Coming to Houston: 170 Years of Migration

Houston has attracted migrants for centuries. Various Native American groups settled near the streams and rivers in the area hundreds of years ago. Since the creation of the city of Houston in 1836, waves of migrants moved to the region from surrounding areas in the interior, throughout the nation, and around the world. We did not come for the mild climate or the beautiful scenery; we came for jobs, for the opportunities presented by a growing economy, for a fresh start for ourselves and our children and grandchildren.

The Allen Brothers established the city on the most readily available spot near the confluence of Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou, hoping that the new town could become a center for trade and commerce in a region that seemed destined for expansion. Many of the original settlers were explorers of a sort. As part of the nation's westward migration, they "lit out" for new places, places where they could pursue the main chance. Some came on business trips and decided to stay. Others trekked across the South in wagons looking for cheap land, access to a thriving town, and perhaps a familiar face or two. Those who settled on the outskirts of Houston generally found that in a generation or two this particular thriving town had reached out and absorbed them. In the decades before the Civil War, the newborn city had strong commercial and personal ties to the large cotton plantations that grew in the Brazos River bottom. Many of the descendants of slaveholders and slaves alike ultimately found their way to Houston.

Men such as William Fairfax Gray found the fledgling city and came to call it home. Gray was the son of Scottish immigrants who had prospered in Fredericksburg, Virginia. In 1835, the 48-year-old attorney traveled to Houston as a land agent for two men based in Washington, D.C. Caught up in the fervor of the Texas Revolution and taken with the prospects for the Houston area, he sent for his family.

His wife Milly did not initially share his enthusiasm for uprooting the family from a pleasant, established home to the uncertainties of a frontier outpost in the Southwest, but she nonetheless packed up and moved. After a one-month sea voyage from Virginia, she and her family tackled the ordeal of a trip up Buffalo Bayou to Houston. She described the largely unimproved waterway as "so narrow at last that I thought it would be no difficult matter to jump ashore from either side of the boat. The water was pleasant but muddy." In these early years, "pleasant" was not an adjective often applied to the city itself, which was muddy, hot, insect infested, and flood prone. Like many others, the Gray family persevered, and this family of lawyers and judges became one of the prominent families of early Houston and early Texas history.

The Civil War marked a stark departure for the Bayou City. The town had grown to a healthy population of about 7,000 at the onset of war in 1861. The region suffered little physical damage in the war, and it became a favored destination for migrants seeking a new life. Included in this wave of migration were thousands of newly freed slaves who came to the city to begin anew in an urban setting away from the harsh grind of rural life. Reverend Jack Yates, himself a former slave, became one of the leaders of the Fourth Ward community known as Freedman's Town.

The late nineteenth century witnessed dramatic changes that transformed the city's economy and pushed it forward as the regional center of trade, commerce, law, and finance. The most significant of these was the coming of the railroads. The completion of local lines in the 1850s and after tied the region into the rich cotton and timber trade of the interior. Then in the 1870s and 1880s, the giant national railroad system tied the region to the mid-

Charlotte Allen: The Mother of Houston

When brothers John and Augustus Allen came to Texas, they brought with them a vision, a drive, and a woman who would later become known as the "Mother of Houston." Augustus' wife, Charlotte, came to Texas from New York in the mid-1830s, when Houston was nothing more than swampland and bayou.[1] Although the Allen Brothers are often given most credit for establishing Houston, Charlotte also had an enormous impact on the creation of this city.

With funds from Charlotte's inheritance, the Allen brothers began to speculate in land. They purchased 6,600 acres on Buffalo Bayou, and according to legend, at Charlotte's suggestion they named the new city after General Sam Houston. The new city of prosperity they envisioned slowly took shape.

Charlotte remained a devoted Houstonian throughout her life. She was a founding member of the First Presbyterian Church, one of the first churches established in Houston. She also owned many pieces of property throughout the city, land that would play host to numerous significant moments in Houston's history. Her home was torn down in 1911 to make way for the landmark Gulf Building. Charlotte also owned the site of Texas' first capitol, which later became the site of the famous Rice Hotel.

