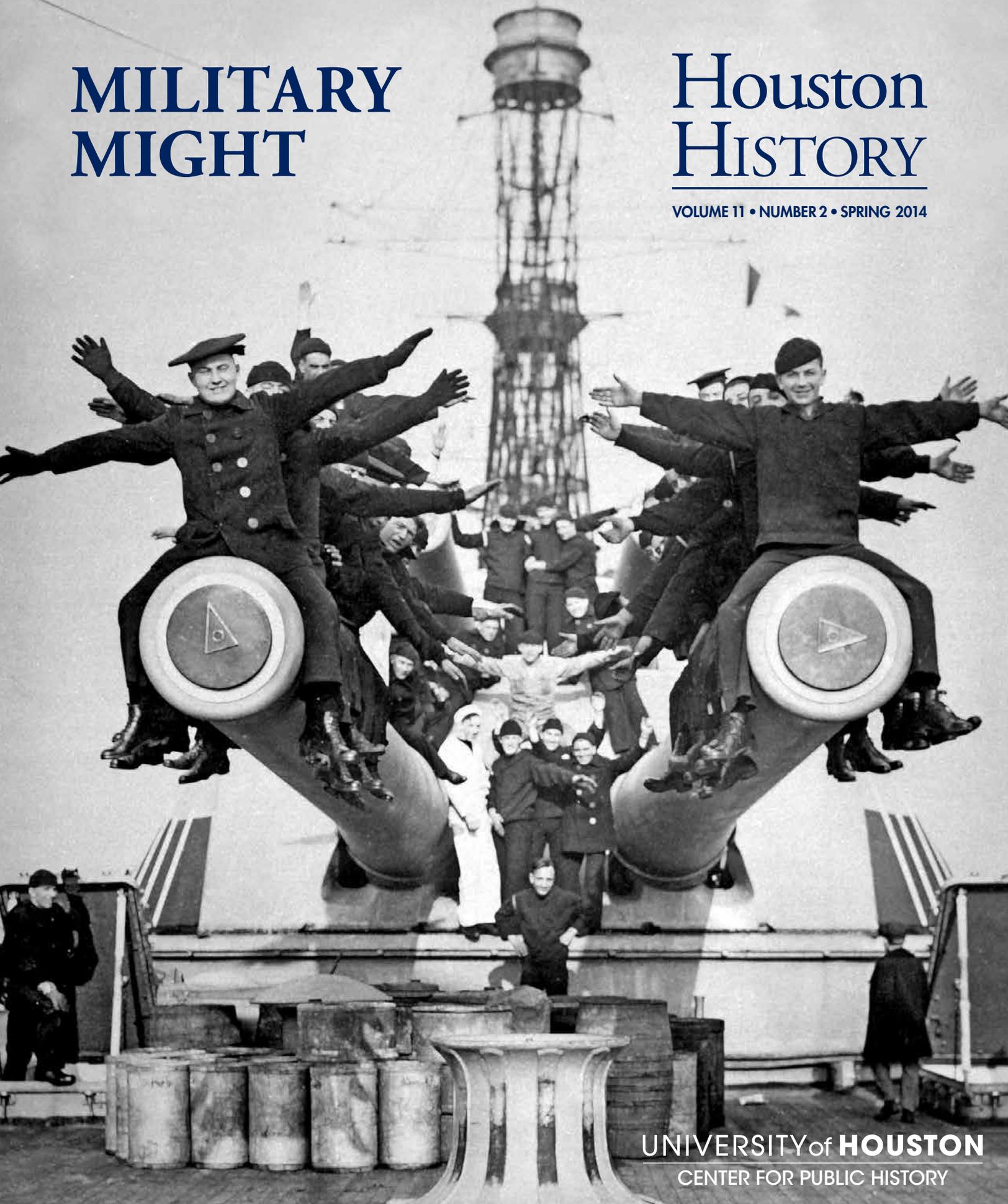


# MILITARY MIGHT

# Houston HISTORY

VOLUME 11 • NUMBER 2 • SPRING 2014



UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON  
CENTER FOR PUBLIC HISTORY

PUBLISHED BY  
WELCOME WILSON HOUSTON HISTORY COLLABORATIVE

## Announcing the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative



*Chris Cookson with Welcome Wilson, Sr., who graduated from UH in 1949 and served on the Board of Regents of the University of Houston System for six years, three of them as chairman.*

Under the terms of a major gift from Welcome W. Wilson, Sr., to the Center for Public History, the Houston History Project will be renamed the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative. The *Houston History* magazine, the UH Oral History of Houston, the UH Houston History Archives, and UH Memories Documentary Films will become parts of the new Collaborative, which will remain under the direction of Joe Pratt. Funding from the gift will support existing initiatives, while also supporting new endeavors.

CPH director, Martin Melosi, called the new funds “the most important financial gift that the center has yet received by an individual synonymous with the history and heritage of the University of Houston and our community at large. We can think of no better name to have associated with our program than Welcome Wilson.” The Chairman of the Board of GSL Welcome Group, LLC, Welcome Wilson, Sr., is a longtime real estate developer in Southeast Texas who recently was inducted into the Texas Business Hall of Fame. A 1949 graduate of UH and a distinguished alumnus, Wilson has served on the Board of Regents of the University of Houston System for six years, including three as chairman.

Welcome cares deeply about the history of our region: “Tracking the history of Houston has been a passion of

mine since I came here for college 68 years ago. I am very honored that this important UH endeavor will bear my name.” The feeling is certainly mutual. An ideal match for our ongoing efforts to capture the history of the region and make it available to others, Welcome is a walking encyclopedia of the history of UH and of Houston. His stories about the people he has known and the events he has witnessed are a treat to all of us who study our region. He is full of life, with an optimism that is contagious. His involvement in the new Collaborative will enrich the projects we undertake while also enriching our individual lives.

The connection between the Center for Public History and Welcome Wilson was made by Chris Cookson, a student years ago in one of Marty Melosi’s public history graduate seminars. When Chris and Marty had a chance encounter at a meeting of the San Jacinto Battleground Conservancy, Chris recalled how much he had enjoyed the class and how it had spurred his life-long interest in history, even as he pursued a successful career in finance.

We thank him for reminding us that teachers matter and for his continuing enthusiasm for history and for the Center for Public History. But Chris went far beyond pleasant reminiscences by taking the initiative to put us together with Welcome Wilson. We thank them both for their generosity in joining us in advancing the work of the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative.

Marty Melosi, Director, Center for Public History  
Joe Pratt, Director, Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative



*Staff members of the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative met with Welcome Wilson to thank him for his recent gift. Left to right: Debbie Harwell, Aimee Bachari, Joe Pratt, Marsha Van Horn, Welcome Wilson Sr., Wyndham Bailey, Terry Tomkins-Walsh, and Martin Melosi. Photos courtesy of Nancy Clark.*

*Houston History wishes to thank the*  
**SUMMERLEE FOUNDATION**  
*for its generous gift in support of the magazine  
and its graduate students.*

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*Houston History* is published three times a year by the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative in the Center for Public History at the University of Houston. We invite manuscripts, interviews, photographic essays, and ideas for topical issues on the history and culture of the Houston region, broadly defined. Please send correspondence to *Houston History*, University of Houston, Center for Public History, 337 McElhinney Hall, Houston, TX 77204-3007 (713-743-3123), or email [HoustonHistory@uh.edu](mailto:HoustonHistory@uh.edu).

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**Cover Photo:** *Crewmen of USS Texas pose for a picture on top of one of the main battery guns, 1918.*



The *Houston History* staff thanks Nancy Clark, UH Director of Legacy Programs, Alumni Relations, for her ongoing assistance with our University of Houston stories. She truly personifies Cougar Red spirit.

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# A Sharp Fight

150 years ago, an unlikely naval encounter off Galveston stunned the U.S. Navy and saved Texas from a Federal invasion.

By Andrew W. Hall and Edward T. Cotham Jr.

Days after the Confederates opened fire on Fort Sumter in April 1861, President Lincoln declared a blockade of ports in the seceded states. The blockade represented a key part of the North's "Anaconda" strategy, designed to isolate the Confederacy from trade and foreign assistance, slowly squeezing the life out of the rebellion.

The Anaconda strategy was sound, but the Union remained woefully under-equipped to implement it. At the beginning of the conflict, the U.S. Navy possessed only a few dozen warships, and many of these were stationed overseas. To make up the deficiency, Navy department agents spread out through northern ports and shipyards, buying up every civilian vessel they could find – including some still under construction – that might be converted to a warship.

One of these new acquisitions was the iron-hulled passenger steamer *St. Mary's*, purchased new from her builder for \$110,000. Outfitted with a hurricane deck and wooden cabins, the 201-foot ship had a pair of enormous side wheels, driven by a single-cylinder steam engine that provided propulsion. A pivoted, diamond-shaped iron frame, known as a "walking beam," that rocked back and forth as the wheels turned, like a leviathan child's teeter-totter, transferred the vertical motion of the engine to the side wheels. Commissioned in October 1861 as USS *Hatteras*, the steamer was soon outfitted with an assortment of obsolete smoothbore cannon and more modern, rifled guns. *Hatteras's* armament typified that used by ships on the blockade but, as events later demonstrated, proved woefully inadequate against a purpose-built warship.<sup>1</sup>

If the Union had limited resources at the beginning of the war, the Confederacy fared even worse. With limited industrial and shipbuilding capacity available in the South, the government in Richmond invested heavily in construction of warships overseas. The most famous of these vessels was CSS *Alabama*, built at the shipyard of John Laird, Son & Co. at Birkenhead, across the Mersey River from Liverpool in England.

Designed to be a commerce raider, *Alabama* preyed on the large U.S. merchant fleet scattered on trade routes across the globe. As built, *Alabama* was just ten feet longer than *Hatteras*, and two feet narrower in beam. But unlike *Hatteras*, *Alabama* was built from the keel up as a warship. While *Hatteras* was constructed of iron, she had thin plating, never intended to stand up to enemy gunfire. *Alabama* had iron framing covered with heavy timber that could absorb enemy shot. The shipbuilders carefully positioned *Alabama's* machinery below the waterline, safely out of the way of gunfire. Most important, *Alabama* carried very heavy naval artillery, including a seven-inch rifle and an eight-inch smoothbore cannon, both fitted on pivoting mounts. All of *Alabama's* guns firing on one side amounted to 274 pounds of shot and shell; *Hatteras's* broadside weight was only 114 pounds.

*Hatteras* spent her first few months patrolling the Atlantic coast off South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida and captured several small vessels that attempted to run the blockade. In the fall of 1862, *Hatteras* was assigned a new commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Homer Crane Blake, a twenty-two-year Navy veteran. About that same time, the Navy reassigned the ship to the Gulf of Mexico, where *Hatteras* took up blockade duties off the Confederate port of Mobile, Alabama.<sup>2</sup>

While *Hatteras* patrolled off Mobile Bay, the new Confederate raider *Alabama*, now under the command of former U.S. Navy officer Raphael Semmes, had begun doing exactly what she had been designed to do – sink Yankee merchant ships. After formally putting his ship in commission at an isolated anchorage in the

Azores, Semmes set a course to the west, skirting dangerously close to New England on the U.S. Atlantic coast. But the busy shipping lane proved to be very successful hunting grounds, and *Alabama* seized a dozen or more Union



Illustration of the steamer USS *Hatteras*.

Images courtesy of Andrew W. Hall.

merchantmen there. Semmes then set his course south and east, almost to the coast of Venezuela, then north and west again through the Caribbean. More captures followed, and word spread that the infamous Confederate ship stalked the region. Five days before Christmas 1862, Semmes's lookouts spotted Cape Catoche, the northernmost point of the Yucatán Peninsula. *Alabama* was now loose in the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

In the fall of 1862, the Union Navy had captured Galveston almost without firing a shot. The Confederate commander in Texas had always deemed the barrier island, connected to the mainland by a single railroad bridge, to be indefensible, so he had made little effort to do so. Galveston was the most important port in Texas and the terminus of a rail system that extended to Houston and points beyond, deep into rich, inland agricultural areas. With Galveston in Federal hands, northern newspapers soon began reporting that Union General Nathaniel Banks was in New Orleans, outfitting a force of 20,000 men to land on the island, the first act in a full-scale invasion of Confederate Texas.

But northern civilians were not the only ones reading rumors about the plans for a Federal invasion of Texas; Raphael Semmes aboard *Alabama* read them, too. Cut off from regular communications with the Confederacy, and a little self-absorbed to boot, Semmes eagerly searched newspapers from captured merchant ships for any stories about his own vessel, or naval developments in general. From these newspapers, Semmes picked up speculation that General Banks's expedition would begin its push inland from Galveston around January 10, 1863. *Alabama's* cruise had been a great success thus far, but Semmes longed to do something more dramatic than burn unarmed Yankee merchantmen out on the open sea. The Banks Expedition seemed like the opportunity for



Lieutenant Homer C. Blake, a *carte-de-visite*.

Photo courtesy Edward T. Cotham.

Semmes to strike a dramatic and spectacular blow against the Union. Semmes figured that an expedition of that size would require a huge fleet of transports and supply vessels – forty, fifty, or more – anchored off Galveston. Semmes determined to head for Galveston, intending to take *Alabama* into the middle of that transport fleet at night and destroy as many vessels as he could. John Macintosh Kell, *Alabama's* executive officer, considered this plan “the boldest of all the bold schemes of Captain Semmes.”<sup>4</sup> During the first week of January 1863, *Alabama* sailed steadily north through the Gulf of Mexico, toward the upper Texas coast.

Semmes and Kell did not know, however, that the situation at Galveston had drastically changed. The new Confederate commander in Texas, John Bankhead Magruder, had scraped

together a disparate force of dismounted cavalry, civilian riverboats, and local militia and had retaken Galveston on New Year's Day, 1863. In the process, the Confederates captured one Union warship intact and caused another to be blown up by her own crew.

Admiral David G. Farragut, the Union naval commander in the Gulf of Mexico, called the defeat at Galveston the “most shameful and pusillanimous” incident in the history of the U.S. Navy.<sup>5</sup> Farragut saw the Galveston debacle as a strategic setback and an insult to the honor of the Navy. He ordered a large part of his command to Galveston, under the command of Commodore Henry H. Bell, to

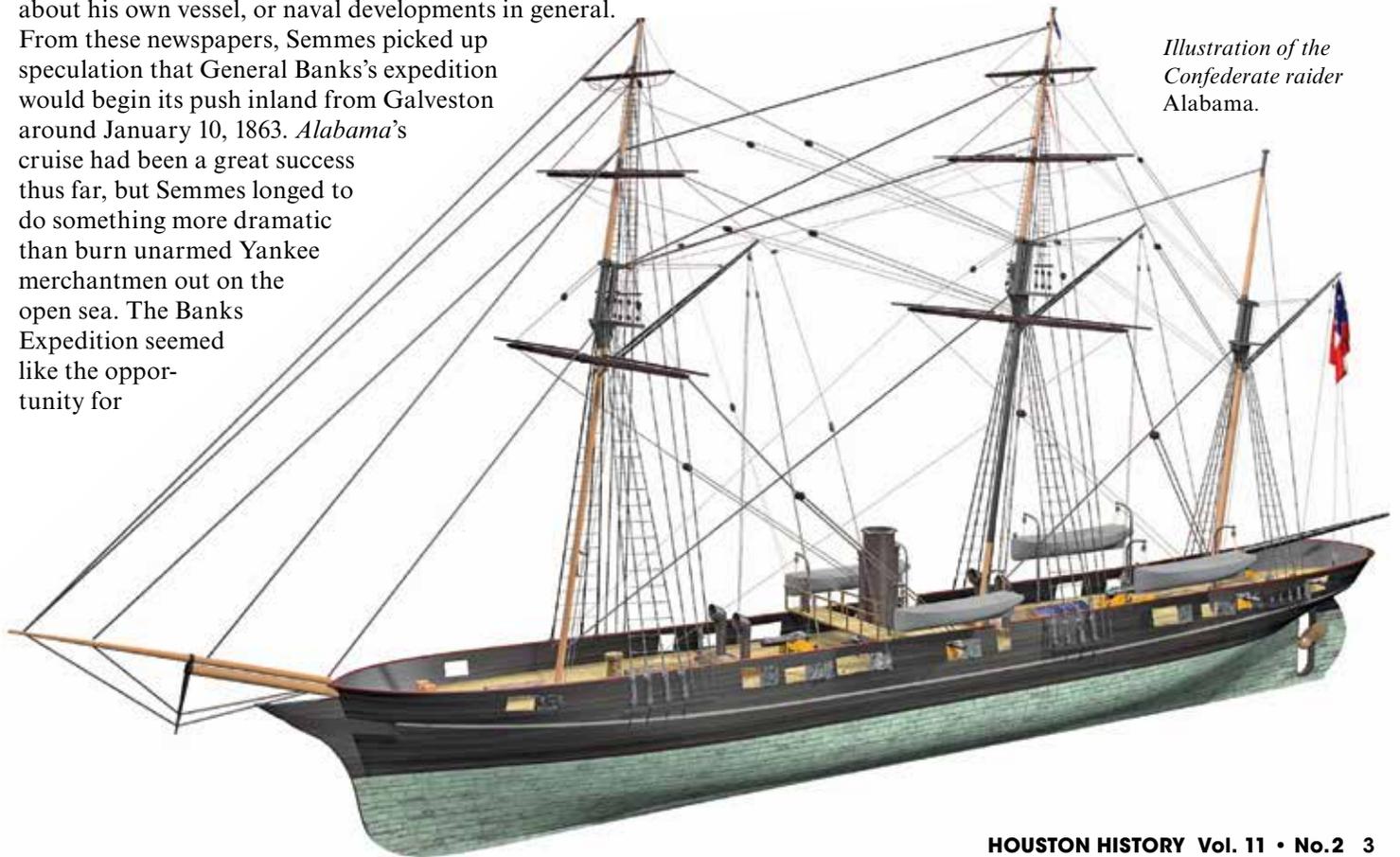
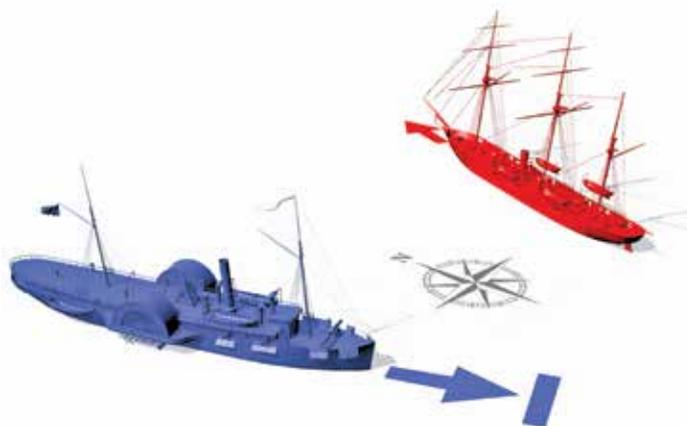
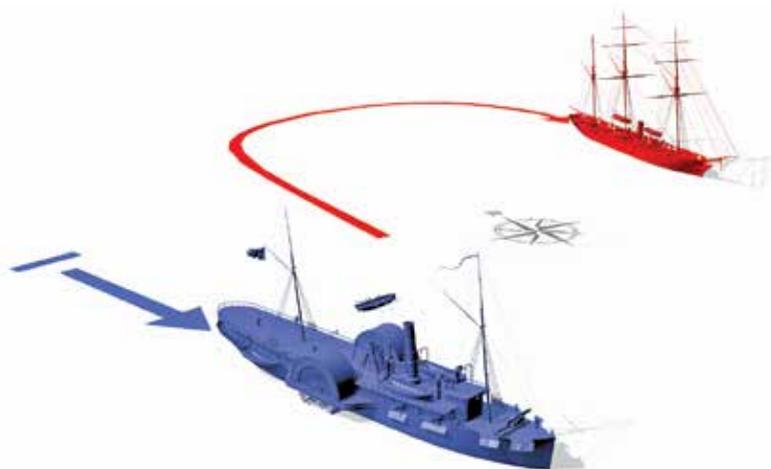


Illustration of the Confederate raider *Alabama*.



USS *Hatteras* (foreground, in blue) stops alongside *Alabama* (red) and asks her identity. Captain Semmes of *Alabama* stalls for time, identifying his vessel as a British warship.

Illustrations by Andrew W. Hall.



*Alabama* makes a wide turn away and to starboard to come back on a parallel course to *Hatteras* that has launched a boat with a boarding party to inspect the strange vessel's papers.

begin preparations to retake the port. Bell's force arrived on January 7, and began a daily bombardment of the city. USS *Hatteras* arrived soon after, late in the afternoon of January 10. Almost everything was in place for the assault on Galveston. One crewman on board USS *New London* confidently wrote to his father that "Galveston is a doomed town."<sup>6</sup>

Sunday, January 11, dawned clear and beautiful. The bombardment of the city's defenses continued. Sometime after 2:00 p.m., lookouts in the Union fleet spotted an unidentified ship approaching from the southeast. Bell ordered the closest of the Union ships, USS *Hatteras*, to investigate. By 3:00, *Hatteras* was in pursuit of the stranger.<sup>7</sup>

The unidentified vessel, of course, was CSS *Alabama*. Semmes had arrived off Galveston expecting to see dozens of transport vessels anchored offshore. Instead, all he saw were a handful of what looked like Union warships. While he puzzled over this, his lookouts reported seeing a shell fired from one of the warships that exploded over the town. Semmes now realized that Galveston had somehow been recaptured and returned to Confederate hands. While he thought about his next move, the lookouts reported one of the Federal warships had come out to intercept him. Semmes quickly revised his plan. He turned *Alabama* around, pointing her bow again to the south, moving slowly away from Galveston. He did not want the Union warship to close the range too quickly and so began leading *Hatteras* on a long chase in the fading, late-afternoon light.<sup>8</sup>

On *Hatteras*, Homer Blake and his officers became suspicious. They knew of *Alabama*'s successes in the Caribbean and had worried for weeks that the Confederate warship would eventually make her way into the Gulf of Mexico. Though they did not know the identity of the mystery vessel they chased, they could guess. Henry Ogden Porter, *Hatteras*'s executive officer, remarked to Captain Blake, "That, sir, I think is *Alabama*. What shall we do?" Blake replied immediately and directly, "If that is *Alabama* we must fight her." Blake ordered his ship cleared for action.<sup>9</sup>

By the time *Hatteras* had closed to a distance of about four miles, Blake could see that the stranger had stopped

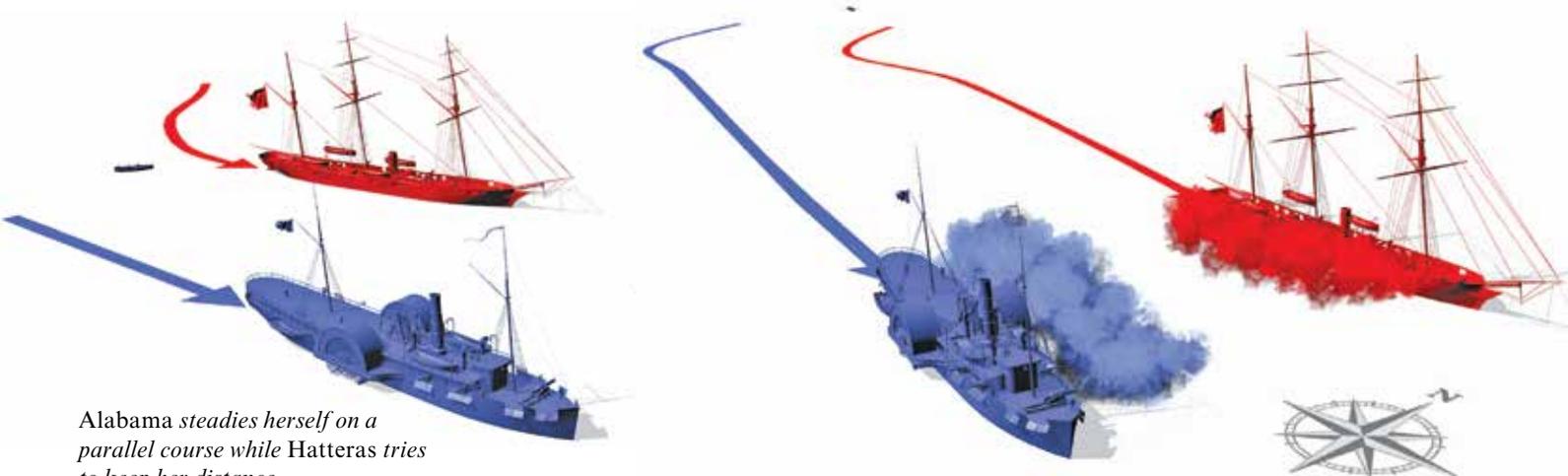
and was lying broadside-on, waiting for him to come up – not at all the way a skittish blockade runner would behave. It was about seven o'clock now, and nearly dark. As *Hatteras* came up alongside, Blake hailed the mystery ship: "What steamer is that?"

