

which time the writer returned to Texas, and the closing of the bar in 1878, at least a half million cattle, either alive or slaughtered, passed over the bar; also great numbers of horses, sheep and hogs, as well as the large wool clip of west Texas; and the hides, wool, lead etc. from Mexico and return cargoes for the market. Also a large lumber trade and general supplies for the surrounding country for a hundred miles north and west of the Rio Grande."

In this letter Fulton makes the prediction that the large pastures of the area would be cut up into farms as the soil was rich and adapted to producing most any crops.

In the letter just quoted Fulton refers to "the closing of the bar in 1878." Immediately prior to this event occurred what was probably the last wreck on the bar before the Government made it safe for traffic.

THE LAST WRECK ON THE BAR

In January of 1876 Mrs. S. G. Miller, of Nueces County, with her father, returned from a visit to Louisiana on board the steamer "MARY" bound for Rockport. A rough sea put Mrs. Miller to bed with seasickness. The Gulf was choppy, the cargo was heavy, and the vessel was so old that it was unfit for further use.

Mrs. Miller describes the events that followed the arrival of "MARY" off Aransas Pass in a graphic manner:

" . . . the night we reached the bar a terrific freezing norther swept out from the land and struck the vessel. The boat rocked, plunged, and dipped from side to side with such violence that it was difficult for me to stay in my berth . . . The next morning at daybreak I noticed water in my room. Next, the room began to crash and pull apart, and I heard terrific noises all over the boat . . . In less than five minutes (the chambermaid) came running and cried out: 'Get up quickly, the boat is sinking, and the freight is washing out already.' Dr. East (her brother) ran in and told me to run for my life to the pilot house. He caught my hand, and together we waded through water that was pouring through the ship like a mighty river. When we reached the pilot house we found everybody huddled there awaiting his doom. As a last resort we were to try the life-boats, a dangerous undertaking indeed in such a sea as was running that morning. Crested with great banks of foam, the waves dashed over the sides of the ship as though they were great monsters, angered at the delay in engulfing our frail boat and unhappy crew.

"The captain came in shortly and said that he had signaled the pilot on Padre (?) Island to come in and pilot the 'MARY' across the bar. When the pilot did not answer the signals, the captain, himself, decided to pilot the boat across, as he had done many times before. It was impossible to anchor in the high seas, so immediate action of some kind was necessary. In attempting the crossing, the boat ran a buoy in her side, and ripped it open, and then began sinking. He (the captain) told us further that he felt sure that it would go to

pieces before the pilot could get to us. Signal guns were fired every few seconds and the flag of distress was hoisted. We soon saw the pilot coming, and we began to feel our hopes rise again at the prospect of rescuing us in his small boat.

" . . . Finally, about 7 o'clock in the morning, the pilot reached us, only to be confronted with the task of getting near enough to the 'MARY' to throw a rope to us in order to tie the two boats together. Trial after trial was made to get us, but each time the great waves carried our rescuers beyond our reach . . . At last after about three or four hours of hard work the rope was caught by one of our men, and the small boat was lashed to the 'MARY' by her gangplank. In order to reach this gangplank we waded through water waist deep on deck . . . As I started across the gangplank after two sailors had lifted me onto it, the 'MARY' broke away from the pilot boat and down I went into the sea . . . as I went down the heel of my shoe caught on one of the slats. This broke my fall and enabled me to catch hold of the two sides of the plank with my hands. Scrambling to a sitting position on the gangplank, I bobbed up and down as each big wave struck it. It seemed to me an eternity before the sailors caught hold of it again and I was helped into the rescue boat . . . The rescued party filled the hold of the boat to capacity, and the outgoing tide and the terrific gale made sailing very difficult. We managed to get across the bar at last while waves that seemed mountain high were rolling and lashing the unfortunate 'MARY'. Before we could reach the pilot's house on the Island, we had to walk the entire length of a 300 foot wharf, which was made of two twelve inch planks. We suffered an agony of cold as the blizzard from the north whipped about us in our wet clothing. Upon our arrival, we found our good hostess awaiting us with a roaring fire in the old-fashioned fire place, and there we sat and dried our clothes. Soon afterward she served us a hot meal, and after this we went out on the beach to watch for a ship. On our return we found that the pilot had rescued the captain and his crew. All the next day we watched and waited for a boat, and at last evening brought us a glimpse of one coming our way. After taking us aboard, it headed for Rockport, arriving there about nine o'clock that night."

ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE THE PASS

While the Aransas Pass project was authorized by the Government in 1879, the work progressed slowly, due to lack of sufficient funds appropriated by Congress. Quoting from a paper read by Mr. Herbert U. Rhodius, an engineer, before the Scientific Society of San Antonio on November 8, 1910:

"The efforts to secure a deep water channel at Aransas Pass divide themselves into three periods:

1st. Early Government improvements 1878 to 1890

2nd. Work of the Aransas Pass Harbor Company 1890-1899

3rd. Recent Government improvements 1899-1910.

"By Act of Congress March 2, 1889, a Board of Engineers was appointed to report on the selection of a deep water harbor on the northwest coast of the

Gulf of Mexico. The Board recommended Galveston as the best adapted for the purpose, stating, however, that the harbors of Sabine and Aransas Pass were worthy of consideration, and vigorous prosecution of improvement under their projects. In view of the smallness of the appropriations which had been made from year to year for the work at Aransas Pass and the general belief that any appropriations for harbor improvements in the immediate future for Texas would be confined to Galveston, the Aransas Harbor Company was incorporated to attempt to secure deep water at Aransas Pass by the expenditure of private capital. In May, 1890, Congress granted to this corporation certain rights and privileges and on June 30, 1890, relinquished charge of the harbor to this corporation. Up to that time there had been spent by the Government about \$550,000."

