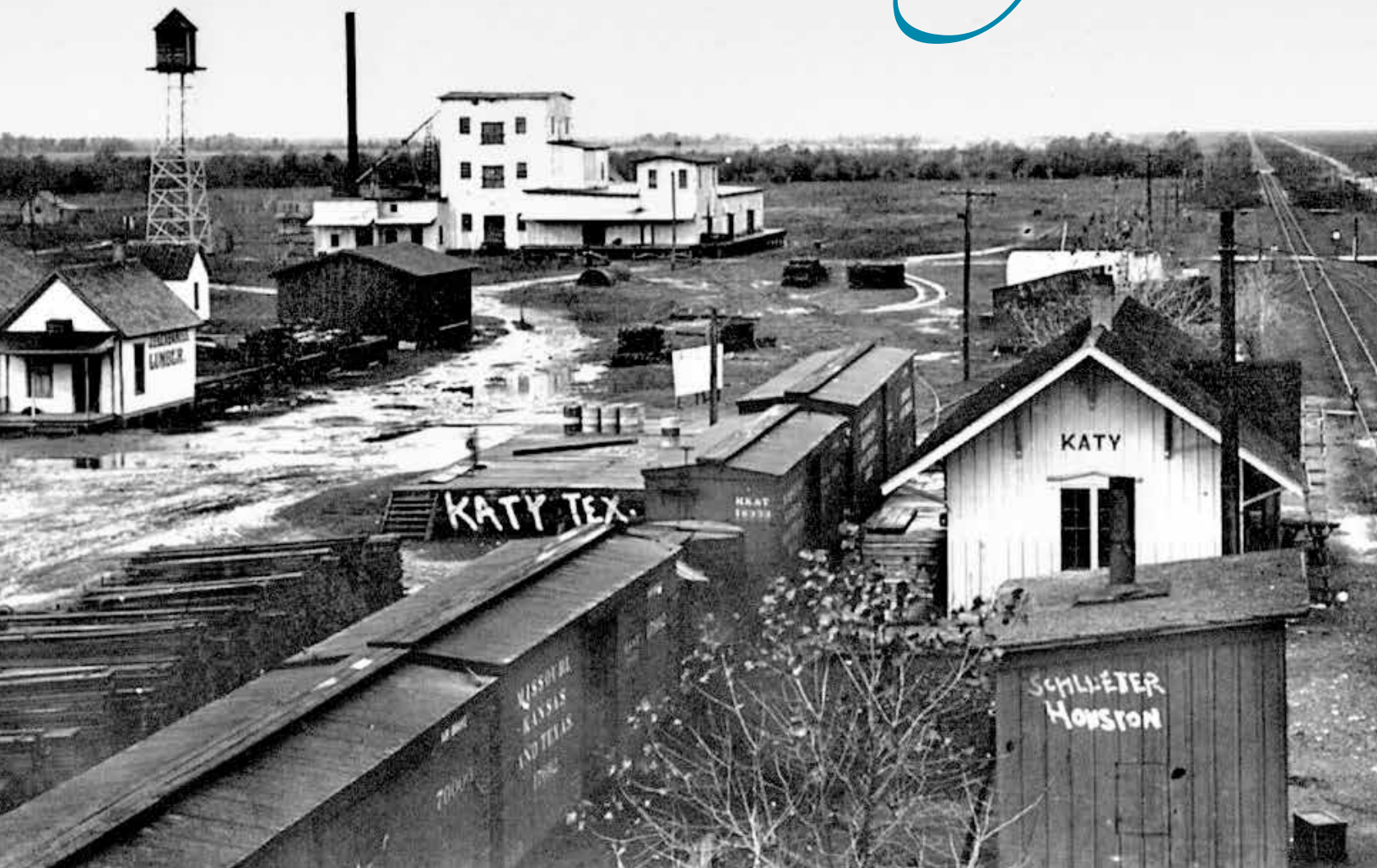


Houston HISTORY

VOLUME 13 • NUMBER 2 • SPRING 2016

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
CENTER FOR PUBLIC HISTORY

Around the Region



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Houston, Broadly Defined



Joseph A. Pratt

At times Houston's "suburbs" appear destined to reach from San Antonio to New Orleans and from Dallas to Cancun. Our city knows no bounds. Yet when I first moved to Houston upon entering Rice University in 1966, our city seemed to stop roughly at the current location of Loop 610. What a difference fifty years have made.

Having grown up near Beaumont, my introduction to Houston came from drives in on old U.S. 90 and later on I-10 to visit an uncle, attend high school athletic contests with schools from Baytown to Galena Park, and finally to see major league baseball. I got excited when the San Jacinto Monument came into sight (and more excited when we stopped to eat at the San Jacinto Inn). But the real eastern boundary for me was the Baytown tunnel under the ship channel or the Budweiser brewery on I-10. Tempering my excitement was the growing tension as my country boy dad broke into a cold sweat at the prospect of driving on Houston's freeways.

My sense of Houston's boundaries extended in other directions while at Rice. Trips for a class project took me southwest to the Sugar Land prison. I drove out South Main and onto an uncrowded two-lane road. My pleasant country drive culminated when the prison and the sugar mill popped up with few other buildings to block my view. There was little traffic in the quiet village of Sugar Land.

To the west, Houston seemed to end at the turn-offs to Memorial, before the spot where Beltway 8 now crosses I-10 in a maze of freeways. From there a leisurely drive led to the

small town of Katy, which passed in a quick blur on trips to Austin. Towns like Katy were then thought of as one-horse towns or, more accurately, one-high-school towns.

When we drove to Austin on U.S. 290, we left the city somewhere around Cypress Fairbanks High School, then the only high school in Cy-Fair. Beyond were few subdivisions. U.S. 290 was still a hazardous four-lane, undivided highway with no resemblance to the four-lane "Interstate Aggie" that now goes to Hempstead. Just past that town was the infamous dead man's curve where 290 crossed Highway 6 at the intersection of UT and A&M.

The landmark that served as a northern boundary in these years was the Goodyear blimp hangar near Spring. I have fond memories of a road trip to Huntsville to the prison rodeo to show some of my non-Texan friends at Rice the real Texas. We had a ball watching the prison "volunteers" try to ride bulls or half-heartedly attempt to snatch a \$100 bill taped between a mad bull's horns. The announcer's introduction of each contestant went something like this: "The old boy gettin' ready to ride is Joe Pratt; he's serving 8-10 for armed robbery. Let's give him a hand." After Buck Owens performed on a platform pulled into the arena by a tractor, we headed back to the city, passing only a few filling stations and homes along the stretch of road now dominated by the urban clutter of Conroe and The Woodlands.

It gives me pause to remember the Houston I first encountered in my teen-age years. Freeways now seem to fill up the moment they are finished, with HOV lanes at times becoming parking lots. The cute little trains downtown have as yet made little impact on traffic congestion. Life in the suburbs can be good, but few honest observers in 2016 can say the same about life on our freeways. And if you want to take a leisurely drive down a country road from Houston to Sugar Land or Katy or Conroe, I recommend the road I take more and more often these days, Memory Lane.

Thank You!

We wish to thank Ginger Berni and The Heritage Society for collaborating with us to produce their exhibit "Asian Americans in Houston: A Kaleidoscope of Cultures," based on our fall issue, and for hosting the joint launch party. The exhibit in The Heritage Society Museum Gallery truly brought the magazine stories to life, providing a wonderful atmosphere for the event. Attendees enjoyed delicious treats thanks to the generosity of Sharon and Resham Gahunia at Raja Sweets and gracious donations made by Shelley Ding, president of the Houston chapter of the Chinese American Citizens Association, and Betty Chapman, board member of *Houston History* and The Heritage Society. Thanks also go to Ed Chen for his invaluable assistance in creating the fall issue.



The Heritage Society and Houston History showcased the exhibit and magazine, "Asian Americans in Houston: A Kaleidoscope of Cultures" at the November launch party. Shown left to right are Joe Pratt, Ginger Berni, Shelley Ding, Ed Chen, Debbie Harwell, and Betty Chapman.

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Around the Region

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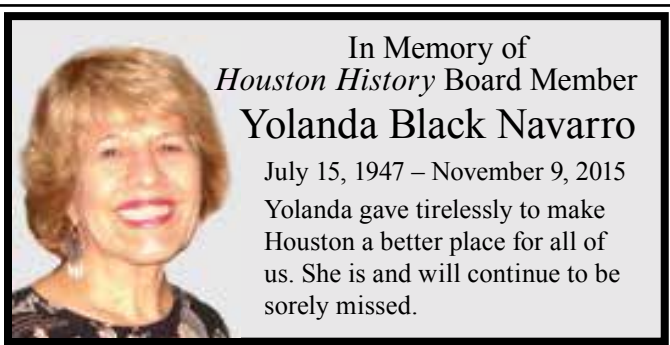
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COVER PHOTO: *The MKT (Missouri Kansas Texas) train depot, from which Katy got its name, circa 1910.*

Photo courtesy of Carol Adams.

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Home in the Pines: Creating The Woodlands

By George T. Morgan, Jr. and John O. King with Joseph A. Pratt



This 1973 scale model of The Woodlands illustrates the desire to incorporate the new city into its natural surroundings and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006-1973-0334N08.



Galveston-born oil magnate George Mitchell embodied the vision of a more environmentally friendly answer to Houston's explosive, madcap growth.

In my adult lifetime, I have watched Houston spread in every direction. People migrated to the region seeking jobs. The circles of highways around the city grew from one to three; the spokes in the wheel of freeways reached farther and farther out onto the flat prairie stretching toward Galveston, Freeport, Baytown, Sugar Land, Huntsville, Jersey Village, Katy, and other suburbs. New, affordable homes sprouted up along these roads, attracting more and more migrants to the jobs and the new neighborhoods that sprawled across the Houston metropolitan

region. The Houston suburbs looked much alike, with the same stores, the same developers, the same interchanges and highway signs. But one major suburb, The Woodlands, remains somewhat distinctive. Since opening in 1974 it has grown dramatically as a distant suburb where people can live and work without commuting daily to downtown Houston. It has partially fulfilled its aspiration to be an environmentally friendly place to live for people from all economic strata of life, with housing for the rich, the middle class, and those of low and moderate incomes.

These early goals for The Woodlands emerged from its unusual past. They reflected the vision of Houston oilman George Mitchell—as filtered through the demands of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.), which seeks to address mounting shortages of housing for the poor and minorities. Although H.U.D. loans helped finance the early development of The Woodlands, its partnership with Mitchell Energy and Development soon soured. Even after H.U.D. funding disappeared, The Woodlands nevertheless emerged as a vibrant center of population and business growth and a major city in its own right.

Mitchell's ideas for building a new community reflected his own background. The son of Greek immigrants who worked their way up the economic ladder in early twentieth-century Galveston, Mitchell grew up on the wrong side of the tracks. Imbued by his parents with a strong work ethic, a respect for education, and optimism about life, Mitchell succeeded in almost every endeavor he undertook. He paid his way through Texas A&M by waiting tables and graduated with a degree in petroleum engineering. He proved to be an entrepreneur of the first class, using this knowledge, insight, and inner confidence to build a superior independent oil and gas company, Mitchell Energy. Although his historical claim to fame will be as the “father of modern fracking,” he also filled his life with a commitment to his large family and with good works ranging from a leading role in the restoration of Galveston to the financial support of Texas A&M, the University of Houston, and many other worthy causes.¹



Jim Veltman with a 1974 environmental assessment of the future Woodlands suburb.

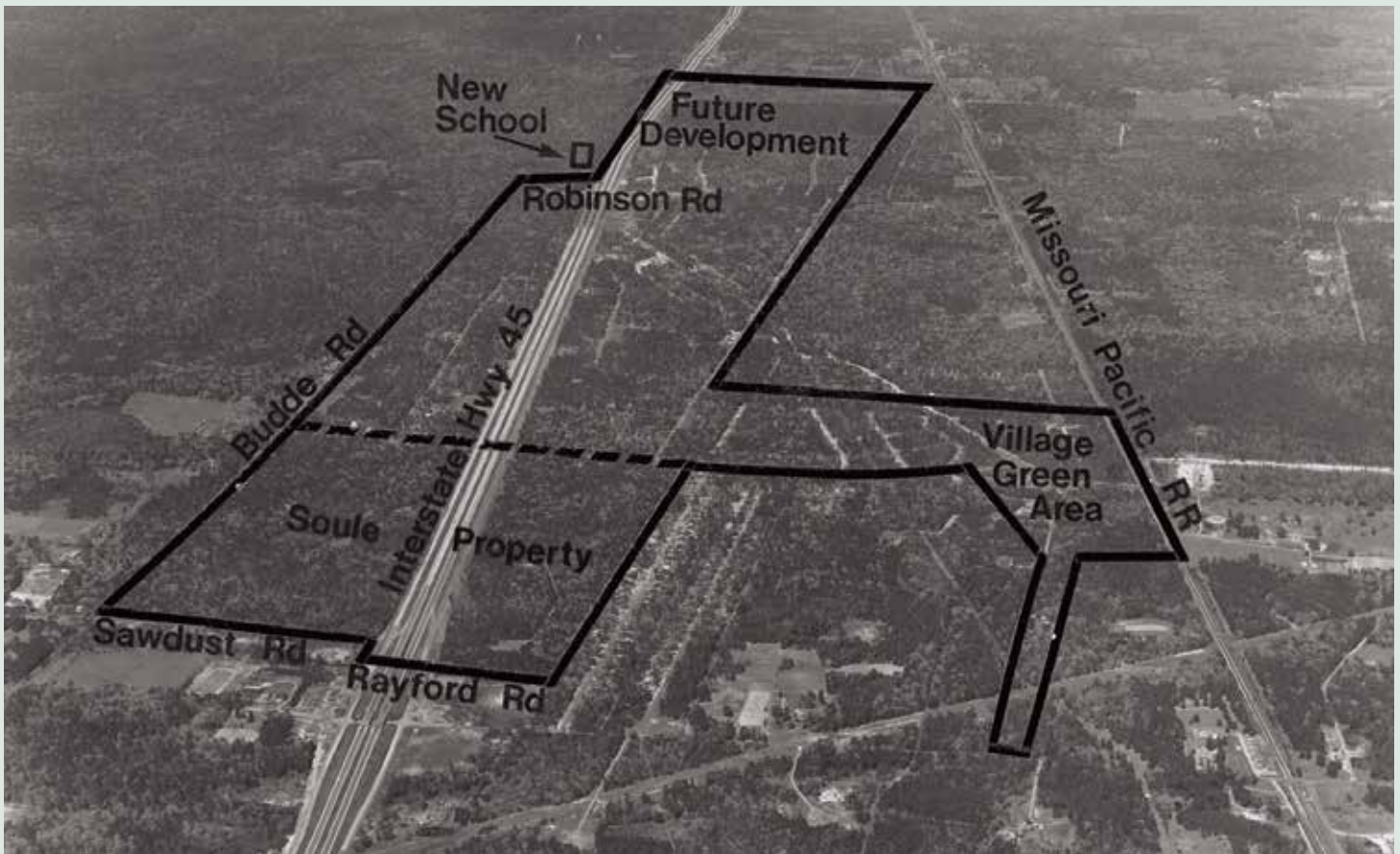
Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RG0006-1974-2439N07.

One such cause was environmental stewardship, an unusual passion for an oilman of his time. This interest spilled over into his work on The Woodlands, which he hoped would become a model for a new type of community. His vision for this development rested in his growing dissatisfaction with the quality of life in Houston during its rapid, chaotic expansion in the 1960s and 1970s. Like many other oilmen of the time, Mitchell had moved his family into the Memorial area west of Houston as he built Mitchell Energy. Drawn by the beauty of the area's stately homes and mature trees, he became disillusioned as rapid, careless, and unplanned development gradually altered the look and feel of the area. In an interview in 1979, Mitchell recalled that Memorial had become the victim of “helter-skelter, fragmented development.” Discouraged that the developers had not made the best use of the natural beauty in the area, he saw his task in The Woodlands as finding the answer to an interesting question: “If you were going to take Memorial and wipe it out and do it over again, how would you do better?”²

His concern about city life in Houston extended past environmental issues to social problems. He felt uncomfortable with the growing congestion and pollution in the city. Migration to the city seemed to be outrunning the capacity of its infrastructure to absorb and provide services to its booming population. He disliked the urban blight of the city's unplanned and undermanaged development, and he feared the consequences of the gap between the haves and the have-nots in his city. With many other Americans, he struggled to understand the causes and implications of a wave of urban riots that wracked the nation in the 1960s. Surely, he thought, a new type of city could be designed to create a more harmonious relationship between its citizens and nature and to foster a sense of community among people of different economic classes and racial and ethnic backgrounds. Was this a utopian vision? Given Mitchell's background and his innate sense of optimism that practical people could make needed changes, perhaps not.

But could such a city be built and sustained in a real world setting in which costs and profits compete with the vision of a better way to live? Mitchell had a keen sense that the social responsibilities of businessmen went beyond making a profit while creating jobs and obeying the law. He felt strongly that there was more to a life well-lived, and he believed that environmental stewardship was compatible with the profit motive. The Woodlands became his trial case, and he pursued his vision of a better city with all the commitment and resources he could muster.

