

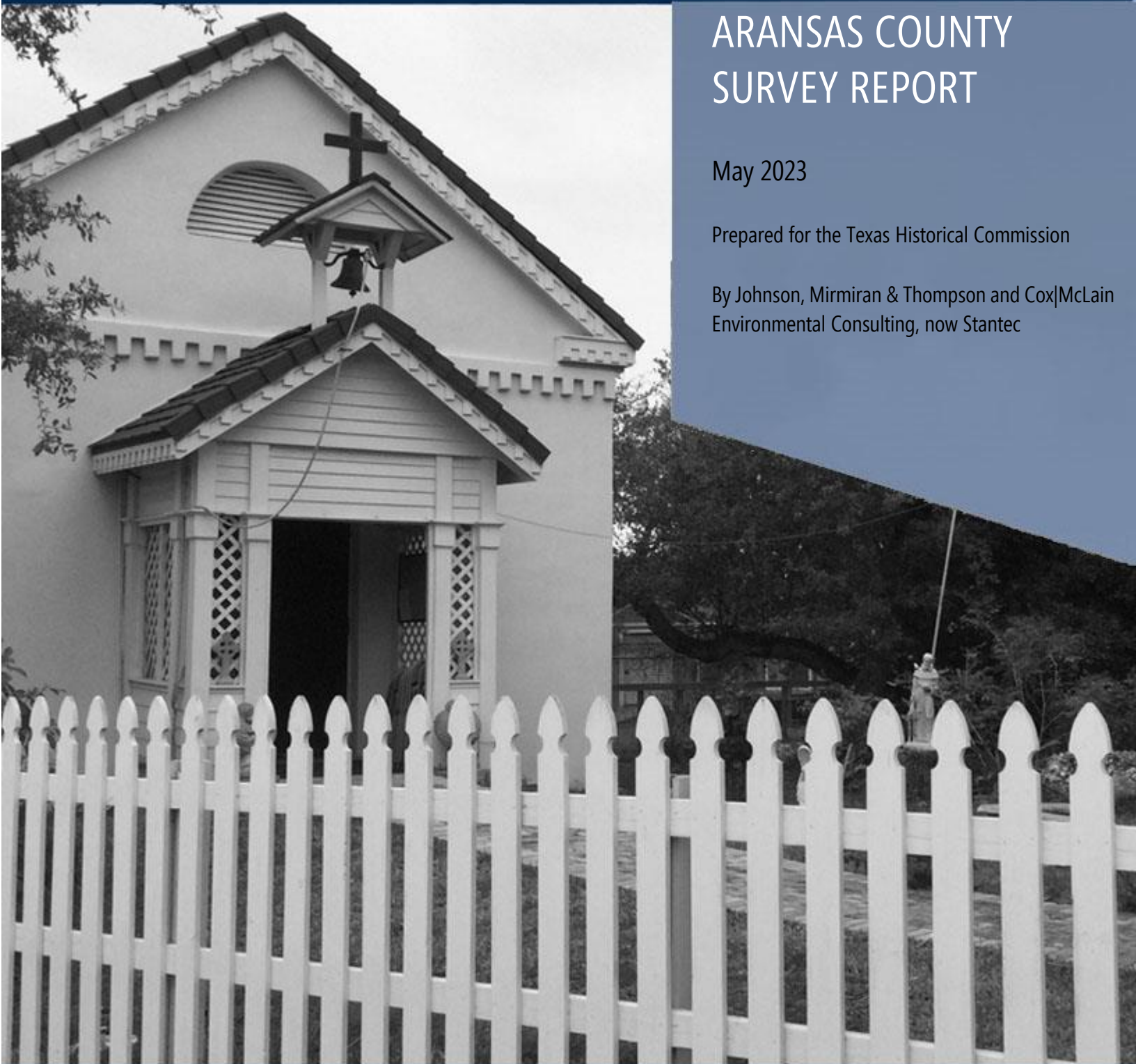
# HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY OF ARANSAS, REFUGIO, AND CALHOUN COUNTIES

## ARANSAS COUNTY SURVEY REPORT

May 2023

Prepared for the Texas Historical Commission

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Marker for town of Lamar | JMT

This document presents the findings of a 2020–2022 historic resources survey of Aransas County, Texas. The Texas Historical Commission (THC), with funding from the National Park Service’s (NPS’s) Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund, retained Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson, Inc. (JMT) and Cox|McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc., now Stantec (Stantec), in November 2020 to survey Aransas, Calhoun, and Refugio Counties. These counties were selected for study based on the lack of existing historic resource surveys, the likelihood of finding historic properties, and the threat of future hurricanes. The purpose of the project was to develop a historic context and identify historically significant properties and districts. This report presents the findings for Aransas County. JMT documented all buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts (broadly described as “resources”) within Aransas County built in 1973 or earlier (defined as “historic-age”) and evaluated each for historic significance and integrity.

Fieldwork preparations involved the development of a fieldwork methodology, research design, public involvement plan, thematic historic context, geographic scope, and development of a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based data collection platform. A virtual public meeting was held on June 22, 2021, to introduce the project to interested parties and solicit information about historic resources. JMT conducted fieldwork in Aransas County between October 2021 and October 2022. Surveyors traveled every public road in Aransas County and surveyed resources from the public right-of-way.

In total, 2,109 historic-age resources were documented and evaluated for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. At a second (in-person) public meeting on September 11, 2022, preliminary results were presented to attendees and additional information about surveyed resources was solicited.

Of the 2,109 resources surveyed, three resources are listed in the NRHP and retain integrity to maintain their listing, 28 are recommended individually eligible for listing in the NRHP, 91 are contributing to a recommended eligible Post WWII development, 1,982 are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and two were not visible. Three resources were recorded as structures or sites rather than buildings (See Figure 1, Tables A-3 and A-4 in Appendix A, and the survey forms and maps in Appendices C and D).

Individual Resources Recommended Eligible for the NRHP:

- Baldwin-Brundrett House | 1028 North Live Oak Street, Rockport
- Baylor-Norvell House | 617 Water Street, Rockport
- Fulton Cemetery | 401 Myrtle Street, Fulton
- Goose Island State Park Recreation Hall (Concessions Building) | Park Road 13B, Rockport
- Joe A. and Bertha Harper House | 811 North Live Oak Street, Rockport
- Koemel Beach Haus | 2292 North Fulton Beach Road, Fulton
- Lamar Cemetery | 222 Hagy Drive, Rockport (Lamar)
- Sea Gun Bay Homes | 5810 Highway 35 North, Rockport
- Residence | 1126 North McCampbell Street, Aransas Pass
- Residence | 1481 North Fulton Beach Road, Fulton
- Residence | 4620 Highway 35 North, Fulton
- Residence | 108 Laurel Street, Fulton
- Residence | 201 Palmetto Avenue, Fulton
- Residence | 902 East Cornwall Street, Rockport
- Residence | 409 Broadway, Rockport
- Residence | 620 East Mimosa Street, Rockport
- Residence | 402 Palmetto Avenue, Fulton
- Residence | 905 Patton Street, Rockport
- Residence | 615 Water Street, Rockport
- Richard Henry Wood House | 203 North Magnolia Street, Rockport
- Rockport Cemetery | 2040 Tule Park Drive, Rockport
- Rockport School | 619 North Live Oak Street, Rockport
- Ruins | 160 Front Street, Rockport (Lamar)
- San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad Depot | 105 South Magnolia Street, Rockport
- Sigwald Service Company | 402 Highway 35 South, Rockport
- Smith-Brundrett House | 901 North Austin Street, Rockport
- Sorenson-Stair Building | 406 South Austin Street, Rockport
- Stella Maris Chapel | 222 Hagy Drive, Rockport (Lamar)
- Kline's Cafe | 504 South Magnolia Street, Rockport
- Home of George W. Fulton Texas Centennial Marker | 317 Fulton Beach Road, Rockport
- Site of One of the Homes of James Power Texas Centennial Marker | SH 35 and FM 1781, Fulton

- Site of the Town of Lamar Texas Centennial Marker | Bois D’Arc Street and Main Street, Rockport (Lamar)
- Aransas County Texas Centennial Marker | Broadway Street (SH 35) and East Orleans Street, Rockport

District Recommended Eligible for the NRHP:

- Oak Terrace Historic District



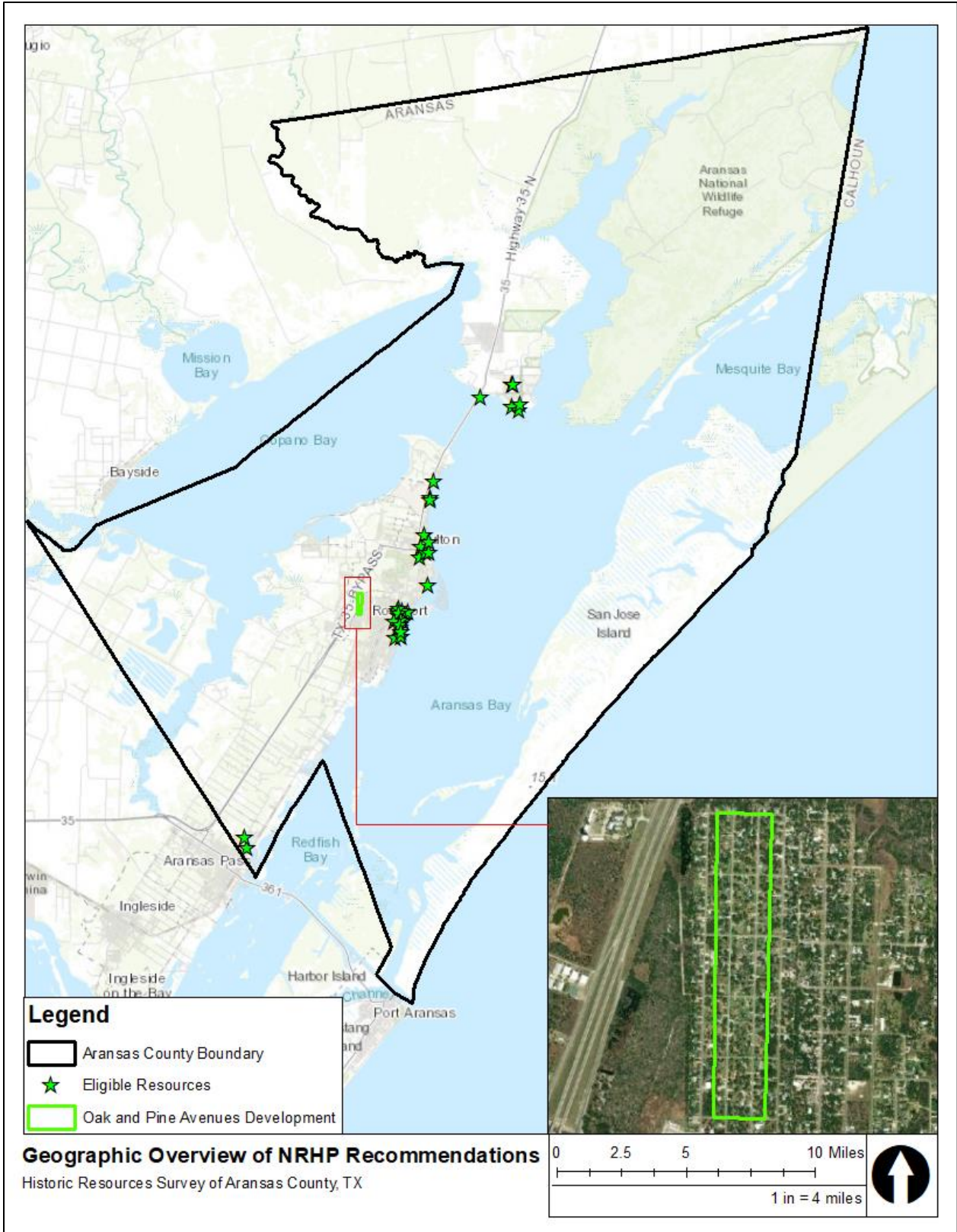


Figure 1. Geographic Overview of NRHP Recommendations.

Throughout the project, regular meetings were held with the project team and THC representatives, and all deliverables were reviewed by THC staff and revised based on their feedback.

This report begins with the project’s research design in Section 2. The public involvement plan and a summary of public engagement is provided in Section 3. Section 4 presents the fieldwork methodology. Section 5 introduces the historic context developed to evaluate the significance of documented resources. Survey results are provided in Section 6, and recommendations for future work are summarized in Section 7. Appendices include tables of historical markers in Aransas County, resources currently listed in the NRHP, and properties/district recommended eligible for the NRHP (Appendix A); survey forms for properties listed in the NRHP (Appendix B); survey forms for properties recommended eligible for the NRHP (Appendix C); map and survey form for the post World War II district recommended eligible for the NRHP (Appendix D); and survey forms for properties recommended not eligible for the NRHP (Appendix E). Digital files, including a GIS geodatabase and survey photographs, were provided with the final report.

## REPORT TERMINOLOGY

Terminology in this report is based on standards set by the NPS. More details can be found in “National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” (NPS 2002). This survey documents “resources,” which can be buildings, structures, objects, sites, or districts, as defined by the NPS.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN



Commercial Building, Aransas Pass | JMT

### PROJECT INFORMATION

#### HISTORIC-AGE SURVEY CUT-OFF DATE

The survey recorded historic-age resources, which are defined as any building, structure, object, site, or district that is 45 years of age or more at the time of the historic resources survey. According to this definition, resources constructed in 1973 or earlier were documented.

### PROJECT SETTING/STUDY AREA

#### CURRENT LAND USE

Aransas County is on the Texas Gulf Coast, which comprises the far western portion of the Gulf of Mexico. It is bordered by Calhoun, Nueces, Refugio, and San Patricio Counties. The county seat and largest town is Rockport; other towns in the county include Fulton and Aransas Pass. Communities in the county include Estes, Copano Village, Holiday Beach, and Lamar. As of 2020, Aransas County had a population of 23,830 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). Rockport and Fulton are the county's largest towns with populations of 10,070 and 1,202 respectively. A portion of Aransas Pass is in the county; a portion of the city's 7,941 residents live in Aransas County. Most of the population is concentrated on the Live Oak Peninsula, in the southwestern portion of the county (Texas Almanac 2020). The county is divided into three parts by the Copano, St. Charles, and Aransas Bays.

Land in Aransas County includes a mix of wildlife managerial, agricultural, industrial, residential, and commercial uses. The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and Goose Island State Park are in Aransas County (Texas Almanac 2020). Between 11 and 20 percent of the county's land is prime farmland, and some oil pads are present in the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and on the Live Oak Peninsula. Shrimping, fishing, and shipping have historically been major industries in Aransas County (Long 2020). Residential development is concentrated on the Live Oak Peninsula, in the areas of Rockport, Aransas Pass, Estes, Copano Village, and Fulton. The Lamar Peninsula, with the towns of Holiday Beach and Lamar, also have some residential development (Google Earth 2016).

## HISTORIC LAND USE

Land use in Aransas County has historically consisted of maritime development in the coastal areas and agricultural development in inland areas. Oil and gas development emerged in the early twentieth century. The area's highway system and suburban automobile-oriented development emerged in the early 1930s and increased after World War II.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Aransas County is in the Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes ecoregion, which is characterized by barrier islands along the coast; salt grass marshes around bays and estuaries; tallgrass prairies, oak parklands, and mottes along the coast; and woodlands in the river bottomlands (Texas Parks and Wildlife 2020). The altitude of the county ranges from sea level to 50 feet above. The land is generally flat; the inland terrain consists of poorly drained, dark, saline loamy soils, and the coastal areas consist of sandy beaches. The northwestern part of the county primarily consists of loamy, acidic soils with cracking, clayey subsoils (Long 2020).

The county has a humid subtropical climate with an average of 36 inches of annual rainfall and a 305-day growing season. The land is broken into peninsulas and islands and contains the Copano, Redfish, Aransas, St. Charles, Mesquite, and Port Bays, and it is partially drained by creeks in the northern part of the county. A barrier island, San Jose Island, forms the southeastern coast along the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway supports the local shipping economy (Long 2020).

Local floras include cordgrasses, sedges, rushes, seashore saltgrass, march millet, and maiden cane in the Gulf marshes and tall prairie grasses and hardwood trees further inland. Faunas include shellfish, alligators, turtles, frogs, snakes, herons, and the endangered whooping crane which nests in the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife 2020). Because of its many permanent and migratory bird species, the county is known for its aviary tourism and bird sanctuaries (Texas Almanac 2020).

## DESIGNATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES AND PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED RESOURCES

The project team reviewed the sources listed below to identify designated historic properties and previously evaluated resources in Aransas County.

- The THC Atlas map showing National Historic Landmark (NHL), NRHP, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL), State Antiquities Landmark (SAL) properties, subject markers, and previously surveyed resources
- Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) GIS data entitled "Historic Districts and Properties of Texas" and "NRHP-Listed and -Eligible Bridges of Texas"
- Texas Department of Agriculture Family Land Heritage Program properties
- Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas (none mapped in the county)
- Known named highways from the THC's Historic Texas Highway program and Hardy Heck Moore's 2014 Statewide Historic Context for Historic Texas Highways (none identified)
- Websites for municipalities in Aransas County to identify local landmark programs (part of Corpus Christi, a Certified Local Government, is in Aransas County; however, none of the city's Local Landmarks are in Aransas County)
- NRHP Determination of Eligibility (DoE) properties and districts from THC records

### PREVIOUSLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Three NRHP properties, one NRHP district, one SAL, 15 RTHLs, and 56 THC subject markers are in Aransas County. No NHL properties or Texas Family Land Heritage Program properties are in the county.

#### NRHP Properties

The three NRHP-individually listed properties in Aransas County are single-family residences built in the late nineteenth century for prominent, wealthy citizens. The George W. Fulton Mansion at 217 Fulton Beach Road in Fulton was constructed by contractor George Purvis between 1872 and 1875 using plans drawn by Fulton. It is listed in the NRHP at the state level of significance under Criterion B in the areas of Invention and Community Development and Planning for its association with George W. Fulton, an entrepreneur and prominent citizen who founded the community, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of the Second Empire style. The property has also been a State Historic Site since 1976 (first with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, then with the THC since 2008).

The Queen Anne-style Hoopes-Smith House was built between 1890 and 1892 at 417 N. Broadway in Rockport for James M. Hoopes and his family. Architect D. S. Hopkins signed the original plans, which were reportedly ordered from a Sears catalog. The building was listed in the NRHP at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

The T. H. Mathis House, located at 612 Church Street in Rockport, is a one-story Greek Revival-style residence with a raised basement. It was built in 1867 for Thomas H. Mathis, a community leader and successful businessman with large-

scale ranching and agriculture holdings. It is listed on the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with Mathis and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

In addition to the three individually listed resources, there is one NRHP-listed district in Aransas County. The Aransas Pass Light Station is located in Aransas Pass and is listed on the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with Commerce and Transportation as well as Criterion C for its association with Engineering. Also called the Lydia Ann Lighthouse, the complex includes a c. 1857 octagonal brick lighthouse and associated frame buildings including keeper's lodgings. The complex is now privately owned, and access was not granted for this project.

### SALs

The NRHP-listed George W. Fulton Mansion is also designated as a SAL.

### RTHLs

The three NRHP-listed houses are also designated as RTHLs. Additional RTHLs in Aransas County include nine houses, a school, a commercial building, and a woman's club building. All the RTHLs are located in Rockport.

The nine houses were constructed between about 1868 and the 1910s in popular architectural styles of the time, including the Queen Anne, Greek Revival, Colonial Revival, Prairie, and Craftsman styles. In comparison to the RTHL-designated dwellings that are also listed in the NRHP, these houses are generally more modest examples. Only one is known to have been designed by an architect: the Hynes-Balthrope House at 801 S. Church Street in Rockport designed by Viggo Kohler of San Antonio. Some were owned by prominent members of the community, such as the Baldwin-Brundrett house (1028 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport), owned by County Judge W. H. Baldwin in the 1890s, or the Moore House (413 S. Church Street, Rockport), built by James Edward Moore, a businessman who served as Rockport mayor for several terms between the 1920s and the 1940s, and his wife Josephine Kennedy Moore.

The Rockport School at 619 N. Live Oak Street in Rockport is an Art Moderne-style building completed in 1935 with financial assistance from the federal Public Works Administration. The school initially housed 11 grades before a 12<sup>th</sup> grade was added a few years later. In 1953, after a new high school was constructed in Rockport, the older building was converted to an elementary school.

The Sorenson-Stair Building at 406 S. Austin Street in downtown Rockport is a one-part commercial-block building with load-bearing masonry walls. Owner Simon Sorenson, a native of Denmark, used the display windows to post weather reports and raised warning flags to notify the public of incoming storms.

The Woman's Club of Aransas County building housed the Woman's Civic Club, an organization formed in 1948 to promote educational, literary, and charitable work (The Woman's Club of Aransas County 2020). That year, the club purchased an employee recreation building from the Humble Oil Company and moved it via barge from Ingleside to its current location at 1104 E. Concho Street in Rockport. The one-story building has a hipped roof, rectangular plan, walls clad in Austin stone, and a five-bay porch with stone columns.

THC Subject Markers and Centennial Markers

The THC markers in Aransas County were reviewed to identify general themes for evaluation. The markers relate to various topics including cemeteries, churches, cities and towns, notable people, the Texas Revolution, the Republic of Texas, immigration, military, business, education, residential buildings, women, water topics, fire departments, organizations, and inns/hotels/motels, among other subjects (Appendix A). Four markers are 1936 Texas Centennial Markers, a type of marker the THC generally considers eligible for the NRHP. Thirty-eight of the 52 additional markers appear to be associated with extant historic-age resources and are noted in Attachment 1. The associated resources are a variety of historic sites and structures and are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. THC Historical Markers in Aransas County.

Name	THC Atlas Number	Address	City	Date Erected
Aransas County	5007000179	301 N. Live Oak Street	Rockport	1990
Aransas County	5007000180	E. Orleans Street	Rockport	1936
Aransas County Airport	5007012429	421 John Wendell Road	Rockport	2001
Aransas Pass Light Station	5007000184	Off SH 361	Port Aransas	1973
Baldwin-Brundrett House	5507016918	1028 N. Live Oak Street	Rockport	2011
Baylor-Norvell House	5007000343	617 S. Water Street	Rockport	1991
Bracht House	5507016457	409 N. Magnolia Street	Rockport	2010
Casterline Fish Company	5507018430	110 N. Casterline Drive	Fulton	2016
Cementerio San Antonio de Padua	5007011686	SH 35	Aransas Pass	1998
Connie Hagar	5007001041	N/A	Rockport	1990
First Baptist Church of Rockport	5007001669	1515 N. Live Oak Street	Rockport	1991
First Methodist Church of Rockport	5007001767	801 E. Main Street	Rockport	1991
First National Bank of Rockport	5007001799	N/A	Rockport	1990
First Presbyterian Church of Rockport	5007001846	514 N. Live Oak Street	Rockport	1991
Frandolig Island	5007011685	1797 Bayshore Drive	Rockport	1999
Fulton	5007002080	205 N. 7 <sup>th</sup> Street	Fulton	1988
Fulton-Bruhl House	5007002084	409 N. Broadway	Rockport	1988
Fulton Cemetery	5007002081	N/A	Fulton	1989
Fulton Community Church	5507016305	215 N 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street	Fulton	2010
Fulton Mansion	5007002083	317 N. Fulton Beach Road	Fulton	1964
Fulton Volunteer Fire Department	5507018743	401 N. 9 <sup>th</sup> Street	Fulton	2017
Hynes-Balthrope House	5507018105	801 S. Church Street	Rockport	2015
Jackson Family Maritime Companies	5507018113	Austin Street and Veterans Memorial Drive	Fulton	2015
Joe A. and Bertha Harper House	5507017584	811 N. Live Oak Street	Rockport	2013
John Fagan	5007001547	Hagy Drive	Lamar	1962
Home of George W. Fulton	5007002537	317 N Fulton Beach Road	Fulton	1936
Hoopes-Smith House	5007002557	417 N. Broadway	Rockport	1989
Lamar Cemetery	5007005368	Hagy Drive	Lamar	1981
Lamar Volunteer Fire Department	5507018745	302 Bois d'Arc Lamar	Rockport	2017

Name	THC Atlas Number	Address	City	Date Erected
Mathis House	5007003256	621 S. Church Street	Rockport	1989
McLester Family Cemetery	5507017220	N/A	Rockport	2012
Mills Wharf	5007016924	5802-5866 Highway 35 North	Rockport	2011
Moore House	5507013692	413 S. Church Street	Rockport	2006
Port Bay Hunting and Fishing Club	5007004073	FM 1069	Rockport	1991
Richard Henry Wood House	5507019965	203 N. Magnolia Street	Rockport	2018
Rockport	5007004325	N/A	Rockport	1988
Rockport Air Force Station	5507018431	Airport Road	Fulton	2016
Rockport Cemetery	5007004326	N/A	Rockport	1988
Rockport Marine Laboratory	5507016785	702 Navigation Circle	Rockport	2011
Rockport Pilot	5007004327	1002 Wharf Street	Rockport	1990
Rockport School	5507013653	619 N. Live Oak Street	Rockport	2006
Rockport Volunteer Fire Department	5507018115	212 N. Gagon Street	Rockport	2015
Sacred Heart Catholic Church	5007004428	704 Cornwall Street	Rockport	1991
San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad in Rockport	5007004522	105 S. Magnolia Street	Rockport	1994
Site of Aransas Hotel	5007000183	N/A	Rockport	1996
Site of Heldenfels Shipyard	5007002427	1800 S. Church Street (SH 70)	Rockport	1996
Site of Marion Packing Co.	5007003213	N/A	Fulton	1976
Site of One of the Homes of James Power	5007002733	SH 35	Fulton	1936
Site of the Town of Lamar	5007003018	Bois d'Arc Road	Fulton	1936
Smith-Brundrett House	5507018009	901 N. Austin Street	Rockport	2014
Sorenson-Stair Building	5507015535	406 S. Austin Street	Rockport	2008
St. Peter's Episcopal Church	5007005078	412 N. Live Oak Street	Rockport	1991
Stella Maris Chapel	5007005103	Hagy Drive	Lamar	1986
The Cedars	5507016784	1203 S. Water Street	Rockport	2011
Women's Club of Aransas County	5507015786	1104 E. Concho Street	Rockport	2009
Wood-Jackson House	5507017218	701 N. Magnolia Street	Rockport	2012

## PREVIOUSLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The Aransas Pass Light Station is the only NRHP district in Aransas County. It is on about 25 acres of Harbor Island and comprises the second oldest lighthouse on the Texas coast and its associated resources. The lighthouse tower is an octagonal brick structure completed in 1857 by the U.S. Lighthouse Board. Also in the district are three keeper's dwellings, a radio room and radio beacon tower, several cisterns, a wharf, remnants of a plank walk, and several building foundations. The light station was in service until 1952. The district is now privately owned and operated as a private beacon light. The district is listed on the NRHP at the state level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation and under Criterion C in the area of Engineering.



## PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED RESOURCES

Aside from designated properties (discussed above), three resources in Aransas County have been determined individually eligible for the NRHP: a café building, a c. 1900 Queen Anne–style house, and a railroad depot, all in Rockport (Table 2). In addition to these determinations of eligibility, the THC identified a church, Stella Maris Chapel built in 1858, and reconstructed in 1931 in Lamar as potentially eligible for the NRHP.

Table 2. Resources Determined Eligible or Potentially Eligible for the NRHP\*

Name	Address	City	Date Built	Notes
Stella Maris Chapel	222 Hagy Street	Lamar	1858/1931	Potentially eligible, resource has been relocated
Kline’s Cafe	106 S. Austin Street	Rockport	---	Relocated
Bracht House**	902 E. Cornwall Street	Rockport	c. 1900	Queen Anne–style
Rockport Depot	E. North Street at S. Magnolia Street	Rockport	---	---

\*Table compiled from TxDOT’s Historic Districts & Properties of Texas database and the THC’s DOE records. Where data is missing in the table, the associated report/documentation was not available for this project, or in the case of the Stella Maris Chapel, which the THC identified as potentially eligible for the NRHP, the documentation did not identify a likely criterion or area of significance.

\*\*This property is different from the RTHL at 409 N. Magnolia Street in Rockport, also called the Bracht House.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

### PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

The JMT/Stantec team conducted a preliminary desktop investigation of Aransas County to develop a profile of current land use and the natural environment, previously designated historic properties and evaluated resources, and prevailing aspects of history, geography, and culture that shaped Aransas County’s built environment. The following resources were consulted:

- Texas Historic Sites Atlas and previous THC projects and programs (THC)
- Historic Districts and Properties of Texas, NRHP-Listed and -Eligible Bridges of Texas (TxDOT)
- The Family Land Heritage Program (Texas Department of Agriculture)
- Freedom Colonies Atlas (The Texas Freedom Colonies Project and Study)
- Articles from the *Handbook of Texas Online*
- Entries in the *Texas Almanac*
- Federal decennial population data; U.S. Census Bureau
- Texas Ecoregions; Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Agricultural census (U.S. Department of Agriculture)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Additional sources were reviewed as part of the research effort. Historic contexts were developed following research, in conjunction with field investigations and incorporating the findings of the historic resources survey report. The types of resources utilized for developing the historic context included:

- Maps and aerial images that illustrate historical development:
  - Texas State Highway Department General Highway Maps
    - Aransas County
    - Detail of cities and towns
  - Texas General Land Office maps
  - Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps of Rockport (Sanborn maps do not cover Aransas County portion of Aransas Pass)
  - U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps of the county and major communities
  - Aerial imagery
    - U.S. Geological Survey
    - Nationwide Environmental Title Research Online
- Current NRHP nominations and DoEs
- Previous historical studies of the region, such as:
  - Hardy Heck Moore's *Statewide Historic Context for Historic Texas Highways*, prepared for THC and TxDOT in 2014
  - The TxDOT, Environmental Affairs Division, Cultural Resources Management Historical Studies Branch report series, including:
    - *A Field Guide to Industrial Properties in Texas*
    - *A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas*
    - *Agricultural Theme Study for Central Texas*
    - *Historical Agricultural Processing Facilities in Texas: An Annotated Guide to Selected Studies*
    - *Historic-Age Motels in Texas from the 1950s to the 1970s: An Annotated Guide to Selected Studies*
    - *South Texas Ranching*
  - Texas State Parks and Wildlife studies
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service studies
- Federal decennial census aggregate and manuscript schedules for population, agriculture, manufacturing, and industry from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture Historical Archive
- Special collections and archives at the following facilities:
  - The History Center for Aransas County
  - Texas Maritime Museum
  - Aransas County History Portal (website)

- Victoria Regional History Center at the University of Houston, Victoria
- Museum of South Texas History at Texas A&M University, Kingsville
- Mary and Jeff Bell Library at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi
- Palo Alto Research Center at the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley
- Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin, including vertical files and photographs
- Texas State Library and Archives Commission
- University of North Texas Libraries, including The Portal to Texas History
- Air Force Historical Research Agency
- U.S. Coast Guard, including photographs and maps of lighthouses and stations
- Historical and regional journals, including:
  - *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*
  - *The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*
  - *The Journal of South Texas*
- Newspaper archives, including:
  - *Rockport Pilot*
  - *Aransas Pass Progress*
  - *Port Aransas South Jetty*
  - *Beeville Bee-Picayune*
  - *The Victoria Advocate*
  - *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*
    - Local history collections available from public libraries
    - Select secondary sources, such as books, articles, blog posts, and cultural resources management reports, particularly those that discuss property types and architectural styles and forms.

## ANTICIPATED THEMES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To develop the historic context, the project team utilized research questions related to the anticipated themes and subthemes of Aransas County's history. If research or public involvement revealed additional pertinent themes or subthemes, these topics were also developed and included in the historic context. The contexts were developed for the purposes of evaluating the significance of surveyed resources. As noted in the Fieldwork Methodology (Section 4), certain classes of resources were only documented under certain conditions, and as such the extent of documentation may be limited. Therefore, associated contexts were abbreviated accordingly. For example, as bridges and other transportation resources were not documented unless they were deemed important features of a potential historic district, the Transportation context statement established broad trends related to development patterns and is shorter than others.

### ARCHITECTURE

- What were early buildings like in Aransas County, and what building traditions did they reflect?

- How did the evolution of architecture in Aransas County mirror or deviate from national trends?
- What major eras of architecture, architectural styles and forms, and vernacular trends are common? What are the characteristics of those styles?
- How were local adaptations of common architectural styles executed?
- Who were the major builders and contractors?
- Were any architects particularly active?
- What are the architectural trends for agricultural buildings and structures? Do these resources reflect local or ethnic building traditions? How do agricultural resources reflect the evolution of agriculture in the county and the types and quantities of agricultural products raised?
- How were buildings built or modified in response to the local climate?
- Have there been periods of exterior renovation/repair after major hurricanes?
- If widespread hurricane damage reduced historical building stock or resulted in major changes to buildings, what, if any, integrity considerations should be applied for eligibility under Criterion C?

## COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- What were the historical demographics for Aransas County and its communities, and what of these trends influenced development?
- Where were early settlements and how did they evolve? This will include a brief overview of indigenous pre-history and European exploration.
- Where and what permanent settlements developed?
- How did land grant distribution evolve?
- How did organizations like the Texas Homestead and Farmers Association (renamed the Aransas Pass Land Company in 1888) affect community development in Aransas County?
- How did railroads influence the location and success of settlements?
- How did maritime access influence the location and long-term success of settlements?
- What land-use patterns are common or atypical in Aransas County's extant communities?
- What historical planning trends occurred in the development of these communities (e.g., planning models influenced by zoning, public health and housing, landscape design, urban renewal, severe weather, etc.)?
- Where and how has suburbanization developed?
- Did Aransas County's resort areas evolve as master planned communities, or did they grow organically?
- How have wildlife management areas restricted growth and/or attracted development?
- What influence did the construction of the Rockport Harbor seawall have on development?
- What influence have hurricanes had on community planning and development?

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Agriculture

- What types and quantities of agricultural products were raised and for what purpose?
- What quantities of land did agriculturists devote to various uses (e.g., improved, unimproved, woodlands, aquaculture, irrigation, orchards, gardens)?

- What labor sources did agriculturists rely on?
- What technological shifts occurred in agricultural practices and production?
- How did Aransas County's few large ranches develop and evolve?
- How did twentieth century federal programs change agricultural production?
- What types of and how did agribusiness evolve?
- Have hurricanes caused changes in the agricultural history of the county?

