

The Book of Sales lies open in this reconstruction of the Houston Town Company's office, 1836, which was located on lot 6, block 32, where the Harris County Administration Building stands today. All props are authentic, including an original deed beneath the Book of Sales and a cash box and writing set with quill, sander, and wax sealing discs at right. Reconstruction by Texas Commerce Bank in cooperation with the Harris County Heritage Society in 1978, photograph by James L. Glass.

# The Original Book of Sales of Lots of the Houston Town Company from 1836 Forward

James L. Glass

The Houston Metropolitan Research Center has received a unique city document as a gift from Houston's oldest law firm, Baker & Botts. It is one of the ledgers in which the Houston Town Company<sup>1</sup> recorded its land sales, beginning in Columbia, Texas, in 1836 and continuing until the 1860s in Houston.

In order to appreciate the significance of the Houston Town Company Book of Sales, this article will briefly review its provenance, key events leading to its use, its matching plat, the pattern of sales, technical details, and avenues for promising future research.

#### Provenance

The Book of Sales was first used in Columbia (present-day West Columbia), the capital of Texas from September through December 1836. It was under the direction of John Kirby Allen (1810-1838) while his brother, Augustus Chapman Allen (1806-1864), was in New York organizing his family's move

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<sup>&#</sup>x27;Although Houston met the legal standards for a "city," and was named as such in court documents, certain areas of the United States considered that a settlement must have more than 10,000 inhabitants before it could be termed a city. The Allens apparently favored "town" because attempts to call it a city were universally derided. Judge Andrew Briscoe neatly covered all the bases when he swore in James S. Holman as the first "Mayor of the Corporation of the Town of City of Houston." The town company was a legal corporation under the umbrella of the Allens' partnership. Record of Board, Commissioners and Election Returns, A. Briscoe, C.J., Jan. 30, 1837 to June 25, 1866, Harris County Clerk's Records, p. 9, August 28, 1838; "A. C. Allen to Harris County Probate Court," Harris County Probate Court Records, vol. B, 423, 426, September 26, 1838; Adna Ferrin Weber, The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century: A Study in Statistics (New York: MacMillan Co. for Columbia University, 1899), 12.

to Texas. The book was kept by their principal sales agent, James Sanders Holman (1804-1864)<sup>2</sup> and a bookkeeper-clerk, William Robinson Baker (1820-1890).3 Two years later, because J. K. Allen wanted to pursue other interests in Nacogdoches, plus an import-export venture4 between Texas and England with James Pinckney Henderson (1808-1858), he dissolved his partnership with his brother on June 16, 1838.5 In anticipation of the dissolution, all Houston land not previously sold had been inventoried in November 1837 and sold to Angus McNeill (1807-?)6 on December 11, 1837, for \$80,000. After John Kirby Allen's untimely death on August 15, 1838, the Book of Sales passed into the custody of the newly organized corporation of McNeill, Allen, and Holman, with A. C. Allen as controlling partner. Holman was given power of attorney over the remaining land sales.8 Another agent, and the one who kept the book current more than others, was Thomas M. Bagby (1814-1868).9 He was married to a sister of W. R. Baker, the company's bookkeeper and clerk. Holman and Baker both became mayors of Houston. From 1839 to 1840, the Book of Sales was kept by A. C.'s brothers, Henry Rowland Allen (1817-1881) and Samuel Lewis Allen (1808-1895), while A. C. was dealing with legal difficulties. 10 The book then reverted to Holman

<sup>2</sup>"Holman, James S.," in Walter Prescott Webb, ed., *The Handbook of Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952), vol. 1, 828; personal communication with Dixon W. Holman, Arlington, Texas, 1988; genealogical information in "Bio-Holman, James S.," vertical file, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library.

3"Baker, William R.," Handbook of Texas, vol. 1, 101-102.

4"Allen, John Kirby," ibid., vol. 1, 80; History of Texas Together with a Biographical History of the Cities of Houston and Calveston (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1895), 261.

<sup>3</sup>Harris County Probate Court Records, vol. B, 423.

<sup>6</sup>Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 231-232, inventory recorded on February 9, 1838. Angus McNeill came to Texas in 1835 with James Bowie and Dr. William Richardson, who was carrying \$80,000 that a company of men had raised for him to invest in Texas. This may be where McNeill got the money to buy Houston. He bought 303 lots, plus a tract of 885 acres and a timber reserve of 1,000 acres. Frank J. Dobie, "Jim Bowie, Big Dealer," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 60 (1957): 356; "McNeill, Angus," Handbook of Texas, vol. 2, 125.

<sup>7</sup>In the new partnership, A. C. Allen held six-tenths interest, James S. Holman had two-tenths, and Angus McNeill and Robert Wilson each had one-tenth. Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 441, May 26, 1838.

8Ibid., vol. A, 131, 441, May 26, 1838.

9"Bagby, Thomas M.," Handbook of Texas, vol. 1, 94.

<sup>16</sup>John Kirby Allen died intestate and A. C. would not or could not pay probate court costs and fees, nor would he clarify the inheritance succession, so Henry R. Allen was appointed administrator of John Kirby Allen's estate and posted bond. The probate court judge issued seven attachment (arrest) orders for A. C. Allen from 1839 to 1840. In September 1840 he was finally arrested and forced to report on the succession of the partnership. Harris County Probate

and Bagby. Finally, in 1870, it was given by H. R. Allen to Peter W. Gray (1820-1874) with an apology for its having been "carelessly exposed, and torn by children, as a useless old book." Gray was the son and law partner of Houston attorney William Fairfax Gray (1787-1841)<sup>12</sup> and was founding partner of the modern Baker & Botts law firm. Just prior to Gray's death in October, H. R. Allen re-presented the book to Gray's partner, Walter Browne Botts (1836-1894), on March 16, 1874, because it had been introduced in court to settle a land claim and might be needed again. He descendant firm of Baker & Botts preserved the book for 120 years before E. William Barnett presented it to the city on behalf of the firm on December 13, 1994.

To summarize key events leading to Houston's founding, A. C. and J. K. Allen formed a partnership in New York to investigate profit opportunities in Texas lands and came to San Augustine and Nacogdoches in 1832. A. C.'s wife, Charlotte Marie (Baldwin) Allen (1805-1895), would follow later. The Allen and Baldwin families in New York provided help with planning and venture capital, and 14 adult friends and family members moved to the Houston area shortly after 1836. Following the battle at San Jacinto, while

Court Records, vol. B, 426. He could not, however, pay the court costs of one-half percent of the appraised value of John Kirby Allen's estate, which amounted to \$4,073.31%, and was sentenced by Judge W. R. Baker (Allen's former clerk!) to be kept in "close confinement in the common jail of the county without benefit of bail." With slashing strokes, A. C. angrily wrote what he called a clarification of the matter of succession, but which only managed to muddy the waters even more. Harris County Probate Court Records, Box A, tie-envelope 21, September 17, 1840.

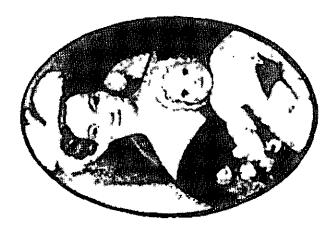
11Written in front endpaper of the Book of Sales. The Allen and Baldwin families had 19 children between them. The Bagbys had six, the Holmans nine, and the Bakers two. Allen and Baldwin genealogy from Ralph E. Dittman, Allen's Landing (Houston: A. C. and J. K. Allen Publishing, 1986), and Dr. Dittman's personal archives (as an Allen descendant) of birth certificates and New York archival records; genealogical records from Dixon W. Holman; "Early Houstonians—The Allen Family," vertical file 017:001, Harris County Heritage Society, Houston, Texas; George Hawley, Dr. Jonas C. and Mrs. Betsy Baldwin, the Founders of Baldwinsville, New York and Some of Their Descendants (privately published, n.d., copy in Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library); John Henry Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (1880; reprint, Austin: L. E. Daniell, 1978), 354-358; History of Texas Together with a Biographical History of the Cities of Houston and Galveston, 297-300, 423-425, 516-518, 628-639.

