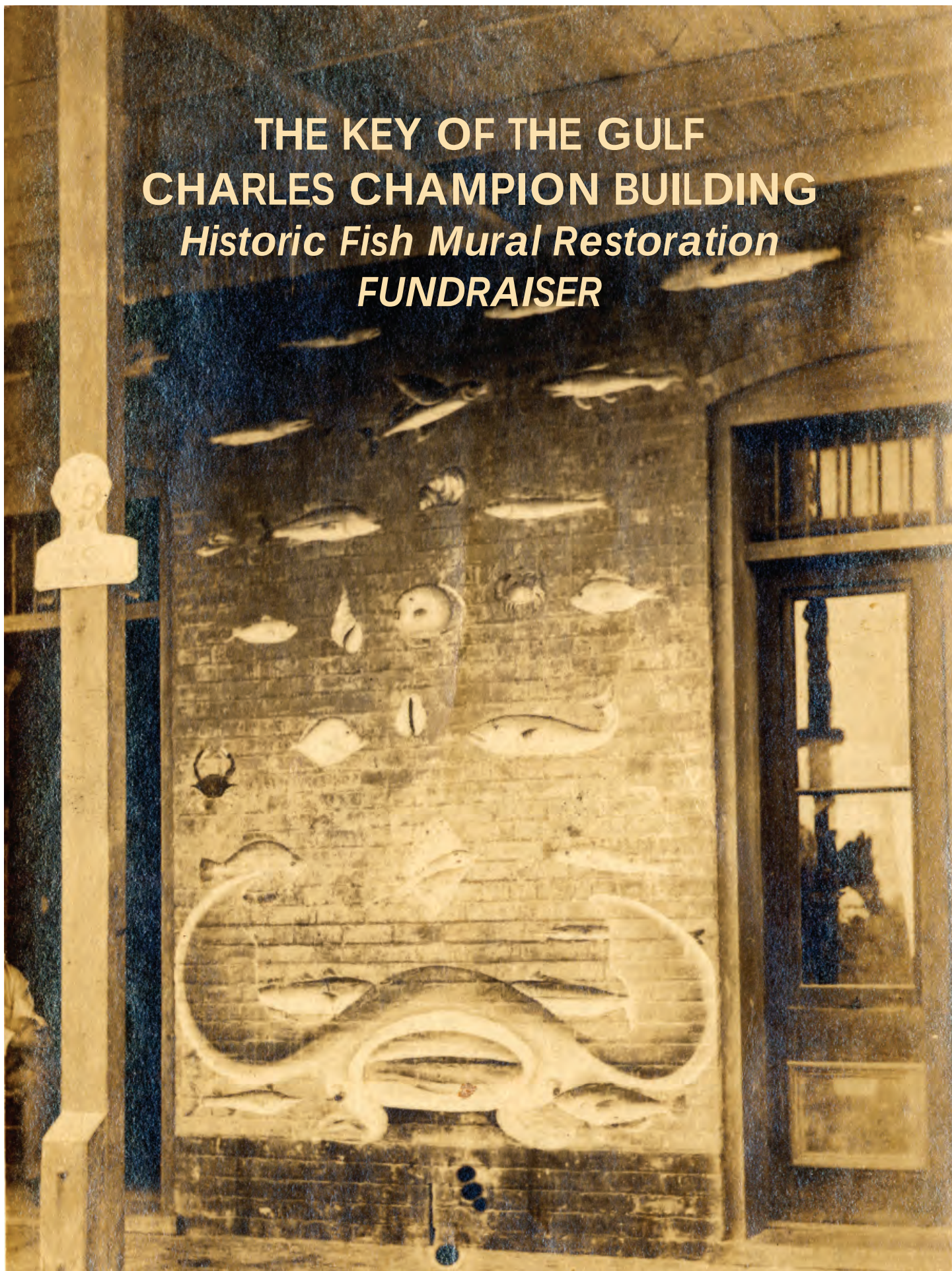


THE KEY OF THE GULF
CHARLES CHAMPION BUILDING
Historic Fish Mural Restoration
FUNDRAISER



Historic Champion Building Fish



Local muralist, Angel Hernandez, will be restoring the historic fish mural, 110 years after local artist, Jose Moreles painted the original. The selection of fish, birds, shells and crustaceans were representative of

h Mural Restoration Fundraiser



the species found in the Laguna Madre Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The mural was instrumental in promoting sport fishing in the Port Isabel area.