### Commerce

- Where did commercial centers develop and why those locations? This will include, but not be limited to:
  - Fulton
  - Estes
  - Aransas Pass
  - Copano Village
  - Holiday Beach
  - Lamar
- What were the types of major commercial businesses? This will include, but not be limited to:
  - Tourism/sport fishing
  - Commercial fishing
  - Shipping (seafood, etc.)
- How did water and rail transportation networks influence types and locations of commercial centers?
- How did the automobile influence business types and locations?
- What were the major businesses and who were the leaders in commerce?
- What common businesses were associated with commercial centers?
- What industries did commercial businesses serve?
- Did hurricane prevalence influence the county's commercial development?

### Maritime

- How is Aransas County's maritime history related to exploration, early settlement, and immigration?
- How has maritime infrastructure (i.e., ports and harbors) that supports maritime transport evolved? How have hurricanes affected these resources?
- How was the portion of the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway (GIWW) that intersects Aransas County established and how has it evolved?
- How has maritime merchant transport (i.e., primary and secondary shipping) evolved?

### Industry

- How and where did industrial sectors evolve in Aransas County? This is expected to include, but not be limited to:
  - Meat-packing
  - Oysters/shrimp/finfish
  - Shipbuilding, and the role of the U.S. Navy in its development
  - Petroleum and natural gas extraction, processing, transport, and related manufacturing
  - Electric, water, and telephone utilities

- Has the county's hurricane prevalence influenced industrial development?

## ETHNIC HISTORY

- What demographic trends, leaders, and important periods/events are tied to ethnic history? This will include, but not be limited to:
  - European heritage
  - Latino heritage
  - Black heritage
    - How did slavery evolve in Aransas County's communities?
- How have these groups shaped the culture, economy, built environment, civic, and political life?
- What important historic-age commercial, social, cultural, religious, and educational institutions have associations with major ethnic groups?

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Educational Development

- How did primary and secondary education develop in Aransas County?
- What are the major historic-age public and private educational institutions?
- What schools (e.g., Rosenwald Schools) served Black and Hispanic students during the Jim Crow Era and are they extant?
- When and how did school integration take place?

### Government

- When/how was the county formed?
- What were the historical government centers?
- When was the current county seat selected and how has it evolved?
- What are the major government administration buildings?
- When and how did major public/private infrastructure and service resources develop, such as post offices, libraries, fire stations, police stations, hospitals, charitable institutions, and drainage and groundwater conservation and improvement districts?
- What twentieth century federal public works projects were in Aransas County (e.g., Goose Island State Park, Rockport School)?
- How do built resources reflect the government's response to major storms and hurricanes?

### Conservation

- Where did historic-age conservation areas and facilities develop and what was the catalyst for conservation in the county? This will include, but not be limited to:
  - Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
  - Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary
  - Rockport Marine Laboratory

- Nature preserves and birding areas
- How has the development of conservation areas influenced the built environment within and near these areas?
- Are there relationships between conservation and the county's industrial history?
- Have conservation areas sustained major storm or hurricane damage?

#### Military Institutions and Activities

- What military institutions and activities are represented in the built environment? This will include, but not be limited to:
  - World War I shipbuilding
  - World War II U.S. Navy use of Aransas County Airport
  - World War II U.S. Navy shipbuilding and repair in Rockport
  - Rockport Air Force Station (World War II, Cuban Missile Crisis)
  - U.S. Coast Guard facilities (Aransas Pass/Lydia Ann Lighthouse)
  - GIWW (U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers)
- How do military facilities in Aransas County reflect the prevalence of hurricanes and how have hurricanes affected military institutions and activities?

#### Recreation, Culture, and Leisure

- How did tourism opportunities on the coast influence the historic-age built environment?
  - What hunting and fishing clubs have potential for historic significance (e.g., Port Bay Club)
  - What hotels, vacation homes, restaurants, and entertainment properties were built to support tourism in the county (e.g., the Tarpon Inn, The Cedars, and Mills Wharf)?
- What theaters, besides Aransas Pass's Rialto Theater, are extant?
- Did communities commemorate events/places/people with monuments and/or markers?
  - Were these markers part of larger commemorative campaigns (e.g., the 1936 Texas Centennial)?
  - Are these markers significant for design and/or association?
- What notable sculptures, statues, murals, or other works of art are visible from the public right of way?
- What resources associated with events like county fairs, rodeos, livestock shows, and annual festivals are extant?
- What dance halls are extant?
- What public parks did the state develop in the county (e.g., Goose Island State Park and Copano Bay Causeway State Park)?
- What municipal parks did the county and cities develop?
- What aspects of the built environment represent outdoor recreation, such as parks, marinas, and bird-viewing locations?
- What Civilian Conservation Corps buildings and infrastructure are extant at Goose Island State Park?
- Are there social, cultural, and religious organizations that have long-standing ties to the community or that have made important contributions to the history of the community?
- How have hurricanes affected recreation, culture, and leisure opportunities?

## Transportation

- What were the significant modes of transportation? This will include, but not be limited to:
  - Water
  - Rail (including the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway, later known as the Texas & New Orleans Railway)
  - Vehicular
  - Air
- What role did the organizations like the Aransas Road Company (later known as the Central Transit Company), Aransas Pass Harbor Company, and Aransas Harbor City and Improvement Company play in the development of transportation routes in Aransas County?
- What role did the U.S. Coast Guard and the Aransas Pass Light Station play in the development of maritime transportation in the county?
- What significant transportation buildings and structures were constructed in Aransas County? This will include, but not be limited to:
  - Railroad facilities, including depots
  - Harbors, wharfs, and shipping ports
  - Lighthouses
  - Dredged channels, including GIWW, Aransas Pass, and Aransas Harbor
  - Automobile-oriented commercial properties
  - Important bridges, causeways, and ferries
  - Major highways (State Highways 35 and 361)
  - Airports, including the Aransas County and San Jose Island Airports
- What historic-age major transportation resources, such as railroad depots and vehicular bridges, are extant?
- When the interstate system was constructed in mid-twentieth century, it bypassed Aransas County. What impact did the absence of interstate highways in the county have on development within the county?
- Have hurricanes influenced transportation development or changed transportation history in the county?



### 3. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN



Stella Maris Chapel, Lamar | JMT

This section summarizes the public engagement efforts undertaken in conjunction with the historic resource survey of Aransas County.

#### GOALS

The overarching goal of public involvement was to provide information about the project and solicit input from the public and key stakeholders. The JMT/Stantec team, on behalf of the THC, sought to achieve the following goals by providing opportunities for citizens, businesses, and organizations to participate in the survey process:

- Generate awareness of the project and communicate its purpose and goals.
- Establish public involvement opportunities.
- Provide county residents, property and business owners, elected officials, agencies, community groups, and other stakeholders with sufficient opportunity to contribute information for the project.
- Ensure that public engagements are held at convenient, accessible, and safe locations and scheduled during times that enable maximum involvement to the greatest extent possible.
- Identify and use innovative tools and strategies to share and present information and to empower public input in the project (e.g., website and social media).
- Proactively involve people and groups of people who are traditionally underrepresented in historic resource surveys by reaching out to targeted stakeholders. This included seeking out and considering the needs of people

who are traditionally underrepresented: people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), low-income, or disabilities; minority households; and ethnic communities.

## TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

In addition to holding two public meetings, the following outreach tools and strategies were used to engage the public.

### WEBSITE

THC provided project information and updates via their website.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

The JMT/Stantec team worked with THC to develop messaging and posts for THC to share on their Twitter® and Facebook® accounts. Posted content included general project information, public meeting announcements, fieldwork updates, and project website links.



Figure 2. Example social media post from the project. Source: THC Facebook, June 10, 2021.

### FLYERS

Project flyers were posted or distributed at public locations including libraries, post offices, government centers, and other high-traffic places in advance of both public meetings. The flyers described the project, ways to get involved, and who to contact for more information. During fieldwork, surveyors carried copies of the flyers to distribute to interested members of the public.

### NEWSPAPER

JMT/Stantec placed public notices in the *Rockport Pilot* on June 19, 2021, and October 6, 2022, prior to the scheduled public meetings.

## STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

JMT/Stantec identified 17 potential stakeholder organizations in Aransas County (listed below). The THC reached out to each person or organization via email and/or letter to provide notice of the project and information about the survey. Recipients were also invited to attend the public meetings, share the information with interested parties, and provide feedback.

Aransas County Judge  
C.H. "Burt" Mills, Jr.  
2840 Hwy 35 N Rockport, TX 78382

Aransas Pathways  
Sandy Jumper (Manager)  
(361) 729-6445  
manager@aransaspathways.com

Aransas County Historical Commission  
Betty Stiles (Chair)  
PO BOX #2,  
1919 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, TX 78382  
<https://www.aransascountytexas.gov/historiccomm/contact.php>

Aransas County Historical Society  
Cheryl Livingston (President)  
PO Box 702, Rockport, TX 78381  
(303) 859-7819  
<http://achs1985.org/contact-us/>

The History Center for Aransas County  
Pam (Patricia) Stranahan (President)  
PO BOX 106, Fulton, TX 78358  
801 E. Cedar Street, Rockport, TX 78382  
(361) 727-9214  
friends@hcfriends.net

Aransas County Memorial Commission  
Lu Arcemont (Chair)  
600 W Cleveland Boulevard, Aransas Pass, TX 78336  
(361) 758-5301

Aransas County Library  
Iris Sanchez  
701 E Mimosa Street, Rockport, TX 78382-4150  
(361) 790-0153  
<https://www.acplibrary.org/contact.php>

Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce  
Robert Mitchell (Chairman)  
319 Broadway, Rockport, TX 78382  
(361) 729-6445  
<http://members.rockport-fulton.org/contact/>

Ed & Hazel Richmond Public Library  
Lillian Villarreal (Librarian)  
110 N Lamont Street, Aransas Pass, TX 78336  
(361) 758-2350

Rockport Cultural Arts District  
Warren Hassinger  
902 E Cornwall Street, Rockport, TX 78382  
info@culturalartsdistrict.com  
(214) 395-7156

Fulton Schoolhouse Museum  
205 N 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Fulton, TX 78358  
(361) 729-5533  
info@fultontexas.org

Texas Tropical Trail Region  
PO Box 1538, Freer, TX 78357  
(361)-547-8033

Fulton Mansion State Historic Site  
317 S Fulton Beach Road, Rockport, TX 78382  
(361) 729-0386  
fulton-mansion@thc.texas.gov

Texas Independence Trail Region  
2305 S Day Street #208, Brenham, TX 77833  
(979) 353-1800  
info@texasindependencetrail.com

Friends of the History Center for Aransas County  
801 E Cedar Street, Rockport, TX 78382  
(361) 790-4199  
friends@hcfriends.net

The Woman's Club of Aransas County  
Wanda Keller (President)  
1104 E Concho St, Rockport, TX 78382  
<https://www.wcofaransas.org/>

Texas Maritime Museum Association  
Justin Parkoff (Executive Director)  
1202 Navigation Circle, Rockport, TX 78382  
(361) 729-1271  
<https://www.texasmaritimemuseum.org/contact-us>

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

JMT/Stantec conducted two public meetings for Aransas County: one on June 22, 2021, prior to commencing the survey and one on September 11, 2022, after survey completion.

The purpose of the first meeting was to introduce the project to interested community members and stakeholders. The survey team explained the purpose and goals of the survey and presented the research design, fieldwork methodology, historic context, and geographic scope. Stakeholders and community members were invited to provide feedback and comments on the presentation materials and to identify properties with potential historic significance. Two people attended this June 22, 2021, meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting took place virtually utilizing the THC's Zoom account. The meeting consisted of an approximately 30-minute presentation by the JMT/Stantec team and covered the following topics:

- Introduction to the THC and to the project
- Introduction to the project team
- Purpose and goals of the project
- Overview of the work completed to date, including:
  - Research Design
  - Draft fieldwork methodology
  - Historic context
  - Geographic scope
- Explanation of the fieldwork approach
- Overall project schedule
- Assistance in identifying resources significant to the public; described how to provide input and feedback, including visual resources such as photographs or scanned images.
- Discussion/Q&A

The second public meeting was held on September 11, 2022, at Fulton Mansion in Rockport. Thirty people attended. The purpose of this meeting was to present the preliminary survey results and NRHP recommendations. This meeting also provided a forum for community members and stakeholders to share feedback.

## 4. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY



Mills Wharf Marina and Bate Shop, Rockport | JMT

### PRE-SURVEY INVESTIGATION

The JMT/Stantec team conducted a preliminary analysis of the number and general character of historic-age resources in Aransas County, informed by county appraisal district (CAD) data, historic aerial imagery, maps, and a windshield visit to canvas the county. The team's proposal for the project included documentation of up to 3,000 resources in Aransas County. As detailed in sections below, based on the preliminary information gathered on the nature and quantity of historic-age resources in the county and the flexibility of the multi-category approach using Survey123, the team estimated we would be able to comprehensively document pre-1974 resources in Aransas County. Therefore, rather than planning how to implement an initial, prioritized investigation under the terms of the contract and proposing a methodology for future work, the team used a desktop analysis and windshield visit to guide the field survey methodology.

### DESKTOP ANALYSIS OF THE COUNTY AND AGOL DEVELOPMENT

The team obtained Aransas CAD data in February 2021 and analyzed it to characterize development. As detailed in Table 3 below, approximately 24,000 parcels are in Aransas County.

Table 3. Preliminary CAD Analysis of Aransas County Parcels

Total parcels	24,060
Total parcels with improvements with a minimum year-built date of 1973 or earlier	2,682
Total parcels built in 1973 or earlier that are part of a 10+ property subdivision with a minimum year built of 1946 or later	622
Total parcels meeting individual survey criteria	2,060
Number of postwar subdivisions with 10 properties or more	39

The team explored methods for identifying “post-war residential neighborhoods,” which were defined in the Request for Qualifications as “neighborhoods developed after 1945 and containing ten (10) or more historic-age residential properties.” The team used CAD analysis to identify subdivisions that are historic-age (pre-1974) and have 10 or more parcels. Based on this criterion, one area in Aransas met this definition.

## WINDSHIELD SURVEY

During the week of March 8, 2021, two senior historians from the JMT/Stantec team canvassed the county, with the goal of exploring answers to the following questions:

- How accurate is the CAD data?
- How many potentially eligible properties are present (order of magnitude) and where are they?
- How many mobile home neighborhoods are present and where are they?
- How many resources will fall within “postwar subdivisions” and where are they?
- Have any additional trends emerged that should be reflected in the development of the historic context statements?
- Are any potential historic districts present?
- How are irrigation resources expressed in the county?
- Generally, how accessible/visible were properties from the public right-of-way?
- What factors should fieldworkers be aware of?

The two historians each drove portions of the county, focusing on populated areas. They used the AGOL map on iPads to identify potential districts and to make other notes, such as the potential for districts and any areas that would require special attention.

The key take-aways from the windshield visit to Aransas County are presented below.

- Few mobile home communities were observed; it was more common to see mobile homes intermixed with single-family houses.
- Concentration of pre-1974 resources are east of SH 35 and north of the Lyndon B. Johnson Causeway.
- Few irrigation resources evident.
- Current agricultural practices observed included cattle/goat grazing and horses and row crops focused on cotton, grain, sorghum. Most agricultural properties appeared to have little potential for NRHP eligibility due to a lack of integrity and/or significance.

- Noted 1950s cabins on the corner of Picton Lane and Broadway Street (Sandra Bay Cottages).
- Davis Loop near the airport is a post-war development likely constructed by the County or Air Force when they leased the property.
- Oak and Pine Avenues in Rockport have potential for a post WWII development.

## REVISED ANALYSIS OF CAD DATA, INFORMED BY THE WINDSHIELD SURVEY

Following the observations made in the field, the estimates of the properties to be surveyed were revised, as presented in Table 4 below. The windshield visit revealed several neighborhoods initially defined as postwar subdivisions instead had considerable numbers of pre-war resources. Thus, the definition was revised to count only those neighborhoods where there were one or fewer parcels with pre-1946 construction dates.

As a result of the windshield survey and research on specific properties as part of the historic context development, approximately 5 percent of historic-age parcels outside of postwar subdivisions were identified as having the potential to qualify as eligible for the NRHP. Given the character of the remaining historic-age properties observed, the percentage of building stock to be documented as not eligible was also estimated prior to survey fieldwork.

Table 4. Revised CAD Analysis of Aransas County Parcels

Total parcels	24,060
Total parcels with improvements with a minimum year-built date of 1973 or earlier	2,682
Total parcels built in 1973 or earlier that are part of a 10+ property subdivision with one or fewer properties built before 1946	964
Estimated number of pre-1974 resources without recorded CAD construction date and/or resources occurring on a parcel with more than one resource (5%)	134
Total parcels meeting individual survey criteria	1,852
Likely to be potentially eligible (5%)	93
Likely to be not eligible (95%)	1,759
Number of post-war subdivisions meeting representative documentation criteria	58

## GEOGRAPHICAL PRIORITIZATION

The following order was identified for fieldwork:

1. Rockport
2. Fulton
3. Aransas Pass (the section that is in Aransas County)
4. Lamar

More urban areas were prioritized, due to their observed potential to have higher concentrations of potentially significant resources. Finally, surveyors expanded into the rural areas of the county to document the remaining historic-age



resources in the county. Survey was limited to public roads and documentation was limited to properties visible from the public right-of-way.

## SURVEYOR TEAMS

Following the pre-survey investigation, the JMT/Stantec team deployed survey teams comprising two surveyors (historians and/or architectural historians) per team. Each team was assigned survey locations, based on the geographic prioritization strategy, before heading out into the field. Each surveyor carried an iPad, GPS Navigation, a Wi-Fi hotspot, battery chargers, a point-and-shoot camera as backup in the event of technical failures, and copies the project flyers to distribute to interested members of the community.

Aransas County was surveyed following the fieldwork methodology approved by the THC. Prior to fieldwork, all survey staff reviewed the documentation produced prior to survey, including the draft historic contexts and the final fieldwork methodology to ensure the team was prepared to follow the procedures outlined in these documents. An internal meeting was held, attended by the JMT/Stantec team principal investigators and project managers, the primary authors of the historic context, the ArcGIS Survey123 data managers, and the staff assigned to fieldwork to ensure that the survey team understood the survey methodology and the historic themes and anticipated property types associated with each theme. The pre-fieldwork preparation included survey team training on the use of the Field Maps and Survey123 applications and back-up procedures. Questions that arose during training were addressed by the project manager.

All fieldwork staff were informed of both general and site-specific safety measures. In addition to typical fieldwork hazards such as traffic, ticks, and weather, surveyors were made aware of the potential for alligators and snakes in roadside drainage ditches.

All resources were surveyed from the public right-of-way, and no right-of-entry permissions were sought. Teams of two historians worked in proximity to one another to ensure consistency in data collection and complete geographic coverage of the county.

## DATA COLLECTION

Surveyors used a combination of GIS Field Maps and ArcGIS Survey123 applications to record resources in the field. Field Maps was used to identify the subject parcel and open a survey form in ArcGIS Survey123 which would then be linked to the parcel via the parcel number. Survey123 is a form-centric application that allowed for full documentation of each resource including creating a GIS point and taking photographs. The data is reviewable and editable on a desktop browser and ArcGIS software. All captured GIS data is compatible with the NPS Cultural Resource Spatial Data Transfer Standards (issued January 2014).

Each parcel was pre-loaded with the Aransas County Assessor's data, including the address, parcel number, and earliest assessor construction date, which was always reviewed and confirmed or updated during fieldwork. The assessor data automatically populated into each documented resource's survey form.

Surveyors documented resources determined to have been constructed in or before 1973. The NRHP has a 50-year age threshold and 1973 was used as the cut-off year because of this project’s 2023 completion date. Surveyors redocumented historic resources previously determined eligible for the NRHP by the THC to provide an updated record on integrity and current NRHP eligibility. The focus of this project was on above-ground resources that have potential architectural or historical significance; no archeological resources were documented.

Surveyors used Field Maps to track their progress, changing each parcel from “not completed” to surveyed, modern/vacant, not accessible, or not visible (Figure 3).<sup>1</sup> This data updated in real time, allowing teams of fieldworkers to work in the same geographic area simultaneously without duplicating efforts. Following the completion of fieldwork, GIS analysis was conducted to ensure that no unsurveyed parcels remained.

The Field Maps and Survey123 applications allowed real-time tracking of survey progress. Survey teams reported their progress to their firm’s project manager daily. The JMT/Stantec team provided regular updates to the THC project manager regarding the number of properties surveyed, including details about their location and survey category. Regular communication ensured that the THC was abreast of the pace of the survey and the ability to document the expected number of historic-age properties in the county.

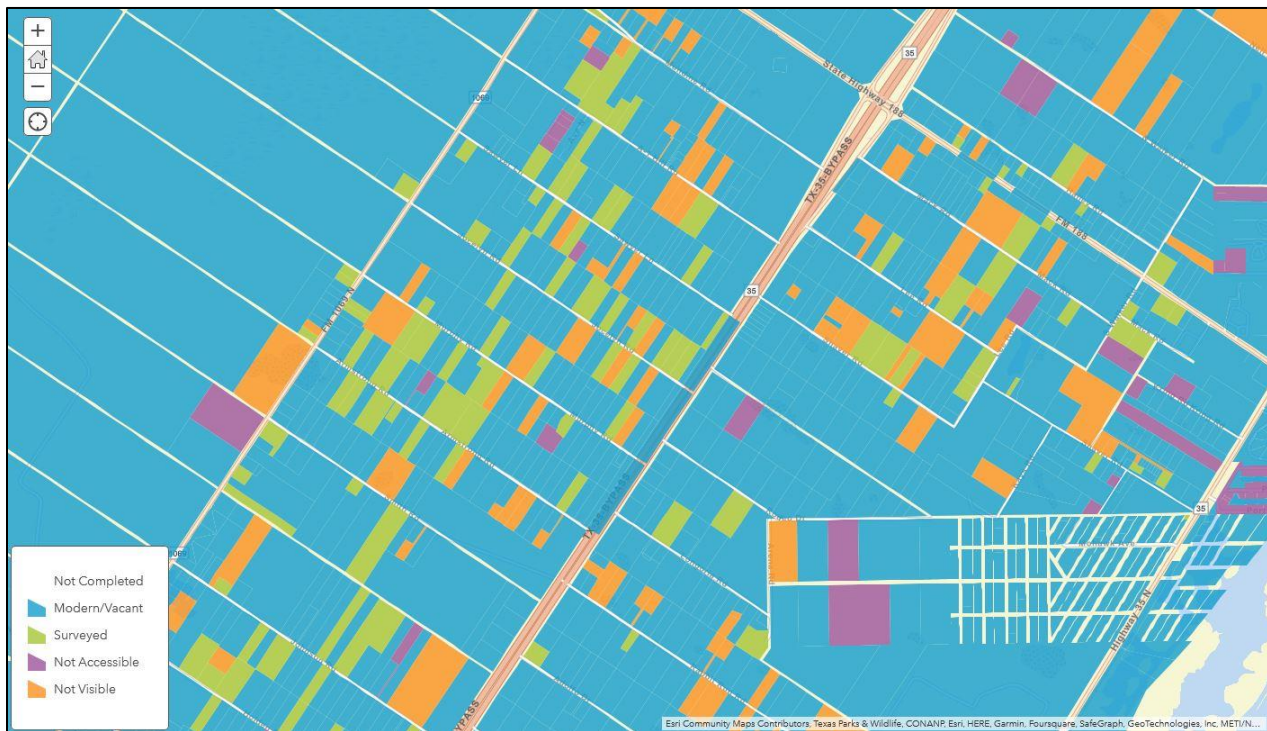


Figure 3. Screenshot of the ArcGIS-based Collector application that surveyors used to track fieldwork progress.

<sup>1</sup> “Modern” properties were defined as those for which all resources visible from the right-of-way were constructed in 1974 or later.

## HISTORIC RESOURCE CATEGORIES

The information gathered on a historic-age resource was dependant on the property type and potential for NRHP eligibility. Each surveyed resource included the date of survey, surveyor name, photographs, and optional field notes. At least two photographs were required of each resource surveyed. As with the documentation, the photographs were taken only from the public right-of-way.

In some instances, CAD data did not have an address, tax parcel ID, or city for a parcel. When missing, address and city information was provided by the survey team for properties recommended eligible for the NRHP or contributing to a recommended NRHP district.

### POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE AND CONTRIBUTING

Resources falling under this category were individual resources considered potentially eligible for the NRHP and resources that contribute to a potential historic district. These resources may be eligible under Criteria A or B for their ties to regionally important events, themes, or figures. They may also be eligible under Criterion C for their architectural significance within a regional context or under Criterion D for their non-archeological information potential. All potentially eligible resources must retain sufficient integrity (integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association) to convey their historic significance. The following data was collected to the extent possible for Potentially Eligible and Contributing resources:

County	Roof Materials	Significant Landscape Features
Address	Wall Materials	Associated Historical Context
City	Windows	Integrity
Tax Parcel ID	Door (Primary Entrance)	Recommendation
Construction Date	Plan	NRHP Criteria
Current Use	Chimneys	Designation
Historic Use	Primary Porch	External Notes
Surveyor	Number of Stories	Photos
Survey Date	Basement	Requires Additional Office Work
Stylistic Influence(s)	Additions/Modifications	Resource Name
Roof Form	Ancillary Buildings	

### NOT ELIGIBLE

Resources recorded as Not Eligible were properties that lack architectural significance and/or integrity including those that may be in an irreversible state of deterioration. These properties would not contribute to a potential historic district. Not Eligible properties do not carry associations with significant historic themes in Aransas County, have deteriorated, or have been altered to the point they no longer convey any such associations. The following data was collected for resources determined to be Not Eligible in the field:

County	Construction Date	Survey Date
Address	Current Use	External Notes (as applicable)
City	Historic Use	Photos
Tax Parcel ID	Surveyor	

## NOT VISIBLE

A number of properties were not be visible from the public right-of-way for a variety of reasons, including their distance from the public right-of-way, intervening buildings, or dense foliage. The following data points were collected for properties that were not visible:

County	Tax Parcel ID	External Notes (as applicable)
Address	Surveyor	Photos
City	Survey Date	

## DISTRICTS AND OTHER GROUPINGS

Certain groupings of resources received a single entry in the Survey123 application with a description and overall photographs that provide an understand of the character of the collection. Each contributing resource within a potentially eligible historic district was documented under the Potentially Eligible and Contributing category of resources (noncontributing resources were documented under the Not Eligible category). Post-war residential developments containing more than 10 post-war resources and mobile or manufactured home developments with 10 or more historic-age mobile and manufactured homes were documented with a single entry. Surveyors recorded the following information for potential or listed historic districts, post-war residential developments, and mobile or manufactured home developments:

County	Name	NRHP Criteria
City	Character	External Notes
Additional Location Information	Buildings Inventoried	Photos
Survey Date	Number of Resources	Requires Additional Office Work
Surveyor	Integrity	
Construction Date	Recommendation	

## SITE, OBJECT, OR STRUCTURE

Surveyors recorded historic-age sites, objects, and structures during the survey. Such resources included monuments, statues, cemeteries, and linear man-made waterways, among other resource types. The following information was collected for sites, objects, or structures:

County	Surveyor	NR Criteria
City	Resource Name	Designation
Additional Location Information	Property Type	External Notes
Tax Parcel ID	Integrity	Photos
Survey Date	Recommendation	Requires Additional Office Work

## RESOURCES OF SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

As directed by the THC, special considerations were taken with the following resource types:

- Bridges—Road and railroad bridges, overpasses, underpasses, and culverts were excluded from field investigation and documentation unless they were important features of a potential historic district as determined by the surveyors in the field.
- Post-War Residential Neighborhoods— Subdivisions with one or fewer parcels with pre-1946 development and containing ten (10) or more historic-age residential properties were documented and evaluated collectively by providing a general description of the neighborhood’s history, design, setting, building forms, architectural styles, a map of the neighborhood boundary, and photographs of a representative sample of the historic-age properties. Important non-residential properties within the neighborhood, such as schools, churches, parks, or commercial buildings, were photographed and recorded as part of the representative sample. CAD data was used to preliminarily identify these areas prior to pre-survey investigation.
- Mobile and Manufactured Homes—Individual mobile and manufactured homes were excluded from field investigation and documentation unless they were part of a development with ten or more historic-age mobile or manufactured homes, in which case they were documented collectively.
- Irrigation and Drainage Districts—Historic-age irrigation, drainage, and other water improvement districts were documented as a single system by providing a general description of the system’s history and function, a map of the system showing major features, and photographs of a representative sample of the historic-age features. No irrigation or drainage districts were identified in Aransas County based on the pre-survey and survey fieldwork, TCEQ Water Districts Map Viewer, and research.
- Linear Transportation Corridors—Historic-age linear transportation corridors, including roads, highways, railroads, and former transportation rights-of-way, were excluded from field investigation and documentation unless they were important features of a potential historic district as determined by the surveyors in the field. No such resources were identified during fieldwork.
- Linear Man-Made Waterways— Historic-age linear man-made waterways such as the GIWW and the Victoria Barge Canal were documented as a single resource.
- Ancillary Resources—Historic-age ancillary buildings visible from the right-of-way were documented and photographed with the associated primary building. Historic-age structures such as stylized signs were documented along with the associated building. Ancillary buildings with no primary building were surveyed as an individual resource.

## POST-FIELD PROCESSING

Following fieldwork, the Survey123 data was reviewed to ensure that all required fields were provided for each documented resource. Desktop research was conducted on post-World War II neighborhoods to compile neighborhood histories. Senior members of JMT's team reviewed individual properties and the district identified during fieldwork as having potential for historic significance and conducted desktop research as needed to inform NRHP evaluations.

## 5. HISTORIC CONTEXT



801 E. Cedar Street, Rockport | JMT

This context is a tool to facilitate identification and evaluation of extant resources in Aransas County and is not a comprehensive narrative of local history. This narrative includes information based on pertinent historical themes and subthemes and specific chronological periods for the geographic area defined as Aransas County, Texas. The historic context describes local historical patterns of architecture; economic development based on agriculture, commerce, maritime, and industry; ethnic heritage; public and private institutional development for education, government, conservation, military institutions and activities, recreation, culture, and leisure, and transportation. Each context theme or subtheme offers one or more periods and areas of significance appropriate to that topic and lists property types based on functions. The narratives focus on the extant buildings, structures, objects, and districts that represent these topics, and includes, to the degree necessary, relevant precursory details that galvanized the local built environment's evolution. With these component parts, this historic context provides a framework to guide field investigations and post-field analysis that will identify and evaluate historic-age resources for NRHP eligibility. Ultimately, this historic context will help guide future planning priorities, goals, and strategies for significant historic properties in Aransas County.

This historic context has evolved throughout the survey project to embrace the resources identified during the survey and incorporate the public input. The previously prepared research design presented a series of questions applicable to each anticipated theme and subtheme to shape this historic context. However, the results of careful research demonstrated that certain paths of inquiry were immaterial, and their pursuit deemed unwarranted. These instances are briefly explained within each topic where appropriate. Similarly, the March 2021 windshield survey of Aransas County supplied invaluable information that reshaped content to accommodate the findings. Surveyors were aware that severe

weather events have caused substantial damage to local resources, and the windshield survey revealed unexpected proof of losses. In effect, almost no nineteenth- or early-twentieth century resources remain extant in Aransas County; of the few that exist, most have been radically altered. Field investigations and post-field analyses revealed beneficial details that necessitated updates to the narrative, periods and areas of significance, and related property types. Field investigations included additional archival research to refine and enrich the historic context. Comments from reviewers provided additional insights and direction.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Aransas County was first settled by Europeans during the Spanish colonial period, although the county was not formally established until 1871 when it was formed from parts of Refugio County. Refugio County itself was organized in 1837, as a part of the Republic of Texas (C. Long 2020a).

Aransas County is located on the southeastern Texas coast, just northeast of Corpus Christi. It is centered on Aransas Bay. Its land is primarily composed of barrier islands and peninsulas, including Live Oak Peninsula, the Lamar Peninsula, the Blackjack Peninsula, and San Jose Island. The waters of Aransas, St. Charles, Mesquite, and Copano Bays lie within its boundaries. Today, Aransas County's communities are located on the Live Oak and Lamar Peninsulas. The Blackjack Peninsula is primarily occupied by the Aransas Wildlife Refuge, while San Jose Island is privately owned. It has public beaches and a single home but is otherwise generally undeveloped.

The Coastal Bend area was historically occupied by several groups of nomadic, hunter-gatherer peoples, including the Karankawas and Coahuiltecans. The Karankawas moved to the Gulf Coast after it was uninhabited for a century in A.D. 1400. These groups disappeared from the area by the mid-1800s as a result of the arrival of Europeans, who brought disease and hardship to the native population (C. Long 2020a). Native inhabitants relied on the natural resources of the area and migrated seasonally to harvest resources inland and fish and shellfish on the coastline (Kenmotsu, 2009).

Europeans began settling the greater Coastal Bend area in the early eighteenth century. In the 1780s, the Spanish established a port of entry and customs house known as El Cópamo on the mainland shore of Copano Bay. The port served Goliad, Refugio, and San Antonio de Béxar, and though hundreds of colonists entered here, the vast majority moved inland rather than settling the coastal area. The Spanish established a mission in 1793 called Nuestra Señora del Refugio, located just north of the mouth of the Guadalupe River. It was the nearest Spanish Mission to the Blackjack peninsula and remained in some use until about 1830 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2013; Benowitz 2021).

The earliest settlement in the area which became Aransas County began in the late Spanish Colonial period (late eighteenth or early nineteenth century) when the Spanish established a fort on Live Oak Peninsula called Aránzazu, from which the word Aransas is derived. The fort guarded the entrance to Copano Bay, just south of Blackjack Peninsula (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2013). Although the Spanish made several attempts to establish settlements in the lower Nueces River valley, none of them were successful due to the remote location and threats of attacks by Native Americans (C. Long 2020a).

