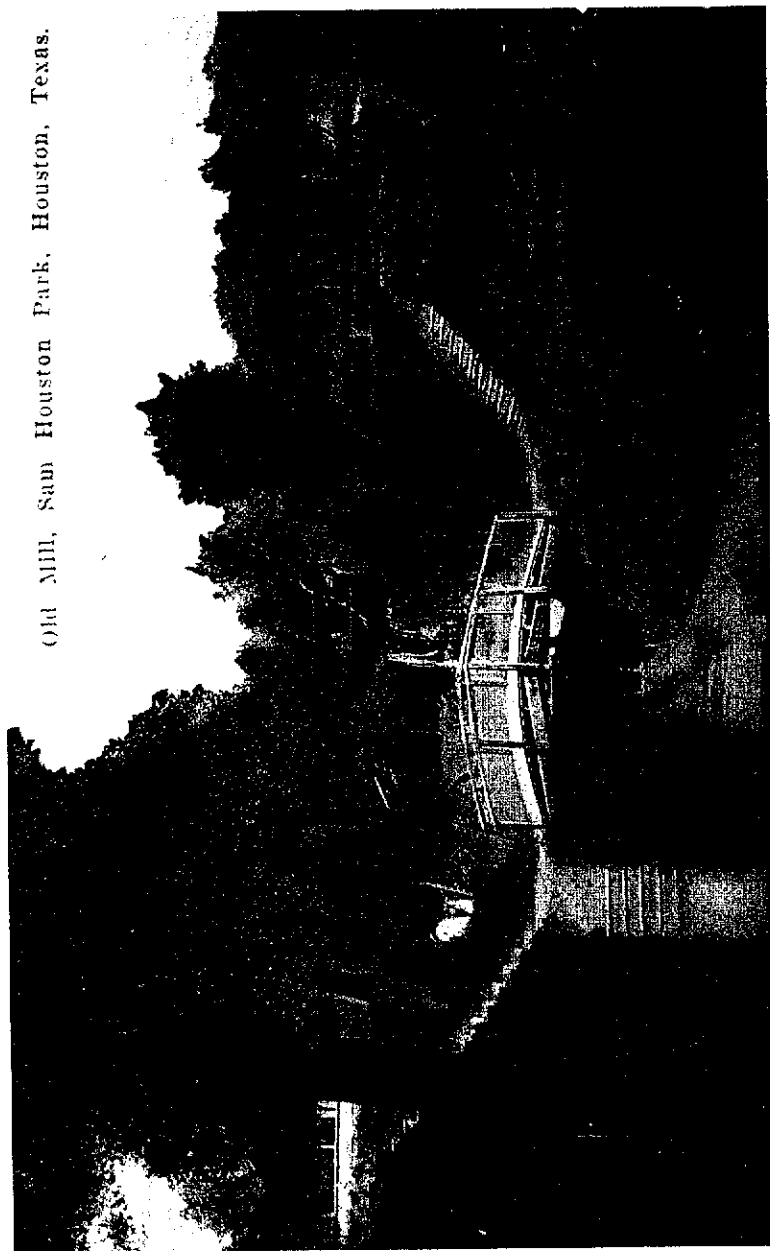


Old Mill, Sam Houston Park, Houston, Texas.



Old Mill in Sam Houston Park, about 1916

JOHN MILSAPS'S HOUSTON: 1910

Part II

BY CHARLES ORSON COOK

In the first issue of this journal an excerpt from the Diary of John Ephraim Milsaps, covering the period of November 5 to 10, 1910, appeared. Milsaps was visiting Houston, "the city of my birth and childhood." On Friday morning, November 11, he departed Houston for a week-end visit to Galveston. By Sunday, November 13, he was back in Houston — as the city prepared for its annual Cotton Carnival — for another week before returning to Chicago where he was employed by the Salvation Army. Pious and proper, Milsaps was possessed by a curiosity that drove him to observe as closely as possible the "folly" of his fellowmen. The following excerpt is printed as it appears in the Diary, with editorial additions indicated by brackets.

Houston, Texas. Written in Room 7 — 3d floor of No. 610 Walker avenue.

Sunday, November 13th 1910 — Got to bed last night 10.15, praying to and praising my God for keeping me on my trip to Galveston and southeastern Texas. Up this morning 6.15. Prayed again. Shaved. Took my meals down town, paying 50 cents for three at restaurants.

A combination of many shows struck town today. The show people busied themselves putting up their tents on 2 sides of Capitol avenue, almost to the Bayou from the Auditorium. Many years ago father and his family resided on this street in the part occupied by the shows.

