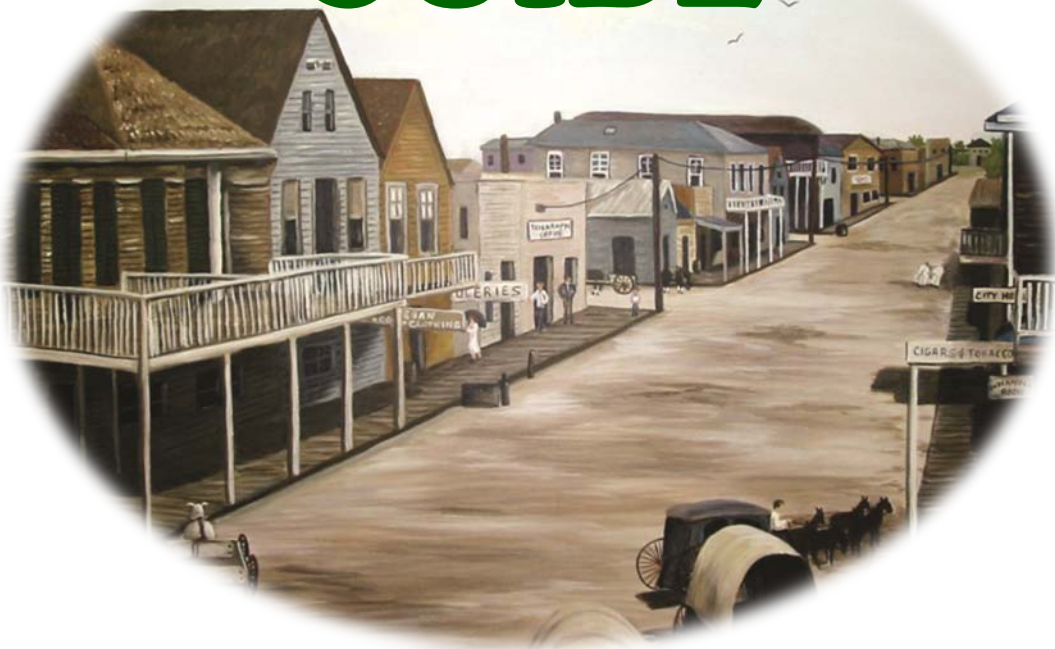


*The Calhoun County  
Museum presents  
The*

# **INDIANOLA VISITORS GUIDE**



**Cover: *Indianola before the 1875 Hurricane* by Shannon Salyer**  
**Collection of the Calhoun County Museum**

©2008

# Calhoun County Museum

## Calhoun County Historical Commission



301 S. Ann  
Port Lavaca, TX 77979  
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[www.calhouncountymuseum.org](http://www.calhouncountymuseum.org)  
[information@calhouncountymuseum.org](mailto:information@calhouncountymuseum.org)

*Cover: Indianola before the 1875 Hurricane by Shannon Salyer*  
Photos from the Collection of the Calhoun County Museum  
Text by George Anne Cormier  
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# *Indianola*

Indianola was the gem of the west. The city, however, was destined to become a ghost town. From her humble beginnings as a camping site for the Karankawa Indians, to the landing site of one of the first Europeans to Matagorda Bay, to a way station for German immigrants, to a town of thousands, Indianola's climb was a frantic race against time although the residents were unaware the end would come so soon.

The birth of Indianola was a direct result of economic, political, and religious problems in Germany. The Adelsverein, a society of nobility in Germany, was created to provide assistance to emigrants choosing to leave their homes for the Republic of Texas. The group was meant to include representatives from all crafts and professions necessary to start a colony including farmers, mechanics, artisans, and doctors. The Adelsverein would purchase the land and each family deposited with them a sum of about \$240 for a family group and \$120 for each single individual. For this, the Adelsverein would take half of that to supply transportation to the site of the colony and housing once there. The remainder of the money was to be used by the families and individuals for tools of their trade and for farming as well as to buy food until they became established.

Problems developed from the first, when Prince Karl zu Solms-Braunfels sailed to Galveston in May 1844. Without his knowledge, a boatload of colonists was to arrive right behind him. There was no settlement for them so Braunfels left them behind and started to search for a permanent point to disembark on Matagorda or Lavaca bays. Finally, Prince Karl settled on a place the locals called Indian Point and decided it would be the most suitable place to move everyone westward. Solms-Braunfels and Samuel White, the owner of the property, came to an agreement and thought they had time before the first settlers were due. Unfortunately, the ships Johann Detardt and Apollo arrived at Indian Point that summer and fall.

