

Smoke From The Chimneys



Long Beach Historical Society

Remembering the past to preserve our future

July 2016

President's Message

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Time for Smoke from the Chimneys again. Hope you are all staying cool enough these days and enjoying the flowers of summer.

Plans are already underway for next year's calendar and the October Cemetery Tour. We've been very busy.

I'm also happy to announce that we will present a plaque, denoting old home status, to new member, Ms. Mary Gardner, for her lovely old home at 302 St Charles Ave. It's been many years since we've awarded one of these plaques and we're happy that the need has arisen again after all this time. I will notify every one with the date of the formal presentation, which could not be determined at press time.

The Beth Hansen History House continues to be open on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month during the hours of 11:00 am until 2:00 pm. That information is posted on our

sign facing Klondyke Rd. Don't forget to spread the word to your friends.

Several weeks ago a former Long Beach resident, Cathy Gervais' Suarez, got in touch with us through our website, about donating a book she'd written to our library. The book, *The Sky is Clear*, is about the ordeals her family endured during Camille and Katrina. She also mentioned enjoying some old issues of our newsletter that someone had passed to her. I told her there was a way (smile) to receive them in her mailbox every quarter. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book written by our newest member! Thanks again Cathy!

Recently Danny and I and several of our classmates had dinner one evening during our high school reunion weekend. A few of them expressed a desire to visit our building at some point. Since one couple was leaving the next morning for their home in Illinois, we gave ten people a private tour of the building after we left the restaurant. They all enjoyed

the pictures and took their time looking at everything and some said they'd be back to sit down in the library and view the scrapbooks during the open hours.

In place of the feature story that I usually do, it has been suggested that I include the recent talk that I was asked to give at the library, in honor of the 50th anniversary of its building. Board member Iantha Hines, also a member of the Friends of the Library called me with the request to speak. About 30 people, including members and ex-presidents, Donald Dana and Nashie Ward, came to hear the presentation and many stayed afterwards to talk to me and one of those in attendance came to the next meeting and joined the society. I hope you enjoy this history as much as they seemed to.

Last, but not least, thanks to my good friend, Eddie Ware, for making my newsletter look so good!

*Beth Hansen
President*

**SMOKE FROM THE
CHIMNEYS
LONG BEACH, MS**

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228-864-6100

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**Long Beach
Historical Society**

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Physical Address

645 Klondyke RD

(South side of the central fire station on Klondyke RD)

Meetings will all be held on the THIRD
Mondays at Historical Society Building, 645
Klondyke Rd.

2016 Meetings:

- January 18 - 11:00 am (Awards)
- April 18 - 6:00 pm
- **July 18 - 6:00 pm**
- October 17 - 6:00 pm

Email Address:

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Website: www.lbhistoricalsociety.com

Eddie Ware – Webmaster

Mission Statement

The Society's purpose is "to bring together those people interested in the history of the City of Long Beach and to coordinate their efforts in preserving and recording that history for future generations."

Long Beach Historical Society is a volunteer-based organization dedicated to the:

- Preservation and management of historic and cultural resources of Long Beach
- Provide educational opportunities for both its membership and the public



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**Upcoming Speaker
July 18th Meeting**

Tom Simmons, local author and historian, will be speaking to us about his book, *The Man Called Brown Condor*, the true story of African American war hero and pilot John Charles Robinson of Gulfport. Col Robinson was instrumental in the establishment of the school of aviation at Tuskegee. He is also remembered for courageous wartime service.

Mr. Simmons, who also grew up in Gulfport, has been a pilot since age 16 and has flown aerobatics in open-cockpit biplanes. He was an artillery officer in Korea and educated at the US Naval Academy, USM and the University of Alabama. Mr. Simmons received the 2015 Gold Medal Award for biography for this book.

**History of
The Long Beach Library**

I was thrilled to be asked to speak about the history of the library in our city because it's a subject that I wanted to know more about and I also love passing history on to others.