In 1850, Augustus left both the city he helped found and his wife behind forever. Charlotte remained in her adopted city, however, and later became "one of the city's best known citizens" of her time. She passed away in 1895. Charlotte is buried in Glenwood cemetery alongside some of Houston's most famous residents: Howard Hughes, George Hermann, famous wildcatter and Shamrock Hotel developer Glenn McCarthy, Texas governor and newspaper publisher William P. Hobby, and Hollywood star Gene Tierney.[2]

—Jenna Berger

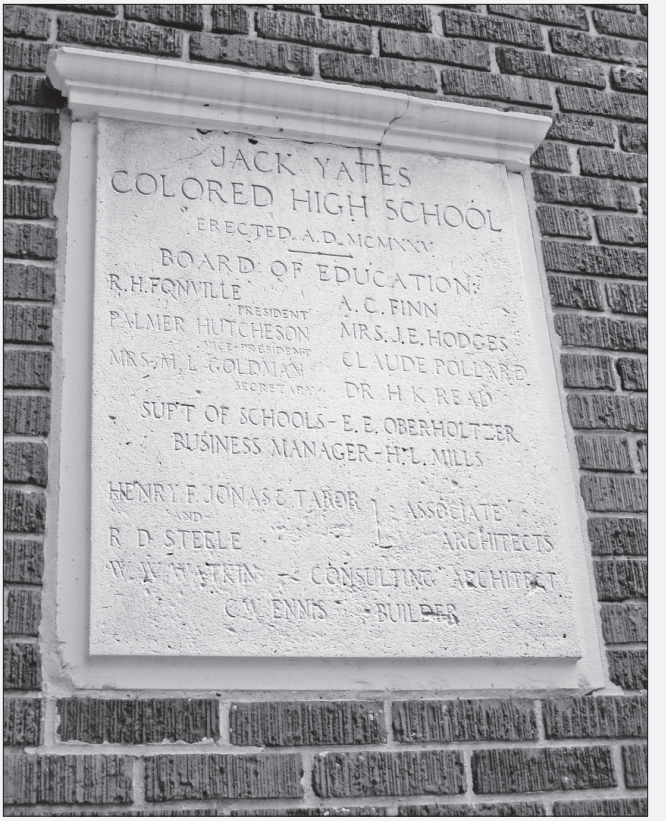
John Henry "Jack" Yates: A Legacy

John Henry "Jack" Yates was one of Houston's most important African American community leaders during the years following the Civil War. His remarkable story began in Gloucester County, Virginia, on July 11, 1828, where he was born the second son of Robert and Rachel Yates. The Yates family, which eventually included six children, were slaves on the Fields Farm near Ware Neck on Mobjack Bay, one of the small inlets on the Chesapeake Bay. Family lore speaks little of his father but his mother was said to have been an industrious woman with a quick mind. When the slaveholder's wife died not long after giving birth to a son, George Fields, Rachel Yates assumed responsibility for nursing and caring for the infant, who was slightly older than Jack. George Fields and Jack Yates grew up as friends and playmates. Fields taught Yates how to read and write. This gave Yates a tremendous advantage as it was illegal to teach slaves how to read at that time. Years later he told how he read the Bible at night by the light of a pine knot.

Yates also learned about oystering and fishing as a young boy and learned to build and sail small boats in Mobjack Bay. In addition to fishing, he became handy with tools and learned to repair and mend broken items on the farm. In time, Yates was permitted half a day on Friday and all day on Saturdays to work for himself, which allowed him to save a small amount of money. When young George Fields took over the family farm, he granted Jack Yates special privileges, including the opportunity to visit other farms in the community. Yates soon fell in love with Harriett Willis, a slave on a neighboring farm. The two married and eventually had eleven children.

During the Civil War, the owners of Harriett Yates and the young children decided to move their slaves to the relative safety of Texas, far from the front line fighting, sometime in late 1863 or early 1864. Yates convinced Fields to allow him to accompany his wife and children to Texas. An atypical slaveholder, Fields never sold any of Jack Yates' brothers or sisters, allowing them to remain together as a family. Even after moving to Texas, Yates maintained contact with his brothers and sisters in the years after the Civil War.