He also recognized clearly that his own self-interest supported his efforts. He had operated a successful oil and gas company for decades, and he understood all too well the industry's volatility. Sharp fluctuations in oil prices and unexpected and unmanageable geopolitical crises could quickly depress profits; a large, successful real estate development might serve as a counterweight to downturns in oil and gas. His company already had a record of acquiring large blocks of land for drilling and for development, and it had completed numerous real estate ventures in its past. A development on the scale of The Woodlands could push its real estate development business to a new level of investment that might make a more significant impact on its bottom line.



Aerial photograph of the site of the future development of The Woodlands, June 2, 1970. The overlay identifies Rayford, Sawdust, Budde, and Robinson Roads, Interstate 45, and the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006-0103.

Mitchell looked near home for the right place for such a development. He knew that Houston historically had expanded to the east along the ship channel from the 1920s forward, and that in the 1950s and 1960s growth had been pronounced to the southeast towards Clear Lake and to the west toward Memorial and points beyond. He saw greater signs of future growth to the northwest in northern Harris County and southern Montgomery County. Here, development had accelerated in the 1960s with the building of the Champions subdivision, which featured quality homes built around an outstanding golf course and country club. Other subdivisions rapidly followed. Mitchell bought large blocks of land near Champions, but after becoming disgruntled with the look and the tone of the crowded developments in the area, he moved his focus north to southern Montgomery County. He made his first major land purchase there in 1964, when he bought 500,000 acres of timberland from the Grogan-Cochran Lumber Company. He had what he had been looking for, a location for his development that had ample stands of mature trees and enough space to build a city with large tracts of green spaces and big lots for homes and apartment complexes. He increased his original parcel of land through purchases and trades, and by the late 1960s he was ready to start planing his new city.

The location had an interesting history of growth fed by a variety of economic activities. Over time it also had established transportation and business ties to Houston. Founded in 1837, the small town of Montgomery had served as a regional center of commerce for an array of small

farmers for decades. Ten miles to the north was the county seat of Conroe, a larger town. Twenty more miles or so to the north sat Huntsville, a town about the size of Conroe, and one that had developed significant historical ties to the Houston legal and banking community. In this region



Willie Nelson (center) smiles after a successful shot during a 1978 celebrity golf tournament at The Woodlands Country Club. He was joined by University of Texas football coach Daryl Royal (left) and actor James Garner (right.)

Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006-1978-1883N19.



The freestanding chimney was a fashionable architectural choice in Woodlands homes going up in the 1970s.

Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006N-19791195N11A.

family farming made room for large cotton plantations in the years prior to the Civil War. After the war, cotton remained important, although tenant farmers steadily replaced plantation-level cotton production. Nonetheless, cotton shipped by wagon to Houston and Galveston established ties with merchants, lawyers, and bankers on the coast. These ties became much stronger with the discovery of a major oil field near Conroe in the 1930s.³

Over the long run the steady development of improved transportation between the hinterland and the central city proved more important in tying the region to Houston. The late nineteenth century brought the coming of numerous railroads to the region. Cotton and timber now had a more efficient means of transport to processing plants and shipping facilities on the coast, and goods from distant points had much easier access to regional markets. The twentieth century saw an even more important development for the region, the creation over decades of a much improved highway system that became the key connector of Montgomery County to Houston. In the mid-twentieth century Highway 75, the key transportation corridor between Houston and Dallas, passed through the region. Then with the financing of the interstate highway system after 1956, the construction of Interstate 45 along much of the route

of Highway 75 placed the region near a modern divided four-lane freeway between the two largest cities in Texas. The subsequent construction of the Hardy Toll Road from the inner loop (I-610) north of Houston to the southern edge of The Woodlands opened another important corridor to downtown for those commuting there to work. The opening of Houston Intercontinental Airport (now George Bush Intercontinental Airport) in 1969 some twenty minutes south of The Woodlands by car gave nationally and internationally active companies another incentive to locate offices in the development.⁴ As Mitchell planned The Woodlands, he had good reasons to be confident of future growth in the region.

With growing excitement, in the early 1970s the project moved from a soft sense of what might be done to the drawing board. Mitchell's wife Cynthia suggested the name "The Woodlands," and her husband moved cautiously in his search for designers and builders who shared his vision and could help make it a reality.

After rejecting traditional architects, Mitchell chose Robert Hartsfield of the Houston architectural firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott as director of planning and design. Hartsfield recommended his mentor Ian McHarg, a Scottish landscape architect who had built a reputation as a creative, environmentally conscious designer and urban planner. His influential book, *Design with Nature*, argued strongly for greater concern for preserving natural beauty in design and construction. As a consultant to Mitchell Energy and Development on environmental planning for The Woodlands project, he put forward a plan that set aside large areas of green space and featured big lots and villages designed to avoid cutting mature trees whenever possible. Mitchell found much to like in this approach, and he valued McHarg's advice as planning moved forward. Mitchell also consulted other environmentally friendly architects and a variety of experts on other social aspects of the project.

From this complex planning process emerged the basic approach still evident in the modern Woodlands: a residential area with a country feel stretching over 28,000 acres, complete with all the trees that could be preserved and still allow the development to be profitable. Residents could enjoy ample green space in every direction, as well as first-class amenities for sports and entertainment. Holding it all together was a long-term plan to manage both population growth and the gradual, phased introduction of commercial and business activity.

As Mitchell searched for capital to finance the project, he examined the new cities program of H.U.D. Laws passed in 1968 and 1970 that gave H.U.D. authority to make loans of up to \$500 million for projects to build innovative new developments featuring designs that included housing for low and moderate income families. The goal was to address growing concerns about inequality of income, white flight, and the shortage of affordable housing for the poor and for minorities. New cities at Reston, Virginia; Columbia, Maryland; and other locations had blazed this trail for The Woodlands, which could learn from both their successes and failures. Mitchell's vision included concern for the social issues originally stressed by H.U.D., and he applied for and received funding for his project.

As construction began on Grogan's Mill, the first village



Market Street, an example of Mitchell's vision for a community with all the amenities of Houston.

Photo courtesy of Thomas Coyne.

in The Woodlands, numerous tensions had to be addressed. First on the agenda were efforts by the neighboring town of Conroe to protect its own self-interests against competing claims by the potential giant to its south. At the top of its list was the willingness of The Woodlands to grant extraterritorial claims to Houston, giving the big city the potential to expand its presence gradually over The Woodlands, with the distinct possibility of annexation down the line. After calming these fears, The Woodlands also had to address numerous challenges from its neighbor to the north over issues as varied as school systems, drainage, and water use.⁵

Tensions with H.U.D., whose focus and management changed with the political winds, also hampered the project. Even in the early years when the agency encouraged the growth of new cities, its political support and funding was by no means secure. During the 1970s H.U.D. became an increasingly unreliable partner for Mitchell Energy and Development as it sought to make The Woodlands a long-term success. According to the authors of the early history of the project, numerous disputes with H.U.D. at one point drove The Woodlands to the “brink of insolvency.”⁶ H.U.D.’s leadership and focus had changed as the new cities program as a whole began taking on water. One of its officials summarized the situation as follows: “The blue sky thinking and the dreaming has ended and the reality has set in that this is just a damn difficult mode of development from a management standpoint.”⁷ The access to capital and credit of George Mitchell and Mitchell Energy helped pull the project through this crisis, and it finally cut the cord with H.U.D. in 1983. One casualty of the divorce with H.U.D. was the reinforcement the original agreement had given to the social goal of diversity in housing.

A long-term goal of George Mitchell to house a major university campus within The Woodlands ultimately faded

away due to tensions with the state coordinating board for higher education. Mitchell initially gave the University of Houston 400 acres on which to develop a new campus. The university was quite eager to expand and Mitchell assumed that the presence of a university would contribute to the prestige of his project while also attracting substantial numbers of potential homebuyers. After much haggling with authorities, this campus failed to materialize. Ultimately, the coordinating board proved more interested in curbing the rising costs of higher education in the state and in protecting the interest of flagship universities in Texas than in the expansion of the University of Houston. The management of The Woodlands later succeeded in creating the Houston Area Research Council, which included all major universities in the area and focused in large part on cooperative research on environmental issues.⁸

Not surprisingly, tensions also grew between those in Mitchell Energy and Development Corporation who worked in oil and gas and those whose job was to develop The Woodlands. In an era of great uncertainty for oil and gas prices and domestic production, the growing budget and staff in real estate development raised a red flag for those who cared first about the company’s traditional strengths in energy. By the late 1970s, the resulting tensions within the company became so pronounced that George Mitchell himself took greater control over the management of The Woodlands.⁹ The sharp rise in oil prices after 1978 dampened such tensions, but they remained until the 1980s, when The Woodlands could generate enough profits on its own to support long-term, sustained growth. The ultimate resolution of these tensions came in 1997 with the purchase of The Woodlands Corporation by a joint venture of Morgan Stanley and Crescent Real Estate and the sale of Mitchell Energy to Devon Energy in 2002.

More fundamental tensions shaped the evolution of The

Woodlands in the past and will continue to affect its future. Built into Mitchell's vision of a better way to live were two sources of potential conflicts: the commitment to environmental stewardship as a defining goal of a profit-making project and the commitment to diversity in the access to housing in an upscale development built far from the city.

Ian McHarg, who preached the gospel of designing with nature, had this practical response to residents of The Woodlands who protested the building of concrete trails instead of walking paths with wood chips: "It would be very nice if the forest remained a forest, but if it remained a forest it would not be a new city." He defended his overall advice to the builders of The Woodland with a simpler quote that his major contribution was to help builders learn that "they could love money and trees at the same time."¹⁰

Statistics suggest that the project was less successful in achieving its goal of attracting economic diversity in its residents. In 2010, for example, The Woodlands population was about 94,000, with 2.4 % African Americans and 12.3% Hispanics. It proved hard to transplant diversity into an upscale community in a traditionally rural community away from a major city.¹¹

The Woodlands had no such problem sustaining steady population growth over its history. By 1980, its population was about 7,800; by 1990, more than 29,000, making it the largest city in Montgomery County; by 2000, over 55,000; by 2010, almost 94,000; and in 2015, over 100,000. This expansion helped spur the growth of Montgomery County from almost 50,000 in 1970 to about 294,000 in 2000.¹²

Forty years after its opening, The Woodlands experiment has been a partial success against great odds. It is not an ordinary suburb. It is greener and it has attracted more jobs that do not require a long commute than most Houston suburban subdivisions. By all accounts it is a better place to live than many options in the region, in part because of its location among the pines and in part because of its environmentally friendly design. Residents also have access to first-class facilities to hike, play golf and tennis, swim, and attend concerts. Above all, it allows many to live near work and shopping with excellent schools nearby for their children.

That said, it is hard to visit The Woodlands today without thinking of George Mitchell's question about starting over in designing Memorial. For those who commute to Houston or who drive the streets of the development, traffic congestion remains a serious problem. The original goal of economic and ethnic diversity has been illusive, and The Woodlands is much closer to a refuge for affluent whites than a reflection of the growing diversity of the Houston region. And yet, the original design of The Woodlands seems capable of absorbing the future growth in population and commercialization that seems destined for most of the Houston region. If George Mitchell did not completely realize his ambitious vision, he at least gave people a choice of a somewhat better place to live.

Joe Pratt is the editor-in-chief of *Houston History*.

George T. Morgan, Jr. and John O'King coauthored *The Woodlands: New Community Development, 1964-1985*. (See Endnotes, no. 2.)

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Houston: Becoming the Ranch House City

By Stephen James

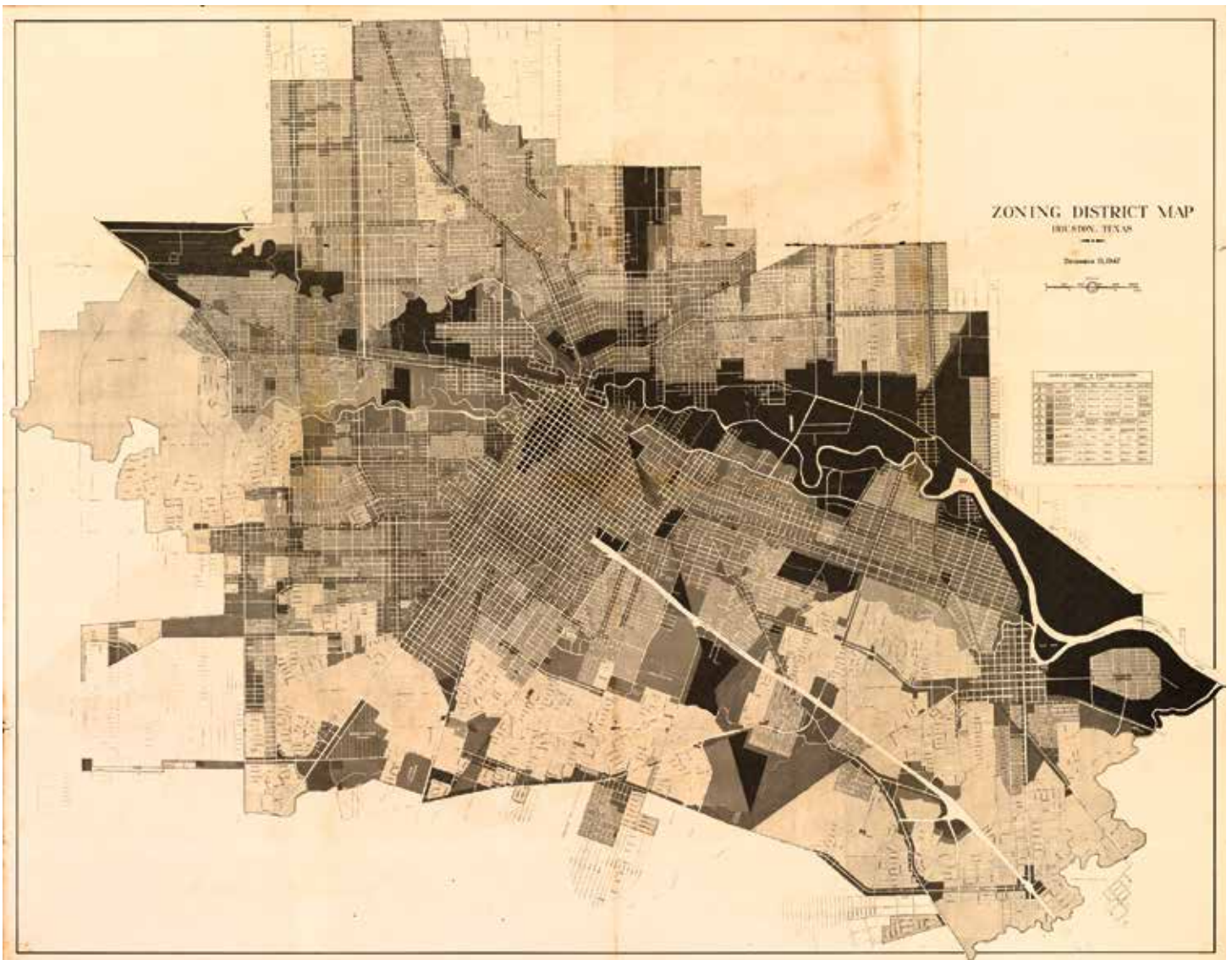
Houston is a vast city that spreads to the horizon in all directions. Gleaming commercial districts punctuate its sprawl, but the landscape is a blanket of residential neighborhoods. They define its architectural character. They tell us how and when the city grew.

Every urban area reflects the architectural styles that prevailed during the years of its greatest growth. The industrial cities of the Northeast and Midwest, which boomed in the nineteenth century, are known for their many neighborhoods of narrow row houses wrapped in picturesque brownstone, brick, or wood clapboard. Houston, less charming but more modern, is the ranch house city.

Houston is a new city, and its urban fabric seems remarkably homogeneous because so much of it was built over a

relatively short period of time. Houston grew at a phenomenal rate during the decades immediately after World War II. Its population soared from 384,514 in 1940 to 1,595,138 in 1980.¹ A booming economy fueled the growth, which city leaders guided through an aggressive annexation policy.

As late as the 1940s, Houston was a compact city of seventy-five square miles. Its boundaries extended no farther than Kirby Drive on the west, Brays Bayou on the southwest, and Sims Bayou on the southeast. The Heights, Rice Institute, and the new Texas Medical Center were on the edge of town. Today, this area defines the urban core, a central business district ringed by the city's earliest suburbs. A 1947 land use map (below) shows that most residential areas—highlighted in shades of gray according to density—developed on a grid pattern with small compact lots.² An informal survey of these areas today shows that architectural types varied according to income. Prosperous neighborhoods featured brick homes of two stories, while one-story cottages and bungalows predominated in more modest districts. There were very few ranch houses within the city limits.



Before the Boom—In 1947 Houston's boundaries extended to Kirby Drive on the west, Brays and Sims Bayous on the south. Residential areas are highlighted in shades of gray according to density.