T. B. WHEELER

Aransas Harbor City and Improvement Company was organized by T. B. Wheeler of Austin, Texas. Wheeler was an ex-mayor of Austin and Lieutenant-Governor of Texas from 1886 to 1890. In 1889, while still Lieutenant Governor of Texas, he came to the present site of the town of Aransas Pass. At that time there was no town or post office there. He and his associates bought from T. P. McCampbell, of Goliad, Texas, twelve thousand acres of land fronting on the shores of Red Fish Bay and extending back to what is now known as Avenue B, about two miles west of Aransas Pass, running north and south.

Wheeler decided that the present site of the town of Aransas Pass was the logical point on the mainland for the location of a city; and then proceeded to organize the Aransas Harbor City & Improvement Co., which took over the twelve thousand acres of land bought from McCampbell. This land was then surveyed, and the town of Aransas Harbor laid out. Subsequently, in 1892, the name of the town was changed to Aransas Pass. This change was made when Rockport, which, for a short period, had assumed the name of Aransas Pass, changed its name back to Rockport.

Among Wheeler's associates was Russell Harrison, a son of former President Benjamin Harrison. Russell Harrison was President of the Aransas Harbor City & Improvement Co. In the city of Aransas Pass today there is a Harrison Boulevard, a Wheeler Avenue, a Yoakum Avenue, a McCampbell street, a Nelson Avenue, and a Houston street. Nelson Avenue was named for the contractor, J. P. Nelson, who built the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad on into Rockport.

J. P. Nelson, a few years later built what is known as the "Old Terminal Railroad"; chartered the Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway; and constructed three and one-half miles of rail line from the mainland at Aransas Pass to Morris & Cummins Cut, it being a part of the plan of Wheeler and associates to build this road to Harbor Island and to establish docks and terminals to accomodate traffic moving through Aransas Pass waterway.

Aransas Harbor City & Improvement Co. held public sales of lots and tracts of land in the new townsite, the first sale occuring in September, 1890. Another

sale was held in January, 1891. Many lots and tracts were sold at these sales.

During the period, 1890-91, it was generally thought that the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad would connect the mainland with a railroad to the deep water harbor at Aransas Pass waterway, but a financial panic at that time caused the railroad to abandon any such plans. It was shortly thereafter that the San Antonio & Aransas Pass R.R. passed into the control of the powerful Southern Pacific Railway System, which had heavy investments in terminal facilities at New Orleans and at Galveston. A new port, serving southwest Texas, would decrease the earnings of the Southern Pacific system by diverting goods from the long haul to Galveston and New Orleans from the southwest coast area. Therefore the Southern Pacific contributed nothing to the development of the proposed new port. This was a keen disappointment to Wheeler and his associates, whose success in building a city was entirely dependent upon securing an adequate depth of water in the Aransas Pass channel.

ATTEMPTS BY PRIVATE INTERESTS TO DEEPEN THE PASS

The Government having relinquished to Aransas Harbor City & Improvement Company the project of deepening Aransas Pass, the latter proceeded with the difficult task. The progress of this work is shown by further quotations from Rhodius' report:

"It seems that when the Aransas Pass Harbor Company took charge of the Pass, it had no definite plans of improvement. The first work of this corporation, in 1892, consisted of the Nelson jetty running seaward from a point on Mustang Island at which the Government revetment ended. This jetty was built for about 1800 feet, and then the work, for some reason, stopped. The Harbor Company then employed Messrs. Lewis M. Haupt and H. C. Ripley, two civil engineers, to prepare a project for the improvement of Aransas Pass. These engineers advised the construction of a single jetty, which is described as follows in a letter dated 1895:

" . . . the work will be entirely of stone with a brush mattress extending under a portion of its length, which will be 6200 feet in all. Top width 10 feet, to a height of three feet above mean low tide. The base will vary with the depth, from 40 to 70 feet. In plan it will differ from the usual form of jetty or breakwater, being detached from shore and located on the bar to windward of the channel. Its axis will be curved (compound and reverse) to produce reactions similar to those found in the concavities of streams. It is designed to fulfill the fundamental conditions of (a) arresting the littoral drift (b) admitting the full tidal prism to the interior lagoons (c) controlling the ebb currents and producing a reaction across the bar (d) changing the equilibrium of flood and ebb currents in favor of the latter, and (e) of affording aid to navigation by a structure of only half the length of the usual convergent jetties in pairs. The work is to be constructed in two parts. The construction of the proposed breakwater as designed will unquestionably result in securing navigable depths over the bar

of 15 feet for the first part of the work and 20 feet for the second.'

Signed Lewis M. Haupt
H. C. Ripley

"This is the reaction breakwater over which there has been so much controversy. It was constructed substantially as above described in 1895-96, the work being done by Charles Clark & Company, of Galveston, under contract with the Aransas Harbor Pass Co., and it seems, owing to lack of funds, not entirely completed according to plans of the engineers who advanced the project. The superstructure subsequently sank beneath the waves, and the jetty accomplished no lasting results, except to cause the channel to remain more fixed.

"Up to January 1, 1898, the Aransas Pass Harbor Company spent the sum of \$401,000.00. In 1897 the Harbor Company decided to abandon the project and petitioned the Congress again to take over the improvement."

ALEXANDER BROWN & SONS OF BALTIMORE APPEAR ON SCENE

In 1894 Alexander Brown & Sons of Baltimore became interested in the project through the efforts of Wheeler. It was this firm which furnished the funds to pay for the improvement referred to in the latter part of the report quoted above. Because of this new source of funds, hopes were again revived in the town of Aransas Pass, and the other communities in the immediate vicinity, including San Antonio, that at last a deep water channel was assured at Aransas Pass waterway.