That winter was a terrible time for the immigrants. They had no refuge, no water and very few supplies. For their survival, they had to build temporary shelters. Fortunately, their stay at Indian Point was short. They were under way after the turn of the New Year. The immigrants spent their first Christmas at Indian Point. The Prince found the perfect place for them on a site called "Las Fontanas" at the confluence of the Guadalupe and Comal Rivers. They named the town Neu Braunfels in honor of the Prince. Indianola became the disembarking point for thousands of German Immigrants.

In 1846 the great German influx continued. The County of Calhoun was created from parts of both Victoria County and Jackson County on April 4, 1846. A plat was done of the town and building on homes and warehouses was started. During the year 1847, the town acquired its first post office. The town's name changed from the Karlshaven to Indian Point and in 1849, Mrs. John Brown had the honor of changing the name to Indianola. She combined the Indian and "ola", the Spanish word for wave. However, when the town started to grow down near Powderhorn Lake, it eclipsed the "old Town" section of Indianola.

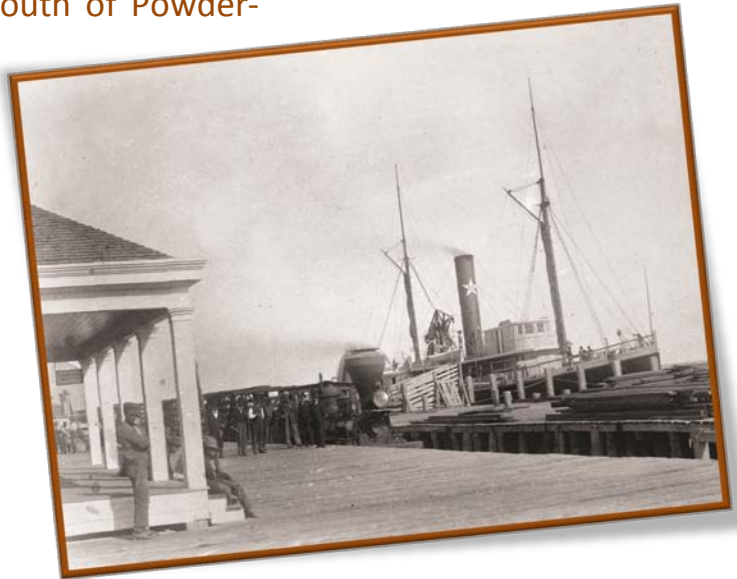
Main Street Looking West



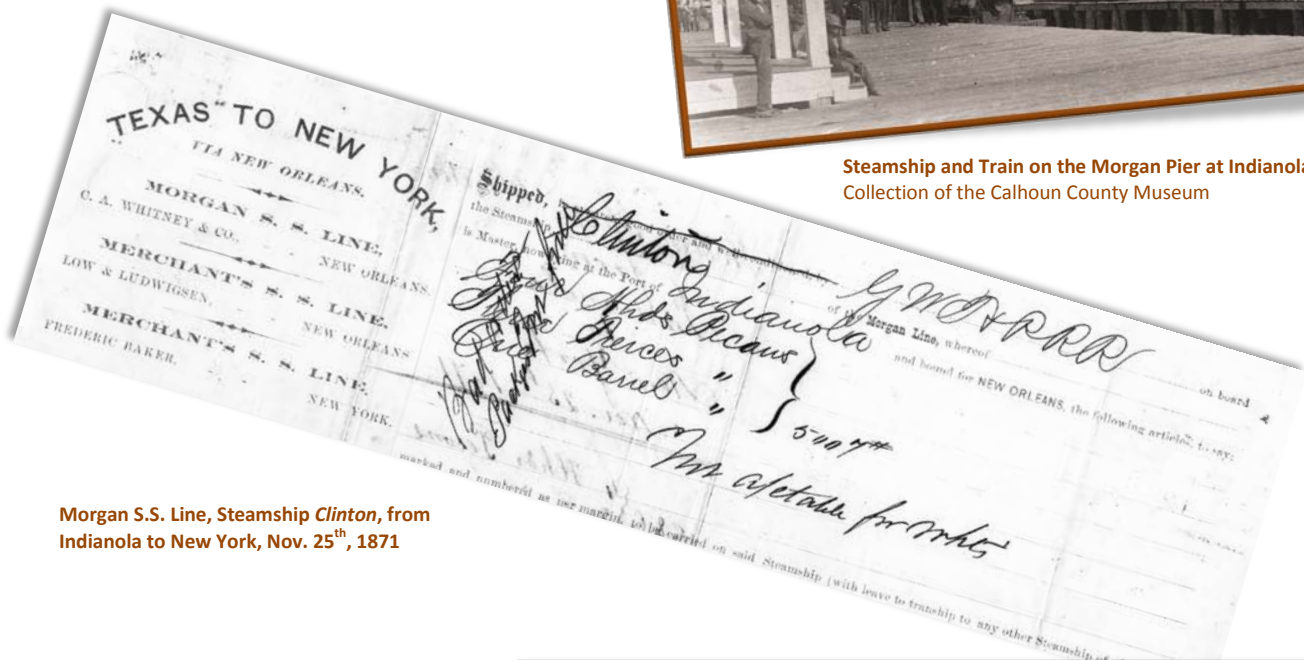