<sup>12</sup>William Fairfax Gray, From Virginia to Texas, 1835: Diary of Col. Wm. F. Gray, Giving Details of His Journey to Texas and Return in 1835-1836 and Second Journey to Texas in 1837 (1909; facsimile edition, Houston: Fletcher Young Publishing Company, 1965).

<sup>15</sup>J. H. Freeman, *The People of Baker Botts* (Houston: Baker & Botts, 1992), 3-18. Peter W. Gray was admitted to the bar and went into practice with his father in 1840, before forming a partnership with W. B. Botts in 1865.

<sup>14</sup>For a history of the firm, see Kenneth J. Lipartito and Joseph A. Pratt, Baker & Botts in the Development of Modern Houston (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).







Left to right: Augustus Chapman Allen, ca. 1835; Charlotte M. (Baldwin) Allen and daughter Elizabeth, ca. 1838; John Kirby Allen, ca. 1835. These three photographs are of portraits painted from life that were subsequently destroyed by fire. Photographed from old newspapers by James L. Glass.

J. K. was still on a three-month trip to the East that he had undertaken to raise money for the Texas Revolution, A. C.—a mathematics professor and engineer—determined that the actual head of navigation on Buffalo Bayou was at its juncture with White Oak Bayou and not at Harrisburg, as was widely believed. That confluence was part of a two-league Mexican land grant to John Austin (1801-1833)<sup>15</sup> made on July 21, 1824. In July 1825, Austin had bought a cotton gin on Buffalo Bayou that had been established by George Harrison<sup>16</sup> prior to 1824. A few months later, Austin moved to Brazoria to start a new port town with J. E. Brown Austin; he died there in the cholera epidemic of August 1833. His father, John Punderson Austin (1774-1834), came to Texas to take over his son's estate, but also died of cholera in July 1834. He named Thomas F. McKinney (1801-1873) as his trustee and left one league of John's grant to another son, William Tennant Austin (1809-1874), and the other to John's widow, Elizabeth E. Austin.<sup>17</sup>

On August 24, 1836, after some small difficulty in clearing title, A. C. Allen purchased the upper (upstream, or western) league of 4,428 acres from W. T. Austin for one dollar per acre, with half paid in hand and the rest due in 18 months. 18 On the following day Elizabeth, now Mrs. Thomas F. L. Parrott,

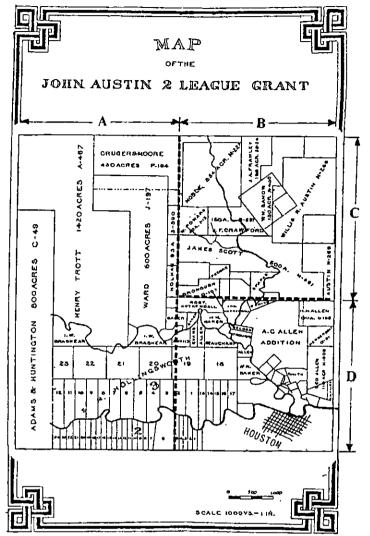
<sup>15</sup>John Austin was a junior, but dropped his father's middle initial to avoid confusion. He bore only a distant kinship to Stephen F. Austin, but the two often collaborated in Texas. "Austin, John," Handbook of Texas, vol. 1, 80; Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas, 604.

<sup>18</sup>Mexico's grant to John Austin identified the confluence of Buffalo and White Oak bayous as being near "the place where the inhabitant George Harrison first established himself." Grant no. 422, Texas General Land Office, vol. 1, 200; recorded in English in Harris County Deed Records, vol. B, 129, November 12, 1849; field notes, with metes and bounds, in Harris County Deed Records, vol. Q, 238, November 12, 1849.

<sup>17</sup>Elizabeth survived several husbands. Her first one was a Mr. Lippincott. When he died, she married John Austin in Brazoria and they had one child circa 1829 or 1830. John and the child died in the cholera epidemic of August 1833, but Elizabeth survived. The following year, she married Thomas F. L. Parrott, who was a medical doctor and captain of a company of artillery in the Texas Army in 1835. They also lived in Brazoria County, at Dr. Parrott's plantation, Tranquility. When Dr. Parrott died, she married William Pierpont. She left many descendants and relatives in Brazoria, Harris, and Galveston counties. "Austin, John," Handbook of Texas, erroneously lists Elizabeth E. Austin as perishing with the rest of the family. G. A. McCall, "William T. Malone," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Society 14 (no. 4, April 1911): 326, for Dr. Parrott's military service; "Bío - Parrott, Elizabeth," vertical file, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library. The vertical file includes copies of the following documents: affidavit of Judge William P. Hamblen, Harris County Deed Records, vol. 248, 62, March 7, 1910; Court Petition, Harris County Deed Records, vol. 287, 301, May 3, 1912, interrogatories 4-7; "Excerpts from deposition," not a matter of record, on file in papers of the 11th District Court, Cause no. 41152: First National Bank v. John Austin et al.; Harris County Deed Records, vol. B, 10, March 18, 1834.



The first survey of the John Austin two-league grant, made by John Cooke in 1824, recently discovered in the holdings of the Texas General Land Office. It was kept in Stephen F. Austin's office in San Felipe, pasted to an old Mexican newspaper. Cooke's name appears in the Harris County Deed Records, vol. B, p. 129.



The subdivision of the John Austin grant, shown in "Houston Survey Maps," (Texas Abstract Company, ca. 1840s), courtesy of Ralph E. Dittman. Section A: upper league purchased from W. T. Austin on August 24, 1836, for \$1 per acre. Section B: lower league inherited by John Austin's widow, Elizabeth (Austin) Parrott, in 1833. Section C: half of lower league which Mrs. Parrott retained and later partially developed as Germantown subdivision. Section D: half of lower league purchased from Mrs. Parrott by the Allens on August 26, 1836, for \$5,000.

petitioned the probate court for permission to sell part of her league, and was so authorized. 19 Also on August 25, with the title cleared by McKinney, Allen petitioned Judge Benjamin C. Franklin in Marion, District of Brazoria, to order the sale of the land he really wanted at White Oak Bayou, and it was so ordered.20 The Book of Sales shows Judge Franklin as receiving a donation of lot 5, block 44, and he had a street named after him. On the next day, August 26, at Elizabeth's home, Allen paid \$5,000 for the southern half of her eastern, or lower, league, with a \$1,000 cash down payment contributed by Robert "Honest Bob" Wilson (1793-1856) and \$2,166 in two notes on J. K. Mead, discounted 10 percent per annum, thus reducing the promissory notes to \$917 each. Wilson received a 10-percent interest in Houston for his \$1,000 down payment.21 The deed was recorded and released when paid.22 It would be many years before Houston would develop north and west into the old W. T. Austin league because two acres on the north side of Buffalo Bayou had been set aside as a site for a steam sawmill, plus a thousand-acre timber reserve.23 Instead, the town rapidly expanded to the south and east into the

<sup>18</sup>Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 157, 163; Edwin Bonewitz, letter of July 26, 1956, pp. 8-10, in Box 1, folder 2, "Early Houston: Locations of Real Properties, 1830s-1850," Edwin Bonewitz Papers, MSS 25, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library. Also see "Action to Try Title," Mary A. Doyle et al. v. John D. Andrews et al., Harris County Deed Records, vol. Q, 243-245, in which the "ancient deed" of 1836 was confirmed on April 24, 1875. The property in question was comprised of lots 6 through 11 on block 48. For a full transcription of the General Warranty Deed of August 24, 1836, see Dittman, Allen's Landing, 703-706.

<sup>19</sup>Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 156.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., vol. A, 157-158.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. Also see Ellen Douglas MacCorquodale, "Houston's Purchase Price, Being the Story of Our First Land Boom," Civics for Houston 1 (February 1928): 13.