ARANSAS PASS ATTRACTS NATIONAL NOTICE

The widespread interest in the Aransas Pass area at this time is illustrated by the following quotations from a copy of "The Daily Herald", a paper published in Aransas Pass at that time:

"Ex-Governor A. C. Mellette of South Dakota said: 'After visiting Galveston and Port Arthur, I can't help but think that this is the most practicable place as a port of entry . . . If the people of the northwest only knew what was here, thousands of them would be here tonight.'

"Lon C. Hill, of Beeville, Texas, said: 'Commercially speaking, Aransas Pass is the greatest scheme on the American continent today. It is to Texas and the west what the Nicaragua Canal would be to the United States'."

Ex-Senator Merrill of Wyoming is also mentioned in the personal column of the paper as a visitor to Aransas Pass that week.

The issue of the Herald quoted above is of date February 16, 1896, and is in the possession of F. G. Bigelow, of Aransas Pass, who established the first store in that town.

In 1897, when it became evident that the plan of deepening and maintaining the channel at the Pass had failed, the town of Aransas Pass reached its lowest ebb, and many people left.

Builders are men of vision and of faith. They first conceive of an objective, and their faith in this objective produces perseverance and determined persistence.

Such a man was T. B. Wheeler. Failure only spurred him on to greater effort. Consequently, at this juncture, he took up the burden of reviving interest in the project through friendships in Washington and particularly through his friendship with Senator Joseph W. Bailey.

The United States Engineers never did believe in nor approve of the Haupt jetty theory but, incredible as it seems, when Wheeler succeeded in getting the Rivers and Harbors Committee of Congress to approve further study and authorize appropriations for improvements, Lewis M. Haupt prevailed upon the Committee to recommend the completion of the curved breakwater, or Haupt jetty, undertaken by the Aransas Harbor City & Improvement Co. This was attempted but again resulted in failure in 1902.

FIRST SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO DEEPEN THE PASS

Notwithstanding this failure, Wheeler with characteristic persistence, continued his efforts in Washington, and in 1906 another examination of the project was ordered. Major Jadwin, the U.S. District Engineer at Galveston, recommended a two jetty type, which was adopted by Congress and money appropriated with which to begin the work. A contract was let to D. M. Picton & Co., of Rockport, for about a half million dollars. The Picton contract was prosecuted with energy. The north jetty was connected with the shore of St. Joseph Island and the south jetty completed about half way. By June, 1909, the water over the bar had improved rapidly and the channel had widened all the way out. A stone dike was built along the bay shore of St. Joseph Island for about three miles to prevent high tides from cutting in behind the north jetty, as the island had only about five feet elevation near the end of the jetty. At the completion of this contract the navigable water over the bar and through the channel was 17 feet.

It was now apparent that deep water in the Aransas Pass channel was assured, and Engineers' reports recommended that the harbor be established at Harbor Island. This afforded an opportunity to private interests to connect the mainland and the harbor with transportation facilities.

THE FATHER OF ARANSAS PASS

The dream of Governor T. B. Wheeler was now a reality. His indomitable energy finally resulted in deep water over the bar of Aransas Pass sufficient for the commerce of the world. He was typical of those pioneer Texans who gave to this generation a mighty state. He subordinated the usual aspirations of men and his private fortune to his effort to effectuate a vision which gave to the world a new port. Aransas Pass, Port Aransas, Rockport and Corpus Christi are deeply indebted to him. When one looks at the busy wharfs, the oil installations, the great industrial plants, the large hotels and countless tourist cottages which stem from the fact of deep water over the bar at Aransas Pass, it staggers the imagination to consider what the efforts of one man can achieve.

T. B. Wheeler was the "Father of Aransas Pass", town and waterway alike.

BURTON & DANFORTH

In 1909, E. O. Burton and A. H. Danforth of San Antonio established themselves in Aransas Pass, operating under the firm name of Burton & Danforth. Their purpose was to continue building the city begun by T. B. Wheeler and also to build docks at the port and connect them with the mainland by dredging a channel in a direct line between Harbor Island and Aransas Pass, a distance of six miles.

The firm first bought from the widow of T. P. McCampbell that portion of the twelve thousand acres originally purchased by T. B. Wheeler which was unsold by the latter and which he had returned to the former owner. They then proceeded to sell town lots and five- and ten-acre tracts. With deep water assured so near the town of Aransas Pass, and with so much publicity having been given this project, it was not difficult to sell these parcels of land. It is claimed that more than six thousand of these lots and tracts were sold to people from many parts of the United States.

Burton & Danforth completed a channel from Aransas Pass to Harbor Island eight feet in depth, in 1911. Through special legislation, called "The Harbor Island Act of 1911", the State of Texas authorized the General Land Office of the state to sell land on Harbor Island fronting on the harbor so recently recommended by U.S. Engineers. The Harbor Island Act of 1911 further stipulated that only those who built docks and or a railroad and or channels to connect the harbor with the mainland, all in the interest of the public, were eligible purchasers. Burton & Danforth, by virtue of the channel that they had dredged from the mainland to the harbor, bought all the land to which they were entitled under the terms of the Harbor Island Act at the harbor site.

This harbor is located directly in front of the Pass. It is about 800 feet in width and 3000 feet in length, and the Government authorized it to be dredged to a depth of 20 feet. When this dredging was started, the spoil was deposited on Harbor Island, raising the elevation of the water-front property to about eight feet. Subsequent dredging operations from time to time completed the job of raising the land to a height of twelve feet over a large area. Prior to these operations, Harbor Island was subject to overflow by high tides to a depth of three or four feet. In dredging the channel between the harbor and Aransas Pass, a spoil bank was created on the south side of the channel of sufficient quantity with which to build a railroad embankment, and the railroad was constructed on this embankment in 1912.

