

Rural Reporter Casper tells about his trip to Rockport-Fulton. Also lots of festivals this month: Sausages, Cotton Gins, Fleas and Bluebonnets.

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BACKROADS NEWSLETTER

April 2014 Volume 30

PDF Copy of April 2014 Newsletter

Howdy Friends & Partners,

I'm happy to share with you another great adventure from Rural Reporter Casper as he travels to Rockport Fulton, the charm of the Texas Coast. It's a story of art, food, history, birds and beauty. Heck, even the alligator is kind of pretty.

Spring has sprung and sprouted up festivals this month! There's lots of neat ones around Texas: Cotton Gin Festival in Burton, Sausage Festival in Schulenburg, Jamboree in Smithville, Bluebonnet Festival in Chappell Hill and the Flea Festival in Jewett.

Also of interest, be sure to catch the story on the unique organization, The Madisonville Sidewalk Cattlemen's Association.

See you on the Trail



Traveling the Backroads of Texas - Rockport/Fulton...Charm of the Texas Coast

by Casper

Rockport [pop. 7400] is the county seat of Aransas County and was first developed about 1865 as a cattle processing and shipping center. It was nearly destroyed by a hurricane in 1919, but the residents quickly rebuilt and by 1925 it became a fishing and shipbuilding center on the Gulf Coast.

The town of Fulton joins Rockport on the north. Today this area is a vibrant community, encouraging both tourism and relocation to the place residents call



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"Paradise".

There are dozens of great places to stay in Rockport/Fulton. From outstanding resorts, to hotels, RV Parks, fishing lodges, and charming Bed and Breakfasts in historic homes, visitors to the area have a wonderful variety of choices.

I began my visit with a stop at the Rockport/Fulton Visitors Center, located near the waterfront and across the street from many of Rockport's main attractions. The helpful staff will help you with great handouts on local museums, art galleries, dining places, and hotels. Many attractions are only open Tuesday through Saturday and I began my tour on Wednesday morning. I was surprised at the number of wonderful attractions in Rockport which are free to the public.




The Rockport Art Center is an attractive one-story building, filled with paintings, sculpture, pottery, and jewelry creations from outstanding local artists. The friendly docents and the open, clean design of the galleries add to the experience. The exhibited artwork changes monthly and is for sale. The center also has a nice gift shop.

Inspired by the artwork, I headed down to the Austin Street art galleries. The Austin Street area is filled with wonderful art galleries and shops, including Salt Flats Gallery, Coastal Creations Art Galley, St. Charles Gallery, Estelle Stair Gallery, 4 the Birds, Paradise House, and the eclectic Flying Pig Emporium. My purchases included a wooden carving, a hand-thrown pottery mug, and a vintage magazine. Lots of on street parking allows you to wander up and down the street and really enjoy the area.

There are many great places to eat in Rockport and recommended restaurants included JD's Seafood, the Chartroom, Shempy's Grill, Panjo's Pizza and Pasta, Latitude 28.02, Jalisco Mexican Restaurant, Rosita's Taqueria, and Rockport Bakery. Charlotte Plummer's Seafare Restaurant and the Moondog Restaurant are among those located nearby in Fulton. I was only able to sample a few, but look forward to finishing the list the next time.

In the afternoon I returned to the harbor area and visited the Bay Education Center. The Center includes informative displays and hands-on activities highlighting the Mission-Aransas Estuary and its ecology. The center also sponsors lectures and educational workshops. Located in the center is Science on a Sphere, a fascinating lecture and program with computerized video display on a giant sphere suspended in the middle of the room. The subjects of the talks change during the week and visitors are encouraged to return.



 Forward to Friend



"Revolution" is continuing to film on the square in Blanco on April 1, 2014. Revolution is an NBC series, a post-apocalypse sci-fi drama taking place 15 years after electricity ceases to exist.

[Angleton, TX](#)

[Bartlett, TX](#)

[Bastrop, TX](#)

[Bastrop County, TX](#)

[Bay City, TX](#)

[Bellville, TX](#)

[Belton, TX](#)

[Blanco, TX](#)

[Bowie, TX](#)

[Bridgeport, TX](#)

[Brenham, TX](#)

[Brownfield, TX](#)

[Brownwood, TX](#)

[Burton, TX](#)



Schulenburg Sausage Festival happens on April 5th. Sausage-making contests, children's activities, great food, antique tractor show, and live music in downtown Schulenburg. Free Admission!