Fish Sponsor Benefits

Sponsors of the fish mural will get credit in all Champion Building Fish Mural Restoration publicity, a special invitation to the unveiling of the restoration, selected Champion Building memorabilia created for the newly restored mural, and your name on a plaque. Invest over \$250 for a 1 year Museum Membership.

For more information & fish availability,
please call 956/943-7602
or email: museumdirector@copitx.com
or info@portisabel-texas.com.

Contributions are tax deductible.



The *KEY* of the Gulf Charles Champion Proprietor. Robert Runyon photo, 1921.

Note: Darker green on the bottom five (5) rows of brick work.

4 - Charles Champion Building

Historic Champion Building Fish Mural Restoration

Over 210 images grace the Champion Building. It was painted in 1906, by a local fisherman, Jose Moreles, who was also an artist. This mural is currently undergoing a complete restoration. You can be a part of our proud local history by sponsoring a fish!

Please call Port Isabel Museum Staff for FISH availability at (956) 943-7602.

There are three prominent images:

_____ Devil Ray #210 (\$600)

_____ Sailfish #180 (\$700)

SOLD Tarpon #160 (\$500)

Seven medium sized images:

SOLD Eagle #122 (\$200)

_____ Sea Turtle #43 (\$200)

SOLD Lighthouse #213 (\$200)

_____ Pelican #16 (\$200)

_____ Bull Shark #148 (\$200)

_____ Sea Bird #64 (\$200)

_____ Shark #169 (\$200)

202 small sized images (fish, birds, shells & crustaceans):

Qty.: _____ \$85.00 each.

Species preference(s)

or list choices by
number:

Make checks payable to:

Museums of Port Isabel • 317 E. Queen Isabella Blvd. • Port Isabel, TX 78578

To pay by credit card, call 956/943-7602.

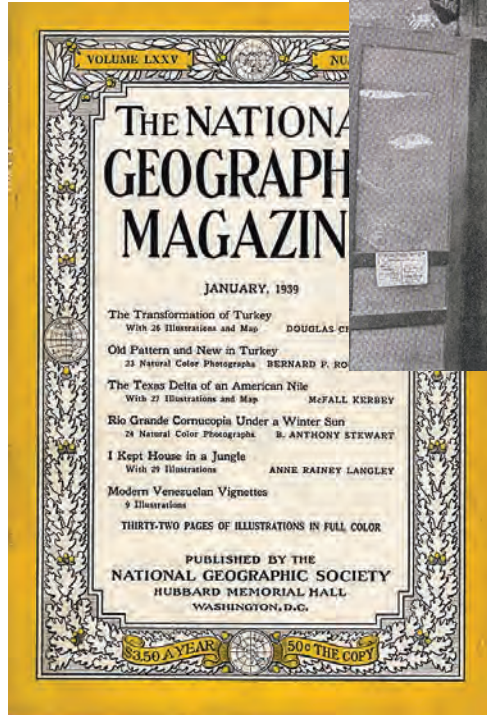
Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

THE KEY OF THE GULF CHARLES CHAMPION BUILDING *Fish Mural*

- Site of Hess General Store in **1894**, small frame structure.
- Champion building constructed in **1899**. Served as general merchandise store, U.S. Customs House, post office and residence.
- Fish mural painted in **1906** by local fisherman, Jose Moreles. Moreles had the use of one arm and was missing a thumb from his other hand.
- Featured in **1939** issue of *National Geographic Magazine*. See upper center.
- Texas Historical Commission historical marker, **1996**.
- Included in a Library of Congress photo collection. Photographer Carol M. Highsmith, **2014**.



- Bass Pro Shop (Harlingen) constructs a scale model of the Champion Building facade for their General Store. Includes plaque: *"Our General Store is modeled after the famous 'Key of the Gulf' building built by Charles Champion in 1899. Champion operated a general store, post office and U.S. Customs House from the building which still stands today in Port Isabel. The building now houses the Port Isabel Historical Museum."* **2011**.
- Champion Store tokens issued by Charles Champion. See right.



TODAY:

Fish Mural & Facade

The **FISH MURAL** is in need of restoration, **DOOR** and **WINDOW FRAMES** refinished and sealed, **LIGHTING** replaced and **WALKWAY ENTRANCE** improved.