ALEXANDER BROWN & SONS AGAIN TAKE OVER

Due to financial difficulties, Burton & Danforth, in 1911, offered to sell their holdings, rights etc., to Alexander Brown & Sons of Baltimore. Although the Brown people had spent, according to Government records, about \$400,000 on the Aransas Pass waterway in 1895 to 1898, yet they purchased from Burton & Danforth the land which the latter had acquired from the State and other certain rights and titles. The Baltimore firm then proceeded to build the railroad to

Harbor Island and docks thereon. The operating companies controlled by Alexander Brown & Sons were the Aransas Dock & Channel Co. and the Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway, W. A. Scrivner being Traffic Manager first, and several years later being elected president of both companies. These corporations opened Port Aransas to commerce in 1912, and although it was in August when this was done, 35,000 bales of cotton were exported that year. Preparations were made for a big cotton export business in 1913, and over a hundred thousand bales passed through the port in that year. Also in 1913 a coastwise shipping company, operating between New York and Freeport and handling general cargo, diverted its sailings to Port Aransas, and merchandise was moved through the port destined chiefly for Corpus Christi and San Antonio.

The faith of Alexander Brown & Sons in the possibilities of Aransas Pass had now brought the commerce of the world to this waterway.

Under the able direction of L. S. Zimmerman, of Baltimore, and representative of the Brown firm for its Aransas interests, the early vision of T. B. Wheeler had now become a reality. This firm was headed by a remarkable man in the person of Alexander Brown, who passed away in 1949 at the advanced age of 96 years. He was an illustrious example of that great coterie of financiers who took the shattered pieces of America at the close of the Civil War and welded them into the mightiest nation on earth.

At this time a new type of commerce, not originally contemplated by the developers of the port, started moving from Tampico, Mexico. This was crude oil shipped by the Mexican Petroleum Company, a Doheny corporation, to the Magnolia Petroleum Company, who, in turn, distributed it to all points in southwest Texas and as far as Bisbee and Douglas, Arizona.

IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I ON THE NEW PORT

In 1914, while its citizens were anticipating a tremendous business for Port Aransas in cotton exports, World War I broke out in Europe. While the United States did not enter this war until 1917, its effect on commerce and shipping in this country was immediately felt by southern ports. Even in the big port of New Orleans shipping declined. A part of the south Texas cotton crop was stored at Port Aransas in 1914, European markets being closed against this commodity. Only oil passed through the Aransas Pass channel, and this continued throughout the war. The city of Aransas Pass again experienced a low ebb period, and a great many people moved away from the town, seeking work in war plants, ship yards, etc.

THE PILOT BOY

In 1916 a hurricane of considerable intensity struck Port Aransas and the railroad and docks were heavily damaged. It cost about \$120,000 for repairs.

In this hurricane, the "PILOT BOY", a small steamboat in regular trade between Corpus Christi and Galveston, went down just north of the Aransas Pass jetties. Sam T. Bromley, now living in the city of Aransas Pass, was at that time employed by the U. S. Government Engineers' Department and was stationed at

Port Aransas. He stated that three men of this crew were drowned including the captain, and that their bodies were recovered. A pathetic touch was given to the story of the tragic incident when Bromley stated that one of these men undertook to save the life of the ship's mascot, a cat, and when he plunged into the water he carried the cat in his arms. His body, when found, bore mute evidence of the struggle to save the cat by its lacerated and clawed condition. Bromley stated that he helped to rescue two of the men, one of whom was taken to his home for first aid treatment. The men had had only life belts as aids to keep afloat.

MANUFACTURE OF CONCRETE BOATS

In 1918 the France & Canada Steamship Co., of New York selected Port Aransas as a site to build concrete boats, due to the fact that its climatic condition permitted concrete to be poured the year round. The program called for the building of oil tankers first. This work brought a great many laborers to Aransas Pass, and a housing shortage developed overnight. The Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway ran a train for the workmen from Aransas Pass and also hauled a great deal of material used in the construction of these boats. This new business, coupled with the increased movement of oil through the port, brought to the railroad, the dock company, and to the people of Aransas Pass a welcome period of prosperity. This condition continued until September, 1919, when, in addition to the other traffic and business, cotton again started moving through Port Aransas.

THE GREAT HURRICANE OF 1919

On September 14, 1919, the busy port bore the brunt of one of the most destructive hurricanes of which the United States Weather Bureau has any record. Several hundred people were drowned in Corpus Christi, and a few were drowned in Port Aransas and Aransas Pass. This storm completely destroyed the railroad tracks and embankment, the warehouse of the dock company, and other port facilities.

However, the France & Canada Steamship Co. completed two of their concrete tankers under great difficulties. Oil continued to move from Mexico and was handled by barge from the hastily repaired docks at Harbor Island to Aransas Pass, where it was pumped into railroad tank cars and shipped to points in west and southwest Texas as before.

The owners of the Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway were slow in rebuilding their damaged properties, and it was not until 1922 that the railroad was restored to operating condition.

THE CORPUS CHRISTI DEEP WATER CHANNEL

Corpus Christi interests for many years had been trying to get that city designated as a deep water port by the Government and had pressed their claims diligently. Many hearings were held by U. S. Government Engineers, and at these hearings the claims of Aransas Pass, Rockport, Harbor Island and Corpus Christi were heard. In 1922, by authority of the Rivers and Harbors Act of September,

a deep water channel of 25 feet was authorized from Port Aransas to Corpus Christi, the channel to be dredged at the Government's expense. Corpus Christi agreed to build docks and a turning basin, and to provide all necessary port facilities. This new waterway was completed in July, 1926, and the port of Corpus Christi was opened to commerce. This rival port, with its many rail and highway transportation facilities, and its numerous sites for docks and industrial installations at waterside, killed Port Aransas as a harbor for the handling of general cargo and farm products.

THE FIRST PIPE LINE AND OIL TERMINALS

However, also in 1926, the first oil pipe line was built to Port Aransas from Refugio. This was the beginning of the movement of crude oil through pipe lines to Port Aransas that later made it the largest station for loading crude oil in this country.