<sup>22</sup>The deed was recorded on November 8, 1837 (Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 157-158), and released on March 28, 1838 (*ibid.*, vol. A, 163) and April 4, 1838 (*ibid.*, vol. A, 346), as the notes were paid off.

<sup>23</sup>Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 232, closing notations. The "Steam Mill Company" land was recorded on June 23, 1838, after the machinery and mechanics arrived in October 1837. The Allens had hired the renowned intellectual and scientific thinker Elijah Hinsdale Burritt to be president of the Texas Steam Mill Company and to bring a party of 13 to Houston to set up a sawmill on the north side of the bayou. Their ship, the brig Elbe from New Haven, Connecticut, was demolished by Racer's Storm at Galveston on October 6,1837, and abandoned by the crew. Eventually, the party made its way to Houston. Six of them, including Burritt and his brother, died of yellow fever within two months. Burritt's estate went to his sister Emily, also with the party, and was comprised of large quantities of mathematical instruments, scientific instruments, and books. It is perhaps indicative of the intellectual climate of Houston that Judge Andrew Briscoe and estate administrator W.

James Wells, James S. Holman, and Obedience Smith surveys.<sup>24</sup>

After securing the land, A. C. immediately set about advertising the town, named after the hero of San Jacinto, in key U.S. newspapers, offering inducements that existed only in his imagination. To his credit, every claim was soon fulfilled except for his boast that Houston was so salubrious that there was "no place in Texas more healthy." Within 500 days the town was built, filled with stores and hotels, made the capital of the new republic, and was Texas's premier port<sup>25</sup> and center for the transfer of goods.

#### The Plat

In order for a sales book to exist there must be a plat for a reference and location guide. Secondary sources allege that A. C. Allen made the first one, sketched on the top of his stovepipe hat, and then took a knife "out of his girdle and blazed out the pathway of Main Street...." Perhaps armed with such a preliminary sketch, he hired the partnership of Gail Borden, Jr. (1801-1874) and Thomas Henry Borden (1804-1877), in Columbia, to survey and plat the site while it was being cleared. The Bordens sent Moses Lapham (1808-1838) to do the actual survey work from October 2 to November 19, 1836, and draw up the first plat, which was nailed to the wall of the Capitol in Columbia, where sales began. A surviving copy of that first plat has not been found, presumably destroyed because Lapham's field notes contained errors. A revised plat was drawn by the Bordens containing a disclaimer to the effect that any sales made from the inaccurate plat would be honored. Their plat

Pinckney Hill felt that the items were "unproductive property...of no use...[and should be] immediately disposed of." They were rescued by Sam Houston's friend in Nacogdoches, Dr. Robert A. Irion, who bought them at auction on April 15, 1838, for \$467. Feris A. Bass, Jr., and B. R. Brunson, Fragile Empires: The Texas Correspondence of Samuel Swartwout and James Morgan, 1836-1856 (Austin: Shoal Creek Publishers, 1978), 65; Harris County Probate Records, vol. B, 113-121; Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 203, 513.

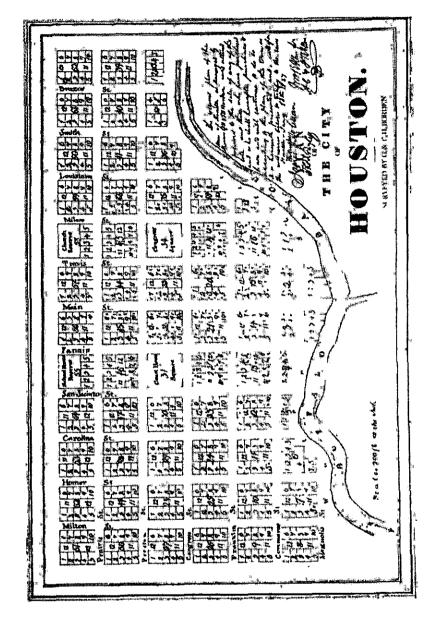
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Letter of July 26, 1956, Bonewitz Papers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>There is no evidence of the name Allen's Landing being used prior to the development of the "Allen's Landing Memorial Park" tract from 1965 to 1967. Before then, it was known as the "landing," "wharf," "municipal wharf," and "foot of Main Street." By 1932, official specifications of the Houston Engineering Department (File Plan No. 1042) named it "Main Street Wharf."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>W. A. Leonard, comp., *Houston City Directory*, 1867-1868 (Houston: Gray, Smallwood and Company, Printers, 1867), 130. Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, 358.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Joe B. Frantz, ed., "Moses Lapham: His Life and Some Selected Correspondence," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 54 (nos. 3 and 4, 1951): 326-327, 468.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Gail and Thomas Borden, "Plan of the City of Houston" (1836), Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library.



1, "Plan of the City of Houston" (manuscript map, 1836), replica of original in the Texas and Local History Department, Houston by James L. Glass drawn by James Public Library.

and succeeding bird's-eye views have often been criticized for showing north at the bottom. The orientation with north at the top has been used since the second century C.E. for maps of a global or continental nature, but land sales plats were oriented to present the greatest commercial advantage for a real estate entrepreneur, and the top orientation varied widely. Houston's map orientation was simply designed to conform to the banks of the bayou to show maximum wharfage and commercial opportunities. There is no reason for concern about the lack of a true north-south alignment. The town's east-west streets were laid out at an angle of north 55° west, and north-south streets at south 35° west. <sup>29</sup> Streets were named for Texas heroes and benefactors, and the classical names of Homer and Milton were quickly replaced by those of Austin and LaBranche. <sup>30</sup> Even the plat itself was soon replaced as the town rapidly expanded in 1839. The new maps were drawn by Colonel Auguste Perrelet Girard (c. 1805-1873), who came to Houston in 1838 from Mobile, Alabama. <sup>31</sup>

### Sales and Development

Four months after buying the land, the town company had a plat in hand and was ready for business. There was heavy pressure as Houston was only one of many new town projects underway in the Galveston-Houston area. Without federal regulations, zoning, highway engineers, and environmental restrictions, the Allens did in one year what now might never be accomplished, and they proceeded with the same entrepreneurial and political skills used today. To gain the tremendous advantage of being a national capital, J. K. Allenelected as a representative from Nacogdoches on September 1, 1836—orchestrated the blitz to move the capital from Columbia to Houston, in competition with 15 other places. The first lot was sold on New Year's Day 1837, to Benjamin Brown. The Book of Sales shows that other lots were donated to senators and congressmen, who finally swung the vote in Allen's

<sup>29</sup> The Original Plan of Houston," inset in W. E. Wood, "City of Houston, Harris Co., Texas" (1869), Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library.

JoThe streets were renamed for Stephen F. Austin, who died on December 26, 1836, and Alcée Louis LaBranche, who came to Houston on March 3, 1837, as the first U.S. chargé d'affaires to the Republic of Texas. The Book of Sales shows that he was given lot 11, block 54, on the south side of Prairie between Carolina and San Jacinto, where the American Legation was built. "LaBranche, Alceé Louis," Handbook of Texas, vol. 2, 3.

<sup>31</sup>Auguste Perrelet Girard Papers, MSS 290, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

<sup>32</sup>The first sale was lot 3, block 19, sold to Brown in Columbia for \$700. It was on the north side of Congress, halfway between Travis and Milam streets.

favor on the fourth ballot.<sup>33</sup> J. K. also promised to build, free of charge, a large house of entertainment (the City Hotel) and a two-story Capitol building. The Allens encouraged others to build boarding houses, stores, kitchens (restaurants), saloons, and more hotels. It was an enormous construction effort that paid good wages (\$3 to \$10 per day)<sup>34</sup> and attracted builders, carpenters, and mechanics from all over Texas and the South. A man could make his fortune. The Allens also provided free room and board for prospective buyers at their home on Carolina (Caroline) Street that cost them over \$3,000 per year, but which they considered as merely a cost of doing business.<sup>35</sup>

They hired an Irish architect named Thomas William Ward (1807-1872)<sup>36</sup> in New Orleans, who was aided by builder-carpenters Nicolas Hansen<sup>37</sup> and Ransom Gwyn Blanton (1814-1881).<sup>38</sup> Another building was started as a backup to house Congress in case Ward couldn't finish by the April 1837 deadline. It filled an entire block on the west side of Main, between Congress and Preston, with large, octagonal rooms at each end for the House and

<sup>53</sup>On the third ballot, Houston needed two votes to win. The Allens gave lots 7 and 8 on block 33 to representatives John Austin Wharton (from Brazoria) and Thomas Jefferson Green (from Bexar) as shown on page 180. These two men swung their votes on the fourth ballot and Houston won, 21 to 19. Telegraph and Texas Register, December 6 and 22, 1836; Journals of the Senate and House of the Republic of Texas, First Congress, First Session (Columbia, Tex.: G. & T. H. Borden, printers, 1836).

