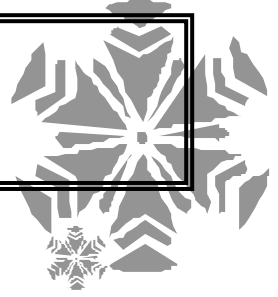




THE WINDOW PANE



Brazoria County Historical Museum

DISCOVER WHERE TEXAS BEGAN

Let It Snow!

The history of snow falling and accumulating on the ground in Brazoria County is one that is marked by rare events that people talk about for years. Because it is such a rare event in the County, snowfall tends to remain in the collective consciousness of residents and the stories about it get passed on to succeeding generations.



Records kept over the last ninety years show that, on average, Brazoria County receives about 0.2 inches of snow per year during the month of February. This does not mean that this is all the snow that falls in the county, but that this is the snow that makes it to the ground and is measurable. If one looks at the list of recorded snow events in the area, there seems to be a disproportionate amount of snow falling in February.

In an article, *Texas and Oklahoma's Greatest Hits*, authored by John Nielsen -Gammon of Texas A&M University and Howard Johnson of the University of Oklahoma, an explanation is given as to why February is the month in which the bulk of snow falls in this part of Texas.

"The three basic ingredients for a snowstorm are low temperatures, ample moisture, and a developing storm system. All are available in February."

"The moisture for a major snowstorm comes from the Gulf of Mexico and points south and east. The cold weather for a major snowstorm comes from Canada and points north."

"For a developing storm system to pull these ingredients together requires a special set of circumstances. It takes strong southeasterly or southerly winds to get the moisture into Texas and Oklahoma, but those same winds bring warm air. So the layer of cold air must be cold enough to allow snow, shallow enough to permit the warm, moist air to rise above it, and deep enough to prevent its retreat

in the face of the moisture -bearing winds."

"Fast-moving storm systems would not allow much time for the cold air to retreat, but they also would not allow much time for the moisture from the Gulf to arrive. Only a slow - atmosphere's snow factory to get cranked up."

Some of the more memorable snowfall events in this area include the snowstorm of February 1895, when as much as twenty inches accumulated between Houston and the Brownsville area. Then on February 12 and 13, 1899, Texas experienced some of the coldest weather in its recorded history. Temperatures reached 8° F in Galveston, and ice formed on the bay. The coldest temperature in the State was recorded at this time as well. It was -23° F at Tulia.



Other dates of significant snowfall in the area are:

December 22, 1929

February 1, 1951 —an ice storm hit the area

February 12-13, 1960—between two to four inches fell across the County

February 4, 1964 —snow fell across the State

December 22, 1989

While this is not a complete record of dates that a recordable amount of snow fell in the area, it demonstrates that snow falls in Brazoria County, and there will be a good chance that county residents will see it happen again.

Michael Bailey

January 2005

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Brazoria County Historical Commission's Annual Used Book Sale

on

February 9, 10 & 11,

from 8 am to 5 pm,

and on February 12,

from 9 am to 3 pm,

at the

Brazoria County

Historical Museum.

For more information, call 979/864-1393.

Adriance Library & Research Center

Looking to the past (as we usually are here in the Museum library), we cannot forget the story of the whale that washed up on the beach at Surfside in 1940. Although I was not even born yet in 1940, I “remember” the whale through hearing my parents’ stories as I was growing up in Angleton.



After reading some articles published in the Museum newsletter in 2002, others came forward to share their own memories of the beached whale. Among them was Craig Barton of Freeport, who called to tell me that his grandfather, Owen Barton, had displayed some of the whale bones for years in front of Lester’s Tackle Shop. Perhaps some of you remember seeing them there back in the 1950s and 60s. Craig promised to locate some photos and bring them to the Museum. Then he presented us with an exciting prospect. He still had some of the whale bones and would bring them to the Museum along with the photos!

Since I did not hear from Craig again for a very long time, I thought that he had forgotten about his offer. Then, who should appear at the Museum this past October but Craig, with whale bones and photos in tow as promised. I probably have you picturing an entire whale skeleton by now, but remember that we are talking about a few samples of the whale bones that were displayed in front of Owen Barton’s tackle shop in Freeport.