The land grant systems under Spanish and Mexican rule influenced early settlement of the area. In 1824, the Mexican government passed a national colonization law which granted states the authority to regulate the distribution of unappropriated lands for colonization (Barker 2020). It was under this law that the earliest land grants in the area that



would become Aransas County were granted. Irish immigrants James Power and James Hewetson received empresario grants encompassing the majority of the future Aransas County and surrounding area, including rights to the old mission and surrounding town (Leffler 2020). Power and Hewetson intended to bring in Irish and Mexican settlers to the land. Some Irish families arrived and settled in the area between 1829 and 1833, but settlement remained sparse through the Texas Revolution (C. Long 2020a). Power and Hewetson's empresario grant kicked off Anglo settlement of Refugio County, including the area that would become Aransas County. The area was appealing during the early settlement period due to its access to the Gulf of Mexico. As settlements in the area developed, it became apparent that improvements to Aransas Pass, the natural channel which allowed ships to pass between Mustang Island and San Jose Island, were needed to enhance access for larger ships and to realize the area's potential for a major port.

A number of settlements were founded during Aransas' early settlement period between about 1839 and 1840:

- *Aransas City*

James Power founded Aransas City on Live Oak Point, near the ruins of the Aránzazu fort in 1832. It became the de-facto seat of Refugio County shortly thereafter and included a customhouse, post office, and several stores by 1840. Although it had a population of several hundred, it was subject to raids by Comanche and Karankawa Indians and Mexican bandits. It suffered its first blow in 1838 when the customhouse moved from Aransas City to Lamar. In 1840, Refugio became the county seat and Aransas City began to shrink. By 1846, it was abandoned entirely (C. Long 2020a; Handbook of Texas Online 2020).

- *Lamar*

Captain James W. Byrne, George R. Hull, and George Armstrong developed the town of Lamar across the pass from Aransas City, on Lookout Point (Lamar Peninsula) in the early 1830s. In the early 1850s, railroad promoter Pryor Lea worked with Byrne and others to develop Lamar into a port city which would be connected via railroad to San Antonio. Although Byrne sold land on the Lamar Peninsula to Lea in 1850, the title reverted back to Byrne in 1853 when Lea failed to make required payments (C. Long 2020a; Roell 2021). The railroad never reached Lamar and the town was badly damaged during the Civil War, suffering a decline from which it never quite recovered (Young 2021; Guthrie 2021a).

- *St. Joseph/Aransas*

A settlement, marked as Aransas on some maps and as St. Joseph on others, was founded by cattlemen and sailors following the Texas Revolution. Located on San Jose Island, the settlement became a prosperous port in antebellum Texas (C. Long 2020a). Byrne and others briefly invested in the settlement, which they called St. Joseph, during the Mexican War (around 1846) but ultimately abandoned it in favor of promoting additional settlement in Lamar (Long 2020a). The city was destroyed during the Civil War and never recovered.

- *St. Mary's of Aransas*

Although located on the north shore of Copano Bay in what is now Refugio County, St. Mary's of Aransas played an important role in the economics of Aransas County in the second half of the nineteenth century. Hit by disastrous storms in 1886 and 1887 that destroyed the town's wharves, St. Mary's was ultimately reduced to a small village by the early 1890s (C. Long 2020a).

Many of these coastal settlements were relatively short-lived but they accounted for most of the population of Refugio County during the early settlement period. They grew and competed for maritime importance while the interior of the county remained generally undeveloped (C. Long 2020a).

Permanent settlements developed on the Live Oak Peninsula. Rockport and Fulton were founded in the years following the Civil War and the area developed into a center for beef processing and cattle shipping during the great cattle boom. Cattle raised throughout southeastern Texas were slaughtered and processed in Fulton and Rockport and live cattle were shipped by steamships of the Morgan Lines to New Orleans from Rockport (Shukalo 2020). The rural community of Estes began to grow in the second half of the nineteenth century. Cattle ranchers and vegetable and hog farmers populated the rural parts of the county (Allen and Taylor 1997, 188).

After the cattle boom went bust the region turned to its waters and natural resources. Strong tourism, commercial fishing and seafood, and oil extraction industries emerged that have endured to this day. After World War II, commercial fishing, shrimping, and tourism remained the primary industries, but oil and gas extraction were on the rise. Wells were drilled to the west of Rockport and northeast of the Aransas County Airfield in the mid-twentieth century (Allen and Taylor 1997, 329). The Aransas County Navigation District constructed a new harbor in Fulton, which until that time had only a few piers. A harbor was dredged and a breakwater was constructed by 1950 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 323).

The post-war era brought an influx of prosperity to the country as a whole. During this time, the Texas coast saw an influx of “winter Texans” – northerners who came to Texas for the winter. New settlements to accommodate this influx were developed. Copano Village, a residential development three miles north of Rockport on the shores of Copano Bay was laid out in the mid-1950s (Jasinski 2020a). Holiday Beach, located off State Highway 35 approximately 11 miles northeast of Rockport, was developed by the Copano Land Company. Organized by Dallas investors in the mid-1960s, the company began selling lots in 1964. Since then, the subdivision has grown to include waterfront homes and boat canals. It has retained about 1,000 residents since the 1990 census (Jasinski 2020b).

In 1957 on the north side of the Live Oak Peninsula on Copano Bay, George Strickhausen began constructing Copano Cove, a residential development built on a series of canals following Florida’s “Venetian Canals” concept. In 1960, Palm Harbor, a more modest residential community on canals southwest of Rockport, was constructed. In 1962, work on Key Allegro, a more upscale canal development on Aransas Bay between Rockport and Fulton, began (Allen and Taylor 1997, 337–40). These developments were successful and remain populated today.

In the 1950s, the oil industry brought new jobs, including building and servicing rigs and constructing and maintaining boats for servicing rigs. Rockport Yacht and Supply Company modernized its facilities and constructed a new turntable in 1950 to meet the demand that would keep up through the 1980s (Allen and Taylor 1997, 331–32).

The Ixtoc 1 oil spill of 1979 was the biggest oil spill disaster at the time. A blowout on the southeastern Mexican coast brought the crude oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico to the San Jose, Matagorda, and Mustang Islands. Man-made booms across the narrow entrances to bays, estuaries, and marshes were erected to protect the wildlife that so much of the county’s economy was based on. The spill raised awareness of environmental issues, including concerns about pollution, overpopulation, overfishing, and the depletion of other natural resources.

Aransas County's built environment has been impacted by severe weather over the course of its history. A number of devastating storms, notably in 1916, 1919, 1942, and Hurricane Harvey in 2017, caused severe damage to the built features of the county, particularly along shorelines. As a result, many extant historic resources have been altered, either in response to storm damage or to prevent storm damage in the future.

## THEME: ARCHITECTURE

Hurricanes and major storms destroyed much of the earliest-built wood-frame-constructed buildings and structures in the county, a building type that would have comprised much of the county's earliest architectural narrative. Thus, this context addresses major, local architectural trends based on extant resources. The styles and forms discussed are generally based on the Texas Historical Commission's (THC's) survey form list, Virginia Savage McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*, and Richard Longstreth's *The Buildings of Main Street*, which historic preservation professionals recognize as industry standards for residential and commercial architecture, respectively.

Both residential and non-residential architecture in Aransas County followed national trends. Some residences (particularly those constructed for wealthy cattle ranchers and other prominent figures), municipal buildings, and churches were architect-designed and reflected high-style influence, but most commercial buildings and residences were modest. Later buildings were sometimes constructed of brick or concrete-block units to withstand storms and others were lifted to prevent flood damage to buildings.

## RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

Permanent dwellings of the pre-railroad era were constructed using local materials, including a masonry concoction known as "shellcrete" which was a mixture of cement and locally sourced crushed shells. These early dwellings typically reflected the folk building traditions of their inhabitants, adapted to their new setting. According to Allen and Taylor's history of Aransas County, the Irish settlers brought over by Power and Hewetson in the 1830s followed this formula:

The houses they built might be of Mexican shellcrete, but the design was that of typical Irish villages (Allen and Taylor 1997, 50).

The European building traditions of early settlers likely influenced local construction throughout Aransas County, however, no buildings constructed prior to the Civil War are known to be extant and none were identified during the survey.

A handful of dwellings constructed in the Rockport-Fulton area in the late 1860s, however, still stand. These dwellings were generally constructed for cattle barons and other local figures around the time the two towns were founded.

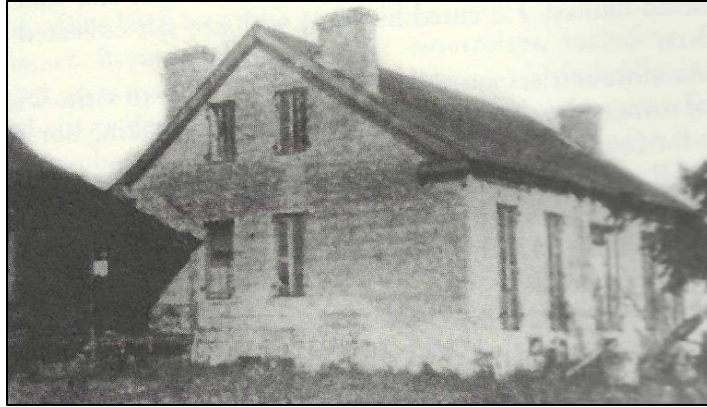


Figure 4: This photograph of a shellcrete dwelling constructed in Lamar during the early settlement period was published in the Rockport Pilot in 1940. It was reprinted in Allen and Taylor's history of Aransas County with a caption noting "This photograph may be the only remaining record of an intact shellcrete home at Lamar" (Allen and Taylor 1997, 93).



Figure 5: The Fulton-Bruhl House was constructed about 1868 at 409 N Broadway for James C. Fulton, a prominent local businessman. The vernacular dwelling exhibits features from a mix of styles including Greek Revival and the Italianate (Texas Historical Commission 1988a; 1989).



Figure 6: The T.H. Mathis House was constructed in the Greek Revival Style for cattleman T.H. Mathis in 1867 (Texas Historical Commission n.d.).



Figure 7: The Fulton Mansion, constructed in the Second Empire style in 1875 for prominent cattleman George Ware Fulton. Fulton imported building materials for his mansion from the northeast and overseas (Texas Historical Commission 1970b; 1970a).

By the 1860s, the nearby port of St. Mary's of Aransas, located on the north shore of Copano Bay, had become "the largest lumber and building materials center in western Texas." Goods were hauled inland on regular wagon trains, and were readily accessible to the coastal areas that would become Aransas County (C. Long 2020a). Many regional communities saw a dramatic change in buildings and construction techniques following the arrival of the railroad since inexpensive materials including dimensional lumber could be obtained from distant sawmills (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 135; C. Long 2020a). Although the railroad did not reach Aransas County until the late 1880s, these materials would have been easily accessible to Aransas County by water. In housing, six distinctive folk-inspired forms emerged: gable-front, gable-front-and-wing, hall-and-parlor, I-house, massed-plan, side-gable, and pyramidal. Collectively, these vernacular forms are referred to as National Folk houses.

National Folk houses were common nationally until c. 1930, but the trend may have persisted longer in rural places like neighboring Calhoun and Refugio Counties. Living conditions in these neighboring counties remained primitive in the early twentieth century, with no municipal water or wastewater systems. The use of outdoor privies and wood or metal cisterns for collecting rainwater was common (Freier 1979, 68). The Rockport-Fulton area was comparatively cosmopolitan, with electric lights, telephone service, and street cars in operation by the last decades of the nineteenth century, while dwellings in more rural areas of Aransas County would have had fewer amenities (Texas Historical Commission 2012). Extant rural houses from this era were modernized with later additions and other modifications to improve living conditions.

Houses constructed for middle- to upper-class residents in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries were commonly examples of the Victorian era of architecture. Victorian-era houses have more complex forms than their National Folk predecessors and have mass-produced decorative detailing and components that industrialization made possible. Pattern books were widely disseminated throughout this period, introducing local builders to the new styles and plans of this era, including the Second Empire, Stick, Queen Anne, and Folk Victorian styles (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 312). Of these, the Queen Anne and Folk Victorian styles appear to have been the most common in Aransas County and are the most common extant type. In Texas, Victorian-influenced designs were constructed as late as the 1910s.



Figure 8: The Baldwin-Brundrett House, constructed in 1881 with Queen Anne style elements (Texas Historical Commission 2010; 2012).



Figure 9: The Hoopes-Smith House was constructed in 1882 in the Queen Anne style using plans ordered from the Sears catalog (Texas Historical Commission Unknown).

The Eclectic era of residential architecture occurred in two waves between 1880 and 1940. During this era, residences emulated the historical styles of domestic buildings in Europe, including traditionally Greek/Roman, English, French, Colonial Revival, and Mediterranean/Spanish designs (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 406–7).

In the early twentieth century, residential architecture shifted from the exuberance of Victorian- and Eclectic-era designs and historical references in favor of basic functional forms, flowing interior spaces, and organic expressions. The Craftsman style was the most popular residential design from about 1905 to the early 1940s (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 568). The style was commonly applied to a long and narrow or boxy bungalow form, but bungalows were also adapted to other styles or absent of stylistic elements.



Figure 10: The A. Bracht House was constructed between 1898 and 1902 for local grocer Adolph Bracht (Texas Historical Commission 2009; 2011).



Figure 11: The Moore House was constructed in 1906 for James Edward Moore, a Rockport businessman who served multiple terms as Rockport's mayor in the 1920s and 1940s (Texas Historical Commission 2005; Bergan n.d.).

The Minimal Traditional style became the favored small house design for working- and middle-class buyers beginning in the mid-1930s. Developed in response to changes in the housing market due to the Great Depression, the federal government established the National Housing Act of 1934 to stimulate the building industry and provide government-financed home loans. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) established guidelines for house designs to stipulate uniform standards for construction of affordable homes (Ames and McClelland 2002, 60–62). In their 1936 publication on house designs, *Principles of Planning Small Houses*, the FHA promoted the basic principle of "providing a maximum accommodation within a minimum of means, and, consequently, cost" (Ames and McClelland 2002, 61). This translated to a modest one-story house form that lacked complexity and non-essential features like intricate roof forms, dormers, cornices, or variations in cladding. The affordable and efficient designs provided housing during the Great Depression and because they could be quickly constructed, they met a burst in demand for housing from returning World War II veterans and their families. The Minimal Traditional style is well represented in Aransas County; however, because of the style's simplicity and ubiquity, individual Minimal Traditional-style residences often do not rise to the level of significance necessary for NRHP designation. Neighborhoods of Minimal Traditional-style residences, however, are often eligible as historic districts.



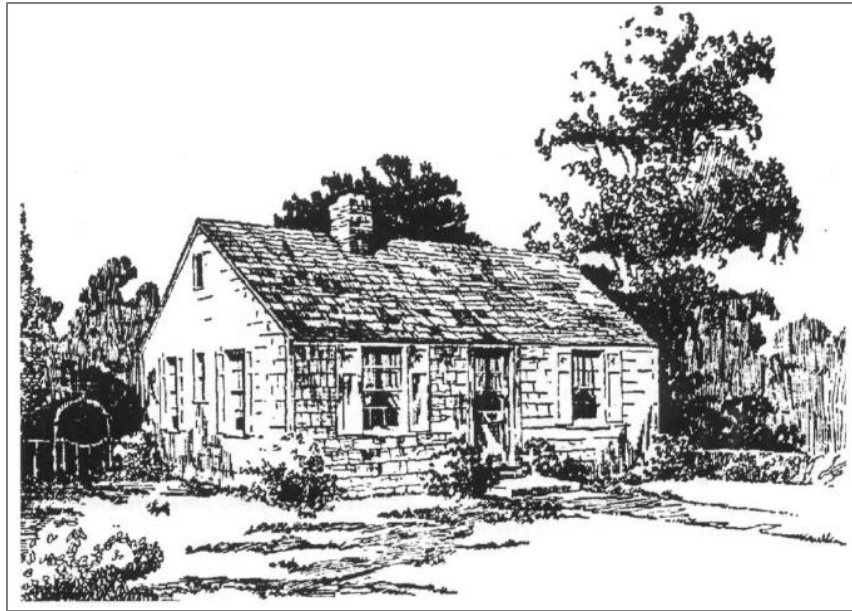


Figure 12: In 1936, the FHA released a series of standards and guidelines for economical house designs that could be financed with FHA-backed loans. This is the FHA's simplest house design, which became known in the home building industry as the "FHA minimum house." Box-like houses that reflect the FHA principals are common in Aransas County. Reproduced from *Principles of Planning Small Houses* (Washington: FHA, 1936). Source: Library of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Minimal Traditional style evolved into the Ranch style. The Ranch style was developed in Southern California in the mid-1930s and was one of the small house types the FHA favored in the 1940s. This approval made it easier to finance this house style than others (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 602–3). Promoted as modern on the inside and traditional on the outside, the Ranch house was considered a conservative approach to modernism and became the most common style of house built in the 1950s and 1960s. Often, these houses were developed simultaneously in clusters as part of an automobile-oriented neighborhood, but they were also commonly built on individual rural properties. The form of the Ranch house reflects the rise of automobile ownership. Whereas earlier houses were compacted on narrow lots to facilitate walking, automobile reliance allowed for development of wider lots, where houses could sprawl with more room between parcels. Ranch houses generally date from c. 1935 to 1975 and feature an integrated garage or carport. Like the Minimal Traditional style, most Ranch-style residences were not architect-designed. Developers commonly built entire neighborhoods of the style, but Ranch-style homes are often used as infill in older neighborhoods, where the form may be adapted to accommodate a narrow lot. Like Minimal Traditional-style houses, Ranch-style houses are so ubiquitous that they are infrequently individually eligible for the NRHP and are more commonly eligible as part of a district.

The Minimal Ranch is a variation of the Ranch style. Early, smaller examples of the Ranch style may be referred to as Minimal Ranch, Ranchette, or Transitional Ranch (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 600–602). In addition to their small scale, these buildings generally lack a broad overhanging roof and other elaborations that may be found on Ranch-style dwellings. Minimal Ranch houses are commonly found in or near the same neighborhoods as, and may be very similar to, Minimal Traditional-style residences, and the distinction is often a matter of judgment (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 602). Minimal Ranch houses may have a broader profile and may be differentiated from the Minimal

Traditional style by the presence of an aspect of the Ranch style, such as a large picture window, horizontal-sash double-hung windows, eaves, brick skirting, or an attached garage (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 602). Like Minimal Traditional dwellings, a Minimal Ranch-style house rarely possesses sufficient architectural distinction for individual eligibility for the NRHP but may be contributing to a district.

Other residential styles from the early to mid-twentieth century, like the Prairie School, Art Deco, Moderne, and post-war Modern styles, favored among architects, are not apparent in Aransas County.

Many houses built after 1960 do not exhibit a clear style or historical form. Brick and concrete masonry unit (CMU) construction became more common than wood frame buildings for storm resiliency. Some houses from this era are elevated with pilings, piers, stilts, or concrete-masonry-unit blocks to resist flooding. The Ranch style persisted in this period. The Styled Ranch subtype is a Ranch house with historical or modern stylistic elements. In the 1960s and 1970s, builders began to produce Spanish Colonial Revival Ranch, Colonial Revival Ranch, Tudor Revival Ranch, Contemporary Ranch, Neoclassical Ranch, Traditional Ranch, and other types of Styled Ranch houses (McAlester and McAlester 2015, 695–704). Some Styled Ranches are architect-designed but most are builder made.

## NON-RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

Commercial, civic, educational, financial, recreational, industrial, and agricultural building types in Aransas County also followed national design trends. Early buildings were vernacular and constructed with available local materials, including the aforementioned shellcrete. Very few buildings predating the Civil War are known to be extant. The Stella Marais Chapel, constructed 1858 in Lamar (Figure 11), is one exception. The shellcrete building was extensively renovated in 1931.



Figure 13: The Stella Marais Chapel was constructed in Lamar in 1858. It was extensively renovated in 1931, and was relocated to its current site near Lamar Cemetery in 1986 (Sacred Heart Catholic Church 2021; Dennis n.d.).

As access to more diverse materials increased, these buildings were replaced with more permanent structures constructed with dimensional lumber and prefabricated windows, doors, and decorative elements. Like residential architecture, non-residential architecture evolved stylistically, moving from the elaborate Victorian-era designs to the

historical references of Revival-era styles. Those styles gave way over time to more modern design, like the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and post-war Modern styles during the early to mid-twentieth century. By the mid-1950s, as car-culture became prevalent, stand-alone buildings with ample parking, drive-in facilities, and flashy signs that appealed to the motorist replaced pedestrian-oriented commercial-block buildings of the late 1800s and early 1900s (Longstreth 1987, 126–31).

The county's early railroad-oriented hotels were joined by automobile-oriented hotels on major thoroughfares. In the mid-twentieth century, owners of older buildings on downtown main streets attempted to stay current by removing then-dated architectural elements and replacing original cladding, windows, and doors with more modern versions (Esperdy 2008). This trend, coupled with the need to repair buildings from multiple hurricanes and other storms, resulted in very altered commercial downtowns throughout the county.



Figure 14: View of the Sorenson-Stair Building, a commercial building that functioned historically as a chandlery, a grocer, and is presently an art gallery (Texas Historical Commission 2007a).

In Aransas County, as was true in most of the United States, important institutions were housed in architecturally distinguished buildings. A notable Aransas County example was the Moorish style county courthouse, designed by J. Riely Gordon, constructed in 1889, and demolished in the 1960s. Other examples of this building trend are not apparent in Aransas County ("Aransas County Courthouse, Rockport, Texas." n.d.).



Figure 15: The Moorish style Aransas County Courthouse, constructed 1889 and demolished c. 1960 ("Aransas County Courthouse, Rockport, Texas." n.d.).



Figure 16: This 1950s view of downtown Rockport shows commercial buildings along Austin Street and some of the modifications to older buildings made during this period ("Street Scene, Rockport, Texas 1950s" n.d.).



Figure 17: The 1956 Aransas County Courthouse, by architect Lynn A. Evans. The building was demolished after suffering extensive damage from Hurricane Harvey in 2017 ("Aransas County Courthouse, Rockport, Texas." n.d.).

The survey revealed that most of the county's late nineteenth century to early twentieth-century flagship buildings are not extant or have been heavily altered. Those resources with architectural merit were mostly constructed after World War II in the post-war Modern style. Many buildings have been lost to hurricanes and storm events, including the second Aransas County Courthouse, which was originally constructed in 1959 and was subsequently destroyed as a result of Hurricane Harvey.

Some local resources are devoid of architectural influences or only offer the barest of stylistic references. Agricultural resources changed over time to reflect new practices, storage needs, and production, and though generally utilitarian, they can convey historical customs through their design. A barn, shed, windmill/cistern, or agricultural processing complex will have utilitarian components—typically of wood-frame construction with wood or corrugated metal exterior cladding and roof materials. Design influences likely to be present are limited to temporal practices, such as exposed rafter tails often apparent on buildings constructed in the 1920s and 1930s. Similarly, most industrial resources are restricted to necessary structural components and exterior materials that protect interior processing mechanisms. Exceptions are those industrial facilities that have public space for sales, marketing, and business offices. For example, a large petrochemical plant office building constructed in the 1950s might exhibit contemporaneously popular architectural influences, such as the International Style with smooth flat surfaces and minimalist decoration limited to highly defined ribbons of windows.

## PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

National architecture trends and major weather events guided development of three discrete periods of significance for this context. This earliest period includes resources constructed prior to 1919 that withstood that year's hurricane. These resources are rarely extant, especially nineteenth-century resources. Examples reflect vernacular and railroad-era architecture and represent the National Folk and Victorian Era styles. From 1919 to 1945 residents rebuilt after the

hurricane in traditional architecture styles, Revival Era styles, and some instances of early modernism. After 1945 trends changed decidedly, encompassing post-World War II-era architecture and modern design through the survey cutoff date of 1973.

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture

## RELATED PROPERTY TYPES

- Most property types have potential to be eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture

## THEME: COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Early development in the area that would become Aransas County was largely, but loosely, planned: first by the Spanish, who established missions and a fort, and later by the Mexican government, who utilized empresarios to settle the land. The Spanish land grant system, which was also adopted by the Mexican government following independence from Spain to distribute lands in the 1820s and 1830s, played little role in the development of the area that would become Aransas County. Land grants issued by the Mexican government in the Aransas County area during that period were frequently contested by other land holders during the period of Texas Independence (1836-1845), and many were ultimately voided.

### PRE-RAILROAD ERA (1830-1888)

After the Spanish period, the earliest European settlers in the area were Irish Catholic and Mexican immigrants brought in by Power and Hewetson in the early 1830s. Most of these immigrants settled around the ruins of the Nuestra Señora del Refugio in the modern-day City of Refugio. Settlement in the region was slow during the republic period as the area was somewhat remote and subject to Mexican raids. A number of settlements and towns were founded between the 1830s and the onset of the Civil War: Aransas City on Live Oak Peninsula, Lamar on Lookout Point, and St. Joseph/Aransas on San Jose Island. While all of these towns played important roles in the settlement of the county, only Lamar remained in the years following the Civil War, although it suffered a significant decline as the result of the conflict.

Later development hinged on the efforts of various entrepreneurs and investors to establish a major port city to serve the region that was then known as western Texas. The towns of Fulton and Rockport were founded immediately following the Civil War and developed as centers for slaughtering, processing, and shipping cattle and beef products. Allen and Taylor recount a description of the people who were drawn to Rockport in its first years:

Terrill Bledsoe, another early arrival, described Rockport as a town of “waterfront characters, frontier merchants, booted and spurred *pisteros* from the brush country, cattle barons, working cowboys and uprooted farmers and tradesmen from the states of the South” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 152).

While Rockport achieved success as a shipping center during the cattle boom of the 1860s and 1870s, a mix of navigational conditions and social and economic factors limited the expansion of its maritime trade. Just as the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) had completed improvements to the Aransas Pass in the early twentieth century, Corpus Christi was chosen to fill the need for a regional port. As a result of Aransas County’s abundant natural resources, fishing, shrimping, shipbuilding, and tourism all emerged as important industries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Access to these resources influenced the locations of settlements that remain in the county today.

The sharp increase in population between 1850 and 1860 can, in part, be attributed to efforts to construct a route of turnpikes and railroads between San Antonio and the Aransas area by Pryor Lea in the early 1850s. However, the cattle boom was the larger driver of settlement in the area. Rockport and Fulton quickly rose to prominence during the cattle boom of the 1860s and 1870s. Rockport was constructed on a rock ledge which created a natural harbor, and cattle from throughout Texas were driven to Rockport for shipment to New Orleans and other markets on the Morgan Line of steam ships. Aransas Pass (primarily located in San Patricio County, with the eastern portion lying in Aransas) developed in the

1890s by speculative developers for its potential as a maritime port. All three towns are situated on the water and rose to prominence due to their maritime access. All three remain hubs of economic activity today.

The village of Estes, located approximately four miles south of Rockport, developed organically. The settlement began in the late 1800s when existing ranchers were joined by hog and vegetable farmers. It became known locally as a center for produce and meat in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other ranching and farming regions of the county developed in a similar manner, with large swaths of range land and some improved pastures and vegetable farms developing on the western side of the Live Oak Peninsula, and in the area to the north of the Lamar Peninsula. Many ranches were active during the period on the Blackjack Peninsula as well as on San Jose Island.

## RAILROAD ERA (1889-1930)

The San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway (SA&APR) (later renamed the Texas and New Orleans Railroad) reached Rockport in 1888. The arrival of the railroad also brought tourists, attracted by the county's abundant wildlife—primarily fish and fowl. Sportsman's clubs were established, and the influx of people to the area created a demand for merchants and vendors to supply them (C. Long 2020a; Roell 2021). Railroad stops along the line in Aransas Pass (Aransas Siding) and Rockport also benefited the county's economy by supporting maritime trade, but the economy never reached the vision that developers and promoters had hoped to achieve due to the construction of the major harbor in Corpus Christi in 1926.

Speculative land developers and promoters, such as the Aransas Pass Land Company and the Gulf Coast Immigration Company drove settlement to Rockport, Fulton, and Aransas Pass in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Attention from such promoters and from government-funded developments of the Aransas Pass and surrounding waterways brought increased settlement and development to the county.

Commercial fishing emerged as an economic driver in the 1890s, with shrimping included by the 1930s. Both industries flourished throughout the mid-twentieth century and continue to prevail today. Oil and gas extraction proliferated beginning in the 1930s and also remains a prominent local industry. Adjacent industries such as ship and boat building and maintenance also endure.





Downtown Rockport Circa 1930

Figure 18: View of Austin Street, c. 1930. The Sorensen-Stair building (center building with awning) is still extant (Anonymous 1900).

## AUTOMOBILE ERA (1930-1980)

Suburbanization began in the mid-twentieth century with the construction of planned subdivisions, many of which were constructed on waterfront canals in Aransas and Copano Bays. Copano Village was developed in the mid-1950s off State Highway (SH) 35 in the area northeast of Rockport. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, this area was primarily rural agricultural and ranch lands with sparse development. Holiday Beach was developed in the mid-1960s by the Copano Land Company, a firm backed by Dallas investors. While Holiday Beach was eventually expanded to include boat canals, other developments of the period, like Copano Cove and Key Allegro, were developed with boat canals in mind. Driven by an increase in tourism, oil and gas extraction, and adjacent industries during the mid-twentieth century, these suburbanized developments were constructed to cater to both permanent residents and “winter Texans” who resided in the region only part-time and who were largely engaged in recreational pursuits.



Figure 19: View of North Broadway. The Hoopes-Smith House is visible at center (Texas Historical Commission 1988b).

Overall, land use in Aransas County followed traditional development patterns in coastal Texas. Historically, Rockport was surrounded on the west, north, and south by agricultural and range land. Development clustered around the harbor. As the town expanded over the years, the street grid expanded with residential development to accommodate the growing population, while commercial development remained clustered in the center of town. Residential and sparse commercial development extended northward to meet Fulton, which generally expanded in the same way. Development in other locations was sparse but present, with residences constructed along the shores of the Live Oak Peninsula. On the Lamar Peninsula, initial development was concentrated near the southeastern tip of the peninsula, directly across Copano Bay from Live Oak Point. Lamar shrank after the Civil War but saw renewed development in the 1950s brought by the tourist trade and oil industry, and it remains an active settlement today. After SH 35 was constructed to the west, new auto-centric development expanded on both sides of the route. Oil fields dotted with oil wells occupy the ranch and agricultural lands of Live Oak Peninsula and are especially concentrated near Live Oak Point, both on- and off-shore. The Lamar Peninsula is also host to a large oil field, as is the area to the northwest, which primarily consists of agricultural and range lands.

In the 1930s, natural resources that had once been abundant were quickly depleted by overfishing and sport and commercial hunting. Hunting had decimated wild bird populations in particular, including that of the now endangered, whooping crane. Two major wildlife refuges were established in Aransas County in the 1930s: Goose Island State Park and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. These refuges are more fully described in the Subtheme: Conservation section of this report.

## PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Three distinct periods of significance were developed for this context based on the development of the local communities within Aransas County. The Pre-Railroad Era (1830-1888) accounts for historic resources from the county's early settlement era through post-Civil War growth, up to the arrival of the SA&APR. The Railroad Era (1889-1946) encompasses resources that were constructed following the arrival of the railroad, which changed the area's economy. The influx of tourists led to the construction of new infrastructure and buildings to accommodate vacationers who were drawn to the hunting, fishing, and other opportunities for outdoor recreation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. The post-war Era (1946-1980) includes resources and infrastructure built as reliance on automotive transportation increased in the decades following the construction of SH 35 and as development practices shifted to suburbanization post-WWII.

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture, Community Planning and Development, Engineering, Ethnic Heritage, Exploration/Settlement, Landscape Architecture

## RELATED PROPERTY TYPES

- Homesteads and residential dwellings, as well as government and commercial buildings from all periods of significance noted herein have the potential for significance under this theme.

## THEME: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The following historic context for the economic development of Aransas County encompasses four subthemes: Agriculture, Commerce, Maritime, and Industry. These subthemes have collectively accounted for the changes in Aransas County's economic development throughout history.

### SUBTHEME: AGRICULTURE

The importance of agriculture, though not a primary economic driver in the county, is nonetheless readily apparent in the rural built environment. Agriculturists shaped their practices to local geographic, topographic, and climatic circumstances to produce successful yields. Relative to many other Texas counties, few ranches and even fewer farmsteads were established in Aransas County, although local farms and ranches were comparatively large. Maritime access linked the county's agricultural yields to numerous regional and national markets. Cash-crop production was limited until the twentieth century, and even then, only nominal amounts of corn and cotton were harvested. Family operations regularly improved their farmsteads with vegetables, fruits, and small orchards for provisional use but did not produce enough volume of these truck crops to report in many aggregate agricultural decennial censuses for Aransas County. Beef cattle, sheep, and their byproducts were the dominant local products throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout these years, tropical storms and hurricanes caused regular difficulties, but no apparent changes to the county's agricultural practices. By the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, only cattle ranching remained a constant, with new ventures into aquaculture just launching.

#### [Early Agricultural Developments, 1824–1846](#)

Since post-contact history under Spanish rule, local agricultural practices focused on raising livestock and limited feed crops that left minimal enduring impressions on the landscape. Livestock ranching was a likely principal source of income for early landowners, but their holdings were loosely ordered and only temporarily occupied on an annual basis (Faulk 1964, 261–63). When native Anglo-American migrants, typically born west of the Mississippi River, and foreign-born

Western European immigrants settled the area in the 1830s and 1840s, they adopted Tejano ranching traditions, as these tried methods eased their adaptation to unfamiliar and often inhospitable conditions (Gerald Moorhead et al. 2018; Jackson 1986, 597–99, 616–17). Landowners delegated management to cowhands who shepherded freely wandering semi-wild livestock on the open range where few built resources marked the landscape.

Nineteenth-Century Agriculture, 1846–1900

Relative to typical Texas counties with numerous small farms, nineteenth-century Aransas County had few agricultural properties improved with essential domestic and agricultural resource types. Between 1850 and 1870 (while Aransas was still part of Refugio County) property values rose regularly and appreciably, indicating that agriculturists were improving their land with domestic and agricultural buildings and structures. A typical agricultural property would have at least one dwelling, possibly other small dwellings for workers, and related domestic auxiliary resources, especially a hand-dug water well and a privy. A gated fence might protect domestic landscape features like a kitchen garden or an ornamental or swept yard. Aransas County’s agriculturists benefited only modestly from technological advancements like the scythe, plow, reaper, thresher, and cotton gin until after c. 1880, when local agriculturists could finally purchase affordable new tools delivered in railroad shipments. These acquisitions required protective equipment sheds or barns.