Just saying those words reminds me of the time that I asked Prof Steve Roberts of the MS Gulf Coast Community College to speak to the Historical Society. Steve said he'd get back with me in a few days, which he

did, and he told me that he was going to speak about something different than my request. His new subject would be our live oak trees. I told him that I was surprised and didn't know that he knew anything about oak trees. He responded with, "I don't, but I will by the time you have your meeting." And true to his word, he knew plenty and presented a great program.

I'm not trying to emulate the greatness of Professor Roberts, but I did want to increase my knowledge of this woman who was very instrumental in the beginning of our library. She was very intriguing and little was known of her except her name, Mrs. Ferguson; she was from New Orleans; she donated about 250 books; and the library was named the Garland Ferguson Library in her honor.

Well apparently this Mrs. Ferguson was one of our regular visitors who came over by train, as did many New Orleanians at that time. During one of these visits she discovered that some of the ladies here had thoughts and dreams about having a library in the little village but so

far they hadn't done anything--- except talk about it.

Well, according to the Biloxi Herald, Mrs. Ferguson, quite the dynamic lady, was president of the Arena Club in NOLA, a social club much involved in good works. Other sources show Mrs. Ferguson had also just become the first state regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution in New Orleans. Not your average laid back type of lady in any way.

the chairperson of a committee composed of Mrs Uriel Wright, Miss E Cable, Mrs R C Jones and Mrs S E Lamberton who all enlisted the help of their menfolk. Mr D Beech provided a ROOM in a building, not the whole building. It was thought to be somewhere between the present Hancock Bank and the Levens building.

So, with donations from many right here in Long Beach, and the kindness of strangers in New Orleans, a small library was

the library known by both her maiden and married names. Her husband, a physician, Dr J M Ferguson must have been very proud of Lizzie, as she was known to family and friends. I think I'm going to call her Lizzie from now on too!

Research shows that Mrs. Mason, the committee head, was the mother of Mrs Uriel Wright and the aunt of Miss E Cable. Both of the girls, the daughters of sisters, were named Ella, and sadly Ella Wright passed on a few years after the library opened but happily Ella Cable married in 1898.

Certainly it was this mother-daughter duo who told Lizzie Ferguson their dreams about having a library in Long Beach.

Further research into Mr. Beech, who provided the room for the library, revealed that he was Duncan Beech, a merchant, who owned a livery business here in town, next to the depot. Mr Beech was a man ahead of his time, listen to this information, copied verbatim: Mr. Beech has several speedy road horses and a number of different conveyances with which to handle the traveling trade and that of the summer and winter residents. He has polite and obliging drivers who are well informed in all points of interest and lands or houses for sale or rent. End of quote. In other words he could have you delivered to the new library or take you on a tour of the village



Mrs. Ferguson decided to take matters into her own hands and help the Long Beach ladies with their idea. She spoke to a large assembly here on the coast, comprised of 4 different ladies groups and inspired them to proceed ahead with full steam. She added to the cause by already having collected books to donate with promises for more and other items too. The ladies followed her example and Mrs. Mary Mason became

opened on Thursday evening, Nov 7th, 1895. A group of about 30 were led in prayer by W C Biberon, a local business man. The evening hours were made possible due to an auxiliary committee of gentlemen.

The Garland Ferguson library was so called because Mrs. Ferguson was the former Miss Elizabeth Cabell Garland so she was doubly honored to have

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too! A very enterprising young man and I was sorry to see that he passed on in 1901, at the age of 33, and his young wife shortly thereafter. They had several young children at the time.

Happiness continued on for 28 years with the little library until the building in which it was housed and all others on that side of the street were destroyed in 1923 by the Big New Year's Eve fire. It was thought the fire began in a restaurant next door

to the library. A bucket brigade was just not enough to contain the flames being fanned by the prevailing mid-winter winds.