I am pleased to announce that Craig donated the whale bones to the Museum and also allowed us to scan the three photographs. We are

grateful to Craig for following through with his promise of bringing these items to the Museum. We hear from people now and then who have materials and artifacts they genuinely intend to donate, but for one reason or another they never get around to making it happen. I appreciate Craig’s perseverance and his resolve to follow through on the offer he made in 2002. That beached whale is definitely a part of Brazoria County residents’ collective memory!

The whale articles that appeared in the 2002 Museum newsletter also attracted the attention of a researcher from California. The researcher contacted me in 2003, identifying himself as “President of the Whale Fund.” He said that he is researching a book about blue whales for the Smithsonian and requested whatever information and images I could provide of the Freeport beached whale. After studying the Brazoria County beached whale of 1940, he was able to conclude that this whale had been *afin* whale and not a *blue* whale as he had hoped.

How did he make that determination? The photo that appeared in the August 23, 1940, issue of the *West Columbia Light* clearly showed that the whale had a white pigmentation pattern on the right side of the lower lip. According to the experts, this is a characteristic pattern unique to fin whales. Fin whales are “bilaterally asymmetrical in their pigmentation, with just the right lip being white while the left lip is always black.” While the researcher was disappointed with his finding, he was glad to clear up the mystery and find an answer to his question. Coming up with proof of a blue whale in the Gulf of Mexico would have been a significant discovery for him and definitely would have put our Brazoria County beached whale in his blue whale book!

Now we know more about this whale than we did before, thanks to a researcher’s in-depth knowledge of whales and to the willingness of Craig Barton to donate his photos and whale bones to the Museum. That is what I love about writing stories for the Museum newsletter. No matter what the topic, we all learn from the research and the sharing of information that its articles inspire.

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Thanks to Killum Pest Control for their donated services to the Museum.

New & Renewing Museum Members

New Members:

La Familia

Donald W. "Dude" Payne, Sr.,
Lake Jackson

El Tejano

Diane Goode, Pearland
Carolina Loa, Clute

Senior

Neal McLain, Brazoria

Recent renewals:

El Empresario

Dow Chemical, Texas Division, Freeport

El General

Dr. N. B. & Kathryn Creel, Lake Jackson
Lisa Doyle, Lake Jackson
Mr. & Mrs. Dwyer McNeese, Houston
Evelyn Muchowich, Freeport
Thurmond & Doris Munson, Lake Jackson
Don & Jean Nigbor, Angleton
Marcus & Lila Stephenson, Lake Jackson
Jeff & Kimberly Young, Ashland, Oregon

La Familia

George & Sybil Andrus, Angleton

Mr. & Mrs. William G. Baskin, Lake Jackson
T. Stewart & Shirley Coffman, Pearland
Gil & Beth Dickson, Lake Jackson
Doyle & Betty Fenn, Manvel
Tom & Cheryl Fowler, Lake Jackson
Gary & Doris Gatton, Angleton
Don & Lola Kay Hood, Angleton
Mr. & Mrs. Leland Kee, Angleton
Durwood & Becky McKinney, Angleton
Robert & Jessica Munson, Angleton
Christine Palmer, Lake Jackson
David & Linda Roberts, Clute
Dr. & Mrs. Max Royalty, Lake Jackson
Dr. & Mrs. Bob Schwebel, Lake Jackson
Darrell & Donna Schwebel, Lake Jackson
Patricia Shell, Lake Jackson
Pat Sims, Angleton
Eddie Venne, Freeport
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Zylks, Lake Jackson

El Tejano

Charlene Buck, Lake Jackson
Marianne Carter, Angleton
Fannie Mae Gilbert, Angleton
Linda Haynes, Pearland
Charlene Hurta, Angleton
Louise Foster Krohn, Houston
Lela B. Morris, Lake Jackson

Heloise Murray, Lake Jackson
John O'Leary, Lake Jackson
Earl Miller, Jones Creek
Otto F. Schumm, Lake Jackson
Sue Williamson, Angleton