The Humble Pipe Line Co., in 1927, bought from the State a dock and tank farm site on Harbor Island and constructed one of the largest oil terminals in Texas. Later on, the Atlantic Pipe Line Co. purchased from William Morgan, the builder of the first pipe line from Refugio, the latter's interest in that pipe line, enlarging its terminal to such an extent that the combined loading capacities of the Atlantic and Humble companies by 1948 placed Port Aransas in the front ranks of the large ports of the country in point of tonnage. But oil loading operations require few men, and so the port has not benefitted to the extent that would have been the case had oil refineries also been located on Harbor Island.

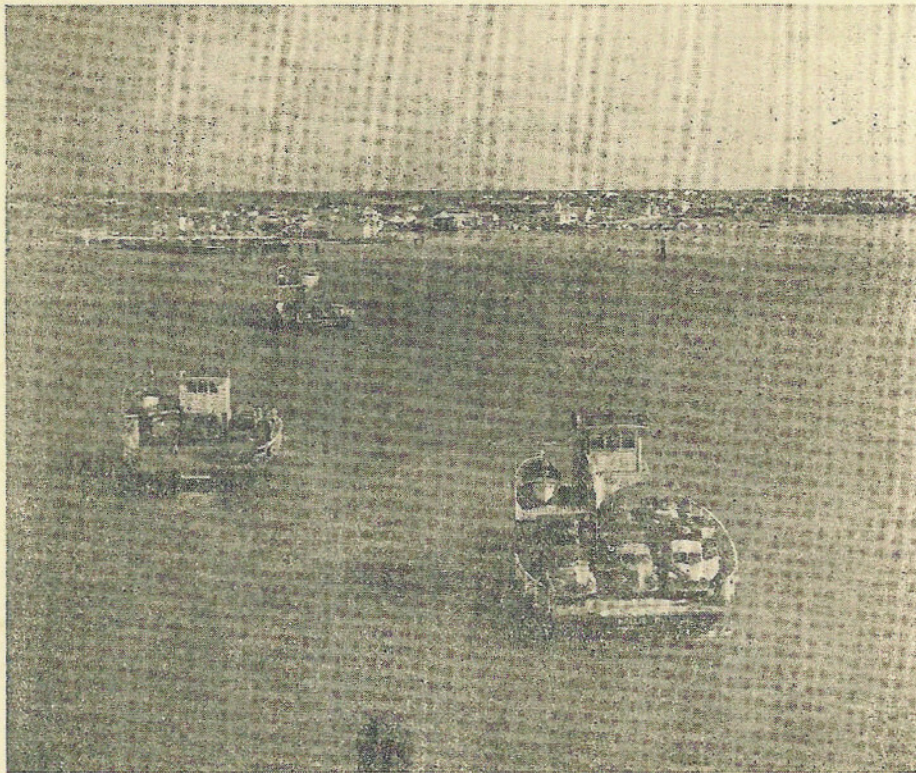
The establishment of the terminals of these big oil companies on Harbor Island changed the fortune of the Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway and the Aransas Dock & Channel Co. The terminal and tank farm of the Atlantic Company is located on the land of the Aransas Dock & Channel Co., and the rentals received by the Dock Company make a steady source of income for that corporation.

THE FIRST CAUSEWAY FROM ARANSAS PASS TO HARBOR ISLAND

Another development occurred in 1926 that was destined to play an important part in shaping the future of Port Aransas. The difficulty in reaching that place by automobile had always been a serious obstacle to its growth as a pleasure resort. To overcome this obstacle a train consisting of flat cars, capable of receiving automobiles, and drawn by an automotive truck, was placed in service. At Harbor Island this automobile train connected with a ferry boat which carried the automobiles across the channel and landed them on Mustang Island. From there the cars could travel down the Island as far as Corpus Christi Pass, a distance of 20 miles. A year or two later a bridge was built across this Pass which opened the entire beach of Padre Island to motor traffic.

In 1931 the automobile train service was superseded by the construction of a causeway from Aransas Pass to Harbor Island, this causeway being capable of sustaining motor traffic. The causeway was an immediate success. Travel to Port

In August, 1945, still another hurricane lashed inshore near Port Aransas causing serious damage to the causeway. Again the company inaugurated a ferry service from Aransas Pass to Mustang Island. The damage was more extensive



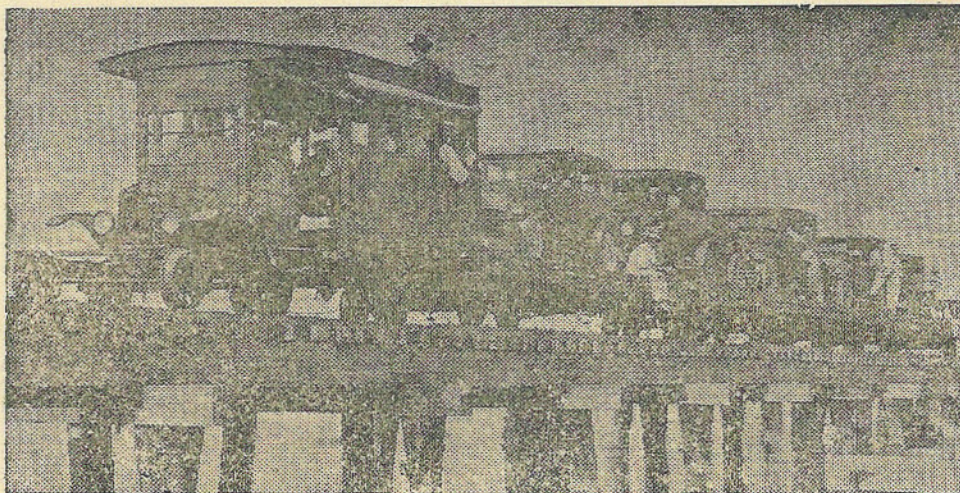
Ferry Scene

than that suffered in 1942, and six weeks' work was necessary to restore vehicular passage over the causeway.