Map courtesy of Paddock Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Council Records, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

Nineteen forty-eight marked the beginning of Houston's rush to the suburbs. On December 31 with the city's first automobile expressway—the Gulf Freeway—under construction, the city council approved an ordinance annexing a large swath of territory that more than doubled Houston's area to 189 square miles.³ With future expressways and future annexations, the city pushed rapidly outward and by 1980 encompassed 556 square miles.⁴

Houston's experience with suburbanization was not unique; it was a nationwide phenomenon.⁵ Significantly, however, 1950 to 1980, a time of explosive growth for Houston's suburbs, were the years the ranch house dominated residential architecture. Thus the architectural character of much of the city is defined by the neighborhoods of postwar ranch houses, which cover a large part of its incorporated area.

Today's suburban ranch house can trace its roots to the Old West, but it bears little resemblance to its namesake. In the nineteenth century the term described a rustic western farmhouse. It was an example of vernacular architecture—functional owner-constructed buildings without pretense. Often seen in Hollywood “Westerns,” the vernacular ranch house was a simple one-story structure, usually of wood-frame construction, often with board-and-batten siding, although Spanish colonial precedents were built of adobe brick and sometimes finished in stucco. Early ranch houses were often L-shaped or U-shaped with extended wings. A common feature was a deep porch supported by a colonnade of posts, called a *loggia*, a *portal*, or a *corredor*. Functional and unpretentious, the house suited the austere realities of ranch life.⁶

Formally, the ranch house has always been distinguished by its low profile. It is a one-story building with a simple shape and a low roofline. Although gable roofs are common, many postwar ranch houses feature the hip roof, which slopes back to meet the ridge line, minimizing the roof's apparent height. When combined with wide eaves at the edges, a hip roof visually extends the length of the house and imparts a strong horizontal appearance. Postwar ranch houses are also known for their large front windows, often called “picture windows.”

These inherent formal characteristics—what makes a ranch house a ranch house—have contributed to its enduring popularity. Its “lowness” gives the ranch house a human scale. The foundation is on or close to the ground and the eaves of the roof are barely above a person's head. This small, domestic scale provides a sense of shelter and refuge—some would call it coziness—not found in more imposing house types. Moreover, all ranch houses have an open floor plan, where functions such as living and dining share space without partitions dividing them. Living areas communicate directly with the outside through large glass doors.

The ranch house has retained its appeal because modern life in the suburbs in some ways shares the informality of life on a western ranch of the nineteenth century. But it is possible to make this connection only because, in the interim, the nation experienced a profound change in the notion of leisure. The Old West ranch house became the familiar suburban ranch house shortly before World War II. The link between them is the California ranch house of the 1930s and 1940s.

California is often a leading indicator of social trends soon to be adopted by the rest of the country; the ranch house is an example. In the 1930s, just as Colonial Williamsburg inspired a national passion for boxy colonial houses, architects and builders in California began to use the vernacular ranch house as a model for middle-class dwellings in the new suburbs of Southern California. The original ranch house was associated with living outdoors—life on a ranch—and the new ranch-style houses captured this quality. Taking advantage of the ranch house's extended wings, builders turned the resulting courtyard into an outdoor living room, complete with furniture. A house built around a patio was ideal for the mild climate of the area, where people were accustomed to spending time outdoors. The open floor plan seemed less confining than those of earlier house types.

The builders romanticized the ranch houses of the Old West, updating them for modern living but retaining their rustic character. Californians discovered that, in these new ranch houses, the living was easy: The rambling design lent itself to an informal, casual way of life, one that eschewed



“Western Ranch House,” 1888.

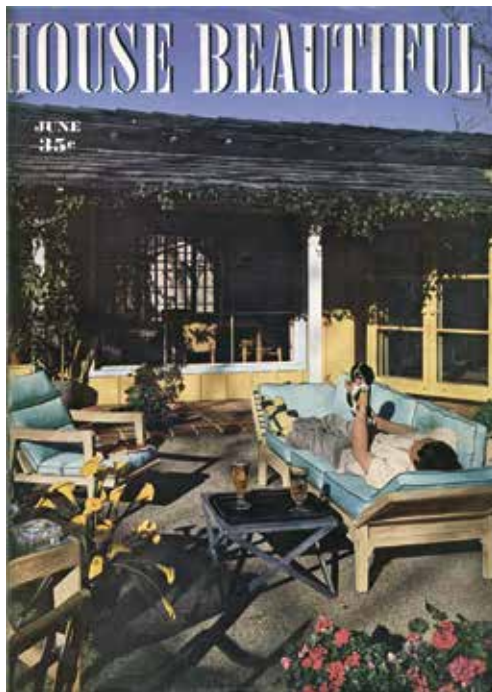
Photo by John C. H. Grabill. Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-pmsc-02597.

servants and social ritual. By the late 1930s *Sunset* magazine and other western regional publications were full of examples of this new house type, which were popping up across Southern California. The magazines recounted the ranch house's humble origins but recognized that the new California ranch houses were a modern adaptation with an identity distinct from the original.⁷

In the East, the editors of national magazines took note. They saw the California ranch house as an important development, not because it was great architecture but because its layout encouraged the leisure-oriented lifestyle that their readers envied. Home building and other nonessential activities stopped during the war, but by 1944 the magazines were already thinking ahead. Postwar home planning became the primary focus of popular women's magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* and the domestic architectural publications, known as "shelter magazines," which included *Better Homes & Gardens*, *House Beautiful*, and *House & Garden*.⁸

As they shaped their readers' expectations of postwar life, the editors seemed infatuated with the new ranch-style house. Through the end of the war and beyond, these popular domestic magazines published countless features on the ranch house, not just reporting it as news but actively promoting it as the way their readers could achieve the casual California lifestyle.⁹

The seductive appeal of the ranch house was apparent in June 1944 when the cover of *House Beautiful* (above) featured the home of builder Cliff May, often called "the father of the California ranch house." It was an evocative image of May's son, Mike, reclining on the patio, and it clearly associated the ranch house with a life of leisure. Only



Magazines associated the ranch house with a life of leisure. House Beautiful, June 1944.

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Photo by Maynard L. Parker, by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

a small part of the house was visible, but it had all the hallmarks of the new California ranch house—low roofline, rustic board-and-batten siding, French doors opening to the patio, and large windows. The view through the windows showed the house was only one room deep. One could see right through it! This house blurred the boundaries between life indoors and leisure activities outside. With the end of the war fast approaching, this was how Americans wanted to live.¹⁰

In the 1940s the shelter magazines introduced the California ranch house to America, and the public reaction was unprecedented. Before the war this house type was a novelty outside the West, and during the war there was no residential construction, but by the end of the decade the ranch house had become the most popular house type in the country.¹¹ From 1946 to 1950 a national consensus developed in favor of the ranch house, driven by its promise of a casual lifestyle.¹² This was clear from the title of a popular book of the time—*Houses and Plans 1950: 55 New Homes Construction-Tested for Today's*

Trends towards the Ranch House and Ease of Living.¹³

When home building resumed after the war, builders moved quickly to offer popular ranch house designs.¹⁴ Builders liked the ranch house because the simple shape made it inexpensive to build and easy to adapt to different tastes. Unlike earlier house types, the ranch house had a chameleon-like ability to be whatever the buyer wanted: A ranch house plan could be dressed in any number of popular styles, from Colonial Revival to Old English. Within a few years the public's perception of the ranch house had changed from a rustic western farmhouse to something that was a blank canvas for one's dreams.

The magazines may have sparked the ranch house revolu-



Whelan House, Bonita, California, 1936, designed and built by Cliff May. The Whelan House illustrates the California ranch house style promoted by the shelter magazines in the 1940s. It is notable for its low roofline and extended wings, which enclose a patio.

Photo courtesy of Max A. van Balgooy.



Builders simplified and mass-produced the ranch house in the 1950s. Also called a tract house or a rambler, this example has the popular hip roof with wide eaves and a prominent picture window. Photo courtesy of the author.

tion, but the nation's home builders completed it. In the late 1940s with residential construction stalled by almost two decades of economic depression and war, the nation suffered from a severe housing shortage. The home building industry responded to the crisis by constructing new housing on a very large scale. Real estate developers created larger subdivisions—covering hundreds and even thousands of acres—by focusing their efforts on rural and suburban areas where land was cheaper. Within many of those neighborhoods, large home building companies known as merchant builders used industrial techniques of mass production to satisfy public demand.

In the process, the ranch house underwent a transformation as home builders simplified its form and details. Often called tract houses (or sometimes, rambles), these simplified ranch houses sacrificed rustic charm for cost savings. Tract house floor plans were often a simple rectangle. The early ranch house could have an extended linear shape because it was located in a rural setting. The tract house is more compact to fit a suburban lot. As the name implies, a tract house is one of many similar or identical houses built closely together on a tract of land. Though purged of its charm, the tract house retains the spirit of the original ranch house. Today, people associate the ranch house with these mass-produced tract houses, but they differ considerably from both the California ranch house of the 1930s and 1940s and the original western ranch house of the nineteenth century.¹⁵

Houston's open prairie presented few natural obstacles to development, and large-scale suburban subdivisions proliferated. Real estate developer Frank Sharp was legendary in the decades after World War II for creating Houston's largest residential developments. His first postwar project was Oak Forest, which opened in 1947, northwest of the Heights. The largest neighborhood in the city at the time, the development covered over 1,100 acres and eventually contained almost 5,000 homes. Oak Forest marketed to returning veterans and offered small, economical ranch houses, many financed with loans guaranteed by the Veteran's Administration (VA) or the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). At the same time, another of Sharp's companies developed the upscale Royden Oaks neighborhood on the western edge of River Oaks.¹⁶

In 1955 Sharp unveiled his biggest project, called Sharpstown—a sprawling mixed-use development of 4,000

acres and 15,000 homes. Until the late 1970s it was unchallenged as the largest residential development in the city. Sharp located his eponymous community on the far southwest edge of Houston in the path of a new city expressway, the Southwest Freeway (US 59). Although Sharp provided for schools, libraries, and commercial areas, his centerpiece was the large Sharpstown Shopping Center, for many years one of the city's most popular indoor shopping malls.¹⁷

As the city's boom continued through the 1950s and 1960s, other developers followed the same formula. In the mid-1950s Ira Berne's Westbury Corporation developed the large Westbury neighborhood at the end of South Main. Covering three square miles and containing 5,000 homes, Westbury rivaled Oak Forest and Sharpstown in size. Consistent with the social conformity of the 1950s, all of Westbury's homes were ranch house designs, but they featured a remarkable amount of stylistic diversity. Like Sharpstown, Westbury offered a retail shopping area, but Westbury's shopping center was unique. Instead of an



Ranch house reverie—A Sharpstown ranch house was on many a wish list. Houston Post, January 1, 1956.

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Westbury
POST OAK ROAD AT WILLOW BEED BLVD.
BERNE
A COMPANY

Conformity and diversity—In ranch house developments such as Westbury, a common one-story house type featured many stylistic variations. Houston Chronicle, June 19, 1960.

© Houston Chronicle. Used by permission.

indoor shopping mall, Berne built an outdoor European village called Westbury Square, which drew shoppers from all over the city.¹⁸ On the northern edge of Westbury, developer George Meyer created Meyerland, a large 1,200-acre subdivision that straddled Brays Bayou just west of Post Oak Road. As with many large residential developments, Meyerland featured a large regional shopping center surrounded by acres of parking.

Several miles to the north, along San Felipe Road, the Tanglewood Corporation catered to more affluent buyers. Its Tanglewood neighborhood teemed with over-sized ranch houses on large lots.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, in the 1960s this prosperous neighborhood attracted developers whose focus was retail, not residential. Not far from Tanglewood's boundaries, the intersection of Westheimer and Post Oak became the center of a new luxury-shopping district. Joske's, Sakowitz, and Neiman-Marcus department stores each anchored a corner, joined in 1970 by Gerald Hines's glitzy extravaganza called the Galleria.

In hindsight, the opening of the Galleria was a watershed, the beginning of the end of the ranch house suburbs and their regional shopping malls. It marked a change in American society, which now valued wealth and conspicuous consumption over the populist conformity of the postwar suburbs. Some were more affluent than others, but there was a sameness to the ranch house neighborhoods because they all featured the same one-story house type. The suburban ranch house enforced a form of social leveling. It was ubiquitous and was one of the few constants across socio-economic levels. In the 1950s and 1960s it seemed that everyone lived in a ranch house. Having more money meant that one lived in a bigger ranch house, not a mansion.²⁰

Every corner of the city had a large regional shopping

mall, and there was little to distinguish one from the other. The Galleria was not just another shopping mall. It was not about shopping; it was about *expensive* shopping. For such an elitist enterprise to become the standard by which all shopping malls are judged suggests that something profound was happening in the larger society.

Seventy years after America fell in love with the ranch house, times have changed and its popular appeal may be hard to understand. But just as the Galleria serves as a metaphor for social change, the declining popularity of the ranch house shows more than a change in tastes; it shows a change in social values.

The prosperity of the last fifty years has made us insensitive to the austerity of the 1930s and 1940s. Hardship was a shared experience and those who were more fortunate refrained from announcing it to others. Social pressure discouraged ostentatious displays of wealth. The popular press used the word "unpretentious" approvingly, and it appeared everywhere, even in celebrity profiles such as one article that asked, "Who wants to live in a pretentious house? Certainly not Olivia de Havilland." In *House Beautiful* Cliff May

expressed the same values when he said of his ranch house, "We don't like pretentious architecture. . . . Our friends come to enjoy themselves—not to be impressed."²¹

After the war, the sudden and universal popularity of the ranch house was a social phenomenon. Everyone wanted one and no one cared that, as a reworked farmhouse, it was inherently modest and unpretentious. Indeed, that was its appeal. It captured the egalitarian spirit of an era of economic hardship. Then, over the next few decades, it served as the stable foundation for a society in transition to a period of great prosperity. Now, of course, the goal of most residential architecture is to impress the viewer with tall facades, grand entryways, and historical allusions.

Beyond its social implications, the ranch house can be viewed more pragmatically. Ranch houses are rarely built today, but the older ranch house neighborhoods are still popular with home buyers because the houses offer a lot of space and are easily updated with modern amenities.²² Moreover, the legacy of the ranch house can be seen in its influence on residential design. The suburban ranch house is the beginning of the modern American house. It popularized the open floor plan, which is now the basis for all residential design. Today, the typical house, with its high gable roof and red brick exterior, may recall an English country manor, but on the inside it looks much like a 1950s ranch house. The interiors are very open and space flows through glass doors on to a patio. Though their aspirations outgrew it, the ranch house transformed the way Americans lived.

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THE BRYAN MUSEUM: HISTORY IN HISTORY

A Conversation with J. P. Bryan and Chris Cookson

J. P. Bryan has spent a lifetime amassing the finest privately held collection of Texana and materials related to the settlement of the western United States. For decades, he has generously shared his collection, which was housed at his office, and recently took the major step of opening the Bryan Museum in Galveston as a permanent home. It is housed in the fully restored Galveston Orphans Home — a historic collection in a historic building. I had the privilege of visiting with J. P. Bryan recently to discuss his personal history, as well as the tremendous resource he has developed.

CC: What drove your original interest in history?

JPB: I came from a family important in the early Anglo settlement of Texas, and they were very proud of their experiences in that event. The family used to share, abundantly, in the retelling of that history. But, also I think it made an impression on all the family members that they needed to make their own history, while at the same time preserving the importance of the history that their ancestors had been a part of because it's a great history and it should be a source of inspiration for future generations of Texans or just people in general who take an interest in heroic conduct. There were literally thousands of heroes that were part of the history of the settlement of the western portion of the United States, both visible and invisible. So, it was through my family that I first established an interest, or more especially my grandmother, her name was Cassie. . . . My grandmother was diligent in teaching me the importance of Biblical study and the study of the history of Texas and, more broadly, the history of the western settlement of the United States. . . .

CC: And your father was a collector as well?

JPB: He was. He inherited a good bit of material from various members of his family, but he collected his own. He had a wonderful, probably at the time one of the best, map collections in the U.S., as it pertained to the western settlement of the U.S. He published a couple of things himself. He edited the diary of Mary Austin Holley, who was Stephen F. Austin's cousin. . . . and the one person he clearly evidenced an interest in marrying.

A photograph of J. P. Bryan, an elderly man with white hair, wearing a dark jacket over a blue shirt and blue jeans. He is standing on a set of stone steps, leaning against a wall. A dog is lying on the steps in front of him. The background shows a brick building with a window.

*J. P. Bryan
and his dog,
Chalk, on
the steps of
The Bryan
Museum.*



This gallery in the Special Exhibits space will house rotating exhibits.

All photos courtesy of The Bryan Museum.



On June 12, 2015, The Bryan Museum opened to the public for the first time. The Galveston Chamber of Commerce conducted the ribbon cutting with Mr. and Mrs. Bryan, their family, the museum staff, and friends of the museum in attendance.

CC: Did you start collecting at an early age yourself?