<sup>34</sup>The first home of A. C. and Charlotte Allen was on lot 6, block 48, the northeast corner of Carolina and Prairie streets. Harris County Deed Records, vol. F, 215, April 18, 1840; Box 1, folder 2, "Early Houston: Locations of Real Properties, 1830s-1850," Bonewitz Papers. John Kirby Allen had a small place in the northeast half of lot 7, block 20, "with house." Harris County Probate Court Records, vol. B, 420.

<sup>55</sup>Margaret Swett Henson, "Robert P. Boyce: Nineteenth-Century Houstonian," Houston Review 6 (no. 1, 1984): 29, n. 14.

56Ward studied architecture in Dublin. When he was hired to build the Capitol, the Book of Sales shows that he was given lot 1, block 44, across Prairie from the construction site, as shown on page 181. Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 131, deed filed July 21, 1837; Mrs. Ward McCampbell, "A History of the Ward Family" (unpublished typescript, January 1, 1980), courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. David Connally. While in Houston, Ward served as Land Commissioner and as Postmaster of the Republic, and as Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives.

<sup>37</sup>Hansen signed an agreement with T. W. Ward, in New Orleans, to work for four months as a carpenter in Houston for board and lodging and \$55 per month. Original contract in the San Jacinto Museum of History, cited in Box 34, Folder 2, Andrew Forest Muir Papers, Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University. Ward also advertised for 20 more carpenters, with or without tools. *Telegraph and Texas Register*, February 10, 1837, 3.

SeWilliam Neal Blanton, Reminiscences of a Texas Frontier Heritage as Portrayed in the Lives of Ransom Gwyn Blanton [&] Benjamin Franklin Blanton (Taylor, Tex.: Merchants Press, 1969); personal communication with Joseph Francis Blanton, Houston, Texas, 1994. Ransom Blanton salvaged Santa Anna's buggy whip and boots and helped in "laying out the new town" in addition to his carpentry work.

Senate, connected by a series of small rooms for clerks and assorted bureaucrats. As events turned out, Ward's building was not yet finished, but was deemed usable. The backup building was then converted into Houston's first strip shopping center, known as "Mercantile Row," now referred to as "Long Row." It even boasted a lending library. <sup>39</sup> The Book of Sales shows the site, block 33, as retained by "Allens and Baker."

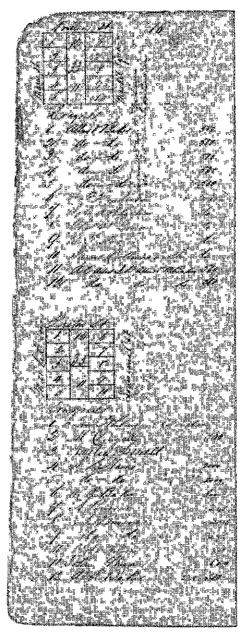
The book also shows that the Allens followed the now-common practice of donating land to celebrities to attract tourists and prospects. Fifty-three lots were donated to relatives of the Allens, heroes of the revolution, lawyers, politicians, and influential men from the United States and abroad.<sup>40</sup> Thirty-eight additional lots were reserved for a church, school, courthouse, and Capitol.

The prices of lots in Houston were bruited about as being uncommonly high. The Allens probably did little to squelch these rumors because prospective buyers would expect to pay premium prices, and their competitors talked up even higher prices to make their own speculations look like bargains. One tourist in 1837 wrote that lots "were selling at enormous prices [in Houston], in some instances as high as four and five thousand dollars apiece. The spirit of speculation was afloat, which, as a false medium, distorted and displaced everything." In the strict sense he was right, but only a handful of sales reached a four-figure price, and these were naturally the ones that alarmists publicized. The Book of Sales also shows a real "brother-in-law" deal to Charlotte Allen's brother, Horace Baldwin, who paid \$30 for lot 5, block 9, on the southwest corner of Crawford and Magnolia streets. Baldwin later became mayor in 1844. But the Book of Sales reveals, and deed records

<sup>39</sup>Mercantile Row covered lots 1 through 5, plus 11 and 12, on block 33, as shown on page 180. The spaces for clerks were made into stores and numbered from north to south. The row contained a pharmacy, clothing shops, commission merchants, and the J. F. Byrne circulating library and stationers at Door 7, on lot 2. Bonewitz Papers; information on Long Row collected by the Harris County Heritage Society; Pearl Hendricks, "Houston by the Bayou–100 Years Ago," (typescript, 1940), 24, in Folder "Houston, General and Miscellaneous," Box 2E215, Pearl Hendricks Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>40</sup>The Book of Sales reveals two blocks that contained lots that were donated to "celebrities." On both blocks, the Allens more than made up for the donations through exorbitantly priced sales to others. Block 33 contained five donation lots behind Mercantile Row that faced present-day Market Square across the street, and store rentals covered the donations. Block 44, the first block north of the Capitol and bounded by Prairie, Preston, Main, and Congress, contained seven donation lots, but the other five lots were sold for a total of \$12,700, far above the average price of \$6,000 per block. Block 44 also faced Market Square on the west, where many believed that the Capitol would be located.

<sup>41</sup>Andrew Forest Muir, ed., Texas in 1837: An Anonymous, Contemporary Narrative (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 28.



### Page in Book of Sales showing Block 33 (top)

Lots 1-5, 11, 12: Mercantile Row

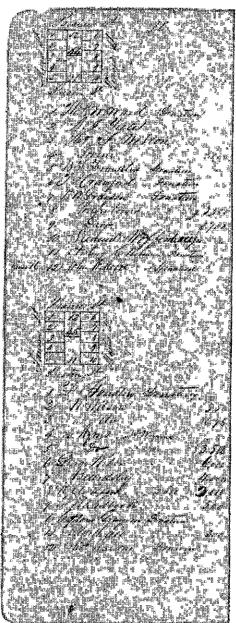
Lot 6: Donation to James Pinckney Henderson, attorney general, secretary of state, and Texas minister to England and France in 1837. Later governor of and senator from Texas.

Lot 7: Donation to John Austin Wharton, congressman. Helped swing the vote to move the capital to Houston. Eulogized by David G. Burnet as the "keenest blade of San Jacinto."

Lot 8: Donation to Thomas Jefferson Green, congressman. Helped swing the vote to move the capital to Houston.

Lot 9: Donation to Dr. Branch Tanner Archer, Texas revolutionary leader and congressman.

Lot 10: Donation to James Collinsworth, judge, politician, soldier, secretary of state in ad interim government, senator, chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court.



### Page in Book of Sales Showing Block 44 (top)

Lot 1: Donation to Thomas William Ward, Houston's first architect. Lived here while he built the Capitol, then built a spec house, which he sold to Judge Andrew Briscoe in 1837.

Lot 2: Donation to Andrew Janeway Yates, a close friend of the Allen family and Houston's first Phi Beta Kappa.

Lot 3: Sold or donated to Thomas J. Weston, no price noted.

Lot 4: Sold to Irvine for \$6,000.

Lot 5: Donation to Benjamin Cromwell Franklin, Texas's first district judge and first chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court.

Lot 6: Donation to Joseph Crawford, British vice-consul from Tampico who made a fact-finding tour of Houston in 1837.