DEWAR & MURCHISON

Alexander Brown & Sons, the Baltimore owners of the Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway, the Aransas Dock & Channel Co., and subsidiary corporations, sold these properties to H. H. Dewar and T. Frank Murchison, of San Antonio, in 1946. Since that time, the new owners have continued the operation of the properties through the same operating corporations which they purchased, with the exception of the Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway, which was abandoned in 1947, its tracks removed and its equipment sold. The announced policy of Messrs. Dewar and Murchison in regard to the Aransas properties, which they purchased, is both reassuring and encouraging to the people who are dependent for a livelihood upon the service of the causeway and the ferry boats, including the entire community

Aransas increased, and through advertising, the fame of that place continued to spread throughout the country as a beach resort.



Automobile Train

THREE HURRICANES

After the causeway was constructed, the owner of the project enjoyed a two-year period of uninterrupted operations. Business was good despite the fact that the depression was adversely affecting the entire nation. But in 1933 another hurricane struck the lower Rio Grande Valley with destructive winds which caused a seven foot tide at Port Aransas. This tidal wave seriously damaged the causeway. Three months were required to repair it. During that period the ferry boats were operated between Aransas Pass and Port Aransas, but these could handle only a limited number of automobiles and trucks. The causeway was rebuilt in such a substantial manner that it was hoped that it could withstand hurricane winds and tides, but in 1942 a hurricane caused sufficient damage to the rebuilt causeway to stop traffic over it for a month. During this time the causeway company again handled traffic by ferry boat from the mainland to the port. World War II was then being waged, and military transportation vehicles received priority on the ferry boats. However, there was not much vehicular travel to Port Aransas during the war, as visitors were not allowed to go down the beach nor to go outside the jetties in fishing boats. This was a Government regulation occasioned by the fact that there were 500 men of the U. S. Coast Guard, the Navy, and Coast Artillery stationed on Mustang Island during most of the war period. Heavy guns were mounted on the dunes between the fishing pier and the south jetty. This military occupation of the Island was occasioned by reports of German submarines operating in the Gulf.

of Port Aransas. This policy is first, to make the properties secure from the ravages of tropical storms. Upon the advice of competent engineers, work is progressing by a new method which it is hoped will solve this very difficult problem, so far as the causeway is concerned. A suction dredge was built and is now working on the north side of the causeway depositing the spoil on both sides of the road in such a manner that the slope from the same elevation as the road is so gradual that a storm tide, it is believed, will flow over the structure without undermining and collapsing it. Messrs. Dewar and Murchison have also announced other plans which they hope to carry out at some future time which will benefit the communities served by their transportation system. It is indeed fortunate for the communities of Aransas Pass and Port Aransas that corporations so vital to them have fallen into such able hands.

THE COST OF DEEP WATER AT ARANSAS PASS

Beginning with the first authorization of improvements for the Port Aransas-Corpus Christi waterway by the Congress of the United States in 1879, and up to May, 1949, a total of sixteen million two hundred thousand dollars has been spent on this waterway by the Government. Private interests have spent over five hundred thousand dollars, which, added to that expended by the Government, makes a grand total of sixteen million seven hundred thousand dollars.

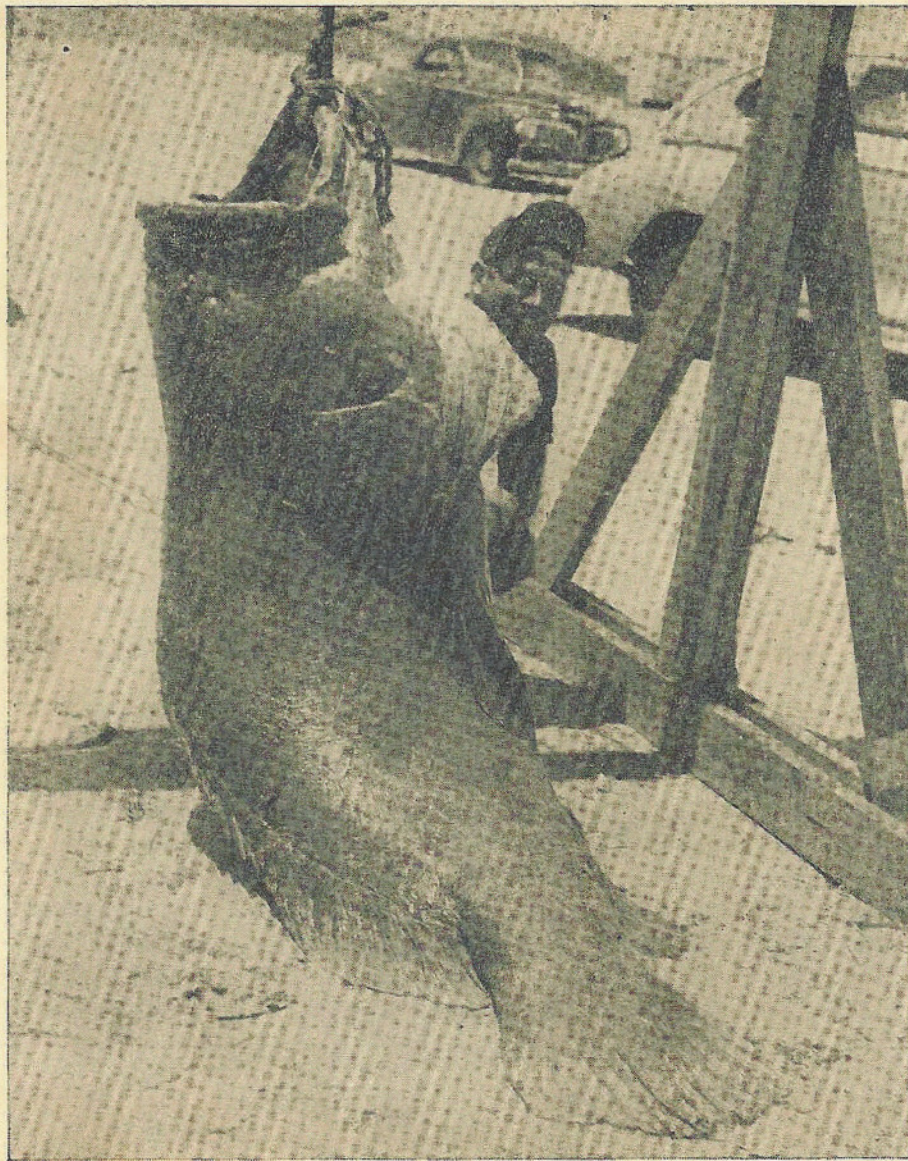
Private interests have constructed docks and shipping facilities along the waterway at a cost approximating seven million dollars. The Nueces County Navigation District, alone, built docks, terminals and warehouses, and dredged a harbor, at a cost of four million two hundred forty-five thousand dollars, and private interests in Corpus Christi own docks and facilities variously estimated at more than a million dollars. At Harbor Island, the Aransas Dock & Channel Co. and the Humble Pipe Line Co. have docks and turning basins estimated to have cost several hundred thousand dollars. Hogg Brothers of Houston built a dock and dredged a turning basin at Harbor City, which is used by the Humble Co. The Sun Oil Co., in 1947, completed a dock and turning basin about a mile below the Hogg Bros. dock, both installations costing several hundred thousand dollars.