RIGHT: LOC Highsmith photo (2014).

TOP: V. Bates photo (2002)

MIDDLE: V. Bates photo (2017)

BOTTOM: V. Bates photo (2009)

INSET: V. Bates photo (2017)



PORT ISABEL PILOT

"Building a City Where a City Belongs"

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NO. 42

Alibi Winner of Sailboat Races Here Sunday

Nine sail boats hit the starting line in the race sponsored Sunday afternoon by the Port Isabel Yacht Club. The Alibi of Port placed first in 55.61, the Vahine crossed the finish line in first place on elapsed time, 50 min. 10 sec. Eddie Valent, Brownsville, sailing the Bandolero, was second, time 52:50; Dick Pitts, Brownsville, sailing the Betty Jean, third, time 54:02, and fourth was the Vahine of Donna, Fred Petch, skipper, time 55:36.

On corrected time the Alibi placed first in 55.61, the Vahine second in 55.91, the Betty Jean third in 59.41. The Bagdad, Brownsville, Fred Deyo, fourth, time 59.70; the Dabo, a National one-design sloop, O. O. Ross, Jr., and Eugene George, Jr., Wichita Falls, fifth, time 60:40; the Gypsy of Harlingen, Milton Connell, sixth, 61:42; Squeekie of Brownsville, Frank Litbe, seventh, 66:00. Eighth place was won by Fred Hanchett of Brownsville, sailing the Pal.

Following the races a delightful cruise to Padre Island and a swim in the gulf was enjoyed by

The Store of Many Fish



The pictures of hundreds of various kinds of salt water fish adorn the store building of Champion Brothers here. It has long been a source of attraction to tourists who have probably photographed this building more than any other one spot in the Valley.

Enraged Tarpon Attacks Angler In Laguna Madre

What may have been a pre-

Redecorating the Champion Store

The store building of Champion Brothers, Port Isabel's old-

Electric Hazards, Their Prevention Told Rotarians

Electric hazards and busi-

Public School to Open September 3; May Refund Bonds

The Port Isabel public school will open the fall term of the 1940-41 school year on Tuesday, September 3. The date for the formal opening was agreed upon at a meeting of the school board last Thursday night.

The corps of teachers remains the same as last year with the exception of Mrs. C. D. Odum, resigned, and Mrs. Margaret Stone, granted a leave of absence of a year to complete study for her degree.

Superintendent Carl S. Chilton is back after a leave of absence of a year, and in addition to his duties as superintendent will be business manager for the district. Other members of the faculty are Fain G. Shannon, principal; Mrs. Helen Cail, Mrs. Mary Le Hunt, Mrs. May Chaudoin, Mrs. Frances Maurer, Mrs. Hazel Martin, Mrs. Ina Shingpaugh, and Mrs. Mabel D. Hickman.

The existing contract with the El Jardin Independent School district for the transfer of 40 scholastics in this district, residing south of the Brownsville ship channel to the El Jardin school,

Redecorating the Champion Store

The store building of Champion Brothers, Port Isabel's oldest mercantile establishment, and one of the oldest in the Valley, is being repainted and the hundreds of varieties of fish that adorn the front of this two store structure are being restored to their original colors.

It was in 1907 that the late Charles Champion, Valley pioneer who established the business in 1876, employed Joe Morales, native son, a one-arm painter, to decorate the store front with varieties of fish to be found in local waters. Although handicapped by the loss of his left

arm and the thumb on his right hand, Morales knew his fish, as is evidenced by their likeness that adorn the building.

Champion's Store, with its pictures of fish, has always been a source of attraction to visitors, many hundreds of pictures having been made of it. When the *National Geographic Magazine* in 1938 devoted the greater part of an issue to Charro Days and the Rio Grande Valley, one of the illustrations featured was of the Champion Store. The business is now operated by one of the four surviving sons of the founder, Ben Champion. Redecorating of the building is by W.H. Mott.

Many years ago the founder, Charles Champion, who also operated a commercial fishing establishment, issued metal trade checks, good in exchange for merchandise. Strange as it may seem, these Champion trade accept these checks in payment tender in all business establishments of Brownsville and Matamoros, Mexico. The Port Isabel post office at that time would accept these checks in payment for stamps. Railroad and steamer tickets could also be purchased with them.

Reprinted from the Port Isabel Pilot. August 14, 1940. Museums of Port Isabel Archives.