In the afternoon went to Sam Houston Park. Lay down on the grass in the shade of a tree to rest. The old Nobe [sic] brick residence in this park and the bell captured on the Harriet Lane brought back memories of my boyhood. I went to the Noble

residence when the Noble family and their slaves had possession.¹ In those years the building seemed to me to be far out of town; now it is far in. I remember quite well when the "Harriet Lane" was captured from the federals.² The monument in the park erected to the Spirit of the Confederacy is quite artistic in its general make-up.³ The estheticism that possesses me found fault with the artist's rendition of his subject: the wings being disproportionately large and heavy compared with the size and weight of the man; a reasonable proportion should have been maintained to properly balance the two when looked at. The old mill in the gully catches the eye as odd. It is a pity that this park is so small. Visited the locality of the cemetery adjoining the park. This is almost choked with houses, and the big gullies which in my youth indented this quarter (our family during part of the Civil War's latter days lived in a dilapidated cottage at the head of this gully, that is, the largest one.) The gullies have been filled and built over; I scarcely recognized the locality, so great has been the change. The old man who picked his way through the streets of that locality this afternoon, did so with memory stirred of the long ago, but the people who saw him pass their doors knew not that man and cared not to make his acquaintance. Old men are relics of the past.

Took a brief nap at home, then sallied forth for supper. After the meal sauntered along Main street observing the shop windows and the people out this lovely autumn evening. The sky was clear, the moon shining, and a pleasant breeze blowing. Thus went this Sabbath.

Houston, Texas. Written in Room 7. No. 610 Walker Avenue.

Monday Nov'm'b'r 14th 1910. This day marked the opening of the "No-tsu-oh Not-toc" otherwise "Houston Cotton Carnival" — the Twelfth function of that character. I heard a man tell one of the Baptist delegates that he has been hoping that each one would be the last. Possibly there are others who entertain the same hope.

I went to the Sunset R.R. depot and witnessed the arrival of 3 trains from the North bringing the A. & M. College students and others to the Carnival. The students were dressed in grey uniforms

¹The "Noble residence" was a private house built by Nathaniel Kellum between 1847 and 1850; it still stands in Sam Houston Park.

²The "Harriet Lane" was a Union gunboat captured by the Confederacy during the Civil War. The ship's bell was a park landmark for many years before disappearing mysteriously.

³The "Spirit of the Confederacy" is a nine feet high bronze, nude angel sculpted by Louis Artemis and donated to the city by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1908. It stands in Sam Houston Park today.

bringing their guns. They are cadets. They made a fine appearance as a military body, and as such outclassed the Texas University students who came from Austin. The two educational institutions have football teams and they came to Houston to try conclusions on that line. Orange and white were the U.T. colors and red and white the A. & M. colors. The orange and white were much in evidence the early part of the day, but almost disappeared from view by nightfall. Cause? The U.T. team was beaten 8 to 14. Last year the University boys had a taste of the same medicine. Little wonder they were crestfallen and out of countenance this evening.

Main street after dark presented an uproarious [sic] scene. Red and white were everywhere conspicuous, ditto the jubilating cadets in grey. The whirr of the legion of automobiles on the street, the clang of street car gongs for right of way, the babel of voices from tens of thousands of throats, the myriad electric lights festooning the streets and decorating the shop fronts, the beautiful displays of goods in the shop windows, and not least the moon shining from a clear sky, and the most delightful weather, constituted a general ensemble not easy to watch. Main street presented almost a jam of humanity. It presented the greatest scene of life and color, that I had ever witnessed on that thoroughfare, during my (almost) twenty-five years of Houston residence, prior to leaving Texas for other parts.

The King of the Carnival was due with his retinue of launches at the foot of Main st. [at] 10.30 a.m. When his fleet made port there was a great blowing of factory whistles — lasting about half an hour, the general din being punctuated frequently by the roar of cannon. In due course the procession passed. The King wearing a mask sat on a throne mounted on a float which pictured sea waves and the sea-serpent's head and sinuous body, showing here and there above the brine.⁴ Cadets with their guns, the U. students & others filled out the line. After the parade, took a 15 ct. lunch served by the Grace M. E. Church. Visited the Austin street sewer,⁵ also the neighborhood of the National Biscuit Co's new building, and the post office where I met Mr. C. Brock, Secretary of the Houston Museum & Scientific Society. Brock informed me that he was the

⁴The King Nottoc of the 1910 No-tsu-oh Carnival was W. T. Carter, prominent Houston lumberman. The 1910 Queen was Laura Rice, niece of Mayor H. Baldwin Rice.

⁵The Austin Street Sewer extended approximately two miles from the foot of Austin Street at the Ship Channel to Elgin Avenue. As unlikely as it may seem, the sewer was the source of considerable local pride. According to the municipal publication, *Progressive Houston*, "Its capacity is so great that three men on horseback can ride abreast into it several hundred feet."

originator of this Society.⁶ Paid 20 cts storage charges on my 27 lb chunk of Louisiana sulphur, then carrying it to the post office, left it with him to be added to the (M) collection of minerals.⁷

In the afternoon took a walk down Capitol Street where the Patterson shows are to exhibit in the evening. The showpeople were busy preparing for their first bow to the Carnival public. These shows impress me as being so trashy that they do not tempt me in the slightest degree to visit them.

Gave 5 cents to a blind beggar. Spent 45 cents for meals.