JPB: I did. . . . My father and I had a common interest in the history of Texas. I was always fascinated with travel books, especially those that included maps. I thought they were a nice little embellishment, and I liked studying them. When I first started collecting, in a modest way, Texana, or Texas material, it was travel books. My early inspiration for collecting books at all was my necessity to pay for my education at the University of Texas. So, I worked with a friend of mine named John Jenkins. We started a business on Congress Avenue that published out-of-date rarities, which we named The Pemberton Press. . . . The initial effort was a reprint of the first cookbook in Texas, done by the ladies of the Presbyterian Church and it turned out to be an excellent seller. We got it out just by luck at the perfect time. It came out in October or November, just before Christmas, and we sold out the edition in short order. So, we thought, we have the formula here for sure success — we would just reprint interesting Texas rarities that aren't available. It worked OK. . . . We also did some fairly important early histories. We did the first biography of J. Frank Dobie ever done, right after his death. . . . We did a really good biography of Frank Hamer, the Texas Ranger who was responsible for capturing Bonnie and Clyde. And then we did a series of other historical books of that ilk. . . .

CC: And you didn't inherit your father's collection?

JPB: I didn't. He sold it in 1966 and so that's when I decided that if I wanted a collection, I was going to have to go get my own.

CC: Can you talk about the process of collecting? It is very gradual? Episodic? Do you find a trove of something?

JPB: It's all of those. Well, if you spend enough time learning the subject, and there's adequate diversity, or volume on the particular subject you wish to collect, you'll find it will come from a whole variety of venues or sources. I started collecting through the guidance of my partner Johnny Jenkins, who was probably the best rare book dealer,



The lobby of The Bryan Museum features the original fireplace and woodwork. The building was meticulously restored after purchase in October 2013.

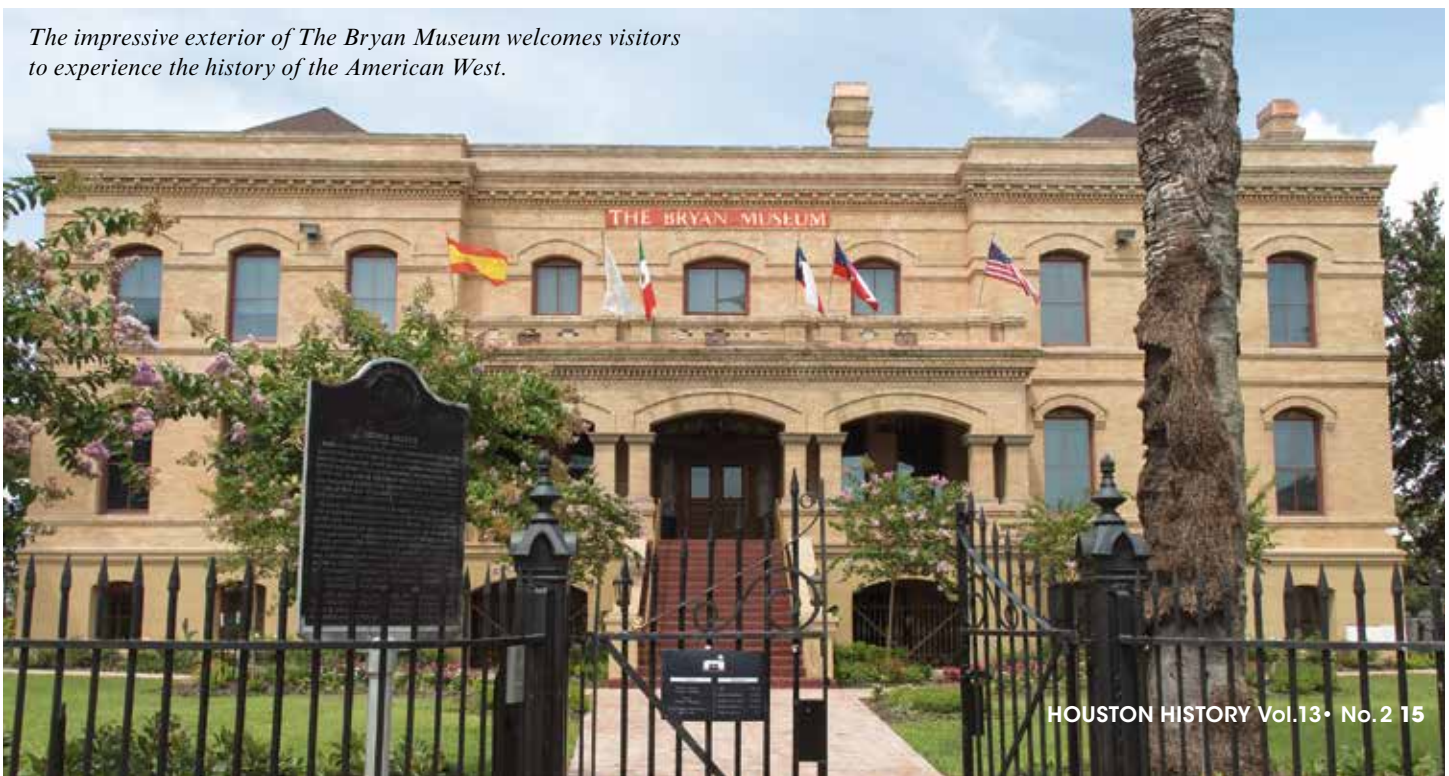
especially of Western Americana and Texana in the United States for about ten or fifteen years. . . . So, when I began, a lot of the rare items I got from Johnny. Then I began to develop other sources — individuals I knew who dealt in books and documents and the like. They would call me when they found something of interest. I would go to auctions, of course. . . . All that early period, up until the eighties, was dedicated mainly to books and documents. That's really the underlying strength of the collection, books and documents. There are some enormously rare documents, numerous of which are the only known copies. The other

thing that makes the total collection good is its diversity. In every sector, or every subject, whether it be bridles, saddles, guns, spurs, documents, or maps, you'll find some very unique and wonderful representations of those particular pieces.

CC: Do you have a favorite story about a particular piece that you chased for years or one that sort of fell into your lap?

JPB: I have a lifetime of them. The one that got away, and the thing I covet most today is the [Texas] Declaration of Independence. I bought one from an individual who turned

The impressive exterior of The Bryan Museum welcomes visitors to experience the history of the American West.





A model ship with actual working cannons excites visitors of all ages in a room dedicated to early native peoples and explorers of the American West.

out to be a master forger. I had it for a number of years before I figured out that it was a fake and went back to the dealer who sold it to me and we had a long discussion. He agreed to buy it back at a small profit, but it didn't come anywhere close to compensating me for what I would have had to pay then for a real one, because about ten years had passed. Since then, I have never been able to buy a Declaration of Independence. . . . It's the one piece I'd love to have. . . .

I bought a whole set of Saltillo serapes from a guy who thought he had a bunch of Mexican blankets. He brought them up to my office in the middle of summer; he was exhausted from carrying them some distance across town. So, I looked at them and I said, "These are not Mexican blankets, they are Saltillo serapes and he said, "Oh, I knew I'd been taken advantage of when I bought them!" And I said, "No, they are really better than Mexican blankets. What do you want for them?" And he said, "Let me just tell you one thing, you offer me what you think is a fair price, because I am not going down the stairs with these blankets." So, I did. I offered him a reasonable price for them. They are a great collection and I'd been looking for Saltillo serapes for years. . . .

CC: Can you give us some sense of the scale of the collection?

JPB: There are over 70,000 items.

CC: How did you get from a collection to The Bryan Museum?

JPB: It wasn't like jumping off a cliff into the museum. It's like a step-by-step adventure, getting here. It started with a zealous collecting habit, with which I filled my house with all these artifacts and paintings that didn't in any way complement my wife's interest in decorating our house. Finally she said, "One of these has got to go — me or your collec-

tion, because I am not living around this stuff anymore." I thought that was a real challenge, but I kept my wife and solved the problem by simply moving the collection to the office. We didn't have anything fancy or distinguishing in the decorating venue, so I just thought to decorate the office with all the things I had collected. We framed maps and related items. With the paintings, of which we had a few, we started putting them on the walls. It turned out to be quite attractive. People admired them. Over time, my collecting interests expanded from just books and documents and maps into paintings. In the eighties, I collected a lot of Texas art and that turned out to be a very good and attractive means for decorating the offices. . . .

In the later eighties, early nineties, I had a young curator, the first curator we had for the collection, who suggested that we should emphasize not just Texas for the collection, but we set out to really focus on the settlement of the western part of the United States, and collect all these symbols of that event — saddles and bridles and spurs and guns and the like, which I thought was a great idea because it meant I could go out and collect more stuff. Her next thought was: 1) we need to prepare a book about the collection, and 2) we need to build a museum style venue within the offices, where you could come in and have something of a museum experience. Also we needed an educational outreach to school children. We bought a chuck wagon, a real one, that had gone up the trail and brought schoolchildren in and introduced them to Texas history and the history of the West by sitting them all around the chuck wagon and talking about how they cooked on the trail. We also displayed for them other artifacts that were associated with the history of Texas or the West. They loved it, and it was a very interactive experience for them. . . . The kids, I think, came away with a rather profound experience and a whole new view of what history is all about.



J. P. Bryan stands in the Texas Masters Gallery, which highlights art by Texas artists, especially Charles Franklin “Frank” Reaugh, José Arpa, Robert Jenkins Onderdonk and Robert Julian Onderdonk, Tom Lea, and Elisabet Ney.

We continued with that format until about 2000 when we decided to move our offices. . . . We decided that it was time to retire, and shut down the business, and the question was, “What do you do with the collection?”

CC: What year was this, J.P.?

JPB: This would have been 2012. . . . We tried to find a building. The expense of it was fairly daunting in Houston. Things were, at that moment, booming in the oil business and our preference was to be in the Museum District of Houston. We could not find a building that was 1) historic, which was our preference, and 2) was not cost prohibitive . . . It just happened that we were down in Galveston doing some research for a book that I have been working on for

years about the Battle of San Jacinto. The museum director, Dr. Jamie Christy, and I left the Rosenberg Library and were driving back to Houston and we passed the Customs House, which had a “For Sale” sign on it — a beautiful Georgian building. . . . We thought, “What about Galveston, what about this building maybe?” . . . By the time we got to Houston we decided it makes good sense. Galveston was a major port, many immigrants that came to the western U.S came there, the Ellis Island of the West. . . .

Within a week, I had submitted a contract to buy the building. We got stymied in that effort when we examined the building closely and figured out that it had 5½ feet of water on the ground floor. With only two floors, we only had two choices — either raise the building 5½ to 6 feet higher in order to be able to put items on the first floor, a cost that would have been prohibitive, or just put all the valuables on the second floor, but there wasn’t enough space there to exhibit much. . . . Dr. Christy and I were quite devastated by that finding, and we were headed back to Houston when our curator Andrew Gustafson said, “Well you may want to come down 21st Street, you are right near there. There’s a building there, kind of spooky, but it might serve the purpose.” Dr. Christy and I pulled up front, looked at [the former Galveston Orphans Home] and said, “Well, it has some things about it that are a challenge, but wow, it looks like it could be a great facility — a wonderful looking structure.” It had a “For Sale” sign and I called the realtor. . . . She came and we walked inside and it was obvious that this was the place for the collection. The ground floor was quite a challenge, but the rest of the building was wonderful. You could see what its potential was immediately — to acquire it was an easy decision.

CC: How long did it take you to open?

JPB: Less than a year and a half.



As the museum’s library illustrates, J. P. Bryan passionately advocates educating both children and adults through access to historical objects and books. The museum’s collection includes 20,000 books and over 30,000 documents.

CC: Tell us about what that experience has been like? Who has come through — children's groups? Educational efforts?

JPB: Well, some of those are in their infancy, most especially the children's educational effort. We have a facility to accommodate their arrival, and we have a room already prepared with displays there, videos and the like, to entertain them. The more formalized educational structure of that experience has not been developed fully, but we are trying to design a tour of the museum that will be appealing to children and not get them embroiled in every artifact, but try to selectively pick things that we believe will pique their interest. To have them become engaged students, we give them information, they answer a quiz and cannons on the boat will fire if they push all the buttons and they get it right. They will learn going through the various displays and also see what it was like to be an orphan in an orphanage, which is part of our history also. For children, it will be a wonderful educational outreach. Of course, we think that's the purpose of the facility to begin with. We are trying to educate — not just children but adults also, on the wonderful historical experience we all share in the settlement of the western part of the U.S.

CC: How many visitors do you average?

JPB: We are only open four days a week, and we are averaging about 100 visitors each time we are open, and that doesn't include school groups that come.

CC: Are you pleased with that number?

JPB: No. I want it to be much higher. But, yes, as a recently opened facility, we are very pleased. We are even more pleased about the enthusiasm with which the people have discussed their experiences. Almost without exception, they have said, "Thank you, this is wonderful — it's beautiful — thank you for doing this. It is a great experience. We are coming back. I didn't even begin to have time to learn all there is to learn here." . . . There has been excellent publicity about the museum. I am very heartened by all that. . . .

CC: You have aspects of the collection, particularly in the documents that haven't been archived — that haven't been catalogued. What sort of research opportunities do you suspect there may be there?

JPB: You could literally probably pick an item and do a whole thesis on that one particular piece and the things related to it and its importance in history. Then we have the complete history, or as complete a history as you'll find on various artists or writers. Anyone that wants to do research on that person, or a biography, we have great resource material. I think there are literally hundreds of Ph.D. theses or other papers that could come out of the museum — enough to keep some history departments very busy.



This postcard shows the Galveston Orphans Home in the early 1900s, following repairs made in the aftermath of the 1900 Storm.

CC: So you have education for children as a mission. You have general education for adults and people of all ages as a second, but then there are also research opportunities. Could this become a research center as well?

JPB: For the academics and the non-professional historians, who, in my judgment, write the most interesting history of anybody. They are not as committed to write something that is politically correct. They want to write something that is historically correct. They are not bothered by recognizing people's heroic conduct or their uniqueness — as a matter of fact, it normally drives their publication. They can be bad guys, too, who are also interesting. . . .

CC: Is there anything else that you want readers to know?

JPB: I guess the one thing I didn't say very emphatically is the settlement of the West, which basically took place over 400 years, and I say 400 years because we are not talking about the time of the Native American, even though we certainly pay homage to their presence here. The settlement of the West, when it was actually transformed from a pristine environment by human habitation, took place over 400 years. And it is without question one of the most important historical stories ever enacted in world history. When you finally look at its history, you cannot find another 400 years of history in the world to match it.

Chris Cookson is a member of the Board of Visitors of the Center for Public History. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Houston and is an avid student of Texas history.

Open to the public Friday through Monday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.,
The Bryan Museum is located at 1315 21st Street in Galveston. It is actively
engaged in a variety of educational pursuits and serves as a popular
venue for weddings and other events.