Back of these privately constructed docks, shipping facilities, and turning basins are located oil tank farms, refineries, and industrial plants of various kinds that represent an investment of much more than a hundred million dollars.

RECREATIONAL ADVANTAGES

The story of the discovery of Aransas Pass waterway; the first use of it in its natural state; the efforts that were made to develop it; the industrial installations and communities that have sprung up around it; has been told. But no history of this fabulous waterway is complete without reference to its fishing and hunting opportunities and to its recreational advantages. These center around the towns of Port Aransas and Aransas Pass.

From the early 80's until 1889 Port Aransas was called Ropesville and had



Sea Bass

"Many Such Fish Are Caught at Port Aransas,
the Largest of Record Weighing 612 Pounds"



Six Foot Seven Inch Tarpon Caught by
Mrs. A. B. Pumphrey, Fort Worth, Texas.

a post office. The name was then changed to Tarpon, the town continued by that name until 1912 when the present name was assumed.

In the 80's and 90's the fishing and hunting was excellent, especially the latter, due to the fact that this part of the coast was so isolated that wild life was not disturbed. W. A. Farley, now a resident of Aransas Pass, states that in the last decade of the nineteenth century there were so many ducks that they were hunted commercially and shipped to market. These ducks, when sold in San Antonio, brought ten cents each. Farley also stated that he acted as a guide for a man named Smith of New York, one day, who, in a duck blind located where the Humble tank farm is now situated, killed 192 red head ducks that day. The marketing of ducks was stopped by the Texas Game & Fish Commission in 1905. Geese were also plentiful and afforded good hunting.

W. A. Farley moved to Port Aransas (then named Tarpon) in 1899, and became a hunting and fishing guide. Tarpon had a population at that time of about 250 people, some engaged in fishing and some working on channel improvements then being done by Aransas Harbor City & Improvement Co. Farley stated that the fishing was mostly done in row boats, the guides being paid \$1.50 per day for rowing the boat. On a very quiet day a row boat would go as far as five miles into the Gulf. All tarpon were caught on 72 lb. test lines, 18 lb. test lines not being used then.

R. L. Mercer, now living in Aransas Pass, said that when he was a young boy he lived in Tarpon in the 80's and 90's, and that people came there in considerable numbers the year round to fish and to hunt, the hunting, of course, being done in the fall and winter. Mercer agreed with Farley that the fishing was done from row boats, and that guides were then available to row boats into the Pass and also out into the Gulf. Tarpon were caught in great numbers, and red fish, speckled trout and sheepshead were caught almost anywhere in the vicinity of Tarpon at any time of the year.

THE FIRST GASOLINE LAUNCH

Around the turn of the century, Colonel E. H. R. Green, only son of the famous woman financier of New York, Mrs. Hetty Green, had a club house of about 20 rooms located on St. Joseph Island, about a mile from the Pass, which was visited by a great many men who had been made members of the club. These visitors kept several guides busy taking them out on hunting and fishing trips. Green brought the first gasoline launch to Tarpon and hired Ed Cotter to run it, after first sending Cotter to Chicago to learn about the combustion and ignition of gasoline engines. This young man's mother owned the famous Tarpon Inn which was the only hotel in the town at that time, and is yet, for that matter. The old building was so damaged in the hurricane of 1919 that it was converted into a kitchen and dining room for the present building. Cotter later sold the Inn and became mayor of the town and also a bar pilot.

Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Ellis bought the Inn from Cotter, rebuilt it, and continued serving the fine sea food for which it is nationally famous. The Tarpon Inn is now operated by Mrs. Ellis and her son, Bill.

During those early days, Sam Gray operated a daily freight, passenger and mail service by sail boat between Tarpon and Rockport.

TURTLES

According to John D. Wheeler, a lawyer now living in San Antonio, who lived in Aransas Pass when a youth, sea turtles were shipped from Tarpon in great quantities. These were big fellows weighing in some instances over 500 pounds each. These turtles had a habit of congregating in the shallows near Lydia Ann Island, which is near the light house. Fishermen made heavy nets, enmeshed the turtles in them, and dragged them into shallow water where they were loaded on light draft boats and carried to market. The turtle was flipped on his back, this making him helpless and easy to handle. In the same manner the turtles were shipped by railway express from Rockport to San Antonio and arrived at their destination alive and fresh.

