



Long Beach Historical Society

Remembering the past to preserve our future

April 2022

President's Message

Hi Everyone,

Best wishes for the spring season that is trying to show itself. I'll take April showers over the really cold weather of a few weeks ago, as long as they don't interfere too much with getting our yards ready for spring and summer, whenever they both occur.

It's been a quiet winter and we've had some repair work done to our building again. The side entrance steps were in need of repair and a water leak sprung up during one of the freezes that was also repaired.

I'm sorry that I wasn't able to be with you for the January meeting and I hear that Russ Jones did a great job filling in for me. As you know, we don't usually have a speaker in January since we present awards and have a luncheon during that meeting. However, I was going to share something interesting with you about a comedian who got his start here in Mississippi, so I will do that this month after our program. It will bring a smile to your face, I promise.

The April program will be presented by member Carol Paola, who has had a long career teaching the gifted students in our city. The subject matter will be the involvement of her students with the Quarles House when its' condition and future came to the forefront many years ago. Some of you may remember but it never hurts to have a refresher. Kudos to Carol for getting the students involved in this worthwhile project. Those students have gone on through school and are now college graduates.

Looking forward to seeing you on Monday evening, April 18, at 6:00 P. M.

Sincerely
Beth Hansen

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

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Long Beach
Historical Society

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Long Beach, MS 39560-0244

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645 Klondyke RD.

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

2021 Meetings:

- January 17 -11:00 am
- **April 18 - 6:00 p.m.**
- July 18 - 6:00 p.m.
- October 17 - 6:00 p.m.

Email Address:

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www.lbhistoricalsociety.org
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

*This quarter's feature story is a natural follow up to last year's program on the American Battle Monuments Commission that the U. S. maintains around the world to care for our fallen. This information is condensed from the book, *The Last Detail*, by David P. Colley, and will enlighten us as to how our country accomplishes this sad and monumental task.*

The Graves Registration Service

After the appalling losses suffered during the American Civil War, it became quite clear that a problem existed with locating and preserving our dead. It became more apparent after each war. Another factor to consider was the discovery of a soldier's fear of being left in an unmarked grave which of course terribly affected his morale. And so, in 1917, a unit was officially established by the Army at the special request of General John J. Pershing, specifically to care for our dead. The general thought the service should take place within the Quartermaster Corps.

The Army requested the services of a retired chaplain who had experience in this endeavor during the Philippine insurrection in 1899. Major Charles C. Pierce set up his headquarters in Tours France in October 1917 with a group of 350 officers and 18,000 enlisted men. After the Armistice in November 1918, the units were dealing with the remains of more than 80,000 Americans, buried in 512 permanent and temporary graves in France, Belgium and Luxembourg.

The formal name of Graves Registration Service (GRS) was adopted in November of 1919 and Col. Harry Rethers was in charge of the teams disinterring the 80,000 remains and of that number, 46,292 were to be returned to their families. The remainder would be interred in the permanent overseas cemeteries.

Every effort was made to remove fallen soldiers off the battlefield as quickly as possible but often times, getting to them was hampered by weather and terrain and even by combat itself. It was also imperative that this task be performed before the next round of fresh troops arrived in order to prevent them from seeing their dead comrades.

These grave caretakers were engaged in dangerous duty and lived in dugouts amid the fighting. They were not safe on the beach head who were even wounded by shelling while digging new graves in the cemeteries. Many duties were carried out by special teams, some tagged and fingerprinted, while others sorted and stored personal effects which were sent to Kansas City, Missouri, before being sent home to the grieving families. No stone was left unturned.

Col. Wallace Hale, a chaplain in the Infantry Division, who buried more than 3,000 while in Italy, noted that dead men are hard to carry and there was also the hardship of morale to consider.

The sad times included finding marked graves that yielded no bodies, as the markers must have been destroyed in some way. Teams had to get in touch with those tasked with the original burials. Danger was also encountered when coming in contact with men who had been buried with live munitions on their bodies. There were so many obstacles to deal with.

Probably the worst part of the duty was the nature of the assignment itself. "it was the faces of these GI's...that hurt the most, remembered Tom Dowling, part of a GRC collection squad serving in France in 1944. "Some stared wide-eyed, others had died in the middle of a scream, and their mouths hung open, Others had no face at all." We asked so much of all our men, but that is the nature of war, all so sad.