The reply shouted across the water from *Alabama* was that the raider was a British warship—Blake recalled that the name given was *Vixen*, while Semmes later said *Petrel*—and Semmes asked for the identity of Blake's ship. Semmes could not make out the name, but the first words he heard, "this is the United States Ship," sufficed. A brief pause followed while both ships jockeyed for a better position, with Blake suspecting the other ship was *Alabama*, and Semmes knowing that he had a Yankee warship under his ship's guns. Blake, following standard procedure, asked for permission to send a boat with an officer to verify the other ship's identity. Semmes, still trying to maneuver for best advantage, politely agreed. *Alabama*, meanwhile, had made a steaming turn to the east, running up alongside *Hatteras*'s port side, less than 100 yards off.

Satisfied with his position and that all was ready, Semmes turned to his first lieutenant and said, "Don't strike them in disguise; tell them who we are and give the broadside at the name." Kell raised his speaking trumpet and announced, "This is the Confederate States Steamer *Alabama*!" And then, to his crew, "Fire!"<sup>10</sup>

*Alabama*'s first broadside went high, passing harmlessly over *Hatteras*. Blake immediately ordered his aft guns, the only guns that would bear, to return fire and rang the bell for full speed ahead. He turned the ship to port, trying to get into a position where he could fire all of his port guns at *Alabama*. On the deck below, Executive Officer Porter of *Hatteras* did not wait for Blake's orders; he yelled, "*Alabama*! Boys, now give it to her!" and the gun crews on *Hatteras* began firing away.<sup>11</sup>

A running fight followed, *Hatteras* firing to port and *Alabama* to starboard. At some points, only twenty-five yards of black water separated the ships; Kell later described it as "a sharp fight." Blake soon recognized his disadvantage in firepower, and tried to turn his ship to



*Alabama steadies herself on a parallel course while Hatteras tries to keep her distance.*

*After Semmes identifies his ship as CSS Alabama, both vessels exchange furious broadsides, running side-by-side, until Hatteras is completely disabled, dead in the water and sinking.*

enable *Hatteras* to get alongside the enemy vessel, where his crew could attempt to board. But Semmes used his ship's superior speed and maneuverability to keep *Hatteras* at a distance.<sup>12</sup> About eight minutes after the action began, a shell entered *Hatteras* above the water line forward and burst a quantity of stored turpentine, setting that part of the ship on fire. Soon after, another shell hit the forward part of the "walking beam" and knocked it out of alignment. The walking beam was a critical part of the connection between the steam engine and the paddle wheels, and the damage caused *Hatteras* to slow its forward motion. At almost the same time, a shell entered amidships and set fire to the vessel near the magazine. Yet another shell had entered the engine works and damaged part of the steam machinery.<sup>13</sup>

Executive Officer Porter went below to check on the damage and asked the ship's engineer about the condition of the machinery. The engineer simply replied, "We are pretty near played out, I think." With the engine room quickly filling with water, crew members tried unsuccessfully to plug the holes with rolled hammocks. Porter headed back up the ladder to Captain Blake with the bad news.<sup>14</sup>

One of the heroes that night aboard *Hatteras* – unmentioned in any official report of the action – was an unidentified African American officer's steward who Blake later described in an article for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. The man knew of a small locker of arms and ammunition under a passageway off the wardroom, and when the ship caught fire, the steward remained at his post, continually dashing the ammunition with water. When later asked whether he found his position dangerous, the steward replied that he had, "but I knew if the fire got to the powder them gentlemen on deck would get a grand hoist."<sup>15</sup>

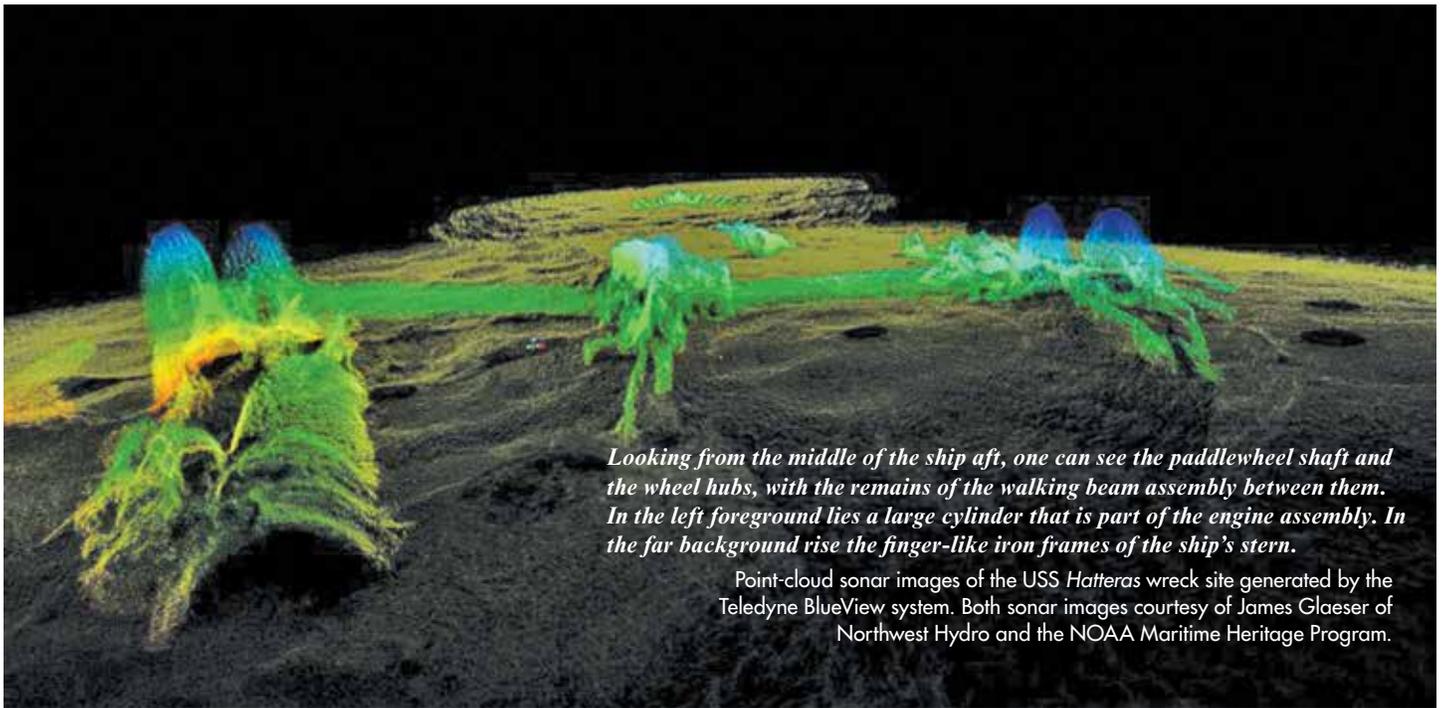
Fearing that the fire might ignite the ship's primary magazine, Captain Blake ordered that two feet of water be pumped into the compartment. At that moment, a shot knocked a hole in the engine's main cylinder, flooding the engine room and deck nearby with scalding steam. The engine ground to a halt, having been struck six times in different places. *Hatteras* was dead in the water and beginning to roll steeply to port.<sup>16</sup> Blake ordered that a lee gun,

facing away from the enemy, be fired to signal his surrender. The entire fight had lasted only thirteen minutes.

Blake and Porter knew that *Hatteras* was doomed; their worry now centered on whether *Alabama* would leave them to sink without attempting to rescue survivors.<sup>17</sup> *Hatteras* had rolled so far over on her port side that it appeared she might capsize completely, so Blake ordered the guns on that side to be thrown overboard. *Hatteras* was heeled so far over by then that the men did not have to use block and tackle to coax the guns over the side. Freed of the weight of the artillery on the port side, the ship righted herself at once but she continued sinking.<sup>18</sup>

Porter could not believe that *Alabama* had left a disabled foe. He yelled into the darkness, demanding that *Alabama* send boats to save *Hatteras's* crew. Finally, Semmes dispatched two of his boats to help transfer the Union ship's crew, now prisoners, to *Alabama*. As Porter supervised the orderly loading of the boats, Blake carefully counted the men leaving the ship. When everyone other than Porter and Blake had been evacuated, two crewmen last seen in the coal bunkers remained unaccounted for. Both Porter and Blake tried to go below to search the bunkers, but the smoke and fire stopped them; Porter even burned off the bottom of his shoes on the hot deck. Finally, Blake concluded that the missing men could not be recovered and reluctantly left for *Alabama* to surrender formally to Semmes. Ten minutes after they reached the enemy ship, *Hatteras* went down, bow first.<sup>19</sup>

*Alabama* had survived the battle with only minor damage, and one man slightly wounded, but Semmes now faced another set of problems. More than 100 prisoners roughly doubled the number of men on board the Confederate raider. They took up space, consumed rations and fresh water, and needed guarding. More importantly, every available Federal warship in the region would now be sent to find and engage *Alabama*. Semmes needed to leave the Gulf of Mexico and dispose of his prisoners quickly, so he set a course for Jamaica, south of Cuba. *Alabama* anchored off Port Royal, across the harbor from Kingston, after dark on January 20, nine days after the encounter with *Hatteras*.



*Looking from the middle of the ship aft, one can see the paddlewheel shaft and the wheel hubs, with the remains of the walking beam assembly between them. In the left foreground lies a large cylinder that is part of the engine assembly. In the far background rise the finger-like iron frames of the ship's stern.*

Point-cloud sonar images of the USS *Hatteras* wreck site generated by the Teledyne BlueView system. Both sonar images courtesy of James Glaeser of Northwest Hydro and the NOAA Maritime Heritage Program.

Semmes put Blake and his crew ashore and, after taking a few days to refit and reprovise his ship, slipped away on January 25 for points unknown.<sup>20</sup>

A formal court of inquiry on the loss of *Hatteras* held at the Brooklyn Navy Yard concluded that Blake and his senior officers had discharged their duties “in an efficient and praiseworthy manner,” and that Blake’s own conduct after the battle “was altogether commendable and proper.”<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, others stood ready to assign blame. One notable example was Admiral David Dixon Porter, elder brother of *Hatteras*’s executive officer, Henry Porter. Years later, Admiral Porter argued that the error was Commodore Bell’s, for not sending sufficient force to investigate the vessel sighted on the afternoon of January 11. Two ships, he argued, would have made quick work of the Confederate raider. Porter suggested, perhaps in subconscious reference to his younger brother’s involvement in the embarrassing incident, “Never send a boy on a man’s errand.”<sup>22</sup>

After leaving Port Royal and *Hatteras*’s crew astern, Raphael Semmes set a course east and then north, through the Santo Domingo Channel between the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, into the North Atlantic again. Then *Alabama* headed south, along the coast of Brazil, where Semmes took a dozen ships in the spring and early summer of 1863. After an extended refit at Cape Town, South Africa, the raider continued east, across the Indian Ocean, through the Sunda Strait and into the Java and South China Seas. After another long call at Singapore for repairs and provisions, *Alabama* sailed west again, skirting the Indian subcontinent, following the west coast of Africa, around the Cape of Good Hope and again north into the Atlantic.

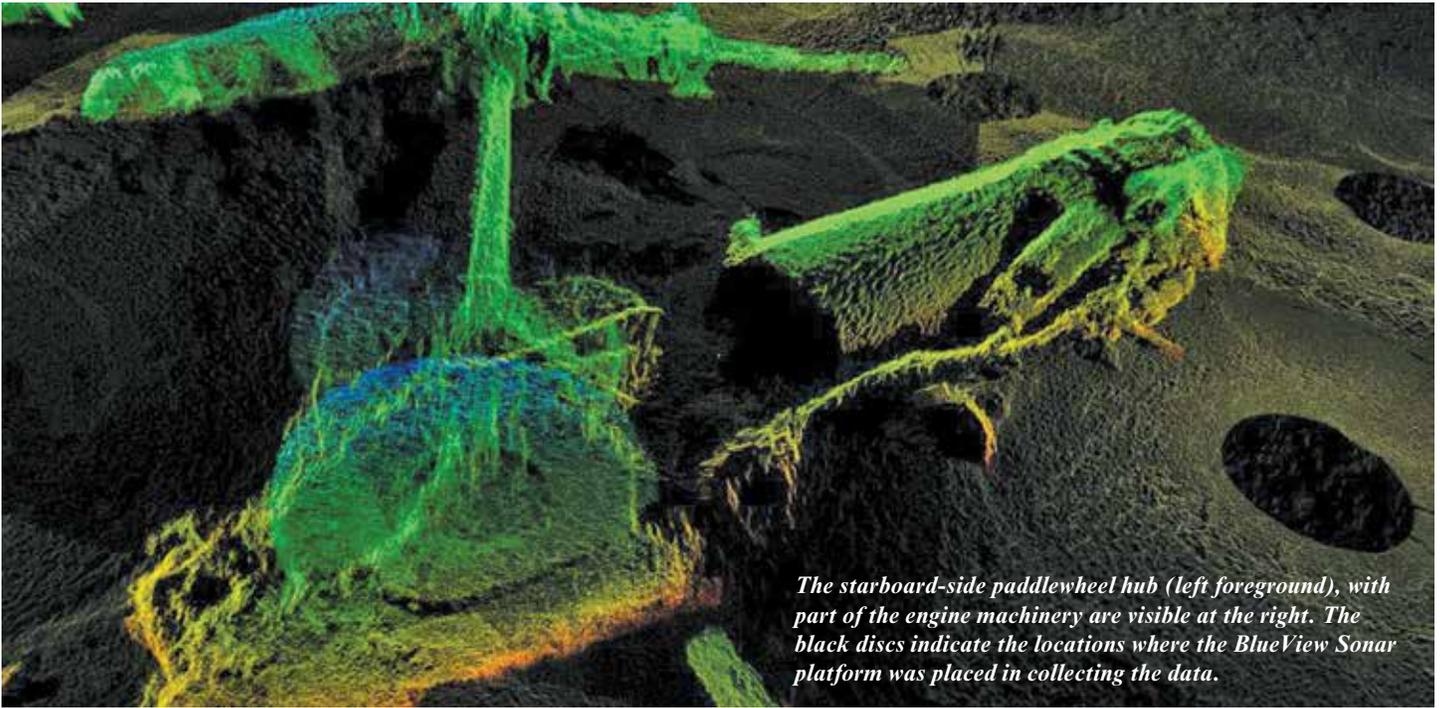
By the spring of 1864, *Alabama* had been at sea for almost eighteen months. Continually hunted, she and her captain stayed just a step ahead of their pursuers. But Semmes’s luck ran out in June 1864, when he brought his worn-out

ship and crew into the neutral port of Cherbourg, France, where the USS *Kearsarge* cornered them. Given the options of abandoning *Alabama* in a neutral harbor or slugging it out with *Kearsarge*, Semmes chose to fight. In an hour-long battle in which the antagonists steamed round and round each other, *Alabama* was holed repeatedly below the waterline. Semmes struck his colors and ordered his crew to abandon their sinking ship. *Alabama*’s depredations against Yankee merchantmen came to an abrupt end.<sup>23</sup>

Semmes’ decision to engage *Kearsarge* has been hotly debated ever since, but undoubtedly his quick victory over *Hatteras* played a part in his calculation. *Hatteras* was the only other naval vessel Semmes had faced during his long cruise, and it may have given him undue confidence in engaging *Kearsarge*, a proper-built and heavily-armed warship. Semmes employed similar tactics in both encounters, but the ease of his 1863 victory helped pave the way to his defeat in 1864.

The *Alabama* and *Hatteras* fight yielded other consequences as well. The ease with which *Alabama* sank *Hatteras* stunned many in the U.S. Navy. Before that battle, they had seen *Alabama* almost as a nuisance. After *Hatteras*, however, they recognized *Alabama* as a formidable warship in her own right. For the next year and a half, Union ship captains worried that *Alabama* or a similar Confederate vessel might appear on the sea behind them and reduce their ships to sinking wrecks. This led commanders to become overly cautious and, on some occasions, fail to achieve military objectives.

The loss of *Hatteras* also helped shape the larger conduct of the war. At the time of the battle, Bell’s squadron was prepared to recapture Galveston and use it as a stage to invade Texas. They likely would have been successful had they proceeded as planned; but worried that *Alabama* and other Confederate ships might be lurking out of sight, naval officials delayed, giving the Confederate garrison critical



*The starboard-side paddlewheel hub (left foreground), with part of the engine machinery are visible at the right. The black discs indicate the locations where the BlueView Sonar platform was placed in collecting the data.*

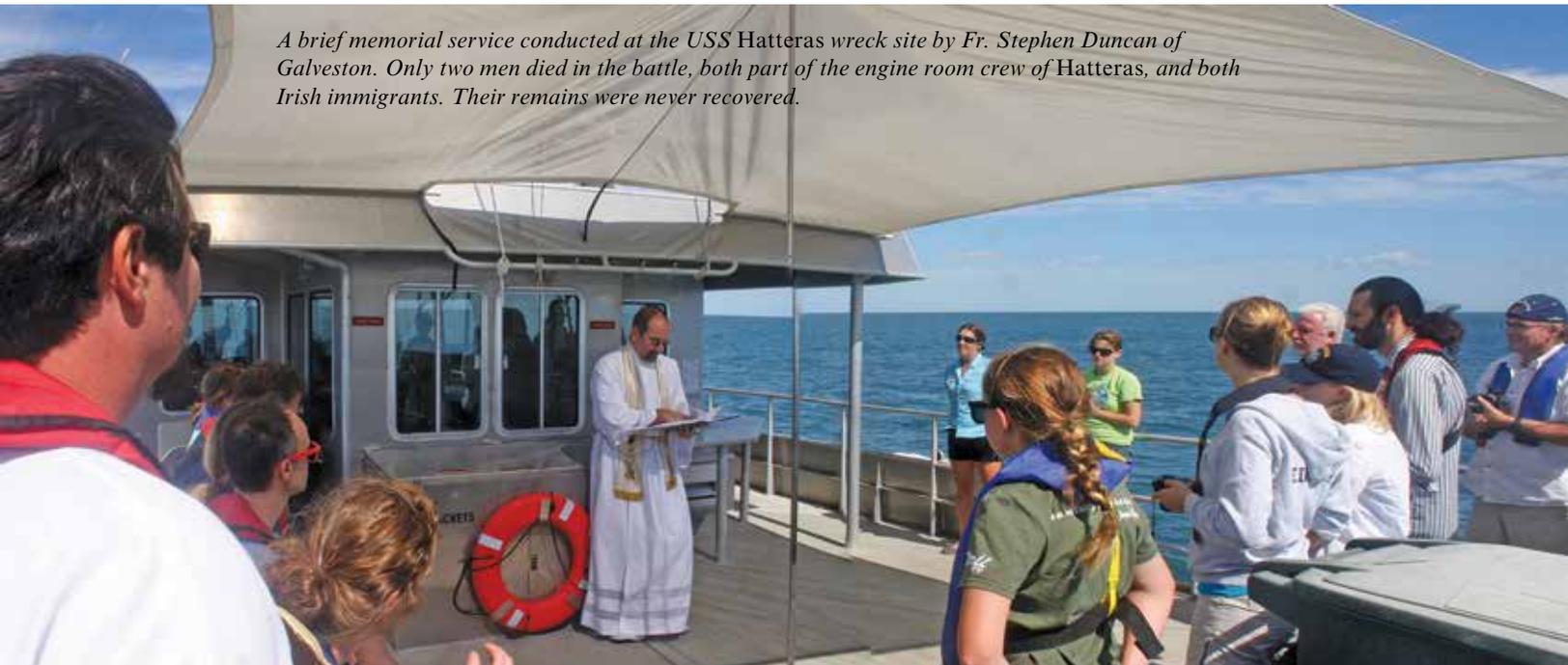
time to fortify the city. Galveston survived as the last major Confederate port, not surrendering until June 1865, two months after Appomattox and the assassination of President Lincoln.

The short clash between *Alabama* and *Hatteras* was more than just a rehearsal for the battle that ended *Alabama's* famous career. The 1863 battle had its origin in a scheme that, if successful, would have dealt a substantial blow to Union military plans on the Texas coast. Although Captain Semmes's plan to steam boldly through the middle of the fleet firing broadsides in both directions did not materialize, Semmes indirectly played a major role in postponing Union plans to capture Texas. The very fact that a major invasion

of the interior of Texas never occurred can be traced in part to the thirteen-minute fight in which *Alabama* defeated *Hatteras*.

**Andy Hall** is a researcher from Galveston, Texas, specializing in Civil War and maritime subjects. He is the author of *The Galveston-Houston Packet: Steamboats on Buffalo Bayou*, published by the History Press in 2012.