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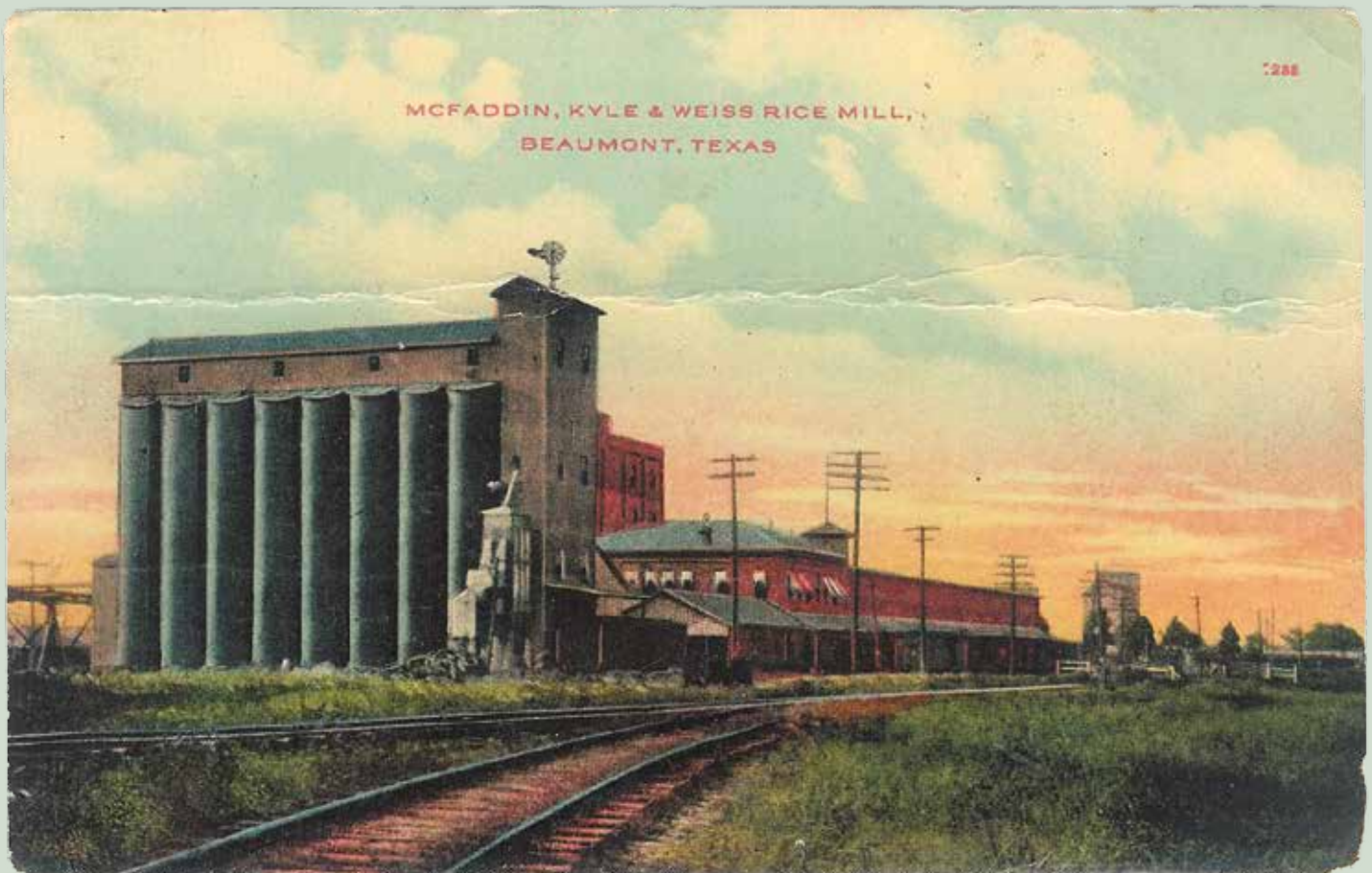
FIRST PROVIDENCE, THEN PROSPERITY: A BRIEF HISTORY OF BEAUMONT'S RICE CULTURE

By Denise Gomez

Past the easternmost boundaries of Houston lies the ancient Neches River, where various settlements formed along the banks long before our region's towns, highways, and industries emerged. This "ideal place for a town" became Tevis Bluff, named for the 1824 settlers Noah and Nancy Tevis, who operated one of three ferries along the river where people and cattle crossed as they moved westward. Although the Tevis family had owned their land for several years, they waited until 1835 to obtain an officially recognized deed. Unfortunately, shortly after the Tevis deed petition was approved, Noah Tevis died. He left his estate to his wife, who took a leadership role as the town of Beaumont began to form its boundaries.¹ Nancy, called "the mother of Beaumont," stood alongside Joseph Grigsby and the three principals of the Joseph P. Pulsifer Company, Henry Millard, Joseph Pulsifer, and Thomas B. Huling, to form "the townsite company." The company donated two hundred acres given by the three men and then divided it,

setting aside land for public spaces—a hospital, a college, and a "steam mill square."²

Before the Port of Beaumont opened, the Jefferson County area relied on rivers for major trade. Late historian W. T. Block wrote, "If, in 1830 Mrs. Tevis had access to any of the manufactured wares of New Orleans, or had a market for her cotton, hides, or other commodities, it was due to [Thomas F.] McKinney," the "first wealthy Texan," and Samuel May Williams, the first to use steamboats in local cotton trading. Among their collection of steamers was the *Laura*, the first steamboat to pass through Buffalo Bayou to Houston in 1837, and the *Lafitte*, the first Texas-built steamboat, constructed at a cost of \$19,000 (about \$401,459 today) and destined for wreckage after two years of service.³ Steamboats were owned by rich merchants such as McKinney, who often assumed dual roles as businessmen and captains, trusting only in themselves to safely transport their goods.



Shown, a postcard of Beaumont's McFaddin-Kyle-Weiss Rice Milling Company. Rice mills encouraged public service irrigation projects, which turned into the canals and waterways that sustained large-scale rice production.

Photo courtesy of the McFaddin-Ward House Museum, Beaumont, Texas.



The French family occupied this house from 1845 to 1865. Now a museum in Beaumont, Texas, it educates students and tourists on local history. Photo courtesy of Doug Matthews from Wikipedia.

In the early harbor days, laborers worked endlessly, repeatedly loading and unloading by hand, with most of the commerce moving inland via waterways. “Idlers were not welcomed” as workers, noted early twentieth-century historian Florence Stratton. Later models of boats evolved from purely service vessels to passenger crafts where romances blossomed and dinners were served. The side-wheeler *Florilda*, boasting a length of 250 feet and capable of carrying thousands of bales of cotton, served what Henry R. Green called “the most stupendously-accursed wine ever administered to saint or sinner.”³⁴ As the nineteenth century closed and time passed, railroad tracks took the place of inland waterways.

North of Beaumont stands the John Jay French Museum, a white and grey, wood-paneled, two-story, nineteenth-century home surrounded by trees and decorated on all sides with rectangular windows. French, a New Yorker who dabbled in the art of tanning, traveled by ship to present-day Beaumont in 1832. Initially inspired to open a general store and tannery, French lost half his intended merchandise at sea. What remained of his products was briefly placed on sale and sold out quickly, convincing French that the area had a healthy market and economy. He soon returned north to retrieve his wife and four children, and they began their new lives in an area that was briefly called “French Town.”³⁵

Widely known as pioneers, one of the French family sons, David, is credited with planting the first rice seeds in Beaumont shortly after the Civil War’s end. While rice farming became an important and defining industry for Southeast Texas, sophisticated irrigation was both lacking and necessary for industrial growth. Early rice growers raised quantities for at-home use and consumption, and they depended on favorable weather, lending the moniker “Providence Rice” to the crop. According to Dr. L. T. Wilson, director of the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center at Beaumont and Eagle Lake, the climate of the Gulf Coast, with its yearly rainfall of 37 to 46 inches, well-known hot summers, and heavy clay soils that “hold water well, make [our location] ideal for rice production.”³⁶

Able to survive without irrigation, this early rice was

treated in the same manner as all other crops. A young daughter of John Jay French was tasked with keeping away birds and other menaces from disrupting the maturing rice. Rice farmers used what was readily available to them—animals, humans, and nature—because rice was not yet among the ranks of lumber and cotton as a cash crop. As a result experimenting came at the leisure of farmers. The French family used a hollowed-out log as a mortar and a rounded piece of wood as a pestle, grinding the rice in order to remove its husks. While the grinding method worked, French attempted to modernize the process by bringing in used equipment from Louisiana to be placed in a French family rice mill, but this venture failed quickly.⁷

Early commercial rice yields popped up around 1886 from a 200-acre planting by Louis Bordages and Edgar Carruthers. In the 1880s a New Orleans newspaper observed the growing Jewish community in Jefferson County, noting, “[their settlement is] a precursor of the prosperity which is to follow.” The Bluesteins, a Jewish family associated with commercial rice agriculture and known for possessing the town’s sole copy of the Torah, began in neighboring Orange County and shipped one hundred barrels of rice on “the first boxcar of rice ever shipped from Orange.” Soon after, Bluestein moved to bustling Beaumont but kept his rice in Orange. Another Jewish citizen and successful grocer, Lederer, had a small rice farm south of town in 1900.⁸

Perhaps one of the most well-known families in Southeast Texas, the Broussards traveled to Texas from Louisiana in 1845 and were listed among the settling Acadian groups in Florence Stratton’s 1925 *The Story of Beaumont*. The innovative Joseph Eloi Broussard was born in his family’s bayou-side home and was known for handling himself well with cattle and all things associated with a young boy raised on a ranch. After marrying, Broussard “heeded the ‘call to the city’” and moved to Beaumont. He bought his first mill, a gristmill, in 1889, and just three years later he accomplished another “first” when he opened the Beaumont Rice Mills. The rice mills became the motivating force behind the beginnings of “public service irrigation projects” in the state of Texas. Moving his rice mills in 1905 allowed Broussard

Joseph Elois Broussard, shown here in his Confederate army uniform, became a prominent businessman with ventures in irrigation, milling, and farming.

Photo courtesy of Tyrell Historical Library, Beaumont, Texas.

to try out new equipment. Stratton wrote, Broussard's mills were the "most modern plants in the rice belt...equipped with an elevator for handling grain" and marveled at the fireproof McFaddin-Weiss-Kyle Mill.⁹

"Rice-mania" set off at the turn of the twentieth century. A man from Galveston's Texas Star Rice Mill, John Reimerschoffer, bought ten tons of rice seed from Louisiana, handing it out at no cost so long as farmers were willing to experiment with rice growing. As rice farming expanded, mills sprang up, and Nederland was founded in 1889 as a "rice capitol [sic]." Lands suitable for rice production rose to three dollars per acre when just a year prior they were valued at a dollar per acre. Beaumont Rice Mills was not alone for long, and by the time Texas entered the twentieth century, half of the Texas rice mills were in the Jefferson County area: Beaumont Rice Mill and Hinz Rice Mill in Beaumont, Port Arthur Rice Mill in Port Arthur, and Orange Rice Mill in Orange. Rice acreage grew quickly, going from 1,500 acres in 1891, to 43,000 in 1900, and 54,000 by 1904.¹⁰

Rice's potential as a profitable crop could not be reached, however, until irrigation became readily available. Canal companies built two hundred miles of canals to bring freshwater to rice farmers between 1899 and 1906. Port Arthur Rice and Irrigation Company constructed twenty-five miles serving 13,000 acres; McFaddin-Weiss-Kyle Canal Company's twenty-five miles served 16,500 acres; the Beaumont Irrigation Company had a hundred miles of canals serving 32,000 acres with the remainder served by the Neches Canal Company and Taylors-Hillebrand. These canals remain in use today as the framework of the Lower Neches Valley Authority's canal system.¹¹

Rice businessmen regularly took on irrigation, milling, and farming jobs all at once, especially as the industry



matured. Farmer Willard G. Lovell, allegedly using only a few mules and his bare hands, built an efficient irrigation system for his 8,000 acres of land when he implanted pumps at Taylor's Bayou, creating Lovell's Lake.¹² The Beaumont section of the *Water Supply and Irrigation Papers of the United States Geological Survey* described the Lovell system as having an estimated capacity of 18,000 gallons a minute, with an engine efficiency of 75% and 100 measured horsepower, pumping 275 gallons-a-second with a flume 146 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 3 feet deep, and a main canal 3½ miles long and 50 feet wide. The survey shows evidence that Lovell had one of the more powerful systems in the area when compared to the neighboring Bingham, Gulf Rice Growing Company, and

Moore systems that boasted smaller engines and canals. In 1902, the Lovell system irrigated the most acreage amongst the Northern Taylor Bayou systems, covering 700 acres compared to the Bingham system's 400 and the Moore system's 80 acres.

The Jefferson County Rice Company, however, dominated both the north and south Taylor's Bayou Systems, irrigating 2,300 acres of their 10,424 total acres in that year. The Beaumont Rice Company outshone the entire Jefferson County area, irrigating 15,000 acres. The Jefferson County Rice Company divided its land into sections and sold them to settlers on the "crop-payment plan" offering land at a rate of \$20-\$25 per one-and-a-half acres on the condition that the new landowners gave half of their yielded crops until their payments were completed.

Among the first large-scale rice farmers of Jefferson County, Lovell arrived in 1890 from Michigan and settled in the open prairies between Beaumont, a "prosperous city of about 15,000," and Labelle. His eulogy described Lovell as well-respected in his field for being knowledgeable and for defying the setbacks he faced in his beginning days of rice farming. The Lovell farm found enemies in the area's cattle ranchers, who used the available lands for grazing. His eulogy read, among his accomplishments, "This land was regard-

The McFaddin-Weiss-Kyle Company was among the businesses dipping into all aspects of the rice industry.

Photo courtesy of McFaddin-Ward House Museum, Beaumont, Texas.





This M&M Air Service Plane was for seeding, fertilizing, and watering rice, circa 1947.

Photo courtesy of Tyrell Historical Library, Beaumont, Texas.

ed as the cow's inheritance.... It was therefore not surprising that this man...who put acres of land over which the cattle had formerly roamed, under fence and begin his rice farming, was soon [in] disfavor among the cattlemen of this section." By 1908 Lovell became successful and traveled to the big cities of Beaumont, Houston, and Galveston for rice business, frequently attending community affairs. In his diary, he wrote that he used Honduran and Japanese rice in his fields as did his fellow rice farmers. By 1914 imported rice seed that "deteriorated in yield and quality" made way for brands like Sol Wright's Blue Rose, described by a 1914 *Beaumont Enterprise* article as "the most famous of all the famed Wright rices...[making] up over half the nation's crop."¹³

The 1908-1909 edition of the *Standard Blue Book of Texas* described how "in less than ten years, 237,000 acres of virgin soil has been broken, hundreds of miles of main canals have been excavated, millions of capital invested," calling rice culture's increase "phenomenal." It called upon farmers from the country's northern and western corners, daring them to try the southlands, saying that "[they] will find no great difference in the preparation of rice land." Irrigation was advertised as adaptable and laid out the schedule for rice harvests, "Rice is planted between the 15th of March and the middle of June, April and May being the usual time and yielding the best crops. After planting, little remains to be done until harvest. The value of this year's crop in Jefferson County, practically all of which is milled at Beaumont is about \$2,000,000" (or about \$52 million in today's dollars). The year's profit for rice farmers was \$881,450 (about \$13 million) and the total investment of the county's rice industry was "conservatively estimated at \$4,000,000" (about \$60 million).¹⁴

Such an abundant production of rice was not without consequence. In 1905 rice prices fell and by 1906 the "rice market 'went bust' from overproduction." The southern part of the Neches experienced an invasion of saltwater after

dredging damaged the Port Arthur and McFaddin canals. Farmers feeling the adverse effects of the economy either moved away or moved on to other enterprises. Similar to the way farmers experimented with rice in different plots of land or with different watering methods, they began seeking out different but equally profitable crops. Sugar cane became a worthy competitor as cane syrup sold for a dollar per gallon. Still, many farmers stayed and waited for the bad times to pass.¹⁵

The market's impact highlighted the importance

of forming an organization of farmers "for the purpose of securing general cooperation among [them] and to study and promote better farming conditions... [and] secure reliable statistics." They called themselves the Jefferson County Rice Farmers Association in 1906 and met monthly to discuss "subjects of vital importance," like fertilizers, cultivation methods, seeds, and irrigation methods. In 1908 this organization was considered the "strongest independent organization of rice farmers in the United States" by the *Blue Book* with the "anybody-who-is-anybody's [sic]" of rice farming an active member. The organization provided benefits like advertisements and announcements seeking labor.¹⁶

A "rice kitchen" was established in Beaumont around 1903 or 1904 to educate the community, especially women, about the uses beyond "just putting gravy on it," according to regional historian Judith Linsley. The kitchen was "the brainchild" of William Perry Herring McFaddin, a name made famous by his business ventures in rice farming, milling, and irrigation canals. An advocate of rice, he especially tried to push forth the idea of what he called "rough rice," rice that had a significantly higher nutritional value, but the more aesthetically pleasing polished white rice gained unwavering popularity. Linsley jokes that "somebody needed to send [McFaddin] to marketing school," and maybe the idea, which required less processing, could have won favor. The kitchen, however, was successful among downtown Beaumont housewives.¹⁷

Right before 1920 farmers had trouble with "red rice" growing in their rice crop. Red rice is "genetically very similar to commercial rice...in fact, the same species," but it is treated like a weed and removed because it is considered unacceptable in U.S. markets. At one time farmers jokingly called it "The Bolshevik of Rice" because of its red color and the ongoing Russian Revolution.¹⁸

Before the Great Depression hit, the earlier overproduction of rice resulted in a rice farmers' depression. The farmers began to focus on subsistence crops, grown to eat instead of sell in mass quantities for profit. Nevertheless the Great Depression worsened the smaller, regional rice de-

pression but it was not as big of a shock to farmers already used to the struggle. Linsley remembers seeing a political cartoon depicting a rice farmer and a politician warning about the Depression, with the farmer saying something along the lines of “Tell me something I don’t know!”¹⁹

In 1946 the rice industry changed again in a huge way. This time as a result of N. W. and Fields Mitchell, K. W. Kinky Shane, Gilbert Mapes, and one Stearman bi-plane. Not the first in the country to implement aviation agriculture, they were the first to use it on a rice field. World War II had ended and outdated planes were accessible for veterans Shane and Mapes, who brought the idea to the farming Mitchells. Together the four air-seeded the Mitchells’ rice field and the method became widely adopted. In fact, “they do everything but irrigation” with planes, noted Judith Linsley. While aviation agriculture completely revolutionized the rice industry it also introduced a certain dangerous element to rice farming because it required a spotter on the ground to guide the airplanes in the directions they needed to go. The airplanes flew low to the ground to ensure they hit their targets when seeding and spraying. Sometimes the planes flew so low that they crashed into the spotters, often teenage boys spotting for summer jobs, in collisions that usually proved fatal.²⁰

Such a rich history transformed rice into a culture celebrated by those who work the fields, sell the crops, and eat rice every day. Judith Linsley remembers rice’s constant presence on her childhood dinner plates and calling Beaumont’s contemporary rice mills’ “rice dryers” as a young girl. In the fall of 1900 Beaumont hosted its first large-scale community event, the Beaumont Rice Festival. The festival’s attitude exuded optimism, as did its goal: to make Beaumont, with fields surrounding her at two sides and two local seaports, “the most important city in the south as far as rice is concerned.” Community entertainment ensured the first rice festival’s huge success, but nothing drew a larger crowd than the following year’s festival attraction, an automobile described as a “wonder of the ages” owned by Beaumont local J. C. Ward, who drove



As the post-war economy boomed, so did rice production. Technological advancements allowed rice farmers to churn out more product more efficiently. These sacks of rice are waiting to be shipped from the Port of Beaumont.