Yates had his first dealings with an overseer once the family arrived in Matagorda County, Texas, southwest of Houston. Accustomed to doing his work with a fair degree of freedom, Yates found his days of slavery in Texas very unpleasant. But all of this ended on June 19, 1865, when Texas slaves finally were set free. Yates briefly considered returning to his native Virginia but decided instead to see what opportunities he could find in Houston, where white people were seen by many freed people as being friendlier to the recently emancipated slaves than other places in the South.



This stone plaque on the façade of James D. Ryan Middle School in the Third Ward is a reminder to students of the school's history and the man who helped improve education for blacks in Houston.

West, the West, and the East. Quickly, Houston emerged as the undisputed railroad center in Southeast Texas, and the subsequent growth of its local banks, law firms, and railroad work force defined it as the center of future regional growth even before the Great Storm of 1900 dealt its regional rival Galveston a crippling blow.

The unlikely rags-to-riches story of Robert Scott Lovett showed—in an admittedly extreme form—the possibilities brought by the national railroad systems. Lovett grew up in rural San Jacinto County near the small town of Coldspring north of Houston. As a young man with little formal education, he worked digging stumps out of the ground around Coldspring to clear the right of way for the construction of the local connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad's line from Florida to California. An ambitious man, Lovett migrated to Houston for the chance to "read law" with a local lawyer and qualify for the bar. In Houston, he captured the attention of Captain James A. Baker, a leading lawyer, who brought him into the law firm of Baker, Botts, Baker & Lovett.

After practicing railroad law there as a partner for twelve years (1892-1904), Lovett became a lawyer for the Southern Pacific Railroad under E.H. Harriman. Upon Harriman's death, Lovett became the Chairman of the Southern Pacific and the Union Pacific Railroad, a position that made him one of the most powerful men in the national economy. To complete the

Yates first worked as a drayman, using a two-wheeled cart to haul merchandise for merchants in Houston. At night and on Sundays he preached. When the Home Mission Society sent a black minister, Isaac Sydney Campbell, to minister to the freed people of Houston, he sought the help of Yates, who as a slave had led prayer meetings and preached when he had visited farms in the Chesapeake region. Soon, Yates was ordained as a minister of the Baptist Church.

Yates worked in Harris, Fort Bend, Brazoria, Wharton, Matagorda, Waller, Grimes, Milam, Robertson, McLennan, and Liberty counties, traveling on horse back. He attended to the spiritual needs of his far-flung congregation while also encouraging them to become self-sufficient by purchasing homes, raising live stock, planting gardens, working their farms and also educating their children in religion. He helped to organize churches and Sunday schools while traveling over the field on his missionary journeys.

Jack Yates soon became a major religious and community leader in Houston and southeast Texas. He thought the road to prosperity and peaceful coexistence for blacks and whites required blacks to live in separate—but not distant—communities.

In 1866, a white Baptist minister, Rev. Crane, organized Antioch Baptist Church in Houston. The church first held services in a lean-to located in a brush arbor on "Baptist Hill" near present day Rusk and Bagby Streets. Jack Yates was invited to become the pastor of this church, since he was ordained and also could read and write. He worked to build up the membership and the treasury so the church could move to a more suitable location. In January 1874, the congregation was able to purchase two lots and eventually constructed a brick building to house their church.

Yates purchased several lots on Andrews Street in 1869 and eventually built a two-story house, the first owned by an African American in that part of the city. He also bought several lots on San Felipe Street (West Dallas Street today) where he grew vegetables and planted trees. He was described as being "not a giant in stature, but a giant in character, in integrity, in purposefulness…He set an example of worthy citizenship by working if needs be with his own hands. He housed his family in a comfortable home, was a good husband and a dear father."

Sometime around 1867, Yates and other black community leaders began an annual dinner to commemorate the nineteenth of June, Emancipation Day. Initially, they held the celebrations in a grove near present-day McGowen and Brazos Streets, where black churches also held their annual Sunday school picnics. After an unfortunate event occurred in the area, possibly an execution or even a lynching, Yates and leaders of the Trinity United Methodist Church formed a committee, the Colored People's Harris County Festival Association, to search for a suitable place to use for picnics and festivals without any interference from white Houstonians. On July 10, 1872, the group formally purchased approximately ten acres in southeast Houston bounded by Dowling, Hutchins, Tuam, and Elgin Streets. The acreage became known as Emancipation Park, and still exists today as a part of the City of Houston parks system.