Harris & Morgan steam shippers were having a great deal of trouble sending their ships to Lavaca. Because the larger ships had great difficulty getting into port, this made Indianola's deeper water a much better proposition. The larger ships kept going aground on the reefs surrounding Lavaca. This necessitated goods being transferred to smaller ships known as lighters, and taking them to shore, not at all economical to the shippers.



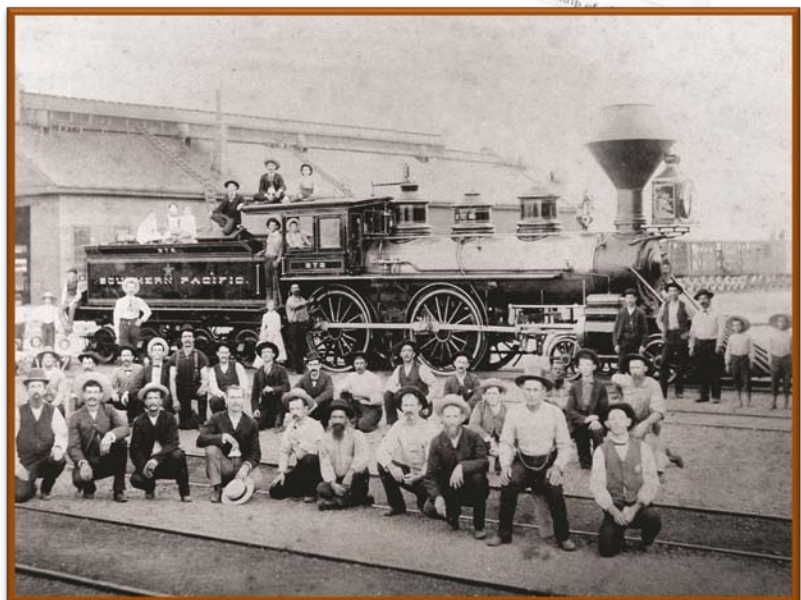
Then, when the port charges in Lavaca started to go higher, Morgan moved his steamships to Indianola near the mouth of Powderhorn Lake. Indianola became one of the largest ports in Texas from this point forward. It was actually larger than Galveston in the years 1869 and 1870.



Steamship and Train on the Morgan Pier at Indianola  
Collection of the Calhoun County Museum



Morgan S.S. Line, Steamship *Clinton*, from  
Indianola to New York, Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1871



Indianola Roundhouse and Train

Indianola was a shining star in the history of Texas, a town of great events and great people. Although its presence was cut off in its prime, Indianola opened the western portion of Texas to settlement and expansion. Indianola became the eastern end of the southern Chihuahua Trail, the road to such places as San Antonio, Austin, and Chihuahua, Mexico, the shortest overland route to San Diego and the Pacific.