Senior

Gen Bagley, Angleton
Peggy Baker, Angleton
Betty Blackmon, West Columbia
Neil Caldwell, Angleton
Gardner Campbell, Lake Jackson
P. D. Campbell, Pearland
Ray Pearl Condry, Angleton
Helen Horton, Pearland
Robert Joiner, Pearland
Stewart Masterson, Houston
Beverly Nixon, Freeport
Helen Phillips, Angleton
Bebe Sauls, Freeport
Lena Joyce Steele, Angleton
Emma Jean Tanner, Lake Jackson
Doris Tielke, West Columbia
Elgin Tielke, West Columbia
Winona Thomas, Brazoria
Sands Weems III, West Columbia
Evelyn Welsch, West Columbia
Betty Zgarba, Angleton

Windows Book and Gift Shoppe

Last month I had the pleasure to visit for the first time the Ammon Underwood home in East Columbia. They are planning on moving the house to a new location in East Columbia. The mighty Brazos River is taking back ownership of the land, and for the fourth time it is being moved to a safer location.

I was rather surprised by how beautiful the place still is. It was built as a two-story cedar log structure by a Thomas Nibbs in 1835. The house was added on to and used as a boarding house shortly after Ammon Underwood and Catherine Carson bought it. I mention the Underwood Home because it is just one of a few houses that are left in this area from an era gone by and one that I have been in. I was pleased at how welcoming the house still feels. I have read several of the stories that Catherine Foster wrote about growing up in the house. I feel like I knew the people that once lived there, and they were there to welcome the many visitors who came to celebrate its continued preservation and relocation a few Sundays ago. I knew not to touch things, but believe me it was hard not running my hand along the top of the worn furniture, or to sit on the high bed, or feel the hand-made lace. I was amazed at the thick plastered walls that kept the heat in on cold days and the cool in on warm days. One of the grand nieces of Laura

Underwood has drawn a beautiful portrait of her. She was not only a beautiful lady, but also one who was well loved by her family and neighbors.

Just after the Civil War, as Ammon Underwood was having breakfast, one of his nieces came running in saying she had fallen in a big hole in the front yard. Upon inspection Ammon saw that the fissure had opened up from the river and had disappeared under his house. He realized that the house needed to be moved. The local contractors said it could not be moved. So Ammon got his hands from his plantations and they moved the house forward a full width of the river. The bank kept creeping up over the years and in 1900, the house was once again endangered by the river. Not only was the house moved further away from the river again, but it also was split in two, with each half of the house placed on adjoining lots. One half of the house was weakened by the 1900 Storm and completely destroyed in the 1915 storm. I noticed that the ceiling in the remaining part of the house was rather low. I found out that over the years the silt from the river had built up under the house and was damaging the foundation of the house. Instead of raising the foundation up and repairing it, they just cut off the bottom, which lowered the downstairs.



Ammon Underwood

BCHM Collection

Another move after the river caved in the kitchen, brings the house to its present location right by the street. It won't be here for long, for sometime this year the house will be moved to its new location. When all is said and done the house will be open again to the public.

Please stop by the Museum whenever you can. Just because you visited the Museum five years ago does not mean that you will not find something new this time. Visit the Bookstore, become a member and receive a 10% discount on most items in the store. The Museum is open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm and on Saturday from 9 am to 3 pm.

Rosemary Duke



Brazoria County
Historical Museum

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Angleton, Texas

77515

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Upcoming Programs

Tony Cherian and Toni Hill-Kennedy will be presenting their latest research on “Land, Class and Race in Brazoria County.” For the past 18 months these two have been recovering truly amazing bits of untold history buried in archives all around the State of Texas, as well as conducting dozens of in depth recorded interviews with Brazoria County residents. They will be speaking at the Museum on Thursday, February 17, 2005 at 6:30 pm.

Recognition & Memorial Contributions

As you consider gift options for a special someone or a fitting tribute for someone dear, remember that a contribution made to the Brazoria County Historical Museum in honor or memory of a loved one is a wonderful way to recognize him or her. When you make a recognition or memorial contribution, your gift will be noted in the *Recognition & Memorial Register*, which is located in the Museum foyer, and listed in the *Window Pane* as well. The Museum will notify the individual being recognized or the family of the individual being memorialized that a contribution was made in his or her name, which will enable the Museum to continue its efforts to preserve the history of Brazoria County.