Table 5: Aggregate Agricultural Decennial Census Statistics for Aransas\* County, 1850-1900

	1850*	1860*	1870*	1880	1890	1900
Number of agricultural properties	--	--	--	18	6	47
Average acreage	--	--	--	1,923	156	275
Value of all agricultural properties	\$19,750	\$738,651	\$135,300	\$29,100	--**	\$819,910
Equipment value	\$765	\$5,635	\$8,080	\$387	--**	\$2,890
Bushels of corn	6,240	29,115	41,555	800	1,818	3,180
Bales of ginned cotton	--	230	--	--	5	89
Pounds of wool	250	200	13,955	6,245	--	10,100
Sheep	190	3,961	4,858	1,611	--	--
Dairy cows	3,146	1,983	1,556	207	95	135
Beef cattle	6,835	153,758	99,785	6,567	1,328	2,390
Swine	323	3,964	4,333	214	381	1
Horses	390	4,730	9,949	325	311	233
Asses and Mules	17	837	1,002	12	16	66
Oxen	143	491	584	6	--	--

\* Refugio County until 1871. \*\*Page missing from archived census data

(US Census Bureau 1850; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office 1864; US Census Bureau 1870; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office n.d.; 1894; 1902, 19)

The towns of Refugio County persisted in historic locations due to their access to local, regional, and national markets which were increasingly reliable transportation networks. The main prerequisite to withstanding the Gulf Coast’s recurrent hostile climatic conditions was this ready access which assured towns were reconstructed following major weather or other climactic events due to their established accessibility. Chief exports were initially beef hides and tallow and, later in the century, sheep byproducts as well. Its coastal position exposed Aransas County to unpredictable tropical storms, hurricanes, and long, hot, humid summers that allowed for an 11-month-long growing season. Agricultural products were shipped to markets via early overland routes; on schooners, sloops, steamers, and packets from seaside

ports to domestic and international ports; and on limited railroad routes (Dase et al. 2010, E7; Kleiner 2020). By the late nineteenth century, mechanically refrigerated freight train cars opened markets to livestock ranchers who hoped to sell perishable meat in addition to more durable byproducts.

Nineteenth-century cash-crop production in Aransas County was lackluster, but local agrarians continued to improve their farms and ranches. Throughout the century, local agriculturists practiced subsistence farming with limited participation in the market economy. Corn, versatile and essential to survival, was the requisite crop that provided food for the family, and grain, hay, and grass-fed livestock. Many agricultural properties likely had corncribs for surplus storage. All parts of the corn plant were valued: the grain for food, the husks for filling mattresses, the stalks and leaves for roof thatch and erosion control. Farmers also grew beans, oats, sweet potatoes, melons, and other vegetables on a few acres or less to supplement their diets (Jones 2005:33, 38). Although near sea-level, these foods may have been stored in cellars. Until the mid-twentieth century, many families kept one or two dairy cows and swine plus chickens to sustain their diets with protein. These animals required either feed or grazing land and small barns, sheds, or coops for protection from the elements and predators. Even as reliable new tools and horse-pulled equipment inspired thousands of Texas farmers to grow the fickle cotton plant, local production remained extremely limited until the mid-twentieth century. In fact, local cash-crop production of all types was inconsequential until 1900, with few Aransas County crops reported in aggregate decennial agricultural censuses. Thus, the county likely had very few mills for grains or syrup and cotton gins.

Both beef cattle and sheep were profitable with minimal care, although ranching required understanding seasons and weather conditions, diseases that could quickly deplete herds, and range conditions for grazing and water, plus managing finances. Herders moved livestock to the best grazing conditions, usually on the prairies in spring, summer, and fall, and in brushlands or river bottoms during the brief winter season (Freier 1979, 120–21). Although they were seldom housed in buildings, some ranchers provided feed and water troughs for their herds. Dramatic increases in livestock numbers demonstrate the high volume of activity occurring in the cattle trade in Aransas County during the cattle boom in the 1860s and 1870s. Statistically, the number of beef cattle declined drastically in 1880. This decline can primarily be attributed to the division of the county in 1871 and the removal of Refugio County farm data from the recorded statistics; however, by 1890, numbers continued to fall as local cattle processing was abandoned in favor of processing centers in midwestern cities.

Three significant events crippled many Texas ranchers in the last decades of the nineteenth century: weather extremes in 1886–1887 and 1891 wiped out herds, and the end of the open range caused by the widespread use of the new barbed-wire fencing in the late 1890s. The gradual installation of fences that defined perimeter boundaries prompted ranchers to divide their land holdings more selectively and, using interior fences, define pasturelands and land-use functions for rotating livestock among pasturelands and segregating herds as needed. They built corrals and pens to hold the animals, related chutes to direct them, and, on more remote sections, may have installed windmills with related troughs or tanks to water them. In general, because these animals were typically driven to markets in San Antonio and beyond, the presence of slaughterhouses and tanneries on local ranches was probably uncommon, although possible on larger holdings. With meat-packing operations in Rockport and Fulton, these types of resources, along with stockyards, were plentiful in these urban settings.

Sheep numbers crested in 1870 before a sharp decline in 1880 and then dropped off entirely. Wool might have been stored briefly on local ranches but was more probably transported to urban centers for storage and shipment. Because ranchers used working livestock—horses, mules, asses, and oxen—to manage their cattle and sheep herds on large pastures and extensive rangelands, the county had more draft animals per capita than the state average. These valuable animals were typically housed in barns with interior feed racks and associated corrals or pens.

### [Agriculture, 1900–1942](#)

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the built environment of rural Aransas County evolved with more and larger agricultural properties and the growing prevalence of tenancy. For the first time, the number and value of agricultural properties rose substantially in 1900 and crested in 1930 before ebbing with typical Depression-era losses by 1940. Most agricultural properties consisted of defined domestic workspace with a main dwelling, water well, privy, and sundry small buildings and structures to support domestic life.

The 1904 Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide described agriculture in Aransas County:

The soil is a deep sandy, or shaley loam, generally rich and easy to cultivate. It is especially suitable for gardening. The cabbage grown in the vicinity of Rockport is noted for its sweetness. Almost any vine crop can be raised profitably in the county. Truck farmers protect their crops from the wind by sowing narrow strips of oats and intervals of a few rods to serve as wind breaks, while others use brush. Water in abundance for irrigating purposes can be had at a depth of about fifteen feet. Windmills are used to pump it into reservoirs, from which it is taken through ditches when needed. A number of fine pear crops have been made, and the fruit readily sold at remunerative prices. Cabbage, onions and tomatoes are the staple vegetables grown for market, although many others of good quality are produced. Watermelons, for instance, are grown in large number, and the quality is excellent. Lettuce, peas, beans, beets, peppers, etc., are grown for the market. [...] In the western part of the county sugar cane is being raised in paying quantities. It is manufactured into sirup [sic]. [...] Corn does very well on the black land, as do oats, potatoes and millet. Cotton yields easily a bale to the acre when the boll weevil does not interfere (A. H. Belo & Company 1904).

Technological advances encouraged investment in equipment, especially increasingly affordable motorized trucks and tractors. Agriculturalists built garages and sheds to protect this property. Tenancy had spiked by 1920, climaxed in 1930, and declined subtly by 1940 as landowners reclaimed their property to combat the depressive economy (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1942). Tenant properties had similar domestic and agricultural resources comparably organized into workspaces. Tenant dwellings were typically newer but less adequate than those on owner-operated properties (Gray et al. 1925, 581). This was likely to be true for other buildings and structures on tenant properties.

Table 6: Aggregate Agricultural Census Statistics for Aransas County, 1900-1940

	1900	1910	1925	1930	1940
Number of agricultural properties	47	79	84	143	108
Average acreage	275	500	701	702	1,075
Value of all agricultural properties	\$819,910	\$747,385	\$798,126	\$1,918,900	\$1,088,040
Equipment value	\$2,890	\$12,562	\$25,360	\$106,506	\$25,206
Percent owner/tenant	73/24	76/22	48/45	40/50	55/34
Bushels of corn	3,180	937	1,210	1,370	4,415
Bales of ginned cotton	89	21	80	1,482	1,253
Pounds of wool	10,100	2,940*	--	--	--
Sheep	--	3,564	--	--	90
Swine	1	1,734	236	1,646	765
Dairy cows	135	208	554	677	454
Beef cattle	2,390	7,005	4,386	10,943	8,447
Horses	233	448	304	279	269
Asses and Mules	66	101	116	208	60

\* With no weight statistic provided for wool in 1910, this represents the 392 fleeces shorn at 7.5 pounds per unit.

(U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census 1913; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1921; 1932; 1942; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office 1902a; 1902d).

Aransas County’s livestock yields rose in the early decades of the twentieth century, contrary to state and national trends which saw livestock numbers and yields generally succumb to Depression-era recession by 1940 (see Table 6). Local agriculturists continued to raise swine, dairy cows, poultry, and provisional crops to sustain their families. They also retained relatively large numbers of draft animals for livestock management purposes, and these animals plus dairy cows were sheltered in barns or sheds.

The 1904 Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide described stock raising in Aransas County:

Cattle do well in this section. Four acres of grass land will support a steer. The Gulf breezes keep the grass within a mile of the shore green when grass on land farther interior ward is nearly dead for want of rain. The average of yearly increase in cattle is greater here than in the interior. Hogs are profitably grown. They fatten well on acorns, which are generally abundant, while those in reach of the water have no difficulty getting a good living from the bay (A. H. Belo & Company 1904).

The scourge of Texas Fever, the common appellation for an epidemic of babesia that overtook the cattle industry in the late nineteenth century, came under control after the turn of the century as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Animal Industry instituted a campaign to stamp out the disease using in-ground dipping vats. Cattle were guided individually through a slender working chute to a narrow concrete channel, immersed progressively deeper in the vat until briefly but fully submerged in a cleansing solution, then directed through gradually shallower levels until exiting (Dase et al. 2010b, E12).

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the county’s corn and cotton crops vacillated decennially, and output of both reached new, although modest, heights in 1940. These yields upped the need for storing corn in storage cribs, bins, silos, or barns on agricultural properties and in similar structures or elevators at feed mills. As the decades progressed, Aransas County’s agriculturists turned to cotton, and ginned bales increased sharply in 1930 and 1940.

Cotton growers usually transported their yields soon after harvest to a complex where the raw material was stored in a cotton house or warehouse, ginned, and formed into 400-hundred-pound bales for sale and shipment. Still, many local farmers abstained from growing cotton on the thick, heavy soils (Freier 1979, 225).

Fundamental changes to transportation and the composition of the population impacted agricultural production and practices in Aransas County between 1910 and 1940. First, improvements to and expansion of transportation networks benefited local agriculturists. These included channel dredging through Aransas Pass, enhancements to vehicular roads and highways, and construction of the SA&APR, all of which provided easier access for exporting goods to more inland markets and importing modern equipment and building materials, like milled and dimensional lumber (C. Long 2020a).

The effects of the Great Depression on local agriculturists are also underrepresented. In the 1930s, the federal government offered relief programs to tackle the devastating effects of severe economic conditions. The Agricultural Adjustment Act implemented a series of programs designed to control surpluses and maintain a minimum income level for agriculturists. In the interest of removing glut from overabundant markets, farmers and ranchers reduced acreage, accepted quotas, abandoned cultivated crops, and killed livestock. Farmers engaged in soil conservation practices, such as terracing, to prevent erosion on overused croplands; in current aerial images, however, remnants of these practices are not readily apparent in Aransas County. Regionally, qualifying farmers, both land holders and tenants, diversified with legume crops and Bermuda pastures, conserved soil and prevented erosion using unspecified practices, and received payment for reduction of cotton acreage (*Victoria Advocate* 1937). Although some of these organizations existed before and during the depression, in its aftermath, local branches of federal- and state-sponsored agencies or private organizations played a greater role in helping and monitoring agricultural activity. These include the agricultural extension service, soil conservation district, and agricultural association; women-based organizations like home demonstration clubs; and others that encouraged the participation of younger generations, like 4-H and Future Farmers of America.

Compensation measures taken during the extended national agricultural depression aided Aransas County's farm and ranch families, although housing conditions remained bleak for many as late as 1940. In addition to dwellings, most rural properties still maintained the same types of domestic and agricultural buildings and structures as in previous decades, but this would change more dramatically after World War II.

### [Agriculture, 1942–1973](#)

After World War II through the mid-1970s, agriculture's role in the local economy continued to diminish, with the total number of farms in the county declining to only 27 by 1974. Tenancy declined, and property values rose in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Apart from beef cattle, Aransas County's agricultural yields plummeted after World War II in large part due to the 1950s drought. Fewer families raised provisional livestock or crops, and dairy cows shrank to nil. With increasingly inefficient drainage, poor irrigation, and soil compaction, the few local cash crops all but dissipated by the early 1970s. In the aftermath of the drought, sheep herding decreased precipitously by 1969 and had practically ceased by 1974. By 1970, local agricultural production was focused on cattle (Table 7).



Table 7: Aggregate Agricultural Census Statistics for Aransas County, 1949-1974

	1949	1959	1969	1974
Number of agricultural properties	87	80	55	27
Average acreage	778	775	931	888
Average value of agricultural property	\$11,825	\$70,607	\$106,570	\$179,256
Percent owner/tenant	79/21	78/22	--	71/29
Bushels of corn	815	880	--	--
Bales of ginned cotton	556	435	517	54
Pounds of wool	160	363	--	--
Sheep	79	78	81	6
Swine	172	233	23	8
Dairy cows	261	34	10	1
Beef cattle	5,963	5,012	4,754	3,572
Draft livestock	182	151	22	40

(U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1961; 1961; 1972; 1977)

The built environment changed dramatically after World War II. In the domestic sphere, original main houses had often already evolved with additions to enlarge and modernize to accommodate a growing family. Agriculturists who prospered might abandon, demolish, or otherwise replace an older dwelling with a newly constructed home. Engine-powered vehicles and aircraft—trucks, tractors, small airplanes, and helicopters—diminished the need for draft animals and related buildings even as cattle ranchers grew their herds in the post-drought years to almost 21,000 head. Livestock feed lots and auction houses became common after the 1950s, attracting slaughterhouses, tanneries, and the meat-packing industry from their more typical locations in large cities. Soil conservation districts, drainage districts, and the county agricultural extension office, all of which supported farmers and ranchers with various programs, built facilities to sustain their staff and projects. Large wood- and metal-frame barns protected vehicles, aircraft, and equipment, such as combines, mower conditioners, pickup balers, windrowers, and harvesters. Operators added miles of fences, interior roads, with advantageously placed permanent corrals and pens, related loading chutes, and gates with cattle guards, and more unusual additions like landing strips. Post-drought, many added water sources using windmills and natural drainages and storing supplies in troughs, livestock tanks, or reservoirs. Ranchers required increasingly heavy capital investments for these improvements. Large-scale ranches more readily adapted to an industry that remained generally cyclical but embraced new technology. Breeding and industry promotion took a progressively greater role (Richardson and Hinton 2021). Organizations like the soil conservation district and agricultural extension service became increasingly active, working with local farmers and ranchers to improve practices.

For the most part, extant agricultural resources in Aransas County are likely to date to the twentieth century. Most farms and ranches have a cluster of resources at a hub or headquarters with their location largely dependent on the location of water. Few resources date to the nineteenth century for several reasons including the many weather events that caused severe damage; the relatively low number of agricultural properties in the county at the time; the very limited number and type of buildings and structures required for livestock ranching and their temporary lifespans if not maintained; the tendency to replace older resources with newer buildings and structures; and, where land is subdivided, the addition of newer homes on smaller parcels. Extant pre-World War II rural houses have experienced additions or alterations, particularly to install indoor plumbing in kitchens and bathrooms and to upgrade living standards. In the

decade immediately after World War II, agricultural buildings and resources are typically of wood construction, but by the late 1950s, metal became increasingly preferable and prefabricated buildings and structures became ubiquitous.

### Periods of Significance

Four discrete periods of significance have been developed for this context. The earliest period introduces livestock ranching and attendant subsistence farming from 1824 to 1846, when the earliest native-born Anglo American and foreign-born European immigrants settled in Refugio County and largely maintained local Tejano ranching and farming traditions, which are rarely evident in rural areas of present-day Aransas County. The period between 1846 and 1900 parallels antebellum and postbellum economic extremes and marked the development of early and varied transportation routes and nominal technological advancements. Between 1900 and 1942, local agricultural production recounts modestly higher cash-crop yields despite agricultural and economic depression, but new lows for livestock herds. The final period, from 1942 to 1973, considers an overall decline of all agricultural yields except limited cattle ranching.

### Areas of Significance

Agriculture, Architecture, Engineering, Ethnic Heritage

### Related Property Types

- Agricultural complexes: with requisite domestic workspace with related buildings and structures, agricultural workspace with related buildings and structures, and various types of improved and unimproved lands, such as feed and cash croplands, terraces, pastures, orchards, fence lines, woodlands
- Agricultural buildings, structures, and objects: headquarters buildings, livestock barns/sheds (for horses, dairy cows, swine, or sheep/goats), storage barns/sheds, corncribs, silos, permanent troughs, coops/cotes/roosts, corrals/pens/chutes, dipping vats, livestock tanks, reservoirs, fences/gates, entry gates/posts/pylons, cattle guards
- Agricultural support resources: blacksmith shops, machine shops, granaries, dipping vats, irrigation systems, agricultural extension facilities, soil conservation district facilities, drainage district facilities, livestock feed lots/auction facilities, county fairgrounds
- Agricultural processing facilities: gristmills, syrup mills, cotton gins, stockyards, slaughterhouses, tanneries, shearing facilities
- Domestic resources: single-family dwellings, multiple-family dwellings, multiple-worker dwellings
- Domestic ancillary buildings or structures: sheds, garages, hand- or machine-dug wells, well/pump houses, cisterns/stands, privies, windmills, cellars
- Domestic landscape features: kitchen gardens, ornamental yards, swept yards, fences/gates
- Funerary resources: cemeteries
- Transportation resources: livestock trails, ranch/farm interior roads, landing strips

## SUBTHEME: COMMERCE

Initially, the economy of Aransas County (part of Refugio County until 1871) was largely based on the county's potential as a shipping port between Galveston, Texas and Veracruz, Mexico. During the early settlement period, economic activity

was generally based on subsistence agriculture and the cattle, salt, cotton, and building materials markets. By the late 1850s, only about 1,000 people lived in Aransas County. The population declined during the Civil War but rebounded in the following years as commercial centers developed in the newly established settlements of Rockport and Fulton. These locales flourished during the great cattle boom of the 1860s and 1870s and a number of businesses devoted to packing, processing, and shipping cattle and beef products emerged. Following the cattle boom, the area pivoted to commercial and sport fishing, and adjacent commercial and industrial enterprises were established, such as boat building/maintenance and bait and supply shops. Tourism emerged in the 1880s with the rise of railroads and remained an important economic driver throughout the twentieth century. Other towns and settlements in the county, including Lamar, Copano Village, and Holiday Beach emerged primarily as residential communities. While they have some local commercial properties along SH 35, these settlements were never commercial centers.

### Commerce 1860-1919

Fulton and Rockport were founded in the years immediately following the Civil War. Surrounded by cattle ranching operations, the area became a center for beef processing and cattle shipping during the great cattle boom of the 1860s and 1870s. Beef raised throughout southeastern Texas was slaughtered and processed in Fulton and Rockport and live cattle was shipped by the steamships of the Morgan Lines to New Orleans from Rockport (Shukalo 2020). As a result, a commercial district developed in Rockport along Austin Street.

By 1885 Fulton had a population of 175 and was home to “a beef-canning plant, a bone fertilizer factory, a post office, a school, and several churches” (Long 2020b). Canneries, tanneries, packing plants, and other processing facilities were erected in the county for the packing and processing of beef products. The cattle boom attracted more residents, which required more businesses to support them. Groceries, drugstores, restaurants, saloons, barbershops, and retail establishments, primarily located in Rockport, were among the early commercial facilities in the county. Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century downtown commerce included common enterprises: groceries, dry goods, mercantiles, drug stores, steam laundries, saloons, newspaper and printing companies, and various other retail operations. Near the harbors, and later the railroad, were wholesale businesses like lumber yards, warehouses, fish houses, ice houses, and packeries (Sanborn Map Company 1894; 1900; 1914).

After the arrival of the railroad in 1888, the waters and woods of Aransas County enticed visiting sport fishers, coastal and inland fowl hunters, beachgoers, and excursioners. Away from home, travelers needed lodging, food, outfitting, and entertainment. Hotels sprang up in Rockport, including the Bayside Inn. Located on Water Street, it had a long pier and pavilion that jutted out into Aransas Bay (City of Rockport 2021b). John Traylor built the Aransas Hotel in 1889, and for a time it was the largest wood-framed building in Texas. Allen and Taylor described the building and the tourist scene of the time:

The grandest hotel of all was the Aransas. Col. John H. Traylor bought all of Merchants Square to build it. It was the largest wooden structure of its time, standing three stories tall and covering almost the entire block bounded by Water, Wharf, Austin, and Main Streets. [...].

Opened in 1889, the Aransas Hotel boasted fifty rooms and wide verandas encircling the first and second floors. [...]. Colonel Traylor provided his personal yacht so that guests at the hotel could have bay and Gulf excursions.

Surrey and hack carriages from Thompsons Livery Stables offered sightseeing trips across the peninsula (Allen and Taylor 1997, 191–92).

The Bailey Pavilion was constructed in the mid-1890s at the end of a wharf in front of the Aransas Hotel. It was built in the mid-1890s. Traveling troupes and musicians performed on its stage, and during the day concessions offered “ice cold soda and mineral waters, lemonade, ginger ale, and sweet cider” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 192).

By 1900, the Bayside Inn and the Aransas Hotel had been joined by the Rockport Hotel and the Orleans Hotel (Sanborn Map Company 1900). The La Playa Hotel was constructed in 1912 at the end of Wharf Street. Although the building survived the Hurricane of 1916 with minor damage, it was more severely damaged during the Hurricane of 1919 and was demolished in the aftermath. The 1919 storm also destroyed the Bayside Inn and the Bailey Pavilion. The former Aransas Hotel (renamed the Del Mar in the 1890s) was destroyed by fire the same year as the historic storm (Allen and Taylor 1997, 192). The tourist trade suffered a severe blow as a result of the storm, which caused substantial damage in Rockport’s business district.

Rockport, and to a lesser extent, Fulton, had restaurants and outfitters that supplied transportation and equipment for hunting, fishing, and sailing excursions. These businesses were largely clustered around the developing downtown areas like Austin Street in Rockport and Fulton Beach Road in Fulton and bolstered the growing tourism industry in the county.

A number of small shops were active in Rockport and supported all of the county’s major industries; restaurants, drug stores, bakeries, grocers, laundries, and barbershops catered both to long term residents and tourists, while specialty shops such as vacation photo galleries and curio shops catered specifically to tourists (Sanborn Map Company 1894; 1914). Simon Sorenson established a ship chandlery on Austin Street in 1886. The building was reduced from two stories following a fire in 1895 and still remains today (Figure 14).



**The Sorenson Store**

Figure 20: The Sorenson Store on Austin Street, c. 1900 (Anonymous 1900).

To support local commerce, the First National Bank of Aransas Pass<sup>2</sup> (located in Rockport) was chartered in October of 1890 by John H. Traylor, James M. Hoopes, George W. Fulton, and other local businessmen. The bank was first located at Main and Water Streets (City of Rockport 2021b).

### Commerce 1919–1973

Tourism-related and other commercial businesses gradually recovered after the perilous 1919 hurricane. By 1920, Rockport was rebuilding but the population stood at 1,545, “scarcely larger than it had been a decade earlier” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 268). In the years following the storm, retail establishments returned. Leopold and Roland Bracht established a furniture store, Marvin Davis established a coffee shop that expanded over the years to include sandwiches and alcohol sales. Davis’s original shop was destroyed in a fire in the 1940s, and the family replaced it with an Art Moderne style building in 1942<sup>3</sup> (Churchwell 2021).

New hunting and boating clubs were established, including the St. Charles Bay Hunt Club, which opened in 1925 on the east shore of the Lamar Peninsula. Local guides resumed hunting and fishing excursions. Beginning in the 1920s, affordability and the resulting popularity of automobiles generated new prospects for commercial ventures. Accommodations typical of the pre-war period, such as tourist homes or motor camps, cottages, cabins, courts, or inns,

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<sup>2</sup> Rockport briefly changed its name to Aransas Pass for a period at the turn of the twentieth century before changing it back to Rockport in 1903. The bank changed its name from the First National Bank of Aransas Pass to the First National Bank of Rockport in 1903.

<sup>3</sup> The Kline Family purchased the establishment in 1968. Kline’s Café building is still extant and was relocated from its historic location at North Street and South Austin Streets in 2021 (Churchwell 2021).

slowly proliferated the county. Growth was slow, however, and by 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, Rockport's population was further reduced from 1,545 to 1,140 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 270–77).

After World War II, Aransas County became more automobile centric. From the 1950s through the early 1970s, the prevalence of automobile transportation shifted consumer interests. During this period, state highways and local roads underwent improvements that included reconstructing older routes, constructing new alignments, and paving smaller and feeder streets. Auto-centric commercial areas developed along SH 35 during this period. Accommodations for travelers expanded to include roadside motels.

As competition from newer roadside enterprises increased, downtown commercial businesses attempted to stay relevant with updated and replaced storefront materials during the post-war period. In some cases, new designs followed traditional fenestration patterns with newer materials like structural or flat glass, porcelain enamel, or screen slipcovers. In other cases, stone, brick, wood panels, or sheet metal enclosed original storefronts. Some downtown buildings were lost to accommodate rising parking needs.

The Del Mar Grill was a café that opened on Austin Street in the mid-twentieth century. The seafood restaurant erected a blue crab on top of the building in 1957, which became a local landmark. Although the Grill closed in 1965, the crab was moved Veterans' Memorial Park by the harbor, where it remained until 1976. It was ultimately lost to Hurricane Harvey in 2017 (City of Rockport 2021b). However, after significant community involvement, the crab was replaced in July of 2021 (KIII News, Lexis Greene).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, seafood and tourism remained the county's largest economic drivers. By the 1990s, oil and gas extraction was among the leading industries, in addition to fish packing and tourism. Commercial establishments including hotels, restaurants, groceries, laundries, and others continue to serve tourists and business travelers.

Extant commercial resources in Aransas County largely date to the twentieth century. Commercial central business districts are primarily located in downtown Rockport, and to a lesser extent, Fulton. Early and mid-twentieth century auto-centric business areas are located along major routes, and small numbers of commercial resources are located in or near some of the county's smaller communities. Commercial resources are commonly altered as the result of resolving hurricane damage and modernizing storefronts.

### [Periods of Significance](#)

Two distinct periods of significance have been developed for the Commerce context, based on the history of commercial businesses within Aransas County. The first period spans from 1860 to 1919 and accounts for resources from the county's early economic development; however, few resources have survived from this period due to widespread fires in Rockport in the early 1890s and damage from the Hurricane of 1919. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Rockport from the year 1894 reveals that the vast majority of construction by that time consisted of wood frame buildings, many of which were hastily constructed during boom times and during periods of speculative development which fizzled by the turn of the twentieth century.

The second period spans from 1919 through the survey cutoff date of 1973 to account for commercial enterprises that were constructed following the aftermath of the hurricane and supported population increases and tourism. Visitors lured by local industries including tourism, commercial fishing and seafood, and later the oil industry created a commercial demand for goods, services, and food. This period of significance also includes the resources and infrastructure built as a result of the shift to auto-centric commerce beginning after the construction of SH 35 in the 1930s.

### [Areas of Significance](#)

Architecture, Commerce, Engineering, Ethnic History, Social History

### [Related Property Types](#)

Commercial buildings from all periods of significance noted herein have the potential for significance under this theme. These would specifically include:

- Shops and retail establishments
- Restaurants
- Hotels, motels, vacation cottages, and sportsman’s clubs and lodges

## SUBTHEME: MARITIME

Maritime shipping from coastal Texas evolved with the state’s economic development. Before the Civil War, Galveston and Velasco were the most important ports on the Gulf coast. These ports were primarily engaged in trade with New Orleans. Most of the trade was of the common-carrier type, an evolution from the merchant-trader type more common in the early nineteenth century. Shallow water ports including Brazos Santiago (at Port Isabel), Indianola, Port Lavaca, Corpus Christi, Port Aransas, and Sabine Pass, primarily served intercoastal trade which generally cleared at Galveston (Handbook of Texas Online 2021).

After the Civil War, maritime shipping increased but shallow-water ports struggled to compete. Smaller ports declined partly due to the growth of railroad transportation in the 1870s and 1880s and partly due to the steadily increasing draft of ocean-shipping vessels, which required deeper harbors and waterways for navigation (Handbook of Texas Online 2021).

### [Early Navigational and Harbor Improvements \(1850-1912\)](#)

Aransas County’s location on the Gulf Coast between the major port city of Galveston and major ports in southern Mexico made it an appealing choice for a new deep-water commercial harbor. The USACE expressed interest in establishing a harbor in the Coastal Bend area as early as 1853. Advancing this project became a decades-long ordeal, marked by a number of false starts and failures before the effort was completed in the early twentieth century.

The natural channel over a sand bar between Mustang Island and San Jose Island, now called the Aransas Pass, was known to Europeans as early as 1528 when it was recorded on the Bratton map (Leatherwood 2020a). The natural pass allowed access between San Jose Island and Harbor Island to the eastern shore of the Live Oak Peninsula. While the pass granted access in ideal conditions, it was also subject to changes in depth due to erosion and sedimentation. Furthermore, passage from the Aransas Pass to Corpus Christi was hampered by the Corpus Christi mudflats, located just inside the pass. Ships traveling from the open ocean into Corpus Christi Bay were forced to first travel north into Aransas Bay before looping south to avoid the shallow flats, making Aransas' ports easier to access (Allen and Taylor 1997, 207).

By 1854, the Texas legislature authorized construction of a seven-mile channel from the Aransas Pass to Corpus Christi (Leatherwood 2020a). In 1856, Pryor Lea obtained a charter to improve navigation through the Aransas Pass as well as to construct a road and rail route to connect an Aransas-area harbor to the mainland. Lea founded the Aransas Road Company to build railroads and turnpikes to connect the interior region at San Antonio to the coast, with opportunities for shipping to far-flung markets through the Aransas Pass (Allen and Taylor 1997, 207). Although Lea's efforts at construction were ultimately a failure, the effort to connect San Antonio with a maritime center in the region were revived by the Central Transit Company in the late 1850s. Although the English financial investors who backed the project noted "all that is necessary was to cut a navigable channel through the sandbar at Aransas Pass to build up one of the world's greatest seaports," the campaign was ultimately stymied by the outbreak of the Civil War (Guthrie 2020a).

The Aransas Pass Light Station was constructed on Harbor Island, just to the north of the Aransas Pass, in 1855. The natural pass through the sandbar was unstable, and it soon migrated a mile to the south through erosion and sedimentation. This condition launched a series of interventions through the construction of "dikes, revetments, sand fences, jetties, brush and stone mattresses, and tree plantings." The effort was largely a series of failures until 1885, when the erosion was finally sufficiently controlled through the efforts of the USACE (Leatherwood 2020a). Today the Aransas Pass is located approximately one mile south of the light station.

Rockport became a major shipping hub during the great cattle boom, utilizing the city's natural rock harbor in the years following the Civil War. The Morgan Steamship Line was operating in Texas as early as 1837, and began service to Rockport in 1867 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 152). After the Civil War, Lea restarted his efforts to improve the Aransas Pass. Prominent cattle ranching enterprises in Rockport and Fulton supported the project, as improvement of the pass would benefit the shipping of live cattle and products to market in New Orleans and elsewhere (Allen and Taylor 1997, 208). In 1879, a group from Rockport raised \$10,000 for the project and rallied enough interest that Congress passed a resolution authorizing the deepening of Aransas Pass, (C. Long 2020a).





**Sorenson's Wharf About 1900**

Figure 21: A c. 1900 view of Sorenson's Wharf, Rockport (Texas Historical Commission 1900).

Beginning around 1890, considerable political and commercial activity was directed toward the establishment of deep-water ports in Texas (Handbook of Texas Online 2021). In 1890, two groups of entrepreneurs, with overlapping membership, chartered the Aransas Pass Harbor Company and the Aransas Harbor City and Improvement Company. The Harbor Company would dig a channel from the Gulf to a site west of present-day Aransas Pass, where the Harbor City Company proposed to develop Harbor City. While the vision of "Harbor City" was never achieved, the USACE did deepen Aransas Pass and dredge a deep-water port at Harbor Island by 1912. The Aransas Terminal Railroad connected the island harbor to the mainland and the SA&AP Railroad, and oceangoing freight was on- and offloaded at the Harbor Island port (Guthrie 2020a; 2021b).

Soon after, Congress appropriated funds for a new harbor in the vicinity of the Aransas Pass. The plan to construct "a safe and adequate deep-water harbor" would mean prosperity for the chosen town. Although studies by the USACE suggested that the costs for constructing a deep-water channel through the mud flats to Aransas Pass or Rockport would be lower, Corpus Christi had a higher population, was served by four railroads, and was ultimately chosen as the deep-water port. The Corpus Christi Deepwater Harbor Bill was signed in 1922 and the Port of Corpus Christi opened in 1926, effectively ending Aransas' prospects for developing a major port within its boundaries (Allen and Taylor 1997, 268–69).



Figure 22: View of the Rockport harbor before the construction of Key Allegro, c. 1960 (Texas Historical Commission n.d.).

The efforts at Harbor Island spurred speculative development in Rockport in 1910, when the Gulf Coast Immigration Company announced plans to turn Rockport into “a great city” by constructing a railroad from Rockport to Harbor Island, where an elaborate port city would handle ocean-going freight, allowing Rockport’s harbor to be dedicated to passenger-service ocean liners. Land promoters attracted Mexican and US settlers to the area, but the railroad from Rockport to Harbor Island was never constructed. Although the Humble Oil and Refining Company (later Exxon Company) operated a large oil terminal on the island by 1927, the port ceased operations as a dry cargo port following the opening of the deep-water port in Corpus Christi in 1926 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 219; Guthrie 2021b; 2021a).

During WWI, Fred Heldenfels opened a shipyard in Rockport. The ships produced there needed a channel with a 14-foot depth to exit the bay and improvements to Aransas Bay were required. To facilitate these improvements, a small area was dredged near Lydia Ann Island (Allen and Taylor 1997, 230–31).