At the end of WWII, special teams were organized to locate and identify 40,467 missing soldiers. They were led by Lt. Richard Albera and took place in Bavaria. His men formed picket lines and many searches took place in pastures and were very successful. They found downed fliers and others. Some had been buried, possibly by their comrades or others. Bullet wounds were evident. The GRS also scoured the Pacific from the Phillipines to Indonesia, New Guinea and the Solomans. Also, far provinces in China to the barren island of Attu in the Aleutians. Even on Okinawa, searches continued long after the war because some areas had not been cleared of munitions.

The teams followed every tip or lead it heard about, once hacking their way through the jungle in Guam to locate a missing soldier. When they found the grave it was for Brownie, a dog still bearing its nametag. In another search they went high in the island hills looking for a grave marked with a cross. They struggled up to the site over sharp coral and found the inscribed cross: Latrine closed 1944. But they trudged along even after following many leads that did not produce the desired results.

It was in October 1946 that the bodies of many of America's dead began to come home, while fifteen permanent American cemeteries were built overseas to inter fatalities. Some questioned the need to create cemeteries on foreign soil but the Undersecretary of war, Kenneth C Royal said, "From my talks with troops throughout the world, I gathered the distinct impression that men, who were going into battle, often expressed the feeling that, should they be killed, they would prefer to be buried in the lands they fought to liberate." The families of some 93,242 service personnel agreed and chose to leave their loved ones among their fallen comrades, including President and Mrs. Teddy Roosevelt, (Edith), who thought their son, Quentin, should stay. All are interred in the extremely beautiful military cemeteries founded and maintained in 1923 by the American Battle Monuments Commission.

Of the 233,181 soldier, sailor, airman and Marine remains returned to the United States from 1946 through 1951, 141,000 were buried in hometown cemeteries, the rest in one of the 139 national cemeteries such as Arlington. Of those 123 are maintained by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 14 by the Dept of the Interior and two, including Arlington, under the jurisdiction of the Army.

The official U. S. program to bring home the bodies of dead warriors began July 1927, at the Henri-Chappelle American Military Cemetery near Liege, Belgium. Some 6,248 American dead were disinterred, embalmed, casketed and shipped to Antwerp, where they were loaded on the Army transport Joseph V. Connolly for a final voyage to New York. It wasn't until the fall of 1947 that enough caskets were available to bring home all of war dead, however.

Even though the United States no longer actively searches for WWII dead, the bodies of the missing from that conflict are found every year in places such as New Guinea, an isolated village cemetery in Sicily or the waters of the Zuider Zee in the Netherlands, where the remains of American fliers are regularly recovered from submerged aircraft. The remains are carefully analyzed by specialists and identified if possible. Dental records continue to be the standard method and DNA is an invaluable tool. Relatives are then contacted, and the soldiers are at long last returned to their hometowns or buried in our cemeteries abroad.

Condolences for April Smoke from the Chimneys 2022



Words can't express the sadness left by the passing of Pat Skellie in December of 2021. Pat was a longtime resident of Biloxi who met the love of her life at college and began married life here in Long Beach with her husband, former Mayor Billy Skellie, whose family has deep roots in the city as well as the historical society.

Pat also became active in the society, serving in many ways, refreshment hostess for many meetings, annual luncheon meeting, worked on the Cemetery Tour, served as Treasurer and also in other capacities, doing whatever was needed, and was an overall valuable member.

Pat was equally esteemed at the First Baptist Church which she also served with the same amount of zeal.

Most of Pat's adult life was spent teaching in the Long Beach School system where she was principal of the Middle School as well as the Alternative School.

In the community she was also a loyal member of the local PEO chapter and various other worthwhile organizations and will be missed by all who knew her.

Heartfelt condolences to Billy, and their children, Ashley and Griff (Monica), three grandchildren and the newest family member, a great grandchild who was born after Pat's passing.