Yates played a key role in the establishment of Bishop College in Marshall, Texas in 1881, by the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Although he failed in his efforts to have the college located in Houston, four of his children attended the school. Jack Yates still held hope of establishing a school for blacks in Houston.

In 1884, the American Baptist Women's Home Mission Society of Chicago, Illinois, sent two white women, Miss Jennie L. Peck and Miss Florence Dysart, as missionaries to work among the freed people of Houston. Working with Reverend Yates through the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, they started a "pay school" charging a modest tuition to help with expenses in 1885. The school offered classes for children by day and adults in the evening. It grew rapidly, reorganized as Houston Academy, and moved to a three acre parcel in what is now the 3200 block of West Dallas Street. With financial help from white Houstonians, two buildings, one of which was named Yates Hall, were erected. The new campus formally opened in the fall of 1894.

Yates believed in living his life and running the Antioch Baptist Church on a "pay-as-you-go" philosophy. In 1890, when church members insisted on taking a loan to finance improvements at the church, Yates left and established Bethel Baptist Church. He died at age 69 on December 22, 1897. Houstonians hear his name most often today in connection with Yates High School, which is located in one of the city's oldest neighborhoods in Third Ward, near Emancipation Park. This is fitting, since Yates committed his life to encouraging education and religion and self sufficiency to a segment of the population long denied these things under slavery.

—William H. Kellar[1]

circle, his family moved east and his son Robert A. Lovett became a partner in one of the nation's leading investment banking firms and "a symbol of the so-called Eastern Establishment."

Houston tended to attract hard-working migrants, who, like Lovett, had scant education but abundant ambition. Of course, few who came to Houston in search of opportunity hit the jackpot as did Robert Scott Lovett. Most did not find fame and fortune, but many did find small advances for themselves and better educational opportunities for their children. Given the general poverty of the agricultural areas to the north and east and south of Houston, many migrants came to escape the hardships of the farm and the tenant farm as much as to take advantage of the industrial jobs in the coastal region. The steady stream of rural migrants to the Gulf Coast from the interior became a flood in the first half of the twentieth century.

Cotton and oil-related jobs attracted many of these migrants. The processing and shipment of cotton grew steadily in Houston and in Galveston at least until the 1930s. Oil played even a larger role in creating the industrial jobs that made the region a Mecca for those in search of steady work. The giant Spindletop discovery in nearby Beaumont in 1901 set off a mass migration of experienced oil workers from Pennsylvania and Ohio to the Gulf Coast, and Houston gradually emerged as the center of the oil business in the region.

THE LOVETTS

Like so many others before and since, Edgar Odell Lovett came to Houston for a job. It's true that the job was a singular one—he was hired in 1909 to be the founding president of the Rice Institute—but in many respects his experience and that of his family reflect the experiences of transplants to the Bayou City that are familiar even today. In 1909, Lovett was thirty-six years old, the holder of two PhDs, a full professor and chairman of astronomy at Princeton, and a rising star in that establishment institution.

He was lured to Houston in the first place by the possibility of accomplishing something truly big, something so big that perhaps, it could only happen in Texas. The members of that first Rice Board of Trustees were charged with finding someone to build the new school. They had a pocket full of money, no real idea what a university was supposed to look like, and the people of Houston clamoring for action. They were also full participants in the culture of audacious Houston boosterism that we still know so well. Their relentlessly positive spin on the promise of the city was in the end perfectly matched with Lovett's own striving personality and boundless (and justified) confidence.

While Lovett was trying to decide whether to accept this job, Captain James A. Baker, chairman of the Board of Trustees, wrote him: "We all realize that it is no small sacrifice to give up a position such as you have in Princeton; while this is true, yet I can assure you that in coming to Houston you and your family will find a warm welcome among generous and hospitable people, who will strive in every way to make you feel at home among them."