8 p.m. inspected the new Harris County Court house from basement to the third floor. This was the first open night for public inspection. The structure not being complete, will not be dedicated for some time to come. A large part is finished however. This is done elegantly. Crowds of people swarmed through the part open to the public. Officials were on hand to explain everything. Saw an entry in a book made by Sam Houston in the days of the Texas Republic. Returning home prayed and then retired to rest 10.17.

Houston, Texas. Written in Room 7 — 610 Walker ave. Tuesday Nov. 15th

Out of bed 6.44. Prayed to the Lord my God. By appointment met Clarence Brock, Secretary of the Houston Museum & Scientific Society, at the Rice hotel, 9.30 a.m. about. We to the Chamber of Commerce rooms in the Chronicle building, and had a long discussion relating to the Museum. At present there is no collection and no place to exhibit a collection. We walked around to the new Auditorium and explored that big structure with a view to discovering a proper place for the Museum. We concluded that under the seats of the main convention hall would be the best location. This is on the Louisiana street side of the structure. The space is ample for a large collection, is on the ground floor and easily accessible to the public. Brock states that Mayor Rice promises space in the building for that purpose. The auditorium grows upon a person by familiarity. We went into the banquet hall. This promises to be a splendid apartment and of great size. The police station which is to occupy one corner of the building (ground floor) down in the dark basement can find

⁶The Houston Museum and Scientific Society was founded in 1908 and was the forerunner of the present Museum of Natural History. C. E. Brock, long-time president of the Standard Chemical Company in Houston, was its founder and for years a patron of the Museum.

⁷The (M) Collection is a reference to Milsaps's gift of several thousand books, pamphlets, prints and mineral specimens to the Houston Public Library. The collection was designated Circle M to maintain the donor's anonymity.

room enough to accommodate a regiment of prisoners, if necessary. Asked Brock to keep me posted as to how things shape in the museum line; he promised to do so. About 5.15 p.m. took a package around to the post office where he works, and left it there with another employee. The package contains the onyx curio purchased at Matamoros, Mexico, and about half a dozen books for the Museum library. Brock was absent when I called.

In the afternoon also called at the Model Laundry, No. 602 Prairie avenue, to learn his terms for the rental of the 3 story building, No. 1011 Prairie ave., recently vacated by the firm. I was informed that the rent asked is \$500 a month, but on learning that the Salvation Army wanted the building, the man who had the power to rent it, said the Army could not have the building under any consideration. (1) the organization could not finance the proposition (2) from what he had seen of the S.A. he did not have but little confidence in the concern. That was the gist of his reply. I made these inquiries in carrying out Com'r Estill's request to look up a building for S. A. hotel purposes. This is the only suitable building that I could find. Houston is booming and buildings are in demand. It is a live town. In the afternoon there was a heavy shower. Temperature cool. Spent 50 cents for meals at lunch stands. Following a supper at one of the aforesaid stands took a chair in the Rice hotel lobby to rest my weary limbs for I had been on my legs the best part of the day. This hotel is headquarters for the Texas Industrial Congress which is holding its first convention in Houston at present.⁸ The lobby was crowded with men from different parts of the state. I remained there about 1¼ hours. During that time Salvation Army women dressed in uniform came in three times (different women) with tambourines taking up collections. I gave a nickel to each of the first two; the third did not reach me. I wondered what kind of an impression our people would make upon these men, coming so often to beg. During this particular period and place, begging would seem to be the Army's chief industry; at any rate that is how I thought they would think. Perhaps the local S. A. work is in straitened circumstances. Since coming to Houston I have seen the Salvationists do nothing in public but beg.

About 9 o'clock the first of the Carnival street parade, excepting the King's entry yesterday, which impressed me more as a parade of college students. The king's float and attendant courtiers

⁸The Texas Industrial Congress, which had as its general goal to "promote the welfare of Texas," held this, its first meeting in Houston. This particular convention concentrated its energies on an extended discussion of Texas agriculture.

on horseback were the only observable carnival features. This evening however in all the gorgeousness of paint, and papier mache figures, colored fire, and animated human beings in oriental attire to lend life to the spectacle, the street pageant took on the carnival feature. Main street was congested with people; adjoining streets were full; people filled windows and balconies; the restless moving panorama of thousands of eager spectators in itself was a sight worth seeing. The carnival pageant was impressive and spectacular. Whatever critics may say of the uselessness and folly of this function — the fact remains that it is a drawing card. Large cities everywhere in the U.S. want crowds, because crowds put money in circulation and make business. To attain this object they are at continuous roar — rivalry — and resort [to] divers expedients to get them. Expositions, fairs &c. are familiar. Houston's chief effort is the carnival. It evidently pays or the Houstonians would have nothing to do with it. The commercial instinct is strong in this city of the black bayou. I wish the carnival feature was eliminated, for it is no credit to the city. Everything passed off very orderly; confetti throwing has been abolished. The most serious side of the pageant was the negro strike. A lot of darkies were employed to carry torches, lend horses &c at \$1 each (the usual price); just before the turnout they demanded \$1.50. The strike caused a delay until others were hired to take their places. Returning to my room after the parade, prayed and then went to bed 10.17.