A few years later as the nation was reeling from the Depression, many lost their mortgaged homes since jobs were hard to come by. Everyone was trying to eek out a living, as best as they could and naturally, replacing the burned out library was definitely taking a back seat.

Twelve years later, another library was able to emerge with help from the government through the Emergency Relief Administration, the ERA. In newspaper articles the library was either described as the ERA Library or as the WPA Rural library, the latter of course, being the Works Progress Administration. Both programs were part of President Roosevelt's Alphabet Relief Programs of the day to help cope with those Depression years. However, the townspeople were providing the grit, sweat and tears with lots of hard work, door to door campaigns, book showers, collections of every kind, including orange crate shelves.

The P. T. A. even raised money to place curtains in the new library.

Finally the written word was in business again in our fair city, this time located in the old vegetable packing shed that fronted Jeff Davis Ave and previously used during the heyday of truck farming and

shipping success that made Long Beach the Radish Capitol. However, no radishes ever touched the books! The library was in the previous office space!

According to newspaper reports, the little WPA Rural library in the packing shed seemed to prosper and was enjoyed by all.

WPA workers kept a close eye on all of its libraries in the area with inventories taking place on a regular basis.

On July 29, 1939 Mrs. C E Buckles, the librarian reported that the WPA library would be closed for 30 days due to some regulations and that she must give back the books for those 30 days.

This announcement no doubt inspired a concerned group of citizens to make plans for a public library. They may have also been thinking that the Alphabet programs instituted by President Roosevelt may be nearing the end and they acted quickly as if inspired by the spirit of Lizzie Ferguson as their ideas took off. (Some folks thought that the burning of the packing shed was the cause of the library closing in 1939 but the shed didn't burn until many years later in 1953.)

On Monday, Oct 2, the group met in the Hancock Bank building, which also became its temporary location, and set up a board, rules, regulations, and officers and promptly opened on Thursday Oct 5, 1939 at 10:00 am with an all-day book shower.

This of course, was done because they had no books. Apparently the books from the WPA library must have been the property of the WPA!

They did have a librarian though, Stella Buckles continued on as librarian and was also elected as treasurer of the newly elected board. That opening day book shower netted, besides calls and flowers, over 100 books and many new magazines. Within a few weeks, they had more than 300 books and even furniture as donations continued to pour in.

Speaking of the WPA, on a good note, it had also begun traveling libraries around the country and there was one in all 82 Mississippi counties. One, the only ONE in the country, was a water route in Leflore County on the Yazoo River, run by a female whose patrons called her "the book boat girl". It was easier for her to get to the patrons by boat rather than automobile.

The new library's rapid growth since opening in Oct 1939, was frequently reported in the Herald. On August, 22, 1940 it was time to move out of the Hancock Bank Building, which was for sale. A new location just across the street in the brand new Patenotte building, a duplex, put the library almost in its original location where it had begun so many years before. To back track just a tiny bit, within weeks of moving from the bank building, the Masonic Lodge bought it, they used the second floor and the Post Office moved into the lower floor with much fanfare during the last week in December, 4

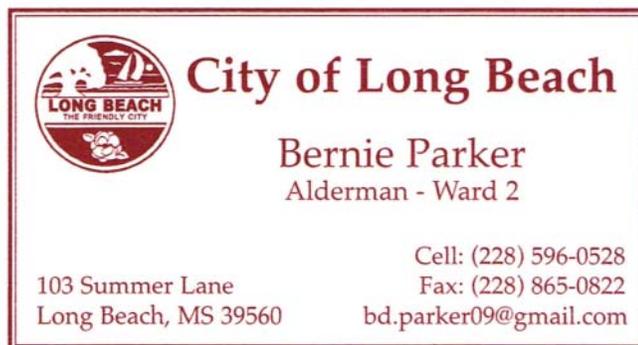
months after the library moved out.