#### Local Harbor Improvement Era (1920-1960)

In 1925, the county established the Aransas County Navigational District. It completed dredging operations and constructed wooden bulkheads for a new harbor at Rockport (Allen and Taylor 1997, 272). In 1936, the Aransas County Navigation District constructed a \$110,000 seawall and improved the small boat harbor in Rockport. The breakwater was extended, and concrete bulkheads were installed. The result was a perfectly round basin that locals would call the “fishbowl” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 302). Other public works by the Navigation District in the early twentieth century

included the Rockport Beach and saltwater swimming pool, a protected swimming area off Aransas Bay constructed in 1935 (Shukalo 2020).

A network of coastal canals had been envisioned by transportation officials since the Texas Republic period. Congress authorized a survey for a system to connect inland waters from Louisiana to the Rio Grande in 1873. By 1875 the USACE had submitted the first plan for a waterway east of the Mississippi. The waterway was constructed by dredging new channels and enlarging, extending, and connecting existing channels. The growth of the oil and petrochemical industries along the Texas Coast increased transportation demands and supported the completion of an intracoastal canal system. By 1905, a continuous channel 9 feet deep and 100 feet wide was completed from New Orleans to Galveston Bay (Leatherwood 2020b). The US government appropriated \$9 million for a shipping canal between the Mississippi River and Galveston in 1925, and in 1927 approved its extension to Corpus Christi (Allen and Taylor 1997, 302). By 1941, the canal was completed to Corpus Christi Bay. It reached its terminus at the Brownsville Ship Channel by 1959 and had been enlarged to 12 feet deep and 125 feet wide (Leatherwood 2021).

In 1938, the Intracoastal Waterway came to the waters around Aransas County. The Commissioners Court of Aransas County met with the Intracoastal Canal Association and determined it would use the natural channels already in use for shipping in the county's waters. Some dredging was required, and the Intracoastal Waterway officially opened in Aransas County in July of 1940. The opening festivities coincided with the Fourth of July weekend, and included a "Million-Dollar Boat Parade" and the dedication of the new breakwater in Rockport (Allen and Taylor 1997, 302–3).

### Periods of Significance

Two distinct periods of significance have been developed for this context, based on the history of maritime activity within Aransas County. The Early Navigational and Harbor Improvements (1850-1912) accounts for early improvements to navigation and to harbors in the county prior to the establishment of a deep-water harbor at Aransas Pass. These improvements were primarily undertaken by or with extensive support from the federal government. The Local Harbor Improvement Era (1920-1960) encompasses improvements to harbors in Rockport and Fulton undertaken by the Aransas County Navigational District.

### Areas of Significance

Maritime History, Engineering, Architecture

### Related Property Types

Maritime infrastructure and buildings from all periods of significance noted herein have the potential for significance under this theme. These would specifically include:

- Seawalls, bulkheads, breakwaters, canals, harbors, piers, docks, wharves, jetties and other built infrastructure
- Warehouses, storage tanks, shipbuilding/maintenance and repair facilities, commercial buildings

## SUBTHEME: INDUSTRY

The imprint of industrial development on Aransas County's landscape has changed markedly since the mid-nineteenth century. The first forms of industry in the area processed raw materials for mostly local use, apart from beef, for which the coastal ports at Rockport and Fulton provided ample opportunity for export to more-distant markets. In the twentieth century, industrial improvements included seafood processing centers, municipal utilities, and wholesale seafood, with shipbuilding and dredging activity to support related industries throughout the century. Because tropical storms and hurricanes have ravaged the county, few nineteenth-century industrial resources are extant and many from the twentieth century, both on the coast and inland, are no longer present.

### Cattle Boom Era – Processing and Shipping (1861-1890)

In the years after the Civil War, Fulton and Rockport attracted new residents with needs for additional merchants and a wider variety of merchandise. The population and economy continued to increase during the cattle boom of the 1870s. Cattle raised in local rural communities like Estes supplied beef for processing and shipping, spurring growth in Rockport and Fulton. The first packery in the county was established near Rockport in 1865, and by 1868 many were in operation along the shoreline of the Live Oak Peninsula. Local ranchers and entrepreneurs Coleman, Mathis, and Fulton formed their livestock company (ultimately the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company) in 1871 and forged a cattle empire that remained in operation until 1930. At the peak of its operations, the company controlled 265,000 acres of land between Rockport and San Patricio County, some of which extended into parts of Live Oak, Bee, and Goliad counties. Some of the first fences in South Texas were installed by this company (Guthrie 2020b).

The cattle boom began to wane in Aransas County by the 1880s, as beef processing operations were shifted to Chicago and Kansas City. Although slaughterhouses, packeries, and canneries went bust during this period, ranching remained a significant economic driver in the region and shipping live cattle through Rockport remained active. Few of these resources survive, given that many were supplanted by the fish houses and canneries that followed them, and many were in locations along the harbors of Rockport and Fulton which have been frequently subjected to the destructive effects of frequent hurricanes.

### Commercial Fishing and Seafood (1890-1980)

Rockport and Fulton survived in the decades following the cattle boom by shifting to commercial fishing and processing industries. By 1890, a turtle-canning plant had been erected in Fulton, and deep-sea fishing emerged as an important local industry. Commercial fishing began to flourish in Rockport and Fulton beginning in the 1890s as Aransas County locals sought an alternative industry to cattle in the years following the end of the cattle boom. Allen and Taylor describe the impetus for a shift to the commercial seafood trade in their treatise "*Aransas: The Life of a Texas Coastal County*" as follows:

So much attention to cattle had diminished an appreciation of the other great resource of Aransas – the life in its bays. By 1880 a federal government fisheries expert had become aware of that, writing that Massachusetts had less sea life than the 'rich tribute of delicious fish and mollusks' blessing Aransas, but the northern state harvested five times as much of it as the entire gulf coast.

Local fisherman soon decided that if Aransas teemed with delights denied the harsh, cold north, the county surely had enough to share. They quickly discovered that the northern markets were willing to pay any price for the magnificent fare of Aransas” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 199).

Bay fisherman in Fulton and elsewhere in the county caught “redfish, sea trout, sand trout, sheepshead, croakers, jackfish, hogfish, drum, mullet, bluefish, Spanish mackerel, pompano, rockfish, jewfish, pigfish, and whiting” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 200). Turtles had always been plentiful in the waters surrounding Aransas County and as early as 1870 many of the county’s beef packeries began side operations processing and packing turtle meat. By 1890, Texas accounted for more than half of the entire turtle catch in the Gulf of Mexico, and 85% of Texas’s turtle catch was in Aransas County. The Fulton Canning Company had a booming business packing turtle meat, producing 40,000 two-pound cans of turtle meat in the year 1890. Cast-offs from the turtle processing business supported the local population, as fish came to feed among the discarded turtle shells, making the wharves around the cannery a prime fishing spot for redfish and trout. The cannery also gave away turtle broth, a byproduct of the canning process, “by the bucketful” – a boon to struggling families during lean times. But the turtle boom was shorter-lived than the cattle boom and, by the turn of the century, over-harvesting had decimated the turtle population (Allen and Taylor 1997, 200–201).

Many fish processing and packaging operations opened in Rockport and Fulton in the period spanning the late 1880s and the early twentieth century but hurricanes in 1916 and 1919 did tremendous damage to these buildings and plants. Surviving examples date to the 1920s and later, as existing companies rebuilt their facilities and new companies were formed over the subsequent years. For example, the Jackson Fish Company was founded by the Jackson Brothers in 1906 and destroyed during the hurricane of 1919. The company rebuilt, expanded by 1935, and remained in operation until the 1990s (Allen and Taylor 1997, 253).

### Shipbuilding (1900 – 1980)

By the end of the nineteenth century, a small shipbuilding industry had developed in Rockport and Fulton to support maritime travel within the county. Abundant yellow pine and the presence of lumber yards and sawmills within the area supported the emergent wooden shipbuilding industry at the time.

A. M. Westergard began building pleasure craft in Rockport in the late 1920s, and local interest grew in sailboats and sailboat racing:

Many mariners considered (and still consider) Aransas the best sailing bay in Texas. Since it is long and narrow, waves do not build up as high as do those in Corpus Christi and San Antonio Bays. There is almost always a good breeze, and Aransas offers numerous good anchorages and cruising areas (Allen and Taylor 1997, 304).

By 1937, Raymond “Chick” Rogers was building cargo ships in Rockport. Around the same time, oilman T. Noah Smith established a small boathouse and repair business which became the Rockport Yacht and Supply Company (Allen and Taylor 1997, 304).

Demand for ships increased during World War I and again during World War II, and local enterprises opened shops to produce vessels for the war effort and to service and maintain government vessels. Shipbuilding in Aransas County during World War I and World War II is more fully described in the Subsection: Military Institutions and Activities.

Following the wars, shipbuilding in Aransas County continued on a smaller scale. Local shipyards built yachts in addition to more utilitarian vessels. The Rockport Yacht and Supply Company grew and modernized their facilities in the 1950s. The company continued to grow through the 1960s and 1970s, until the oil industry's downturn in the 1980s affected regional wealth, negatively impacting the pleasure craft industry (Allen and Taylor 1997, 333).

### Petrochemical Industry (1936 – 1980)

Oil was not discovered within the boundaries of Aransas County until 1936, however, oil and gas extraction became important in the greater region in the late-1920s and early-1930s. The Greta Oilfield opened in Refugio County in 1928 and "demonstrated the tremendous potential for oil production in the area; in 1936 almost 9,756,000 barrels of crude were taken from wells in Refugio County" (Leffler 2020). Allen and Taylor described the beginnings of the industry in their *Aransas: The Life of a Texas Coastal County*.

During the 1870s, a land owner wanted a water well at St. Mary's. Workmen digging it brought a water sample to the surface and found it covered with a blackish oil scum. The land owner, worried that the well was spoiled, quickly had the hole covered up.

Hunters and fisherman, camping on nearby Power's Point some years later, claimed to hear loud explosions in the direction of Mission Bay. Early geologists interpreted the circular shape of that bay, and Mission Lake, as evidence of prehistoric explosions of natural gas.

After [the discovery of oil] at Spindletop set Beaumont reeling, landowners in Aransas began to dream of black gold. In 1909 Harry Hertzberg and Harry Traylor made the first effort to drill for oil at Aransas, but they never solicited enough funds to drill.

John E. Schell of Pennsylvania leased all of San Jose Island from T. D. Wood and Sam B. Allyn. He drilled to 3,000 feet but then abandoned the well and released no information concerning it. H. E. Bahr had a large gas well at White Point, southwest of Aransas. He wrote that it produced "pure petroleum."

Drill derricks dotted Refugio and San Patricio Counties. Storage tanks, necessary to hold all the production that was coming in, changed the landscape of Mustang and Harbor Islands (Allen and Taylor 1997, 217).

By 1927, natural gas production in the region passed four billion cubic feet a day. The Humble Oil Company built a small refinery at Ingleside (Nueces and San Patricio Counties), and many small plants opened in Corpus Christi, Refugio, and Port Lavaca during the 1930s (Olien n.d.).

After the discovery of oil, the industry expanded during the early twentieth century and helped to sustain the local economy during the Great Depression. After the war, commercial fishing, shrimping, and tourism remained the primary industries, but oil and gas extraction were on the rise. Wells were drilled to the west of Rockport and northeast of the Aransas County Airfield in the mid-twentieth century (Allen and Taylor 1997, 329). These oil fields typically had pump units with related separators, metering stations, and storage tanks linked to pipelines. Larger operations have pump houses or stations, power or boiler houses, and refinery facilities or natural gas casinghead, cycling, or injection plants (Dase 2003). The industry downturned sharply as supply outstripped demand and prices fell in the 1980s (Eaton 2016).

### Periods of Significance

Four periods of significance have been established for industrial history in Aransas County. The Cattle Boom Era encompasses the period of time when processing and shipping of cattle products was the county's primary economic driver. It begins following the Civil War in 1861 and runs until 1890 when the local economy pivoted from cattle processing and shipping to commercial fishing and seafood. The era of Commercial Fishing and Seafood begins in 1890 and continues through 1980 to encompass changes to the industry including the addition of shrimping. The period of significance for shipbuilding spans from 1900 to encompass the county's fledgling shipbuilding industry through its growth during the two World Wars and through mid-twentieth century changes through the decline of the industry by 1980. The period of significance for the Petrochemical Industry begins in 1936 when oil was first discovered in the county and runs through 1980 when the industry declined.

### Areas of Significance

Architecture, Engineering, Industry

### Related Property Types

- Industrial complexes: extractive, manufacturing, and/or processing facilities with collections of requisite resources plus associated storage resources, transportation resources, office buildings, parking lots
- Extractive facilities: derricks, drill rigs, pump houses, pump stations, pump units, power/boiler houses, separators, metering stations, office buildings, warehouses, parking lots
- Processing facilities: food processing/packing, grain elevators, cotton gins/houses/compresses, cotton seed oil mills, trash burners and hoppers, storage resources, office buildings, warehouses, parking lots
- Manufacturing facilities: mills, shipyards, factories, refineries, natural gas plants (casinghead, cycling, and injection), power/boiler houses, office buildings, warehouses, parking lots
- Waterworks resources: filtration plants, sewage treatment plants, reservoirs, water towers, dams, pump houses, ice plants, warehouses
- Energy facilities: generating plants, substations, transmission lines, windmills, turbines, office buildings, warehouses
- Communications facilities: exchange offices, pole lines
- Storage resources: bulk terminal plants, tanks, tank farms, grain storage bins, cotton houses, seed storage houses/bins, warehouses
- Transportation resources: pipelines (fountain heads and gathering, trunk, and natural gas lines), railroad sidings, wharves

## THEME: ETHNIC HERITAGE

The historical ethnic makeup of Aransas County encompasses several bands of Native Americans, Europeans, Latinos, and African Americans. The native population occupied the territory in both prehistoric and historic periods. Archaeological artifacts recovered in Aransas County and the surrounding area suggest that the area has been the site of human habitation for several thousand years. Artifacts from a culture known as Aransas have been located and dated to approximately 4,000 years ago. The Aransas Indians, a nomadic hunter-gatherer people are believed to have left the

Gulf Coast between 1200 and 1300 AD. During the historic period, the area was occupied by several groups of Native Americans including the Karankawas and Coahuiltecans. Most of these groups were forced from the area or succumbed to disease following the arrival of Europeans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Spanish explorers visited the region in the first quarter of the sixteenth century but did not make any settlements in the area. In 1695, the French established a colony in Texas and dispatched an expedition to the Aransas area in 1689, but again no settlement was established. In 1766, Diego Ortiz Parrilla named what is now Copano Bay "Santo Domingo," and named what is now St. Joseph Island "Culebra Island." By the late colonial period, the Spanish established a port, a mission, and a fort in the Aransas County vicinity between about 1780 and 1810. Several attempts to establish settlements in the general area were unsuccessful primarily due to the threat of Indian attacks and the distance from other Spanish enclaves (C. Long 2020a).

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans came to Texas in large numbers. Many fled their Old-World countries as a result of political, religious, or economic difficulties. Publications produced as early as the 1830s and through the 1850s lured foreign-born immigrants to Texas in search of a better life (Dase et al. 2010, 21).

After Mexican independence in 1821, Irish immigrants James Power and James Hewetson received empresario grants encompassing the majority of the Aransas area with rights to the ruins of the old mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio and surrounding town, which was at the mouth of the Guadalupe River in present-day Refugio County. The new mission had been moved to the Mission River after a Native American raid in 1794 (Leffler 2020). The majority of the 350 Irish settlers that Power brought over from Ireland were from Ballygarrett Parish in County Wexford. These immigrants were attracted to Texas by the opportunity of landownership. An outbreak of cholera killed many after their arrival in Texas, while many of the survivors, joined by colonists from Mexico, moved to the abandoned Refugio Mission, which served as the center of operations for the colony (Handbook of Texas Online 2020).

After the annexation of Texas, new settlers poured into the state. A census conducted by the State of Texas in 1847 reported the population of the state as 142,009. The first United States Census taken in Texas in 1850 enumerated 212,592 residents in the state but did not count the Native American population. Immigrants arriving to the Gulf Coast through entry ports in Galveston and Indianola, as well as through Nacogdoches were primarily from the lower South. Numerous foreign-born European immigrants, particularly Germans, also entered through these ports during the late 1840s (Campbell 2021).

Slavery evolved in southeastern Texas much as it did through the south. The majority of Texas's white inhabitants had been natives of the South and brought the traditions of their home states with them as they settled the eastern timberlands and southern central plains. They ultimately turned to the production of cotton as a cash crop, cementing the need for slave labor on the frontier. By 1846, Texas had more than 30,000 black slaves and produced a considerable amount of cotton (Campbell 2021). Given its low population in general, Aransas County (still Refugio prior to emancipation), had few slaves. Because the production of cotton was relatively low in the area that would become Aransas County, the ratio of slave to white population is low relative to neighboring counties and other areas of the country (Dase et al. 2010, 30–31). By 1850 eight enslavers held a total of 19 enslaved persons in rural Aransas (at that time part of Refugio) County. By 1860 that number had risen to 234 enslaved persons held by 61 enslavers (U.S. Census Bureau 1850; Leffler 2020).



The US Census data for 1870 on Aransas County shows roughly the same number of free Black persons as enslaved Black persons in the previous decade, generally indicating that the freedmen population largely remained in the region following emancipation, at least in the short term. Lacking cash and land, many freed families lived in log houses that were easy and inexpensive to build, upgrading in later years as their finances allowed. Most freedmen were trained in agriculture and turned to sharecropping or leasing land to farm (Dase et al. 2010, 32).

Numerous freedmen communities were established in the South in the 1870s and 1880s, and many survived into the twentieth century when “Jim Crow” laws forced segregation. Sometimes referred to in modern times as “Freedom Colonies,” these small enclaves typically included homes clustered around community resources like a church, school, lodge-hall, and perhaps a store. Given the difficulties in establishing financial security in the decades following emancipation, these communities were typically located on less desirable lands, far from main roads and resources or near railroad tracks (Dase 2003, 32). In the vicinity of Aransas County, freedmen communities were located in Refugio, the Blackjacks, Lewis’s Bend, Sprigg’s Bend, and Robinson’s Bend (Sitton and Conrad 2012). Allen and Taylor’s history of Aransas County describes the Blackjacks community:

“A small community formed in the Blackjacks, made up of freed slaves. The genealogy of their former owners explains their surnames. A white couple, John and Sarah Huff, gave their slaves freedom, land, and a house in 1863 when they first heard the Emancipation Proclamation. Their son Ransom Francis Huff married Kate Jane Tucker, daughter of Mary Frances Duke. After the war, the freed Tucker and Duke slaves and a family named Joshlin joined the Black Huff family. All were hard workers and soon had crops in and gardens growing. Their descendants live in the Blackjacks still and in Rockport as well” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 147).

In Rockport around the turn of the century, most freedmen “lived in a little row of houses fronting on Market Street, just west of Church Street” (Allen and Taylor 1997, 282).

Aggregate population census data from 1850 for Refugio County, which at that time included the area that would become Aransas County, reveals a total population of only 288. Of those 288, 19 were enslaved Black people and the remainder were White and of both European and domestic origin (US Census Bureau 1850). By 1860, the population increased to 1,600, made up of 1,212 White residents, 6 free Black residents, 148 “Indians,” and 234 enslaved Black people. In 1870, only a year before Aransas County was formed, Refugio County had a total population of 2,324 which included 2,078 White and 246 Black citizens (US Census Bureau 1870). By 1880, Aransas County had a total population of 996, comprised of 917 White and 79 Black people. No persons of Chinese or Native American origin were enumerated (US Census Bureau Administration and Customer Services Division 1880, 408).

Aggregate population census data from 1880 also reveals that the majority of Aransas County residents – 832 out of 966 – were native-born. Of the native-born population, most (572) were born in Texas, while large numbers came from Louisiana, Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi. Others came from Georgia, Missouri, Arkansas, and Virginia. The non-native-born population numbered only 165. Of those, 73 came from Mexico, 23 from Germany, 17 from England, and 13 from Ireland. The remaining 18 came from British-American territories, Scotland, France, Sweden, and Austria (US Census Bureau Administration and Customer Services Division 1880, 530).

By the time Aransas County was established in 1871, Mexican nationals (those with Spanish and indigenous cultural roots) and their descendants outnumbered all other non-native ethnic groups. Mexican nationals and their descendants have had a notable impact on southeastern Texas due to their relatively large numbers and their retention of cultural traditions (Dase et al. 2010, 25). Almost all of the Mexican Americans of Aransas County were fisherman or employed in the related packing and processing industries. As Rockport grew, newly arriving Mexican American families settled close to one another on the west side of town. (Allen and Taylor 1997, 277–81).

Mexican Americans were generally segregated from the White population. By the end of the nineteenth century, Rockport had a separate primary school for Mexican American students that was “up in the brush close to the city barn,” and the White elementary school had a separate building in the school yard for Mexican American students (Allen and Taylor 1997, 278).

Mexican Americans formed private clubs to support their communities, including the Blue Cross Lodge in Rockport. An oral history included in Allen and Taylor’s county history described it as follows:

Most every Mexican belonged to the lodge. The head of the family would pay a fee and then whenever someone got sick, the lodge would help out with medicine and doctors and things like that. Once in a while, they made dances and fiestas to support the lodge (Allen and Taylor 1997, 282).

A number of such groups dedicated to improving the lives of Mexican Americans joined together to form the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), originally called the United Latin American Citizens, in 1929 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 282). LULAC is the oldest and largest continually active Latino political association in the United States and was the first nationwide Mexican American civil rights organization (Orozco 2021).

The Ku Klux Klan was active in Aransas County during the 1920s. Allen and Taylor’s history of the county quoted a resident who had lived through the period to explain their influence in the region:

Emory Spenser, a relatively new arrival from East Texas at the time, later explained that “newcomers, so to speak, probably exceeded the number of old settlers and the situation was just ripe for such an organization as the Ku Klux Klan.” Across the South, the Klan’s prejudice included Catholics, Jews, and “Negroes,” but there were very few of the latter two categories in Aransas. Spenser said that the Klan’s bigotry “really amounted to an exclusion of the Catholics only.” In Aransas, that meant most of the families with long roots at Lamar and nearly every Mexican (Allen and Taylor 1997, 274).

In 1924, the Ku Klux Klan opened a summer camp called the Kool Koast Kamp somewhere overlooking Aransas Bay. The resort sought to attract white Christians and provided tents, a dining hall, and waterfront activities (Allen and Taylor 1997, 273–74). The camp was apparently short-lived. It rebranded for a time as the Cool Coast Camp when the Klan retreated due to backlash against the racist organization in the late 1920s (Onion 2013; C. Long 2021).

Vietnamese refugees arrived in Aransas County between 1975 and 1980. Many were fishermen in Vietnam and were attracted to the county’s marine resources and shrimping industry. Many locals resented the newcomers, as overfishing in previous years continued to impact local seafood stores (Allen and Taylor 1997, 348). The Ku Klux Klan gained new notoriety after targeting groups of Vietnamese fishermen in the Gulf during the 1980s (Smith 2017).

Historic U.S. Census data demonstrates how Aransas County has evolved demographically throughout the last two centuries. Table 8 includes census records for Aransas County from 1850-2010, excepting 1920. The records for 1850-1870 are from Refugio County as Aransas County was not formed until after the 1870 census. The census data illustrates the patterns of growth within the county until Refugio was split after 1870 at which time the total population of the newly formed Aransas County is recorded as 996 in 1880. From 1880 onward Aransas County shows cyclical patterns of population increase and decrease generally consistent with national trends. Early censuses only record the White and African American/Black population, excepting 1860 which also included the Native American residents of the county. It was not until the late twentieth century that the Hispanic/Latino population was included in the census records. It is possible that early records counted Hispanic and Latino residents in the White category. Today, Aransas County residents largely identify as White with the second most common racial identification being Hispanic or Latino.

Table 8. Abbreviated U.S. Census Data, 1850-2010.

Year	1850*	1860*	1870*	1880	1890	1900	1910	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
White	269	1,212	2,078	917	1,684	1,527	1,970	1,854	3,402	4,145	6,719	8,678	13,812	13,354	16,575	16,381	17,996
African American/Black	19	240 (6 free, 234 enslaved)	246	79	187	189	136	48	67	107	N/A	357	277	299	307	273	264
Hispanic/Latino	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3,554	4,606	5,706	6,158
Asian/Native American/Alaskan/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	N/A	148	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	656	736	577	763
"Nonwhite"/Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	287	32	307	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,557
Multiracial (non-Hispanic)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	228	252	3,250
Total	288	1,600	2,324	996	1,824	1,716	2,106	1,902	3,469	4,252	7,006	9,067	14,396	17,863	22,452	23,189	23,830

\*Census data derived from Refugio County prior to the creation of Aransas County.

## PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Three distinct periods of significance were developed for this context based on historical events and development patterns within Aransas County. The first period spans 1830 through 1864 and accounts for ethnically associated historic resources from the county's early settlement era through the Civil War. The second period spans 1865 through 1965,

covering Emancipation, post-Civil War growth, and the Jim Crow era. The third period spans 1965 through 1980 and encompasses the Civil Rights era and more recent demographic changes within the county.

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ethnic History, Social History, Architecture, Agriculture

## RELATED PROPERTY TYPES

Most property types have the potential for eligibility under this context where association with particular ethnic groups is known. Specific types include:

- Churches
- Schools
- Cemeteries
- Private dwellings and homesteads
- Clubs, clubhouses, and meeting spaces
- Commercial buildings and stores, warehouses, processing facilities

## THEME: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The following historic context for the institutional development of Aransas County encompasses six subthemes: Educational Development, Government, Conservation, Military Institutions and Activities, Recreation, and Transportation.

### SUBTHEME: EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In Spanish Texas, education was designed to Christianize and assimilate the native population, as well as to provide basic knowledge to the children of garrison troops and Spanish colonists. Mission schools established for the native population taught Christianity and the Spanish language. A non-mission private school was established in San Antonio during the Spanish colonial period but was short-lived. A public school was established in the city sometime after 1812, but funding was precarious, and the school did not endure. A number of factors resulted in the Spanish government's failure to establish general education including frontier conditions, sparse population, as well as local poverty and lack of financial support (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

The Mexican Texas Government failed to establish a system of public education, and the Constitution of the Republic of Texas sought to rectify the deficiency by directing Congress to provide one. Several private schools were chartered in the early years, but public education was slow to develop. In 1838, Mirabeau Lamar requested Congress establish and endow an education system, resulting in the passing of bills in 1839 and 1840 that adopted a public-school plan for primary through university education, delegated to the counties. Each county was granted land endowments to support

local schools. Many counties were indifferent to schools; by 1855, 38 counties had not even surveyed their land allotments. Private schools and academies were prevalent in the years prior to the Texas Revolution and continued to operate as part of the republic, and several institutions of higher education were chartered during the period (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

After annexation, the state provided for the establishment of free schools under the Constitution of 1845, which stipulated that one-tenth of the state's annual taxation revenue be set aside as a perpetual fund to support schools. A school law enacted in 1854 provided the framework for the Texas school system. It required the establishment of common schools and provided a system to cover tuition for impoverished and orphaned children. It also allowed private schools to be converted to common schools and set aside 20% of the \$10 million received by Texas from the sale of lands to the United States for the Permanent School Fund (Berger and Wilborn 2021). In addition to the county's private schools, seven public Common School Districts were in existence in Aransas County between 1893 and 1949. In June of 1949, these districts merged to become the Aransas County Independent School District. (Aransas County Independent School District 2021).

The first school in the county (then still Refugio) was founded by Jane O'Connor (nee Gregory), who came to Lamar with her infant son in 1855 and established a school in her mother's home on Aransas Bay. Mrs. O'Connor's school attracted families to Lamar so that their children could attend what came to be known as the "old Lamar Academy." The school had a music program, taught by Mrs. O'Connor's sister, Mrs. Carrie Byrne, using a "fine big rosewood piano in the home." The school accommodated both male and female students, and also housed "a few girl boarders, who lived in the big home" (Ziegenmeyer 2021a; C. Long 2020a; Ziegenmeyer 2021b).

After the Civil War, the Constitution of 1866 provided for the education of African Americans through taxation of their property. Although the Freedmen's Bureau brought teachers from the north to teach in Black schools, the early African American schools remained controversial, and students and teachers suffered from both discrimination and intimidation. The Constitution of 1869 eliminated the separation of Black and White taxation for schools and reaffirmed provisions for funding public education. It directed the legislature to set aside a quarter of the general revenue for public schools and utilize all money from the sale of public land to fund schools. In 1871, a bill enacted by Governor Davis established a state board of education which consisted of the governor, attorney general, and the superintendent of public education (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

The first school in Rockport was the Rockport Institute, opened by Henry Nold II. Nold was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania and taught in Kentucky before serving as president of the Aranama College in Goliad. He founded a boarding school called Nold's Academy in Ingleside in 1856, which was destroyed in the Civil War. Nold taught in Mexico and Kentucky before returning to Aransas County in 1874 where he opened a school at Rockport called the "Rockport Institute." Nold's private Rockport school was active for two years (Guthrie 2021c). The name "Rockport Institute" has been used in historic documents to describe schools in Rockport other than Nold's early academy.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, private and church schools played important roles in education. As some Texans disapproved of state involvement in education, private and church schools were the only options in some locales (Berger and Wilborn 2021). Multiple churches in Aransas County have served the community with educational programming, including First Baptist Church of Rockport and First Methodist Church of Rockport.

The first public school in the county opened in Rockport in 1884, called simply “the Rockport School.” A one-room school house was built in Fulton in 1886 (C. Long 2020d). The *Texas School Journal* in 1886 described the educational institutions in the county at that time:

“Rockport institute opened September 6, with a faculty of teachers, and an enrollment of 104 pupils. The faculty of the present scholastic year consists of Prof. E M. Fly, of Gonzales, as principal; Miss Alice Nole, assistant, and Miss Lizzie Allen, of the ladies’ annex of Southwestern University of Georgetown, as second assistant. The year promises to be a pleasant and profitable one to parent, teacher, and pupil. We have a session of eight months public school... There is also a good school at Fulton, Texas, under the management of Prof. Daniel and one at Lamar conducted by Miss Minnie Johnson. All are in a prosperous condition and the outlook for the Aransas County schools is good.”

A new building for the Rockport School was constructed at the corner of present-day East Laurel and North Live Oak Street in 1892. The frame building was in use until the Hurricane of 1919, which damaged it so badly it needed to be rebuilt.

A statewide scholastic census conducted in 1910 recorded 625,917 children (501,806 White and 124,111 Black) attending school in county districts, and an additional 342,552 children (272,075 White and 70,277 Black) in independent school districts throughout Texas. Many of the rural schools consisted of one-room schoolhouses with a single teacher instructing multiple grade levels (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide of 1904 described Aransas County schools:

There are six public schools in the county. Three of these are at Rockport. One of them, a nice brick building, is for white children. There is another school for Mexican children, and still another for negro children (A. H. Belo & Company 1904, 205).

The first graduating class from Rockport High School consisted of four girls and two boys in 1907 (Aransas County Independent School District 2021; City of Rockport 2021a). By 1910, the publication reported that there were four established schools in the county (A. H. Belo & Company 1910).

The Better Schools Amendment of 1920 allowed an increase in local taxation for education. The law was designed to ease the state’s burden of financing schools; however, many counties were slow to increase their funding. Financial inequality from area to area led to insufficient funds and subpar facilities in some locales. These challenges resulted in poor quality schools for students in rural, sparsely populated counties as well as in areas with high Black and Mexican American populations. In 1930, the legal case of *Del Rio Independent School District v. Salvatierra* attempted to show the inferior quality of educational facilities for Mexican Americans. Although the plaintiff, Jesús Salvatierra lost, the case helped launch a movement against segregated schools. In 1948, a district judge ruled against the segregation of Mexican American children within the public school system in the case of *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District*. The Gilmer-Aikin Laws passed in 1949 sought to raise the general level of school standards and to eliminate inequalities by increasing of teacher salaries and establishing the Texas Education Agency (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

The old Rockport School (first built in 1892 and rebuilt after the Hurricane of 1919) was demolished in 1935 when a new school was constructed. Construction of the new Rockport School building was the Public Works Administration's Project Number 2813. The sale of local bonds helped to subsidize the government project. The new school building housed 11 grades and added a 12th a few years later in order to receive full accreditation. The school expanded after World War II by using a former Army Air Forces building for a gymnasium and classroom addition, it remained in use until the late 1950s. A new high school was constructed in 1953, and the 1935 Rockport School building was converted to an elementary school called Rockport Elementary. The 1935 elementary building now houses school administration offices and is still extant (Texas Historical Commission 2006).



Figure 23: An undated late-twentieth or early twenty-first-century photograph of the Rockport School, constructed in 1935 (Texas Historical Commission n.d.).

According to lists of known Rosenwald Schools in Texas, none appear to have been operated in Aransas County. Up until the 1950s, schools were segregated under the "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) laid the foundation for integration in schools, and the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 compelled schools to end segregation. Although many discriminatory practices continued, school districts across the state began to implement integration (Berger and Wilborn 2021). San Antonio and Corpus Christi adopted immediate, cross-the-board integration in the 1955-56 school year. Other districts began in 1955 with partial integration, including

Rockport and Aransas Pass. Partial integration was typically staggered and usually began at the high school level before the lower grades (Jacobus 2019).

The Rockport-Fulton High School was constructed in its present location and opened in 1953. The campus grew to include the Fulton Elementary School in 1957 and a new Junior High School in September 1963. The Live Oak Elementary school opened in 1967. The 1935 Fulton Elementary School was closed in 2005, when the current Rockport-Fulton Middle School opened to the south of the high school. At the same time, a major renovation to the mid-century buildings on the high school campus was executed. It was renovated to connect the high school and junior high buildings. The old 1935 Rockport School building is still extant and operates as a community center today (Aransas County Independent School District 2021; Texas Historical Commission 2006).

In the 1970 case of *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District*, the desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* was extended to Mexican Americans, for whom integration had not been universal (Berger and Wilborn 2021). In the same year, a federal judge ordered the integration of all Texas schools in *United States v. Texas*. This changed school district boundaries and increased bussing to enforce integration. In 1973, the state legislature enacted the Bilingual Education and Training Act, which mandated bilingual instruction for all Texas elementary public schools that had 20 or more children with limited English-speaking skills. During the 1970s, the scholastic population rose, and the cost of education increased. Small school districts were consolidated into larger districts in an effort to control costs and provide equal opportunities (Berger and Wilborn 2021).

