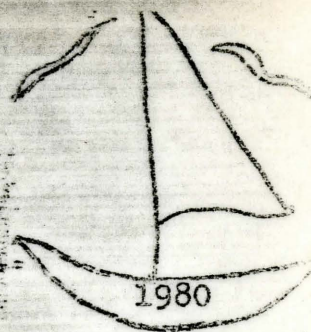


# HARRAL'S HISTORICAL HERALD



WRITINGS FROM SEABROOK'S PAST  
REPORTED BY 4TH GRADERS AT J.F. BAY ELEMENTARY

## JAMES F. BAY

James F. Bay Elementary was named after Mr. James F. Bay. He was born in Richards, Texas. His father was a farmer. His mother ran a boarding house. He received his B. A. degree in history and English and his Masters in Elementary Education. He got these degrees from Sam Houston University.

He came to Seabrook in 1939 as a teacher. In 1945 he became Superintendent of Seabrook Independent School District. After consolidation in 1948 he became Principal of Seabrook Elementary.

He initiated Parent Conference Day. He knew all of his students by name even after they graduated and followed their progress. He was a member of the Seabrook Methodist Church. He served on the boards, as head of the Education Department, Superintendent of Sunday School and on committees. He was a life member of Texas P.T.A.

Mike Becker

## EARLY SCHOOL DAYS IN SEABROOK

In 1940 James F. Bay was different from what it is today. If you came to school early you would have to shovel coal for the heating stoves. School always started at 7:30.

Mr. Bay's office was on the stage. The school secretary was Miss Sweet. One of the teachers was Mr. Hallmark who taught 6th and 7th grades. There were only 20 to 25 kids in each class. There were basic subjects - Math, English and Science.

Each day the children ate lunch at the Community building because there was no school lunch room. Lunch was 10¢ and you always found Mr. Bay helping. Mrs. Porter lead the daily blessing and always taught proper table manners. At the end of meals, Mr. Bay would beat the kettles with a silver spoon saying, "seconds, seconds". The big events of the year were the May Day Party and the Halloween Carnival.

Shauna Dillon

## BALLENTINE HOUSE

The Ballentine house was built in 1895. It was one of the first houses built in Seabrook, and it still stands. It was built about 85 years ago, and it was also the town's first library. Ansul Wiltsie was the person who built the house and had no idea he was going to build a library. This all started when some folks asked Lady Wiltsie if she wanted a few books. Seems like they were selling the place, except the books.

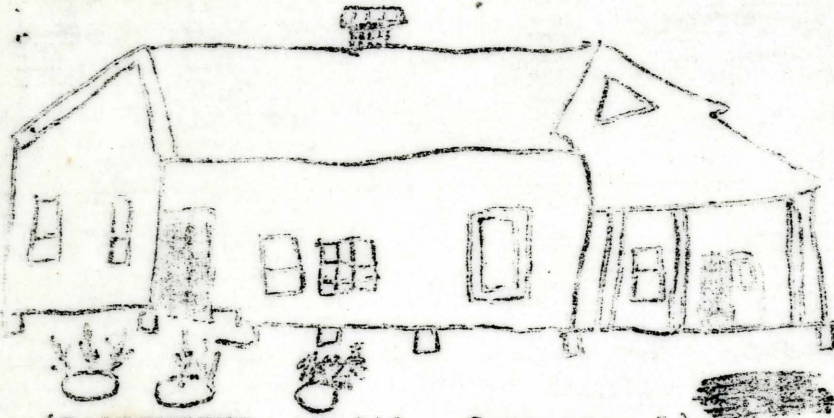
She said she'd love to have the books. Then, she got the idea of a library. The library was right in her parlor. Ansul put shelves in the parlor which are still there. He put all the books up there nice and neat. Before you knew it, folks were exchanging books they hadn't read.

In 1924 the Ballentines bought the property from the Wiltsies.

Mr. and Mrs. George E. Ballentine were married on February 18, 1936 in Houston's old court yard by Justice of the Peace, Thomas M. Mayers. Then

(BALLENTINE, page 2)





(BALLENTINE, cont'd., from page 1)

he brought his bride, Bee, to Meyer Street where they live 26 years.

Mr. Ballentine: Mr. Ballentine was born on March 16, 1888. His house was built by Mr. Wiltsie. He had a garden surrounding his house. He spent most of his free time there. His garden was his life.

He can remember the 1900 storm. He said it was the most frightening night of his life. He can remember waves coming from 20 to 30 feet high. The waves carried many things, including bales of cotton. In the morning you could see his house on its side.

Another time, his cousin Jack, who was 4 or 5 years old, got a new skiff. Leeta, his sister and George, went down to the lake to play with it. While they were down there Jack decided to go buy some candy. The current was so strong, Leeta and George tried to persuade him not to go. He went anyway. When he got out of the skiff, he saw some pigs and got scared and jumped back in the skiff. Then, it turned over.