Wednesday, Nov. 16th 1910. Up this morning 7.17. Prayed to the Lord my God. Struck out early to catch one of the Copping line boats for the San Jacinto battle ground. Got disappointed and did not go. Boat left me. Was misinformed. At Henke's bought 6 Satsuma oranges for 10 cents and 2 Japanese persimmons for 5 cents. Bought them as an experiment to see how they tasted — as they are fruit that is now being introduced into the Galveston-Houston district for cultivation.

Going to the Market square witnessed the newspaper men's automobile party start out to see the city and its environs. Mayor H. B. Rice accompanied the party. Thought I saw him in an automobile. A cold norther today (started last night) caused others and myself to don overcoats. The sky is overcast with gloomy clouds.

Spent for meals at lunch stands 40 cts and 5 cts for a paper.

In the afternoon the Red Men from various parts of Texas paraded up Main street in part regalia. They had a brass band and one float. Called at the Westmoreland Farms promoter's office, 10th floor of the Scanlon building. Asked the firm many questions

respecting their lands West of Houston. Gave me literature. Promised to call 8 a.m. tomorrow to take me out. Am making these inquiries for Major Parker.

About 4.30 p.m. took a Woodland Heights street car to Hollywood Cemetery. I was surprised how that part of Houston has gone ahead. Several years ago I purchased a lot (No. 4) for myself and am of the opinion that I furnished the money to purchase a lot for my brother Haslem Milsaps. Mr. F. P. Moore of the cemetery informed me that both are in my name. My wish is that all my relatives of the Milsaps family should be buried there. As night was closing in Mr. Moore took me to the lots and showed me the graves of my father, Ephraim Milsaps, little sister Eva, and youngest brother (of us three) Haslem. The graves are unkept and grown over with high grass but no weeds. A small oak tree stands on the plot. There are no head-stones or boards to mark the graves. This is making me feel bad. Got too dark to look around. By invitation of Mr. Moore accompanied him back to the business part of the city. Mr. M. complained of cold; said he could not get warm. Spoke to him about the salvation of his soul, while we were in the buggy together.

Walked down to the I. G. N. Ry depot (near it,) studying the looks of the town, then to the new Terminal R. R. depot where I rested for sometime. Last when [sic] around to the new Auditorium where the grand ball connected with the Cotton Carnival takes place tonight. This presented a most animated spectacle. The sidewalks were crowded with pedestrians. Many ladies wore ball dresses and the men plug hats. Automobiles and cabs were coming and going continually to the three sides of the structure and many door keepers were required to attend to tickets and the seating of the crowds. This ball is said to have become a state affair for the elite of Texas society. Close by is the entrance to "Wonderland" (aggregation of Patterson shows,) great activity was also evident here. The street was crowded with people and the shows seemed busy. I looked down the thronged street from outside the gate. Was reminded of Bunyan's description of Vanity Fair. I did not go in.

Am sleepy. The temperature is chilly; must pray and go to bed.

Westmoreland Farms, Harris County

Thursday Nov 17th 1910. After devotions retired last night 9.56. Up this morning 6.30. Prayed to the Lord my God. As per his promise, a young man representing the South End Land Co. called at No. 610 Walker avenue in an automobile for me. Being ready and awaiting his coming got in and was immediately taken out Main

street past the Rice Institute buildings that are now (some of them) under construction to the Westmoreland Farms, about 6½ miles South-west of the Courthouse. A cold wind and drizzle made the run so uncomfortable, that at the suggestion of the young man who acts as chauffeur and salesman, I accompanied him into his pretty bungalow out there to get warm. He explained to me everything of interest. Saw an orange orchard out there (Satumas) many of the trees bearing fruit. Bellaire boulevard just beyond the Rice Institute is shelled on both sides with the center planted with trees and flowers. Bellaire (a town to be) has been laid off elegantly, and some fine buildings are being erected by the South End real estate company with a view to setting the pace in fine structures, and thus getting others to follow suit. The scheme is well conceived, and if carried out successfully will give Houston a beautiful suburb.⁹ The company built a trolley line down the center of the boulevard. The Houston Electric R. R. Co. will operate cars over this as soon as the Fannin street line is completed. My 5 acres of land lies half way between Bellaire and the Courthouse. Land is worth, said my informant, from \$1000 to \$1600, an acre 3 miles out from the city. The road that intersects San Felipe Road near my land is Reynolds st. Is just west of me, and will connect Brunner with Main street, and probably have a street car line on it. The Westmoreland proposition greatly interested me. It is in a vast elevated prairie, West of the SAR railroad. The promoters ask for their land from \$250 per acre up. I do not expect to invest, but got points for Major Jonas Parker who expects to have money to invest. After inspecting the land proposition at Westmoreland Farms, was whisked back to the city in the automobile that took me out, went up to the Co's office, 10th floor of the Scanlon office building and got a map on which the agent marked prices, after this cold ride of 13 miles, went to the Woods' hotel lunch stand for breakfast.

Paid for meals today 50 cents.