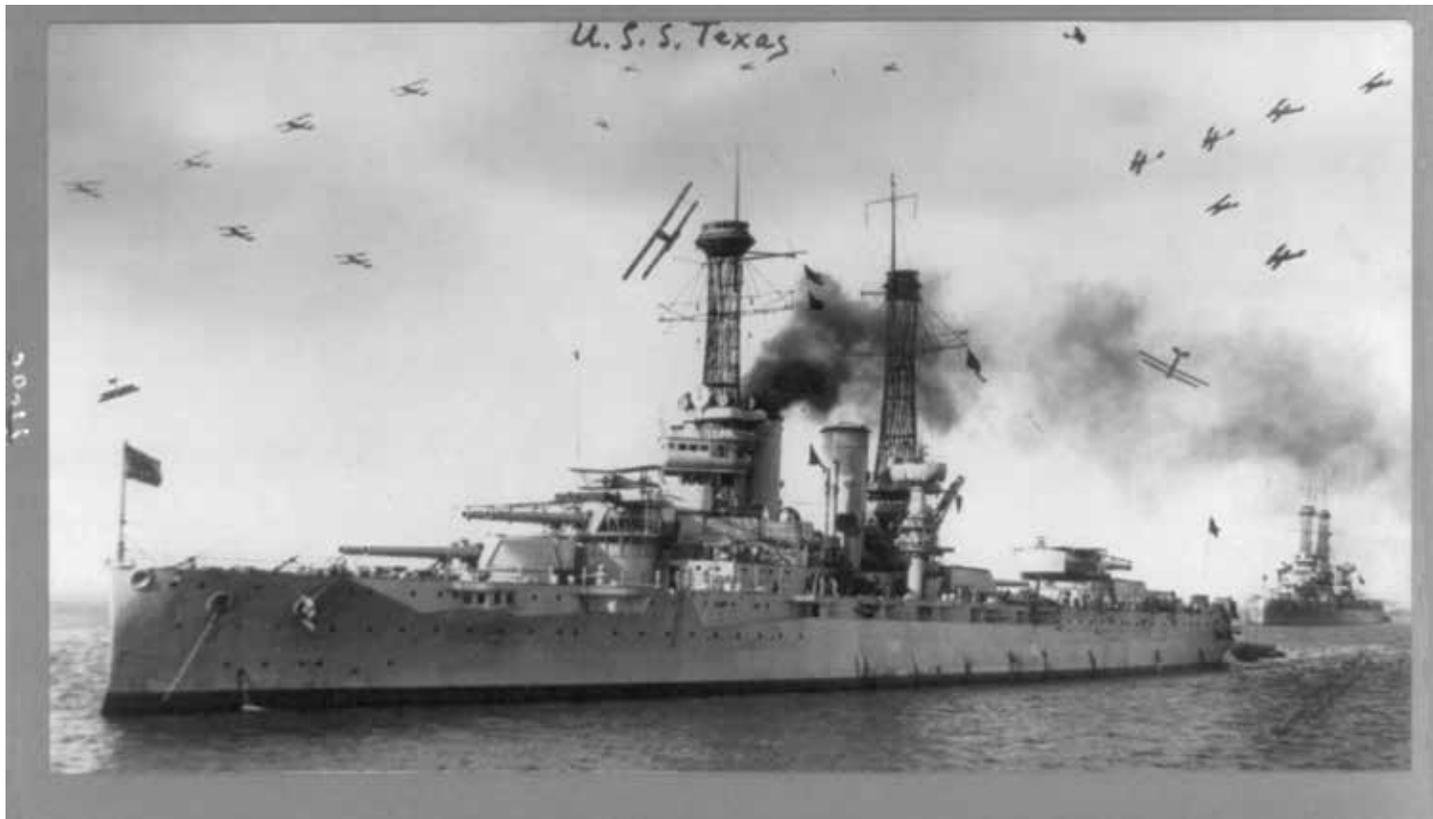
**Ed Cotham** is the author of several books on Texas in the Civil War, including *Battle on the Bay: The Civil War Struggle for Galveston*. Ed also serves as president of the Terry Foundation in Houston.



*A brief memorial service conducted at the USS Hatteras wreck site by Fr. Stephen Duncan of Galveston. Only two men died in the battle, both part of the engine room crew of Hatteras, and both Irish immigrants. Their remains were never recovered.*

# USS *Texas* BB-35, Boasting More “Firsts” than any Ship in the U.S. Navy

By Johnathan Flerchinger



USS *Texas* surrounded by bi-planes, circa 1919.

Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

During the early twentieth century, Newport News Shipbuilding Company constructed the USS *Texas* (BB-35), which was commissioned on March 12, 1914.<sup>1</sup> After surviving two world wars, this magnificent vessel became the last surviving dreadnaught battleship, representing an important piece of local and national history. *Texas* measures 573 feet long with a 95-foot beam.<sup>2</sup> Known for having some of the largest engines constructed for American battleships, she used steam turbines and triple expansion engines, which made the ship very fuel-efficient. This battleship, now a tourist attraction, can be found at the Battleship Texas State Historic Site near the south Houston Ship Channel and the San Jacinto Battleground State Park.

The state of Texas adamantly insisted on bringing this incredible ship to Houston to preserve and protect her from government or scientific experiments, such as turning her into an artificial reef that would have ultimately destroyed her. Despite being the only remaining battleship of its kind, sadly with time, *Texas* has begun to wear out. Repairs have become more expensive as Houston's salty water corrodes the ship at an alarming rate, making it difficult to maintain

her. As *Texas* celebrates the centennial of her commissioning, this article looks back on some of the major battles she survived and the notable number of firsts she accomplished for the U.S. Navy.

## The Major Wars of the *Texas* BB-35

Early in World War I, *Texas* was assigned to train gun crews for merchant ships before she ran aground on hidden underwater blocks, forcing her to undergo major repairs that limited her participation. Her duty shifted to escort missions as part of the 6th Battle Squadron of the British Grand Fleet, reinforcing the British army whenever the German military posed a threat. *Texas* was part of the fleet that met the surrendering Germans in November 1918. Later, she assisted in escorting President Woodrow Wilson to France for the Paris Peace Conference. She resumed her military duties in 1919 alongside the Atlantic fleet. Her post-war service consisted mostly of escort duties, which took her to places such as Casablanca, Gibraltar, and ports in the British Isles.

During the Second World War, *Texas* steamed toward Scotland where she remained for a seven-week training

exercise in preparation for her upcoming role in the U.S.-led D-Day invasion of Normandy, which unfolded on June 6, 1944.<sup>3</sup> During the early hours of this invasion, *Texas* was tasked with anchoring 12,000 yards off Pointe du Hoc, using her 14-inch salvos to attack the coastal landscapes, while the secondary battery focused on Omaha Beach. By the end of her constant bombardment, *Texas* had strategically destroyed most of the enemy's feared anti-aircraft battery. Afterwards, *Texas* was assigned to support the Army's advance inland. *Texas* soon closed in on the highly important port of Cherbourg where at 13:36 the enemy scored a direct hit on the battleship, killing one helmsman and injuring almost everyone on the navigation bridge. *Texas*, although limping, continued delivering her 14-inch shells despite the damage and casualties she had sustained. *Texas* received her final blow in the form of an unexploded 240-millimeter armor-piercing shell that entered her port bow and came to rest in a compartment near the ward-



*This anti-aircraft gun and many others were added to the USS Texas during her upgrades.* Photo courtesy of Johnathan Flerchinger.



*Texas's massive salvos ultimately helped clear the way for American troops during many large scale battles.*

Photo courtesy of Johnathan Flerchinger.

room. This critical hit forced *Texas* to retreat and head to Plymouth, England, for much needed repairs.

Upon completion of her initial repairs in England, *Texas* returned to New York, where she underwent another thirty-six-day repair to replace the damaged barrels of the main battery.<sup>4</sup> On February 16, 1945, *Texas* was sent to the Pacific to join the attack on the enemy's army in Iwo Jima in preparation of a U.S. landing. The battleship spent days providing lifesaving support to these troops with repeated heavy fire into the highly fortified Mount Suribachi, which proved paramount in clearing the Japanese garrison. On March 7, 1945, *Texas* returned to Ulithi to become equipped with a gunfire support unit to prepare for the next operation on the island of Okinawa. On March 26, *Texas* began her attack on the enemy, ruthlessly using her 14-inch salvos in the six-day-long attack to open the way for the U.S. Army and Marines to invade the island.

During her time in Okinawa, *Texas* retreated from her position every evening, only to return the next day to

resume the enemy bombardment. The Japanese had no response to this continued shelling except for multiple air units of kamikazes sent with orders to either destroy or slow down *Texas* and other U.S. ships' powerful salvos by any means possible. These kamikaze raids failed miserably and caused very little damage to this juggernaut's capability.<sup>5</sup> The enemy's true response came April 1, when the U.S. ground troops landed. *Texas* supplied a steady stream of gunfire to protect the charging troops from the enemy's relentless ground and aerial attacks. She claimed one kamikaze kill single handedly, while assisting with three others.

Weakened by the battle, *Texas* left on May 14, bound for Leyte in the Philippines, where she stayed until August 15, after the Japanese capitulation. She then returned to the waters off Okinawa arriving toward the end of August.<sup>6</sup> On September 23, she finally received orders to embark our tired troops and carry them back to the United States.

By February 13, 1946, *Texas* was steaming toward Norfolk, Virginia, to prepare for the ship's decommissioning. The U.S. Army then moved her to Baltimore, Maryland, until she sailed to her permanent home in La Porte, Texas, outside Houston. This giant steel war hero ultimately earned five battle stars for her service during the two world wars and had many crowning achievements, which made her unlike any other ship to serve the U.S. Navy before or since with a long list of notable firsts.

### **The First U.S. Navy Vessel to House a Permanently Assigned Contingent of U.S. Marines**

The warship's design easily accommodated twenty-one 5-inch guns, which protected the 1,072 officers and enlisted men who proudly served upon this vessel, including members of the Navy and the first permanently assigned contingent of Marines to serve on a U.S. Naval vessel. *Texas* was newly equipped with all-electric galleys and a state-of-the-art laundry installation, which helped keep the morale high. The Navy and Marine personnel who drew orders to this ship could easily travel for months on end inside the skin of the ship and still have a surplus of food, clothing, and ammunition. One of the main jobs assigned to *Texas* during World War II was to supply the troops and ammunition to



USS Texas entering Havana harbor from Cabanas, 1928.

Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

the battle zones. Because she had carried the contingent of U.S. Marines, she usually arrived at the red zones prior to other troops and cleared the shore of enemy combatants. *Texas* saved countless lives by diverting the enemy's attention from the attacking U.S. troops and clearing the path for them with armor-piercing rounds intended to kill everything in its path.

### **The First U.S. Ship to Control Gunfire with Directors and Range-keepers**

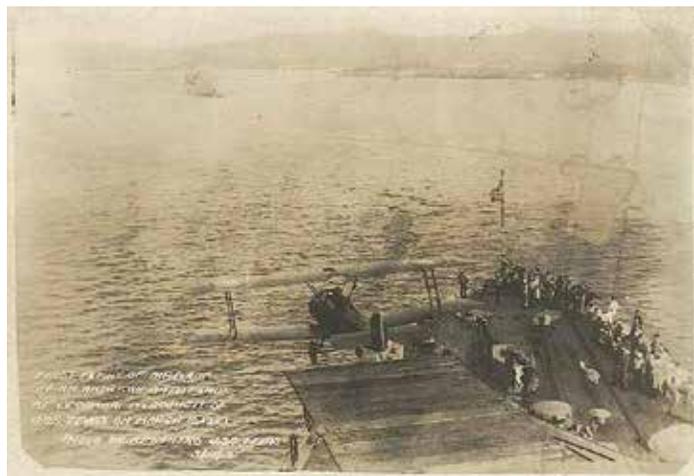
Although technology was nowhere near today's levels, *Texas* was the first U.S. ship with a gunfire control system that used directors and range-keepers. Directors were the forerunner of analog computer technology in contrast to the digital versions in use today. A fire-control system consists of a number of components working together, usually a gun data computer, a director, and radar, which is designed to assist a weapon system in hitting its target. It performs the same task as a human gunner firing a weapon, but attempts to do so faster and more accurately.<sup>7</sup>

*Texas's* deadly main battery that contained 14-inch salvos provided her most notable defense. The battleship's crew used the fire control system to key in the location, direction, and speed of a given target in order to engage. It enhanced the accuracy of the *Texas* but was not foolproof because the lack of precise calculations could cause the gunners to miss the target. This fire control system did, however, make it much easier for the crew because once they entered correct data, the system's accuracy made it deadly to anyone or anything in this juggernaut's path.

### **The First U.S. Battleship to Mount Anti-aircraft Guns and the First to Launch an Aircraft from its Deck**

On March 10, 1919, while she lay anchored off Cuba near Guantanamo Bay, *Texas* made history when she became the first American battleship to launch an airplane from her turret. Considered an advantage to the fleet as a result, *Texas* was assigned to the Pacific Fleet where she served until 1924.<sup>8</sup> At that time, USS *Texas* left the Pacific and headed for her new assignment with the Naval Academy to conduct training, and the Navy soon decided to use the ship in a training cruise for the European waters.

On July 31, 1925, *Texas* went to the Norfolk Navy Yard for a modernization overhaul, which brought her back from near death. The modernization included replacement of the cage masts with the single tripod foremast and the installation of the latest and greatest fire control equipment. The Navy also installed one of the first anti-aircraft weapons ever housed on an American battleship. The modernization



Medal of Honor winner, Lt. Cmdr. E. O. McDonnell became the first man to successfully launch a plane from a U.S. battleship. The Sopwith Camel took off from *Texas's* No. 2 Turret on March 10, 1919, at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

of *Texas* extended to the torpedo tubes and her casemated secondary armament. However, one of the most important additions to the ship's arsenal was an aircraft catapult on the Number 3 main gun turret, which was virtually unheard of at the time and made her unique to the fleet.

### **One of the First in the U.S. Navy to Receive the CXAM-1 Production Radar**

After the much needed overhaul, *Texas* began operating between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In 1931, she shifted duty stations to California where she served as a hand chosen flagship and took part in many national celebrations. In 1939, with World War II already underway in Europe, she successfully carried out many patrol missions and received her first radar that made her a main contender on the sea. This new radar, known as the CXAM, was developed from merging the XAF and CXZ technologies into one super-radar.<sup>9</sup> Demand for such high-tech systems ran high for deployments that required detection of approaching airplanes and ships. In October 1941, *Texas* had the CXAM-1 modifications to the CXAM installed, which greatly enhanced the battleship's safety, security, and morale.

In comparison to the CXAM, the CXAM-1 system increased the detection range from sixty-eight to one hundred miles, and these radar modifications ultimately led to a change of duty for *Texas*. Once the nation joined World War II, the Navy shifted her halfway across the Atlantic to support the needs of the country and its allies. These



*The operating room served as the ship's surgical theater. Large ships like Texas offered medical support to smaller ships. The wardroom and crew berthing space on the third deck could also be used as makeshift operating rooms.* Photo courtesy of Debbie Z. Harwell.

state-of-the-art radars also proved extremely helpful when she moved to the Pacific by detecting nearby enemy ships to clear the path during the Iwo Jima invasion. In 1945, when kamikaze raids were at their height, these new radar systems helped *Texas* escape certain disaster, which could have ended her service to the nation.

### **The First U.S. Battleship to Become a Permanent Museum Ship**

When World War II ended in August 1945, the battleship became a transport vessel to help bring our returning war veterans stateside, transitioning them from the fierce battlefield they had survived. In February 1946, she returned to New York where the Naval Commission decided to keep her in service until April 1948. At that time, she moved to her final dock at the Battleship Texas State Historic Site near the San Jacinto Battleground State Park in La Porte, Texas, where she soon became the first U.S. battleship named a floating museum.<sup>10</sup> The Texas State Legislature assigned the ship to the Battleship Commission for maintenance.

During her first years in Houston, battleship-loving volunteers, who felt a personal need to maintain the beautiful ship, manned and cleaned it. Most of these volunteers had either served as crewmembers onboard this vessel or served in the Navy and felt an unspoken duty to continue serving *Texas* even after her decommissioning. However, with time, the severe lack of funds for the proper maintenance of the iconic ship took a huge toll.<sup>11</sup> By 1968, *Texas* had significantly deteriorated. Rainwater rampantly leaked into the different compartments and the wood all around the vessel had rotted. With what little funds the battleship commission had, they fought to preserve as many



*During World War II, Texas had approximately 1,700 crew members, who had no privacy in their berths, restrooms, or bathing facilities. Making use of every available space, berths lined hallways. Most of the enlisted crew washed their own uniforms, which were stored in their nearby lockers.* Photo courtesy of Debbie Z. Harwell.

areas of the ship as possible. Some of the most interesting historic areas preserved included the vintage engine room, which dates back to the battleship's birth; along with other compartments, such as the dining room, which still houses the old silver cutlery the Navy used in her galleys.

### **The First Battleship Declared a U.S. National Historic Landmark**

The U.S. *Texas* BB-35 has another notable first, which is actually the main reason this battleship survives today. Her legacy lives on as the first battleship that the United States government named as a National Historic Landmark. In 1983, the Texas State Legislature handed over full control of this battleship and responsibility for its existence to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Taking this task very seriously, TPWD quickly hired skilled architects whose expertise included the proper preservation of this aging battleship.<sup>12</sup> During one of their many inspections, they highly recommended that the ship be dry-docked to enable the crew to complete some major repairs as part of the preservation. After collecting \$15 million from a fund-



*If Texas is permanently dry-docked as she was in 1988-1990 for repairs, the ship would be protected from wide-spread decay and visitors could see her entire hull, keel, and superstructure.*

Photo courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

raising campaign, architects and crew pulled the battleship to the Galveston shipyard, where the process of repairing the highly corroded ship began. This process took fourteen months, bringing *Texas* back to life and restoring her to her 1945 condition.

Deterioration continues to haunt this aging ship. In June 2012 *Texas* “began taking on water at rates as high as 2,000 gallons per minute” from leaks in the hull. TPWD, the Naval Sea Systems Command, the Texas Historical Commission, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the other parties involved in a project to dry-berth the ship, “determined the most critical repairs necessary for the ship and conducted those repairs.” They used funds originally allocated for the Battleship Texas Dry Berth Project to finance this endeavor. By November 2013, approximately a third of the overall work was completed, including almost two thirds of the required work to repair the keel, which represents the ship’s backbone. The longer term goal, however, remains creation of a permanent dry dock once adequate funds can be raised.<sup>13</sup>

Although many areas of the ship still need some tender loving care, one thing is certain—this world war warrior continues to serve the people of the great state for which she was named as she continues to fight for her own survival.

The USS *Texas* is located at 3523 Independence Parkway South, La Porte, Texas. Hours of operation are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. year round. Admission is \$12 for adults, and children under twelve are free. For group rates or additional information, call 281-479-2431 or visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/battleship-texas](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/battleship-texas).



*Johnathan Flerchinger with his service dog, Walter, who was provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs in conjunction with the Wounded Warriors Project.*

**Johnathan Flerchinger** is a small town boy who was born and raised in the great state of Idaho. After graduating from Lewiston High School in the year 2000, he quickly enlisted in the U.S. Navy as an interior communications electrician. He served in areas of operation such as Japan, Korea, Iwo Jima, Lebanon, and the Middle East, to name a few. After injuries ended his military service, he returned to Houston, Texas, with the mindset of pursuing higher education.

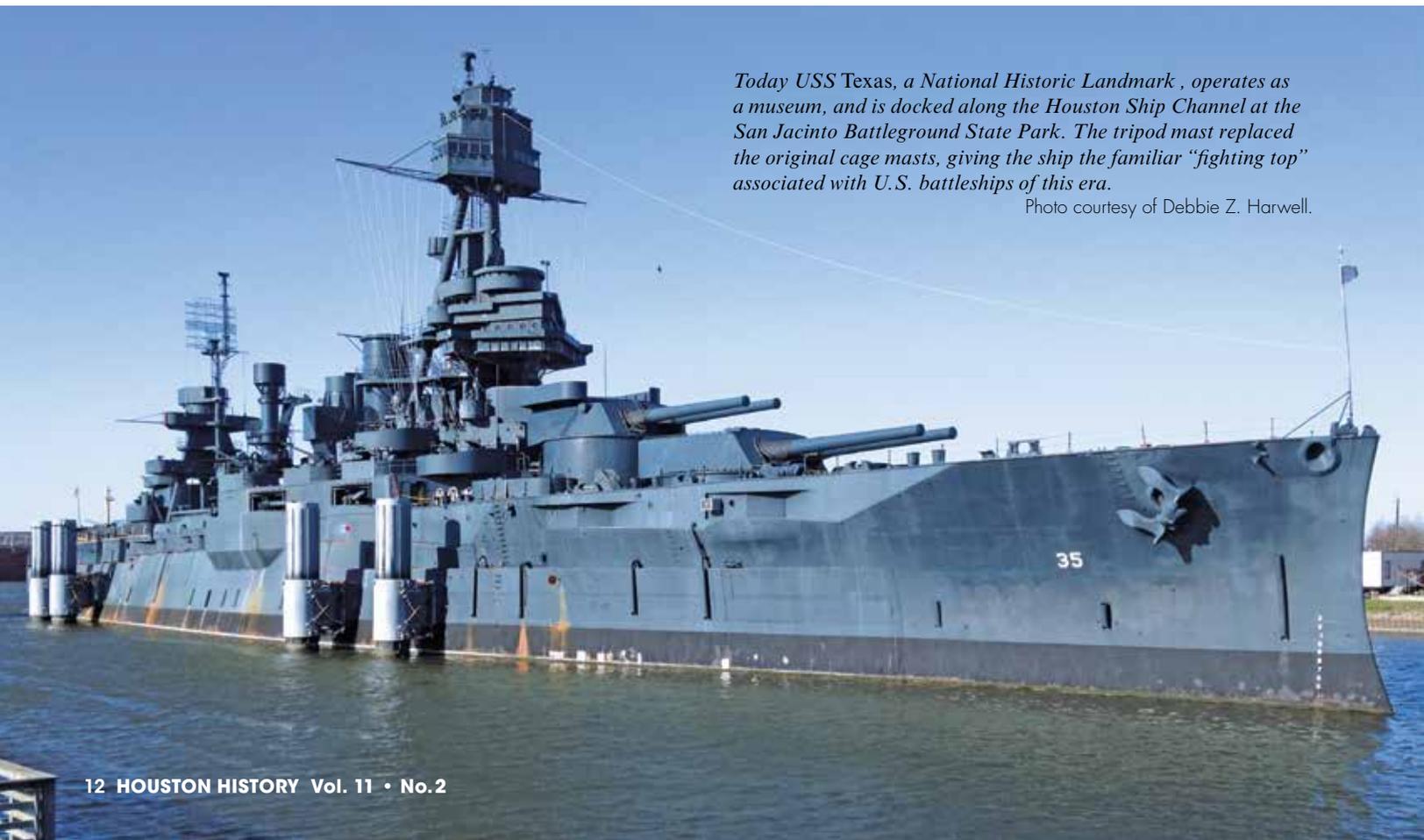
Johnathan is a family man who prefers to spend every possible moment with his wife Michelle and his two sons Dominik (12) and Clayton (born in February 2014). Johnathan will

finish his B.A. in both history and political science at the University of Houston in 2014, at which time he will continue working in the field of politics.

Johnathan’s family has a long history of serving in the United States military, including his brother Christopher Flerchinger who served four years with the Marine Air Wing located in Miramar, California; his father-in-law Robert Montalvo who served two combat tours with the Marine Corps, one in Quang Tri Province and the other in Ga Dang during the heat of the Vietnam War; and his grandfather, John Flerchinger, who served in the U.S. Navy with Helicopter Squadron 2 based out of San Diego, California, in 1951. Last but certainly not least, his wife’s grandfather, Jorge Bravo, served alongside the brave men of the 101st Airborne (The Screaming Eagles) earning both the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his service and injuries received during the invasion of Normandy in 1944.

*Today USS Texas, a National Historic Landmark, operates as a museum, and is docked along the Houston Ship Channel at the San Jacinto Battleground State Park. The tripod mast replaced the original cage masts, giving the ship the familiar “fighting top” associated with U.S. battleships of this era.*

Photo courtesy of Debbie Z. Harwell.



# Discovering Maritime Monuments from World War I

By Jim Saye

*Port side view of the Selma from Pelican Island. White spots at her waterline are fishing boats. The tanker at right is in the shipping lane, headed out to the Gulf.*

Photo courtesy of Herbert W. Boerstler.

Two historically important seafaring monuments dating back to World War I (1914-1919) can be found in the Greater Houston area. The grander of the two is the Battleship *Texas* BB-35, saved from the scrap yard by donations from the people of Texas, and brought here for retirement. Few people realize, however, another World War I monument rests in Galveston Bay.

As the Bolivar Peninsula ferry clears the Galveston landing slips, she gains headway, surging through the wavelets. On the port side passengers can see the mass of Pelican Island, with Seawolf Park and the pavilion. Rounding the tip of the island, the ferry sets her course across the busy ship channel towards Bolivar.