[Cameron, TX](#)

[Canton, TX](#)

[Clute, TX](#)

[Columbus, TX](#)

[Comfort, TX](#)

[Cuero, TX](#)

[Diboll, TX](#)

[Dimmit County](#)

[Elgin, TX](#)

[Emory, TX](#)

[Ennis, TX](#)



Rockport/Fulton is on the Texas Birding Trail and there are many quiet places to walk and bird-watch. During my stay I visited the Rockport Demonstration Bird Garden and Wetlands Pond. This park includes a garden of native plants chosen to attract hummingbirds and a boardwalk and observation platform for viewing the birds and wildlife around the wetlands pond. Late afternoon found me at Goose Island State Park searching for whooping cranes and the legendary Big Tree. The park is a wonderful place for camping, fishing, and picnicking on the beach. One of the best places to see the seasonal whooping cranes is an open field in the nearby town of Lamar. The site of the Big Tree, a live oak believed to be over 1,000 years old, is now part of Goose Island State Park but is also located in Lamar. The trunk of this huge tree is over 35 feet in circumference and the ancient oak is protected by a fence with informative signs nearby.



The Visitors Center also recommended a walk on the beautiful Rockport Beach and the Copano Causeway Pier and a visit to the Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary, a featured stop on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.



On Thursday I headed for the harbor area again and visited the Texas Maritime Museum. This museum is one of seven on the Texas coast forming the LaSalle Odyssey, and features artifacts recovered from the 1684 ship LaBelle and a large scale model of the ship. Other exhibits include displays on coastal shipbuilding and boating, Texas lighthouses, offshore oil recovery, and sport and commercial fishing. The third floor tower offers a great view of the bay and the town. This is a fun and informative museum for the whole family. The Aquarium at Rockport Harbor is open Thursday through Monday in the afternoon and is another free attraction for the whole family. Informative displays educate about the bay ecology and marine life and large tanks are full of local fish and marine animals. My favorite was the five-foot



This is a chance to have your artwork seen by thousands! Enter your artwork for the 2014 HummerBird Celebration T-Shirt Design for Rockport-Fulton. For more information contact: Sandy at the Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce: 729-6445 or email tourism@1rockport.org. The deadline for getting your entry to the Chamber office is May 1, 2014. For More information on the HummerBird Celebration visit: www.rockport-fulton.org

Giddings, TX
Gonzales, TX

Hallettsville, TX
Hamilton, TX
Henderson, TX
[Honey Grove TX](#)
Iraan, TX

Jefferson, TX
Jewett, TX
Lee County Fair,
Giddings
Lexington, TX
Livingston Polk
County
Luling, TX



124th Annual Maifest in Brenham on May 2-4.

One of the oldest German festivals in Texas! Colorful parade, spectacular pageants, food, crafts and exhibits. Enjoy polkas, waltzes, German and country music. Fireman's Park, Brenham. 1-888-BRENHAM or www.maifest.org

eel, who was very active while I was there. Next door is the Education Center which shows a continuous variety of excellent short videos on ocean life. We were greeted by Capt. Dar and enjoyed a video about venomous sea creatures which was fascinating.



Friday morning we were on hand for the morning tour of the Fulton Mansion. This beautiful historic French Second Empire style home was built by cattle baron George W. Fulton in 1877. The interior of the ornate, 3-story mansion was filled with modern conveniences not seen in south Texas at that time, including gas lighting, central heating, and hot and cold running water for bathtubs and flush toilets. The beautifully restored rooms contain period furniture, some original, and give a great insight to the Fulton family life. Although the mansion withstood over 100 years of coastal storms, our tour guide stated that the building is now showing signs of its age, and will be closed for extensive exterior restoration this spring. Our guides were very knowledgeable and informative, and we enjoyed the tour.



After leaving Fulton, we headed north to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, winter home for many whooping cranes. The 59,000 acre refuge spreads across tidal marshes, blackjack prairie, and grasslands, and protects a wide variety of birds and wildlife. The park is home to over 390 species of birds, deer, javalinas, bobcats, and alligators. I was greeted at the first viewing area by an alligator basking on the bank. There are short walking trails and two observation towers which give a breathtaking view of the bay and wetlands.

We were joined on the tallest tower by a number of vultures, who consider this a great place to observe the countryside as well. A 16-mile auto tour is available, leading back into the heart of the refuge. Driving slowly to spot wildlife, the tour took about an hour. We ended up spending over two hours in the refuge and could have easily stayed longer. Early morning is one of the best times to visit, so remember to bring your binoculars, bug spray for the mosquitos, and a picnic lunch.