This was German Day of the Carnival week. Their parade was to come off at 10 a.m. but rain delayed it; finally the Germans paraded in a fast falling rain about noon. It was very disagreeable to them but they faced the situation heroically and their wet garments. The floats were quite creditable reflecting Teutonic ideas and scenes. The Germans deserve credit for their tenacious courage.

⁹Westmoreland Farms was a large (9,000 acre) land development just three miles southwest of the Houston city limits. When it opened in 1910, Westmoreland Farms advertised small agricultural lots suitable for truck farming. Included in the plans for Westmoreland Farms was a city, "Bellaire," which was to be the center of the development.

The Coppings advertised 2 daily trips to the San Jacinto battle ground from the Harrisburg bridge and return for 75 cents the round trip. I took the trolley car to the starting place, but the boat master would not make the trip because I was the only passenger who wanted to go. This was the second disappointment the Coppings gave me. Took trolley back to Houston. Heard one passenger tell another that Houston possesses 102 churches and 40 schools. Houston is a progressive town.

Growing weary of slopping around town through the mud under a wet sky returned home early with the intention of going to bed early. The streets presented a busy appearance.

Went around to the auditorium to see how things looked there. Negroes were busy taking away pot plants and greenery that was used for decorative purposes. One was folding colored clothes etc. that had been also used for decorations. The Carnival (12th) ball was over, the guests had gone and likewise the glitter and glory of pro tem King Cotton — "Nottoc." A "Post" report states that 6000 people were present, and that over \$1000,000.00 [sic] worth of diamonds, rubies, pearls and other gems and jewels were worn. Vain is the glory of man. His glory is but a passing show.

Brunner, Harris County, Texas, Written in Room 6 — 610 Walker ave. Houston.

Friday, Nov 18, 1910. Turned in for rest last evening tired and cold because of raw weather and much running around, 7.10, after praying. Up this morning 7.22 after praying to the Lord my God.

Went to the Kiam building to see Porter Newman the lawyer who wanted to take my land case for me. Was shown to Mr. Yarbrough's office, who is a Notary Public. Yarbrough was absent at the Pullman House, down near the Great Northern RR passenger depot, Congress street. A young man in the office informed me that Newman had gone to Crockett, Texas, to live. I waited quite a while in Yarbrough's office awaiting his return. Y. was Newman's partner until lately. After a while the young man said Mr. Y. would be gone another hour. Struck out to find him at the Pullman house. Arriving was told by a girl that he had left word for me to come to his office to see him. He learned by phone that I was on the way to see him at the Pullman. Did not try again to see Yarbrough, but in the afternoon took a trolley car to Brunner about 4 miles out Washington road, opposite Houston Heights. Called at a cottage, No. 4614 Wood street, where reside Mr. John C. Goldsmith, wife and family. Mrs. Goldsmith, a cousin on my mother's side I called expressly to visit. Found her sitting near a stove in the front room surround[ed]

by her husband and part of her very large family of children. She is the mother of ten big children — all living — a most wonderful thing. The names and ages of her children is [sic] of interest: John Goldsmith Jr., age 27, Grover C., age 26, William Tell, age 25, Oran N., age 21, Jessie C., age 14, Margaret Eva, age 30, Mary E. Greer (married) age 29, Christina Ann, age 23, Kate Elizabeth, age 19, Lovie Hilger, age 17; five sons and five daughters. I was introduced to several; a fine appearing household they are too, of which any parent has good reason to thank God. A couple are Baptists, one I think is a Methodist, the others do not claim salvation including Mrs. Goldsmith. Did not neglect to urge the importance of getting saved and serving God. Mrs. Goldsmith promised to meet me in heaven. I knelt down and prayed with such as were in the room before departing. Mrs. G. could not kneel; she is so fleshy that she cannot walk. Am wondering if dropsy has not something to do with her appearance; am afraid Lizzie is not long for this world; she has changed greatly since I saw her last over thirty years ago. She has survived all the members of her [family] and is poor. Uncle John Tuffly (her father) accumulated a fortune; by some kind of jugglery inexplicable to me, her brother Wm. Tell and sister Christine (there were 3) through influence brought to bear upon their mother, got almost everything and Lizzie almost nothing. I made many inquiries regarding their property affairs including the 5 acres of land belonging to me near Houston, which I gave as security to cover a small debt I owed Lizzie's mother, Mrs. Anna Eva Tuffly — my aunt. Could get but little information from them. Neither the Goldsmiths' nor myself know much about the details now, and those who were in a position to know are dead or gone to we know not where. Before departing I learned a thing or two about Leroy Milsaps' whereabouts, and that the children of Uncle John George Hilger (deceased) of Milam County, Texas, are in Houston. Took trolley car back to Houston. Wm Tell Goldsmith accompanied me. Paid his fare. Advised him to become a Christian. He seemed to be interested in the subject. Found No. 805 San Jacinto st. where Dan Hilger, son of Uncle John Hilger lives. Met a daughter of Uncle H. who gave me the address of Leroy Milsaps, son of my deceased brother Haslem. Told the girl her father was an uncle of mine. She exhibited no interest in the announcement. Did not enter the house.