Now, as passengers gaze to their left, they are astonished to see the weather-beaten hulk of a full-size ship, standing motionless in the murky water. When the ferry passes closer, people on the port side stare in wonder. Long ago

abandoned, bleached by sun and sea and countless storms, this mystery ship rises above the waves like a Texas Sphinx.

The onlookers have discovered a “Texas Treasure” – the good ship *SS Selma*. Not just any ship – a concrete ship. A proud veteran of the U.S. Navy, with wartime service in World War I. Just like other ninety-five-year-old veterans, the *SS Selma* (though reluctant to do so) could tell some exciting tales. Tales of dangerous voyages to hazardous ports, of riding out storms and hurricanes, of brief fame as a movie star, of unsung service during a terrible local disaster, of a midnight visit by a barge loaded with contraband treasure . . . and of a “Hollywood ending” with cheering audiences and enduring recognition!

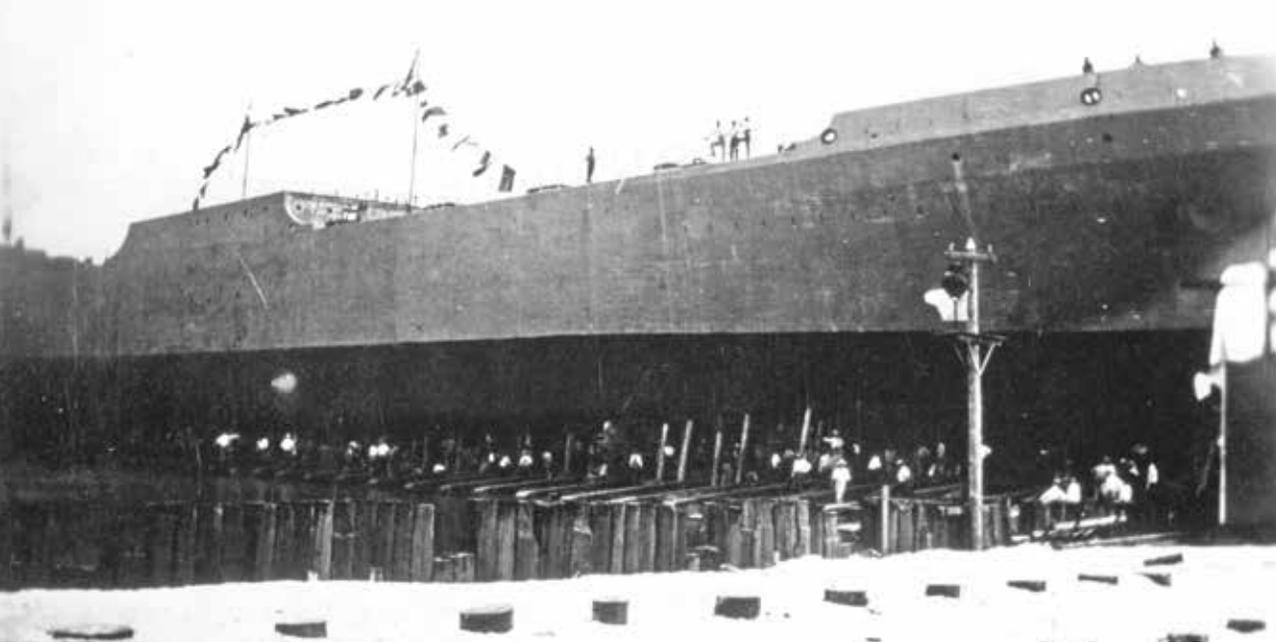
## *Total War on a Global Scale*

World War I was characterized by savage trench fighting in Europe. Newly devised weapons of mass destruction – tanks, airplanes, giant cannon, machine guns, poison gas,



*Selma, underway in the Gulf of Mexico with a full head of steam, trailing a cloud of black smoke, shuttled back and forth between Gulf ports, carrying oil and petroleum products.*

Photo courtesy of Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia.



This view of Selma's port side shows preparation for the ship's sideways launch from the shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. Decorative flags stream from the masts before she splashes into the water starboard side first.

Photo courtesy of the Expanded Shale, Clay, and Slate Institute.

long-range submarines – produced a tragedy of unspeakable suffering. German submarine “wolf-packs” decimated convoys carrying food and other necessities to Great Britain and France, and sunk American-flagged cargo ships.

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and her allies. A woefully unprepared nation set out to mobilize for war. Multitudes of soldiers were drafted who had to be clothed, fed, housed, trained, and armed. Lumber and steel, meat and wheat, guns and ammunition, trucks and tanks were dedicated to the war effort. Then it became apparent that the United States lacked enough ships to transport our forces to the war zone. (In both World War I and II, British ships transported the majority of American soldiers to the European theater.)

Every shipyard on the East Coast worked twenty-four-hour shifts, handicapped by shortages of steel and facilities. Modern, mechanized warfare required vast amounts of petroleum to fuel tanks, airplanes, and machines, thus the nation desperately needed freighters *and* tankers.

### *Ships of Concrete? Preposterous! Concrete won't Float*

The concept of a concrete ship seems strange, but it is not unnatural. While a chunk of concrete (or a bar of steel) thrown into the sea will sink, a concrete (or steel) ship will float so long as it is lighter than the weight of the water it displaces. A ship is essentially a sturdy container filled with air. It will float until the container wall is pierced, allowing water, which is heavier than air, to fill the ship and force out the air. By World War I, shipbuilders had extensive experience building ships of concrete, which was ubiquitous and proved to be a practical material for shipbuilding.

The Government Shipping Board chose the Fred T. Ley Shipbuilding Company of Mobile, Alabama, to build twelve reinforced concrete ships. Time elapsed while the yard made changes in its production procedures and facilities and specially trained its workforce. Often production methods required drastic change when application did not match theoretical plans. The first and largest of these concrete ships was the tanker USS *Selma*. The city of Selma won naming rights by selling more “Liberty Loan” war bonds than any other Alabama city its size.

Hindered by delays, the *Selma* remained under construc-

tion when the World War I Armistice was declared on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918. Work continued on the ship, and the hull was launched on Saturday, June 28, 1919. With wartime restrictions relaxed after the Armistice, the shipyard threw open its gates and a large crowd witnessed the unusual sideways launching. Because of its extraordinarily heavy weight and ponderous size, the *Selma* slid sideways down the launching ways and slammed into the water with a huge splash, marking the first sideways launch of a ship that size into the Gulf of Mexico.

The *Mobile News-Item* reported that the *Selma* was “gaily decorated with flags and bunting for her trip down the launching ways.” While the *Selma*'s launch made headline news in Mobile, the eyes of the world on that historic day focused on the Palace of Versailles, where world leaders gathered to sign the treaty that officially ended the Great War. By the thinnest of margins, *Selma* became a World War I service veteran.

After launching and outfitting, the USS *Selma* was 7,500 tons, 421 feet in length, with a width of fifty-four feet and a depth of thirty-four feet. Her hull tapered from a thickness of five inches on the bottom to four inches on the sides. She had two decks, with a raised forecastle and amidships, two masts, and a round stern. With full cargo she had a displacement of 13,000 tons and a draft of twenty-six feet. Her top speed was optimistically listed as 10.5 knots. A three-cylinder steam engine provided the main propulsion driving a single screw. The crew numbered forty-nine.

### *Post-war Career of a Concrete Tanker*

With no wartime role, the *Selma* (now SS *Selma*) began her service as a tanker, shuttling petroleum products to and from Gulf Coast ports. *Selma* performed successfully until 1920 when she rammed a jetty and tore a sixty-foot slash in her hull while delivering cargo to Tampico, Mexico. Two tugs towed the damaged ship to a shipyard in Galveston, but it lacked the specialized facilities and the craftsmen to make the necessary concrete repairs. After almost two years of futile attempts to repair the *Selma*, the Shipping Board authorized her disposal.

A trench 1,500 feet long and twenty-five feet deep was

dredged in Galveston Bay, near Pelican Island. Three tugs guided the *Selma* from her berth at Pier 21 around Pelican Island to the trench in the flats on the far side. Unexpectedly, she grounded before reaching the trench. *Selma* continued to resist for several days. Finally four tugs and a dredge shoved her into a bed of sand and mud on March 9, 1922. And there she stands to this very day – ninety-two years later!

Galvestonians J. L. Bludworth and Captain J. E. Petersen purchased the ship, and *The Galveston Daily News* reported, “The new owners expect to convert her into a fishing pier and pleasure resort.” They fell short of their expectations and, in 1929, sold the ship to H. G. and B. R. Dalehite, owners of the Galveston Boat Company. Resting serenely in her bed of sand, *Selma* was largely out of sight and out of mind for a couple of decades.

During World War II, rumors circulated of a Nazi spy living on the ship and reporting movements in the Houston Ship Channel to submarines lurking in the Gulf. This seems unlikely because early-on *Selma* became a mecca for fish – and countless fishermen, who cast their lines from the ship’s decks and small boats. Also, Coast Guard cutters continually patrolled the area.

On May 3, 1946, Clesmey N. “Frenchy” LeBlanc bought *Selma* for \$100 in “ten easy payments.” Living in Galveston, Frenchy and his friends spent leisurely days fishing around the ship, returning home with a sizeable catch.

Isom Swift, a fisherman and native of Bolivar Peninsula, also frequented the waters around the *Selma*. His detailed knowledge of those waters characterized that of the seafaring men who live in the Bay Area, and it proved very important on a day of unspeakable tragedy in a neighboring city.

### *Selma Serves in Time of Disaster*

Historically, April 16, 1947, is remembered as the day of the Texas City explosion. On that day a French ship, the *Grandcamp*, stood moored at a Texas City wharf near the Monsanto Chemical Company. A converted World War II American liberty ship, the *Grandcamp* had a huge cargo capacity and was loaded to the Plimsoll lines with cargo and 100-pound paper sacks of ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

*Fire in the hold!* At twelve minutes after nine the *Grandcamp* blew up, destroying Texas City. The next morning, another ship at the docks, also loaded with tons of ammonium nitrate, exploded, increasing the shock and horror.

Texas responded. Massive resources arrived to aid the injured and shelter the survivors. An armada of small boats swarmed in to provide access to harbor areas isolated by debris. Isom Swift was one of the boat captains who piloted through the destruction to provide aid.

To help clear debris from the docks and channels, Isom and other captains loaded their boats with all manner of flotsam and jetsam and carried it away to the deck of the nearby *Selma* for temporary holding. In later years, Isom shared vivid memories of the chain of boats and the men’s endless hours of toil in collecting and loading debris, and transporting it to the *Selma*.

Galveston’s famed “Mosquito Fleet” of commercial fishing vessels provided an example of selfless, unflagging,

dangerous labor worthy of remembrance and commendation. And don’t forget the *Selma* . . . a marine landmark – at the right place, at the right time to serve.

### *The Hermits Convention*

Celina Guyewski recalled her father, Frenchy LeBlanc, decided in 1948 to live aboard the *Selma*, which he owned. His attempts at an oyster farm in the flooded holds below deck did not prosper, but his chickens and goats adapted and multiplied. Frenchy was a congenial and colorful character, popular among the “old salts” who hung out on Galveston’s waterfront.

Christi Mitchell, a Galveston newspaper reporter and columnist, restaurant owner, and world-class publicist, saw an opportunity to use Frenchy and his friends, the “Happy Hermits,” to gain national publicity. He staged a “Hermits Convention” on the *Selma*, with Frenchy as host and emcee. To draw a crowd, Mitchell advertised free beer for all.

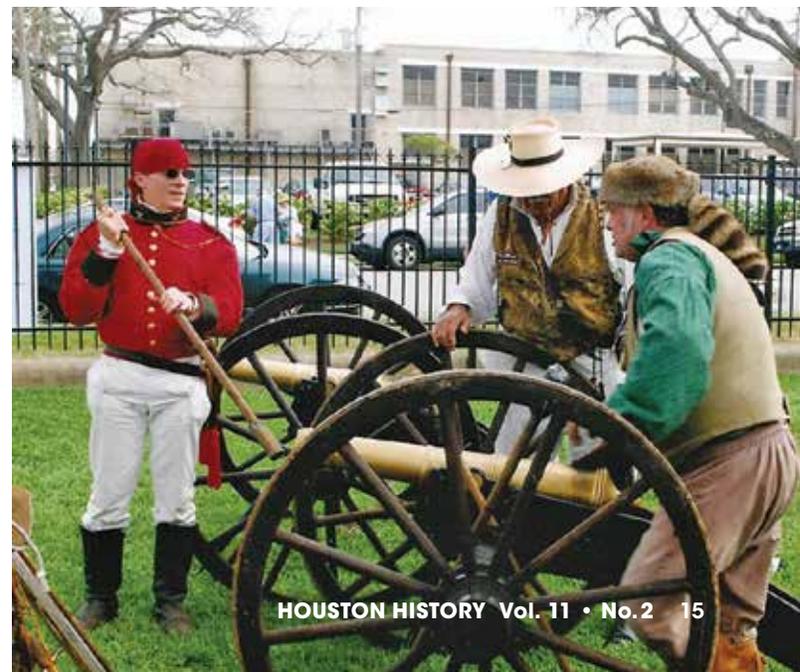
The Happy Hermits turned out in large numbers. The *Selma*’s deck boasted a rowdy crowd of grizzled ancient mariners that ranged from the whimsical to the eccentric, even bizarre. All guzzling free beer, shouting, singing, and pushing each other overboard. A grand spectacle. Which was (as planned) caught on film by both Fox Movietone and Universal News and shown as “short subjects” in movie theaters from coast-to-coast. A publicity coup for Galveston!

### *Buried Treasure*

When Texas Attorney General Will Wilson closed down illegal gambling in Galveston County in 1957, he delegated the disposal of hundreds of confiscated slot machines to a local authority who arranged to have the Texas Rangers load them on a barge in the dark of night. After transporting the slot machines around Pelican Island, the Rangers pushed them into the Bay between the island and the *Selma*.

*At the annual Selma birthday bash, Texas Army Colonels Tony Emmitte (left), Earl Shanks, and Sam Martin (in raccoon cap) load and fire the cannon, replicas of the famous “Twin Sisters” in the Battle of San Jacinto. As a safety precaution, the Galveston Fire Department has a fire truck and crew on standby.*

Photo courtesy of Jim Saye.



The problem was considered solved – until some of the slot machines rose to the surface and floated into the ship channel. That made the five o'clock news!

### Official Recognition for the *Selma*

After Frenchy LeBlanc died in 1964 at the age of eighty-nine, ownership of the *Selma* passed through several hands before reaching A. Pat Daniels. In the late 1930s, after studying at the University of Texas, Daniels began a distinguished newspaper career as a reporter on *The Galveston Daily News*. He became city editor in 1941, before being drafted into the Army. After World War II, Daniels worked for newspapers in the Houston area. He wrote several books, including *Bolivar! Gulf Coast Peninsula*. Writing that book, Daniels researched the *Selma's* history and became concerned that this monument was neglected and forgotten. When he learned in 1992 it was for sale, Daniels jumped at this opportunity to “own a piece of Texas history.”

Daniels prepared the extensive documentation necessary for government officials to include the *Selma* on the National Register of Historic Places. Meanwhile, his presentation to the Texas Antiquities Committee resulted in *Selma's* designation as a Texas State Archeological Landmark.

At this time, macular degeneration was dimming Daniels's eyesight so listening to music, especially jazz and classic pop tunes, became his favorite recreation. Every Wednesday night he dined at the restaurant where the Over-the-Hill-Gang performed. Listening to this jolly band of senior citizens, featuring a hot piano, slide trombone, clarinet, trumpet, bass, and drums, became the happiest time of Daniels' week. The masterful drummer of the band was seven-star General Carroll Lewis, a Texas legend as the founder and commander of The Texas Army.

The general and Daniels had a longtime friendship, and the two carried on lengthy conversations during the band's breaks. One night the general bemoaned the loss of The Texas Army's flagship, the Goodyear Blimp *America*. “It just got up and flew away,” General Lewis remarked.

In the twinkling of an eye, Daniels said, “Problem solved! I've got a flagship for you that will never fly away!” With a handshake, the good ship *Selma* became the Flagship of The Texas Army.

### Raising the Flag on the *Selma*

Daniels organized a “Birthday Party for the *Selma*,” for Saturday, April 24, 1993. The weather was a disappointment. The sky remained dark all day; rain fell intermittently on the freeway to Galveston. Fierce, howling winds made the dash across the Causeway frightening. The Texas Army found the choppy waves on Galveston Bay too rough for its fleet of small boats. The “raising of the flag” on the *Selma* was scratched, and all hands gathered for a lawn party at Galveston's historic Edward T. Austin House on Market Street. The fifty or so guests included a blue-ribbon list of newspaper writers and editors, business owners, advertising executives, historians, family and friends, plus a large delegation from The Texas Army led by General Lewis.

This was Daniels's party to introduce the *Selma* and celebrate with his friends, but the general carried the day. Resplendent in his 1836 officer's uniform with sword, he

conducted the ceremonies declaring the *Selma* to be the official Flagship of The Texas Army. Then he led The Texas Army Colonels, all attired in 1836-era clothing, in firing musket volleys and cannon salvos.

This party continued on Sunday, June 13, 1993, when The Army reached the *Selma*, boarded her, and raised a Texas flag. A film crew from KUHT-Channel 8 recorded this event subsequently shown on the local news.

Following the success of the first *Selma* “Birthday Party,” Daniels carried it forward, holding the twenty-first annual party in May 2013. Over the years, these unique events have attained a semi-traditional character.

The fourth party featured an unveiling of the Texas Historical Commission's Official Texas Historical Marker honoring the *Selma*. The Texas Army fired a musket salute to the ship before the gathering adjourned to the Austin House for refreshments and music provided by Dr. Paul Cloutier and The Texas Army Band. The marker stands in Seawolf Park on Pelican Island where visitors can see the *Selma* from the fishing pier.

The expansive porch of the antebellum Austin House has served as a bandstand for a variety of folk and Texas-Western musicians. Houston native and nationally known ragtime piano virtuoso “Pinky” Hull entertained at a couple of the parties. “Hickory, Dickory and Doc,” a trio of string musicians from The Texas Army, serenaded the gathering several times.

As the years passed, Daniels became legally blind, barely able to see at all. Thus the *Selma* parties featured more music, especially after JoAnna Jetton, leader of the Fun Country Band, composed a song about the ship. Each year, JoAnna and veteran country-western vocalist Frank Haley assembled an unlikely band of talented musicians: Louis Rezin, washtub bass; Lou Wilcox, drums; Mike Evans, keyboard piano; Earl Williams, trombone; Howard



*Helen Mooty, director of the Galveston County Museum, gave her impersonation of Jane Long, “Mother of Texas,” at the 2013 Selma party. She is joined by Bonnie Cox, an active supporter of the event.*

Photo courtesy of Jim Saye.

Hendrix, clarinet; John Wardell, trumpet; and sometimes others. They cover the lawn with incomparable music!

Texas history is the basic theme of the *Selma* parties. Col. John Martin recounted the history and activities of The Texas Army. A presentation on the history of the Edward T. Austin House, built in 1852, explained that this stately mansion has retained its “Old South” charm, remaining undamaged during the Civil War and withstanding the many storms and hurricanes that have ravaged Galveston . . . until Ike, which flooded the ground floor with brackish water to a depth of five feet!

In accordance with the long-range plan, William “Bill” Cox became the *Selma*'s owner when Pat Daniels died on July 17, 2011. Bill and Pat were close friends who had served together on the Harris County Historical Commission for twenty-five years. A prominent Houston businessman, Bill owned an accounting business and served on government committees in Houston and Austin. He is a sixth-generation Texan, proud of his pioneer forbears. In honor of extraordinary public service, Bill, a former bomber pilot in World War II, was commissioned an admiral in the Texas Navy by the governor in 1985.

### *Drumroll, please, for the big “Hollywood Ending”*

Pat Daniels conceived the first *Selma* party as a reward for people who helped him gain Texas and national recognition for the ship. He envisioned the celebration as a congenial group of knowledgeable people chatting about Texas history, concrete ships, and the *Selma*. Gen. Carroll Lewis wanted to christen a new flagship for The Texas Army. Ray Simpson thought that a gathering of newspaper writers and editors, and historians would stimulate appreciation of his historic house.

The first party, on April 24, 1993, was a rousing success. So much so that it triggered an explosion of serendipity that produced a new type of *Selma* party that was fun, loud, musical, and history-related. A unique party celebrating a partially sunken concrete ship.

Fabulous people came from London, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco to enjoy the lawn parties. The legend grew. The “ugly duckling” concrete hulk gained excitement, even a wee bit of glamor! More like a Phoenix than a swan, but forgotten no longer.

When the party on Saturday, May 3, 2014, draws to a close, we can rest assured that once again the good ship *Selma*, an authentic World War I Maritime Monument, will have received sincere, and *loud*, birthday recognition and honors, as befitting a ninety-five-year-old lady.<sup>1</sup>



*The Edward T. Austin House, decorated for the 2013 Selma party with bunting and the six flags that have flown over Texas, is owned by Ray Simpson, proprietor of Simpson's Gallery in Houston. Fun Country Band is spread across the porch. A hundred cheering people are seated on the lawn.*

Photo courtesy of Paul and Marcia Daniels.



**Jim Saye** is an honorary captain for the SS *Selma*. A native of Montezuma, Georgia, he joined the Navy Reserve and “was in heaven” repairing propeller planes. After attending Officer Candidate School, LTJG Saye served two years at sea during the Korean War. Spending winters in Cuba and summers in Greenland, his ship, the USS *Thuban*, carried

twenty-four Higgins boats and conducted training exercises for amphibious landings to bring Marines ashore. On one of the trips, Saye spoke to the Cuban Military Academy about amphibious warfare. The captain appointed Saye, who had a bachelor's degree in law from Emory University, as the ship's legal officer. Finding his trial duties often unpleasant, Saye opted for a career change when he left the Navy, obtaining a degree in advertising from the University of Georgia.

He joined McCann-Erickson, Inc., advertising agency in Houston in late 1955. He wrote radio and TV commercials, magazine ads, and a plethora of sales promotion materials for the agency's largest client—Humble Oil & Refining Co. Subsequently, Saye eventually founded his own agency in 1966, and in 1972 he won an award from the Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge for a series of patriotic mailers he wrote for a Houston letter shop. After writing many articles for Texas publications, he closed his agency in 2000 and concentrated on writing cover stories for *Cowboy Sports & Entertainment* magazine. He has written several articles for *Houston History*, including one on the USS *Houston* (CA-30) in 2005.

# Medal of Honor Recipients from the Houston Area

by Lindsay Scovil Dove



*The Medal of Honor is the highest military award granted to members of the United States Armed Forces. Over 3,400 medals have been conferred upon deserving military personnel who “distinguish[ed] themselves through conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty.”<sup>1</sup>*

*The following profiles highlight three of the Houston area’s many recipients.*

**CLARENCE EUGENE SASSER** was just twenty years old when his actions earned him the Medal of Honor. His enrollment at the University of Houston had kept him out of the draft, but as the Vietnam War progressed Sasser dropped his student status to part-time. The Army subsequently drafted him, but he prefers to think that he “volunteered to be drafted.” He headed to Fort Sam Houston where he trained to become a combat medic.