By the early 1980s, Aransas County had three public schools: one elementary, one middle, and one high school. All three are located in the Rockport-Fulton area. In 1983, 62 percent of the graduates were White, 31 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Black, and 5 percent Asian (C. Long 2020a). Today, the Aransas County Independent School District includes the Live Oak Learning Center, Fulton Learning Center, Rockport-Fulton Middle School, and Rockport-Fulton High School.

### Periods of Significance

Three periods of significance were developed for this context based on the development of schools in Aransas County. The early education era spans from 1830 to 1920 and accounts for historic resources from the county's early settlement era through the 1920 Better Schools Amendment, after which additional funding became available to local schools. The second period of significance is from 1920 through 1955 and encompasses resources that were constructed when local communities began to improve and consolidate school resources, and reinforced segregation. The third period of significance encompasses the post-segregation era, 1955 through 1973, and includes resources built to accommodate integrated schools and the county's post-war growth, through the survey cutoff date of 1973.

### Areas of Significance

Architecture, Education, Ethnic History, Social History

### Related Property Types

- School buildings, sports facilities, and associated resources
- School district offices
- Religious school buildings, churches



## SUBTHEME: GOVERNMENT

### Introduction

The area that later became Aransas County was first settled by Europeans during the Spanish colonial period. It was initially part of Refugio County when the government of the Republic of Texas established Refugio County in 1837. Aransas County was carved from the coastal areas of Refugio County by an act of the Texas Legislature on September 30, 1871. It was fully organized on March 26, 1872. The county commissioners' court met for the first time in a rented frame house in that year. On September 4, 1947, the boundaries of the county were extended southeast to the continental shelf in the Gulf of Mexico reaching its current size and boundaries ("Aransas County, Texas" 2021; J. H. Long 2008).

In the Spanish Colonial Period (1690-1821), the Spanish government established a port of entry and customs house known as El Cópamo on the mainland shore of Copano Bay which served Goliad, Refugio, and San Antonio in the 1780s. The Spanish established the mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio in 1793. In the late colonial period, the Spanish established a fort called Aránzazu. Although the Spanish made several attempts to establish settlements in the lower Nueces River valley, none of them were successful due to the remote location and threats of attacks by Native Americans (C. Long 2020a).

The Spanish government established the empresario system to bring settlers to the region, and the system remained largely the same under Mexican rule in Texas (1821-1836). In 1824 the Mexican government passed a national colonization law which granted states the authority to regulate the distribution of unappropriated lands for colonization (Barker 2020). It was under this law that the earliest land grants were issued in the area that would become Refugio, and later, Aransas County.

Refugio County was formed in 1837, during the Republic period (1836-1845). Aransas City, a settlement founded in 1832 by James Power on Live Oak Point near the ruins of the Aránzazu fort, became the de-facto county seat. A customs house and post office were located there at that time. In 1840, the City of Refugio was formally declared the county seat (C. Long 2020a; Handbook of Texas Online 2020). In March of 1871 Rockport, which had become a center for shipping and processing cattle, was named the seat of Refugio County. Only months later, the state legislature formed Aransas County and Rockport became the Aransas County seat (C. Long 2020a). Rockport has remained a center of county government since 1871.



Figure 24: This undated historic image shows the 1889 Rockport County Courthouse designed by J. Riely Gordon (left) and the county jail building (right).

A county courthouse, designed by J. Riely Gordon, was constructed in Rockport in 1889. That building was demolished and replaced in 1956 by a new, modernist building by Lynn A. Evans, architect, and O. Roy Abbot, designer. The modernist building was badly damaged by Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and was demolished the following year (“Aransas County Courthouse, Rockport, Texas.” n.d.).

Rockport had a fire company with a chemical engine by 1894. Post offices were located in Rockport, St. Joseph’s Island, Fulton, Lamar, Salt Creek, and St. Mary (A. H. Belo & Company 1904). Shell was used to pave streets in Aransas County in the 1920s and 1930s, before asphalt paving techniques were used. A modern sewer system and disposal plant was constructed in Rockport beginning about 1940, as a result of the work of Rockport Mayor J. Ed Moore (Bergan n.d.).

The Federal government undertook three large public works projects in Aransas County in the 1930s: Goose Island State Park, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rockport School. Those projects are more fully described in the Educational Development and the Conservation subtheme sections.

### Periods of Significance

The historic context for Aransas County’s governmental development occurred in three periods. The first begins in 1832 and extends through 1871, encompassing resources from the earliest settlement and the era when Aransas County locales functioned as the Refugio County seat. The second period of significance covers early Aransas County government resources through 1930, when federal funding became more readily available to the local government. The third period begins in 1930 and extends through 1973. This era encompasses updated and new facilities leading up to World War II and includes federal public works constructed in the county as well as new facilities constructed in the decades after the war.

### Areas of Significance

Architecture, Politics/Government, Social History

### Related Property Types

- Federal: agency offices, port customs facilities, post offices
- State/County: county extensions, courthouse, hospitals, correctional facilities/jails, libraries, offices/annexes, law enforcement sub-stations
- Municipal: city/town halls, community centers, fire stations, municipal buildings, park facilities, police stations, public works

## SUBTHEME: CONSERVATION

The need to protect Aransas County's natural resources arose in the 1930s, as resources that had once been abundant were suddenly depleted. Overfishing had significantly reduced populations of aquatic species including turtles, fish, and shrimp. Sport and commercial hunting had decimated wild bird populations, including that of the whooping crane. Two major wildlife refuges were established in Aransas County in the 1930s: Goose Island State Park and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

### Goose Island State Park

Goose Island State Park, the habitat of many migratory and local bird species, was established on lands set aside by the Texas Legislature in 1931. Between 1931 and 1935, the state government purchased land for the preserve to serve as wintering grounds for the endangered whooping crane (C. Long 2020f). In 1933, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company 1801 arrived to improve the park.

The CCC was a Public Works program introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression. The program recruited young men who were married but unemployed to work under the supervision of army officers and experienced craftsmen in exchange for wages, food, and housing. CCC Company 1801 was a mixed-race company until April of 1935, when it was converted to an all-Black company (Texas Parks and Wildlife 2021). CCC enrollees worked to clear brush, dig drainage ditches, and build parking facilities in order to develop the preserve. Structures within the state park were built using local materials including shellcrete blocks that the CCC enrollees made on site using crushed oyster shells and Portland cement (Texas State Parks 2019). The CCC team was led by principal architects George T. Patrick and Thomas B. Thompson. The team also improved an existing road that became Park Road 13 and access roads on the 307-acre park by paving them with crushed oyster shells. The park's picnic area was finished in a "tropical" manner, with roofed pavilions thatched with palmetto leaves (Texas Parks and Wildlife 2021).

### Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge was established as the Aransas Migratory Waterfowl Refuge on December 31, 1937. It is located on Blackjack Peninsula, on the Gulf Coast. Today, the refuge contains woodland, fresh and saltwater marshes, ponds, and coastal grasslands, 54,829 acres of which are on the mainland and 56,668 acres on Matagorda Island (Kleiner 2020).

At first, the refuge consisted of 47,261 acres on the Blackjack Peninsula, on the St. Charles Ranch of Leroy G. Denman. The government raised funds to purchase the surface rights to the property through the sale of migratory bird stamps, and the Continental Oil Company won the right to extract oil and gas within the refuge. In 1967, 7,568 acres along St. Charles Bay was added to the refuge. It was expanded to Matagorda Island with the addition of 19,000 acres in 1982, 11,502 acres in 1986, and 2,940 acres in 1993 (Kleiner 2020).

Austwell based Company 880 of the CCC helped to construct the features of the refuge. They built shell roads, cleared brush, and built dams, residences, a boathouse, the Lookout Tower, and bathroom facilities (Allen and Taylor 1997, 357). Extant built features within the refuge include an observation tower, picnic area, trails and car tour route, and a visitor's center. The portion of the refuge located on the mainland is administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, while the Matagorda Island State Park is maintained by the Texas Parks and Wildlife department (Kleiner 2020).

### [Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary](#)

The Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary is located in Rockport on the site of the residence of Conger (Connie) Neblett Hagar, an accomplished amateur ornithologist who made a notable contribution to the study of birds in Texas. In 1943, the state Legislature designated Little Bay as the Connie Hagar Wildlife Sanctuary. The Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary is a 6-acre preserve with a birding trail through oak mottes, wetlands, and coastal prairies (Smith-Rodgers 2014).

### [Rockport Marine Laboratory](#)

In 1935, the Rockport Marine Lab was set up aboard the houseboat *Vivian* in Rockport Harbor to assist the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission with fisheries management. A permanent lab was built on the harbor in 1947. The building was a state-of-the-art facility and included a public aquarium. The lab now supports the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Coastal Fisheries Division in long-term management of fisheries populations "to ensure sustainable stocks of finfish, shellfish and other marine life important to commerce and recreation" (Texas Historical Commission 2011).

### [Periods of Significance](#)

The period of significance for conservation in Aransas County begins in 1930, when local awareness about conservation issues began to rise, through 1973, the survey cut-off date. This captures the 1967 expansion to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on St. Charles Bay, before expansions to Matagorda Island.

### [Areas of Significance](#)

Conservation, Landscape Architecture, Agriculture, Social History

### [Related Property Types](#)

- Outdoor recreation facilities including parks, campgrounds, picnic areas, and hiking trails
- Landscape features including trails, paths, parking lots, parks, unoccupied lands, natural features, street furniture/objects, conservation areas
- Local government offices associated with wildlife conservation
- Research facilities, visitors' centers, museums/aquariums

## SUBTHEME: MILITARY INSTITUTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The area that became Aransas County has been the site of military activities as early as the Mexican War, when Zachary Taylor made an encampment on Live Oak Peninsula on his way south (C. Long 2020a). During the Civil War, the Confederate Army maintained positions near Aransas Pass, Port Lavaca, and Indianola and the area was the site of several engagements between Union and Confederate troops (Wooster and Derbes 2021). During World War I the county was home to a number of shipbuilding enterprises supporting the war effort. The industry boomed again during World War II, and Rockport became a center for ship repair and maintenance for the Navy. Remnants of military activity constructed prior to World War I do not remain in the built environment due to damage caused to waterfront properties during the hurricanes of 1916 and 1919.

### [U.S. Coast Guard Facilities \(Aransas Pass/Lydia Ann Lighthouse\)](#)

The Aransas Pass Light Station was constructed on Harbor Island, just to the north of the Aransas Pass, in 1855. (Leatherwood 2020a). Extant built features date from 1857 to 1939 (Holland Jr. 1977). The Aransas Pass Lighthouse was one of the original Texas stations of the U. S. Lighthouse Service, which became a part of the Coast Guard in 1939. It is the second oldest lighthouse on the Texas coast, and the oldest standing structure in Aransas County (C. Long 2020c; Texas Historical Commission 1973).

Congress authorized \$12,500 for the construction of Aransas Pass Lighthouse on March 3, 1851 (Anderson 2020). Construction began in 1855, and it was first lit in 1857 (U.S. Coast Guard 2021). The United States government constructed the lighthouse to support navigation on Aransas Bay (C. Long 2020c). The light station was disestablished on June 4, 1952. A new lighted aid was constructed, and the radio-beacon was moved to the nearby Coast Guard Station Port Aransas, on the north end of Mustang Island in San Patricio County. The original station site is now a private aid to navigation, called the Lydia Ann Channel light (U.S. Coast Guard 2021). The station has a tapered octagonal brick tower, three wooden auxiliary dwellings, and a radio shack (C. Long 2020c). The lighthouse station suffered damage during the Civil War, when Confederate forces made multiple attempts to destroy it. It suffered so much damage to the brickwork and interior iron stair that it had to be rebuilt in 1867 (U.S. Coast Guard 2021).

### [World War I Shipbuilding](#)

A small shipbuilding industry had developed in Rockport and Fulton by the end of the nineteenth century. The industry boomed during World War I as the result of increased demand for merchant shipping. The abundance of yellow pine and the presence of lumber yards and saw mills in the area allowed a wooden shipbuilding industry to emerge (Peebles 2021; C. Long 2020b). Fred Heldenfels of Beeville endeavored to utilize his lumber yard and building skills to construct ships for the war effort and set up shop at a site in Rockport in 1909. He secured a contract from the Federal government to build four wooden, steam powered cargo vessels, and needed a channel with a 14-foot depth to exit the bay once completed. The required depth necessitating dredging of a small area in the bay near Lydia Ann Island (Allen and Taylor 1997, 230–31; Heldenfels, Inc. 2021). Heldenfels employed over 900 men at the height of construction. They produced four 281-foot wooden cargo vessels, including the *Baychester*, launched on July 31, 1919, and the *Zuniga*, launched September 9, 1919. Although the shipyard was damaged by the Hurricane of 1919, the barges *Jasper* and *Manchester* were completed in 1920 (Texas Historical Commission 1996).

### [World War II U.S. Navy Shipbuilding and Repair in Rockport](#)

As in World War I, World War II caused an increase in shipbuilding in Aransas County; between 1937 and 1940 the number of shipbuilding enterprises in Texas increased from seven to ten (Peebles 2021). Rob Roy Rice founded a shipyard in 1941 to build wooden submarine chasers, and the US Navy took over the Rockport Yacht and Supply Company facilities for ship repair (Shukalo 2020). The Rice yard was on Water Street, between E. Market Street and E. Cornwell Street in Rockport (Colton 2017). The Navy needed a facility to maintain its ships during World War II. It utilized the Rockport Yacht and Supply Company to repair and maintain 100-foot class vessels (C. Long 2020a).

### [World War II U.S. Navy Use of Aransas County Airport](#)

The United States Civil Aeronautics Administration built an airstrip on Live Oak Point in 1943, on land donated by the county with the understanding that the county would own it after the war. (Allen and Taylor 1997, 307–10; 1997, 316–17). The US Navy needed additional air training sites during World War II, and in 1942 the Aransas County Commissioners Court offered land at the north end of Live Oak Peninsula for the construction of a military landing field. Voters approved a bond issue and tax to purchase 700 acres of land for the site. The county leased the land to the military for \$1 per year from 1943 until March of 1948 (Morrow 2012, 2). During the war, the Navy practiced landing operations out of regional air stations at Beeville, Kingsville, and Corpus Christi (Aransas Pathways 2016; Texas Historical Commission 2001). The Aransas County Airfield is still in use today by the U.S Navy as an auxiliary field for training operations (Stranahan, email on 5/30/23). A portion of it was damaged by Hurricane Harvey, and an original 1943 airport hangar collapsed in the aftermath on August 25, 2017 (Sasser 2018).

### [Rockport Air Force Station \(Cuban Missile Crisis\)](#)

Aransas County leased a 214.8-acre portion of the Aransas County Airfield to the US Air Force on December 5, 1955, as tensions in the Cuban missile crisis were rising (Morrow 2012, 7). The 813th Aircraft Control and Warning (AC&W) Squadron dedicated the Rockport Airforce Station on May 16, 1959. The station was active for only about five years. One of the first officers to arrive at the Air Station clarified: “We operated on a site the Air Force leased at the Aransas County Airport, but never were a part of the airport. The airport property was always owned and maintained by the county” (Morrow 2012, 2–3). Buildings on the station included an operations center, supply building, machine shop, radio maintenance facility, three barracks, dining hall, and recreation halls. Thirty family housing units were located outside the main gate. (Morrow 2012, 4).

The 813th AC&W Squadron was constituted on September 27, 1955, and activated on December 18, 1956, as the 33rd Air Division of Air Defense Command (ADC). The 813th moved to Rockport Air Force Station in 1958. The unit was tasked with utilizing radar to monitor air traffic along the coast for potential enemy aircraft, especially during the Cuban Missile Crisis (Morrow 2012, 5). The unit was discontinued and deactivated on August 1, 1963 (Cornett and Johnson 1980, 102; Morrow 2012).

### [Gulf Intracoastal Waterway \(U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers\)](#)

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) is a shallow-draft, man-made channel that runs parallel to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. It is part of the Intracoastal Waterway, which spans from Boston, MA to Brownsville, TX. It was originally

constructed to facilitate trade between Texas ports and was expanded to aid in defense during World War II (Kruse et al. 2016). The GIWW is more than 1,100 miles long, spanning from St. Marks, Florida to Brownsville, Texas (Texas Department of Transportation 2021). See Subtheme: Maritime for additional information on the history of the GIWW.

The presence of German submarines in the Gulf of Mexico after the onset of World War II highlighted the need for protected inland transportation for the movement of personnel and defense materials. German vessels “sank more than two dozen merchant ships in the Gulf of Mexico, severely disrupting commerce” (Kruse et al. 2016, 24). In 1942, the federal government enacted legislation authorizing enlargement of the GIWW, and its extension via a channel from its eastern terminus at Apalachee Bay, Florida, to the Texas-Mexican border for the purposes of national defense. The construction was given high priority and a continuous waterway with minimum dimensions of 12 feet deep by 125 feet wide was extended from Carrabelle, Florida, to Corpus Christi by 1945 (Kruse et al. 2016, 24).

### Periods of Significance

Military institutions in Aransas County developed in three distinct phases. The first period of significance begins in 1855, when the federal government completed the lighthouse on Lydia Ann Island through 1900, to cover nineteenth century military infrastructure. The second period spans 1914 through 1946 to cover military activity in the county during the two World Wars. The third period begins in 1946 and runs through the survey cutoff date of 1973 and includes Cold War era and subsequent development throughout the county.

### Areas of Significance

Military, Government, Engineering, Architecture

### Related Property Types

- Associated property types will include both purpose-built military facilities as well as facilities utilized by the military during the period of significance.
- Maritime infrastructure including jetties, breakwaters, seawalls, canals etc.
- The Lydia Ann Lighthouse and associated features
- Airfields, airplane hangars, storage buildings, barracks, offices, shops, dining halls, recreation halls, radio towers and equipment, etc.

## SUBTHEME: RECREATION, CULTURE, AND LEISURE

Recreation, culture, and leisure have been important to Aransas County’s history, as tourism has been a major component of the local economy since the arrival of the railroad in the late 1880s. Like much of the built environment in Aransas County, many recreational and cultural resources have been lost to hurricanes and major storms or have been substantially altered by subsequent repairs. Additionally, due to the county’s small population, the area has only ever had one or two examples of certain property types. When evaluating these resources for NRHP eligibility, diminished integrity is common, and rarity of resource types is considered as part of the resource’s significance.

## Tourism

Tourism emerged in the United States during the late nineteenth century as a result of improved working conditions for a growing middle class, including five-day work weeks and vacation time, and the expansion of the railroad network throughout the country (Aron 1999, 45–47). Across the nation, coasts, mountains, and other scenic and natural areas became popular places to visit (1999, 46). When the railroad arrived in Rockport in 1888, Aransas County became a tourist destination for Texans traveling on excursion trains from San Antonio or other inland places to spend a weekend or up to several months along the waterfront (Allen and Taylor 1997, 188–91).

Just as the railroad arrived on the Live Oak Peninsula in 1888, the Morgan Lines ended their shipping service to Rockport, signaling the end of the commercial shipping era and the beginning of the tourism era. Wealthy vacationers boarding one of four daily trains in San Antonio flocked to Rockport for lodging and dining and spent leisurely days hunting in the peninsula's fields and fishing along the coast. A number of private hunting and fishing clubs offered transportation from the passenger depot to their club properties. Hotels erected during the cattle boom began to see even more business. New accommodations popped up, including the Shell Hotel, which was converted from the mansion built by beef packery mogul William Hall (Allen and Taylor 1997, 188–91).

A boom in private sportsman's clubs began at the turn of the twentieth century. The Port Bay Hunting Club was established in 1911 by Andrew Sorenson, who left the cattle business to become a sportsman's guide. Similar establishments included the Oakshore Club, whose membership included Texas Governor James Ferguson. The Tarpon Club on San Jose Island established by E.H.R. Green, and the Fulton Mansion in Rockport which became the Texas Club. Other establishments were erected around the county's bays and waterways to rent boats, sell bait, and provide meals and other essentials to sportsmen hunting and fishing in the area (Allen and Taylor 1997, 212–13).

The boom in hunting and fishing began to wane in the 1930s as over-fishing and hunting began to impact wildlife and natural resources. Bird populations dramatically decreased, and thus the lure of hunting declined. Tourism remains an important economic driver, but after the 1930s more emphasis was placed on general outdoor recreation than on high-volume bird hunting.

In later years, after the construction of SH 35, roadside cottages and motels were constructed to cater to vacationers arriving by car. Of the many local early tourist improvements, hotels and tourist cottages constructed after 1919 are the most common survivors. Hotels and other lodging establishments were constructed within walking distance of passenger train depots and the bayfront in Rockport. Dancing, swimming, sailing, fishing, and hunting were popular activities in the early twentieth century. Tourists dined in fish and oyster houses on the bay (Cormier 2013, 81). Pavilions erected over the water in Rockport had changing rooms and spaces for dances, parties, and community functions. Tourism stalled during World War I and then the Hurricane of 1919 caused severe damage in Aransas County, destroying much of Rockport's coastal built environment.

Aransas County's tourism industry persevered in the decades after the 1919 hurricane. Gas rationing during World War II kept Texans close to home, and Aransas County attracted tourists who would usually travel to farther flung locales. The post-war era brought an influx of prosperity to the country as a whole. During this time, the Texas coast attracted "winter Texans" – northerners who came to Texas for the winter.



Swimming at beaches, recreational fishing and boating in freshwater and saltwater, hunting, and birdwatching were popular recreational activities. Piers, marinas, hunting and fishing clubs, and restaurants catered to tourists. The county also became a birdwatching destination. Automobile-oriented tourist motels added capacity to the older railroad-oriented hotels. Vacation houses were constructed as second homes or rentals along and near the coast.



Figure 25: This 1976 photograph shows recreational fishing on the Port A Jetties in Rockport (Texas Historical Commission 1976).

### Recreation, Culture, and Leisure

Aransas County's natural resources provide numerous recreational opportunities for tourists and residents, although few are enhanced with landscaping and built resources. Beaches include the Rockport Beach and saltwater swimming pool, a protected swimming area off Aransas Bay constructed in 1935, and the public beach on San Jose Island, which includes no built features (Shukalo 2020).

Nature preserves established by the federal government in the 1930s, Goose Island State Park and the Aransas National Wildlife Preserve, also provide outdoor recreation opportunities. These resources are more fully described in the Subtheme: Conservation.

Public and private piers, jetties, marinas, and boat launches are common resources in Aransas County. These waterfront resources are susceptible to storm damage and have been replaced over time. In the 1930s, the Aransas County Navigation District was established and undertook a series of improvements that continued into the 1960s and included construction of piers, a small boat harbor, beaches, boat launches, and public swimming facilities along the bay in Rockport and Fulton.

## Parks

Given Aransas County's focus on outdoor recreation, parks are numerous. A THC historic marker describes Rockport's Community Aquatic Park complex as follows:

The Community Aquatic Park offers a multi-purpose, heated competition pool, which is open year-round, and a recreational pool with slides and sprays for children. Rockport Beach Park, recognized as a "Blue Wave Beach," offers a pristine shoreline with playgrounds, fishing pier, boat ramp, picnic areas, and a cold water "pool". Memorial Park is a 100+ acre community park with recreational trails, sporting fields, exercise stations, birding sites and picnic facilities. Hiking and Biking Trails are ever expanding with plans to connect the city's boundaries within the next 20 years. Neighborhood parks featuring recreational and picnic facilities, as well as ornamental and natural resource parks, are conveniently located throughout the city (Texas Historical Commission 2021).

Other local parks include Memorial Park, Pride Park, Magnolia Park, Mathis Park, Compass Rose Park, Spencer Park, and the Zachary Taylor Arboretum Park, Tule Park, and Tule Park East all located in Rockport, while Murph Park is located near Copano Village. The Goose Island State Park and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge are located on the Lamar and Blackjack peninsulas. The majority of these surviving recreational facilities date to the late twentieth century.

## Monuments and Markers

Monuments and markers denote significant places or sites of historic events and are often considered attractions to historically curious individuals. The Texas Centennial Historical Commission erected four markers in the county as the final event of the Texas Centennial in 1936. THC generally considers these to be eligible for the NRHP.

- "Home of George W. Fulton," 317 N. Fulton Beach Road, Fulton
- "Site of the Town of Lamar," Bois D'Arc Road, Fulton
- "Site of One of the Homes of James Power," State Highway 35, Fulton
- "Aransas County," E. Orleans Street, Rockport

In addition to the Centennial markers, there are 52 THC Historical Markers in Aransas County. These markers are described in Table 1 and include:

- "Aransas County", 301 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport
- "Aransas County Airport", 421 John Wendell Road, Rockport
- "Aransas Pass Light Station", off SH 361, Port Aransas
- "Baldwin-Brundrett House", 1028 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport
- "Baylor-Novell House", 617 S. Water Street, Rockport
- "Bracht House", 409 N. Magnolia Street, Rockport

- "Casterline Fish Company" 110 N. Casterline Drive, Fulton
- "Cementerio San Antonio de Padua", SH 35, Aransas Pass
- "Connie Hagar", Rockport
- "First Baptist Church of Rockport" 1515 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport
- "First Methodist Church of Rockport", 801 E. Main Street, Rockport
- "First National Bank of Rockport", Rockport
- "First Presbyterian Church of Rockport", 514 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport
- "Frاندolig Island" 1797 Bayshore Drive, Rockport
- "Fulton", 205 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Fulton
- "Fulton-Bruhl House", 409 N. Broadway, Rockport
- "Fulton Cemetery", Fulton
- "Fulton Community Church", 215 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Fulton
- "Fulton Mansion", 317 N. Fulton Beach Road, Fulton
- "Fulton Volunteer Department", 401 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Fulton
- "Hynes-Balthrope House", 801 S. Church Street, Rockport
- "Jackson Family Maritime Companies", Austin Street and Veterans Memorial Drive, Fulton
- "Joe A. and Bertha Harper House" 811 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport
- "John Fagan", Hagy Drive, Lamar
- "Hoopes-Smith House", 417 N. Broadway, Rockport
- "Lamar Cemetery", Hagy Drive, Lamar
- "Lamar Volunteer Fire Department", 302 Bois d'Arc Lamar, Rockport
- "Mathis House", 621 S. Church Street, Rockport
- "McLester Family Cemetery", Rockport
- "Mills Wharf", 5802-5866 Highway 35 North, Rockport
- "Moore House", 413 S. Church Street, Rockport

- "Port Bay Hunting and Fishing Club", FM 1069, Rockport
- "Richard Henry Wood House", 203 N. Magnolia Street, Rockport
- "Rockport", Rockport
- "Rockport Air Force Station", Airport Road, Fulton
- "Rockport Cemetery", Rockport
- "Rockport Marine Laboratory", 702 Navigation Circle, Rockport
- "Rockport Pilot", 1002 Wharf Street, Rockport
- "Rockport School", 619 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport
- "Rockport Volunteer Fire Department", 212 N. Gagon Street, Rockport
- "Sacred Heart Catholic Church", 704 Cornwall Street, Rockport
- "San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad in Rockport", 105 S. Magnolia Street, Rockport
- "Site of Aransas Hotel", Rockport
- "Site of Heldenfels Shipyard" 1800 S. Church Street (SH 70), Rockport
- "Site of Marion Packing Co.", Fulton
- "Smith-Brundrett House", 901 N. Austin Street, Rockport
- "Sorenson-Stair Building", 406 S. Austin Street, Rockport
- "St. Peter's Episcopal Church", 412 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport
- "Stella Maris Chapel", Hagy Drive, Lamar
- "The Cedars", 1203 S. Water Street, Rockport
- "Women's Club of Aransas County" 1104 E. Concho Street, Rockport
- "Wood Jackson House", 701 N. Magnolia Street, Rockport

### Movie Theaters

The first movie theater in the county was the Rio Theater, constructed in 1936. It was renamed the Surf Theater in the 1950s and was demolished in the 1990s (Allen and Taylor 1997, 291, 352). A Rialto Theater, part of a chain established

in Beeville in the 1930s, was also located in Aransas County during the era. Another is located on Commercial Street in Aransas Pass, just over the San Patricio County border (Texas Historical Commission 2007b).



Figure 26: A Rialto Theater, located in Aransas County c. 1940 (Texas Historical Commission Unknown).

### Dance Halls

According to Preservation Texas,

As Texas was settled, a dance hall was one of the first public buildings constructed in nearly every town and hamlet. Texas dance halls have served and continue to function as meeting spaces and the sites of social events. They contribute to the development of country-western and conjunto music. They preserve the cultural traditions of many ethnic groups who immigrated to Texas and settled here ("Texas Dance Halls" n.d.).

Aransas County's dance halls catered to tourists and residents, beginning with the bayfront pavilions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other arenas for dancing and nightlife may have been located in buildings otherwise utilized for practical purposes such as warehouses and other commercial spaces. For example, Allen and Taylor's history of Aransas County recounts dances being held after hours in the upper stories of furniture warehouses and fish houses.

### Clubs and Organizations

The Woman's Club of Aransas County was formed on June 15, 1948, as the Woman's Civic Club. The organization formed to further educational, literary, and charitable work. Their goal was "Friendship, Fellowship, and Service to the Community." The group held meetings in various locations around Rockport prior to securing a permanent home for the club. The Woman's Club purchased the recreational building of the Humble Oil Company in Ingleside (San Patricio

County) in the fall of 1948 and had it moved by barge in three sections to its current location in Rockport. The club endeavored to establish a county library and were successful in 1956, when they established it at an old Fulton warehouse, utilizing fruit crates for shelving (The Woman's Club of Aransas County 2020).



Figure 27: The Women's Club of Aransas County purchased their club building from the Humble Oil Company in 1948 and had it shipped by barge from Ingleside to Rockport (Texas Historical Commission n.d.).

The painter Simon Michael founded the Fulton School of Painting in Rockport in the late 1940s. The school was later renamed the Simon Michael School of Fine Art. Michael was a well-traveled artist who settled in Rockport and painted in the open air alongside his students for decades. He is attributed with establishing a local tradition of public art and worked alongside Kit Dinger, Steve Russell, Jan Wendell and Estelle Stair to establish the Rockport Art Build and Association in 1967. The association ran a gallery in a number of different spaces until it moved in 1978 to the building that housed Simon Sorenson's ship chandlery and grocery store. The gallery has since become the Estelle Stair Gallery and is still in operation in the old Sorenson store in a building now called the Sorenson-Stair Building. The Rockport Art Association, however relocated to the Bruhl-O'Connor House in 1992 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 378–79; "The Rockport Fulton Art Colony" n.d.).

Other art schools were established in the area including the Texas Coast aesthetic. This group was founded by Jack Cowan, Herb Booth, Al Barnes, and Steve Russell who were all avid hunters and fishers. Their style was promoted by Meredith Long who opened a gallery in Key Allegro, a branch of her Houston based gallery, which helped popularize the school. Several of these wildlife artists donated their art to Gulf Coast Conservation Association (now the Coastal Conservation Association) and Ducks Unlimited to raise money for conservation efforts. The first annual Rockport Art Festival was held in 1969 (Allen and Taylor 1997, 378–79; "The Rockport Fulton Art Colony" n.d.).

Religious Organizations

More than 15 religious congregations are active in Aransas County (ChurchFinder 2021). Some were organized in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, including historically Black and Anglo congregations. Many of the congregations have weathered storms that destroyed church buildings, requiring temporary gathering locations and rebuilding on higher ground. Between storm damage and growing congregations, some church buildings have been replaced multiple times. Today, most local congregations meet in churches and facilities constructed after World War II. Several Aransas County Churches have Official Texas Historical Markers (Table 9).

Table 9: Religious Congregations in Aransas County Commemorated with a THC Historical Marker\*

Name	Established	Current Location	Current Location Year Built	Notes
First Baptist Church of Rockport	1873	Live Oak and Main Streets, Rockport	1920	
Saint Peter’s Episcopal Church	1871	412 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport	1954	First located at Live Oak and Wharf Streets
First Presbyterian Church of Rockport	1869	514 N. Live Oak Street, Rockport	1949	
Sacred Heart Catholic Church	1860	704 Cornwall Street, Rockport	1955	
First Methodist Church of Rockport	1870	801 E. Main Street, Rockport	1914	

\*Data from THC Atlas.

Periods of Significance

Aransas County had two major eras of recreational and cultural development. The earliest period of significance extends from the late nineteenth century to 1919, the heyday of the county’s railroad-oriented tourism and development. This period ended with a major hurricane in 1919. The second period extends from 1919 to 1973, reflecting the period of rebuilding after the 1919 hurricane and automobile-oriented development.

Areas of Significance

Architecture, Art, Commerce, Entertainment/Recreation, Ethnic Heritage, Landscape Architecture, Performing Arts, Religion, Social History

Related Property Types

Tourist/seasonal lodgings: cabins, cottages, seasonal residences, hotels, motels, resorts, fishing camps, hunting camps

- Recreation and culture resources:
  - Theaters/auditoriums: cinemas, movie theaters, playhouses, auditoriums, halls
  - Museums: museums, exhibition halls
  - Music facilities: dancehalls, bandstands, opera houses
  - Sports facilities: gymnasiums, swimming pools, tennis courts, playing fields, stadiums, bowling alleys
  - Outdoor recreation: piers, marinas, parks, campgrounds, picnic areas, hiking/walking trails

- Fairs: county fairgrounds
- Monuments/markers: commemorative markers, commemorative monuments
- Works of art: sculptures, statues, murals
- Social resources: meeting halls, clubhouses, civic organization facilities
- Religious resources: religious facilities, religious-related halls
- Landscape resources: parks, plazas, gardens, forests, unoccupied lands, natural features, street furniture/objects, conservation areas

## SUBTHEME: TRANSPORTATION

This context includes significant modes of transportation in Aransas County during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including shipping ports, railroads, roadways, and, to a lesser extent, airfields. Few resources in Aransas County are eligible for the NRHP related to transportation due to the loss of built environment resources from frequent damaging weather events. However, extant transportation infrastructure and resources, including the ports, channels, lighthouses, railroads and railroad beds, roadways, and airfields were significant to Aransas County residents and businesses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### Maritime Transportation

Maritime transportation played a major role in the settlement and economic development in Aransas County. As early as the mid-nineteenth century, the area was planned for a harbor to support a deep-water commercial port south of Galveston and to provide more reliable access for larger vessels for the shipment of goods to southwest Texas and Mexico (Allen and Taylor 1997, 207). Accomplishing this would be a decades-long ordeal, marked by a number of false starts and failures before the effort was completed in the early twentieth century.