After night fell went down to Main street to witness the flower or automobile parade, for this was Ladies' Day of the Carnival week. Owing to the threatening weather however, the parade did not materialize, but a parade of Galvestonians did! In force (550 sand-crabs) they broke into "Heavenly Houston" with possibly a baker's

dozen of big placards lauding the Island City up to timberline and above. A brass band came along and they paraded the streets to their heart's content; they whooped things up among the Bayou City "mudcats." Between Galveston invaders, a couple of other brass bands, and the noise of many automobiles, and a great throng of people bent on getting up an excitement, there was plenty of noise, and excitement, until tired nature made the fun seekers go home to rest. Returned to my lodgings. After praying to the Lord my God and praising him, retired 10.07.

Houston Heights. Written in Room 7 — No. 610 Walker st. Houston

Saturday November 19th. 1910. The past three days was rainy, cold and disagreeable. Today the weather was perfection — clear, warm and calm. After praying to my God prepared for the day's duties. Got up 6.33 a.m.

10.30 a.m. or thereabouts called at the Carnegie Library and introduced myself to Miss Julia Ideson, the librarian, who received me cordially.¹⁰ Had a talk about books, libraries, the (M) collection, etc. lasting about 2½ hours. She showed me the (M) collection in the stack room. The (M) books fill the larger part of this room. These books occupy 6 double stacks of 6 tiers each. There are more than 26 boxes filled with books down in the basement unopened.* This is my last shipment from Chicago. Was shown some of the curio (M) collection that are on exhibition in the main room. Suggested to Miss Ideson a library site down near the Auditorium with ground enough for future growth. She favors the idea. The front porch of the present building is badly cracked.

Afternoon took trolley car to Houston Heights and hunted up No. 505, 5th avenue, a very little shack, the abode of poverty, where Haslem Milsaps' widow and her two sons Leroy and John lived until about three weeks ago; so said a neighbor. He also informed me that both boys are working — Leroy is quite a man and John is about 14 years of age. I did not continue my hunt but returned to the city.

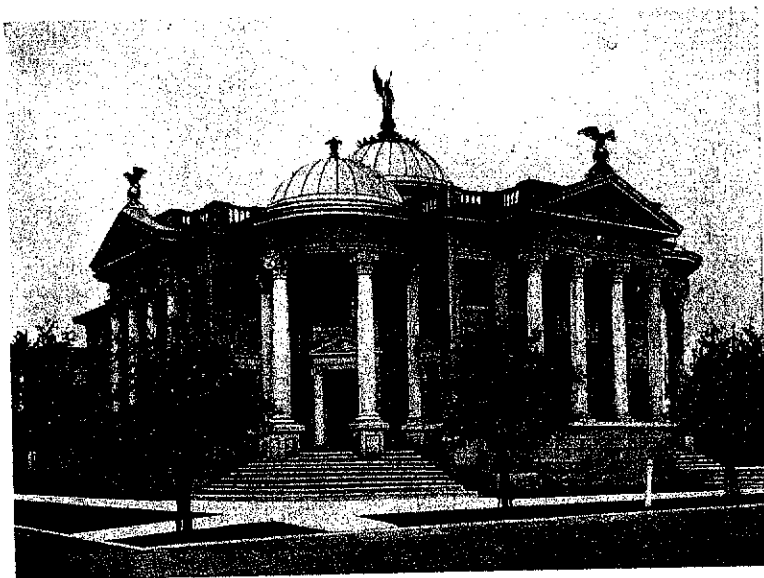
Again Main street was thronged with people. Women and children were out in force to witness the Flower parade, which was a carnival function, in which the fair sex (generally beautiful young ladies and children) were the chief features. Several floats nicely gotten up, and a number of flower decorated carriages, automobiles

*The 26 boxes lately shipped from Chicago have been received. The boxes are unopened.

¹⁰Julia Ideson was the first head librarian of the Houston Public Library and for years a prominent personality in the cultural life of Houston.

and taxicabs, paraded through long lanes of interested spectators, to the music of three brass bands. Today ends the 12th carnival. The business men of Houston may consider this a good business stroke, because great crowds attend and much, much money is spent; to the Christian one word epitomizes the whole thing, and that word is folly.

And now I must prepare for my homeward journey. My 3 weeks' vacation is drawing to its close. The Lord has given me a pleasant time. It is not without regret that I am about to turn away from the city of my birth and childhood, and where my loved [ones] are sleeping their last long sleep. Tonight (D.V.) I leave for Dallas — 9.40 o'clock.



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MILSAPS'S HOUSTON: NO-TSU-OH

Local festivals and celebrations are familiar sights to contemporary Houstonians. The "Main Street" festival and the Fat Stock Show and Rodeo are but two of many events which annually attract thousands of visitors. Less well known — indeed, almost forgotten — was a week-long carnival called No-tsu-oh which, between 1899 and 1916, captured the interest of more Houstonians than did any other social event of its time. For more than a decade and a half at the turn of the century, Houstonians and their guests took to the streets in elaborate costume for six days every November to celebrate the Bayou City's answer to Mardi Gras.