Tax Receipt, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1853  
Collection of the Calhoun County Museum

# *Businesses*

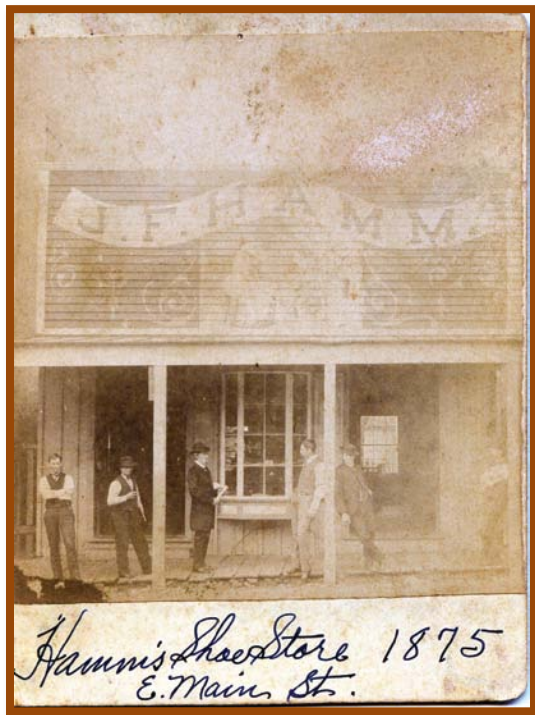
**Around 1875-1886**

J.H. Huck Lumber Yard  
Runge and Sheppard  
Louis Willemin Jewelry  
J.E. Mitchell & Co. Hardware  
Charles Morgan Steamship Lines Warehouse  
Morgan's Ticket Office  
Louis Preisig Ice-Cream Saloon  
A. Fuhnhan — Kleineke Saloon, "The Office"  
Charles Walker Tin Shop  
Dan Sullivan and Company  
Adam Rahm Cigar and Tobacco Shop  
Casimir Hotel  
Casimir.Hall  
Mrs. Pat Smith Hotel  
C.B. Hubble Livery Stable  
Jacob F. Hamm Business  
Dudley Schultz Wagon Yard  
John Letsche Business  
W.H. Marshall Grocery  
Christian French Business  
Henry Kuester Business  
Calhoun County Courthouse  
Calhoun County Jail  
Masonic Hall  
James Morrison Business  
C.B. Burbank Business  
G. Marx Business  
Customs House  
Stockdale and Proctor Law Office  
Joseph Cahn House and Business  
R.C. Warn and Company, hardware

David Lewis Business  
A. Straube Business  
Mat Hailer Bakery Shop  
J.H. Remsehell Lumber  
C & A Keller Grocery  
Dr. J.M. Reuss office  
C. Etchlitiz Grocery  
Charles Zelleny Business  
Nicholas Cahill Restaurant  
Rundell and Nolda Confectioners  
David Stubbeman Tailor Shop  
David Holtzheuser House  
St. Mary's Institute and School  
Casino Association Hall  
Valentine Fox Tailor Shop  
B.A. Hoyt Hardware  
Heyck and Helfnick General Merchandise  
U.S. Bond Warehouse  
H. Iken & Company Merchandise and Grocery  
Indianola Bulletin Newspaper  
August Fromme Mercantile and Grocery  
Gulf Western Texas and Pacific Railroad Depot  
Westhoff and Co. Lumberyard

**This is a partial list of the businesses in  
Indianola**





Hamm's Shoe Store, E. Main St. Indianola 1875



R. C. Wars Store and Warehouse after the 1886 Storm





Runge & Co. after the 1886 Storm

## *World War Two*



Indianola Gunnery Range looking South from Water Tower as the camp was rebuilding after the 1942 Hurricane. Blind Bayou is in the far Background.

**D**uring World War II, the U.S. Army constructed an anti-aircraft firing range along the Indianola shoreline to train gunners. Military personnel from Camp Hulen were the primary users of the camp.



Indianola Gunnery Range 1942



Indianola Gunnery Range 1942



# HURRICANES

Tuesday, September 15, 1875, brought threatening skies and moderate winds. However, by the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the waters of Matagorda Bay started rising. Heavy seas found their way to Main Street and the wind continued to blow harder. Water began rising and in places was six or more feet. Salt flats became filled with water and waves crashed over the town.

Homes and businesses began crumbling under the onslaught of the wind and water and many were lost to the waves. Whole families disappeared.