Photo courtesy of Tyrell Historical Library, Beaumont, Texas.

the “horseless carriage” among parade floats. Exhibits, a festival queen, and a “shop on wheels” were included in the parade line up. Eventually this rice festival evolved into the South Texas State Fair, but the celebratory mood surrounding rice survived through time.²¹



The Beaumont Rice Festival held in 1900 shared many similarities with today’s Texas Rice Festival held annually in Winnie, including parades, pageants, educational booths, and food.

Photo courtesy of McFaddin-Ward House Museum, Beaumont, Texas.

In October 1969 a small but successful gathering, planned by farmers, manned by volunteers and enjoyed by locals of the towns of Winnie, Dayton, Anahuac, and Liberty celebrated the year’s harvest once again, this time as the Texas Rice Festival. Initially, the four towns intended to rotate hosting the festival, but the board of directors voted to select downtown Winnie as the official host location. As the festival’s popularity grew so did the need for accommodating space, and by 1975 the board of directors and Chambers County entered a lease agreement that moved the festival to Winnie-Stowell Park, where it has been held since. The enlarged space expanded festival-goers’ entertainment options, and by 1980 the festival’s itinerary included the Gospel Singing Jubilee and a livestock show, broadened its pageants for all genders and age groups to compete, and began presenting “Farmer of the Year” awards in multiple categories.²²

In a little over a hundred years, David French’s small rice experiment evolved into a modern agricultural empire. Researching the town’s history, one encounters the attitude that Beaumont *was* a flourishing rice town, but arguably it still is. Although rice fields have dwindled from 60,000 acres to 25,000 acres since the seventies and aging farmers can no longer rely on their children, who may want to pursue other careers, to succeed them, Douget’s Rice Mill still greets those driving down Interstate 10 or Highway 90, and the locals clearly have not forgotten.²³ There is an undeniable dedication towards preserving, celebrating, and tasting their rice history.

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KATY: WEST HOUSTON WONDER

By James E. Thornock

Long before the Katy Mills mall bustled with customers, the Katy rice mills watched over the area. Earlier still, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) railroad traversed the fertile prairie near Cane Island Creek. The first records of the community are about Cane Island, named for the creek. Those who settled there received land grants from Stephen F. Austin, including James J. Crawford whose land included a part of the prairie west of Houston that was later named Katy and incorporated in 1945.¹

By 1847 the San Felipe Road connected Houston and San Antonio, running through Cane Island, which had become a stagecoach stop. Remaining mostly undeveloped, Cane Island drew few settlers to the area, and many of those were freed slaves. That all changed, however, with the arrival of the railroad. In 1890 the MKT railroad announced plans to build rails through Cane Island and started the project three years later. In 1900 after several years of construction, trains started coming through the area.²

With the railroad construction underway, ambitious men planned the city layout. In 1893, Milton August Beckendorff and his partners began surveying the land and determining county lines. They set a marker at the place where Waller, Fort Bend, and Harris Counties met. James Oliver Thomas along with the Cash and Luckel Company platted the town in 1895. Soon after, he applied for a post office, which was approved, and Katy was founded on January 23, 1896. Once the railroad began service, Thomas constructed another building downtown that became the post office and the location of social services for many years to come.³

Several explanations for choosing “Katy” for the community’s name have surfaced. Carol Adams, resident and Katy historian, described one favorite legend that Katy, short

for Katherine, was an early settler of the area. Her husband Charles owned a saloon, but Katy was the face of the place. Customers came for her hospitality, good food, and drinks. More likely the town drew its name directly from the MKT Railroad, which had brought life and residents to the area.⁴

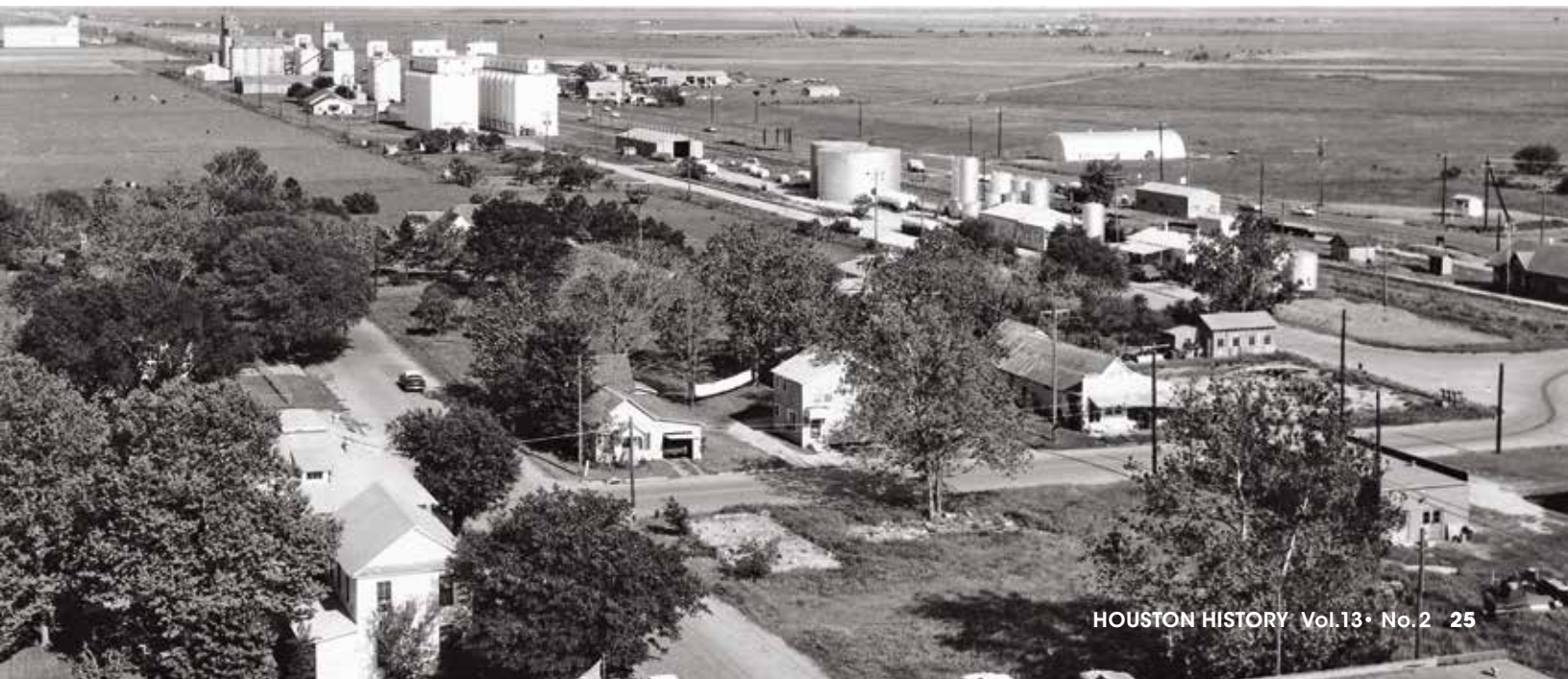
Many came by wagon to visit Katy and see the land put up for sale by Adam Stockdick, the first MKT railroad land agent in the community. After he left the railroad, he opened his own real estate business. Travelers and prospective settlers stayed in the Katy Hotel and Hotel Clardy, which opened their doors in 1897 in what is now downtown Katy. Although these hotels represented an iconic part of Katy’s history, they did not survive. In 1930 after having several owners, the Katy Hotel closed. The building later housed several businesses before it was moved in 1966 to make room for an expansion of the First Baptist Church and then converted into apartments. The 1900 Storm that devastated Galveston also ravaged inland areas, including all but two buildings in Katy. Houses and businesses had to be rebuilt, but some of the residents who lost everything decided to leave Katy. Those who stayed banded together to rebuild what they could.⁵

Despite the storm, people did not stop buying up the land, and soon many new residents settled in the area. George Weinmann came right after the storm. Once he unpacked his belongings, he went straightaway to buy lumber and then to his property to begin construction. At first, though, he found his land knee-deep in water, so he adapted and searched for a drier place to begin building his home.⁶

The railroad brought more settlers to inspect and purchase Stockdick’s land, attracted by the price, the mild climate (for health), and the fertile soil. As people poured into

The rice dryers along Highway 90 outside of Katy can be seen for ten miles and have been a local beacon since 1900. Shown circa 1962.

Photo courtesy of Carol Adams.



the township, the community thrived. The new demand allowed old businesses to grow and new businesses to set up shop. The first automobile appeared in Katy in 1906 and ten years later the first dealership. Also in 1906 Southwestern Bell Telephone Company installed two telephone lines, and two years later it began installing the town party lines, which were shared by several households. After the phone lines came electricity provided by Houston Lighting and Power Company in 1929. Before that kerosene lamps and stoves provided lighting and heating. As with other American communities, this luxury paved the way for new household appliances, freeing time to do other things. Several

local women seeking “to advance culture” formed the Katy Literary Club, which still meets today.

The thirties were a rough time for Katy. The Great Depression slowed the town’s growth but did not halt it. The bank closed in 1932, but no one starved. As Bran Legett explains, “If you didn’t have [land], the neighbors would let you farm, let you make a garden on his land.”⁷

After the Depression, life started to return to normal, and



Floyd Breedlove was the lone World War II casualty from Katy.

Photo courtesy of Katy Veterans Memorial Museum.

other work on the Katy prairie soon sent Katy’s population skyrocketing. Carol Adams reported that Stanolind (part of Standard Oil, Indiana) drilled in excess of 1,000 wells with remarkable results. To process these natural resources, Humble Oil built the Katy Gas Plant, which started operations on January 1, 1943, with Johnnie E. Clayton acting as superintendent. The Katy Gas Plant was invaluable to Humble Oil, as well as to the war effort. The war increased the demand for very rich liquid hydro-carbons, ingredients essential to the production of jet fuel. The Katy Gas Plant produced the lion’s share of these ingredients. An added advantage was that the plant stood less than thirty-five miles away from the Houston refineries. Within a year, the plant’s work doubled the town’s population from approximately 400 to 800 people.⁸

When Japan forced the United States into the war by



One of the city’s great icons, the Katy Caboose represents the beginning of Katy. Photo courtesy of author.

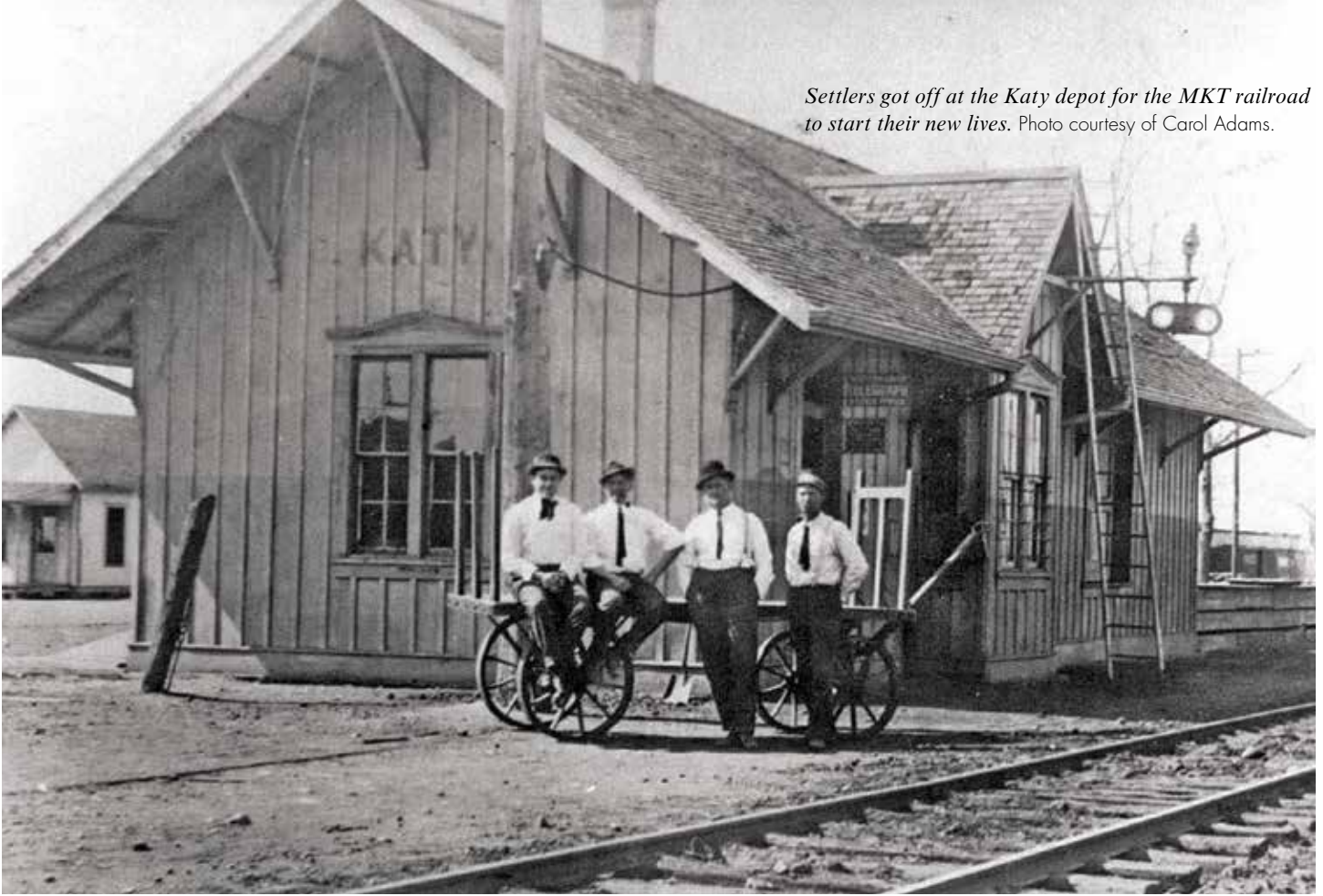
bombing Pearl Harbor in 1941, Katy signed up for service. The community did many things to support the war effort, including holding scrap metal drives, buying war bonds, and enlisting in the military. All of those who enlisted came back save one, Floyd Breedlove. Because he gave all, veterans named their post in his honor. Later converted into the VFW Hall, it became a center for social life.⁹

Following the war, Katy grew even more. One of the new families was the Mikeskas. Roy Mikeska was seventy-nine years old at the time of this writing, but he was only a boy of nine when his father showed up to work at the Katy Gas Plant in 1945. Roy remembered the dirt roads and the small one-room schoolhouse. He recalled swimming in the rice wells and the mild segregation that existed between the Katy citizens and the Humble Oil workers who were fresh to town. Most of those tensions died down over time in large part due to how valuable the plant and its workers were to the city and its economy. The plant infused the market with revenue that came to farmers who sold their land to Humble Oil as well as the workers who spent their earnings in local stores. The oil company also donated large sums to the Katy Independent School District. In appreciation, the district saved a position on the board for the president of the plant.¹⁰

Roy recalled that the Humble Oil neighborhood had seven streets and forty houses in the early days, and the buses picked up all of the children for school in the morning. During his high school years, Roy went with his buddies into Houston to go dancing. At the end of the evening, they came home “with nothin’ but armadillos and skunks crossing the road” and “turtles crossing over from one rice field to the other rice field.” Often they stopped and swam in one of the nearby rice wells before heading home around 2:00 to 3:00 a.m.¹¹

Roy reflected on the lifestyle in those years, indicating that church was a large part of living in Katy, which was

Settlers got off at the Katy depot for the MKT railroad to start their new lives. Photo courtesy of Carol Adams.



nicknamed the “City of Churches” for both the large number of churches and the importance of church life to its residents. The Mikeskas belonged to the First Baptist Church, and Roy’s mother insisted they attend every Wednesday night. The community held no school events on Wednesdays so families could go to church, which served as a social hub where “everybody knew everybody.” Roy graduated from Katy High School in 1956. With a longing in his eyes he said, “I’d like to do it all over again, start again.”¹²

Roy eventually married, and the couple had a son, Michael, who followed in his father’s footsteps by “running all over Katy” and graduating from Katy High School. He married Kim, and they had two children, Michael and Amanda, who followed their father by graduating from KHS in 2007 and 2008 respectively. The Mikeska legacy is like that of many of the founding families who grew up in “Old Katy” or “Katy proper.” However, the Katy area is not restricted to the area within the city limits, with the overwhelming majority of the population living outside the city’s borders but inside the boundaries of Katy ISD.¹³



Roy Mikeska’s Katy High School year book picture from class of 1956.

Photo courtesy of Mike Mikeska.