Once he agreed to move to Houston and prepare for the birth of a new university, Lovett also had to prepare to move his young family here. His son Malcolm later recalled that the first time he heard of Houston was when his father announced at the dinner table that he had decided to leave Princeton to take the reins at Rice. While Edgar stayed in a Houston hotel and looked for a house, his wife Mary Hale along with seven-year-old Malcolm and an older daughter, Adelaide, then eleven, stayed with her family in Kentucky, postponing their initiation into Houston's summer. Again, like more than a few transplants, young Malcolm (who later became chairman of Rice's Board of Trustees) held several misapprehensions about life in Houston. One story that his father loved to tell and that he himself particularly enjoyed involved a boastful conversation that took place not long after the dinner table announcement. Learning to skate on a New Jersey pond, he informed his friends that next winter he would be doing his ice skating on the Gulf of Mexico.

Still, Houston was not without its charms for the Lovett children. Their father had been promised a President's

A young H. Malcolm Lovett and his sister, Adelaide, standing with their maid, Mamie Price, in front of their home on Polk Ave.
c. 1911, Courtesy Rice University

Men like Joseph Cullinan, the son of Irish immigrants who had settled in western Pennsylvania, gained valuable training in the Pennsylvania oil industry before coming to Texas in pursuit of blacker pastures. Cullinan worked in Corsicana and then in Beaumont, where he helped create and manage the company that became Texaco. His decision to move Texaco's headquarters to Houston in 1908 marked the beginning of the growth of the city as the administrative headquarters of the southwestern oil industry. After he lost control of Texaco, he remained in Houston, created other oil-related companies, and took his place among the city's leaders.

The long-term impact of Cullinan's decision to migrate to Houston lasted throughout the twentieth century, for his children Nina and Craig continued to influence the city's growth with their work and their charitable contributions. Nina Cullinan remained an influential patron of the arts until her death in 1986, helping to develop the institutions of high culture that are one hallmark of a maturing city. As Nina Cullinan and many others supported the creation and growth of museums, symphonies, and operas, others used wealth inherited from Houston's past to help build another symbol of maturity, institutions of higher education such as the Rice Institute.

The opening of the Houston Ship Channel (HSC) in 1914 marked the beginning of an era of stunning growth in the region. Not only did the new deep water channel to the sea establish Houston as a major port, it also opened space for industrial expansion on the banks of the channel. The growth of oil refineries from the 1920s through the 1960s, petrochemical plants from the late 1930s through the remainder of the century, and assorted other industrial plants along the HSC drove the economy forward. These plants attracted to the region tens of thousands of industrial workers, engineers and technical specialists, and professional managers. The building and expansion of the plants encouraged

House by the Rice board, but it clearly could not be built immediately (and would not be, in fact, for almost fifty years). Lovett instead had the university rent a house at the intersection of Polk and Caroline, a location that would then have been thought nearly the outskirts of town (but now is the site of the Toyota Center). The Lovetts lived there for their first couple of years in Houston, then had several short stays at other residences before settling into a suite of rooms at the Plaza Hotel on Montrose, which was only a short walk from the Rice campus. Edgar and Mary would spend the rest of their lives there.

Once in Houston, the Lovett family embraced its new hometown wholeheartedly and with genuine relish. And what Captain Baker had promised in his letter was delivered. Then, as now, Houston proved to be a city that welcomes newcomers and makes a place for those who want one. The Lovetts soon were at home. They joined the Central Christian Church at the corner of Main and Bell, attending and contributing regularly. Mary Hale Lovett became a valued and valuable member of the community in her own right, not only serving as hostess of various Rice events, but also helping organize the Museum of Fine Arts and the Houston Symphony. She worked with the Houston Settlement Association, the Faculty Women's Club at Rice, and the First Christian Church until illness forced her to curtail her activities.

The Lovett children also adapted quickly, attending classes at the Houston Academy (Christopher Welch's School) and then Houston High School. Naturally, they spent quite a bit of time at Rice. One of the first things the family did when they arrived in town, according to Malcolm, was to hire a Pierce-Arrow car and motor out Main Street—then an oyster shell road—to see the land where the new college would be built. (It was, familiarly, mostly under water). In their early years in Houston, the Lovett children attended nearly every social function on campus, and both Malcolm and Adelaide graduated from Rice, Adelaide in 1920 and Malcolm in 1921. Adelaide Lovett eventually married Captain Baker's son, Walter Browne Baker and was one of the founders and first president of the Houston chapter of the Junior League. Like her mother, she gave a great deal of her time to the Museum of Fine Arts.