Men, women and children moved to the second story of homes or took re-



Indianola after the Hurricane

fuge in the County Courthouse. The courthouse, constructed of masonry, had a foundation that was six feet deep. The water rushed through broken windows and doors below, while people huddled on its second floor.

Close to nine o'clock the eye of the storm passed over and the wind changed direction and blew, if possible, even harder. The water that had been moving inland, now found its way back to the bay. Buildings that had withstood the wind

and waves could not hold up to its power as it again tried to find sea level. As the night winds raged, Indianola was ravaged.

At daybreak the next day, survivors looked out onto their town and were horrified at the destruction. Toppled building and debris littered what had been the streets. Friends and family, of many, had ceased to exist.

Saluria, on Matagorda Island was destroyed. The East and West Shoal lighthouses and all four keepers were gone. Decrow's Point was no more. The inhabitants of Indianola felt it could not have been worse.

On August 20, 1886, the worse came. Just eleven years after the first storm had taken such a toll on the town, another, worse storm happened. Although this storm did not linger as long the storm was more intense than the previous one. Buildings that had survived in 1875, now shattered. Just when it seemed to have been at its most severe, it got worse.

The signal station, run by Captain Reed, collapsed under the power of the waves and water. When it fell it killed Captain Reed and Dr. H. Rosencranz. A lantern burning in the building, started a fire when it fell, that eventually destroyed the entire downtown district. It destroyed warehouses, dry goods stores, grocery stores and residences.

In 1887, the county seat was turned over to Lavaca and Indianola passed into the realm of ghost town. Some homes survived and were taken apart and moved to Victoria, Cuero and Lavaca. The courthouse building that had saved so many was dismantled. Its foundation sat at the water's edge for many years and was eventually engulfed in the waters of the bay. Marking its location, today is a large pink granite block that overlooks the water that covers the remaining brick

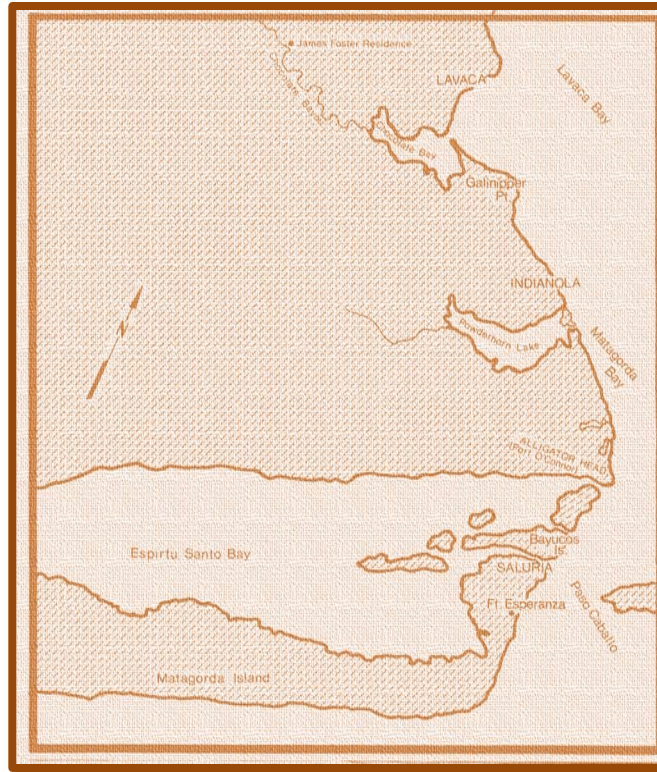


Site of the courthouse at Indianola



Clement Home after the 1886 Hurricane





## *Civil War*

Calhoun County, although in the back water of the Civil War, was thoroughly exposed to its ravages. Prior to 1862, Matagorda and Lavaca Bays were bustling centers of trade. The town of Indianola, alone, was vying with Galveston to become THE major port in Texas.

Common to the success of Linnville, Lavaca and Indianola was Pass Cavallo. As expected it played a large role in the war to come. The Harris and Morgan Steamship Line, literally, put Indianola on the map and under the scrutiny of both the Confederate and Federal leadership.

Business flourished. Approximately 35 vessels a week were seen at the wharves of Indianola. Imported lumber came to the town with all types of other goods. Canned turtle meat, and the hides, hooves, horns and tallow of cattle, were all exported along with such items as cotton, pecans, and copper and silver from the mines in Mexico. The silver and copper were shipped to the mint in New Orleans by Wells Fargo to be made into coins. Indianola was the closest port to the west and opened it up to development faster than it might have been otherwise. It is no wonder that it was considered important to the war effort.