From its inception in 1899, No-tsu-oh was a clear attempt to stimulate business for Houston merchants. Local businessmen first suggested the carnival as a one-day effort to improve interest and participation in a floundering event known as the Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Festival. In its first few years, then, No-tsu-oh was only a part of a larger event. Increasingly, however, No-tsu-oh came to dominate all the activities of the older celebration, so that by 1910 the festival had dropped most references to the Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Festival.

The businessmen founders of No-tsu-oh manufactured a detailed — though not very serious — fable surrounding the legendary King Nottoc and his annual return to his capital city of No-tsu-oh. The name No-tsu-oh actually derived from the reverse spelling of Houston, a practice which eventually produced an entire backward vocabulary for the carnival. King Nottoc (Cotton), for example, was said to rule the mythical realm of Saxet (Texas) in the land of Tekram (market). Costumes for the event were sometimes imported from Wensnaelro (New Orleans) and floats for the royal parade were often constructed in Laslad (Dallas). There was even a racially segregated version of No-tsu-oh for Negroes called, appropriately enough, De-ro-loc (Colored).

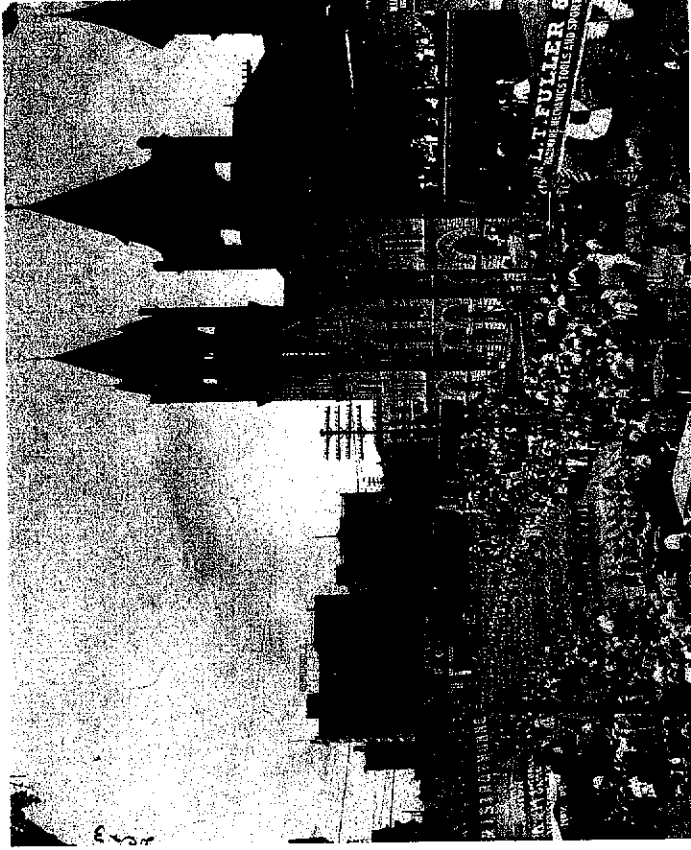
The number and variety of activities during the week of No-tsu-oh indicate that the festival's planners attempted to offer something to everybody. The celebration began on Monday morning with the landing of King Nottoc's barge at the foot of Main Street and a parade for His Majesty and the Queen. Tuesday evening the much-touted "Parade of Lights" turned Houston streets into a huge

midway. On Wednesday night there was the grand costume ball in the City Auditorium. Thursday was given over to a variety of competitive events, including a chess and checkers tournament. Friday was set aside for the Flower Parade and on Saturday there was a parade of decorated vehicles. Sandwiched between these events were football games, automobile races and even baby contests. Like modern promoters, the planners of No-tsu-oh reserved certain days for particular groups or localities in an effort to attract widespread support. There was an "East Texas Day," and a "German Day," and a day reserved for Galveston residents too.