Edgar Odell Lovett himself, while much occupied with his pressing duties at Rice, also managed to participate actively in Houston's civic and cultural affairs. He spoke almost endlessly at business and social gatherings, was instrumental, along with his wife, in the formation of the Alliance Francaise, and was even crowned King Nottoc of the No-tsu-oh carnival in 1911. Above all, Lovett became one of Houston's strongest public boosters. He quickly grasped that the fates of Houston and of Rice were profoundly intertwined, and he drove this reality home as he spoke to audience after audience. Rejoicing in Houston's growing prosperity, Lovett noted that "great trading centers have often been conspicuous centers of vigorous intellectual life: Athens, Florence, Venice, and Amsterdam were cities great in commerce, but inspired by the love of truth and beauty, they stimulated and sustained the finest aspirations of poets, scholars, and artists within their walls. It requires no prophet's eye to reach a similar vision for our own city. I have felt the spirit of greatness brooding over the city. I have heard her step at midnight. I have seen her face at dawn. I have lived under the spell of the building of the city and under that spell I have come to believe in the larger life ahead of the city."

That's a Houstonian.

—Melissa Kean[1]

the growth of giant specialized construction companies; the needs of the workers and their families spawned the growth of service industries in "refinery towns" such as Baytown, Deer Park, Texas City, and Pasadena. Oil production had sparked a regional boom in the early twentieth century, but oil refining was the core of the industrial expansion that pushed Houston's ascent up the ranks of the largest cities in the United States in mid-century.

The rapid expansion of trade and manufacturing unleashed by the opening of the ship channel created a regional boom in the 1920s, then helped cushion the area from the worst impacts of the Great Depression. The demands of World War II sparked another boom led by the expansion of existing refineries, the rapid construction of petrochemical plants, and the building of steel mills and giant shipyards in the region. The post-World War II boom accelerated a fundamental on-going transformation of both the Texas Gulf Coast and the surrounding areas in Texas and Louisiana.

The extraordinary expansion after World War II reflected the fact that the region was home to three of the nation's fastest growing industries: oil, natural gas, and petrochemicals. As regional oil production declined, pipelines fed crude oil from around the Southwestern U.S. into the giant refining complex that spread from Corpus Christi to New Orleans. A new oil-related industry, the shipment of natural gas from southwestern fields to northeastern markets, grew rapidly after the war, and Houston became the administrative headquarters for Tenneco, Texas Eastern, Transco, and El Paso, the leading companies in this industry. The region also quickly became the largest center of petrochemical production in the world, and this relatively new industry added tens of thousands of industrial jobs.

With its growing array of oil-related activities, it is no wonder that Houston also attracted more and more of the administrative and technical jobs in oil, natural gas, and petrochemicals. By the 1960s, Houston could accurately lay claim to the unofficial title as the "nation's energy capital." This status was reinforced by the steady expansion of oil-related headquarter buildings in the city, particularly the much publicized move of Shell Production Company (the U.S. affiliate of the Royal Dutch-Shell Group) from New York City to Houston in 1970.

As the region's population grew in the decades after World War II, racial segregation under Jim Crow laws effectively divided Houston into two groups: "Black" and "not Black." In this era, the city's growing population of Latino immigrants and migrants were classified as more or less not Black for social and economic and even educational purposes. Other growing ethnic groups, notably Asian Americans, did not fit easily within the segregated order. Changes in Houston's racial and ethnic mix and the Civil Rights Movement's successful challenges to Jim Crow in the 1960s finally forced the city to begin to acknowledge and finally to embrace its growing diversity. Jobs