In 1860, Calhoun County produced about 5 bales of cotton and was not considered a part of the plantation culture, never-the-less; the county residents voted

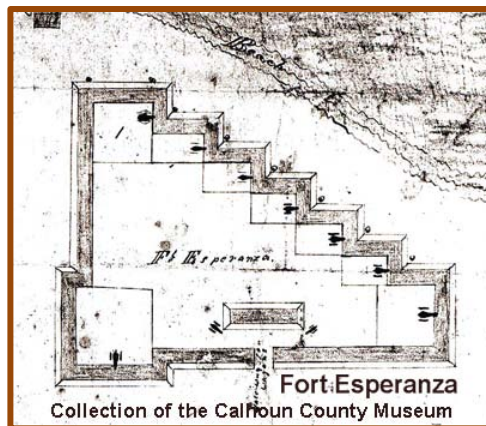
276 to 16, to secede from the union. The call to war was presented on placards reading: "The Time Has Come! Calhoun County is ready! Who is not for us is against us!"

Funds came from the Indianola City council, the citizens of Saluria and Lavaca, and from Hugh Hawes of Saluria to fortify Pass Cavallo and to arm 100 men.

The Matagorda Bay Marine Corps in 1859 was established to police the inland waterways around the county. Volunteers from Calhoun County became part of the Third Texas Infantry of the Confederate Army. The Indianola Guards, under Darwin, became part of Company A of the 6<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry.

The Indianola Camp was the headquarters of Colonel Van Dorn in 1861. It was occupied by the Federals after the Rio Grande Expedition in 1863. No other region of Texas was as heavily fortified by the Union Soldiers during the Civil War as the Matagorda Bay Region.

**Detail of a drawing of Fort Esperanza**



# Camel Corps

In 1855, Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War, sent Major Henry Wayne on a trip to the Middle East for the purchase of camels for one of the government's most unusual experiments. Congress, having appropriated the sum of \$30,000, set the stage for the import of camels as pack animals for the army.

Wayne, on board the *USS Supply*, left New York on June 4, 1855 and purchased camels at various locations in North Africa.

- 1 Tunis Camel, male
- 1 Sennaar Dromedary, male
- 1 Muscat Dromedary, female
- 2 Siout Dromedaries, male
- 4 Siout Dromedaries, female
- 1 Mount Sinai Dromedary, male
- 2 Bactrian Camels, male
- 1 "Booghdee" or "Tiuolu", male (cross between Dromedary and Bactrian camel)
- 4 Arabian Camels, male
- 15 Arabian Camels, female
- 1 Arabian Camel, male, 24 days old
- 1 Baby camel born on board the *USS Supply*<sup>1</sup>

On May 13, 1856, residents of Indianola had their first encounter with thirty-three, four-legged, foul smelling creatures from across the seas. The camels stayed in Indianola to get their land legs before moving on to Camp Verde, north of San Antonio.

There were three shipments of camels into Indianola. The second shipment of camels in 1857 totaled forty-one. The last shipment was brought in by a private individual in 1860.

With the coming of the Civil War, the camel experiment came to an end. Some were sold and other roamed the American desert for many years. Hadji Ali (Hi Jolly), also known as Philip Tedro, one of the camel drivers who came with the first shipment, lived his life in the United States and is buried in Quartzite, Arizona. At the Quartzite Cemetery, a pyramid of stone topped with a copper camel

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Emmett, *Texas Camel Tales* (San Antonio: Naylor Printing Company, 1932), 13-14.

marks the last resting place of one of the men who helped to lead the camels into history.