There was blue mud at the bottom of the lake about ten feet deep and something like quicksand. Jack got stuck in it and they thought he would drown. Leeta ran and told his mother. She told George to try to wade and get him. Then, Papa came and got hold of him and worked him like a washrag. Then they took him out.

Mrs. Ballentine: Mrs. Bee Ballentine was born in Eastland, Texas

in August, 1889. She spent her school days in Abilene. She had to walk several miles to school each day, and when she got home, there was always chores to be done. Then they did their homework.

The Ballentines lived on Meyer Street with their daughter who is now Mrs. Benney Sanders. She lives in Clear Lake. There are two grandchildren Darlene Sanders and Bennie Morris Sanders and two great-grandchildren, Mike Wayne Sanders and Bennie Morris Sanders.

This year (1980), the Ballentine House was partially destroyed by fire. This was an 85 year old house which survived the 1900 and 1915 storms and still stands.

Alicia Knoedler

#### THE MIDDLE BAYOU SCHOOL

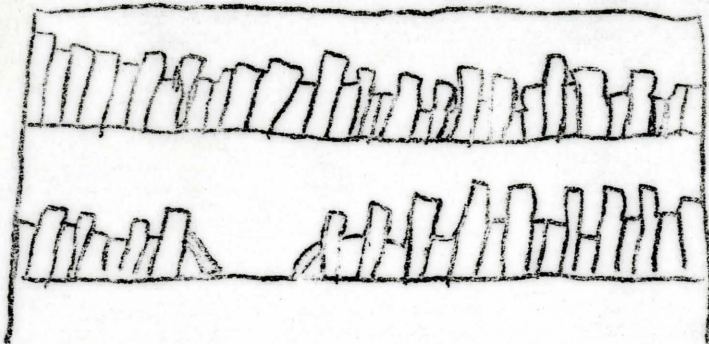
One of the first school buses in the area came from the Middle Bayou School. It was called "the kid wagon." It was an old covered wagon that they used to put kids in.

There were three drivers. They were Mr. Dobsen, Mrs. Donnell, and Tom Wiltsie. Even sometimes Dave Ballentine drove it.

When the school was moved to Bay they brought the library, also. He put the books from the library in a whole bunch of boxes. Some of the books were given to area persons by Mr. Bay.

Vance Wagenknecht





### ALICE ROYAL

Mrs. Alice Royal is our school librarian. She has been at this school for 24 years. This is her 25th year. She has not always been a librarian, though she has been a librarian here for 17 school years. The other seven she was a classroom teacher. She taught Kindergarten, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and when the 6th grade was still here, she taught that. However, she says her favorite grade to teach was 5th grade.

Mrs. Royal says that she would rather be a librarian than a classroom teacher. As a librarian, she meets all the kids, when a classroom teacher can't.

With all the interest centers and the computer in the library, Mrs. Royal says that it gets very noisy in there. Sometimes, she gets pretty aggravated with the kids! She used to think 3 people from a class was enough, but reading groups stepped that.

Mrs. Royal says she doesn't have too much trouble with the kids. In other words, most of them like to read. The people that don't, she says, are the ones that have difficulty reading.

Mrs. Royal was born on December 13 in N. Pleasanton, Texas. She has three children; two boys and one girl. She also has two grandsons. Her husband is principal of Clear Lake City Elementary School.

Andrea Moore

### GOOSE EGG

Back in the 1800's when the children in Seabrook needed light at

night they found a special way to get it. They would take a big goose egg and blow the insides out. Then, they would catch fireflies. They would put them in the egg and cover the hole. The fireflies gave just enough light to help them walk down the hallway in the dark.

Shawn Heath

### RUGERS HOTEL

A little after 1900, the Rutgers Hotel was built. Charles Christian Rutgers built the Rutgers Hotel. Mrs. Hecker and Rutgers were sister and brother.

Acer trees were brought from a city park in New Orleans. They planted them in front of the Rutgers Hotel. Now they are big oak trees. These trees now stand in front of the Lakewood Yacht Club.

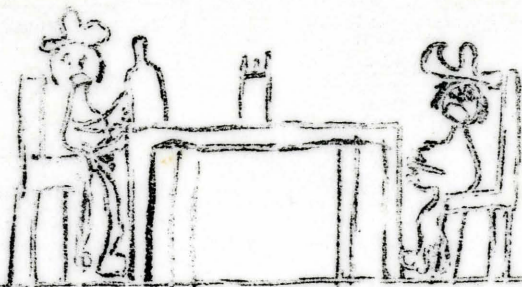
The Rutgers Hotel was closed so they decided to make the Rutgers Hotel into a boys home. There was a fish pond there full of beautiful gold fish. Each child in Seabrook was given two. They built the Lakewood Yacht Club in place of the boys home. The Lakewood Yacht Club is still standing. The big oak trees are still there right where they were planted about a few years ago.