In the early settlement period beginning around 1830, settlers arrived in the county by water via the Aransas Pass. The natural channel leads through Aransas Bay and Copano Bay to the port of Copano. The Spanish then Mexican missions La Bahia (Goliad), Lipantitlan and Bexar were served through the port at Copano which had been used by the Spanish as early as the 1790s (Stranahan, Email). As settlements developed on the islands and peninsulas, small watercraft were used for local trade and travel. As local ports and harbors became established and ship channels were improved, larger vessels began to service the ports of the county. Maritime transportation was particularly important in Rockport and Fulton during the decades of the cattle boom beginning in the 1860s, as the Morgan Line's steam ships serviced the ports there, shipping cattle and beef products to market in New Orleans and beyond. The Morgan Line's steam ships served the ports there until 1888; however, some commercial shipping activity remained in the county, particularly at Harbor Island, through the first quarter of the twentieth century. See the Subtheme: Maritime for additional information on maritime transportation in Aransas County.



### Railroad Transportation

The San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway (SA&APR) was chartered in 1884 to connect San Antonio with Aransas Bay, a distance of 135 miles. The railway reached Rockport in 1888. Although its local promoters hoped it would cement the town's status as a shipping hub, the cattle boom had begun to fizzle out by the early 1880s. The Morgan Lines, whose beef and cattle exports had decreased, ceased servicing the port in the same year that the railroad arrived (C. Long 2020a).

While the loss of service from the Morgan Lines signaled the end of Rockport's time as a maritime transportation hub, the arrival of the railroad signaled the beginning of the tourist era. Passengers boarding in San Antonio flocked to the bucolic shores of Aransas County for recreational fishing and hunting. A number of private sporting and fishing clubs were established in Rockport around the turn of the century. These clubs provided private transportation from the Rockport passenger station to their properties, where they provided lodging accommodations and amenities such as guided hunting or fishing expeditions. Many catered to rich sportsman, while others offered sparser accommodations for middle-class visitors. Many locals continued to hunt in the area and shipped game like duck and quail to northern locales as well (Allen and Taylor 1997, 212–13).

The Aransas Harbor Terminal Railway (AHTR) was chartered in 1892 to build a ten-mile railroad line from Aransas Harbor (present-day Aransas Pass) east across the north end of Harbor Island, then south to Turtle Cove and then east to the north end of Mustang Island (Guthrie 2021a; 2021b). The charter was later amended to include the construction of a harbor in Aransas, however, after several private and government attempts to construct a deep-water pass between Mustang and St. Joseph Islands failed, the USACE took over the project and built Aransas Pass in 1907. In 1909, construction on the terminal railway began:

In June 1909 the Aransas Pass Channel and Dock Company filed for a charter with the announced intention of building a channel 8½ feet deep and 100 feet wide from deep water at Harbor Island to Aransas Pass on the mainland. The dredge from this channel was thrown up on one side, and this fill became the roadbed for the new Terminal Railway. The deepwater port and railroad were completed in 1912, and for the next six years the 9½-mile railroad served the booming oil port at Harbor Island. The hurricane of 1916 damaged the line, but it was put back in operation within a short time. The hurricane of 1919 did major damage to the line, and it was 1922 before service was resumed (Guthrie 2021a)

No additional railroads are located within the county. One surviving railroad resource was identified during the survey. This was the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad Depot located at 10 S. Magnolia Street in Rockport.

### Vehicular Transportation

Aransas County was connected to a wider road network as early as the 1840s. Regular wagon trains hauled goods inland from the port at St. Mary's to Refugio, Goliad, Beeville, and San Antonio. Later, daily stagecoaches ran from Rockport to St. Mary's (C. Long 2020e; 2020a).

The outbreak of WWI halted county efforts to construct a causeway across Copano Bay to connect the Live Oak Peninsula with the Lamar Peninsula in 1914. Allen and Taylor's *Aransas: Life of a Texas Coastal County* quoted county Judge Baldwin's memoir's commentary on the subject:

"In a brief memoir, Judge Baldwin wrote 'Everything looked good again. We had arranged our finances.... had made a tentative estimate and order for material to construct a causeway across Copano Bay at Lamar by 1914, when lo! The World War was declared. ...Again, our prospect for a railroad and a port went up in smoke. I have not the slightest doubt, that had it not been for that War, Rockport would have had one of the finest railroads and ports in the state" (Allen and Taylor 1997, 227–28).

Up until that time, most of the roads in Aransas County were unimproved, remaining largely unimproved following the establishment of the State Highway System in 1917. By 1919, a route designated Highway 12 crisscrossed Aransas County, traversing the Live Oak Peninsula from its southern border with San Patricio County and looping back to extend northwest along the shores of Port Bay and Copano Bay to Bayside and then west and northeast to Woodsboro and the City of Refugio in Refugio County (Texas Highway Department 1919).

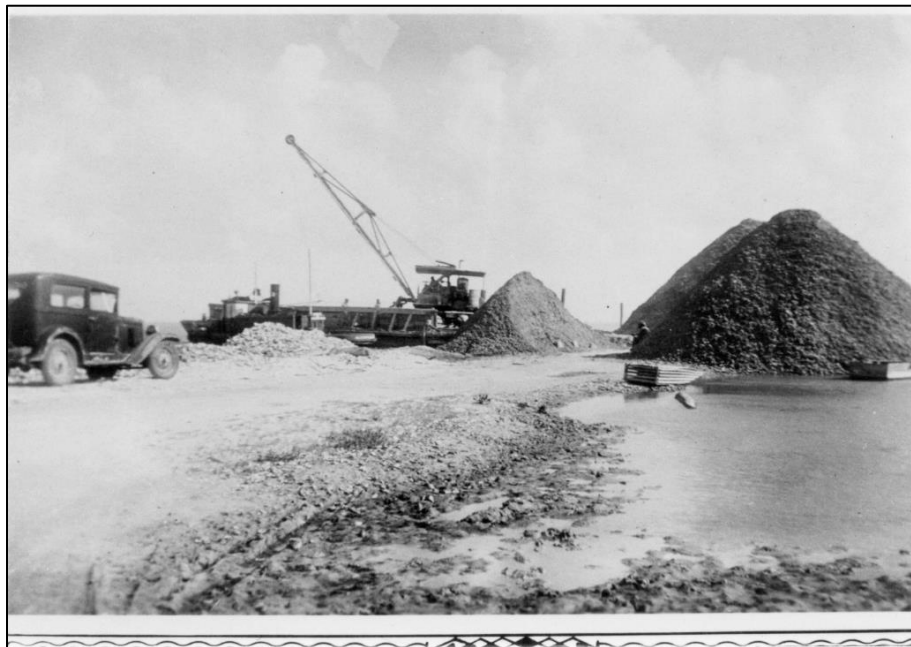


Figure 28: [Shell Piles in Aransas County], photograph, Date Unknown; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph104991/m1/1/?q=Aransas>: accessed March 25, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Bell/Whittington Public Library.

In 1930, the Texas Highway Department (predecessor of Texas Department of Transportation) built a new highway, designated State Highway (SH) 57 and nicknamed the "Hug-the-Coast Road," across the Live Oak Peninsula, and it constructed a 1.5-mile causeway between Live Oak Point and Lamar (Allen and Taylor 1997, 288). The highway brought more automobile traffic to Aransas County, where previously travel by rail had been the primary means of travel for tourists to the region. To accommodate automotive travelers, motels and roadside cottages were constructed, and filling stations, which sold food and drink as well as gasoline, popped up along the route.

By 1935, most of the rural and urban roads in the county remained unimproved. SH 57 was redesignated SH 35, and it was the only bituminous surfaced and paved road at that time (Texas State Highway Department 1936). By 1956, road conditions had improved dramatically and most roads within Aransas County were paved or metal-surfaced (packed gravel). Farm to Market Road (FM) 1781 was extended across the Live Oak Peninsula to Live Oak Point (Texas State Highway Department and U.S. Department of Agriculture 1961).

### [Air Transportation](#)

Other than the U.S. Navy use of the Aransas County Airport during World War II, air travel does not appear to have been a significant transportation source in Aransas County in the twentieth century. The airfield is further described in Subsection: Military Institutions and Activities.

### [Periods of Significance](#)

The period of significance for maritime transportation begins in 1853 when the United States Army Corps of Engineers began to examine the potential for a deep-water port in the vicinity of the Aransas Pass. The period extends into the early twentieth century to cover the development of maritime shipping facilities at Harbor Island through 1919, when the hurricane of that year destroyed wharves and other shoreline infrastructure throughout the county. The period of significance for railroad transportation begins in 1883, when the SA&APR was chartered and began its first surveys through the county through 1942, after which time automobiles became the primary mode of transportation. The period of significance for automotive transportation is from 1917 with the establishment of the state highway system through the survey cutoff date of 1973.

### [Areas of Significance](#)

Architecture, Agriculture, Commerce, Engineering, and Transportation

### [Related Property Types](#)

- Maritime-related resources: wharves and docks, warehouses, channels and canals, moveable roadway and railroad bridges over navigable waterways
- Railroad-related resources: depots, railyards, industrial properties, agricultural storage buildings and structures adjacent to railroad tracks (grain bins, etc.), bridges, and warehouses
- Vehicular-related resources: gas stations, hotels and motels, major bridges and causeways, and roadside parks

## 6. SURVEY ANALYSIS



The Big Tree | Rockport

### RESULTS SUMMARY

A total of 2,109 historic-age resources were recorded. Of these resources three are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and retain integrity to maintain their listing, 28 are individually eligible for listing in the NRHP, one eligible post WWII development containing 91 buildings, two resources were not visible from the right of way, and 1,982 are not eligible for listing in the NRHP. Three resources were identified as sites, objects, or structures (Table 10). One additional resource is listed on the NRHP as a district, the Aransas Pass Light Station, however this resource was not assessed as it is privately owned, and access was not granted for this project.

Table 10: Total Number of Historic-Age Resources Documented by Survey Category

Survey Category	Number
NR Listed	3
Individually Eligible	28
Eligible Post WWII Development	1 (91 buildings)
Sites, Objects, Structures	3
Not Visible	2
Not Eligible	1,982
Total	2,109

Work was conducted from the public right-of-way resulting in significant vegetation or a deep setback preventing the survey of two resources. There may be additional historic resources in Aransas County over 50 years of age which were not recorded due to lack of access or visibility. Additionally, 21,148 parcels were identified as modern or vacant.

The survey found that historic resources are concentrated in Rockport and Fulton. No resources were documented west of State Highway 35. Throughout the county, historic-age resources are mixed with buildings constructed after the survey cutoff date of 1973. Modern buildings have replaced many historic buildings, both in response to storm damage as well as modern infill.

The majority of surveyed resources were domestic buildings. Other common documented historical functions included commerce/trade, industry/processing, healthcare, transportation, hospitality, governmental, religious, recreation/culture, and educational (Table 11).

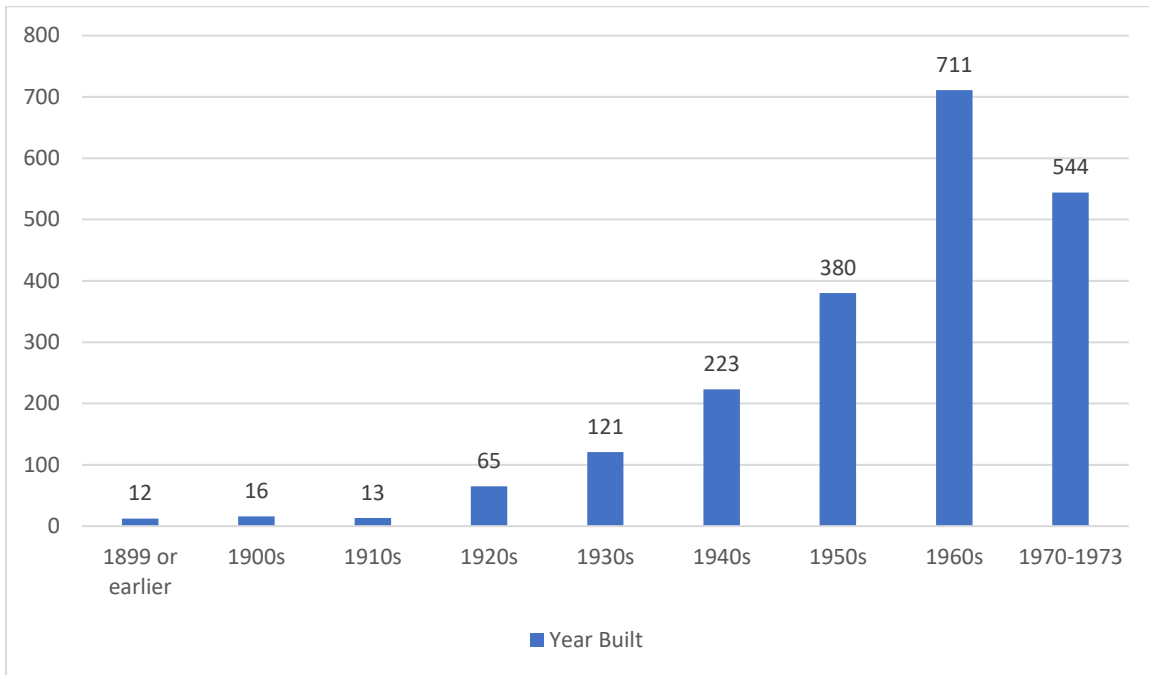
Table 11: Primary Functions of Surveyed Buildings (not including structures/sites, not visible resources, dwellings within the Post WWII development are counted individually)

Current Use	Total
Commerce/Trade	99
Domestic	1,839
Educational	9
Funerary	4
Government	4
Healthcare	1
Historic Marker	1
Hospitality	20
Industry/Processing	7
Recreation/Culture	13
Religious	18
Social	3
Transportation	2
Utilities	1
Vacant/Not in Use	85

Historic Use	Total
Commerce/Trade	94
Domestic	1,919
Educational	8
Funerary	4
Government	5
Healthcare	0
Historic Marker	1
Hospitality	23
Industry/Processing	10
Recreation/Culture	13
Religious	18
Social	3
Transportation	5
Utilities	1

The construction date of surveyed historic-age buildings ranged from 1854 to 1973. As shown in Chart 1, the majority of buildings surveyed date from the 1960s with a dip in the following decade; this can likely be attributed to the cut-off date only three years into the 70s. Only 106 buildings were constructed prior to 1930 equaling 5% of the surveyed resources.

Chart 1. Year Built Date of Surveyed Resources



## POST-WORLD WAR II NEIGHBORHOODS

One post-World War II neighborhood containing 91 dwellings was documented as one resource and evaluated for historic significance as a district. Forms for contributing buildings are provided in Appendix D.

## RESOURCES CURRENTLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

T. H. Mathis House (71000918) | 615 South Church Street, Rockport



Figure 29. T.H. Mathis House c. 1971 (Texas State Historical Survey Committee, 1971).



George W. Fulton Mansion (75001945) | 317 South Fulton Beach Road, Rockport



Figure 30. George W. Fulton Mansion c. 1975 (Texas Historical Commission, 1975).





Hoopes-Smith House (94001016) | 417 Broadway, Rockport



Figure 31. Hoopes-Smith House at an unknown date (Gossett, 1994).



## NRHP RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents NRHP recommendations for surveyed properties in Aransas County. Properties recommended individually eligible are provided first, followed by the eligible historic district.

### INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Twenty-eight resources are determined individually eligible for the NRHP as a result of this survey. These resources possess significance on a local, state, or national level under Criterion A, B, C, or D or a combination thereof, and appear to have retained sufficient integrity to convey their historic associations. Due to the inherent limitations of survey from the public right-of-way, additional examination may be warranted to more fully assess historic integrity of materials, workmanship, and design.

Four resources, three individual structures and one district, were previously listed in the NRHP. The three individual listings were reassessed for NRHP eligibility: The T.H. Mathis House (71000918) listed under Criterion A for its association with commerce and Criterion C for architecture, the George W. Fulton Mansion (75001945) listed under Criterion A for its association with Community Development and invention as well as Criterion C for Architecture, and the Hoopes-Smith House (94001016) listed under Criterion C for Architecture. All resources retain their significance and integrity. No change is recommended to their eligibility.

The one listed district in Aransas County, the Aransas Pass Light Station district (77001423), was not surveyed or recorded as part of this project. The c. 1857 lighthouse and associated outbuildings are currently listed under Criterion A for the district's association with Commerce and Transportation and under Criterion C for its association with Engineering. The district is on privately owned property, and access was not granted for the purposes of this survey project. It is assumed that the district retains its significance and integrity, and no change is recommended to its eligibility at this time.

The properties recommended individually eligible for the NRHP were constructed between 1854 and 1965 and are associated with events or trends (NRHP Criterion A), persons (NRHP Criterion B), or design (NRHP Criterion C) important to local or state history, or the potential to provide information (Criterion D). They are located in Aransas Pass, Fulton, Rockport, and Rockport/Lamar (Figure 1).

Each eligible property is summarized below. A complete tabulation is provided in Table A-3 (Appendix A). Survey forms and individual maps are provided in Appendix C.

## ARANSAS PASS

Residence | 1126 North McCampbell Street, Aransas Pass  
THC Atlas Number 3300071606



The house at 1126 N McCampbell Street is a Creole Cottage constructed in c. 1920 according to historic aerials. The wood frame house features a full width front porch recessed under a hip roof, a single front hipped dormer, and exposed rafter tails. The house has thin horizontal wood siding and wood window surrounds. Although the building is now vacant, its original residential purpose is clear. The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent intact example of a Creole Cottage in Aransas County. The period of significance is the estimated construction date of c. 1920.

## FULTON

Residence | 1481 North Fulton Beach Road, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 3300071635



The house at 1481 N Fulton Beach Road is a c. 1963 Post-War Mid-Century Modern Ranch dwelling. The house features a flat roof with deep eaves, a band of 7 fixed windows, and a prominent centrally located internal chimney. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as an intact example of a Post-War Mid-Century Modern Ranch plan house in Fulton, with a period of significance of c. 1963.

Koemel Beach Haus | 2292 North Fulton Beach Road, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 3300071638



The house at 2292 North Fulton Beach Road, now called the Koemel Beach Haus, is a c. 1960 Mid-Century Modern A-Frame dwelling. The house has a characteristic steeply pitched gable roof with side flat roof extensions. The roof has a wide overhang which shelters the deeply recessed large picture windows which dominate the facade. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as an excellent, rare, intact example of a Mid-Century Modern A-Frame house in Fulton. The period of significance is the approximate construction date of 1920.

Residence | 4620 Highway 35 North, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 3300071634



The house at 4620 Highway 35 North is a Post-War Mid-Century Modern style dwelling constructed in c. 1965. The house features a low sloped front gable roof with exposed rafter tails, large picture and awning windows, and board and batten siding. It sits on a raised concrete foundation and has a large porch constructed off of the façade. The dwelling retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as an intact example of a Post-War Mid-Century Modern house in Fulton. The period of significance is the construction date of c. 1965.

Multi-Dwelling Residence | 108 Laurel Street, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 3300071639



The property at 108 Laurel Street is comprised of five main buildings constructed in c. 1960. The two largest buildings and the small building on the east side of North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street set along San Antonio Street are side gable roof CMU block one-story condominiums separated by integrated carports. The two buildings which are perpendicular to each other along North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street both feature decorative breeze block on the exterior carport walls. The roofs on all buildings extend beyond the façade elevation creating front porches supported by replacement supports. Several windows throughout the complex have replacement sashes. Some early sash windows survive on the rear of some buildings. The smaller building fronting Laurel Street and the smaller building located adjacent and abutting the large building facing Laurel Street have similar materials but lack extensive detailing and are each a single unit. A small garage is centrally located on the parcel and has a screened side porch. The buildings appear to have operated as rental properties or a motel/hotel throughout their history and are associated with the post-war tourism boom in Aransas County. Overall, the buildings retain their integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and are collectively recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion A for their association with Recreation, Culture, and Leisure in Aransas County with an approximate period of significance dating to the cottages' construction dates-c. 1960-to the project cutoff date of 1973.

Fulton Cemetery | 401 Myrtle Street, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 3300071610



Fulton Cemetery is an approximately 2.2-acre cemetery platted by George Ware Fulton in 1868 on land provided by the City of Fulton. According to the cemetery's historical marker, a large number of children are buried at the cemetery, including the earliest burial that of Louis L. I. Greenough (1868-1869), victims of an epidemic. Several European immigrants and prominent local citizens are buried in the cemetery including veterans of the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Several of the early wooden markers were destroyed in a fire in 1947 resulting in many unmarked burials. Today, the cemetery has a metal entry arch flanked by masonry piers which can be seen around the cemetery's perimeter. Most of the graves are grey granite indicating primarily late nineteenth and twentieth century burials and several family plots are observed with raised curbing demarcating their boundaries. The cemetery is largely open, spotted with several mature trees. A single paved roadway roughly bisects the cemetery running south to north before turning east onto a gravel drive which turns south back to Myrtle Street. Fulton Cemetery retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with early settlement of Fulton, it is also recommended eligible under Criterion B for its association with significant persons including George W. Fulton. The cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D under the basis of age and association with the planning and plotting of the cemetery by George W. Fulton. The cemetery's period of significance is related to its date of plating-1868-and extends to c.1950 following the fire which destroyed several early markers.



Multi-Dwelling Rental Property | 201 Palmetto Avenue, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 3300071637



The four buildings located at 201 Palmetto Avenue are a combination of c. 1950 Minimal Traditional style cottages and duplexes. The cottages are set between the duplexes and have low sloped hipped roofs, symmetric plans, and one-over-one double-hung sash windows. The northern duplex is symmetric in plan with a central carport, a low slope hipped roof and one-over-one double-hung sash windows. The southern duplex is asymmetric with the southern unit significantly larger than the northern due to a side rear addition. It also has a low sloped hipped roof and one-over-one double-hung sash windows. All four buildings appear to have replacement siding and windows. The residences have a period of significance related to their use as vacation rentals beginning with their construction in c. 1950 and extending to the project cutoff date of 1973. Collectively buildings retain their integrity of association, design, feeling, location, setting, and workmanship and the building complex is recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A for their association with Tourism and Recreation, Culture, and Leisure in Fulton and Aransas County.

Site of One of the Homes of James Power Texas Centennial Marker | SH 35 and FM 1781, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 5007002733



Figure 32. Site of One of the Homes of James Power Texas Centennial Marker. Photograph by Norman Frank March 19, 2021. Courtesy of the Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=53708>, accessed May 3, 2023.

The Texas Centennial Marker identifying the location of a house owned by James Power currently listed as a Texas Centennial Marker, is located near the intersection of SH 35 and FM 1781 in Fulton. The granite marker identifies the location of a house of James Power. Power was an Irish immigrant and one of the earliest settlers in Fulton. The “Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial” Multiple Property Documentation Form identifies Texas Centennial markers as individually eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Social History at the state level of significance and indicates they meet Criteria Consideration F as the product of the statewide efforts to commemorate historic persons and events in the 1930s (Wilson and Smith 2018). The period of significance is 1936. The resource retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

## ROCKPORT

Sorenson-Stair Building | 406 South Austin Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071632



The Sorenson-Stair Building is a c. 1895 commercial brick building within a commercial corridor. The building was reconstructed following a fire in 1895 which destroyed the original structure. It was purchased by Simon Sorenson who ran a mercantile business. The building also housed an operating telegraph machine. Additionally, Sorenson posted updates in the large front display windows and posted warning flags as needed thus serving as a public information hub. In 1978 the Estelle Stair Gallery and Rockport Art Association were housed in the building which now features two distinct commercial spaces. Stair was instrumental in nurturing the growing art community in the late twentieth-century (Fisher 2016, "Details for Sorenson-Stair Building" 2020). The building is a Folk Victorian brick masonry structure with large commercial windows, a symmetrical façade, engaged brick pilasters, and divided transoms over the windows and doors. The Sorenson-Stair Building retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with early commerce in Rockport and under Criterion C as an intact example of a Folk Victorian commercial building in Rockport. The Sorenson-Stair Building's period of significance is from its construction in c. 1895. A second period of significance may be established in relation to the Rockport Art Association; however, these dates are outside the project cutoff date of 1973.

Smith-Brundrett House | 901 North Austin Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071619



The Smith-Brundrett House is a Vernacular Bungalow with Craftsman influence constructed in 1903. Purchased by W. H. Smith in 1920, the house was acquired by John Frederick "Fred" Brundrett in 1934. Brundrett resided in the house until his death in 1987. The house remained in the Brundrett family for over fifty years. In the mid-twentieth century Brundrett and his family ranched thousands of acres on Matagorda Island and later at Port Bay. The family played a significant role in the history of ranching in the Aransas County area. The house features a low sloped hip roof with front hip dormer and integrated full-width entry porch. The porch is supported by large square columns on a raised landing with replacement handrail and pickets. Additionally, some porch decoration, doors, and windows have been replaced or otherwise altered. The period of significance for the Smith-Brundrett House is from its year of construction, 1903, to the project cutoff date of 1973. The dwelling retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, material, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion B for its association with the prominent Rockport family, the Brundretts, and under Criterion C as an intact example of a Vernacular Bungalow with Craftsman influence in Aransas County.

Residence | 409 Broadway, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071625



The Fulton Bruhl House was constructed c. 1868 and purchased by businessman and civic leader James C. Fulton in 1872. He sold the house to his son-in-law Albert L. Bruhl in 1907. Bruhl was a pharmacist and local government official who served three terms as mayor of Rockport and the house remained in the Bruhl family for several generations (Heinich 2016). The Frame Vernacular house has stylistic elements of the Greek Revival and Italianate Revival styles including the porch supports, symmetric façade, and oversized dormers. The house retains its wood siding, two-over-two and six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows, full width porch entry, and divided light transom and flanking sidelights at the primary entry door. The Fulton-Bruhl House retains integrity of association, design, feeling, materials, location, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criteria B for its association with prominent Rockport residents James C. Fulton and Albert L. Bruhl, and under Criterion C as a surviving example of a Greek and Italianate Revival influenced Frame Vernacular house in Rockport. The Fulton-Bruhl House's period of significance is its construction date of c. 1868.

Residence | 902 East Cornwall Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071627



The dwelling at 902 East Cornwall Street is an 1881 Queen Anne style house. Now used as a bed and breakfast, the building retains its wood cladding including wood siding and patterned shingle and plank siding in the front gable,

wrap around porch with simple columns, turret, and some stylistic detailing in the front gable end. A detached two car garage has matching siding, exposed rafters, and wood doors. Although the house is now used as a bed and breakfast rather than a single-family dwelling, it retains its integrity of association and feeling. Additionally, the building retains its integrity of design, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for an excellent example of Queen Anne style residential housing in Rockport. Given its early construction date of 1881, it is also potentially eligible under Criterion B for its association with a significant person(s), additional research is recommended to determine if the house is eligible under Criterion B. At this time, the THC is preparing a National Register nomination for the Bracht House as part of the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the NPS.

Sigwald Service Company | 402 Highway 35 South, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071621



The Post-War Modern style commercial building at 402 Highway 35 South was constructed c. 1960. The building features characteristic forms and details of the style including a flat roof, breeze block screening walls, an emphasis on the horizontal rather than vertical, and an integrated vertical brick sign. Metal square posts support the integrated covered parking and a band of floor to ceiling aluminum windows are located on the brick building. The building's period of significance is its approximate construction date of c. 1960. The building retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as the sole example of an intact example of a Mid-century modern commercial building in Rockport.



Sea Gun Bay Homes | 5810 Highway 35 North, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071651



The Sea Gun Bay Homes complex is comprised of thirty buildings that were constructed in the 1960s, replacing the original, smaller cabins associated with Mills Wharf. Twenty-nine of the thirty buildings are used as rental properties, with one functioning as an office building. In addition to the buildings, the resource features an oval pool, which is accessed by curvilinear sidewalks. The landscaping of the property is characterized by mowed grass and mature palm trees. According to historic aerials, there was a hotel on the north side of the complex, but it was demolished in 2007. The original cabins, associated with Mills Wharf, were constructed in the 1940s to accommodate the tourists visiting the wharf, which was a recreational facility with a tackle shop and wildlife museum that offered hunting and fishing expeditions (Fisher 2016). Today, the Sea Gun Bay Homes have a combination of original features such as quoining, decorative lintels and aluminum double-hung sash windows and modern alterations such as replacement windows, board and batten and aluminum siding. Overall, the property retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, setting, and workmanship. The resource is eligible under Criterion A for its association with Tourism centered around Maritime Recreation in Aransas County.

Rockport School | 619 North Live Oak Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071612



Figure 33. Rockport School c. 2014 (Kline 2014).



The school buildings located at 619 N. Live Oak Street are now associated with the Aransas County Historical Society. The F-shaped clay tile block building at the corner of Live Oak Street and East Laurel Street was constructed c. 1935 while the two rectangular brick buildings fronting East Laurel Street were constructed in c. 1960 (Frank 2016). According to Archipedia, the Moderne style school was constructed in 1935 by architects Hamon and Griffiths using WPA-finances (Moorehead et. al. 2012). Originally, the school housed eleven grades and later grew to include all twelve grade levels until a new high school was constructed in 1953. The building then served as the city's elementary school until it was converted to a community center in 2005. The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with education trends and growth in Rockport. Additionally, the school may be eligible under Criterion A for its association with the Depression Era Works Progress Administration, more research is recommended. The original c. 1935 building is also eligible under Criterion C for Architecture as an excellent intact example of a Moderne style educational or civic building in Rockport. At this time, the THC is preparing a National Register nomination for the Rockport School as part of the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the NPS.

Joe A. and Bertha Harper House | 811 North Live Oak Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071626



Constructed c. 1910, the Joe A. and Bertha Harper House was originally used as a boarding house. The Colonial Revival dwelling housed shipyard employees and served as a hurricane shelter during the devastating storm of 1919. The Harpers purchased the house in 1920. Joe was an Aransas County Judge while Bertha was a primary school teacher at the First Baptist Church of Rockport. During his tenure as a county judge, Harper was influential in the creation of the first coastal highway in the area which ultimately stimulated development in the county. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its association with Judge Joe A. Harper. The Harper House has a period of significance relating to when Judge Joe A. Harper resided at the house, c. 1920.

Baldwin-Brundrett House | 1028 North Live Oak Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071620



The Baldwin-Brundrett house was constructed c. 1880 in the Queen Anne style. According to the home's historical marker, in the 1890s, the house was occupied by Aransas County Judge W. H. Baldwin who was responsible for promoting Rockport as a deep-water port. Following Judge Baldwin, the house was occupied by George A. Brundrett, Jr. from 1917-1942. Brundrett was a Confederate veteran and along with his family, a prominent cattle rancher on Matagorda Island. George Brundrett's second wife Flavilla repeatedly used the home's parlor as a makeshift hospital, and it is rumored to have sheltered 200 people during the 1919 hurricane. The house has remained largely unchanged since the 1880s except for the enclosure of the rear porch. The dwelling retains its wood siding, original woodwork ornamentation in the gable and accenting on the porch, and two-over-one and one-over-one wood sash windows, some with decorative colored glass. The resource retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under both Criterion B for its association with prominent Rockport residents, Judge Baldwin and George Brundrett, and under Criterion C for architecture as an excellent intact example of a Queen Anne Cottage in Rockport. The Baldwin-Brundrett House has a period of significance relating to its construction, c. 1880 until the Brundretts moved from the house in 1942.

Richard Henry Wood House | 203 North Magnolia Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071631



The Richard Henry Wood House was constructed in 1868 for Richard Henry Wood, one of Rockport's first permanent residents. In 1870 he was appointed alderman and later served as mayor of Rockport. Wood was a prominent land developer, community influencer, and rancher, he partnered with James Doughty and together they constructed the first cattle pens, warehouse, and wharf in the city harbor. These developments were subsequently destroyed in the hurricane of 1919. Wood was also appointed, by Governor Thomas M. Campbell, the first commissioner of the Texas Game and Fish Commission in 1907. The Gothic Revival style house features board and batten siding, a front bay window resembling a single-story turret, decorative detailing in the gables, and two interior chimneys with decorative corbelling. The Wood House has a period of significance related to the time period in which Richard Henry Wood resided at the house, approximately 1868-1910. Although the house retains characteristic features, a large rear addition has affected its integrity of design. The dwelling retains integrity of association, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion B for its association with early, prominent Rockport resident Richard Henry Wood.

San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad Depot | 105 South Magnolia Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071630



The vacant building at 105 S Magnolia Street is a c. 1888 railroad depot. The structure was originally associated with the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad which was completed in 1888. The railroad changed Rockport's reliance on gulf shipping for goods and services to rail-based shipping at the same time the Morgan Lines discontinued all routes to Rockport. The introduction of the railroad also spurred a population increase and tourism boom. By the 1940s, passenger service ended followed by freight service which ended in 1985 (Fisher 2016). The Frame Vernacular building features wooden board and batten siding, a clipped gable roof with decorative braces, and corner boards. Although the majority of windows are infilled, the windows which survive are six-over-six double-hung wood sashes. The railroad building retains integrity of design, feeling, location, materials, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad. Additionally, the building is recommended eligible under Criterion C as a rare intact example of a railroad depot in Aransas County. The depot's period of significance is c. 1888, the estimated year of construction.

Residence | 620 East Mimosa Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071629



The c. 1920 front-gabled Craftsman style house at 620 East Mimosa Street is an excellent example of this domestic style. The dwelling features a wide front gable overhang sheltering the full width entry porch. The porch features tapered box columns on brick piers, decorative bracing, and exposed purlins. Additionally, the house features wood siding, fixed wood windows, decorative glass, and an off-center entry door. Additions and alterations are limited to a new standing seam metal roof, and two small cross gable additions at the rear of each side elevation. The house's period of significance is its approximate construction date of c. 1955. The dwelling retains integrity of association, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as an excellent intact example of a Craftsman house in Rockport. The house's period of significance is its approximate construction date of c. 1920.