Camel Saddle    Collection of the Calhoun County Museum



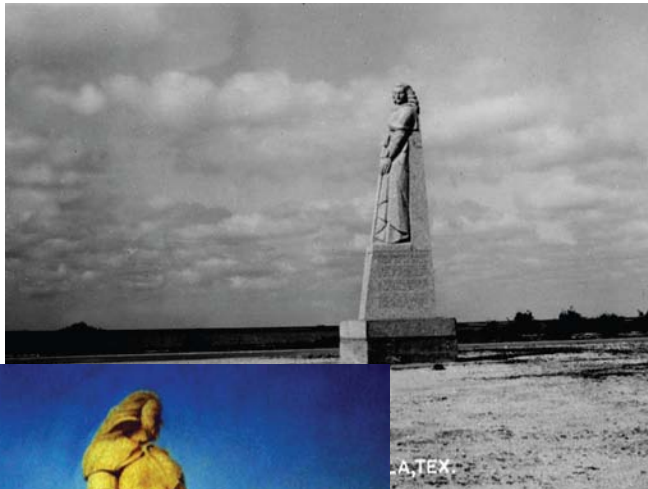
Photograph by George Anne Cormier



# *La Salle Monument*



1936 Statue of La Salle  
Collection of the Calhoun County  
Museum



On May 21, 1939, close to 2000 individuals gathered at the beach at Indianola to dedicate the Statue of Rene Robert Sieur de La Salle.

The statue was unveiled by Mrs. Grace Montier. The dedication speech was given by Dr. Marcel Moraud of Rice University in Houston.

Approximately 300 survivors of Old Indianola and their descendents were at the dedication.

Near the Indianola cemetery you can find a pair of boots that are all that are left of the original statue of La Salle from 1928. The statue was made of an inferior concrete and the artist has problems making the sword. The then governor of Texas gave her a real sword to use in her work. Unfortunately, over the years the statue disappeared due to the quality of the concrete and because of vandalism and hurricane. All that remains now are the legs of the famous explorer, La Salle.



Sieur de La Salle, Indianola/Matagorda Bay, 2004  
by Nelson Marek  
Collection of the Calhoun County Museum



# Indianola Notables

## Fletcher Summerfield Stockdale

Fletcher Stockdale, born in Kentucky, moved to Texas in 1846. By 1856, Stockdale had become one of the original four that secured the charter for the Powderhorn, Victoria and Gonzales Railroad Company. He served in the Texas Senate, as a delegate to Democratic conventions and was elected lieutenant governor in 1863 and served as governor in 1865 for a couple of months.

Stockdale promoted the development of the refrigerated car for the shipment of beef. This was a great boon to Indianola. Up to that time only the hooves, hides, and horns of cattle were shipped. With this innovation the meat could now be shipped New Orleans. Under his tenure as president of the Indianola Railroad new track was laid, two locomotives and cars were used, as well as buildings and shops. Around 1873, Stockdale moved to Cuero and practiced law. F. S. Stockdale died in Cuero on February 4, 1890.

## Angelina Belle Peyton Eberly

Born in 1798, Angelina Eberly is best known as the Heroine of the Archives War in Austin in the year 1842. Eberly moved to Port Lavaca in 1846 and after leasing a tavern from Edward Clegg in Lavaca, she realized the importance of what was happening at Indian Point. Aware of the increase in commerce and the growth of immigration at Indianola, Eberly moved to the town and established her own hotel in April of 1848. The following year the name of the town was changed. Mrs. John Henry Brown felt the word "Indian" should be kept and added the Spanish word for wave "ola", thus, the new name, Indianola.

After attempting to run a hotel at the new site of LaSalle, Eberly moved back to the area known as Powderhorn. Powderhorn eventually became Indianola and the old Indian Point became known as Old Town. It was here that Angelina ran a hotel until her death on August 15, 1860 and was buried in the Indianola Cemetery.

## *Artists in and Around Indianola*

Many of the early Texas artists came through and painted or photographed in Indianola. Helmuth Holtz came through and painted "View of Indianola" which was turned into a lithograph and printed by Ed. Lang, titled, View of Indianola. Taken from Bay, on the Royal Yard, on Board the Barque Texana, Sept. 1860

The famous horn furniture maker, Wenzel Freidrich, made his way into Texas from Grünthal, Bohemia, through Indianola in 1853 and settled in San Antonio. Several photographers are listed as having businesses in Indianola. M. O'Regan is listed as a photographer in 1859. D. S. Morrill was making daguerreotypes in 1853. Also, in 1853, J. M. Vaught is listed as making daguerreotypes.

Two famous Texas artists, Hermann Lungkwitz and Richard Petri went to New Braunfels via the port of Indianola. The British artist Thomas Flintoff painted Indianola as well as other areas of the Gulf Coast.