DOMINIQUE AND JOHN DE MENIL

In describing the art museum she envisioned for Houston, Dominique de Menil stated, "We would show only portions of the collection at a time, but displayed in generous and attractive space. The public would never know museum fatigue and would have the rare joy of sitting in front of a painting and contemplating it. Works would appear, disappear, and reappear like actors on a stage. Each time they would be seen with a fresh eye. Habit blunts vision."[1] This concept of rotating works of art to galleries for limited periods, showing only ten percent of the collection at any one time to ensure an intimate setting, was an innovative one in the Houston artistic environment and became the founding principle for the Menil Collection. The museum, which displays the vast art collection of its founders, Dominique and her husband John de Menil, opened to the public on June 7, 1987.[2]

Dominique de Menil was born in France in 1908 and was the daughter of Conrad Schlumberger, one of the founders of Schlumberger, an oil-drilling equipment company. In 1931, she and her husband John began to amass their uniquely personal art collection in Europe, shortly after they were married. They left France when it was occupied by the Germans in World War II, bringing their family in 1941 to Houston, where John headed up the local Schlumberger office. The de Menils quickly became a force in the local artistic community, serving as patrons to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Contemporary Arts Museum, and the art departments of the University of St. Thomas and Rice University, and involving themselves in various other Houston art ventures. During this time, they continued to collect art on their own, supported by the profits from a mineral identification device that Dominique's father invented. Beginning in 1927, this device was marketed throughout the world by the Schlumberger companies and provided the basis for Dominique de Menil's personal fortune, which was estimated at over $100 million in 1989.[3]

By 1973, when John de Menil died, the couple had accrued over 10,000 works of art, encompassing a broad spectrum from the antiquities to tribal cultures and present-day Western art. After her husband's death, Dominique continued to pursue their goal of keeping the collection together, rather than donating it to various existing institutions. Over the previous twenty years, the de Menils also had purchased twelve acres in the Montrose section of Houston, where the museum and accompanying offices were to be located. Dominique's desire for a museum building that looked small on the outside and big on the inside was realized through the work of Italian architect Renzo Piano.[4]

The de Menils' artistic legacy includes both the Menil Collection and Rothko Chapel. The collection, protected by a $35 million endowment, houses art worth between $75 million and $150 million.[5] The commission of the Chapel and its mission, "to be a public space where mortality could be contemplated, religious ecumenism practiced, and spiritual reconciliation pursued," are unique because they embody the moral, political, religious, and aesthetic values of the de Menils.[6] Dominique de Menil's final project before her death in 1998 was the $4 million Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum, located on the same Montrose tract of land.

Devoted to civil rights as well as art, Mrs. de Menil spearheaded annual $10,000 gifts to recipients of the Rothko Chapel Awards, honoring individual efforts on behalf of human rights. Additionally, every two years she offered a $20,000 award named for El Salvadoran Catholic Bishop Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered as he said Mass. [7]

Dominique and John de Menil's profound sense of responsibility to their enormous wealth, a belief in moral worthiness of modesty, and a strong sense of aesthetics, faith, intelligence, and vision distinguished them from other people and directed their life's work. They had the power, the means, and the imagination to push the city of Houston to new possibilities and international acclaim, especially in the arts. Their impact and important contributions in the multicultural life of the city are still unfolding today.[8]

—Leigh Cutler

Dominique and John de Menil.
Photo credit: Hickey-Robertson, Houston. Courtesy The Menil Collection, Houston

remained the roux for the rich gumbo of Houston's many different racial, ethnic, and national groups.

After almost forty years of sustained growth following World War II, the region suffered an economic body blow, the oil bust of the mid-1980s. Amid widespread lay-offs in the oil industry, the city reeled—and then regrouped and began in earnest to diversify its economy. A new wave of migrants with professional training in medical services and space technology and higher education bolstered the city's growth, and the continuing expansion of cultural institutions brought an added richness to a maturing metropolis.

Looking back over the 170 years since the founding of Houston, one is struck by the extraordinary growth of the region sustained over a long period and by the increasing diversity of the region's population. By the turn of the twenty-first century, Houston had both the economy and the tone of an international city. This required more than global trading ties; it also required migration to the region of people from around the world. Individual decisions to come to Houston have been primarily a quest for personal opportunities, but taken as a whole, these decisions by millions of individuals and their families have provided the people and resources and energy to make Houston an international city.