Susan Eichenauer

### INTERVIEW OF TONIE MUECKE

What did you do when you were small? "It was lots more fun than now. At least we thought it was back then. There were just 300 people in (MUECKE, page 4)





(M. BRANT, cont'd., from page 7)

of land that previously were beaches and now under water. Subsidence was caused by the removal of under ground water by channel industries.

This practice is now regulated, but the land will continue to sink at a much slower rate. I have seen vacant lots changed to building sites for new homes and the number of summer residents decrease and the number of permanent year around residents increase. The advent of freeways leading to and from Houston made it possible for residents to live in El Jardin and commute to work.

Clarence Swinea

#### MRS. SANFORD

I moved to El Jardin from Houston in 1957 with my family. At that time the grass between the houses was head high, blocking the vision between the homes as the street I live on. This was cut by tractor mower within two years and is now kept to an 18 height or lower.

The beach at our pier was a beautiful, grassy hill that has changed to a much shorter hill because of subsidence. The bluff has changed from 17 ft. high to 14 ft.

I have seen the old timers change to the younger generation with lots of new ideas about the upkeep of the pier, parks, etc. which proved to be good ideas.

The Volunteer Fire Department is still intact with some of the charter members enrolled. The sewage lines have replaced the septic tanks we

were forced to use until 1978. The drainage ditches are improved, and many more changes, too numerous to mention, have taken place through the years - all for the better.

Clarence Swinea

#### SANTA ANNA COMES TO SEABROOK

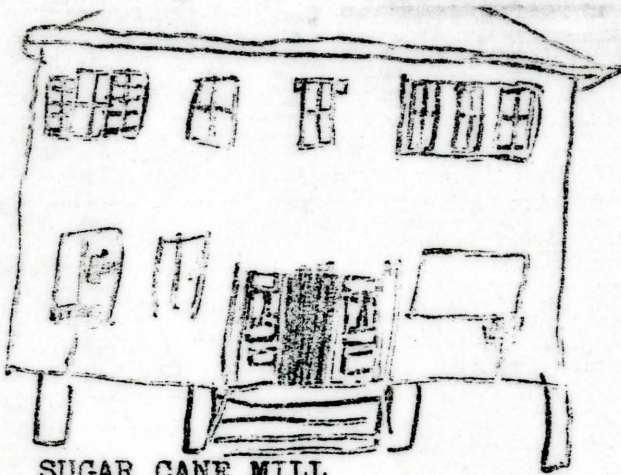
One day the Texans rounded up Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto. Santa Anna was sent to General Sam Houston who decided to take him to some safe place until they could decide what to do with him.

A day or two later several white men rode up to Mr. Morris' place just before dark with a Mexican prisoner they were guarding very closely. They would not tell who he was. They had supper and Mr. Morris gave them beds for the night.

The Morris' had a parrot who was a good talker and had a way of screaming "Savannah" which sounded very much like "Santa Anna" as the Mexicans pronounced it. The parrot had not been noticed by the strangers until it suddenly screamed "Savannah". The Mexican almost jumped and his face turned white as a sheet. Mr. Morris knew it was Santa Anna. He told the guards and they admitted to him that it was and told him they were taking him to Freeport under Gen. Houston's orders. They swore him to secrecy until they could get him to safety. Imagine Santa Anna right here in Seabrook!

Kimberly Markley





SUGAR CANE MILL

Will Murdock used to have a sugar cane field. He had a sugar cane mill in the same area.

There was a road at the west side of the sugar cane field. To get to the mill, the workers had to go on the road to get to the sugar cane mill.

Chris Olzinger

#### SEABROOK AND PIRATES

When the buccaneer village of Campeche, on Galveston Island, was disbanded, there were some free-beaters who decided not to go to sea with Lafitte. Most of the freebeaters came inland and settled down around the area where the town of Kemah and Seabrook are now located. Their descendants still live in these small villages and the cemeteries there still have many tombstones that are engraved with the names of the remnants of Lafitte's pirate gang.

Even the street names such as "Kipp" in Kemah, reflect the influence that these ex-Lafitte henchmen had on the area. One of these pirates named Jim Campbell, settled 15 miles south of Seabrook on a bayou that was later to bear his name - Campbell's Bayou.

Another one of Lafitte's lieutenants named Tayler, built his home on a small lake that emptied into the Clear Lake. His wife was buried on the north shores of what was later called Taylor lake. Lafitte would often drop his anchor near the outlet to that lake, and Tayler evidently marked it in his mind for future use.

It was very strange, but the remainder of Lafitte's pirates stayed right around that particular area in Seabrook. We wonder what could be the secret of Clear Creek that attracted them. Were the pirates hoping to find Lafitte's treasure nearby?

