

concerning matters of local government record. To further facilitate local government research, RHRD provides for an interdepository loan system whereby, at no cost to the patron, records housed in the twenty-four statewide depositories and the State Archives may be transferred to HMRC. Records are loaned for a period of 60 days, with a 30 day extension if they are not needed by another researcher. Access to these materials can be obtained through the Texas and Local History Department or by contacting the Texas State Field Archivist, Robert Schaadt, stationed at the Research Center (224-5441, ext. 340).

### RECENT ACQUISITIONS

William Marsh Rice Collection, 1841-1869, 2 linear feet.

Personal correspondence and financial records of the cotton merchant, realtor, entrepreneur and philanthropist who was responsible for the founding of Rice University. Material spans the twenty-five year period Rice lived in Houston and operated his numerous business ventures. Collection also includes records of his attempts to retain his financial accretment during the decline of the Confederate states.

Sidney Van Ulm Collection, 1920s-1970s, 3 linear feet.

Scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and original sketches spanning the lengthy career of a cartoonist, photographer, reviewer and reporter for the *Houston Press*.

Port of Houston Collection, 1920s-1940s, 81 linear feet.

Technical information, ship reports, newspaper clippings, correspondence, and unpublished manuscript material documenting the history of the port.

E. Richardson Cherry Papers, 1900s-1950s, 5 linear feet.

Papers of a longtime resident of Houston and perhaps the city's best know artist for half a century. Correspondence, notes, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia detail her family's history, her own travels and artistic achievements as well as her role in founding Houston's Museum of Fine Arts.

Stuart-Allen Collection, 1890s-1930s, 6 linear feet.

Correspondence, legal papers, maps, clippings, and financial records of Robert Cummins Stuart, grandson of Samuel Ezekiel Allen and Rosa C. Allen, owners of the Allen Ranch in southeast Texas. Material primarily reflects the dissolution of the Allen Ranch, its sale in the 1920s and the subsequent creation of the subdivisions Allendale, Allen Farms, and Lum Terrace.

Ballinger and Associates Collection, 1855-1907, 45 linear feet.

Correspondence of a Galveston law firm relating to economic, legal, and political affairs of Texas and particularly the Gulf Coast region.

Houston Subdivision Collection, 1890s-1940s, 2 linear feet.

Brochures, pamphlets, and plat maps documenting the development of various subdivisions in the Houston area. Some early street directories and city maps of the 1890s and 1900s are included. Additional subdivision materials are incorporated into the collection as they are donated.

Congregation Beth Israel, 1860s-1920s, 7 linear feet.

Earliest records from the oldest Jewish congregation in Texas are on permanent loan at HMRC; more recent records are located in the church archives.

Amerman-Collings Collection, 1840s-1920s, 3 linear feet.

Correspondence and papers of the family of A. Earl Amerman, mayor of Houston from 1918 to 1921. The collection contains material relating to social and business history of Houston and also includes Civil War letters from Charles G. Collings who served with the Confederate Army in Galveston and San Antonio from 1861 to 1864.

### Book Review

*A WEEKEND IN SEPTEMBER*. BY JOHN EDWARD WEEMS. (College Station and London: Texas A & M. University press, 1980. Pp. 180. \$ 8.95)

For Americans living in 1980, it is somewhat difficult to believe that the Galveston Hurricane of 1900 still retains the invidious distinction of being the worst recorded natural disaster in the history of the North American continent. Raised to believe that the present is always more potent than the past and fed a steady diet of disaster films at the movies and regular horrors on the evening news, we become inured to catastrophes and find it almost incomprehensible that a hurricane which took place 80 years ago could outdo the daily performances of Mt. St. Helens' volcanic eruptions.

Yet, the figures alone speak for themselves. Over 4,000 homes were destroyed and 1,500 acres of land lost to the sea. Although 6,000 is the figure generally conceded to be the death toll from the storm, some estimates of the deaths range as high as 12,000. By comparison, the other great natural disaster of this century, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, took 452 lives and the last great hurricane to batter the Houston-Galveston area, Hurricane Carla in 1961, claimed 46 victims. For those persons—young people, local history buffs, or

just someone wanting to pick up a good book—wishing an introduction to the human side of that awesome storm, one could do no better than to obtain a copy of John Edward Weems' recently republished *A Weekend in September*. Through the recollections of dozens of survivors of the storm, Weems has fashioned an engrossing narrative worth anyone's reading time.

When *A Weekend in September* was originally published in 1957, the book was widely recognized as the best current account of the Galveston Hurricane of 1900. It is to Weems' credit that *Weekend* still retains that honor, despite the intervening 23 years.

What sets *Weekend* apart from other accounts of the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, the most recent being *Death From the Sea* by Herbert Malloy Mason (1975), is that ever elusive quality which every author strives for—readability. Mason follows Weems' format of giving an hour-by-hour account of the storm (although curiously Mason does not cite Weems in his own bibliography), but his book suffers from the lack of the very thing which makes *Weekend* such good reading: the reminiscences of persons who actually experienced the storm. Weems secured the materials for his book at an historically opportune time, for the first-hand accounts which he was privileged to acquire have steadily decreased through the years forcing new versions of the story to rely primarily on secondary sources. It is necessary to note here that Weems does a good job of handling his own secondary sources, treating on-the-scene accounts, some of which were written as soon as two weeks after the conclusion of the storm, gingerly and avoiding the sensationalism of many of the contemporary newspaper reports.

While Weems could have better served his readers by providing footnotes for the text, *A Weekend in September* remains enjoyable reading. Above all, it serves as a welcome historical antidote to our present-centered state of mind.

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STEVEN STROM

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