Lot 7: Donation to Peter William Grayson, first attorney general.

Lot 8: Sold to S. Wolfenberger for \$3,500.

Lot 9: Sold to Davy [?] for \$700.

Lot 10: Sold or donated to Samuel Wolfenberger, no price noted.

Lot 11: Donation to Sterling Clack Robertson, an important land empresario and congressman from the Milam District.

Lot 12: Donation to John W. Moore, first congressman from Harrisburg, first county sheriff and later a city alderman.

TABLE 1. High Lot Prices in the Book of Sales

Lot	Block	Price Paid	Buyer
1	2	\$5,000.00	Jonathan Hull (stage line)
4 & 5	35	4,000.00	J. A. Starns
4	44	6,000.00	Irvine
8	44	3,500.00	Samuel Wolfenberger
6	45	6,000.00	George Reber
7	45	4,000.00	Beardsley
11	57	3,000.00	F. L. Gosse & Co.

confirm, an average price of \$500 for a 50 by 100-foot lot, or \$6,000 per block.<sup>42</sup>

The town began in earnest in April 1837, when President Sam Houston brought military law overland from Columbia, and the steamboat Yellow Stone brought the Congress, its bureaucracy and lawyers, and the newspaper press of the Telegraph up to the foot of Main Street. At that time, Houston was described as looking like a "Methodist camp-ground," containing an estimated 500 tents, 100 structures, and 1,500 citizens. 44

The Allens' Book of Sales ledger replicated the Bordens' plat by drawing each block, two per page, and dividing each block into 12 lots. Lot numbers were listed under each drawing to be filled in later with the name of the buyer and the price paid. A weakness in the book is that none of the transactions is dated, making it necessary to confirm dates in the Harris County Deed Records. Fortunately, the inventory of unsold lots made when Angus McNeill bought them all in December 1837, makes the sales of lots during Houston's

first year, at least, relatively easy to date. There is also an important discrepancy between the Book of Sales and a description of it given by Lewis Birdsall Harris and Samuel L. Allen in a court case in 1870. In the trial in which the book was verified by testimony, Harris deposed (corroborated by S. L. Allen) that "a book was kept with the plats of the blocks and numbers. When a block was sold the number of such block was put opposite to the plat of the block and designated with a letter ('s') [for 'sold']. The clerks kept the books." While no sales are so marked in the Baker & Botts book, they are marked with an "X" on the Bordens' plat. They show that the majority of the earliest sales marched straight south, down both sides of Main Street, down the east side of Travis, and around block 34, which had been designated as the location of the Capitol before the site was changed to Main and Texas. Although the Allens did well in providing the structural amenities necessary to attract and hold new citizens on the frontier, they did poorly in providing an adequate infrastructure. They did not provide water or sewage systems, \*7 street paving

<sup>45</sup>Harris County District Court Records, Cause No. 7022: F. A. Rice et al. v. James T. D. Wilson, interrogatory 6, May 31, 1870.

46Historians have long puzzled over the reason for this move. Some thought it was due to a burgeoning trade in prostitution (of which there was some), but the Book of Sales clearly shows the name "Market Square" on the west side of block 33 and the east side of block 35, rather than "Congress Square" shown on the Borden plat. The Allens quickly realized the need for a central depot and storehouse for goods coming in from the hinterlands, across a ford at the foot of Preston. See Benajah H. Carroll, Standard History of Houston, Texas (Knoxville, Tenn.: H. W. Crew & Co., 1912), 77: "On the square itself was [a] big shed that had been erected for temporary use...under the control of the city." A permanent building was erected in 1840. County and other sources indicate that block 34 was surrounded by stalls selling food and farm products, with a large warehouse called the "City Recess," and a sawpit operated by builder Robert P. Boyce. Telegraph and Texas Register, September 2, 1837, 3. "Recess" is a medieval English term for a communal, secluded storage building for farm products and arms, according to A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1910), vol. 8. The Allens originally deeded the block to the city specifically for use as a site for a city hall and marketplace. When the city hall moved and the marketplace was used as a bus depot, the Allen heirs claimed a violation of the original charter and, in 1940, sued to get it back, but lost. "Allen Heirs Claim Old City Hall," Houston Press, May 4, 1940. The fact that the Book of Sales shows donations to so many prominent men around the square infers extensive use of the book in Columbia before the Allens took the decision to move the capitol, and many people must have been dismayed. Preston continued to be a farm conduit for 122 years, until the old Farmers' Market was demolished in 1958.

<sup>47</sup>An 1837 visitor noted that the water in Buffalo Bayou was "dirty, filthy, miserable stuff—covered with a green scruff or scurf...They have dug several wells but the water is genefally impregnated with Sulphur and some mineral that works the people to death." Dr. Moreau Forrest to Mrs. Mary Forrest, August 23, 1837, Collection 2, Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University. While Houstonians were drinking bayou, rain, or spring water, Chicago (incorporated in 1833) was laying an underground, freshwater pipeline system from

Muir, Texas in 1837, 191, n. 12.

<sup>43 [</sup>bid., 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup>James Morgan wrote to Samuel Swartwout, May 3, 1837: "Houston it is said now nos. 1200 inhabitants and has grown like magic...," Bass and Brunson, Fragile Empires, 44; Sam Houston to Robert Irion, April 28, 1837, reported that since his last communication of January 20, 1837, "Houston has grown tremendously...and now has more than 100 houses finished and 1500 people," A. Pat Daniels, Texas Avenue at Main Street (Houston: Allen Press, 1964), 5; in December of the same year, a visitor reported 1,500 to 2,000 inhabitants, including "80 sailors," Mary Austin Holley: The Texas Diary, 1835-1838 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 37. By way of contrast, One Shell Plaza—the downtown office building which serves as the modern headquarters of Baker & Botts—has a population of roughly 3,500, almost twice the entire population of Houston in 1837. Personal communication with Cliff L. Parker, Hines Interests, Houston, Texas, January 23, 1995.

of any sort, gas works, public schools, mass transit, or provisions for trash or garbage, depending instead on roaming wild pigs and the bayou, which quickly became an open sewer. The town was laid out in a simple, geometric grid with typical blocks being squares of 250 feet on a side, each containing 12 lots. Five lots (1 through 5 and 6 through 10) ran down each side of a block and were 50 by 100 feet each. Two "key" lots (11 and 12) ran through the center of each block and were 50 by 125 feet each. Strips for sidewalks surrounded each block outside of the lot sizes and were "trodden out" to be from six to 15 (now standard) feet in width, for an overall total block width of 280 feet, curb to curb. Streets now maintain a 50-foot right-of-way except for Main Street at 90 feet and Texas Avenue at 100 feet. An 1837 subdivision, Frost Town, had 20-foot-wide east-west streets and a 30-foot-wide north-south main street (Spruce). 48

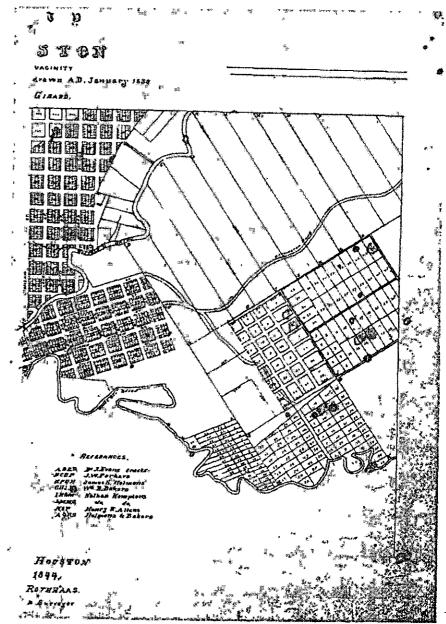
The last stone in the city's foundation was put in place in the summer of 1837 when a municipal government was established. The first city election was held on August 14 and certified by the county two days later. This was eight months after Houston was named as a temporary capital and five months before city officers were established by a congressional act of incorporation. James S. Holman was elected as first mayor, David S. Harbert as treasurer, and Seth Carey as tax collector, in addition to eight aldermen. 49

One mystery that caused a brief stir in the early twentieth century was the disappearance of Water Street, along the south side of the bayou at what is now called "Allen's Landing." It was shown on the 1837 Borden plat, but that plat was never filed for record in the county clerk's office. The plat that was actually filed was drawn by Col. Girard for Allen and Richardson and dated

Lake Michigan, using superbly crafted interlocking wooden tubes. An over-bayou aqueduct from Beauchamp Springs was attempted by Thomas D. Beauchamp from his 54-acre subdivision on the north side of Buffalo Bayou, but by June of 1838 it had failed for lack of financing. Statement from John Huffman to Thomas D. Beauchamp and Joseph A. Parker "for services performed in connection with this fresh water project," Box 1, folder 3, Bonewitz Papers.