Others came to the region in a different time, including my grandfather, Carl Hursman. He came here from Billings, Montana, in the summer of 1975 with his wife Karen, and their two daughters, Kareen and Joy, to follow a job with Conoco

(now ConocoPhillips). Carl looked all around Houston for housing, but no other location compared to Katy in the amount of land offered at affordable prices. They moved into a new home in West Memorial off of South Mason Road, almost twenty-seven miles and an hour commute to downtown Houston where Carl worked. The subdivision was so new that they had to drive over nine miles to the closest grocery stores located off of the Dairy Ashford exit from Interstate 10.¹⁴

When the Hursmans arrived, nothing stood west of their house. Carl recalled, “For the next couple of years there were four and five houses a day” being built. He said they “sprung up like popcorn.” The community grew along with the Hursman family. New houses appeared all around them on Mason Road. Katy ISD built schools at breakneck speed. Karen Hursman said it seemed like a new elementary school materialized every other year and a new junior high every three or four years. Eventually the Hursmans looked for new housing options for their growing family. They bought land in 1979 and had their new house built in 1980. Carl had changed jobs in 1978 from ConocoPhillips to Pennzoil, but with the Oil Bust he lost his job in 1984. He received one year’s salary as severance, but finding a job in oil at that point was “impossible.” During the two years he was out of work, he and his wife did everything that they could to make ends meet, looking for jobs, accepting church welfare, cutting coupons, cooking at home, and doing whatever else it took to make it. Their story was not so unlike many people living in Houston or Katy at the time.¹⁵

Katy and Houston built their economies on the strength of oil. When the prices of crude dropped, so did the wellbe-

ing of nearly all in Houston. With the Oil Bust, one in seven Houston jobs were lost. The *Houston Chronicle* described the era as “a time of bankruptcies and foreclosures, For Sale signs and empty office towers, loan defaults and failed banks. Phones were cut off and trucks repossessed. The city reduced garbage pickup. Church charities fed 300,000 families in 1986, twice as many as the previous year. Eighty-four children checked in at the Star of Hope shelter downtown on Christmas Eve.”¹⁶

Houston recovered by diversifying its economy. The Dallas Federal Reserve Bank makes this clear stating, “Strong growth in Houston in the 1990s required more than oil; it needed both a growing U.S. economy and strong oil markets.” Katy recovered from those years as did my grandfather who found a job with Texas Commerce Bank. After moving just north of Katy proper, the family put down their roots, raised the two children, and three more who followed. All graduated from Katy High School. The experiences of one of those children, my mother Kareen, show the evolution of Katy. This period in the late 1970s and 1980s was transitional for the nation and also for the town.¹⁷

Kareen remembered her parents telling her, “We’re going to move somewhere so hot, you won’t be able to go barefoot on the sidewalk,” unlike their home in Montana. She attended West Memorial Elementary where their mother met other moms in an effort to make the transition easier on the children. As with earlier generations of Katy residents, church played a central role in their spiritual and social life. The church met in a small house in Old Katy and had weekly activities for the children and young adults. Kareen’s family was active in more than just church, however. Both parents served on the PTA, and Carl served as an election judge for Harris County and as a county judge for Katy ISD.¹⁸

Kareen remembered many parties, dinners, potlucks, picnics, dances, pancake breakfasts on the Fourth of

July, and the Rice Harvest Festival, originally called the “Sellabration.” Promoted by the Tri-County Optimists in the late 1970s, the event grew larger each year and was eventually renamed to honor farmers and the agricultural legacy of Katy. In 1895 land agents recruited settlers to the area from the Midwest with promises of fertile soil. Katy’s soil nourished the crops that grew in the area, including apples, peaches, cotton, lumber, peanuts, rice, peas, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and others. In the beginning no single crop dominated, and settlers tried many different crops to see what would grow best on the land. They needed to experiment because most of them were accustomed to farming in an entirely different climate.¹⁹

Wilhelm Eule was the first farmer to plant rice in Katy. In 1901 Eule and A. J. Peek dug the first rice well, without any machinery. Farmers used well water to flood rice fields to nourish crops, and drown out pests and weeds. Still, they faced many risks. Many farmers maintained fields with uneven ground that required more water to flood than flat fields. Geese, other birds, and livestock invaded farms and their crops. Farmers also struggled to find the time and place to dry their rice. Later, though, agricultural technology advanced, saving time and increasing profits for farmers.²⁰

The technological advancements that offset these losses included deepening of rice wells and the evolution of tractors, combines, and rice driers. The concrete rice driers were so useful that they became one of Katy’s most iconic symbols. Rice became Katy’s dominant crop because of the money it brought in. Rice production increased year after year and peaked with 60,000 acres of land planted in rice. Later, homes took the place of rice paddies, and the last crop dried in the Katy driers was harvested in 2011.²¹

Football is another important Katy and Katy High School tradition. These games bring together students and



Humble Oil's Katy gas plant with employee housing on left.

Photo courtesy of Carol Adams.

alumni who graduated long ago. The sense of honor continues across generations, as well as championship titles, with the Katy Tigers earning their eighth state title on December 19, 2015. Families with their children, current students, grandparents, and old time Katyites all attend the games. One t-shirt encapsulates the atmosphere, reading, “You and 10,000 of your closest friends.” This kind of attitude is all around Katy and has caught on in the six other high schools in the area.

Katy’s population continues to grow, and “9% of Katy’s land is currently under construction.” This growth requires funding for infrastructure. For example, the *Houston Chronicle* reported that the Katy district added 2,495 students from fall 2014 to fall 2015. In response 28,509 voters “approved a \$748 million bond that will help Katy’s school district keep up with rapid growth, paying for new schools and a hotly debated football stadium.” This bond was the largest one passed in the Houston area up to that time.²²

Businesses interests and investments in the area have also grown along with the housing market. Many businesses flocked to Katy to capitalize on the West Houston wonder. Katy ISD, BP North America, WoodGroup Subsidiaries, Shell Exploration and Production, and ConocoPhillips employ the largest numbers of Katy residents.²³

The Katy Mills mall is next on the list of largest employers of Katyites. In the late nineties people speculated that a mall would be built at the Grand Parkway and I-10, and these rumors proved true on January 12, 1997, when The Mills Corporation announced its plans to build a

\$250,000,000 megamall. After long legal battles and large settlements with two other development companies, the mall opened on October 28, 1999, drawing a crowd of over 122,000 for its grand opening. Today it still draws crowds as well as investors and businesses to the Katy area.²⁴

As an example of that development, Kingham Dalton, Wilson Ltd. (KDW), an affiliate of Welcome Wilson’s GSL Welcome Group began developing the Texas Typhoon Waterpark on land bordering the mall in August 2015. Wilson believes being next to the mall is “going to make [the water park] extremely successful.” Investors designed the park, which is scheduled to open in May of 2016, to draw both local residents and people from around the region and is already selling season passes.²⁵

For more than one hundred years Katy has grown continuously, with minimal setbacks. The first settlers came with their families to work, worship, and thrive. Although today’s modern life is different from that of the first settlers, the Katy area still draws many families each year. According to the Katy Economic Development Council, that number has reached over 309,556 people as of 2015.²⁶ For tens of thousands of families, one thing remains constant: Katy is home. As the Katy area flourishes, one can only hope that the area remains as hospitable as it was to those who first set up log cabins on Cane Island.

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The Katy Tigers charge through their banner right before the 2015 UIL State Championship game.

Photo courtesy of Franklin Smith.

A Quest into the World of Rennies

By Taylor Mankin



Musicians perform for festival attendees, October 1978.
Photo courtesy of Texas.713 on Flickr.com. (See Endnote no.15 for license.)

The Texas Renaissance Festival has been a popular form of entertainment for Houstonians since the early 1970s, with thousands making the trek each fall into a world that is part history and part fantasy. Upon entering the fairgrounds, tourists and visitors encounter performers, merchants, and artisans donning medieval-style garb and speaking in a language that most have only heard in Shakespearean plays. Contrary to what some may assume, many of these Renaissance players are not your run-of-the-mill citizens, only working the fair every October and November, but a people who belong to a subculture consisting of

actors and artisans that share a common love for the arts and a way of life that allows them to explore their passions year-round. Working fair after fair throughout the state of Texas and the United States, these people endearingly refer to themselves as Rennies.

The first Renaissance festival was held on the weekend of May 10, 1963, in Southern California. As the years passed, the festival's popularity grew and its duration was extended to six weekends, eventually developing into the current California Pleasure Faire, which is divided into a northern and southern festival. This became the prototype for Renaissance festivals found in the United States today. The event's remote site captivated visitors who were absorbed into the fair's historic realm; however, the concept of an interactive audience had not yet come into play. Rather, the fair aimed to compel audience members to imagine what it must have been like to live during the Middle Ages.¹

The shift from one-sided participation to a more collaborative style—between the performers, vendors, and audience—originated in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when California Pleasure Faire glass-blower George Coulam decided to open his own Renaissance festival in Utah. After two years, authorities with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints told Coulam that he could not lease the property a second time, a reflection of their distaste for what they saw as uncouth behavior. In his second venture, the Minnesota Renaissance Festival, Coulam leased a larger piece of land. Inspired by a book on Walt Disney and his theme parks, he began using scenarios to establish the fair's

*Frank Della Penna appears as the mystical "spirit of the bells" who breathes life into a rare, four-ton medieval instrument called the carillon in a Texas Renaissance Festival performance of *Cast in Bronze*, 2007. The instrument is made up of thirty-five bells, and is played from a keyboard with the fists and feet.*

Photo courtesy of Eric V. Blanchard. (See Endnote no.15 for license.)





A sign for a Rennie's leather gallery in Todd Mission, Texas. Many Rennies spend their spare time pursuing their respective arts and crafts.

Photo courtesy of author.

overall setting, creating a cohesive narrative for all of the participants. This technique, known as the "Minnesota Model," is still utilized by most U.S. festivals.²

Worried that he might once more face problems with leasing land, and again inspired by Disney's ideas on development and construction, Coulam decided to purchase rather than rent the land for his next festival. He found his answer in the defunct town of Todd Mission, Texas, located just outside of Houston, between Magnolia and Plantersville. It is here that Coulam built the Texas Renaissance Festival (TRF), incorporating Todd Mission and avoiding the earlier problem of losing his location. Today, the town more or less *is* the festival and Coulam even serves as its mayor, often referring to himself as "The King."³

From its small beginning in 1974, TRF has grown into one of the largest and most popular Renaissance festivals in the United States, with attendance increasing annually from 210,000 visitors in the early 1990s to a record 606,694 in 2012. The festival takes place over seven weekends in October and November. In the late 1990s, it saw up to 37,000 visitors per day, and this figure has grown exponentially in the last fifteen years. The number of performers has also increased rapidly in that time, swelling from just over 500 workers to thousands today.⁴

In an effort to meet the needs of the growing population of tourists and fair-workers, the Fields of New Market Campgrounds have expanded from around 70 to 170 acres. Each year, the festival invites its visitors to spend the day in a sixteenth century world, and this engagement does not end when the sun sets. Those who choose to camp at TRF continue their journey into the night, enjoying an assortment of events, including a bonfire and performances.⁵

In his study of Disneyland's development, Coulam perceived Disney's biggest mistake to be his failure to predict the growth of the nearby towns and cities, which inevitably surrounded the theme park and stifled the possibility for expansion. In an attempt to avoid the same fate, Coulam purchased the contiguous land around the fairgrounds. The expanse of land totaled an estimated 1,200 acres in 1999, and it has continued to provide room for the multitude of visitors and performers who attend each year.⁶

The acquisition of festival property ushered in a new way of life for the Rennies who spend the majority of their time working at the various fairs around the United States. Before, nearly all fair workers lived a nomadic lifestyle, traveling from fair to fair in campers or cars, and pitching tents to live on site for the duration of their stay. For the first time, TRF provided a more permanent and stable place for the Rennies to call home. For many of them, this home is the only one that they have and their fellow fair-workers



Multiple generations of Rennies, such as this mother and daughter, live in the community. Many raise their families on the campgrounds, passing on crafting and performance skills.

Photo courtesy of author.

are their family. After a long weekend working at other Texas festivals, many Rennies come home to the section of TRF property, affectionately called Toon Town, where they maintain established campsites and housing.

According to Lisa High, an artisan, dancer, and Rennie who lives at the Texas Renaissance Festival, only a few areas exist around the United States where large groups of Rennies can be found: the town of Lloyd, Virginia, a commune in Austin, Texas, and the Texas Renaissance Festival. It is within these groups that generations of Rennies can be found. For example, some of Lisa's friends are third generation Rennies.⁷

You may be wondering, what is a Rennie? The term "Rennie" can be both positive and negative. Those who live the lifestyle prefer to refer to each other as Rennies, but they feel that outsiders often use the term incorrectly, or even pejoratively. The term is further complicated because many super-fans of Renaissance festivals often refer to themselves as Rennies—though, it should be noted that the Rennies do not call them that. According to Lisa, a Rennie is "a person who makes their living [working at] Renaissance festivals." They are members of a close-knit community where everybody helps each other. Some Rennies join the festivals looking to create ties to a new family because they have none; however, many are artists and musicians trying to support themselves. Lisa explains, "It is the easiest way to sell our stuff [artwork] in a way that it is presented properly . . . We're doing everything by hand, whether it's playing music, or being one of the players or making leather goods by hand, or pottery . . . Because we only work on the weekends, it gives us the opportunity to pursue our art."⁸

Lisa grew up in Houston and studied theatre in college. She initially joined the festival as a bartender because she always liked the fair as a kid. During her first season, she made friends with other Rennies and through these connections obtained other jobs. The next year, she worked for a soap company selling all-natural soap. She now sells her artwork and often dances with a gypsy dance theatre at the TRF.

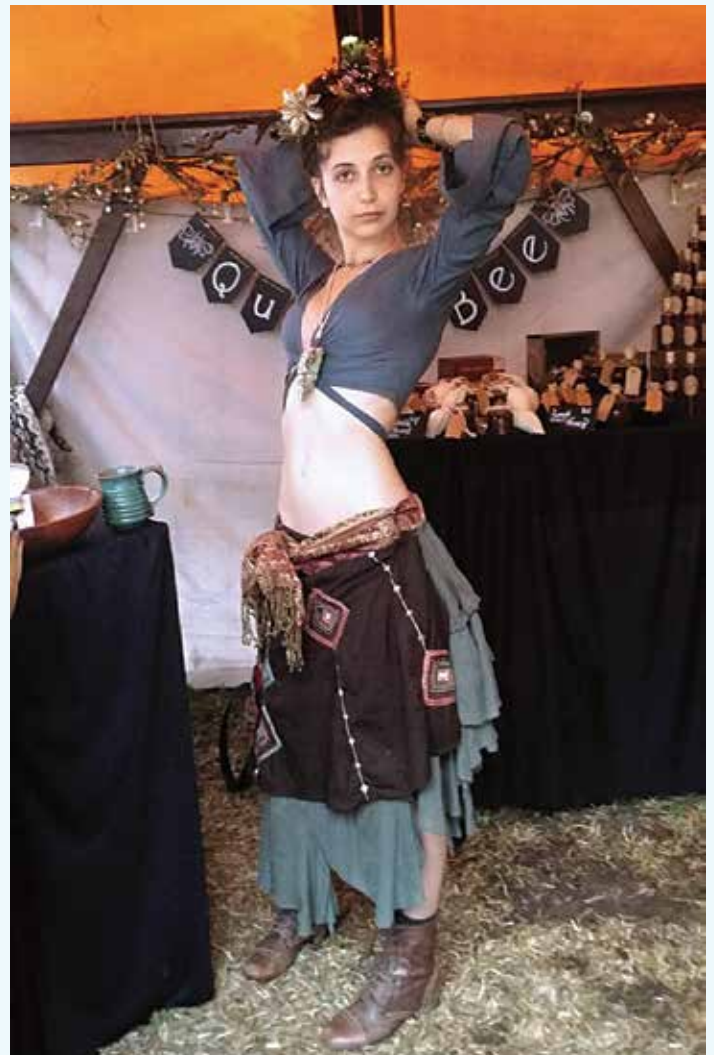
The Rennie lifestyle could best be described as alternative. Certainly the culture has a "hippy" and "gypsy" feel to it, however, that does not apply to every Rennie. As Lisa explains, "[Rennies are] true renaissance people, like when you describe a true renaissance man," adding, "It's people who just do everything. Most of my friends have lived really interesting, crazy lives and do a billion different things or have gone through many different versions of themselves. . . . They are very worldly and cultured."⁹

Rennies work the festivals on the weekend and use the rest of the week to pursue their hobbies and crafts. Those who have higher paying jobs, such as the artisans and performers, can take more time off to explore their passions. Lisa works at the Scarborough Renaissance Festival in Dallas, Sherwood Forest Faire in Austin, the Michigan festival in the summer, and of course, TRF in the fall. Because her jobs pay well, she is able to take off two months in the summer and two in the winter. When she is not in full character at the festival, she plays music, works with other types of art such as painting and mixed-media, gardens, and teaches dance. As Lisa puts it, she "pursue[s] [her]self and

[her] hobbies."¹⁰ Many Rennies love the interactions they have with tourists and visitors. Lisa believes this gives people the opportunity to celebrate life and nature. "We change people's lives. They work in offices and don't [often] go outside. . . . They can't believe I only work two days a week and can make a living. It shows them another perspective. . . . This lifestyle is so far from the norm; it gives them a little inspiration to change their lives even a little bit."¹¹

The Rennies at the Texas Renaissance Festival live in a community that, like other communities, has a form of hierarchy. Elders, the Rennies who have been there longest, tend to take the positions of leadership, helping other Rennies to be their best selves. "It depends on who's around and when," says Lisa, explaining, "The community is like a high school or a microcosm of a large city. There are a lot of mini-groups that organize and help other Rennies out." Every Rennie has his or her own social circle within the larger group, often based on their jobs at the festival and how much they earn. Nevertheless, the community has an overall sense of family, and they will always come to the aid of a fellow Rennie.¹²

Rennies have several support systems to help them in



Rennies often enjoy the freedom festival life offers them to pursue and sell their art. During festival season, they hold positions as entertainers, salespeople, and artisans.