The list goes on. Indianola was a town of great influence in its short life. It set the stage for the lives of many who lingered and many who moved on to other parts of the fledgling continent.

## *Sutton-Taylor Feud*

One of the most well-known feuds in Texas was the Sutton-Taylor Feud, and as the DeWitt County War. On March 11, 1874, William and Jim Taylor boarded the steamship *Clinton*, docked at Morgan's Wharf and shot and killed William Sutton and Gabriel Slaughter. This horrendous crime was done in full view of William Sutton's wife, Laura, who was expecting their first child.

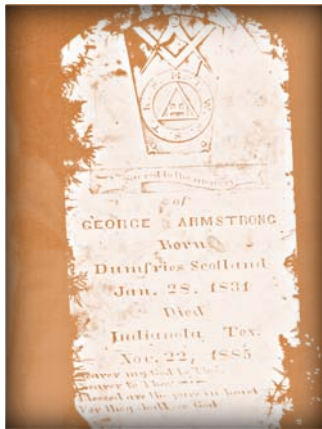
A reward was offered for the Taylor brothers and this started a manhunt that caused the death of Jim Taylor in a skirmish, in 1875, near the town of Clinton. Bill Taylor, however, was brought to trial twice.

Taylor escaped from the jail at Indianola on September 15, 1875, the day of the devastating hurricane. Records show that he was eventually captured and kept in jail in Galveston and brought to Indianola for trial. Eventually the charges were dropped and the Sutton-Taylor Feud became history.

# *Indianola Cemeteries*

There are two main cemeteries located at the site of Indianola. The first is known as the "Cemetery on the Ridge," located off of Zimmerman Rd. This was located near the Old Town or Indian Point. The second cemetery that is open to the public is located in the Powderhorn Subdivision. This is known as the "Indianola Cemetery."

Many of the headstones are missing from the both cemeteries because of storm and theft. The Calhoun County Historical Commission is now in the process of repairing stones that can be found.



Indianola had its share of killer epidemics. Yellow fever destroyed many lives in Indianola over the years, the first during an epidemic in 1853. Cholera and typhoid were also devastating to the population of the Coastal Bend.

# *Calhoun County Museum*

In 1872, Samuel Kinlay purchased a piano created in Boston and had it shipped to his home in Indianola. Kinlay's daughter Freda learned to play the piano and eventually used it to teach piano lessons. In 1875 and 1886, the Victorian Grand Piano managed to survive both of the hurricanes that eventually led to the demise of the port city. It was during the second that the family wrapped the piano in mattresses and quilts and left Indianola.

After the hurricane the family returned and found that the only part of the house that managed to survive was the living room floor with the piano still sitting on it. The piano eventually made the journey to Cuero and San Antonio and in recent years back to Calhoun County. Several years ago the Ryan family donated the piano to the museum.

Much of the museum collection deals with the history of Indianola. A large diorama of Indianola has the locations of a number of the homes and businesses before the 1875 hurricane and a number of artifacts from the town after the hurricane. The museum also has a Third-Order Fresnel lens from the Matagorda Island Lighthouse.



Calhoun County Museum  
301 S. Ann, Port Lavaca, TX 77979

## **Hours**

Tues. – Wed. 10:30 – 4:30

Thur. – Fri. 10:30 – 5:00

Sat. 10:00 – 3:00

(361) 553-4689

(361) 553-4688 (fax)



## *Further Reading*

Malsch, Brownson. *Indianola: The Mother of Western Texas*. Austin, State House Press, 1988.

*Indianola Scrapbook*, reprinted with an index, compiled by Leonard Joe McCown, Port Lavaca, TX, Calhoun County Historical Survey Committee, 1974 [originally compiled and published by The Victoria Advocate, Victoria, TX. 1936.

McGuire, James Patrick. *The German Texans*, San Antonio, University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio, 1987.

Calhoun County Historical Commission. *Shifting Sands of Calhoun County*, (Port Lavaca, TX, ca, 1980.)

Emmett, Chris. *Texas Camel Tales* (San Antonio: Naylor Printing Company, 1932), 13-14.



Miss Freda Kinlay



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Tuesday – Wednesday 10:30 to 4:30

Thursday – Friday 10:30 – 5:00

Saturday 10:00 – 3:00

Closed Holidays