Of course, sport fishing is one of the top outdoor activities on the Texas coast, and Aransas County has three harbors, Rockport, Fulton, and Cove Harbor, which provide fishing and boating services. Another popular fishing spot is the Copano Bay State Fishing Pier. Beside numerous fishing piers, boat docks, and beach front parks, the Rockport/Fulton area is home to many fishing guides and charter boats. Check with the Visitors Center for more information.

[Madisonville TX](#)
[Magnolia, TX](#)
[Matagorda County](#)
[Mexia, TX](#)
[Mineral Wells, TX](#)
[Mt Enterprise, TX](#)
[Munday, TX](#)

[Nocona, TX](#)
[Onalaska, TX](#)
[Point, TX](#)
[Plummer Printing](#)
[Port Lavaca, TX](#)

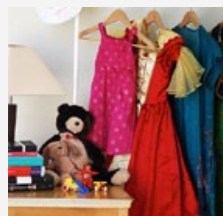


Port Lavaca Market Days and Farmer's Market on April 3rd from 8am-3pm. First Saturday of every other month at the Bauer Community Center parking lot.

[Rockdale, TX](#)
[Rockport-Fulton, TX](#)

[Schulenburg, TX](#)
[Sealy, TX](#)
[Smithville, TX](#)
[Smithville Cottage](#)
[Spoiled Doves of Texas](#)

[Taylor, TX](#)
[Texas Word](#)
[Wrangler Book Fest](#)
[Wharton, TX](#)
[The Village Bakery](#)



Sealy City Wide Garage Sale on April 26. Stay tuned to the Chamber website for more information.



Rockport/Fulton hosts a number of annual events, including the Gospel Music Festival in January, Fulton Oysterfest in February, Rockport Annual Festival of Wines in May, Rockport Art Festival in July, the HummerBird Celebration in September, and Rockport Seafair in October.

We really enjoyed our visit the Rockport/Fulton and look forward to our next trip to the coast.

Websites – www.rockport-fulton.org
www.texasmaritimemuseum.org
www.rockportartcenter.com
www.rockportaquarium.com
www.missionaransas.org
www.fws.gov/refuge/aransas/

"Like all travelers, I have seen more than I remember, and remember more than I have seen."

– Benjamin Disraeli



Celebrate the Burton Cotton Gin Festival

Enjoy the 25th annual Burton Cotton Gin Festival on April 25-26, kicking off at 6:30 p.m. Friday evening with an all-you-can-eat shrimp boil (limited to 300 participants). Saturday features a full day of activities, including a parade, antique tractor pull, ginning of a bale of cotton, and for children a kiddie tractor pull, barnyard and petting zoo.

Festival foods will be available, as well as contests for bubble gum blowing, pie eating and cotton seed pulling. Music throughout the day will be provided by the Shiner Hobo Band, the Dujka Brothers Band and Lone Star Bluegrass Band.

Friday hours ar 6 p.m.-9 p.m. and Saturday's activities begin at 10 a.m. For more information, call 979-289-3378 or visit www.cottonginmuseum.org.



Jamboree Smithville
from April 9-13. Carnival, live music, food & drink, dances to hold your sweetie close, parade, arts & crafts, tournaments of skill & cunning, pet show, livestock show & sale. The critter says, "ya'll come!"



Plan ahead: Taylor Zest

Fest on May 3rd from 10am-5pm at Taylor's historic downtown district. Kid's fest, arts & crafts and entertainment featuring local and area talent to celebrate the community's diversity. Cultural and heritage music and song will be showcased throughout the day and into the early evening.



Wharton Spot Trot/5K Race on April 12 from 8am-1pm at Riverfront Park. There will also be music, concessions, contests, children's activities, a raffle and silent auction, and the one-mile Trot. Call Christine Stransky 979-532-1894 for more info.



Mexia's Shoppolooza and "Boomtown" History Day on April 5, 2014 at the Mexia Convention Center, Downtown.

It's Bluebonnet Festival Time in Washington County

Bluebonnets and other wildflowers bloom with life and color in beautiful Washington County! Celebrate the spring season April 12-13 in the quaint, historic town of Chappell Hill at the Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas.

The festival showcases more than 400 exhibitors featuring home accessories, gardening, artisans, craftsmen, clothing, jewelry, and much more. There's something for everyone. Plus, indulge in the delicious country-style food and enjoy live entertainment. A special Children's Activity Corner provides a petting zoo, face painting, barrel train, and more.

Historic buildings in the community will be open for visitors. Tour the Chappell Hill Historical Museum where exhibits of photos, documents and artifacts give a glimpse of the town from its beginnings in 1847 to the present day. Learn about Soule University for men, the Chappell Hill Female College, King Cotton, the Brazos River, the Polish community and the Civil War.