By September 1967, Sasser was in Vietnam. Assigned to an infantry unit, he regularly treated gunshot wounds, shrapnel injuries, and jungle-related skin issues while on patrol. In January 1968, Sasser’s unit was backing up those on the front. “We thought we had an easy time for a change,” he recalled.<sup>2</sup> The first two days of the engagement proved relatively simple, but on day three they received orders to head to the front. Helicopters took the group to a rice field under heavy fire. Sasser was shot in the leg as he exited the aircraft at roughly 11:00 a.m. on January 10. The next hours turned into the longest day of his life. The soldiers fought against enemy snipers, mortars, and booby traps; and the wounded Sasser attempted to tend to as many injuries as possible. He had become friends with the men in his unit and felt a responsibility toward them, saying, “There’s no way that I could have, in my mind, not went to see about someone when they hollered medic, or when they called Doc.”<sup>3</sup>

That day and overnight, Sasser sustained painful shrapnel injuries, including two that immobilized his legs. A target for snipers, he still continued to tend to his fellow wounded soldiers for hours until just before day break, helicopters evacuated them.

President Richard Nixon presented the Medal of Honor to Sasser on March 7, 1969, to reward him for his “extraordinary heroism” as a combat medic. After his tour ended, Sasser completed his degree and worked at the Department of Veteran Affairs in Houston for much of his career. Looking back on his service, Sasser notes, “I am particularly proud that my medal was for saving lives, rather than destroying lives. That’s not to say anything against the guys that were combat soldiers, or whatever, that killed people and of course received the medal. I do not mean to insult or belittle their accomplishment.... It’s just that I’m particularly proud that mine was for being a medic and was for saving lives.”<sup>4</sup>

**RAYMOND LARRY KNIGHT** was a First Lieutenant in the United States Air Force and served in World War II. He piloted numerous flights over enemy holdings in Northern Italy. On April 24 and 25, 1945, Knight led multiple missions to attack enemy aircraft hidden in preparation for an attack against the Allies. According to the Medal of Honor citation, “Ordering his fellow pilots to remain aloft, he skimmed



All photos courtesy of United States Armed Forces.

the ground through a deadly curtain of anti-aircraft fire to reconnoiter the field, locating eight German aircraft hidden beneath heavy camouflage.” Knight personally led the attack, destroying five of seven enemy planes. Upon returning to base, he immediately volunteered for another mission against the same enemy holding. Despite his plane being hit, Knight destroyed eight German aircraft. The following day he returned to wipe out three more, but his plane was severely damaged in the fight. In trying to return the much-needed aircraft to his base, Knight encountered dangerous weather and was killed when his limping aircraft crashed into the Appennines Mountains.

The Medal of Honor was awarded to Knight posthumously for his “gallant action” that “eliminated the German aircraft which were poised to wreak havoc on Allied forces pressing to establish the first firm bridgehead across the Po River; his fearless, daring, and voluntary self-sacrifice averted possible heavy casualties among ground forces and the resultant slowing on the German drive culminated in the collapse of enemy resistance in Italy.” Knight is buried in the Houston National Cemetery.

**RICHARD ALLEN ANDERSON** grew up in Houston, graduated from M. B. Smiley High School in 1966, and attended San Jacinto College. In 1968, he enlisted in the



U.S. Marine Corps and attended combat training and Sea School in San Diego, California. One month after completing training, Anderson was deployed to Vietnam and promoted to lance corporal.<sup>7</sup> Anderson and his team came under heavy enemy fire while on patrol on August 24, 1969. He sustained multiple injuries, including gunshot

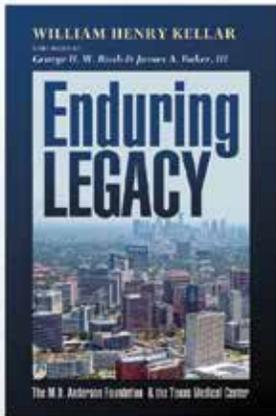
wounds to both legs, yet he continued to fire back at the enemy. In an effort to protect his fellow Marines when an enemy grenade landed nearby, Anderson “immediately rolled over and covered the lethal weapon with his body, absorbing the full effects of the detonation.” He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his “indomitable courage, inspiring initiative, and selfless devotion to duty.”<sup>8</sup> Anderson is buried in Forest Park Cemetery in Houston.

Lindsay Scovil Dove is a master’s student in public history at the University of Houston where she interns for *Houston History*.

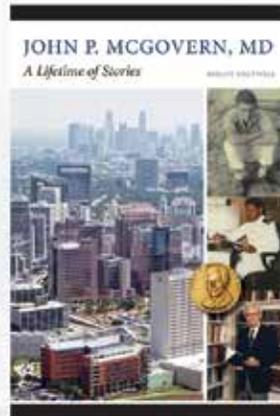
To read more about other Houston area Medal of Honor recipients, please visit our website at [www.houstonhistorymagazine.org](http://www.houstonhistorymagazine.org).

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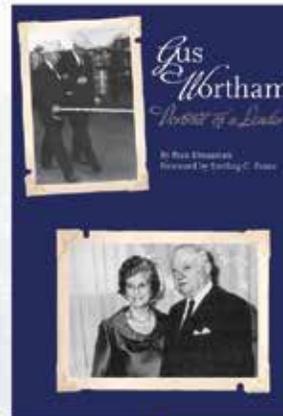
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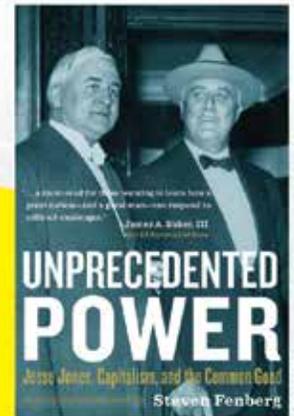
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# IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY: UH CONNECTIONS

By Aimee L. Bachari and Debbie Z. Harwell

From the University of Houston's first U. S. Navy Reserve Vocational School to the thousands of service men and women who have attended UH under the G.I. Bill for the past seventy years, UH has a proud tradition of students, faculty, and staff who have served in the armed forces. Today the university works to ease the transition for veterans returning to school with Veterans Services Programs such as the Military Entrepreneurship Program and the Camo to Classroom to Career Program. Though we could never adequately cover all of the veterans with UH connections and their heroic efforts, we want to express our appreciation for their service by highlighting members from each branch of the military.

## ARMY: MAJOR GENERAL BARRYE PRICE, GIVING TIME

"Time is the one asset, the only resource that we all have to give," Major General Barrye Price said at the annual Bauer Alumni Association meeting. "We all get to invest twenty-four hours of a day." Having graduated in 1985 from the University of Houston's College of Business Administration, Price earned his M.A. in history from Texas A&M University in 1994, and in 1997 he became the first African American to obtain a Ph.D. in history in the 136-year history of A&M. In 2004, he earned an M.S. in national security strategy from the National Defense University. When speaking at a C. T. Bauer College of Business leadership class about important but underrepresented African American figures in history, Price said, "Education continues to be the great equalizer."



Major General Barrye Price with his son William, his wife Tracy, and retired astronaut Bonnie Dunbar, head of the UH STEM Center at the 2013 Freedom Foundation Awards luncheon.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Clark.

Price received his commission as brigadier general at Fort Knox, where he began his military journey along with his best friend right out of high school ROTC. Price's military career included assignments at U.S. bases, the Pentagon, and the White House, as well as postings in Kuwait and Germany. Some of Price's military awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, five Meritorious Service Medals, Joint Commendation Medal, two Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, National Defense Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

From 1999 to 2000, Price served on President Clinton's "Mississippi Delta Task Force" to revitalize the 207-county, seven-state region that comprises the Mississippi River flood plain and on the President and First Lady's Task Force on "Raising Responsible and Resourceful Teenagers." Price also published *Against All Enemies Foreign and Domestic: A Study of Urban Unrest and Federal Intervention within the United States* (2001).

A former professor of military history at West Point, Price has a passion for education, saying, the "greatest compliment is to call your professor 'teacher.' Every time I meet with students I am blown away." Price endowed the Elaine Yvonne Cook-Price Memorial Scholarship within the Bauer College of Business at UH. He received the 2007 Distinguished African American Alumnus Award from the UH African American Alumni Association and the 2008 Distinguished Alumnus Award from the UH Alumni Association.

Price is married to the former Tracy Benford, a medical doctor and fellow native of Gary. They have a son, William Garrison Price. On April 5, 2013, the Army announced the nomination of Brigadier General Price for the rank of Major General, which was recently confirmed. He currently serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff, G1, Army Forces Command, in Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.<sup>1</sup>

## ARMY: KELI CHEVALIER, TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH

Houstonian Keli Chevalier was looking for a way to pay for college when an Army recruiter happened to call her. She wanted to go to France and agreed to be a linguist—until she found out it meant jumping out of planes. Instead she signed on to repair biomedical equipment, leading to an al-



*Keli Chevalier has taken her experience with PTSD and turned it into a strength to help others. Still a “girlie girl,” she says, “I curate fashion ... my motto is ‘buy the damn shoes!’”*

*Photo courtesy of Keli Chevalier.*

most twenty-year military career during which she achieved the rank of major. Today she operates a non-profit directed at helping women like her cope with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Chevalier’s first assignment took her to Fort Sam Houston where she became a spokesperson for new biomedical equipment. She so impressed her colonel that he enrolled her in the Green to Gold Scholarship Program, which enabled her to complete her B.A. in English at the University of Houston. In 2000, she went to Kosovo where she ran a transition center that brought troops in and out of the region. Just a few months later, 9/11 changed U.S. military priorities.

One of the first logistics units deployed to Iraq, Chevalier’s unit set up the infrastructure that laid the groundwork for the 2009 surge. Under attack from the moment their plane touched the ground, she found herself at their first campsite running from bunker to bunker seeking shelter and finding each one full of people who looked back at her but did not make room for one more.

Battling enemy fire and sandstorms, they reached their base in April 2003, and life was just beginning to have a sense of normalcy when a non-commissioned officer came into her tent one night and raped her. She made the difficult decision to submit to a medical examination and report him. Questioned repeatedly about the assault, she was forced to relive it again and again. The assailant, a “good soldier,” received a demotion and dishonorable discharge, but she was shunned nonetheless. Unlike many women, she

luckily found “some-one” who took her complaint seriously.

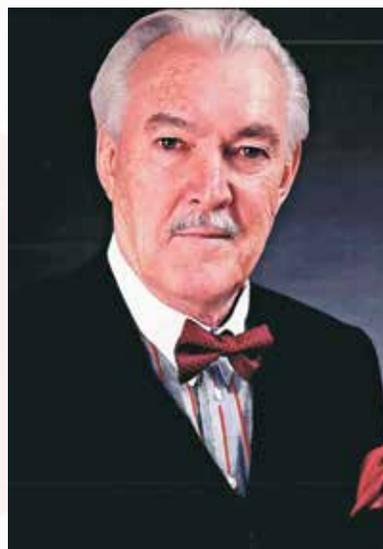
Chevalier entered the captain’s career course and served in Japan, where she met her husband and put her UH degree to use, starting the first Army newspaper in Okinawa, called the *Island Knight*, in 2005. She spent time in the Reserves before being called for a second tour in Iraq in 2009.

She recalls how much Iraq had changed since her first tour. The biggest danger was the threat of suicide bombers, unheard of in 2003, with enough explosives to take out a bus or a whole block. While in Iraq, Chevalier was injured and, at the end of her deployment, had to have surgery to fuse her spine, ending her military career.

Chevalier is deeply concerned about the ravages of PTSD, which claims a life every hour from suicide in this country. Her personal difficulties with PTSD led Chevalier to create Trauma to Triumph, a non-profit serving the needs of returning women soldiers, particularly those who do not have the support from family and friends that she received. In 2012, the overburdened Veteran’s Administration processed 6,000 PTSD claims in Houston, but only one percent of those people received compensation. Trauma to Triumph gives them a sense of security, the chance to talk to other women who understand where they have been, and helps transition them to civilian life before they run out of money and leave. It assists with counseling, housing, job training, job placement, and living expenses.

The Trauma to Triumph website shows a photograph of a woman’s muscular bare back, with a scar running top to bottom. It is Chevalier’s scar. It represents her victory over the PTSD she experienced from being raped and from combat. She wants women to know, “You can be scarred, you can be wounded, you can have scars that you can’t see, but you can still be strong, and you can still be beautiful, and you can still be proud of who you are.”<sup>22</sup>

Visit <http://traumatotriumphinc.org>. To read the full text and hear excerpts from Keli Chevalier’s interview, visit [www.houstonhistorymagazine.org](http://www.houstonhistorymagazine.org).



*Today, Clem Beard, who was first inspired to become a Marine by images he saw in the movies, is an actor himself.*

*Photo courtesy of Clem Beard.*

### **MARINES: CLEM BEARD, FROM FOOTBALL FIELD TO BATTLEFIELD**

Clem Beard’s inspiration to become a Marine came in 1949 at age seven when he watched *The Sands of Iwo Jima* at the El Lasso Theater in his hometown of Uvalde, Texas. His real heroes, though, were “the boys” who had come home from World War II to tell their stories, and those like his uncle who was killed by a sniper in Okinawa. In 1955, at age thirteen he again found himself at the El Lasso Theater watching

a group of Marines going from boot camp to the precarious battle for Guadalcanal and on to Tarawa in *Battle Cry*. “I wanted to be a Marine,” he recalls.

UH recruited Beard to play football in 1960 and he played in the 1961 Tangerine Bowl. In the summer of 1962, he joined the Marine Corps Reserve. The following year under the leadership of West Pointer Bill Yeoman, Beard was football captain. He received his journalism degree in 1965 before leaving for Officer Candidate School at Quantico, Virginia. After completing his Infantry Officer Training in May 1966, Beard was sent to Vietnam, First Marine Division, as a platoon commander.

He received the Navy Commendation Medal for Valor in combat for his actions on December 14, 1966. He remembers, “We fought all night through and when the NVA/VC broke contact at first light, those who’d lost their lives littered the battlefield. Christmas wrappings, sent from home and shredded by incoming mortar fire that night, littered the defensive wire in an innocent, gay profusion. Poignant.” Recalling friends who lost their lives in Vietnam, he notes, “I have often said the Marine Corps is firstly a religion and secondly a fighting force. You have to believe. You have to have faith. Never can the faith falter when the chips are down.” These were men who believed.

Beard, who retired as a major, spent seventeen years in the active and reserve Marines Corps. He went on to become an attorney and is now an actor, doing film, stage, television, and voiceovers. Nevertheless, he is still a Marine and closes with an ancient Marine Corps officer’s mess night toast, “...the Marines Corps, where every day is a holiday and every meal a feast ... the Corps, the Corps ... I think I’ll ship for thirty more.”<sup>3</sup>



Gene Tulich, a Vietnam veteran and chair of the Houston Military Affairs Committee, helped save Ellington Air Force Base from closure.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Clark.

oped the Pacific Area Intelligence Center.

With Tulich’s assignment as the Coast Guard Coordinator for the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force in Houston and Operation Alliance headquartered in El Paso, he coordinated drug trafficking and smuggling investigations throughout Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and along the southwest border with federal, state, and

local law enforcement. After his retirement in 1988 through 2001, Tulich taught government and political science as an adjunct professor at the University of Houston, where he worked toward his doctorate (ABD). Governor Rick Perry appointed him Commissioner on the Texas Military Preparedness Commission in January 2006, and Tulich provided advice on military matters until he completed his service in 2011.

Among his many recognitions, Commander Tulich has received three Navy Commendation Medals with Combat Distinguishing Device, three Coast Guard Commendation Medals, Coast Guard Achievement Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, and National Defense Service Medal. He was awarded the Coast Guard Swivel Shot Award for enhancing and enriching the lives of the Coast Guard Family and Community. The Texas Navy appointed him an admiral, and the 75th Mission Command Training Division of the U.S. Army made him an honorary colonel.

Tulich’s wife, Joan Swanson Tulich, also served and retired as a commander in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps and was a commissioned a Yellow Rose of Texas for her service.

Tulich now serves the Houston community as chairman of the Houston Military Affairs Committee. As deputy director of the Ellington Field Task Force involved in the Base Realignment and Closure processes regarding the Texas Air National Guard’s 147th Fighter Wing, he saved Ellington from closure. Instead, it went from 1,500 active, reserve, and National Guard personnel to 6,000. He serves in several community organizations including the Greater Houston Partnership, Houston USO, Board of Military Officers Association of America Houston Area, and the City of Houston Veterans Park. After serving his country, Tulich continues to serve his community as an unpaid volunteer—demonstrating his commitment to Houston.<sup>4</sup>

#### **AIR FORCE: RICHARD JENNINGS, “DOING WHAT I LIKED TO DO”**

Born at the Jacksonville Naval Air Station after World War II, Richard Jennings moved to Houston when he was fourteen. Fortuitously, he enrolled at the University of Houston in 1964, setting the course for his life to come. A member of the Army ROTC at UH, Richard became discouraged when it revoked a promise to let him go to law school, so he joined the Air Force after graduation. At the beginning of his senior year in August 1968, he met Joan Matthews while helping with freshman orientation. Originally attracted to Jennings’s brother, Joan soon had a change of heart and married Richard in June 1969. One night the newlyweds sat in a theater watching the opening scene of *Midnight Cowboy* showing the dirt streets of Big Spring, Texas, and they agreed they hoped they would not be sent there; but that is exactly where they went.

Jennings served in the Air Force from June 1969 to August 1978 at bases in Texas and Florida. After training as a pilot on propeller planes and jets, he “blossomed” flying the supersonic jet (T-38). He went straight from student to instructor, later teaching pilots to become instructors themselves. He participated in Operation Homecoming for POWs returning from Vietnam in 1973 and requalified them as pilots. At that time when pilots flew one hundred missions,



*Richard and Joan Jennings first met at the University of Houston and married ten months later. After nine years in the Air Force, they decided to make the transition to civilian life.*

Photo courtesy of Richard Jennings.

a ceremony was held and they got to go home. Jennings worked to reenact the 100th Mission celebration for these pilots, providing the closure they missed as POWs.

Jennings later served as a wing operations officer and as a foreign training officer. In that capacity, he and Joan hosted Israeli, Jordanian, and Saudi Arabian pilots, the first time these pilots had met in peace.

Since leaving the Air Force, Jennings has spent his career serving Houston. He served as chair of the Ambassador's Program to retain membership for the Greater Houston Partnership, and as board member and chair of Leadership Houston. He worked for corporations and non-profits to maximize philanthropic giving. With the March of Dimes, he secured over \$24 million in eight years and pushed for legislation that expanded newborn screenings. At the Arthritis Foundation he increased fundraising, expanded adult programs, and created the Kids Get Arthritis Too program. Today Jennings runs JRJ Consulting, which helps other groups benefit from his skills in organizational development, non-profit management, and corporate philanthropy.<sup>5</sup>

### **NAVY: LAWRENCE SCHULZE, FULFILLING A LIFELONG DREAM**

As a young boy, Lawrence Schulze was filled with admiration for his father and uncles who each represented one of the three spears during D-Day operations. His father, Staff Sergeant John Schulze served in the Army's 38th Infantry Division (mechanized) going through North Africa and the Ardennes, fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, and liberating Paris. His uncle, Sergeant Bud Howes participated in the Normandy Invasion but never talked about his experiences. The other uncle, Corporal Francis Dresser, fought through Leyte and Okinawa with the 96th Infantry Division

(the Deadeyes) and was awarded the Bronze Star. Schulze's paternal grandfather also served his country as a captain. These great men of the Greatest Generations inspired Schulze to serve his country. He wanted to be a pilot, but the armed forces did not take pilots who wore glasses. So, he went to college and, as they say, life got in the way.

In 2010, Schulze, an associate professor of industrial engineering at the University of Houston, happened to read a note from the Engineering Dean's Office: Wanted – Navy Campus Liaison Officer. Schulze responded and LT Terry Turner of the Navy Recruiting District Houston contacted him. After the men talked, Schulze was given a choice of two capacities to affiliate with the U.S. Navy. He chose to become an active reservist in pay status (one weekend a month and two weeks of training), wearing the uniform at least once per week, and representing the U.S. Navy on campus, stating, "If I am going to recruit students to be officers in the U.S. Navy, I ought to know what it is like to be a U.S. Naval Officer." He called his Uncle Francis for advice, since his father and Uncle Bud had passed on, and asked "Do you think it is a good idea to affiliate with the Navy as a campus liaison officer?" Uncle Francis responded, "You're a fool if you don't."

LTJG Schulze was commissioned in the U.S. Navy on October 14, 2010, at the Cullen College of Engineering. Since his commissioning, he has brought over 250 contacts as potential officers to the Navy Recruiting District Houston, and all of the student applicants he recommended have matriculated to the Navy as officers. LTJG Schulze has participated in familiarity visits aboard the USS *Memphis* (LA Class Submarine SSN-691) and USS *Stennis* (CVN-71), Seal Base Coronado, and Naval Base San Diego; all required leadership courses; and the implementation of Six Sigma in the U.S. Navy's Lovell Federal Health Care Center in Great Lakes, Illinois. Mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012 and returned in 2013, LTJG Schulze is currently the operational support officer, training officer and N7 (Training) department head for the Operational Support Unit, Naval Operational Support Center Houston. He represents the U.S. Navy at UH as the Navy Campus Liaison Officer. His door is always open to those interested in leadership opportunities with the Navy in either active or reservist capacity.<sup>6</sup>



*Lawrence Schulze, UH associate professor of industrial engineering, has fulfilled his dream to serve in the military as the UH Campus Liaison Officer for the U.S. Navy.*

Photo courtesy of Nancy Clark.

Aimee L. Bachari is associate editor of *Houston History*, and Debbie Z. Harwell is its managing editor.

# ON TRACK: Living History through Tanks at the Museum of the American G.I.

*By Jon Fairchild*

A cannon barrel aimed at the sky breaks the gently sloping plains, the steel frame of a behemoth of a tank standing guard as sentinel. Nearby, a platoon of men works frantically to restore another tank: the sound of mechanical clanging, of repair duties, of engines rumbling, and of cannon firing rises through the air. Some men are wounded; a mechanic working on the tank had his finger badly mauled by metal as he worked. Yet dedication to the cause presses them onward. The work must be done, and quickly, to prepare for the assault.

Where, and what, exactly is this assault? Doughboys providing desperately needed relief to beleaguered French and British allies in World War I? American G.I.s and tankmen pushing across the fields of France to liberate

Paris in World War II? Perhaps U.S. Marines defending against the threat of communism in the name of containment in Korea and Vietnam? No, this tank and the garage nearby where restoration efforts proceed are located in College Station, Texas. The year is 2013. The assault these men are preparing for is the 15th Annual Open House for the Museum of the American G.I., where a host of visitors will descend upon the museum in March 2014 to enjoy the Living History Day display of their excellent collection of American military vehicles.<sup>1</sup>

The museum, which incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit museum in 2001, is the brainchild of founder and president Brent Mullins.<sup>2</sup> Brent's interest stems from a long history of collecting militaria, dating back to his youth. Originally, he



collected American military uniforms. Once his collection grew, he sold the uniforms to move on to larger, grander things, restoring his first military vehicle in 1976. Though the Jeep he restored may seem a far cry from the massive tanks that fill multiple garages on the museum grounds, it sparked an interest, which has filled him for decades, growing more expensive in scale.

His hobby eventually evolved into dream made reality, a personal collection worth millions of dollars. Of the tanks in his collection, each is worth anywhere from \$250,000 to upwards of \$500,000 – and the various artillery pieces, trucks, and half-tracks are also worth a considerable sum.