On a personal note, I moved to Long Beach in late 1951 and the library, still in the Patenotte building, was one of the first places in town that I visited. It was very convenient for an avid young reader to be in walking distance of the local library. The library was small but effective, and had a full set of Nancy Drew mysteries, just what a 9 year girl wanted to read.

The library would stay in that location until this fine building was built. There was a most dedicated group of ladies, ably led by Mrs. Vinson Smith. The Smiths at the time owned the lovely old Harper McCaughan house on 4th St. Mrs Smith seemed to possess that same energy as Harper as she tirelessly worked to bring about the purchase of this land by seeking federal, state and local monies to make it all a reality on March 27, 1966.

This property for many years was home to Mr & Mrs Ed Fillingim who also had a lovely home here on this corner. They actually had it moved from down the street where they'd first built it behind Mr. Fillingim's meat market. It was moved on rollers by oxen to this location where it sat for many years.

A Friends of the Long Beach Public Library was organized three years later under Mrs. Henry Levy. This group



promotes, encourages, informs and raises funds continuously to support and further the cause of the library. We admire and are indebted to this group of local citizens in our midst.

During that year, Hurricane Camille struck and although water came up to the steps out front, there was no damage or loss of books inside. However, about 400 books were out on loan and were damaged or lost in the homes of patrons. That fact and the general disrepair of the city contributed to the library being closed for several weeks.

Life was again good until August of 2005 when Hurricane Katrina struck the coast with a vengeance. Many libraries, of course, did not make it through the destruction but this building was still standing.

Contending with 3 ½ ft of water here on the lower level and the caving in of the south wall caused such damage to all books that only the ones on the highest of shelves survived.

Although there was roof damage, it fortunately equated to being slight on the inside of the 2nd

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floor, so the books upstairs were salvageable.

One of my favorite neighbors, the late Jean Sneed, had gone to North Carolina to stay with relatives. Not wanting her library books to become overdue Jean asked her son John, who stayed behind to look after the house, to make sure and put them in the drop box. He later told her he couldn't find the drop box... it was gone and furthermore, the building was badly damaged.

When Jean passed this tale of woe on to the Polk County Public Library, it adopted our library and within several weeks presented it with 1,000 books.

On a humorous note, Jean's story about her books and the drop box made it to the internet in record time, which is where I saw it, even before it became news here in the Friendly City. Sadly and luckily, the library operated from a FEMA trailer for two years before the building reopened. On a happy note, it was overrun with books!

What wonderful library volunteers and workers Long Beach has been blessed with for

the last 121 years that led up to the opening of this building 50 years ago. I'm sure Lizzie and the early Long Beach ladies of 1895 are filled with pride. I know I am.

Thanks for listening!

Beth Hansen, President
Long Beach Historical Society
April 14, 2016

*Sources: www.genealogybank.com
(articles from the Daily Herald of
Gulfport and Biloxi, MS)*

*Rosalie and Radishes: A History of
Long Beach, Mississippi by Mary
Ellen Alexander.*

Marguerite Brandt McCaughan and 3 sisters. Surviving are his wife Della, two daughters and a large family. He proudly served his country in both WWII and the Korean War and received many performance awards during his 33 years in Civil Service at Keesler AFB.

Our sympathies are also extended to member Stephanie Bass, who also recently lost her brother, Bill Welch, whose wife, Norma Reinike Welch's passing was just noted in the last newsletter Bill had a combined total of 38 years of service to the nation, serving in both Korean and Vietnam and working in Civil Service. He was a man of many talents and a great inspiration to his family with his interest and knowledge in many endeavors. He and his wife ran her late father's nursery, Cypress Grove, for many years.

Condolences



Condolences to member Jennie Lee McCaughan Lacy, who recently lost her brother, Finley Brandt McCaughan, last living grandson of Harper McCaughan and great grandson of John McCaughan. Jennie is now the last surviving grandchild of Harper. Finley is preceded by his parents, Finley B H and

Our city also mourns the death of Fred Walker, a State Farm insurance agent, who was very active in the community, holding numerous leadership positions and was a recipient of the Aline Doherty Citizen of the Year Award. He will be greatly missed.