Residence | 402 Palmetto Avenue, Fulton  
THC Atlas Number 3300071636



The asymmetric plan dwelling at 402 Palmetto Avenue is a c. 1955 Post-War Mid-Century Modern brick house. The house features stylistic traits such as a flat roof with wide overhangs, a recessed entry, a low horizontal emphasis, a low and wide masonry chimney, and brick veneer which continues from the chimney onto the house demonstrating an uninterrupted patterned broad surface. An integrated carport supported by simple metal poles provides additional access to the house through a pair of sliding glass doors. Additional visible windows are jalousie. The house's period of significance is its approximate construction date of c. 1955. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as an excellent intact example of a Post-War Mid-Century Modern house in Fulton.



Goose Island State Park Recreation Hall (Concessions Building) | Park Road 13B, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071616



The Recreation Hall, originally constructed as the Concessions Building, was completed c. 1935. The Spanish Colonial Revival Building is located in Goose Island State Park and was constructed by the CCC as part of the New Deal Work Relief Program. The hall was designed by George T. Parrick and Thomas B. Thompson with assistance from the landscape designer Herbert L. Scogland. The one-story building was constructed using shellcrete blocks which were cast on site (Moore 2014). It features a low sloped gable roof and two hipped roof extensions all with exposed rafters and clad in clay tiles. The Recreation Hall was constructed at the same time as the Entry Gate, picnic units, bridges, camp shelters with fireplaces and drainage systems, and alongside other CCC nature preservation programs (Moore 2014). This included caring for the "Big Tree", a live oak reportedly over 1,000 years old. The recreation hall's period of significance is from its construction in c. 1935 to the project cutoff date of 1973. The building retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship. It is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion A for its association with the CCC, the evolution of Recreation and Leisure in Aransas County, and its association with Community Development and Planning. Additionally, it is eligible under Criterion C as the only extant Spanish Colonial Revival recreational building in Aransas County.

Residence | 905 Patton Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071618



The house at 905 Patton Street is a Queen Anne constructed c. 1890. The house features many characteristic elements of this type of Queen Anne and no visible alterations or additions. Stylistic features include a hipped roof with a lower cross gable, horizontal wood siding, Ionic porch columns, decorative porch spindlework, large two-over-two double-hung wood sash windows, and decorative brackets under the roof eave. The wrap around porch partially extends to both side elevations. The house has a period of significance related to its estimated construction date of c. 1890. The dwelling retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C as an excellent intact example of a Queen Anne style house with integrity in Rockport.

Rockport Cemetery | 2040 Tule Park Drive, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071609



Rockport Cemetery is an approximately 14.8-acre cemetery which had its first interment, Emma Fulton, in 1876. The cemetery has served Rockport and Fulton residents since 1876. Emma Fulton was the granddaughter of George Ware Fulton who was an early settler who helped develop the county including founding the town of Fulton and laying out Fulton Cemetery. There are several burials that date to the influenza outbreak of 1918 which devastated the community. Additionally, veterans of the Texas Revolution, Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam Wars are interred at Rockport Cemetery. The cemetery has a primary road running east to west with several other roads or loops throughout the irregularly shaped property. Trees are sporadically placed except for two large clusters to the north of the cemetery. Family plots are identified by their surrounding curbing and monuments are primarily grey granite with significant amounts of white marble also observed. Rockport Cemetery retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with Early Settlement of Rockport and Aransas County, given its age it is also recommended potentially eligible under Criterion B for its association with significant persons and additional research is recommended to determine eligibility under Criterion B. The cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D as a cemetery significant to the development of Rockport and Fulton. The cemetery's period of significance is approximately from the first interment in 1876 through the influenza outbreak of 1918.

Residence | 615 Water Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071624



The side-gabled, two-story Folk Victorian house at 615 Water Street was constructed c. 1900. The house is a simple form with Queen Anne style decoration. Its two story, full width porch displays extensive wood details including turned posts and decorative frieze on the first floor, and a turned balustrade on the second floor. Additionally, the house features Dutch-lap wood siding, one-over-one double-hung wood sash windows with simple surrounds, and corner boards. The symmetric façade has two entries on each floor, these are stacked atop each other, and all feature a transom window. Doors on the first floor are glass and panel while the second floor has full glass. The house retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as an early intact Folk Victorian dwelling in Rockport with a period of significance related to its estimated date of construction, c. 1900. Given its early construction date, c. 1900, the resource may possess additional significance under Criterion B for its potential association with an early resident of Rockport, additional research is recommended to determine potential eligibility under Criterion B.

Baylor-Norvell House | 617 Water Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300071622



The Colonial Revival style Baylor-Norvell House was constructed c. 1868 by Dr. John W. Baylor. Dr. Baylor was a local medical practitioner, owner of a meat packing business, and rancher. He was also instrumental in bringing the railroad to Aransas County. Dr. Baylor later rented the Baylor-Norvell House to schoolteachers Elisha and Irene Norvell who relocated to Rockport from Goliad. Eventually, the two women purchased the house from Dr. Baylor in 1890. In addition to teaching, Elisha also served as an agent for the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad and worked as a realtor. The Greek Revival inspired house retains its wood siding, six-over-six double-hung wood windows, classically inspired door surround including a divided transom and sidelights, and an exaggerated pedimented portico. The dwelling retains integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship. It is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its association with prominent Rockport residents Dr. Baylor and Elisha and Irene Norvell and Criterion C as an excellent intact example of a Colonial Revival house with a period of significance of c. 1868.

Kline's Cafe | 504 South Magnolia Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 3300077712



The building at 504 South Magnolia Street, commonly known as Kline's Café was relocated from its original place of construction in 2021. The c. 1942 Art Deco restaurant building was constructed by the Davis family following a fire in the early 1940s which destroyed the 1930s coffee shop. Shorty and Gloria Kline purchased the restaurant in 1968 and operated Kline's Café from this location (Churchwell 2021). The period of significance is the building's year of construction, 1942. The masonry building is finished with stucco, has a sculpted parapet roof, large rounded corners on the main façade incorporate glass block, and horizontal banding near the roofline and along the parapet add simple detailing. The resource retains its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association but has lost its integrity of setting and location due to its relocation in 2021. The café is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criteria C for architecture as a rare example of commercial Art Deco construction in Rockport and Aransas County. The building meets the requirements for consideration under Criteria Consideration B for relocated properties due to its architectural significance.

Aransas County Texas Centennial Marker | Broadway Street (SH 35) and East Orleans Street, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 5007000180



Figure 34. Aransas County Texas Centennial Marker. Photograph by Norman Frank March 19, 2012. Courtesy of the Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=53705>, Accessed May 3, 2023.

The Texas Centennial Marker for Aransas County, currently listed as a Texas Centennial Marker, is located at the intersection of Broadway Street (SH 35) and East Orleans Street in Rockport. The marker commemorates the creation of Aransas County in 1871 including the establishment of Rockport as the County Seat. The "Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial" Multiple Property Documentation Form identifies Texas Centennial markers as individually eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Social History at the state level of significance and indicates they meet Criteria Consideration F as the product of the statewide efforts to commemorate historic persons and events in the 1930s (Wilson and Smith 2018). The period of significance is 1936. The resource retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Home of George W. Fulton Texas Centennial Marker | 317 Fulton Beach Road, Rockport  
THC Atlas Number 5007002537



Figure 35. Home of George W. Fulton Texas Centennial Marker. Photograph by Norman Frank March 19, 2012. Courtesy of the Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=53700>, accessed May 3, 2023

The Texas Centennial Marker for the George W. Fulton House, currently listed as a Texas Centennial Marker, is located at 317 Fulton Beach Road in Rockport. The granite marker identifies the George W. Fulton House. Fulton was a pioneer resident of Refugio County, engineer, and cattle baron. The “Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial” Multiple Property Documentation Form identifies Texas Centennial markers as individually eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Social History at the state level of significance and indicates they meet Criteria Consideration F as the product of the statewide efforts to commemorate historic persons and events in the 1930s (Wilson and Smith 2018). The period of significance is 1936. The resource retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.



## Rockport (Lamar)

Ruins | 160 Front Street, Rockport (Lamar)

THC Atlas Number 3300071615



The resource near 160 Front Street which spans two parcels is the remains of an early building likely associated with the initial settlement of Lamar. The architectural remains date from c. 1865 and are constructed of shellcrete with extent evidence of multiple window openings. Layers are clearly visible throughout the shellcrete walls indicating the building was poured and cured in place through a layering of the material similar to cob construction. The ruins clearly demonstrate a traditional construction method which was used by the early settlers of Aransas County, and its in situ preservation indicates it possesses historic significance. The resource retains its integrity of association, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties under Criterion A for its association with settlement of Lamar and pre-railroad era community development. More research is recommended to determine if the architectural ruins are eligible under Criterion B as they are potentially associated with a historically significant person(s). Additionally, the ruins are eligible under Criterion D as a site potentially possessing archaeological significance or containing information related to construction methods. The period of significance for the ruins is its approximate construction date of c. 1865.

Lamar Cemetery | 222 Hagy Drive, Rockport (Lamar)  
THC Atlas Number 3300071613



Lamar Cemetery measures approximately 1.2-acres and was the first burial ground for the settlers of Lamar. The first interment was Patrick O'Connor in 1854. The community was originally founded by James W. Byrne and named for his friend Mirabeau B. Lamar, President of the Republic of Texas from 1838-1841. The town of Lamar fell out of existence by 1915 and the cemetery was neglected until its full restoration in the 1940s. The restoration was funded by the family of John Henry Kroeger, son of Henry and Eve Kroeger who were also interred in the cemetery in 1908 and 1884, respectively (Heinich 2016, Loth 2009). Several burials are grey granite, while concrete and marble are also seen throughout the property. Today the cemetery has a modern fence including a wooden gate with archway over (c. 2000) and wooden bell tower (c. 1987). Two modern utility and storage buildings have also been added to the property. Lamar Cemetery retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship and is recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with Early Settlement and Planning of Lamar, given its age it is also recommended potentially eligible under Criterion B for its association with significant persons and further research is recommended to determine eligibility under Criterion B. The cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D as a cemetery significant to the development of Lamar.

Stella Maris Chapel | 222 Hagy Drive, Rockport (Lamar)  
THC Atlas Number 3300071617



The Stella Maris Chapel was completed in c. 1858 and moved to its current site in 1986. The Greek Revival chapel is the earliest recorded Catholic chapel in Aransas County. James W. Byrne, founder of Lamar, provided the land on which the chapel was originally constructed as well as funded the unnamed French architect to who designed the chapel. The shellcrete chapel is the earliest Roman Catholic structures in the county and is now owned by the Diocese of Corpus Christi. The front gabled chapel, which is constructed of shellcrete, features an entry portico detailed with horizontal wood siding, lattice work and dentils along the eave. The dentil detail is repeated along the gable and gable returns. A small bellcote sits atop the portico and houses the church bell. The remaining building retains integrity of association, design, feeling, materials, setting, and workmanship. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association the early Roman Catholic population in Aransas County with a period of significance from its construction, approximately 1858 to the project cutoff date of 1973. Additionally, although the Chapel was moved in 1986, after its period of significance, it was moved within the same area to a setting similar to the original and is one of the few remaining examples of buildings constructed using shellcrete which was once popular in Aransas County. Therefore, it is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture. The church meets Criteria Consideration A as a religious property which derives its significance from its historic associations and architectural prominence. Additionally, it meets the requirements for Criteria Consideration B as a relocated property which is the earliest example of a Catholic Chapel and a surviving example of shellcrete construction.

Site of the Town of Lamar Texas Centennial Marker | Bois D'Arc Street and Main Street, Rockport (Lamar)  
THC Atlas Number 5007003018

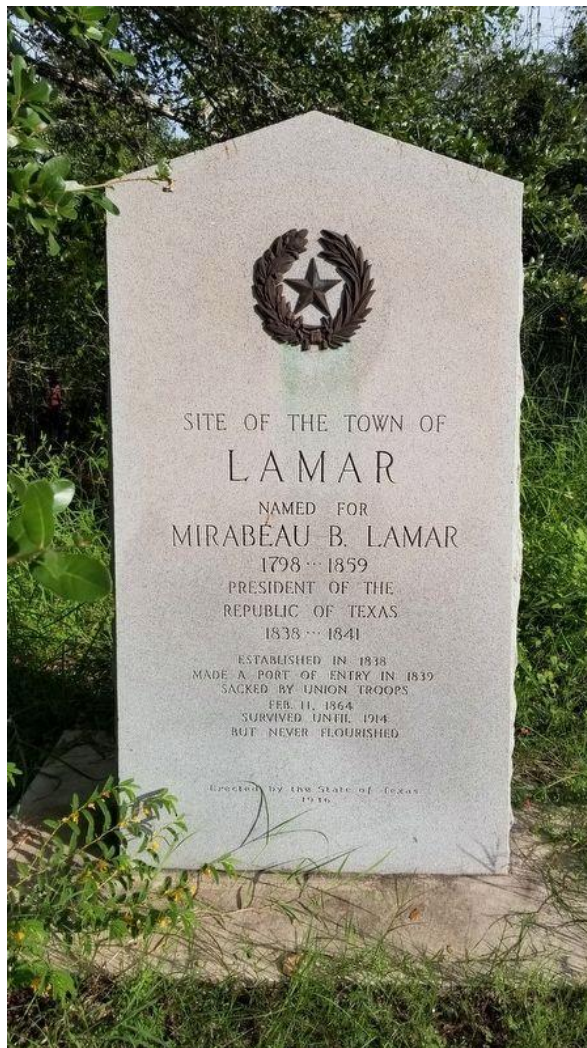


Figure 36. Site of the Town of Lamar Texas Centennial Marker. Photograph by James Hulse August 29, 2021. Courtesy of the Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=53711> accessed May 3, 2023.

The Texas Centennial Marker identifying the location of the town of Lamar, currently listed as a Texas Centennial Marker, is located at the intersection of Bois D'Arc and Main Streets in Rockport (Lamar). The granite marker identifies the location of the town of Lamar which existed 1838-1914. The "Monuments and Buildings of the Texas Centennial" Multiple Property Documentation Form identifies Texas Centennial markers as individually eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Social History at the state level of significance and indicates they meet Criteria Consideration F as the product of the statewide efforts to commemorate historic persons and events in the 1930s (Wilson and Smith 2018). The period of significance is 1936. The resource retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

## OAK TERRACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

THC Atlas Number 3300071640

The Oak Terrace Historic District is an NRHP-eligible Post WWII residential development located in Rockport. A summary of the recommended district is provided below. See also Table A-4 in Appendix A and the district maps and summary overviews in Appendix D. There are 91 properties within the district none of which are individually eligible.

Ranch and Minimal Ranch style housing developed from the Minimal Traditional style by incorporating modern elements in a conservative fashion. Ranch style houses have integrated garages or carports which reflect the mid-twentieth-century rise in private automobile ownership. Larger lots gave rise to a more sprawling house plan typical of a Ranch house. The style, which often features entry porches, engaged planting boxes, false window shutters, picture windows, and mixed use of siding and brick or stone veneers, was commonly built during the 1950s and 1960s throughout the United States and houses were often grouped into planned neighborhoods. The style is significant as a common housing type which characterized post-war mid-century suburban housing throughout the country. Minimal Ranch style houses are similar to Ranch houses but typically have a smaller footprint and lot size and less detailing.

Built on former agricultural or ranch lands the Oak Terrace Historic District is located just east of Texas SH 35. This choice of location likely reflects a growing workforce who commuted to Corpus Christi in the mid-late twentieth century. The ease of access to SH 35 provides a direct route for daily commuters, reflecting automobile-centric development characteristic of the period. Between 1950 and 1970, Rockport's population grew approximately 70% resulting in the increased need for housing leading to the creation of communities like that at the Oak Terrace Historic District.

The proposed district is comprised of 91 contributing houses constructed between c. 1960 and c. 1970 (see Table 12 for a list of contributing resources). These houses are a combination of brick Ranch, Minimal Ranch, or altered Vernacular style single-family houses. These buildings feature low pitched gable, hip, and cross gable and cross hip roofs. Some stylistic details seen in the district include breeze block and decorative false shutters. The houses have a variety of alterations, the most popular being replacement roof cladding, windows, and doors, but the district overall retains its integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting, and workmanship.

The Oak Terrace Historic District is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A, at the local level for its association with the mid-twentieth-century growth in Rockport, and under Criterion C for architecture, as an intact Post WWII development comprised primarily of Ranch and Minimal Ranch style houses.

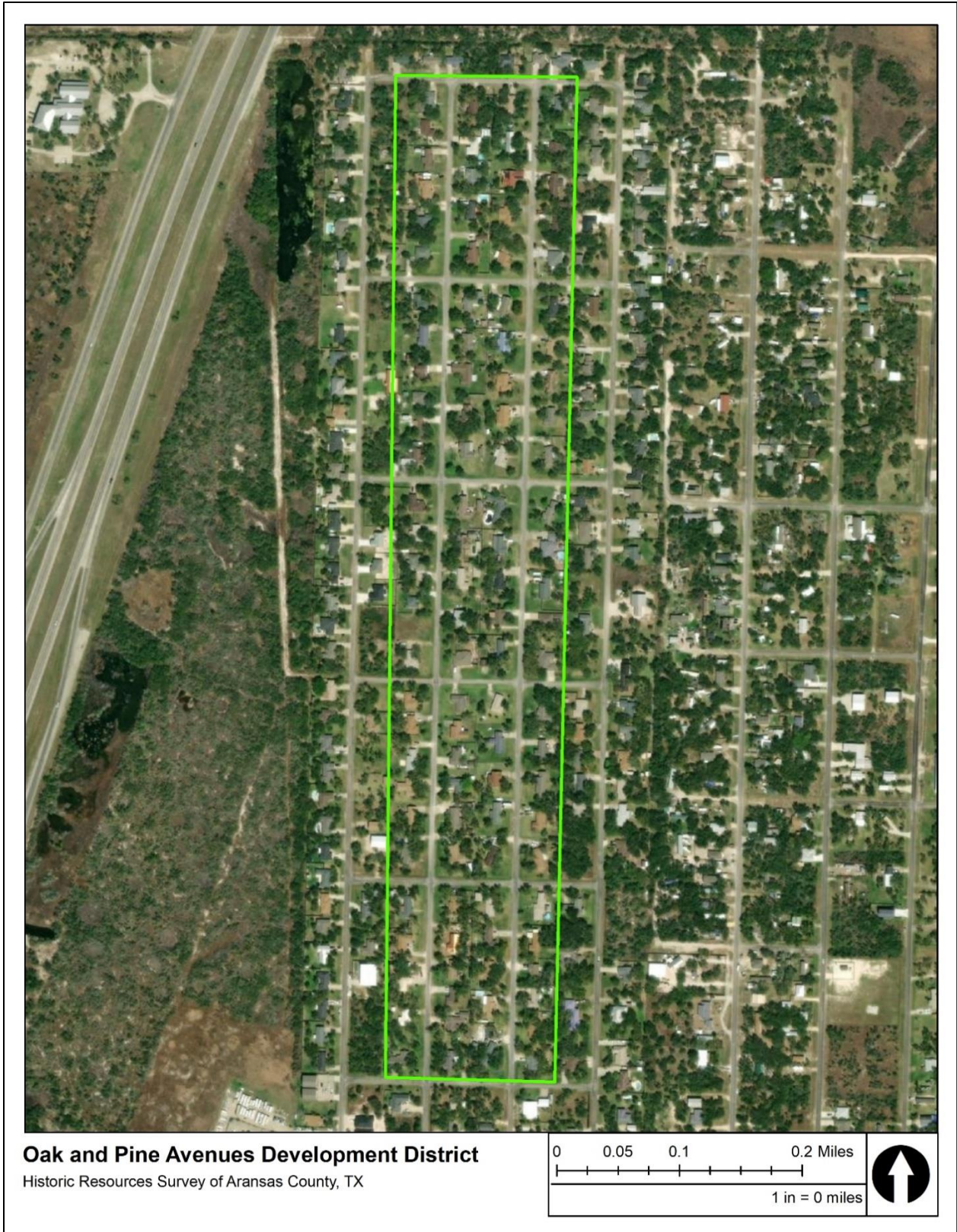
Table 12: Contributing Resources

Address	Resource	Contributing Y/N
1126 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1114 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1048 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1036 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1028 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1016 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1004 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
948 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
904 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
848 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
836 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
816 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
804 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
748 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
736 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
704 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
720 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
724 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1051 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1039 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1017 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1027 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1005 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
951 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
939 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
927 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
917 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
905 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
851 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
839 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
827 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
817 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
805 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
751 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
743 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1148 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1136 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
924 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
828 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y

705 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
721 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
731 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
712 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
812 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1105 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1039 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1031 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1005 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
951 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
939 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
851 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
843 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
743 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
721 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1148 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1136 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1124 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1116 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1104 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1051 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1004 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
948 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
916 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
751 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
731 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
704 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
705 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
848 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1048 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1036 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1024 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1016 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
936 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
928 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
828 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
816 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
804 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
748 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
736 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
724 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
720 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y

712 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
704 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
916 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
936 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1104 Oak Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1110 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
1126 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
927 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
905 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y
904 Pine Ave Rockport	Building	Y





Aerial view of Oak and Pine Development District. Image from Google Imagery.

Below are a series of photographs which capture the overall character of the proposed Oak Terrace Historic District. These are a sampling of properties which embody the characteristics shared among the contributing resources.



1114 Oak Avenue, façade; facing east.



1051 Oak Ave, Rockport, façade, facing northwest.



1005 Oak Ave, Rockport, façade and side elevation (southeast and northeast respectively), facing west.



927 Oak Ave, Rockport, façade, facing west.



917 Oak Ave, Rockport, façade, facing west.



705 Oak Ave, Rockport, façade, facing west.



705 Pine Ave, Rockport, façade, facing west.



1036 Pine Ave, Rockport, façade, facing east.



804 Pine Ave, Rockport, front, facing northeast.



704 Pine Ave, Rockport, front, facing east.

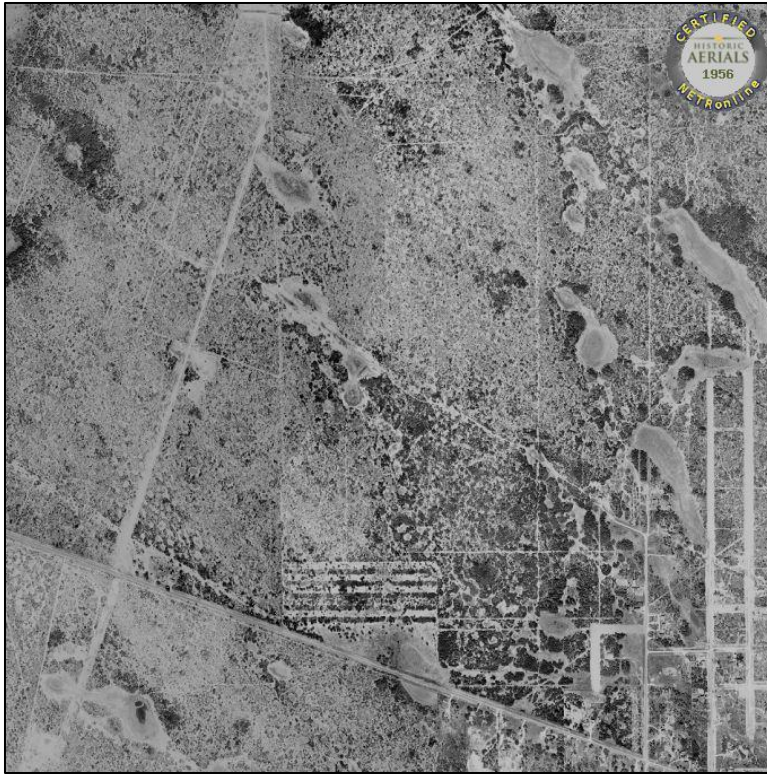


Figure 37: 1956 historic aerial of Oak and Pine Avenues area (Source: historicaerials.com)



Figure 38: 1972 historic aerial of Oak and Pine Avenues area (Source: historicaerials.com)



## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK



Lamar Cemetery | JMT

As a result of this survey, 28 buildings and one district have been recommended as eligible for listing in the NRHP. These resources possess significance on a local, state, or national level under Criterion A, B, or C, or a combination thereof, and appear to have retained sufficient integrity to convey their historic associations. Due to the inherent limitations of survey from the public right-of-way, additional examination may be warranted to more fully assess historic integrity of materials, workmanship, and design.

Recommendations for future work and preservation are listed below.

1. Conduct further study of select resources. Resources recommended for study outside the parameters of this survey are listed below.
  1. 902 East Cornwall Street, Rockport: Due to the resource's age, it is possible it is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion B. Conduct deed research to determine its eligibility for a potential association with a person significant in the past.
  2. Ruins at 160 Front Street, Rockport (Lamar): Due to the ruinous and unique nature of the ruins, the resource is eligible under Criterion D as a site with potential to provide information on early settlement and construction techniques. An archaeological investigation of the ruins is recommended.
  3. 615 Water Street, Rockport: Due to the resource's age, it is possible it is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion B. Conduct deed research to determine its eligibility for a potential association with a person significant in the past.
  4. Rockport Cemetery: Due to the age of the cemetery, it is possible it is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion B, Consideration D for containing the grave(s) of important persons.

5. Lamar Cemetery: Due to the age of the cemetery, it is possible it is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion B, Consideration D for containing the grave(s) of important persons.
2. Maximize accessibility of survey documentation and use for planning. The documentation collected during this survey should be made available to Aransas County Historical Commission and Aransas County municipalities, with encouragement to publish the data in an interactive GIS map. Alternatively, or additionally, the THC should host the data in the THC Atlas. This report should be used by residents and officials to understand the historic building fabric within the county in an effort to protect historic resources. The survey results should be used to assist in planning efforts including projects which require Section 106 review. The results contained herein, should be utilized early in project planning to prevent disruption of historic resources including districts.
3. Support NRHP designation of eligible properties and districts. Prior to this survey, there had been no comprehensive survey of Aransas County. Currently, there are 57 historic markers and three resources in Aransas County listed in the NRHP. The JMT/Stantec team recommends that the THC reach out to owners of properties determined eligible for the NRHP and other interested parties to encourage new NRHP applications. Increasing the number of NRHP-listed properties and historic districts in the survey area can help drive heritage tourism and bolster community pride. Additionally, nonprofit properties would be eligible for state historic preservation tax credits, and income-producing properties would be eligible for both state and federal tax credits if they are listed in the NRHP individually or as contributing to a district.
4. Support funding for historic property restoration and repair. Many properties determined eligible for the NRHP have visible storm damage or are in some state of disrepair. Preservation of historic buildings is a sustainable practice as these structures were often designed for their local climate reducing energy costs as well as reducing development and material waste through their existence. The JMT/Stantec team recommends that municipalities encourage residents to preserve and renovate existing structures rather than demolishing and replacing historic buildings.
5. Support disaster preparedness plans that include historic properties. To prevent future loss of important resources in Aransas County, disaster preparedness plans should be reviewed to ensure that historic properties are considered and that strategies are in place for how to protect and rehabilitate historic properties in the event of a major storm or hurricane.
6. Educate property owners on preservation tax credits. Owners of historic properties, especially in disaster-prone places, need help accessing funding to ensure the long-term survival of these important resources. Residents should be made aware of both state and federal programs that could benefit the preservation of their property.
7. Promote the need and benefits of preservation ordinances. Rockport and Fulton should consider adoption of preservation ordinances to protect historic resources through a review process which attempts, within reasonable limits, to preserve historic forms and materials (integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling).
8. Develop a Multiple Property Documentation Form for mid-twentieth-century tourist resorts. According to *National Register Bulletin* 16B, "The National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form documents

groups of thematically related properties. This form defines and describes one or more historic contexts, describes associated property types related to the historic contexts, and establishes significance and integrity requirements for nominating properties to the National Register.” Mid-twentieth-century tourist resorts remain throughout Rockport and Fulton, due to the likelihood of additional resources up and down the gulf coast, the development of a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) is recommended.

Aransas County has been a tourist destination since the arrival of the railroad in the late 1880s. Texans traveled from inland cities to the coast and would stay for weeks to months enjoying the climate, scenery, sports, wildlife, and recreation which developed as forms of tourism. Early tourism was primarily aimed at San Antonians who ventured to Aransas County for hunting and fishing and several private hunting clubs were established in the first part of the twentieth century. Sport hunting, however, declined in the 1930s as animal populations plummeted due to over-hunting (Allen and Taylor 1997, 188–91, 2012–13).

General outdoor recreation largely replaced hunting related activities after the 1930s. This combined with the construction of Texas SH 35 and the rise of the personal automobile led to additional tourism in the county. Although the hurricane of 1919 destroyed several hotels and cottages, tourist accommodations were rebuilt in the decades following the storm. The gas rationing required of Americans during World War II further encouraged Texans to vacation near their homes resulting in an additional tourism boom in Aransas County in the mid twentieth century. The increase in tourism in coastal Texas, including Aransas County, created a demand for short-term lodging leading to the construction of numerous hotels, motels, and cottages throughout the county. These were primarily located along major roadways, near tourist attractions including the water, and near entertainment including restaurants and night clubs. These buildings were constructed in various styles and materials but are largely single occupancy cottage units or duplexes.

Seven documented resources form the basis for the development of a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), the Cedar Lodge Motel, Living on Islanding Time, Fulton Beach Bungalows, Bayfront Cottages, Harbor Lights Cottages, 201 Palmetto Ave, and Sea Gunn Bay Homes. Each of these properties was constructed for short-term rental purposes and embody coastline vacation rentals. They reflect the mid twentieth-century trend in automobile-based tourism which led to the development of Aransas County, especially near the coast and along major motorways.

The Cedar Lodge Motel was constructed c. 1950 with two primary structures. A third building was added c. 1970 and additional structures were added in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries. Today there are seven buildings, three of which are historic age.

Living on Island Time is a property containing two duplexes flanking a single unit building. The duplexes are c. 1950 Minimal Traditional buildings with a shared entry porch while the central building is a c. 1955 Minimal Traditional structure. All three buildings have stucco exteriors, vertical siding in gable ends, and replacement sash windows. The buildings all have original or early doors, fixed louvered shutters, symmetric facades, and no gable side overhangs.

The Fulton Beach Bungalows is a group of buildings including one two-story stucco building with a hip roof, a one-story block and shellcrete duplex with a hip roof, six hip roofed one-story bungalows, and a small one-



story hip roofed office. Other structures on the property are ancillary and provide sheltered seating or recreational space. The buildings are all c. 1945 frame with stucco or shellcrete finishes excluding the small office which is from c. 1980 with vertical wood siding.

Bayfront Cottages is a collection of thirteen short term buildings, a covered picnic shelter, and a pool that form the hotel facility. One structure is a long multi-unit motel building with a side gable roof while the other buildings are one- or two-unit buildings with side gable roofs that are generally perpendicular to the street. Apart from the contemporary picnic shelter, the structures appear to be c. 1950 brick buildings.

Harbor Lights Cottages, 201 Palmetto Ave in Fulton, and Sea Gunn Bay Homes are all recommended individually eligible, and detailed information can be found under Individual Properties in the NRHP Recommendations section of this report. Respectively these are collections of c. 1960 Ranch, c. 1950 Minimal Traditional, and c. 1960 Vernacular style short-term rental properties.

The seven properties represent four different styles of architecture, but all embrace a small-scale unit-based form or plan. The hotels, like many constructed in the mid-twentieth-century, were located along major roadways, waterfront attractions, and within walking distance of recreational facilities and restaurants. All of these resources post-date the 1919 hurricane which was responsible for destroying much of the coastal community.

Table 13: Properties considered for the MPDF

THC Atlas Number	Resource Name	Address	Resource Type
3300071645	Cedar Lodge Motel	702 N Commercial St, Aransas Pass	Building
3300071646	Living on Island Time	208 Broadway St, Fulton	Building
3300071647	Fulton Beach Bungalows	130 Prairie Rd, Fulton	Building
3300071648	Bayfront Cottages	309 S Fulton Beach Rd, Rockport	Building
3300071649	Harbor Lights Cottages	108 Laurel St, Fulton	Building
3300071650	201 Palmetto Ave, Fulton	201 Palmetto Ave, Fulton	Building
3300071651	Sea Gunn Bay Homes	5802 Hwy 35 N, Rockport	Building

The images below are representative photographs of each of the properties associated with the MPDF.

### Cedar Lodge Motel



Cedar Lodge Motel, side (southeast) elevation, facing northwest.



Cedar Lodge Motel, front (southwest) elevation and side (southeast) elevation facing north-northwest.

### Living on Island Time



Living on Island Time front (north), facing south.

### Fulton Beach Bungalows



Fulton Beach Bungalows, front/side (south) elevations, facing north.



Fulton Beach Bungalows, front (south) elevation and sign, facing north-northeast.



Fulton Beach Bungalows, front and sides (south), facing north.



Fulton Beach Bungalows, front (east) elevation, facing west.



Fulton Beach Bungalows, front (south) elevation, facing north.



Fulton Beach Bungalows, side (south), facing north-northwest.



Fulton Beach Bungalows, front (south) elevation, facing north-northeast.

### Fulton Beach Bungalows



Bayfront Cottages, front and sides (east) elevations facing west-southwest.



Bayfront Cottages, front (east) elevation, facing west.



Bayfront Cottages, front and side (east) elevations, facing west-northwest.

### Harbor Lights Cottages



Harbor Lights Cottages, front and side (east and south respectively) elevations, facing north-northwest.



Harbor Lights Cottages, front and side (west and south respectively) elevations of three buildings, facing east.



Harbor Lights Cottages, front and side (north and west respectively) elevations, facing east-southeast.



Harbor Lights Cottages, front and partial side of two buildings (north and east respectively), facing south.

### 201 Palmetto Avenue



201 Palmetto Avenue, front (south) elevation, facing north.



201 Palmetto Avenue, front (south and east) elevations of several cottages, facing north-northwest.



201 Palmetto Avenue, front (south) elevation facing north.



201 Palmetto Avenue, front (east) elevation and picnic shelter, facing west-northwest.

Sea Gunn Bay Homes



Sea Gunn Bay Homes, front and side of several cottages (south and west respectively) elevations, facing east-northeast.



Sea Gunn Bay Homes, view of cottages (south and west), facing northeast.



Sea Gunn Bay Homes, view of cottages (south and west), facing northeast.



Sea Gunn Bay Homes, view of cottages, west and north elevations respectively, of cottages, facing east.

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