While establishing this impressive cache of armored vehicle history, Mullins served his nation with pride in the U.S. Marines Corp Reserve from 1980 to 1989, married Leisha Mullins in 1987, and opened up Mullins Jeep Parts to fuel his various restoration efforts. The sheer volume of parts located on site is mind boggling. From fuel cans to tank treads, seat covers to cannon barrels, every part one can imagine fills the building's halls. Brent or the museum own all but two of the vehicles; an M18 Hellcat tank destroyer and an M4 Sherman medium tank have independent, private owners. Yet the most impressive aspect of the museum's collection is not the size or the value but the labor of love that goes into preserving and restoring these artifacts for historical memory.

Though the concept of a museum honoring the memory of veterans through their equipment, uniforms, and vehicles is not unique, the implementation certainly is. Leisha Mullins and Mark Hawthorne were gracious enough to grant a personal guided tour of the facility, explaining just how the Museum of the American G.I. stands a tier above the competition. The guiding principal of the museum is recovering the memories and sharing the stories of American veterans through the concept of "living history" – representing history through reenactment, rather than relying simply on static displays. Living history museums, since the emergence of Colonial Williamsburg in the 1930s, have entertained and educated the public through use of artifacts, reenactments, and activities to recreate the past for visitors.<sup>3</sup>

For the Museum of the American G.I. in particular, this means not just having an immobile steel hulk on display but taking a vehicle and restoring it to its original functionality. Leisha noted how important a complete restoration is to living history, to see how the vehicle functioned inside and out, rather than doing solely cosmetic work on the frame. At the Museum of the American G.I., these vehicles represent an unfolding story. Visitors can "come out and see

*This M18 Hellcat tank is one of many tanks on display inside the Museum of the American G.I. The collection includes a host of other vehicles, from trucks and Jeeps to boats and helicopters, uniforms, and other items of interest that were used in wars since the turn of the twentieth century.*

Photo courtesy of Jon Fairchild.



*The Renault FT-17 tank is a World War I light tank supplied by the French to the Americans upon U.S. entry in the war in 1917. The photo above shows what the tank looked like before restoration efforts, bearing ninety years of accumulated rust. On the left, in the midst of restoration efforts, it will soon be transformed for the annual Living History Day.*

Photos courtesy of the Museum of the American G.I.

it in action, the Armored Support Group [a collection of volunteers and veterans who served in those vehicles at the museum] dressed in appropriate attire for the vehicle on display."<sup>4</sup>

The vehicles are licensed according to federal law with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives because, in addition to restoring the armored vehicles to drivable condition for living history displays and reenactments, their mighty armaments are prepared to fire as well. Since they have been demilitarized, the museum uses blanks, but controlled explosions are timed in conjunction with the firing of the guns to provide quite the spectacle at the open house. Of course, the outcome of the battle between the American tanks and the German vehicles (a replica of a Stug III tank destroyer and a SD.Kfz. 251 half-track) is never in doubt. "The Allies *always* win," Leisha beamed enthusiastically.

The Museum of the American G.I. goes to staggering lengths to restore its vehicles to the high standards required of living history. The intense restoration process consumes not only thousands of hours of labor and thousands of dollars in parts, but also intense research to recreate authenticity. This attention to detail and the use of original parts and designs are paramount. The museum has an archival library brimming from floor to ceiling with original blueprints, designs, maintenance, and technical manuals for the complete vehicles and the individual parts. Radio sets, engines, no detail is too minute to be accurately and authentically pursued at the Museum of the American G.I. As Leisha put it, "We do it by the book – and we *have* the book."<sup>5</sup>

While the massive frames of the vehicles – the three

Sherman medium tanks, the two Hellcat tank destroyers, two light tanks (an M3 Stuart light tank and an M24 Chaffee light tank), as well as various artillery pieces, half-tracks, and transports – are impressive, seeing the work that goes into the restoration process only increases the sense of awe. The museum is currently restoring a French-built FT-17 light tank, the only example of its kind, which actually saw service in World War I, located in the United States.

Even though the FT-17, the tank encountered in the first paragraph with the crew of frenzied mechanics, does not quite have to be built from scratch, an astounding amount of research, parts (to say nothing of the hunt for the parts), and labor have gone into this process. The museum acquired a maintenance manual for the FT-17 in the original French, which sits in the massive archive of manuals and reference materials. The owners acquired many parts and even entire vehicle chassis from other museums and private collectors. The chassis of another FT-17 came from a museum in Louisiana in order to cast replacement parts when originals simply could not be found. The museum has gone as far as Australia in the hunt for original parts, a testament to the driving spirit of authenticity in living history.

Leisha Mullins and Mark Hawthorne shared a touching story of why living history matters, why the Museum of the American G.I. does what it does. Day after day a man had driven past the museum, where a Vietnam War-era river patrol boat sat visible from the highway. Finally, he stopped in and asked to see the patrol boat, noting that he served in Vietnam on river patrol boats. He walked up to it, and after seeing the serial number on the side of the boat, he started crying. He said, “That was my boat. That was the boat I served on.” Leisha explained, “That is why we do this. We are authentic as possible. We track down, as much as we can, the history of the vehicles. It’s very cathartic for a lot of these veterans.”<sup>76</sup>

This man’s story hardly seemed an exception. Over the course of two hours visiting the museum, Mark and Leisha

*These books represent a selection of the original manuals the museum has in its archive, including manuals for American trucks, Jeeps, tanks, and artillery. Founder Brent Mullins initially collected militaria such as the uniforms shown here.* Photo by Jon Fairchild.



*Vietnam veterans reunited: Jack Fugate and Steve Hickman stand by the 1968 River Patrol Boat (PBR) they served on during the war.* Photo courtesy of the Museum of the American G.I.

regaled me with countless tales of veterans and their memories, of vets who volunteer and work at the museum, and of those who visit with their families. The museum is doing its job perfectly.

Though the museum stands as a shining beacon of living history done right, of memories preserved through the vehicles of the past, the Museum of the American G.I. faces challenges. As with any museum, money has proved a constant woe. Though the board of directors has carefully managed to get the museum up and running, the number one priority is to stay out of debt and be self-sustaining.<sup>77</sup> Recognition presents another challenge. Mark quipped that the museum is “the best kept secret in the Brazos Valley.” In the face of these obstacles, the museum currently operates out of a temporary facility while it prepares its permanent structure to open in 2014.

The hollow shell of the permanent museum currently stands ready as a hallowed ground of historical memory, a temple waiting to be consecrated. The vehicles, uniforms, equipment, and other artifacts will fill this temple, where an eager congregation will come to understand the complex experiences of the past made real through living history. As Brent, Leisha, Mark, and the veterans and volunteers of the Armored Support Group labor to restore the FT-17 to join her sisters in the Open House reenactment, it is clear that their vision and drive are taking the museum right where it needs to be – On Track.

For further information on the Museum of the American G.I., please visit <http://magicstx.org/index.shtml>.

For excerpts from the interview and expanded content, please see the *Houston History* website at [www.houstonhistorymagazine.org](http://www.houstonhistorymagazine.org).

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# WARBIRDS RISING:

## An update on the Lone Star Flight Museum *A Conversation with Larry Gregory and William H. Kellar*

In November, 2008, just two months after Hurricane Ike devastated Galveston, historian William H. Kellar drove to the island to interview Larry Gregory, president of the Lone Star Flight Museum (LSFM) and the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame, for a “Conversations with...” feature that appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of *Houston History* magazine. The museum, which first opened in 1990, and its priceless collection of mainly World War II aircraft, suffered terrible damage from the effects of the hurricane. At the time, Gregory talked about the storm, the cleanup, and his hopes for the future. In 2011, the museum announced it planned to move from Galveston’s Scholes International Airport to higher ground at Ellington International Airport, further inland and closer to Houston. Recently, Kellar wondered how the museum was fairing and made the trip to Galveston for a follow-up interview with Larry Gregory. The following “Conversation” is based on Kellar’s interview with Gregory, June 24, 2013.

**William H. Kellar (WHK):** The last time we visited here was in 2008, and you were just getting things cleaned up after the hurricane.

**Larry Gregory (LG):** After Ike, we opened on January 31, 2009, and it was pretty rough at the beginning. We still had a lot of parts and debris in the back of the second hangar and really only half of that hangar was open. We have since been able to reorganize and now almost all of hangar two is accessible. It looks a lot better now than it did after we first reopened. We were glad we had the doors open and the lights on to start getting back to a sense of normalcy. That helped the general psychology of the organization more than anything – just getting back to business. It is one of my proudest moments to be able to reopen and to somehow keep this thing going. It was only made possible by the hard work of our staff, volunteers and support we received from the community.

Now our facility is back to normal. The airplanes are on display and we are flying more now than before the storm. Occasionally, a visiting airplane from another collection will come in for a short time. Currently, we have a P-40 from the Cavanaugh Flight Museum, and that will be on display for a few weeks. The main thing that we are focused on is our historic flight experience program. We offer flights in several of our historic aircraft. We continue to fly the B-17 and the B-25 along with the PT-17 Stearman [Bi-plane] and

the T-6 Texan. These flights make great gifts, and I really encourage people to come out and have a great experience in one of these historic airplanes over Galveston Island. It is a beautiful flight.

**WHK:** Yes, it seems like it would be. Could you talk a little bit about some of the damaged airplanes that the museum salvaged and what it took to do that?

**LG:** Well, immediately after the storm, we were looking at the airplanes and what we needed to do to save them. The day we started down here, some volunteers from the Collings Foundation arrived wanting to help. They have great collection of Vietnam-era jets at Ellington Field – and we have worked together quite a bit. They brought some equipment and jumped in with both feet. They were able to disassemble a lot of airplanes that were damaged and start preservation efforts. All of the airplanes that were damaged were pulled apart and flushed out internally with fresh water. After they had dried out, we came back through with some Corrosion X that was donated to us and were able to arrest any corrosion that had begun. That was an extremely important first step. I recently crawled around in some of the airplanes and you cannot tell they have been underwater. Luckily they were in pretty good shape before the storm and we were on it very quickly to limit the damage.

*Proposed front view of new museum at Ellington Airport by Verrét Group.*

*Rendering courtesy of Lone Star Flight Museum.*





Larry Gregory, president of LSM, in front of the B-25, with Doolittle Raiders official emblem on the aircraft.

Photo courtesy of William H. Kellar.

I am very optimistic that sometime in the future, almost every one of those airplanes can be returned to the air if we have the financial wherewithal to do it. I do not think many of them have received a death sentence from it. We have taken our *Spitfire* to a shop in Breckenridge, Texas, where they disassembled everything—just pulled the whole thing apart. Other than the cad-plated hardware in it, you cannot tell it had been underwater. That is the good news and some day, that *Spitfire* will fly as well. We lost some [of] our small replicas that were on the ground-level when the storm came through, they were just destroyed. Some of the other smaller airplanes were severely damaged as well.

**WHK:** Would you talk about the decision to move the museum to Ellington?

**LG:** I was standing with the airport manager immediately after the storm, and his building looks like a bomb went off in it, ours looks like two bombs went off in it – where do you start? It was very overwhelming. About two weeks after the storm we had a board meeting, and I mentioned that we needed to investigate relocation off the Island.

When a hurricane is approaching, a fluke event like a flat tire or a failed engine starter on one of the aircraft could result in several of the airplanes being blocked in the hangar and unable to be evacuated, resulting in the catastrophic

loss of vintage airplanes worth millions of dollars. You can play those what ifs all you want but literally, you are on the razor's edge when it is time to get out of here. And if you miss your window, that's it. I cannot take that chance...the organization cannot take that chance. That was the driving factor. The board did not know if we could do it or where we could go. But, the discussion just continued to grow and gain some momentum. It is important for our future to have a facility that has a higher elevation to better protect our assets. That is why the board decided to move to Ellington. We negotiated a lease with the City of Houston for, in my opinion, the best location on the field for a museum, and we are moving forward towards that goal. We have enacted a campaign to raise funds for the new facility, and we are very optimistic that sometime in the fall of 2014, we will be able to break ground and hopefully move in by the end of 2015.

I know a lot of people are disappointed that we are leaving and I understand and appreciate that. I cannot say enough about Galveston—how great our run has been down here and how this community reacted after the storm. It is not Galveston's fault. There is nothing here that is driving us to move other than our elevation. Personally, I love it down here. I love the flying here and the people at the airport are great. The people within the city have been very receptive to us over the years, and I feel like we have been more closely knit into that fabric of the community since the storm. I want to somehow continue to be part of the community here after we move. We still have some charities and some of the other attractions that we support. We are very close with the *Elissa* and other historic attractions here. I want to continue those relationships after we move because I love what they do. I think it is important, not just to the Galveston community but for this region, to have some of these assets here such as the *Elissa*. It is important for people to climb aboard a ship that was sailing in the 1800s and have the opportunity to learn something. I just love that kind of stuff. Again, it's only available because there are so many dedicated people who do the grunt work to keep it going along with people who write checks to support it, just like at our museum.

I will be honest—I did not truly appreciate the ship until I was invited to sail on it. You can feel it creak and you can hear it come alive just like our airplanes do once you start them up and get rolling down the runway. They all have their own life story that comes alive and shows you what the airplane or the ship is about. And what is amazing is that it has the same smells, sounds and the same vibrations that people who flew these airplanes seventy years ago or the sailors who sailed that ship 100 years ago experienced. I believe these experiences are an amazing resource for our region.

**WHK:** Let's talk a little bit more about the move to Ellington.

**LG:** We were able to work with the Houston Airport System and their leadership to embrace our vision of what we want to develop, which flows into their vision of where they want to take Ellington Airport. We have a lot of common interests, even more than what I thought we had at the beginning, so I think it is going to be a great relationship for us. We will build, maintain, and operate a world-class facility. It is our goal to build a gem for the city of Houston and this

region. This is going to be a modern museum in a lot of different ways, especially on the technology front. We are looking to greatly expand and develop new educational opportunities and general community programming that will be second to none in the aviation museum circles. I am very excited about what lies ahead.

**WHK:** So, you are looking at building more of an interactive museum in addition to the hangars and the planes?

**LG:** Absolutely. Our facility here was built essentially as a hangar because the museum had a lot of airplanes that needed to be under a roof. We developed a nice museum out of it especially when we added the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame in the late 1990s. You also have to remember that this was designed in the late 1980s, so the internet and computer age was in its infancy. Cell phones were not commonplace then either, and that tells you where we were on the technology front when our facility was built. I think the way we are looking at it for this project is to build a museum that happens to have a hangar in it. We will have a lot of the modern accoutrements around the hangar to include a theater, a restaurant, educational areas, conference facilities, flexible classroom space, and other spaces for after-hours functions, meetings, or community events. It will also have a hangar where we can display our airplanes. I believe we are looking at it from a much better perspective since we have lived in our current facility for such a long time. We are looking forward to using technology to develop ways of communicating with our patrons on their terms to broaden the museum experience. We are very optimistic about the opportunities before us.

**WHK:** Have you consulted with any other museums?

**LG:** Yes, we looked at several other organizations and museums, not just aviation, in terms of what works for them and what doesn't. I am talking with some folks with regards to educational programming opportunities that will allow us to broaden our outreach to the community and to possibly reach kids all across the state. We want to be a driving force in STEM – science, technology, engineering, and math programs—but also aviation as well. I want to have a career center to show what jobs are available in aviation. It is not

just being a pilot or another position at an airline. There are many valuable services that the aviation industry needs here in Houston and across the state. I am hopeful that we will introduce aviation to kids and inspire them in a way that promotes their interest in learning about STEM related subjects. We have to place a value on learning. We want school children to know that real jobs and careers are waiting for them, and education is the key to access their future.

We also worked with other museums on the exhibit front as well. We have hired an exhibit company to develop our exhibits and creative content. In fact, it is the same company [that] developed the exhibits at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg. They did a phenomenal job and I am excited to work with them to develop quality exhibits that are accessible through modern communication techniques. That is going to be a lot of fun.

**WHK:** Let's talk a little bit about the Hall of Fame. What are your plans for it?

**LG:** The Hall of Fame was essentially destroyed during Hurricane Ike. We were able to salvage a few things but, by and large, it was wiped out. That was one of the most heartbreaking aspects of the storm. We had some very rare artifacts in the Hall of Fame and most of those are gone. In the wake of the storm, we made a decision not to rebuild it here once we determined we would relocate. Our worry is what if another storm hits us again? Plus, we are looking at elevating the quality of our exhibits throughout the facility and building it from the ground up. With everything else in the new museum it was the logical thing to do. When we open at Ellington, it will be fresh, modern, and accessible to everybody on their terms instead of the typical artifacts behind a piece of glass. We also want to showcase our inductees as the fabric for our education programs. In addition to honoring their achievements, we want to tell the story of how many of our inductees rose from challenging situations and had the determination and drive to become an industry leader. Hopefully, kids will pick up some inspiration from our inductees.

I believe relocating to Ellington is going to be a great move for us. Obviously being closer to the population



World War II era B-25, part of the LSFM's Warbirds Historic Flight Experience program, prepares for takeoff.

Photo courtesy of Lana Chow.



*P-47 at Scholes International Airport, Galveston.*

Photo courtesy of William H. Kellar.

center in Houston helps, but it also provides us more direct interaction with some of the other Warbird [or vintage military aircraft] groups at Ellington such as the Collings Foundation and the Texas Flying Legends. I know we will work with them to develop Ellington as a historic aviation attraction. We will have access to other private collections that will rotate planes through our facility on a regular basis. Every additional aircraft we display has a potential link to the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame and/or our educational programming. I am very pleased with the reception Houston has given us. It is still a couple of years out and

hopeful that we can be a good neighbor in the city, and add something that enhances the culture of the region.

**WHK:** We have talked a little bit about change over time, especially from the time the museum was first established and looking toward the new facilities. What else comes to mind here as we wrap up?

**LG:** I am proud of all the staff here who have stuck it out because once you go through a very dramatic event like Hurricane Ike, it gives you some perspective and makes what you are working toward much more meaningful. I

think all of the struggles that we have endured will help us make the new facility a wonderful venue. A lot of blood, sweat, and tears from a lot of people have gone into this, and I know the final result is going to be phenomenal. I'm really excited about what lies ahead. It is not going to happen overnight and that's okay. But, it is going to be an eye-opener. We have learned a lot here—you learn what limits you and everything else. Now we have an opportunity to address those limitations, add more programming to reach a greater population and become a jewel of the community. That is what we are hoping to do.

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Lone Star Flight Museum

## ART WITHOUT ARTIFICE: THE BIRTH OF THE MENIL COLLECTION

By Emily Zinsitz



*The front exterior of the Menil Collection.*  
Photo by J. Griffis Smith/TxDOT, courtesy  
of the Menil Collection, Houston.

Tucked away in the heart of a Houston suburb, among generous green park space and snug, grey-clapboard bungalows, the unexpected is made manifest in the Menil Collection. An internationally-renowned arts destination identified only by a small, inconspicuous sign, the Menil is a recognized Houston landmark that, for all its importance, still bears a remarkable sense of simplicity. With its understated grey and white edifice blending seamlessly into the surrounding neighborhood, the Menil's quiet elegance belies its rich interior: a haven for ancient, tribal, and contemporary art. Despite its unassuming aura, the Menil Collection has garnered a reputation for being both eccentric and exceptional. Possessing a unique aesthetic that succeeds in drawing the public into an intimate contemplation of the artwork itself, the museum does its work sans audio guides, wordy plaques, or crowded walls. Completed in 1987, this corner of Houston was the *magnum opus* of one unconventional, hugely influential Houston couple: John and Dominique de Menil.

Originally from France, the de Menils fled Europe during the Second World War. Dominique followed her husband separately, along with their children, to Houston

in 1941. The daughter of Conrad Schlumberger, a physicist who helped found the oil services company Schlumberger Limited, Dominique grew up in a bourgeois Protestant household, the child of practical, if conservative, parents who did not believe in spending money on frivolous things like fine art and other luxuries.<sup>1</sup> John, meanwhile, the son of a career Army officer, grew up poor, but ambitious, leaving school early to support his family as a banker, while still managing to earn his baccalaureate and graduate degrees in political science by taking night classes.<sup>2</sup> By the time the couple married in 1931, John was employed as the head of investment services at one of the largest banks in France. However, in 1936 he began to work for the family company, eventually becoming president of both the Middle and Far East and Latin American branches of Schlumberger Limited.<sup>3</sup>

As a couple, John and Dominique were an intensely dynamic pair: John acting as the lively, opinionated instigator to contrast Dominique's intellectual, understated reserve. In characterizing John de Menil, Calvin Tomkins calls him "a tough-minded capitalist, a bon vivant, and a leftist in the French mold – a man who wanted to right



Dominique and John de Menil, 1967, pictured with Seated Figure, Mali, Dogon. Photo by Hickey-Robertson, Houston, courtesy of the Menil Collection, Houston.

wrongs and change society.”<sup>74</sup> Dominique, on the other hand, has been described by architect Philip Johnson as “a mysterious woman,” exotic and reserved, “yet her strength was so obvious.”<sup>75</sup> As one of her associates explained, “The phrase ‘steel butterfly’ was coined for her. Behind that fragile, otherworldly façade [was] a complex person of very ambitious reach.”<sup>76</sup> Together, this couple found their place in Houston, a young, growing city, far from their European roots, and began to make a name for themselves in the Houston community.

At the time of their arrival in the early 1940s, Houston appeared, from an outsider’s perspective, to be an intellectual and cultural desert, a place dominated by the crude capitalistic pragmatism of the region’s newly wealthy oilmen. Certainly, Houston of the 1940s lacked a strong modernist spirit, but it did have an established symphony, the Museum of Fine Arts, and Rice University. Dominique herself described this Houston as a “provincial, dormant place,” lacking the pervasiveness and vibrancy of the European arts scene, but asserted that, far from stifling her, it provided her with the blank slate from which to begin her own collection. Discussing her relationship with the city, she asserts, “I always felt a sort of energy in Houston. I always felt that what didn’t exist would happen within a couple of years. I always felt things were possible.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, she and John began their patronage of the arts in Houston, setting out to expand the city’s artistic horizons and draw Houstonians into the world of the modern art.

Taking up this mantle, the de Menils soon became a fixture in the Houston arts scene, becoming involved with both the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) and the Contemporary Arts Alliance (CAA), later dubbed the Contemporary Arts Museum. John de Menil served on

the boards of both organizations as Dominique became engaged with various museum committees, always acting with an eye to the improvement and expansion of Houston arts culture.<sup>8</sup> As Vance Muse, director of communications for the Menil, described their involvement, “They administered something like the shock of the new. They helped bring modern ideas to this part of the world. I think they saw the good and potential of Houston – the great generosity and ambition to make the city an interesting arts center.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1955, the de Menils coaxed curatorial visionary Jermayne MacAgy into becoming the first professional director of the CAA. It took MacAgy hardly any time to begin making her mark.<sup>10</sup> With innovative contemporary instillations, such as *The Disquieting Muse: Surrealism* and *The Trojan Horse: The Art of the Machine* gracing the Houston stage, the city finally began to garner national attention in the arts world, winning the prestigious honor of hosting the convention of the American Confederation of the Arts in 1957.<sup>11</sup> With such momentum, the MFAH, with the help of John de Menil, recruited and installed internationally renowned James Johnson Sweeney as the MFAH’s new director in 1961, a man who previously directed the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Proud of Houston’s new artistic icons, John de Menil wrote candidly to *Houston Town & Country*, “What city in this country can boast to that equivalent?”<sup>12</sup>

Beyond their work with Houston museums, the de Menils further developed their attachment to the city’s artistic advancement by becoming involved with local universities – first the University of St. Thomas, and, later, Rice University – developing outstanding programs in art history. Founded by the Basilican Fathers in 1947, the University of St. Thomas became the special beneficiary of de Menil enthusiasm and funding in the 1950s and 1960s, as the couple lent significant aid to the fledgling school, first in real estate and architecture and later in the university’s educational programs.<sup>13</sup>

Driven by a desire to expose students to truly great works of art, Dominique de Menil established a “teaching collection” of exceptional art pieces hosted along with numerous temporary exhibitions, to educate art students by broadening their aesthetic experiences. Under the guidance of Jermayne MacAgy, who came to head the university’s new art department in 1959, Dominique began developing as a scholar and curator in her own right. When tragedy struck in 1964 with MacAgy’s unexpected death, Dominique assumed MacAgy’s projects herself by creating new art exhibitions for the students and larger public.<sup>14</sup> It was during this time, springing out of their significant forays into arts education and museum leadership, that the de Menils first conceived of devising a new forum for housing and displaying their own prodigious collection.