Long Beach Historical Society

2016 Membership Application

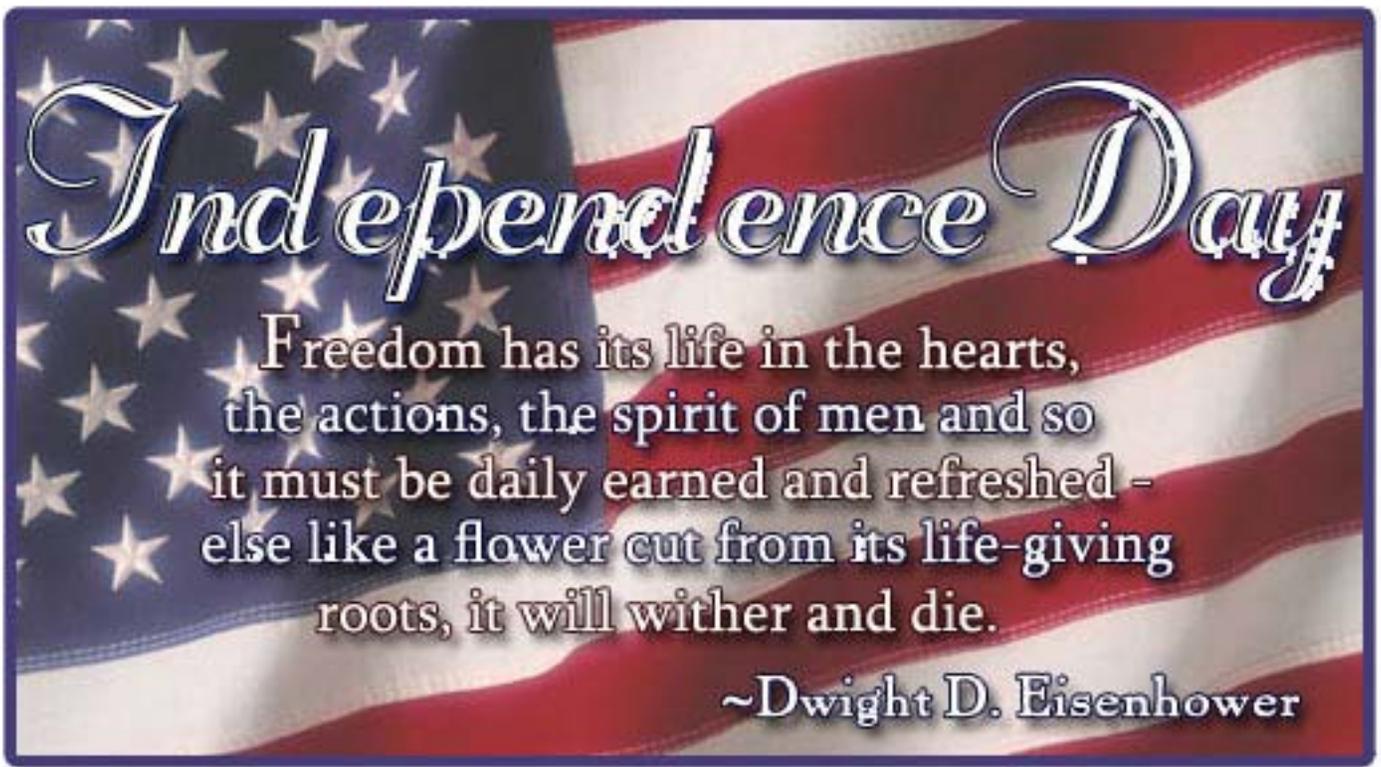
Feel free to either use this form as a gift for family or friend or pass along to a prospective member.

Yearly membership is January 1 – December 31
Payable beginning at the January meeting or online as follows:

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The following pictures were taken one week after Hurricane Katrina had done its damage.