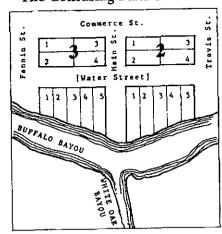
<sup>48</sup>Capt. C. R. Ebersole, "Footnotes for Houston Urban Archaeologists," *Journal: Houston Archaeological Society* (no. 84, April 1986): 20.

<sup>49</sup>Record of Board, Commissioners and Election Returns, Harris County Clerk's Records, "Elections," p. 6; ibid., "Oaths taken," p. 9, August 28, 1838. Records of the earliest days were kept by the Houston Town Company (largely destroyed by fire), the County Clerk, and the Board of Commissioners of Roads and Revenues of Harrisburg County, whose seat was at Houston by a congressional act of December 22, 1836. An earlier act of December 15, 1836, had established Houston as the temporary capital. H. P. N. Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas (Austin: Gammel Book Company, 1898), vol. 1, 78 (1138), 224 (1284). County records are well preserved and accessible. There are no municipal records prior to 1840. Book A, City Council Minutes from June 5, 1840, to January 11, 1847, is available on microfilm at the Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library, but the pages were watersoaked due to a fire and are mostly illegible.

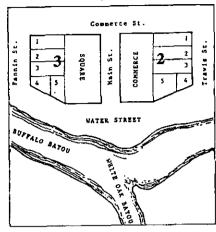


Auguste Perrelet Girard, F. Jacob Rothhaas, "City of Houston" (1838, 1844), filed in Harris County Deed Records, vol. J, p. 55. The left half of the plat has been missing since the late 19th century.

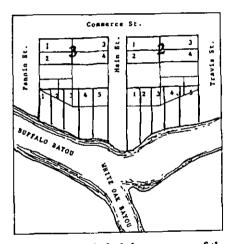
## The Confusing Plats of the Municipal Wharf Area (Allen's Landing)



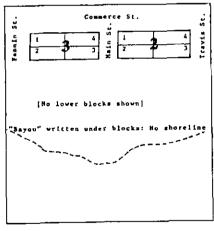
1. The hand-drawn Borden map showed Water Street passing south of the long wharf lots. Gail and Thomas Borden, "Plan of the City of Houston" (manuscript map, 1836).



2. The published version of the Borden map identifies Water Street, but with different configurations of blocks 2 and 3. Gail and Thomas Borden, "Plan of the City of Houston" (1836, lithography by P. Snell & Theuret), Map Book 23 (1836), Folio #1, Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans, Louisiana.



3. Changes made in ink on a copy of the published map in 1837 included extending the wharf lots to match the original Borden plan. Gail and Thomas Borden, "Plan of the City of Houston" (1836, lithography by P. Snell & Theuret, amended in ink in 1837), Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library.



4. The blocks drawn in the Book of Sales show no Water Street, no shoreline, and no lots drawn close to the bayou, perhaps indicating a realization of damaging high tides and storm surges.

1839.50 It does not show Water Street and the left half of the plat-showing the area in question—was torn out and missing "many years" prior to 1907. Between 1836 and 1839, the Allens never showed Water Street in the Book of Sales, referring only to "Bayou." In 1907, the street was discovered as "missing" and a local brouhaha developed with waterfront merchants scrambling to search their deeds in hopes of reclaiming some land. But nothing could be done because the only plat showing Water Street had never been filed.<sup>51</sup> It seems most likely that the Borden plat followed the nineteenth-century convention of labeling waterfront roads to quickly communicate access to water transportation. The plats for the foot of Main changed rapidly, but the Allen brothers-at least in one configuration-set themselves up with property that extended from Commerce Street down to the bayou, so that they could roll cotton bales and other merchandise out of the north sides of their warehouses directly to waiting boats.<sup>52</sup> Because sales of land in that area were so complicated and controversial, it also seems likely that a lot of squabbles and lawsuits were averted by the mysterious disappearance of the left half of the filed Girard/Rothhaas plat.

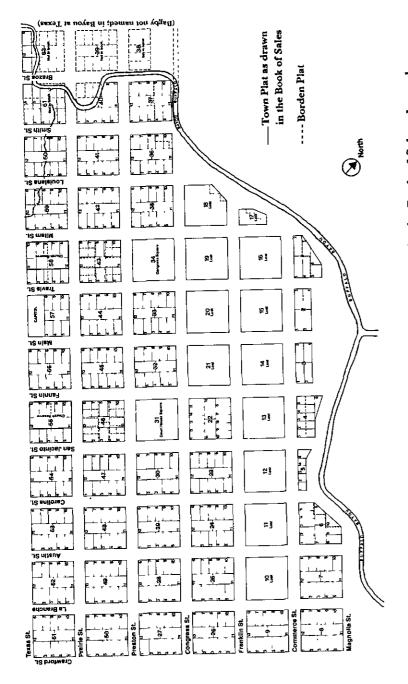
#### Technical Details

In 1978, the Book of Sales was temporarily resurrected by John H. Freeman, of Baker & Botts, and Barbara J. Eaves, of Texas Commerce Bank, for a bank exhibition of Houston's history, entitled "The Spirit of Commerce." At that time an analysis of the book began and it was examined by the author, by Peter Rippe, then director of the Harris County Heritage

<sup>30</sup>Harris County Deed Records, vol. J, 55. The plat seems to have been drawn by Girard and surveyed by Jacob Rothhaas in 1844 to confirm its accuracy.

51"Borden Map Was Allen Reference," Houston Daily Post, August 2, 1907.

<sup>52</sup>Block 3, Lots 3 and 4, Borden Plat, to Henry R. and H. H. Allen, Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 324, January 20, 1837; Block 3, Lot 1, to S. R. and S. L. Allen, *ibid.*, vol. C, 335, April 17, 1838; Block 3, Lot 2, to S. R. and S. L. Allen, *ibid.*, vol. C, 355, January 16, 1839. S. R. Allen is a relative who has not yet been discovered in genealogical records. Also see Margaret S. Henson, James L. Glass, and Roger G. Moore, *The Evolution of Allens Landing City of Houston, Harris County, Texas* (Moore Archeological Consulting, Report of Investigation, No. 60, for Art Nicholas Mina Engineering, 1991). The Allen warehouse was the first building erected in Houston, followed closely by the City Hotel. It was a sturdy log building on the northeast corner of Main and Commerce (lot 3, block 3) and was used first as a trading post and then as a commission merchant's warehouse. It was the first thing seen by soldiers arriving two weeks after the battle of San Jacinto. It was razed in 1870 to make way for a newer building. James Bailey, later mayor, operated a store in the building and Henry R. Allen had a daguerreotype room. Pearl Hendricks, citing memoirs of George Bernard Erath describing the "single warehouse" in an untitled, undated typescript, folder "Houston, Ships (Steamboat Laura; and Cruiser Houston)," Box 2E215, Pearl Hendricks Papers.



shows discrepancies from the Borden plat in the layout of the blocks and Blocks 38, 39, and 62 were not shown in the Book of Sales and were never in the Book of Sales, reconstructed from the information recorded James L. Glass. The map the course of the bayou. I Society, and by Army Emmott of A. V. Emmott & Sons, bookbinders. Their conclusions were as follows:

- 1. The Book of Sales shows blocks 1 through 267 on the south side of Buffalo Bayou (SSBB), minus the 12 blocks 10 through 21 on the pages that were lost by children, plus blocks two through 70 on the north side of Buffalo Bayou (NSBB). The book is as difficult to date at the end as it is at the beginning. The notations dealing with NSBB, where Charlotte M. Allen had extensive holdings, begin smartly with drawings and records of lot sales, but with no street names or dates. Confusion soon develops and the numbers for blocks and pages become out of sequence. The block drawings finally stop near block 50, on or about March 12, 1861.<sup>53</sup> The book was kept in a desultory manner thereafter and petered out with a notation of "Block 70." The last robust entries occur in 1844 for blocks 33 through 45.<sup>54</sup> Although the book requires considerably more title and deed research for validation, one might question the value of such an effort in view of the fact that it is simply a private, anecdotal record.
- 2. The Book of Sales shows the correct course of Buffalo Bayou, preventing full development of blocks 37, 40, 61, and 62. The Bordens' plat shows no such complication, indicating that the Allens may have had the idea to rechannel the bayou in a straight westerly course, eliminating the oxbow, or horseshoe bend, running up Smith and Brazos streets. However, the rechanneling work was not done until 1928. Block 39 was never established and is not in the Book of Sales. The plat reveals more of a marketing mentality rather than a reflection of actual conditions, which probably kept it from being filed for record.
- 3. Prices: no double ciphers were used to indicate cents, and decimals were used as commas. Hence \$750 meant \$750.00 and \$1.500 meant \$1,500.00.55

  Prices are not always given. The abbreviation "do" meant "ditto."
- 4. The majority of the book is written in sepia ink, which was homemade. Some is in blue commercial ink, indicating business practices above the frontier level. The calligraphy indicates the use of both quill and gold-point pens. The pages are of soft paper causing bleed-through from heavy applications of ink.

<sup>58</sup>H. H. Allen to C. M. Allen, Harris County Deed Records, vol. X, 769. Charlotte Marie (Baldwin) Allen, wife of A. C. Allen, operated under the name of C. M. Allen. From the time of J. K. Allen's death in 1838 until her own in 1895, she was uncommonly active in Houston real estate for a woman of her time. While influential, she should probably not be considered as active in the Houston Town Company because her focus was on acquisition, rather than sales and development. Reverse Index to Deeds, Grantee, A-BA-BL (1836-1903), Harris County Deed Records, 53-64.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>Harris County Deed Records, vol. I, 307.

<sup>55</sup> Confirmed by spot checks in Harris County Deed Records.

5. Dots, pits, or tiny mounds on the pages indicate heavy sanding to dry the ink, instead of using blotting paper. The book was shaken after use to get all of the sand out, leaving brown spots.

6. The majority of the writing seems to have been done by one person, although at least three others contributed. Further research into handwriting analysis would be useful. The primary writer was probably Thomas M. Bagby, whose name is written on the front cover and who came to Houston as a trained commission merchant (scribe) in 1837. There is no certain knowledge that any purchasers actually signed the book, as if to seal a bargain.

7. The ledger book measures six and one-half inches by 15 inches. It was purchased elsewhere and brought to Texas. It may have been made in New

York and purchased in New Orleans.

8. The sewing had come loose and the book was rebound at some point and marked "Wharton." This rebinding was probably ordered by Clarence R. Wharton (1873-1941), an avocational historian who became a partner at Baker & Botts in 1906.

9. Even before the discrepancy in the 1870 court testimony was discovered, Peter Rippe was of the opinion that the ledger may have been one of several used in the field (because it was undated) and brought to the central land

office<sup>56</sup> for incorporation into a master record.

When taken together, the Book of Sales, the Borden plat, and the Harris County Deed Records offer glimpses into the minds of the Allens. We have seen the first pattern of land sales along Main Street, and the set-asides for church, school, courthouse, and Capitol. The rechannelization of the bayou couldn't be done and lost 23 lots. The Allens were hemmed in on the south by the limits of their half-league purchase. Their plans for the north side of the bayou, as shown in the deed records, were ambitious. A. C. Allen, and many others, had dreamed of extending Buffalo Bayou as a canal to the rich Brazos plantations, but switched to dreams of railroads as they became perfected. He laid out a major thoroughfare named Railroad Street north of Buffalo Bayou, leading directly to the sawmill site, 14 years before an inch of

56"In December 1837 A. C. and J. K. Allen lived in the City of Houston, or at least A. C. was there and J. K. most of the time. I cannot at this lapse of time say exactly where their office was but believe it was on the same square as the Court House (or fronting it) in which I had my office. It was never farther off than a few blocks." Deposition of Lewis Birdsall Harris, Harris County District Court Records, Cause No. 7022: F. A. Rice et al. v. James T. D. Wilson, interrogatory 7, May 31, 1870. This would seem to corroborate other evidence that the office of the Houston Town Company was on the northeast corner of the intersection of Main and Preston where the Harris County Administration Building is today. The Book of Sales shows that lot as belonging to the A. C. and J. K. Allen Partnership and Moseley Baker. Harris's deposition also indicates that the Allen brothers were known familiarly by their initials.

track was laid.<sup>57</sup> Deed records also show plans for a thousand-acre timber reserve, the Texas Steam Mill Company, and other large acreage for Dr. Ashbel Smith and British diplomat Joseph T. Crawford, who received a town lot plus 15 acres inside a huge grant to Sam Houston. A. C. Allen also reserved to himself 800 acres for a planned subdivision, with mention of a horse-racing track, and a large number of outlots for farming.<sup>58</sup>

The question arises as to how the Allens' vision compared to that of other new town developers. The so-called "first wave" of Texas immigrants came with plat dreams more grandiose than their ability to actually deliver such towns. The promoters of San Felipe and Cole's Settlement drew up expansive plats that bore no relationship to the stark reality of a few log huts. An examination of plats from U.S. towns that were established at the same time as Houston shows that the Allens had a relatively modest plan of action. For example, the town of Chicago, which originated as a trading post at Fort Dearborn, was incorporated in 1833, and by 1836 was bringing in town water from Lake Michigan. In 1834, it was platted at more than 300 blocks and it was reincorporated in 1837. A plat of St. Louis in 1835 showed 200 blocks, with its waterfront on the Mississippi conforming roughly to that of Buffalo Bayou. Cleveland, Ohio, in 1835, was also planned to have 200 blocks. <sup>59</sup> The Borden plat of 1836 showed that the Allens were planning on a smaller, perhaps more realistic, scale; Houston was originally planned to have 62 blocks. By 1839,

<sup>57</sup>The vision of a railroad was present from 1836. The first city seal, adopted by council on February 17, 1840, featured a locomotive. Despite the city's interest, lack of financing led to many failed starts until Sidney Sherman, backed by investors from Boston, began building the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway in 1850-51 at a cost of \$18,400 per mile. David G. McComb, Houston: A History (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 26. For more information on the seal, see "H-City Seal," vertical file, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library.

<sup>58</sup>Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 231-232, November 20, 1837.

historical Society, the Missouri Historical Society, and the Western Reserve Historical Society, Library Division, Cleveland, Ohio. Suggested sources include: Alfred Theodore Andreas, History of Chicago from the Earliest Period to the Present Time, 3 vols. (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1884-1886), which contains an 1830 map; James Neal Primm, Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Company, 1981); William Ganson Rose, Cleveland: The Making of a City (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Company, 1950); Edmund H. Chapman, Cleveland: Village to Metropolis: A Case Study of Problems of Urban Development in Nineteenth-Century America (Cleveland, Ohio: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1964); an original plat of Cleveland in 1835 held by the Geography and Maps Division, Library of Congress. Additional works about nineteenth-century town building include Harold L. Platt, City Building in the New South: The Growth of Public Services in Houston, Texas, 1830-1910 (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1983); Harold L. Platt, "Energy and Urban Growth: A Comparison of Houston and Chicago," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 91 (no. 1, 1987): 1-18; Gurney Breckenfeld, "Early New Towns in America," chapter 5 in Columbia and the New Cities (New York: Ives Washburn, 1971).