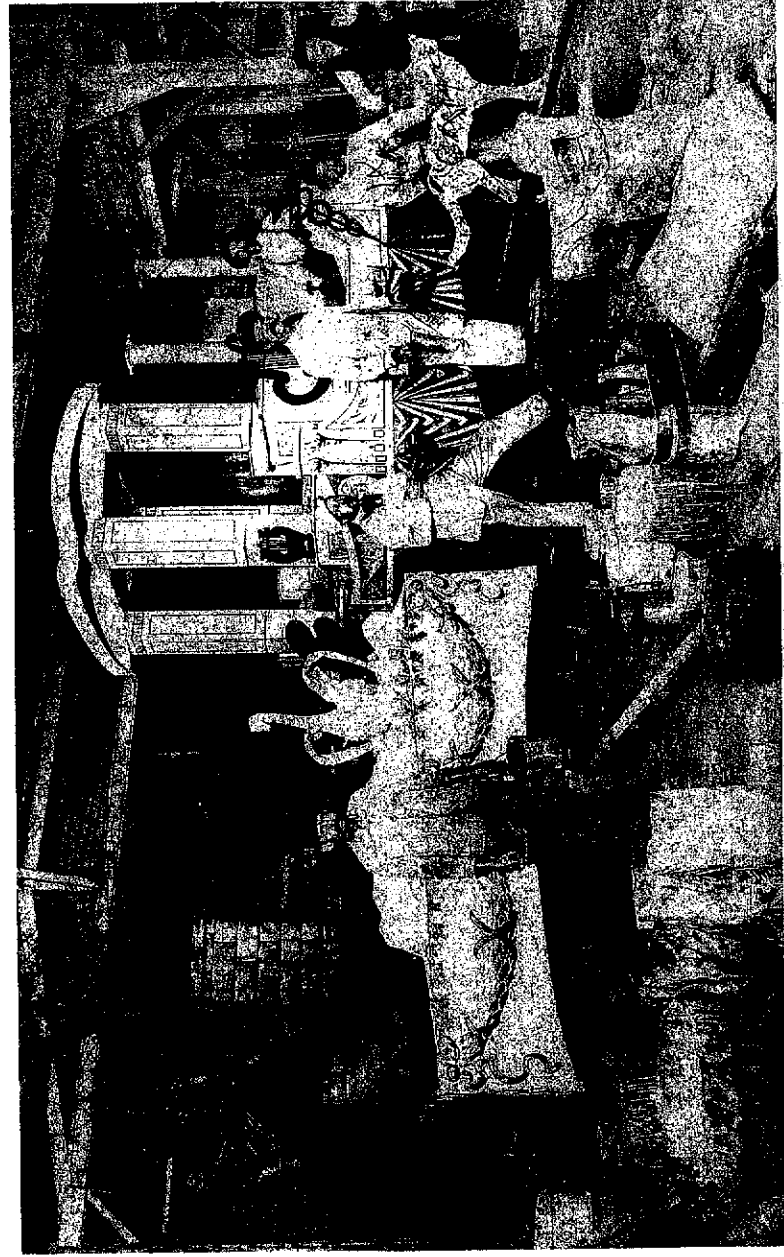
A quick survey of the notables who served as King Nottoc suggests that the celebration enjoyed the endorsement of Houston's elite. The first King Nottoc was A. C. Allen, son of one of Houston's founders. Others included the lumber magnate John Henry Kirby, Jesse "Mr. Houston" Jones (1902), and Captain James A. Baker of the law firm of Baker, Botts, Parker and Garwood. The Nottoc queens were no less pedigreed than their male counterparts. In 1910 Laura Rice, the daughter of Colonel John S. Rice and the niece of Houston mayor H. Baldwin Rice, presided over the festivities. In 1904, John Henry Kirby's daughter, Bessie, reigned alongside S. F. Bonner, a prominent Houston lumberman.

But as the following photographs suggest, there were thousands of less prominent Houstonians who were part of the celebration too. For No-tsu-oh was a true cultural event in which all kinds of Houstonians paid homage to the god of commerce that made their city thrive. Although a combination of events, including the onset of World War I, ended the festival, Houston's municipal celebrations have been in the tradition of No-tsu-oh ever since.





Texas A & M students parade on Main Street, in 1909, as part of the NO-TSU-OH carnival.



Preparation of a NO-TSU-OH float for the German Day Parade. This float was prepared in the Henke wagon yard and barn on Preston Avenue.

NEWS AND NOTES OF THE HOUSTON METROPOLITAN RESEARCH CENTER

BY DON. E. CARLETON

From November 10, 1979 through January 12, 1980, the Houston Public Library's Metropolitan Research Center will be host to an impressive exhibit presented by the Menil Foundation. Titled "Image of the Black," the display features 103 color and black and white prints selected from a massive three-volume work, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*. Over fifteen years ago, the Menil Foundation initiated research for a scholarly study of the ways the Western world has perceived black Africans. Works of art in many areas — sculptures, frescoes, illuminated manuscripts, paintings, drawings — have been sought out in archeological sites, museums, private collections, church treasures, and libraries. The resulting volumes trace the evolution of "the image of the black in Western art" from the third millenium B. C. to the early twentieth century, from Egypt to America. The varied and complex representations of blacks are examined by ten scholars; the documented text is complemented by more than 1,100 illustrations. The most representative of these illustrations will be selected for display in the exhibit. "Image of the Black" will be open to the public, Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., at the Metropolitan Research Center, Julia Ideson Building, 500 McKinney.

The Metropolitan Research Center and the Rice University School of Architecture, in cooperation with the Rice Design Alliance, are sponsoring an exhibit and symposium on "Civic Art in Houston Since 1900." The exhibit will be at Rice University's Sewall Gallery, November 2 to December 5, 1979 and at the gallery of the Julia Ideson building, January 16 to February 29, 1980. The exhibit will document three areas of the city influenced by civic art principles: the Buffalo Bayou corridor from Memorial Park to the Civic Center; the South Main Street/Hermann Park/Rice University/Shadyside/Museum of Fine Arts area; and the University of St. Thomas/Menil Foundation area in Montrose. An illustrated catalog will accompany the exhibit. The Research Center will also host a



NO-TSU-OH revelers clad in crowdad costumes. The crustaceans that Houstonians liked to eat were a symbol of the carnival.