We also saw where Wilma Faye "Billie" Holzweissig, Art's wife, passed in mid January at the age of 85. Her family said that her love knew no bounds and she always had an open door. You may remember that Art was president of the society from 2005-2007. You may also remember that Billie's son, Russell Schmermund and his wife, put Long Beach on the map in 1997, when they became parents of the only quadruplets ever born in our city. Billie is now resting with Art (passed in 2017) in the Biloxi National Cemetery.

Daily Herald Newspaper Clippings From 100 Years Ago

Nov 4, 1922 Long Beach Hopes for Auditorium.

Long Beach wants to better her school and community by adding to it an auditorium, which is very badly needed. This will be voted on Nov 15 and we will lose it unless people are made to realize the need of an auditorium. Many boys and girls have gone to other high schools from here because they are better equipped and have more advantages. Many of our patrons do not take enough interest to see what improvements are needed, and see how far behind we are in modern equipment.

We need an auditorium. We have no place for a public gathering in the school, and cannot have an entertainment successfully. Are we going to stand back and let the school drag along in the same old rut for years, or are we going to wake up and be among the best schools in the county?

David Weeks, Reporter

Nov 4, 1922 Auditorium

Over at Long Beach, there is talk of an auditorium and the people of that town are to vote soon on the question. David Weeks, in his plea for the Long Beach parents to take interest, published elsewhere on this page, stresses the importance of this proposed good movement for the school. May Long Beach win out in this race, which is the most important of the year for them.

Dec 30, 1922 Strawberries at Long Beach

Jo Bonasinga of the Splendid Market was presented yesterday with a handsome crate of strawberries grown by Frank LaRosa of Long Beach. The berries are as large and as richly colored as those in the fields in April. These berries show the remarkable mildness of the winter, and what it is possible to accomplish here even in the winter season. Many visitors to the market yesterday expressed wonder at so rare a sight.

May 17, 1922 Young Turkeys Dying

Gulfport will have to look to other sections for its turkey supply next winter as the young ones are dying at a rapid rate in the western section of the county, said F. D. Shaw this morning whose home is on Wolf River. The disease from which the young turkeys are dying is cholera and it is spreading to many points.

Aug 31, 1922 Dredge Difficulties Declared Rectified.

A. M. Lockett & Company of New Orleans, the engineers who have been working on a type of dredge to use on the coast here to pump sand on the beach, have brought back the dredge which they took over to New Orleans several weeks ago to improve the intake and the moving apparatus. The apparatus was put into operation on east beach one day this week and it appears that the difficulties have been overcome and that the dredge will do the work required in the specification. An extensive test will be made, however, during the month of September and if it is found that the machine works successfully a settlement will be made with the engineers by the Harrison County Board of Supervisors and the beach protection work start early in October.

Feb 11, 1922 Long Beach Churches

Presbyterian Church - Sunday School every Sunday at 10:00 a. m. Young peoples meeting every Sunday at 7:00 p. m. Prayer meeting every Wednesday, 7:45 p. m. Church service every second Sunday at 11 a. m. and every 4th Sunday at 7:45 p. m.

Episcopal - All Saints Church, Rev. Nowell Logan, D. D. Pastor. Evening prayer and sermon on the 3rd Sunday at 3 o'clock. Lay service at other Sundays at same hour. Holy Communion on the 3rd Sunday 9:45 a. m.

Long Beach Methodist - H. C. castle, Pastor. C. B. Gates, S. S. Supt – Sunday School 9:45 a. m. Preaching services every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. and 8 p. m. All visitors cordially invited.

St. Thomas Catholic Church - Rev. J. M. Hager, C. M. pastor. Mass on first and last Sundays of each month at 10:00 a. m. Other Sundays at 8:00 a. m. Confessions – Saturdays from 5 to 8 p. m. and on Sunday mornings from 7 – 8 o'clock.

Dues are due every January, unless you recently paid or recently joined.

Check the address label to see if your membership has lapsed.

- Per Individual \$15.00
- Family \$20.00
- Student \$5.00 (thru 12th grade).

Mail to:

Long Beach Historical Society

PO Box 244

Long Beach, MS 39560

You may also pay online:

www.lbhistoricalsociety.org/members

And, remember, when you reach your 90th birthday, dues become complimentary, which is a small perk of the society.

Dues paid in October, November, or December will not expire until December 2022.

Find more at lbhistoricalsociety.org