Name	TABLE 2. FILLICIPAL PLANAGES OF the Arousium Form Company Position Birth/Place	Birth/Place	Death/Place
Allen, Augustus Chapman. Most responsible for Houston's success. Noted as "taciturn," with math and engineering skills.	Senior partner, CEO	July 4, 1806 Canascraga,* N.Y.	January 11, 1863 Washington, D.C.
Allen, John Kirby. Lobbyist for Houston, member House of Representatives from Nacogdoches. Noted for wealth and charisma.	Junior partner	March 31, 1810 Canascraga, N.Y.	August 15, 1838 Houston, Tex
Holman, James Sanders. Principal control of sales through power of attorney. First mayor of Houston in 1837.	Principal agent and attorney-in-fact	February 7, 1804 Woodford Co., Ky.	December 8, 1867 Near Cameron, Tex.
McNeill, Angus. Investor and land speculator with James Bowie in Louisiana and San Antonio. Purchased all remaining unsold lots in Houston in November 1837.	Partner, A. C. Allen, McNeill and Holman partnership	Circa 1807 North Carolina	After 1860 Colorado City, Tex.
Wilson, Robert. Mariner, land speculator, and legislator.	Sales agent, owned 10% interest in company	July 12, 1793 Easton, Md.	Мау 26, 1856 Lockharı, Тех.
Bagby, Thomas M. Kept the Book of Sales. Was in shipping business with S. L. Allen in 1846.	Sales record agent	May 18, 1814 unknown	May 12, 1868 unknown
Allen, Samuel Lewis. ** Assumed duties of CEO in absence of A. C. Allen.	Manager, 1839-1840	April 12, 1808 Canaseraga, N.Y.	August 4, 1895 Houston, Tex.
Allen, Henry Rowland.*** Manager protem with brother S. L. Allen.	Comanager, 1839-1840	July 13, 1817 Canaseraga, N.Y.	October 12, 1881 Houston, Tex.
Baker, William Robinson. Grew wealthy, became mayor of Houston in 1886.	Clerk and bookkeeper	May 21, 1820 Baldwinsville, N.Y.	April 30, 1890 Houston, Tex.
Girard, Auguste Perrelet. Chief engineer and surveyor in Texas Army. Scientist, inventor, and heavy investor in Houston real estate until 1840.	Surveyor, engineer, and cartographer	Circa 1805 Swizerland	Circa 1873 Mobile, Ala

\*Not Canasareaugh, Canasarague, Canasuserea, or Canasaragua.

Canasaragua. \*\*Not Louis.

however, under the guidance of A. C. Allen, Samuel L. Allen, and James S. Holman, Houston quickly grew to 270 blocks.

Houston has an unparalleled collection of founding documents in the Houston Metropolitan Research Center's Archives and Manuscripts and Texas and Local History departments of the Houston Public Library, They include letters, diaries, the original Borden plat, the account book of Doswell and Adams, the papers of surveyor and cartographer Auguste P. Girard, the papers of Robert P. Boyce and of Edwin Bonewitz, the earliest field notes of surveyor George Bringhurst, and now the Book of Sales. These documents trace the almost overnight development of a genteel southern city, never a frontier town, based on American models. The written records combine to convey the sense of urgency and frenetic activity of the earliest days of Anglo-American settlement. The city's foundations were wrested from their ancient state of nature by the African Texans, African Americans, and Mexican prisoners-of-war who filled the swamps, cut out the trees and undergrowth. cleared the streets, and scythed the prairies. John Kirby Allen was in Columbia using the force of his charismatic personality to persuade Congress to make a leap of faith, while directing donations and sales and laying plans to clear Buffalo Bayou for large vessels. A. C. Allen was in New York to collect his bride and family, ship thousands of board feet of lumber to the townsite, and arrange for the immigration of workmen and mechanics. The Houston Town Company was comprised of young men who were living on the edge and under time constraints. Their average age was 28.6 years. President Sam Houston was one of the city's more senior residents at age 44.

The Book of Sales and its companion Borden plat help us to understand the relationships of the past, both interpersonal and geographical. We can infer an amity among individuals in the placement of donated lots. We can sense an underlying agenda behind the arrangement of blocks and plazas, and infer such long-range plans as changing the course of Buffalo Bayou, an idea 92 years ahead of its time. Land use plans, aside from the grouping of the first sales along Main Street, are hinted at in some closing notations by Mayor Holman in his inventory of town property for sale to Angus McNeill. Additions (subdivisions) were definitely in the works: 15 acres were sold to J. B. Frost for Frost Town Addition, SSBB, and 800 acres were reserved for the A. C. Allen Addition on the north side of Buffalo Bayou, where most of Charlotte Allen's holdings were located in later years. Also on NSBB were two acres reserved for the Texas Steam Mill Company's sawmill operations, plus a thousand acres of timber reserve, recorded on June 23, 1838. Joseph T. Crawford, a British vice-consul from Tampico, came to Houston in May of

<sup>60</sup> Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 231-232, inventory recorded on February 9, 1838.

1837 on a fact-finding mission; he was given lot 6, block 44, and a street was named for him. <sup>51</sup> Holman's notes reveal that he was also given 15 acres, NSBB, enclosed in a larger tract that was given to Sam Houston about one mile and a half "above town." The Town Company's surveyor named a street north of the bayou after himself, Girard Street, and another after his wife, Susan Street. They survive today.

Future studies of the Book of Sales and the county deed records can shed light on financial and political relationships and clarify the actions of competing development groups. The Book of Sales shows that other speculators and developers bought at least 200 of the original 690 lots at an average price of \$247 per lot, for improvement and/or resale. Considerable litigation developed between the Allens and these groups. The *Index to Minutes* of the 11th Judicial District Court<sup>62</sup> lists four lawsuits in 1837 with the A. C. & J. K Allen Partnership as plaintiff, 15 with J. K. Allen as plaintiff, and 50 with A. C. Allen as plaintiff. Defendants included Hughes & Irwin, McLeod & Butler, and Best & Thompson. An active, early (1836-1837) partnership was that of John R. Horde and Charles A. Pearson, who specialized in buying land scrip from ex-soldiers for from  $3\frac{1}{2}$ % to \$1.60 per acre. The book may also help to clarify the activities of the Allen & Richardson Partnership, for which Col. Girard drew his maps in 1839. Several men named Richardson were active in Houston real estate during the founding years.

Today, as the nation's fourth largest city, Houston has matched and surpassed the Allens' vision of a "great interior commercial emporium." <sup>64</sup> The Houston Town Company's Book of Sales has unlocked many of Houston's early secrets.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>Crawford arrived in Texas aboard the brig HMS Racer, from Tampico, on April 11, 1837. He left Houston on May 13, 1837, and by 1844 he was the British Consul General in Havana. The precise nature of his land dealings and his friendship with Sam Houston and the Allens has not been explored. James Hope, entry of April 11, 1837, at the mouth of the Brazos River, Captain's Log HMS Racer, PRO #ADM 52 3407, Public Records Office, Kew, Surrey, England; Telegraph and Texas Register, May 18, 1837, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup>Index to Minutes, Harris County District Court Records, vol. A, March 20, 1837, to March 24, 1838.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup>Direct Index to Deeds, Grantor, Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 47-51E; Horde & Pearson, Harris County Deed Records, vol. A, 8, 18, 20, 25, 32; Index to Minutes, Harris County District Court Records, vols. A-C.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup>Quoted from the newspaper advertisement of August 30, 1836, written by A. C. Allen for the partnership. The date of this advertisement is the basis for Houston's official "Founders Day." The city has no official "birthday." Houston Chronicle, August 31, 1931, 7; ibid., August 28, 1937, 16; ibid., August 29, 1937, 16; Houston Post-Dispatch, August 30, 1930, 1; Houston Post, August 31, 1937.