In the early days of fishing around the Pass there were no shrimp trawlers, due to the fact that there was no market for shrimp. But now, shrimping is a major occupation with over a hundred shrimp boats based at the city of Aransas Pass. According to reports of the Texas Game, Fish & Oyster Commission, about one-fourth of the catch of the Texas Gulf coast is shipped through Aransas Pass to market.

CELEBRITIES

But no record of the fishing history of Port Aransas is complete without mention of some of the celebrities who have visited it.

One of the early enthusiasts was Dr. Richard L. Sutton, of Kansas City. He wrote many books on sports fishing, one of them being entitled "The Silver Kings of Aransas Pass." He dubbed Port Aransas "The Tarpon Capitol of the World." He introduced the custom of fishing with hooks without barb so that the tarpon could be released without too much injury. It is said that he caught as many as twenty five in one day. However, Dr. and Mrs. N. S. Ozburn of Memphis, Tennessee, hold the record for one day's catch, having caught and released thirty seven tarpon.

Dr. J. A. L. Waddell, an eminent mining engineer, spent much time during the 1930's at Port Aransas. He was at one time advisor to the Chinese Government, shortly after it became a republic. He was often referred to as the dean of American engineers.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt anchored the "POTOMAC", the presidential yacht, near Harbor Island in 1937 and enjoyed the tarpon fishing.

In order to get a cross-section of the many sports fishermen who have visited Port Aransas, the following are mentioned as only a very few: Charles

Urschel, oil man of Oklahoma and Texas; Durwood Kirby, National Broadcasting Company announcer; Buddy Rogers, moving picture star; and Amiee Semple McPherson, the noted evangelist of Los Angeles.

A VISION

The recent completion of the Intra-coastal Canal to Brownsville is an event of prime importance, not only to south Texas, but to the entire state. It is obvious that cheap transportation is of great benefit to commercial interests and especially to the industrial installations now located along the entire Texas coast.

But the completed canal presents the state with another asset of incalculable potentiality. One may now travel by boat from Chicago to Brownsville along an inland waterway. If this fact is sufficiently advertised, visitors in great



"Remote Solitude"

numbers from the heart of the middle west will come by house boat and in small craft on the new waterway to a vacation land heretofore closed to them. The last part of the waterway parallels the Texas Gulf shore for more than 400 miles. But only between Port Aransas and Port Isabel is there an unbroken beach for so

great a distance as 130 miles. The sand dunes of Mustang and Padre Islands separate the canal in Laguna Madre from the Gulf of Mexico. Some day the State of Texas will construct a highway on this stretch of land from which the tourist can gaze on the boundless expanse of the Gulf where steamers are in sight on regular trade routes, on the one hand, and on the other, he can see the placid waters of Laguna Madre and catch an occasional glimpse of laden barges, house boats and small craft moving long the canal. Private interests will provide food and shelter at intervals along this roadway and dredge small inlets from the Laguna Madre waterway so that both water-borne and land travelers may meet and mingle and exchange experiences. The tourist can stop his car at any point along this 130 mile stretch of highway and cast his line into either the Gulf or into the lagoon, both of which are teeming with fish. He can bathe in the unrivaled surf on the seaward side, or he can watch the spectacular bird life on the shores of Laguna Madre.

The great Island of Padre was granted by the King of Spain to Nicolas Balli in 1806 and has been the scene of many a shipwreck in the days of the treasure galleons and the rendezvous of pirates. Ancient gold coins have been found in its dunes together with other relics of a romantic past. Ghost towns have left their evidence on the lower end of the island, and ranchmen have grazed their cattle and sheep on its coastal grasses. Coyotes roam over its dunes, and wild fowl of every kind drink at its fresh water pools.

A feeling of remote solitude hovers over this seascape. The visitor is impressed with the haunting mystery, as far down the beach he glimpses the white skeletons of unfamiliar trees washed ashore from some exotic isle. Savage war canoes, cocoanuts, battered skiffs and rafts, drums of oil and cases of liquor have been found along the shore. A translucent haze enshrouds the scene. The roar of the surf is ever present, and the cries of the birds intrigue the ear.

No other state can furnish such a unique recreational opportunity.

The tourist business is a tremendous industry. It has been neglected by the State of Texas. The building of a scenic highway from Port Aransas to Port Isabel would benefit the entire state to a greater degree than the establishment of America's greatest factories within its borders. The tourists attracted to the south Texas coast would swarm all over the state and the gasoline tax, alone, would pay for the highway.

This vision will be realized.

CONCLUSION

Fabulous Port Aransas, whose recorded history reaches into that dim and distant past when intrepid explorers were still seeking a passage to the Pacific from the Atlantic through the continent of North America! Whose Pass was discovered coincidentally with the discovery of Texas. Whose waters were used by smugglers and men with piratical intent in many an unrecorded and secret voyage to its inner bays. Whose dangerous bar was braved by the early Irish

colonists destined to build a civilization in the surrounding coastal plain.

The indigo waters of the Gulf breaking in white foam at the entrance of the Pass lured man and Government into spending fortunes to improve the historic waterway. Neither storm nor war nor depression could prevent Aransas' rendezvous with destiny.

Men who gazed far into the future were able to envision a port serving a rich agricultural and ranching area. But even these men could not foresee the fabulous pools of oil which lay beneath the surface, nor the sprawling industrial plants which cluster along its shoreline. Nor did they dream of the long lines of sleek automobiles carrying a happy and prosperous people to bathing beaches, fishing launches, or duck blinds.

Known to mariners, industrialists and sportsmen throughout the world, Port Aransas has come into its heritage and justified the faith of its god-fathers. And even the fish teeming in its limpid waters do their part, for "They Bite Every Day."

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Mammoth Tanker "ESSO ZURICH" coming up to
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