Festival hours are 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. Admission to the festival is free, parking is \$5 and no street parking is allowed. Chappell Hill is located halfway between Houston and Austin on Hwy. 290. For more information, call 888-273-6426, 979-836-2554 or visit www.chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com.



Madisonville Sidewalk Cattlemen's Association's - 74th Annual Steak Dinner and Dance on May 3

The Madisonville Sidewalk Cattlemen's Association (MSCA) is an organization that pokes fun at the non-cattlemen who have worn their cowboy boots within the boundaries of Madison County. Unwary boot wearers who are unable to prove that they own at least two head of cattle should be prepared for a ceremonial dunking in the watering trough on the courthouse lawn.

This tradition all began when Henry Fox, the editor of the Madisonville Meteor in 1941, noted that there were many young men habitually loitering on the sidewalks of the town square wearing cowboy boots and discussing cattle yet owned no cattle themselves. "Sidewalk Cattlemen" was coined by Mr. Fox to describe those cowboys.

The idea took hold and a local doctor, Jesse B. Heath, organized the first meeting of the Madisonville Sidewalk Cattlemen's Association on March 25, 1941. A complete set of "boot wearing regulations" was formed along with infraction penalties. The owners of two head



Plan ahead: Dewberry Festival in Cameron on May 17 at Wilson-Ledbetter Park. Activities include: Bicycle Decorating Contest and Parade; Pet Parade; Arts & Crafts Booths; Classic Car Show; Food Booths; live Entertainment; Horseshoe Tournament; Youth Fishing Tournament, and Free Dewberry Cobbler and Ice Cream.



If you missed the Point Possum Palooza in March, make a note to catch it in 2015. This year had mud bog trucks, a medi-flight helicopter exhibit and the Rural American Musical Revue at the Cotton Pickin' Theater.



Roughneck Chili & BBQ Cook-Off in Luling on April 5 in Downtown Luling. There will also be the Oil City Car Show held in the Thump Pavillion.



Flea Festival in Jewett on April 12 from 9am-4pm at the Jewett Civic Center. There will be shopping, live music, children's games and inflatables, face painting, food, the 5K & One Mile Fun Run.



of cattle are entitled to wear cowboy boots; owners of three head may wear boots with one pants leg stuffed into the top of the boot; owners of four head may stuff both pants legs into the boots; and owners of six head of cattle may wear cowboy boots with both pants legs stuffed in and spurs. Violators receive the customary dunk in the horse trough.

The MSCA is the oldest continually running non-profit in the state of Texas. It affords an air of good humor and fun as it plays host to a steak dinner and barbeque cook-off. Funds raised provide scholarships for local Madison County students.

This year's 74th Annual Steak Dinner and Dance is on May 3rd and will feature National Recording Artist Joe Diffie. Diffie has recorded 20 Top 10 singles and 13 albums which include the chart toppers "Pickup Man," "Third Rock from the Sun," and "John Deere Green." He, along with the Jawga Boyz, has just released a brand new single "Girl Ridin' Shotgun." For more information or tickets, contact Joel Hardy, President at 936-348-9000, check the website at www.sidewalkcattlemens.com, or email sidewalkcattlemens@gmail.com.



Barbs, Bullets & Blood: The Wire War

Saturday, April 26, 2014 10:30 am - 3:00 pm at Daddy's Sam's Saloon in Nocona

The story of barbed wire in Texas is a tale of innovation and imagination, entrepreneurship and saleship, legislation and lawlessness - liberally peppered with acts of raw intimidation and episodes of bloodshed!

Speakers will be Clifford R. Caldwell, author of "John Simpson Chisum: The Cattle King of the Pecos" and other books; Harold D. Jobes, a Texas Hill Rancher; and Bob Alexander, retired Federal agent and author of several books on the Texas Rangers; and Michael Barr, a retired educator.

\$20 per person or \$15 for Museum Members - price includes lunch on the patio



City Wide Rummage Sale in Jefferson on April 4-6.

Homeowners all around town go through their closets and storerooms bringing out treasures to sell; you might not find anywhere else, there are also booths set up downtown to hunt through. You can pick up a map of all the places that have wares for sale from the Chamber.



Rodeo 2014 in Giddings

on April 11-12 at the Sheriff's Posse Arena at 7:30pm. Rodeo events are Bareback - Steer Wrestling - Team Roping - Calf Roping - Ladies Barrel Racing - Bull riding - Saddle Bronc - Ladies Breakaway

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