Accumulating more than 10,000 objects by the 1970s, the de Menils had begun collecting art seriously nearly thirty years earlier, under the guidance of French Dominican priest, Father Marie-Alain Couturier. Speaking of his influence, Dominique wrote, “Father Couturier relieved me of my latent Puritanism I had inherited as a tradition. For many years I felt that purchasing art was a



*Peter Rice, Rezo Piano, Shunji Ishida, and Lois and Georges de Menil viewing the museum model, Menil Foundation, Houston, 1982.*  
 Photo courtesy of the Menil Collection, Houston.

slightly bad action, too pleasure seeking, too hedonistic. Father Couturier made it almost a duty to buy art we could afford.”<sup>15</sup> And buy they did. Over the course of the next several decades, John and Dominique de Menil began purchasing modernist and surrealist art, particularly favoring Max Ernst and Rene Magritte, turning later to abstract expressionist and contemporary art, with heavy accessions in Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol. However, ancient pieces along with tribal art also fascinated them, and by the mid-1980s, Dominique began collecting Byzantine works as well. Thus, the collection formed in a somewhat eclectic manner, not as a comprehensive anthology of the history of art, but as a pointillistic array, featuring impressive depth in certain schools of art, and complete lack in others. Describing her approach to collecting, Dominique explained, “My policy of buying is to have no policy. There is no special theme for the permanent collection because you don’t buy with ideas in your head.”<sup>16</sup>

Instead, she maintains that the collector makes decisions on instinct, adding, “When you love something you just buy it – if you can afford it.”<sup>17</sup>

From the beginning of their collection, however, the de Menils did not consider their acquisitions in terms of possession or property. Instead, they intended to share their discoveries, which they did wholeheartedly through public exhibitions and the teaching collections at St. Thomas and Rice Universities. Ultimately, though, they understood that such individual programs could not truly showcase all that

they had amassed, or fully express the aesthetic ideals to which they aspired. Thus, the idea of a museum to house their collection in Houston began to take root as the best and only means to secure their legacy and maintain the integrity of their vision.

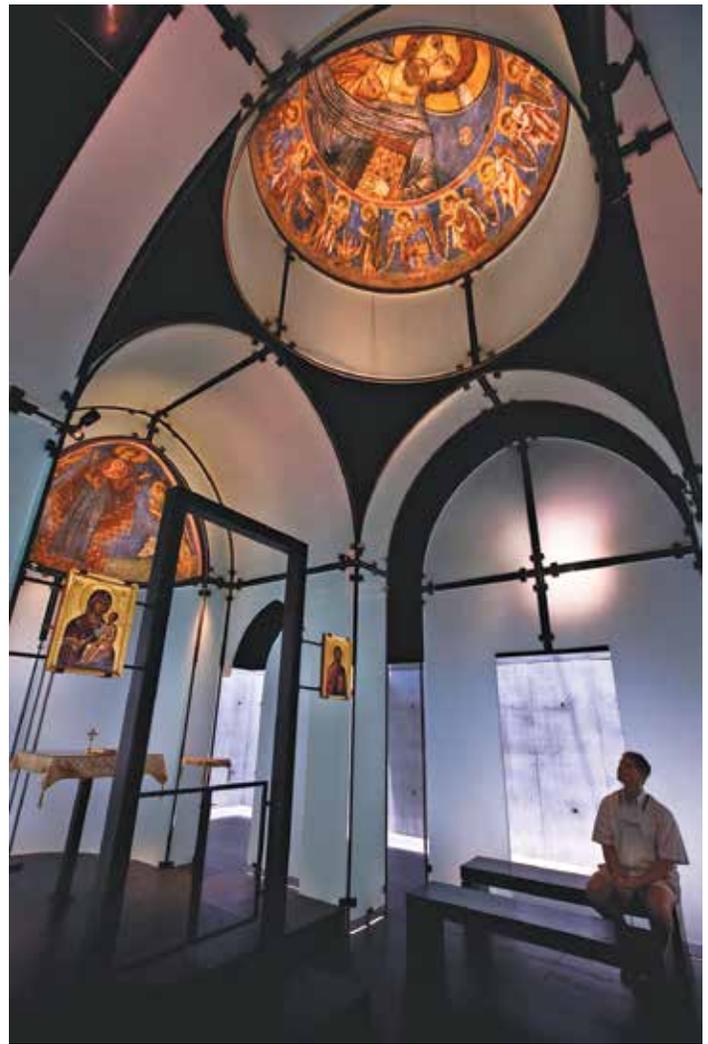
In 1972, John and Dominique began to make overtures to architect Louis Kahn indicating their interest in building a museum in Houston’s Montrose neighborhood.<sup>18</sup> In 1973, Kahn created preliminary drawings for the museum, but the project ended abruptly with his death in 1974, leaving Dominique in the lurch. In the wake of John’s death the year prior, this fresh obstacle deflated Dominique’s enthusiasm for the project she began with her husband, and for the next five years she shelved museum discussions entirely. However, talks renewed in 1979, first with local architect Howard Barnstone, then with art curators Paul Winkler and Walter Hopps, before Dominique, with the help of her consultants, found the architect and partner for her great endeavor: Italian newcomer, Rezo Piano.<sup>19</sup>

Acting under Dominique’s oft-quoted instruction to create a building that is at once “small outside and big inside,” Piano began designing a technologically complex structure that appears deceptively simple. Long and flat, the museum seems to sit parallel to the ground, giving off an air of lightness despite its clear size. For illumination, Dominique was intent on utilizing natural light, so Piano installed wide windows which expand to height of the ceiling, and long, graceful metal ‘leaves’ along the roof and

walkways supported by tall, white metal columns lining the outer portico. One of the major technological innovations of the construction, the leaves let in sunlight to illuminate the interior galleries, while curving precisely in such a way to cut the harshness of the Texas sun and diffuse the heat of its rays.<sup>20</sup>

In the same understated way, Piano also ensured that the interior of the museum was quietly impressive as well. Appearing as a single story building from much of the exterior, the museum interior actually has five different levels, which accommodate the “treasure house” of stored art as well as rooms for framing and conservation alongside exhibition spaces, thus blending the museum’s several functions in an uncommonly egalitarian way. In essence, Dominique’s museum expresses its luxury in the details, which never seek to overwhelm the observer, but, instead, blend seamlessly into the harmonious whole. Describing his aesthetic aims for the project, Piano explains, “You don’t want to compete with the art, and you still want to give character to the museum; you have to work on the immateriality of the museum – light, vibration, proportion.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, Piano and de Menil created a space designed to center focus inward, a masterpiece of modesty, calculated to cede attention to the artwork for which it was built.

However, such an elaborate construction had its difficulties. Most notably, the funding required to build such a museum (over \$21 million) was monumental, necessitating outside contributions to ensure its completion. Complicating the funding situation further, falling oil prices in the mid-eighties caused Schlumberger stock prices to take a dive precisely when Dominique required the money to finance the building process. Luckily, the Houston Old Guard willingly came to her aid, recognizing the cultural significance such an instillation would have in their city and trusting Dominique’s vision to create something truly exceptional. Both the Cullen and the Brown Foundations offered \$5 million contributions to the endowment, which, along with several other contributions from local families, compensated for over half of the building costs.<sup>22</sup> In the end, the museum would not have been possible without the



*Interior of the Byzantine Fresco Chapel.*

Photo by J. Griffis Smith/TxDOT, courtesy of the Menil Collection, Houston.



*Nelson Mandela and Dominique de Menil touring the galleries in the Menil Collection, Houston, 1991.*

Photo courtesy of the Menil Collection, Houston.

generosity and good faith of the Houston community, as it stepped up to give back to a woman who had played an integral role in the development of Houston culture.

After more than a decade since its initial conception, the Menil Collection opened to the public on June 4, 1987. International artists and dignitaries along with much of the Houston community came during the opening week to take part in the festivities and see the culmination of Dominique’s efforts. What they found was a museum experience unlike its predecessors in the art world: a space dedicated solely to cultivating a spiritual connection between the art and the viewer. Describing the experience, Vance Muse observes, “It’s so welcoming and so simple that it has an almost intimidating effect on some people because they’re so used to banners and a turnstile and a bookstore and all this kind of activity that brings you into a museum.”<sup>23</sup> Instead, he explains, “It’s a very direct experience with the work of art – little or no text is on the wall. It’s a very emotional, contemplative experience.”<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, in arranging her museum, Dominique followed in the footsteps of her mentor, Jermayne MacAgy, and made a point to hang the artwork lower than usual, allowing viewers to encounter works directly, without having to stare upward at the art as though it were on a pedestal.<sup>25</sup> Further,

she did not organize her collection historically, but chose, instead, to exhibit her art pieces on a rotating basis, thematically. Walter Hopps, the Menil's first director, explains this choice, saying, "[The collection] presents an important alternative regarding the meanings of art and culture, one that runs counter to the conventional chronological exposition of Western art...With such material, it has not been possible nor has it been desired to present a developmental picture. Rather, the links are conceptual, iconographic, and formal. The collection's *raison d'être* suggests the profound ties between aesthetic and spiritual values among peoples of diverse times and places."<sup>26</sup>

In a way, it is almost impossible to imagine that Dominique's vision, manifested in such a perfectly tailored environment, would not receive international recognition. As the chips fell, it has done exactly that. In the first years after the museum's completion, the Menil produced an outstanding series of exhibitions along with scholarly catalogs to accompany them, several of which toured around the world to other museums. Such exhibits include *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s*, a collection of Rauschenberg's more obscure early work, and *Magritte*, a major retrospective of the artist's oeuvre.<sup>27</sup> Beyond exhibitions, the museum also expanded its art conservation department, receiving grants in 1990 and 1996 to fund post-graduate fellowships and two full-time conservator positions. Finally, the Menil hosted several lecture series from visiting curators, artists, and art historians, encouraging lively intellectual conversation to help cultivate a deeper appreciation for the art.

Despite the success of her museum, Dominique's work was not finished. In the last years of her life, she began to build small, independent galleries near the Menil campus to house single art pieces or artists, creating thoughtfully structured environments in which to view the works in perfect conditions. The first of these constructions, designed by Rezno Piano and completed in 1995, was the Cy Twombly Gallery, which, at the time, was the only permanent museum gallery devoted to one living artist.<sup>28</sup>

Following this creation, Dominique commissioned a modernist chapel, designed by her son, Francois de Menil, to house two Byzantine frescoes on temporary loan from the Church of Cyprus, which she had rescued on its behalf. In correspondence with her son, she emphasized the importance of building a separate structure to preserve the "intangible element, which is the frescoes' spiritual importance and their original significance," asking him in his designs "to restore the sacred fragments to their original spiritual function."<sup>29</sup> Completed in 1997, the chapel housed the frescoes until March 2012 when they were returned to Cyprus. The museum installed Dominique's final commission, three Dan Flavin fluorescent light pieces designed specifically for Richmond Hall, a year after her death, serving as a fittingly grand conclusion to her immense contributions to the museum and the city of Houston.

With the loss of such a charismatic and visionary founder, the Menil Collection has risen to the challenge of preserving the standards of excellence set by Dominique. Muse explains, "When a founder has such a strong personality, it puts us in a unique position. It's about understanding the



John de Menil at "Through the Porthole," University of St. Thomas, 1965. Photo courtesy of the Menil Collection, Houston.

aesthetics of an unusual place. You have to make sure that the people here understand the Menil aesthetic, but you don't feel that this ghost is looking over your shoulder."<sup>30</sup>

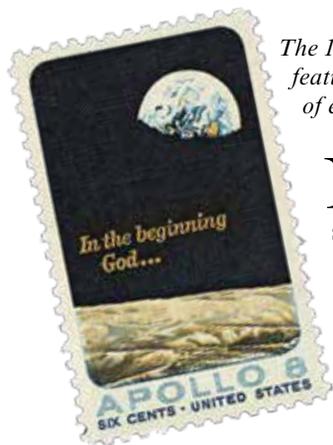
Under the leadership of museum director Josef Helfenstein, the permanent collection has grown to over 17,000 works of art, and the museum continues to host unconventional and innovative productions augmented by strong scholarly research for which the Menil has built an international reputation.<sup>31</sup> Even more impressively, it has done so within the bounds of a fairly modest endowment. Vance Muse acknowledges, "There's a myth of Menil wealth, down to the magma, but it's not the case. [We have] a very nice endowment, but compared to other museums, it's a fraction. It's all the more remarkable that we do what we do."<sup>32</sup>

The Menil Collection stands today as a living testament to the great aspirations of John and Dominique de Menil, a physical legacy of beauty and complexity offered freely and eagerly to the people of Houston and the world as a space for innovation, contemplation, and spiritual awakening. In this way, it has more than fulfilled what the Menils set out to accomplish. As Dominique recounts, "[John] used to say: 'We do what others won't do.' This is not just a provocative remark. It is a whole program... It would be exhilarating if within the limited means of this foundation we would encourage ideas capable of making a breakthrough, works of a redeeming quality and far reaching consequences."<sup>33</sup>

Emily Zinsitz is a graduate of the University of Houston Honors College, Class of 2013. Now a technical writer by trade, she holds a B.A. in liberal studies and a minor in creative work.

## PUTTING A STAMP ON HOUSTON

By John Germann



The 1969 stamp commemorating Apollo 8 featured an image of the first photograph of earth taken from space.

Nineteen forty-five was a year to remember on the national, state, and local level. For our country, it marked, of course, the end of the worst war the world had ever endured. For our state, it saw Texans celebrating the centennial of statehood. And for Houston stamp collectors, it witnessed the founding of the

Houston Philatelic Society. (Technically stamp collectors are called philatelists; please note, not philanderers!)

Thousands of collectors live in the Houston area. None of their interests are exactly alike, for stamp collecting is an exceedingly wide-open and democratic hobby. Anybody can do it and they can collect whatever fascinating little pieces of paper that they want – from countries around the world, or from one country/region, or from historical lands that no longer exist. Some like to explore the printing and usage of one stamp in exceptional depth. Others gravitate toward stamps showing topics like birds, Elvis, paintings, civil rights, Texas, the Red Cross, religion, science, or the scouts; basically a limitless variety of such topics exists. Some enjoy stamps which, in their engraving or their aesthetic design, are miniature works of art. Others pursue covers (i.e. envelopes) with markings from the Republic of Texas, wars, post offices that have been closed, navy ships, Antarctic expeditions, dirigibles, and the like.

This reflection of history and the world around us, combined with the democratic nature of stamp collecting, account for the hobby's worldwide appeal. Add to that the stories that relate to stamp-collecting – such as the



Spectators enjoyed the show exhibits at the Houston Y Philatelic Society show at the Houston YMCA in 1949.

All images courtesy of John Germann.

millions of dollars paid for rarities, the conversion of assets into paper-thin stamps which refugees smuggled out of oppressed areas, the errors of design or production (sometimes fabulous, like that of an upside-down airplane), the use of stamps as propaganda – and you have elements of romance and intrigue, equally enticing and equally universal. Then there is the challenge and thrill of the chase in searching for “that special item” with the help of friends, stamp dealers, auction firms, and online entities. The hobby is an exceptionally educational endeavor to boot, allowing for virtual, armchair experience of far-flung travel, of cultures, and of history. The inherent fun in stamp collecting can appeal to penny pincher or trillionaire, child or senior citizen, bon vivant or homebound. Something of personal interest can be found within everyone's reach.

### Stamps of the Houston Region

Our nation's stamps have honored Texas and the Houston area multiple times. In 1936 portraits of Texas' founding

fathers, Stephen F. Austin and Sam Houston, started the parade, gracing a stamp commemorating the creation of the Republic of Texas one hundred years earlier. Nine years later, ap-



propriately, the Lone Star flag stamp appeared, marking the centennial of our statehood. Sam Houston reappeared in 1964, memorializing the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.



This cover celebrated the stamps issued to commemorate Texas's centennial of statehood in 1945.

Texas independence likewise resurfaced, in 1986, in the form of a stamp celebrating the sesquicentennial of the Battle of San Jacinto. Other Texas stamps have featured Lyndon Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, Sam Rayburn, the Alamo, and animals like the whooping crane, armadillo, mockingbird, and jackrabbit.

Houstonians in particular can take pride in the accolades accorded to Sam Houston. But we can also point to the early 1969 stamp acknowledging the *Apollo 8* moon-shot mission, one of our proudest moments, by reproducing the first photo of the earth taken from space (one of the author's all-time favorite stamps).

Houston area personalities have also graced American stamps. As early as 1981 a commemorative stamp marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Mildred Ella "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias of Port Arthur, one of the finest athletes of the twentieth century—male or female. In 2011 two other Houston women in two very different fields helped carry Americans' mail. Houston's eminent pioneer



legislator/orator/constitutionalist/civil rights advocate, Barbara Jordan, made her appearance in the "Black Heritage" series of stamps. Shortly thereafter the "Latin Music Legends" series recognized the enormous singing and song-writing talents of the Lake Jackson-born star, Selena Quintanilla-Perez.



Even more recently, in 2012 an "Earthscapes" issue replicated aerial images of diverse U.S. landscapes. One of those stamps pictured the goings-on in an industry historically vital to Houston's economy – two tug



boats "wrangling" barges in the Houston Ship Channel. And surely more will come. For example, currently a move is afoot to persuade the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee of the United States Postal Service to approve the issuance of a stamp paying respects to our famed heart

surgeon, Michael DeBakey. Keep your eyes open and your hopes up for this and many others.

## Houston Philatelic Society History

Stamp collectors have existed since Great Britain issued the world's first postage stamp in 1840, and Houston had its share of them a century later. Some local collectors had begun gathering at a downtown bicycle shop on Thursdays to gab about stamps and to do some buying, selling, or trading. However, philately, the study of stamps and postal history, did not take a formally organized approach in



Great Britain issued the world's first stamp. The letters are all different on any single sheet. In this block of six, the stamps came from rows L and M, columns D, E, and F. The printed page ranged from AA at the top left to TL at bottom right. Imagine what great fun it would be to reconstruct a full sheet!

Houston until 1944. Twenty-three charter members gathered at the Central YMCA at 1600 Louisiana at Pease, where they produced a constitution for the "Houston Y Philatelic Society" in 1945. In 1956, the group dropped the "Y" from its name; from that time on it has been known as the Houston Philatelic Society (HPS).

The original 1945 constitution for the Houston Y Philatelic Society called for a board of directors, consisting of three officers plus three directors, all elected by the membership. Bradfield A. Beard was elected first president, with E. C. Kline serving as vice-president, and Ruth Struwe handling the duties of secretary and treasurer. The three original directors were J. T. Fincher, Harry W. O'Kane, and George Rodgers. The club's first show, held at the "Y," premiered in the spring of 1946, with Beard collecting the top exhibit award. The society grew quickly. In 1947, it joined the American Philatelic Society, the major national philatelic organization, and five years later became a full-



The original Houston Y Philatelic Society logo.



Brad Beard (center in checked shirt) with some of the society's founding fathers and mothers.



*Members of the HPS work with Girl Scouts in the 1960s as part of the club's on-going commitment to community outreach.*

fledged chapter; in 1950, it also joined the state society, the Texas Philatelic Association. At the end of 1948, the membership roster stood at seventy-four. The annual show became ever more popular, and almost 300 collectors attended the 1951 show.

As Houston has grown, so has the Houston Philatelic Society. Membership is now about 100. The original three-man officer corps has grown to four, with the roles of secretary and treasurer divided. The board of directors has also grown; the number is flexible, but currently consists of eight members. The \$1 dues in 1945 have risen to \$7 (no horrendous inflation here!).

Over the last sixty-eight years, the venues for HPS meetings and shows represent an interesting slice of Houston history. The club met at the downtown YMCA into the 1980s, when it relocated to the Central Presbyterian Church on Richmond Avenue. From October 1999 to date, it has held its meetings at the West University United Methodist Church.

Its show venues were also diverse in type and in location. The YMCA hosted the Houston Philatelic Exhibition (Houpex) until 1955, when the Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church on Main Street kindly offered its facilities. The



*The visitors to the beginner's booth at a recent show illustrate what a diverse group of people take an interest in stamp collecting.*

Hermann Park Garden Center, the Rice Hotel, and the Albert Thomas Convention and Exhibit Center were followed by a string of hotels, including the Continental Houston Motor Hotel, Albert Pick Motor Inn, Shamrock Hilton Hotel, Stouffer Hotel, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Astro Village Hotel, and Adams Mark Hotel, followed in 1994 and 1995 by Trading Fair II on the South Loop East. Sandwiched in among these were shows in conjunction with the state society in 1967 at the Rice Hotel and the national philatelic organization in 1993 at the Astrodomain Expo Hall.

Finally, in 1996, on the fiftieth anniversary of the society's first

show, the show moved to the Humble Civic Center—where it has remained ever since, the longest run of any location. At the same time, mirroring the physical growth of Houston, the show was renamed when Houpex became the Greater Houston Stamp Show. A crowd of around 600 attended the show in September, 2012 — a testament to the continuing lure of stamp collecting. They came to view over 1,000 pages of exhibits, shop for stamps with thirty-three dealers, get free stamps and pointers at the beginners' booth, attend a floor auction and meetings, or perhaps just satisfy their curiosity. The beginner's booth, aimed primarily at young people, is considered one of the best in the country.

The twice-a-month HPS meetings include a welcome to visitors, a business segment, door prizes, auctions, presentations on aspects of philately by members themselves, and lots of swapping, comparing, sharing, story-telling, and "good old" camaraderie. HPS has something for just about everyone, from the casual to the serious stamp collector. Its website includes the program for organizational meetings, notes on the annual show, and membership information. The club produces a quarterly newsletter, *The Perforator*. Plus, the club has had a long history of outreach — introducing the pleasures of "stamping" to orphans, to veterans, to prisoners, and to youth in scouts and schools. Those of us in the Houston Philatelic Society have many different collecting interests but we all understand what a valuable tutor and rewarding companion the pastime provides us, for a lifetime.

For more information on the Houston Philatelic Society, visit [www.houstonstampclub.org](http://www.houstonstampclub.org).

**John Germann**, like many collectors, was attracted to the wide world of stamps when he was young and particularly enjoyed the history and culture that they displayed. Although he shelved his collection while in college, stamps, history, and culture have been an integral part of his and his wife's lives ever since. John joined the Houston Philatelic Society in the mid-1970s and recently retired from teaching history for forty-four years at the Kinkaid School.

## "Give them good food, and they'll recognize it": Maxim's Introduces Fine Dining to Houston

By Mark E. Young



Camille Bermann attends to guests at Maxim's in the 1950s.

All photos and images courtesy of the Hospitality Industry Archives, Massad Research Center, Hilton College, University of Houston.