Jesse A. Ziegler recalled that when he was a young boy, he remembers often seeing many of the men in Lafitte's gang. There was an old pirate named "crazy Ben" who stuck most vividly in his memory. Crazy Ben was a fisherman who stayed around the shore. One day when Ben was out fishing in the bay, porpoise began playing around his skiff. Ben wanted to get rid of it because it was scaring the fish away. He shot it with a harpoon and it stuck in his hide. The harpoon was connected to a chain in the boat, so the porpoise took off going 30 miles per hour. Some men in another boat finally rescued him.

Diana Taylor

#### SEABROOK AND MRS. HESTER

Mrs. Hester has been a resident in Seabrook for 65 years. She moved here in 1914. She taught school in an old white, square-framed building, which was located on Hardesty Street. There was one teacher for each room. There were four teachers so there were four rooms. Inside the classroom there were double desks. Two pupils shared a desk. The rooms were heated by wooden stoves that burned on fire wood. The drinking water was carried in by a bucket and they all drank out of the same dipper.

(HESTER, page 10)





(HESTER, cont'd., from page 9)

There was not a bridge that we knew of that goes to Kemah. The only way you could get there was by a ferry which was pulled by a pullet wheel.

There was no Toddville road, but there was a road along the bay. A girl scout sailing camp was established after the road along the bay was made.

There was no meat market, just one small grocery. There was one small Methodist church. There were places with just grass and trees. Nine trains came through a day! There was one very small post office. There was no highway 146.

The 1915 storm took all the houses on the road that we call Toddville, except for one. In winter you could look out on the bay, and it would be covered with wild ducks. There was not a single cemetery in Seabrook. Where the "Bay Elementary School" is now there was just plains and there was a private railroad track.

Mrs. Hester has seen Seabrook change from a small town to a big community.

Lauren Schooley

#### JEAN LAFITTE

Who was Jean Lafitte? Jean Lafitte was a Frenchman. No one knows his birthplace or birthdate. No records were kept when this handsome baby was born. We do know that at an early age he came to the West Indies. There he was falsely imprisoned for seven years without trial by the Spanish. His friends helped him to escape. For the rest of Jean Lafitte's life he hated the Spanish and wanted revenge.

It was said that Jean was from a good family in France. He had elegant manners. Jean was a handsome man. He was more than six feet tall and well proportioned. Even though Jean was strong, he was also very graceful.

Jean's eyes were the thing that everyone noticed about him. They were sparkling with glee. Jean had a bad temper, and when he had one those eyes of his were terrifying to see.

When Jean escaped from prison, he stole away on a ship. He hid behind bales of goods. When the ship was in the middle of the ocean he came out. He was treated kindly, but was put on shore at the first stop the ship made. Jean was in Charleston, South Carolina.

There were lots of pretty girls in South Carolina and Jean fell in love with one of them. It just so happened that she already had a lover. This jealous young man challenged Jean to a duel. He was no match for this strong, adventurous Frenchman. He was killed. Dueling was against the law and Lafitte had to leave.

He went to New Orleans. There he fitted out a ship.

The Spanish colonies in South America, and a little later in Mexico, were fighting for their freedom from Spain.

Jean's old madness still burned in him, and he saw his chance for revenge.

So, Jean gathered up his crew and told the officials that they would attack every Spanish ship that they saw in the Gulf of Mexico.

Jean and his men attacked every Spanish ship they saw and took the rich cargoes, not as a prize, but

(LAFITTE, PG. 11)



# ANCHOR THIS IS SEABROCK

(LAFITTE, cont'd, from page 10)

their own property.

Now Jean was a pirate, but he never robbed a ship himself, except for the Spanish.

Jean couldn't live in New Orleans now that the United States and Spain made peace. He and his men moved to an island called Barataria.

A lot of smuggling was done by the pirates in New Orleans. The Spanish complained to the President of the United States. He asked the Governor of Louisiana to do something. It was very embarrassing for the Governor.

The Governor posted signs everywhere offering five hundred dollars for Jean dead or alive.

One day a group of men were standing in front of a notice, laughing loudly. During the night some of Jean's men posted a notice by Jean. Jean offered fifteen thousand dollars for Governor Claiborne's head?

Jean and his men helped the United States win the battle over Great Britain.

After the battle was over, Jean and his men returned to their life as pirates. They made their headquarters on Galveston Island. Jean called the colony Campeche. There he built himself a beautiful castle and lived in luxury.

A thousand men came to join Jean at Campeche. The men were rough and dishonest, but they were scared of Jean.

After an incident with an American ship, Lafitte was forced to leave Galveston Bay.

Jean burned his village, paid and disbanded his men, and sailed away down the coast of Mexico and was never seen again.

Lori Duke



WELCOME

CARTON