

# JUNE-JULY 2015 NEWSLETTER

www.passhistory.org • Post Office Box 58, Pass Christian MS 39571 • Society Building 201 East Scenic Drive  
228 452-7254 • info@passhistory.org • Building typically open: Thursday-Friday-Saturday, 10-2 p.m.

Evening meetings at 7 p.m. on the 2nd Monday • Monthly luncheons are typically on the 4th Monday of the month.

## June 4, 2015

Dear Friends & Members,

This coming week marks a milestone in Pass History: it is the 100th anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's visit to Pass Christian. Roosevelt wrote about his visit first in an article for *Scribner's Magazine*, and later included the article in "A Book Lover's Holiday in the Open," which our members can find for download on the internet.

The Garden Party was a success. Financial data is still being compiled and result should be in the next newsletter. A good time was had by all and the croquet game was fun and there has been some conversation about making that a part of future Tour of Homes so start practicing for the next event.

Two new members have been elected to the Board of Trustees. Mr. **Bob Cutting** has joined us as the Recording Secretary and Ms. **Marian Foster** has become the Archivist. We welcome both to the Board as the positions they fill are important to the success of the Society.

A meeting to start cataloging archival material is scheduled for Saturday, June 13 at 9 AM at the Society Building. If you would like to help with this work please plan to join us on at that time.

—Virgil Harris and the Board of Trustees

### Upcoming Events

**Monday, June 8th, 7 p.m.** A two-fer! **Dr. Harold Dawley** will speak about the Pass Christian and New Orleans Memories documentary he is producing. In addition, **Eimhear Davis**, a 15-year old home school student, will present her short documentary film which recently won first place in the Mississippi State National History Day competition.



Former president Theodore Roosevelt with John Parker June 1915. From *Caire's History of Pass Christian* (Photo furnished to Caire by one of Parker's sons.)

**Saturday June 13 at 9 a.m.** Meeting to start cataloging archival material. Members are invited to join this effort.

**Monday, June 22th, 12 noon.** Monthly luncheon. **Marian Foster** will speak about "Hilda, the Displaced Person from Estonia—a Love Story." A \$10 (\$12 non-members) admission fee, which includes lunch is payable at the door. Please call 228 452-7254 or email your reservation to: president@passhistory.org.

**Monday July 13th, 7 p.m. Marian Foster** will speak about "Being a Communist for a Day—Experiences in Czechoslovakia in the early 1970's."

Monday July 27th, 12 noon. **Dr. Lawrence Strout** will speak about "Pass Christian and the Gazebo Gazette."

### 100 Years Ago...From the Journal of the Pass Christian Library Association

August 7th, 1915

At the meeting held on this date the secretary reported that a note had been sent on June 7th to the City Council asking assistance in the matter paying; that on June 8th, 1915, the courtesy of the Town Library had been extended to Col. & Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt while they were guests of Mr. & Mrs. John M. Parker & that Mr. Aschaffenburg had presented a fixture for the library's dressing room, and a note of thanks had been written to him. An extract, copied by Miss Finley from a personal letter from Col. Roosevelt was read, as follows:—

**From *Pass Christian, Mississippi, of All Places* by William Green Wiegand (March 1967)**

**Theodore Roosevelt already had been President** of the United States when he and Mrs. Roosevelt arrived in Pass Christian on June 7, 1915, to be guests of Mr. and Mrs. John M. Parker in the summer home then standing at 612 West Beach, which had been built about 1900. Mrs. Roosevelt wasn't feeling very well and was glad to stay ashore and chat with Mrs. Parker while the men boated to the Louisiana marshes south of Pass Christian to inspect bird sanctuaries in behalf of the National Audubon Society.

Roosevelt and Parker had been friends since 1888 when they met as young cowboys on the Western plains, where both had gone to be relieved of respiratory ailments. Parker was to continue to suffer from asthma for years. When he left for the West he had but recently married Cecile Airey, whose family lived in the big house on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans which now is occupied by the Orleans Club.

A Louisiana Department of Conservation vessel was put at the disposal of the hero of San Juan Hill by Louisiana Governor Luther Hall. Aboard were the former President, Parker, who was to be elected governor of Louisiana in 1920, John M. Parker, Jr., a photographer for the Audubon Society, and several others.

"The mosquitoes were pretty thick in the marshes that June," John M. Parker, Jr. recalled. "As a robust, outdoor man, Roosevelt brushed aside the thought that the mosquitoes could be troublesome and declined my offer to tuck the mosquito bar securely under the mattress of his bed. But that was only for the first night, for the mosquitoes tormented him and wouldn't let him sleep, and after that he was glad to accept nightly tucking in.

"The president did a lot of writing on his trip, besides going ashore to observe nesting pelicans and sea gulls. On one of the islands he dug up with his own hands a sea turtle nest and handled the eggs.

Turtle eggs have each a small indentation, a hollow space put there by nature as growing space for the little turtles before they emerge upon being hatched by heat of the sun. We teased the President about having pushed in these small indentations saying that eggs handled so roughly wouldn't hatch.

"News of the sinking of the English liner *Lusitania*, torpedoed a month before, on May 7, was brought to us by Levi Sprinkle aboard the *Royal Tern*, a patrol boat for the Audubon Society, while we were at the Chandeleur Islands. On receiving this news the President expressed the desire to go back to Pass Christian because he thought the United States might go to war over American lives lost in the *Lusitania* sinking, and he wanted to be ready to serve the country in any way possible.

"While in Pass Christian he held no formal reception, but on coming ashore from his trip to the marshes made a little speech to the fishermen and seafood packers on the factory wharf." Parker's son, John, said the friendship between Roosevelt and his father was continuous, and recalled that in 1907 there was a financial emergency, perhaps, he said, it could be called a panic, and none of the banks in New Orleans would cash a check larger than \$50.

"There was widespread hardship and business came to a standstill," he said. "Father went to Washington to seek relief from President Roosevelt and brushed aside a secretary in the White House who sought to stop him, and without announcement, walked into the private office of the President. There, he explained the situation that existed in New Orleans. The President called in the Secretary of the Treasury, cleared details with the Attorney General, wired W. R. Irby, who then was then president of one of the banks in New Orleans, and the flow of cash was restored. My father called on President Roosevelt several times again in 1907, for yellow fever returned in that year to New Orleans. The President ordered the United States

Health Department to cooperate with Louisiana's State Health Department and the epidemic was stamped out before reaching serious proportions.

"Later two of the Roosevelt boys, Archie and Quentin, came to New Orleans with their father, and on to Pass Christian to stay at our house and to enjoy raccoon and possum hunts. We would get together a pack of village dogs for these hunts and one night we found a nest of young coons in a tree in the Stith's yard, and they were taken home as pets.

"In coming to the Pass from New Orleans the Roosevelt boys received special permission from high officials of the L & N railroad to ride in the cab of the engine part of the way. It was just as well for the other passengers that they did ride in the cab, for Quentin was mischievous, and threw lighted firecrackers in the aisles and cuspidors. In Washington he rode his pony up the White House steps and into his father's office. On another occasion he galloped his pony into the grounds of the British embassy when being chased for a boyish prank by Washington cops and claimed diplomatic immunity. "When President and Mrs. Roosevelt were in the Pass, they slept in the downstairs northwest bedroom. On his first night here, he appeared for dinner in formal attire, but finding his host in a white suit returned to his room and reappeared in a similar lightweight white suit." ■



*Early postcard view of the Parker home on West Beach where the Roosevelt's stayed. (The home was destroyed in Camille.)*