In 1949, amid the city's booming economy and population growth, the Peacock Grill opened—giving Houstonians a new kind of culinary experience. Max Manuel and Camille Bermann opened their fine dining establishment in downtown Houston filling the niche for continental cuisine. The name was soon changed to Maxim's, and a Houston legend was born. Bermann based the new name and the design concept on the world-renowned restaurant Maxim's de Paris. For over fifty years, Maxim's provided sophisticated food and dining to its loyal patrons, introducing Houstonians to fine French cuisine and wine.

In its December 1999 issue devoted to the best of Texas in the twentieth century, *Texas Monthly* food critic Patricia Sharpe described Maxim's as the "Restaurant of the Century." The restaurant earned this distinction in large part because of proprietor Camille Bermann's legendary demand for perfection in food, wine, and service. Born and raised in Luxembourg, he trained in Brussels learning to make pastries; soon he was working at the Ritz in Paris. In 1939-1940, under the tutelage of Henri Soule, Bermann travelled to the United States to work at Le Pavillion restaurant in the French Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. By

*Doorman Will Park Your Car No Charge*

*A Dinner Without Wine?*

IS LIKE A HUNTER WITHOUT SHELLS

**MAXIM'S DINING ROOM**

IS LIKE A LION WITHOUT COURAGE

TABLE D'HOTE DINNER  
(Choice of Appetizer)  
Hot Hors D' Oeuvres \$1.00 Extra

Oysters Rockefeller \$1.00 Extra Oysters Bouerguione \$1.00 Extra  
Smoked Salmon Mariniered Herring Tarama ala Camille  
Crabmeat Cocktail Shrimp Remoulade Fruit Cocktail  
Hors D' Oeuvres Parisienne Half Baked Grapefruit  
Chilled Tomato or Grapefruit Juice  
Snails Bourguione \$1.00 Extra  
"or" Soup  
Split Pea Soup French Onion Seafood Gumbo

(Choice of Entree)

Lobster Thermidor \$4.50  
Broiled Individual Flounder 3.75  
Stuffed Flounder 4.50  
Pompano en Papillote 4.75  
Red Snapper Sante Pontchartrain 4.50  
Poached Trout Marguery 4.75  
Sweet Breads Sante au Madera 4.25  
Whole Roast Capon—Cherries and Wild Rice—Serves two 9.50  
Breast of Chicken Marie Christine 4.75  
Breast of Chicken Monte Carlo 4.75  
Squab Chicken Camille 4.75  
Stuffed Squab Chicken Rozzini 4.75  
Breast of Chicken Marie Antoinette 4.75  
Sliced Turkey Rochambeau 4.50  
French Double Lamb Chop 5.00  
Ham Steak Grand Duc-Poaches and Cherries 4.50  
Roast Prime Rib of Beef au Jus 4.75  
Prime Sirloin Steak 6.25  
Pheasant Chicken With Wild Rice—Serves Two 12.00

(Included)  
Potatoes Salad Vegetable

(Dessert)  
Coffee, Vanilla or Peppermint Ice Cream Rainbow Parfait  
Coeur au Marron (Chestnuts and Ice Cream) Pineapple Sherbet  
Peach Melba Maxim's Cheese Cake Baba au Rhum \$1.00 Extra  
Assorted Cheese

(Drink)  
Coffee Tea Milk

**BAKED ALASKA FOR TWO \$3.00 EXTRA**

APERITIF—RHINE WINE AND GRENADINE—80c  
PATE DE FOIS GRAS—\$5.00  
BELUGA CAVIAR—\$3.00

*Your Favorite Foods Will Be Prepared At Your Request*

IS LIKE A HUMORIST WITHOUT WIT

IS LIKE A HEART WITHOUT LOVE

IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE

*responsible for Lost Articles*



Camille Bermann, who was born and raised in Luxembourg, is pictured at the beginning of his career in 1933.

this time, the twenty-five-year-old Bermann had a lifetime of experiences that he eventually shared with Houston.

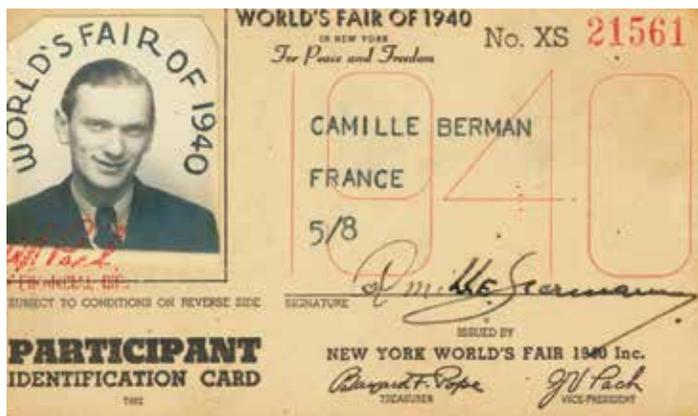
The outbreak of World War II interrupted Bermann's plans to return to Europe. With his culinary and service training, he quickly found employment, first in New York, then in New Orleans as head of foodservice at the Beverly Country Club, an establishment with a colorful gambling reputation. In the meantime, Bermann met and married his life partner Lisl, and the couple soon had two boys, Ronnie and Mark.

In 1946, Bermann moved to Galveston, Texas, where he worked as dining room captain of the Balinese Room. He then came to Houston with the Peacock Room in 1949. With the rechristening of Maxim's, culinary history was in the making.

Bermann tried to recreate the flavor of France in his restaurant. The cuisine included favorites like lobster thermidor, poached trout marguery, and desserts like cherries jubilee and peach melba. However, Bermann realized that not all of his customers had an appetite for French cuisine and always offered dishes that included more traditional local offerings, a minute steak with sauce or a prime sirloin steak.

Matching the food was the quality of the wine selection. Credited with introducing fine wine to the palates of generations of Texans, Maxim's had the largest wine collection in Houston with 70,000-80,000 bottles and was the first local restaurant to offer fine wines such as Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Château Margaux, Château Mouton-Rothschild, and Louis Roederer. By this time, Maxim's had moved next to the downtown Foley's department store; and in typical Bermann can-do spirit, he created Houston's first wine cellar, or perhaps wine room, built into a corner of the Foley's parking garage.

This section of Maxim's menu shows Camille Bermann's flair for eccentricity. Read the menu to find his answers to the question, "A Dinner Without Wine? Is..."



Camille Bermann's identification card from the World's Fair in 1939-1940 that took place in New York City.

Bermann, ever the showman, turned the restrictive Texas liquor license law of mid-twentieth century Texas to his benefit. Restaurants in Texas had to issue memberships to diners, usually for a nominal fee, for alcohol consumption. Bermann, often with flourish, issued memberships to the exclusive Maxim's wine room, but to favored patrons, he issued membership card number "1." Over time many of Maxim's most loyal customers discovered they all shared membership card "1"!



*The wine list for Maxim's demonstrates Bermann's sense of humor.*

Bermann instinctually knew what would please his restaurant patrons. The fine wine and French cuisine were the most important ingredients, but his flair for showmanship also won the favor of his customers. One example comes in his tough taskmaster attitude toward the waitresses. Yes, Bermann much preferred women to men in the service department. Patrons often heard him scolding waitresses or imploring them to maintain the impeccable service that Maxim's was known for. These public reprimands often resulted in large tips for the waitresses. In fact, Bermann's public displays did not result in a high turnover rate, with his employees often averaging more than twenty-five years of service.

The other key ingredient to the success of Maxim's was the city of Houston. In 1949, Houston already had a decade of transformative growth that had only accelerated since the end of World War II. The development and concentration of the petroleum industry in Houston brought new people

to the city daily. These people had food tastes that went beyond the Texas meat-and-potatoes standard. Oil industry executives, who traveled across the nation and around the world, developed a taste for fine cuisine. Under Bermann's direction, Maxim's educated its patrons and laid the foundation for the future expansion of Houston's vibrant fine dining selections.

In 1981 the restaurant moved to Greenway Plaza, and ten years later upon Camille's death, his son Ronnie assumed Maxim's leadership. With plans for renovation, the restaurant was sold and the new owners closed it in 2001, but it never reopened. Nevertheless, Maxim's legacy lives on in the many fine dining establishments that have opened their doors in Houston—following in the footsteps of Camille Bermann.



*Camille and his wife Lisl.*

The Maxim's collection can be found in the Hospitality Industry Archives, a part of the Massad Family Research Center located in the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston. The repository maintains a host of collections devoted to the culinary history of Houston, Texas, and the world. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

**Mark Young** is a historian and the archivist for the Hospitality Industry Archives, Massad Family Research Center in the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston.

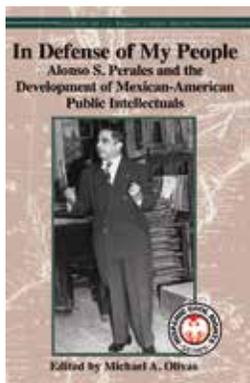
The **Hospitality Industry Archives** includes the following collections with a strong Houston component:

- Les Amis D' Escoffier Society of Houston Collection
- Erik J. Worscheh Collection
- Harry L. Chambers Collection
- George Fuermann Wine Talk Collection
- Houston Restaurant Association Women's Auxiliary Collection
- Mary K. Kilburn Collection
- Sonny Look Collection

To visit the University of Houston Digital Library's collection of 1850s and 1860s hotel and restaurant menus from the Hospitality Industry Archives, go to <http://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/p15195coll34>.

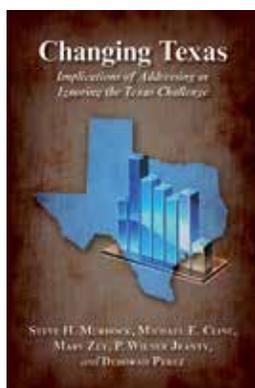
# News Updates & Books *by Barbara Eaves*

## BOOKS



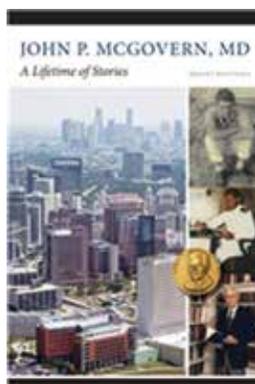
*In Defense of My People: Alonso S. Perales and the Development of Mexican-American Public Intellectuals*, edited by Michael A. Olivas (Arte Público Press, 2013). This collection of essays focuses on the life and work of Alonso S. Perales, one of Texas's earliest Mexican-American attorneys. He co-founded the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a national organization seeking to advance the economic, educational,

political, and civil rights of Hispanic Americans. Olivas is the William B. Bates Distinguished Chair of Law at the University of Houston; the Perales papers are part of the Hispanic Collection at the University of Houston M. D. Anderson Library.



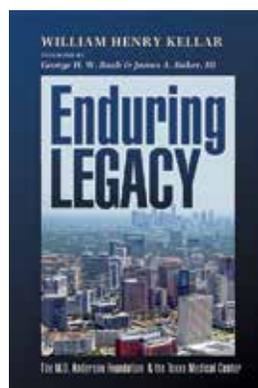
*Changing Texas: Implications of Answering or Ignoring the Texas Challenge*, by Steve H. Murdock, Michael E. Cline, Mary Zey, P. Wilner Jeanty, and Deborah Perez (Texas A&M University Press, 2014). Reviewing historical data (population and household growth, age, race, education, wealth, and more) back to 1980 and then projecting it forward, *Changing Texas* previews the "state of our state" by the mid-twenty-first century under several

scenarios. With no change in the socioeconomic conditions associated with the fastest growing segments of our population, Texas will be larger, poorer, and less competitive. However, the authors also delineate how public policy can alter prospects, making the "Texas Challenge" a Texas advantage, leading to a more prosperous future for all Texans. This academic study presents valuable information for anyone involved in planning future business, health care, education, transportation, public funding, and more in Texas.



*John P. McGovern, MD: A Lifetime of Stories*, by Bryant Boutwell (Texas A&M University Press, 2014) captures the influential life of this visionary Texas physician. Interlaced with revealing personal and family stories, Boutwell's narrative chronicles McGovern's holistic approach to medicine, which transcended the traditional boundaries of institutional identities and medical specialties. McGovern worked tirelessly to bring together big institutions, the health

professions, bold interdisciplinary ideas, and a team approach to healthcare that is recognized today as imperative. This commitment led to his founding role in the American Osler Society, which promotes humanistic and ethical dimensions of practicing medicine, and the establishment of humanities programs at the UT Health Science Center at Houston and the UT Medical Branch at Galveston.



*Enduring Legacy: The M. D. Anderson Foundation and the Texas Medical Center*, by William Henry Kellar with foreword by George H. W. Bush and James A. Baker III (Texas A&M University Press, April 2014), provides a unique perspective on the generosity of Monroe Dunaway Anderson and the indispensable role the M. D. Anderson Foundation played in the creation of the Texas Medical Center. *Enduring Legacy* demon-

strates how public and private institutions worked together to create this veritable city of health, with educational, clinical, and hospital facilities that provide state-of-the-art patient care, basic science, and applied research in more than fifty medicine-related institutions, making it the largest medical complex in human history. Kellar is affiliated with the Center for Public History at the University of Houston.

## NEWS

**NAU LEADS TSHA:** Houstonian John L. Nau III has been elected president of the Texas State Historical Association for 2014-2015. Nau is president and chief executive of Silver Eagle Distributors, the nation's largest distributor of Anheuser-Busch products. Silver Eagle also distributes Grupo Modelo beers, microbrews and craft beers, as well as non-alcohol beverages. He is a board member of Discovery Green Conservancy, the National Park Foundation, Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, San Antonio River Foundation, and the National Western Art Foundation of the Briscoe Western Art Museum. His \$12 million gift kicked off fundraising for the \$60 million Nau Center for Texas Cultural Heritage, an interactive facility that will welcome visitors to Houston. [www.naucenter.org](http://www.naucenter.org).



**LORENZ WINS:** The *Houston Chronicle* named Jennifer Lorenz as "The Houstonian whose work has had the biggest impact on conservation." Lorenz, executive director of the Bayou Land Conservancy, led the effort that raised \$4 million in six weeks to save a fifty-acre tract of Gulf Coast, tall-grass prai-

rie in Deer Park, home to numerous birds and 300 species of native plants. A coalition had long worked to save this tract from developers, but when owner Dean Lawther received an offer that was hard to turn down, Lorenz contacted funders who could move fast to meet his deadline. Terry Hershey and the Hamman Foundation jump-started the fundraising. Others contributed tens of thousands, but small donors also responded in a big way. When they fell short, Lawther gave them a few more days ... and they made it, with hours to spare. The Lawther family even contributed. The *Chronicle* reported, “The ‘people-powered prairie,’ as Lorenz calls it, shows that small donors can make a big difference in wild places’ survival.” The Lawther Deer Park Prairie will open to the public this spring.

**BRIAN BEHNKEN WINS IDESON:** *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011) won the 2013 Julia Ideson Award. Behnken is associate professor in the Latino/a Studies Program at Iowa State University. The 2014 Ideson prize will go to an article, thesis, dissertation, website, film, or video. Deadline for entry is June 1, 2014. [www.friendsofthetexasroom.org](http://www.friendsofthetexasroom.org).



*Bethel Park in Freedmen's Town.*

Photo courtesy of Houston Parks & Recreation Department.

**TEN WIN “GOOD BRICKS”:** In February, Preservation Houston presented ten 2014 Good Brick Awards for excellence in historic preservation. An independent jury of preservation and design professionals, community leaders, and former Good Brick winners select the winners. The 2014 winners are: Doug Lawing, for his Tudor Revival house (1926) in the Museum District; Trinity Episcopal Church in Midtown for restoring its historic stained glass windows; restoration of the C. Milby Dow House in Broadacres (1926), designed by John Staub; Summer Ventures, LP, for rehabilitating the former Cook Paint and Varnish Co. on Summer Street; Harris County, Precinct 2, for restoring the Sylvan Beach Pavilion (1956) in La Porte; Houston Parks & Recreation Department for developing Bethel Park, which encompasses ruins of historic Bethel Church in Freedmen's Town; Diane and Ray Kreuger, for their mid-century modern commercial building in the Heights; Gayle and Arlen Ferguson, for their Victorian house (1904) in Heights West Historic District; Houston Audubon Society for restoring the Edith Moore Log Cabin (1932) in west Houston; David Hille for rescuing and renovating a Craftsman bungalow in

Brooke-Smith Addition. The Hermann Park Conservancy won a Community Pillar Award for its years of stewardship and improvements in Hermann Park.



*Dignitaries line up with wheelbarrows to kick off Buffalo Bayou Partnership “gap” funding. From left to right: Roksan Okan-Vick, Victor Mendez, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Mayor Annise Parker, Joe Turner, Congressman Gene Green, Sis Johnson, and Diane Schenke.*

**HPARD AND PARTNERS CLOSE GAPS:** A \$30 million Houston Regional Bike/Ped Connections to Transit Project was made possible through a \$15 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) federal grant received by the Houston Parks & Recreation Department. Project partners providing local matching funds include the Houston Parks Board, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and the Greater East End Management District. The funds will help close six trail gaps. The \$4 million Buffalo Bayou path downtown is the first to begin construction, closing a gap between Smith and Travis Streets. Partnership chairman emeritus Mike Garver contributed \$1 million in matching private funds.

**WORK ON COFFEE BUILDING PERKS:** The first contract has been signed for Buffalo Bayou Partnership and Houston First Corporation's Sunset Coffee Building at Allen's Landing. Renovations will be complete by the end of the year. A canoe, kayak, and bike rental facility will occupy the ground floor. The rest of the building will house BBP offices, and meeting, exhibition, and rental space.

**THE HERMANN PARK CONSERVANCY:** In May, the Conservancy will officially open the park's new Grand Gateway and host the Urban Green Spring Event. From May 24-July 26, visit the Julia Ideson Library's exhibit of documents, plans, photos, and maps that follow the park's history. Upcoming events include a “Park to Port Bike Ride,” September 13; the Grand Opening of the McGovern Centennial Gardens and Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, October 18; and the Run in the Park, November 8. [www.hermannpark.org](http://www.hermannpark.org).

**THE TEJAS GAZETTE** compiled by Trevia Beverly is a monthly online listing of local history events and all things genealogical! Email [treviaawbeverly@comcast.net](mailto:treviaawbeverly@comcast.net) to join.

**MEMORIAL PARK** seeks ideas, volunteers, and money! A consortium of the Memorial Park Conservancy, Houston Parks & Recreation Department, and Uptown Houston TIRZ needs help to kick off a renaissance of one of



Construction should be complete on the Memorial Park Running Trails Center, a locker/changing and visitor orientation facility that will house the Conservancy offices and Houston Police Department substation. Mindy Hildebrand led the center's capital campaign. Honor a loved one with pavers priced from \$250 to \$5,000.

Houston's most popular parks. "Work will be informed by research – including historical research – and public input," said Shellye Arnold, executive director of the Conservancy. Log onto the website and take the survey.

Meanwhile, visit [www.memorialparkconservancy.org](http://www.memorialparkconservancy.org) and register for a fun run and/or the annual golf tournament. The Houston Parks & Recreation Department and Luke's Locker will also sponsor the "4 The Park" Fun Run, a 4-mile run and 1-K kid's race on April 5. Activities include live music, food booths, and children's activities. Some 3,000 runners are expected. Russell Brown and Randall Grace at the Memorial Park Golf Club will chair the Annual Golf Tournament on May 13.

## EVENTS

**Through April 13:** Battleship *Texas* (USS *Texas* BB-35) celebrates the centennial of its commissioning with the Texas Parks and Wildlife's exhibit, "The Last of the Dreadnought Battleships," showcasing some sixty artifacts at the Bob Bullock Museum in Austin. Visit the Battleship *Texas* at San Jacinto State Park in La Porte.

**March 21-22:** 15th Annual Open House at the Museum of the American G.I. in College Station, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Adults \$10, children over five years, \$5. Visit <http://magicstx.org/> for a schedule of special events and directions.

**March 22:** Harris County Historical Commission dedicates a state historical marker at *El Barrio del Alacrán* (the Community of the Scorpion) at 512 McKee Street at 2:00 p.m. Since 1837, this area has evolved from Houston's first and one of its finest subdivisions to an industrial area to one of its poorest neighborhoods – yet, one that produced a strong community and many civic leaders.

**March 29:** The Hermann Park Kite Festival at the Jones Reflection Pool and Miller Hill from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**March 29, May 3, and October 18:** Share your favorite Memories of Hermann Park as part of the centennial celebration. Staff from *Houston History* will record your favorite park stories and adventures to document its contribution to Houston culture.

**March 29:** Baytown Historical Preservation Association presents *Historic Texas Flags*, by Thomas Green at the "big red barn," Republic of Texas Plaza, 5117 North Main, Baytown. Free. RSVP 281-421-2099.

**April 5:** Hermann Park Dog Walk – Enjoy a scenic one-mile trek around the park with your pooch and a party in Lake Plaza with the Houston Rockets. Proceeds go toward construction of a dog park.

**April 9:** The Heritage Society, celebrating its 60th birthday, honors Janiece Longoria at its Houston Heritage Luncheon, chaired by Laura Gibson. Call 713-655-1912 for reservations. A 115th anniversary exhibit on Sam Houston Park will be displayed alongside a smaller show on the Port of Houston's 100th anniversary.

**April 12:** The San Jacinto Symposium, sponsored by the San Jacinto Battleground Conservancy, looks at the Texas Revolution through the eyes of Texas-born Tejanos who fought for independence alongside "newcomers" from the United States and Europe. Speakers are: Raul Ramos, Francis Galan, Craig H. Roell, Frank de la Teja, Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, and Jim Crisp. 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at Ripley House, 4410 Navigation, 77003. [www.sanjacintoconservancy.com](http://www.sanjacintoconservancy.com).

**April 21:** San Jacinto Commemorative Ceremony, sponsored by the San Jacinto Battleground Association, is at the San Jacinto Monument, 11:00 a.m.

**April 22:** The San Jacinto Museum of History will recognize Helen Kleberg Groves at its annual dinner at Houston Country Club. Mrs. Groves is a descendent of Robert Justus Kleberg, who fought at San Jacinto, and a great-granddaughter of King Ranch founder Capt. Richard King. She is president of the Robert J. Kleberg, Jr. and Helen C. Kleberg Foundation. Former Senator Kay Bailey Hutcheson will discuss her book, *Unflinching Courage: Pioneering Women Who Shaped Texas*. [www.sanjacintomuseum.org](http://www.sanjacintomuseum.org).

**April 25:** Evening in the Park Gala, the Hermann Park Conservancy's largest fundraiser, will treat guests to an evening of dining and dancing in the park.

**April 26:** San Jacinto Festival and Battle Re-enactment will be held at the San Jacinto Battleground, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., sponsored by the San Jacinto Museum of History.

**April 26:** Bay Day, the Galveston Bay Foundation's annual family festival will take place at the Kemah Board Walk. Visit [www.galvbay.org](http://www.galvbay.org).

**May 28:** Friends of the Texas Room: Barrie Scardino Bradley discusses her book, *Houston's Hermann Park: A Century of Community*, at the Friends meeting in the Julia Ideson Building, 500 McKinney, at 6:00 p.m. Visit the Hermann Park Centennial Exhibit while there.

**Thru June 6:** Texas General Land Office: The second of two exhibits highlighting the Hispanic contributions to Texas, *Standing their Ground: Tejanos at the Alamo*, is on display at the Alamo. It focuses on the Tejano men who fought and died at the Alamo, those sent out before fighting began, and the women and children who survived. Free, 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. [www.thealamo.org](http://www.thealamo.org).

**July 17-19:** The 18th annual Angelina College Genealogy Conference is in Lufkin. [www.angelina.edu/genealogy.html](http://www.angelina.edu/genealogy.html).

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