Photo courtesy oauthor.



The front door of a Rennie house located in Todd Mission, Texas.

Photo courtesy of author.

times of need and assist them in staying well-connected. Rennie RESCU is an organization that helps with medical bills by raising money throughout the community.¹³ Often, super-fans of Renaissance festivals also donate money. Aside from RESCU, Rennies fundraise to help each other by playing music and performing follies and vaudevillian

shows, as well as holding auctions and collecting donations. Rennies post bulletins at each fair with announcements about other fairs and important information. Lisa points out that staying connected is much easier today with the technology of computers and cell phones. A literary magazine, *Uproots*, also helps to keep Rennies in touch.

With the Rennie subculture becoming more well-known, many members are torn between proudly celebrating their lifestyle with the world and wanting to stay somewhat secluded and undisturbed. They are certainly protective of the community and hope that as the world learns more about them, their culture will be recognized for what it is. Lisa explains, “The majority of us are all artists and are just trying to make a living being an artist. It’s very difficult being a working musician or artist [outside of the festivals].”¹⁴

Over the years TRF has become an important part of Houston culture. Every fall Houstonians get their friends and families together and escape into a fantasy world, far away from the hustle and bustle of the big city. It is the Rennies who make this fantastical experience possible, inviting Houston into their unique world and bringing joy to thousands through their artistry.

Taylor Mankin is a Ph.D. student at the University of Houston. She studies Medieval history and, like many of her fellow Houstonians, enjoys partaking in the beloved bohemian experience that the Texas Renaissance Festival offers.



A daring tightrope performer maintains his balance while showing off his acrobatic multi-tasking skills at the festival in 1978.

Photo courtesy of Texas.713 on Flickr.com. (See Endnote no.15 for license.)

IN TIME: THE RISE, DECLINE, AND REBIRTH OF THE CULLEN RIFLES

By James Wang

The sound of hands clashing the wooden stocks of 1903 Springfield rifles echoed loudly across the field as a crowd of Houston Cougars football fans watched. Thirty young men, all dressed in their pink and green military dress uniforms, were executing the Queen Anne's Drill—a complex rifle maneuver that requires high levels of discipline and precision to perform correctly. At the end of the drill, each man planted his rifle butt-first into the field and the crowd erupted into applause. The stadium lights shined down on each individual's bowed head, glistening off their chrome-plated helmets. These men are hallowed members of the famed Cullen Rifles, a once time-honored tradition at the University of Houston.

For such a highly decorated tradition at the university, the history of the Cullen Rifles is very poorly documented. Deep within the M. D. Anderson Library archives, only decades-old pictures from past college yearbooks remain to chronicle the group's history. What can be gathered, however, is that the Rifles were a modern day praetorian guard and once served as color guards to the President of the United States, all the while remaining undefeated as a competitive drill team throughout the southwestern United States, representing discipline, precision, and honor for the Houston Corps of Cadets, the university's Army ROTC program.

The Houston Corps of Cadets and the Cullen Rifles were both established in 1948. Created as one of many extracurricular activities offered to the members of the Houston Corps of Cadets, the Cullen Rifles were named after university benefactor Hugh Roy Cullen in recognition of his \$88 million in donations. The Rifles were "equipped with silver helmets and chrome-plated 1903 Springfield rifles" with which they proudly marched in various "parades and special events."¹ These events included home football games, Armistice Day

and Mardi Gras parades, and whatever else the university chancellor, mayor, or President of the United States asked them to do in Houston.

The Rifles enjoyed accolades and recognition from the city and the student community. Starting from their inception through the 1950s, the *Houstonian* yearbook constantly featured the Rifles, showering them with flattering phrases depicting them as a "crack drill team well known to Houstonians." The 1951 *Houstonian* described the Rifles as already enjoying the distinction of being "one of the most outstanding marching units in the Southwest," just three years after its founding.² According to former Cullen Rifle, William "Bill" Taylor, one would have been hard-pressed at the time to find anyone on campus that "didn't know the Cullen Rifles."

Aside from its competitive successes, the Rifles's campus fame can be attributed to a few special cosmetic features. Their distinctive chrome helmets made them easily recognizable at special events and drill ceremonies. On campus, through the 1950s, Cullen Rifles members typically dressed like their counterparts in the Houston Corps of Cadets with a few unique characteristics. According to Taylor, during the summer and fall, their uniform consisted of a military top, khaki pants with a red stripe down the side, of their "bloused pants," and "straight military dress shoes with the... leggings." In the winter, they wore the "pinks and greens, which was then the standard officer's Army uniform." While all cadets wore the UH insignia on the left sleeve of their uniform, the right side of the Rifles's uniform featured a cougar's head emblazoned on a shield, setting them apart. They also wore a distinctive cord, "which was red in the khaki uniform and white in the winter uniform."³

Aside from the uniform, Rifle members were like any other ROTC cadet. Taylor recalls



The distinctive uniforms of the Cullen Rifles included chrome-plated helmets and the Cullen Rifle patch on the shoulders. This member of the Rifles is wearing the winter "pinks and greens" uniform worn by contemporary officers of the United States Army. Circa 1950s.

All photos courtesy of the Digital Library, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries, unless otherwise noted.



Shown here in downtown Houston in 1952, the Cullen Rifles marched in various parades during their existence, including the Armistice and Veterans Day parades and at the New Orleans Mardi Gras parade.

that in the early- to mid-1950s, physical training was not a mandatory morning activity in a cadet's life, as one might assume of a military unit, because the cadets were expected to stay in shape on their own. Instead, the cadets and the Rifles began their mornings like any other student—going to classes with freedom in between to do as they pleased. By virtue of being a part of the Rifles, though, they had an activity added to their agenda. “Every morning at seven o'clock,” the Rifles met to rehearse their drills and maneuvers for upcoming events. These rehearsals proved essential to refining rifle handling skills into an art form.

One particular maneuver they performed, explained by Taylor, was the “Queen Anne's Drill.” Performed with the standard Cullen Rifle platoon formation—three squads deep, with ten men in each squad—the maneuver required the platoon to line up on a football field, from one thirty yard line to the next, and perform “various manual arms movements,” one after another, creating a ripple effect. After this, they performed the “Queen Anne's Salute,” which began at the position of “Right Shoulder, Arms” and then featured each Rifle flipping his weapon off his shoulder. The Rifles assumed a kneeling position, with their heads bowed down and the rifle planted into the ground beside them at a forty five degree angle.

This formation was followed by the “Five Sixes to the Wind” in which the platoon split the unit in half and marched off in opposite directions—“one would go to one side of the field, one to the other side of the field.” The units divided even further into their squad formations and then broke off in four different directions. The Rifles did maneuvers in their split formations and then reassembled as one platoon.⁴

The Rifles performed these drills at Houston Cougar football games and numerous local events such as the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, or anywhere their presence was requested. Their dedication to their craft enabled them to win awards, beating teams within their conference, including the Ross Volunteers of Texas A&M. As Taylor noted with unsuppressed glee, the Rifles excelled at beating Texas A&M's rival drill team, the Aggies' Fish drill team in particular, who the Rifles reportedly “beat... like a drum pretty regularly.”⁵

While their rifle drill maneuvers were far from traditional marching, the Rifles did march in major parades. They participated in the annual Mardi Gras Parade in New Orleans and the local Armistice Day and, later, Veterans Day parades, in addition to receiving invitations to participate in parades in cities across the nation.

The Rifles's greatest distinction, however, was serving as the Honor Guard for President Dwight D. Eisenhower during his presidential visits to Houston. The Rifles did not serve solely as a color guard and escort because at that time, “there were virtually no Secret Service agents,” according to Taylor. “It was literally just [the Rifles]” protecting the President of the United States, who came to Houston for some matter of business and was often found speaking with Hugh Roy Cullen and other influential businessmen. The Rifles followed Eisenhower from his arrival in Houston to his departure and were privileged to stand by his side during campaign stops or whatever galas the president attended.⁶ The Rifles moved in high circles, and the future looked bright.

Having enjoyed fame in its early years, the Rifles experienced an unexpected decline in popularity and coverage in the 1960s followed by rebranding. The decline began with

the 1960 *Houstonian*. Just like years past, ROTC received a multi-page spread chronicling the various company members, but the Cullen Rifles were nowhere to be found.

From there, the blackout spread. Rather than including panoramic photos of the companies, the regimental band with the Rifles, and the military ball, the 1965 yearbook allotted only three pages to ROTC.⁷ While the reason for the decline in coverage is unclear, it might have been due to the growing counterculture movement and anti-military sentiments of the times.

Even though ROTC had less coverage in the yearbook, the program and the Rifles continued to thrive as evidenced by photographs depicting cadets in full regalia marching in parades and the continued practice of the Final Review, which can only be held by larger units. Eventually, ROTC's competitive rifle marksmanship team and civilians from the UH varsity rifle team became associated with the Cullen Rifles name in the *Houstonian*. The drill team was not mentioned.

This rebranding allowed the precision-based drill team to branch out as a national top-tier rifle team, however, the Rifles still lacked the media recognition they previously received, culminating with the loss of the "Cullen Rifles" name. The *Houstonian* referred to them generically as the "rifle team" or the "University of Houston rifle team." Nevertheless, the Rifles won first place at the NRA International meet in 1965 and the 4th Army Southeastern Conference in 1966. As the UH varsity rifle team, members of the Rifles finished the 1966 season with ten first place victories and two second place victories resulting in a win at the Southwest Rifle Association championship. That same year, Cadet Jesse Reynolds became "UH's first All-American marksman."⁸

The 1967 *Houstonian* officially dropped the "Cullen" name from the Rifles and Houston ROTC cadets. Still wearing the characteristic silver helmets and uniforms, they were now called the Cougar Rifles, complete with a new guidon bearing

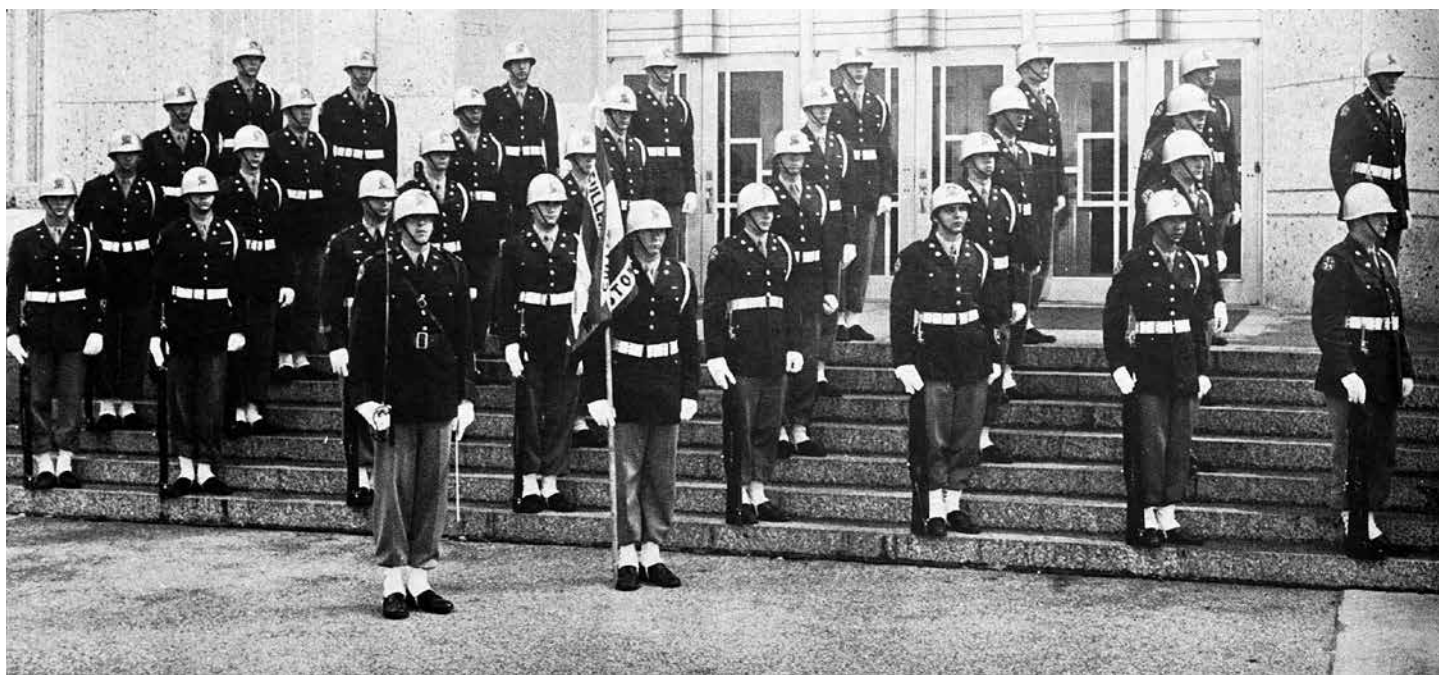
a new emblem. That year the Cougar Rifles "rated number one among the drill teams of non-compulsory military colleges in the state of Texas."⁹ In 1967, it placed second nationally and first overall in the "big 4th Army, Southwest Association, Oklahoma Invitational and Central Texas championships" as well as the NRA sectional meet, "scoring just 13 points below the national record." It marked the third year in a row that the Rifles "dominated the Southwest [Association]."¹⁰

As it turned out, the Cougar Rifles name did not catch on as widely as the Cullen Rifles had, and by 1970, the *Houstonian* referred to them simply as the ROTC rifle team. Yet, the Rifles continued to strive towards excellence, still marching in city parades and racking up victories as an undefeated competitive shooting team.¹¹

Shooting competition victories alone could not sustain the Cullen Rifles, however. With anti-war sentiment continuing to grow, there were more uniformed war protesters on campus than cadets. The Houston ROTC experienced a sharp decline in membership and popularity on campus. In a decade when veterans returning from Vietnam were spat on and called baby killers and child murderers, it was a bad time to be an American serviceman, much less a cadet on a liberal college campus.¹²

According to Taylor, who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War years, few students were willing to be ridiculed and spat upon by their classmates for wanting to serve their country. As enrollment numbers dropped, the Cullen Rifles found themselves "pressed to function with less than about thirty" cadets, and as an extracurricular activity, they took a back seat to the Army's main mission of developing officers to lead troops into combat.¹³

Existing documentation, or rather the disheartening lack thereof, seems to further confirm that the final death knell of the Rifles was the decline of ROTC as a result of anti-war sentiments. Beginning in 1972, the *Houstonian* had very few references at all to the ROTC program, much less of the



The 1955 Cullen Rifles, led by Cadet First Lieutenant William "Bill" Taylor, stand in formation on the steps of the Ezekiel Cullen Building, a favorite place for members of the Rifles to have photos taken for the *Houstonian* yearbook.



In September 2013, the Cullen Rifles were re-established thanks to a generous donation from Lillie Robertson, granddaughter of Hugh Roy Cullen.
Photo courtesy of UH Army ROTC.

Rifles who, with their precision marching and rifle marksmanship, must have epitomized the goose-stepping imperialism that anti-war student protestors now associated with their country. The blackout from the *Houstonian* ended in 1975, the same year that the Vietnam War ended.

Houston ROTC annual field training briefly returned to the campus spotlight in the 1975 *Houstonian*. Not until 1983 did ROTC begin to fully rebound from “years of negative sentiments” and by then, the damage had already been done.¹⁴ In the years between ROTC’s sudden disappearance from campus life and its equally sudden resurgence, no mention of the Cullen or Cougar Rifles as a marching, drilling, or shooting team exists. The Rifles became a casualty of the Vietnam War, and like many of those casualties, the exact date of death is difficult to discern. It appeared that the Rifles were gone for good, but appearances can be deceiving.

Donations from Lillie Robertson, granddaughter of Hugh Roy Cullen, made it possible to re-establish the Cullen Rifles on September 17, 2013. These donations included fourteen new M4 rifles, a gift befitting the modern warrior. The revival became part of “a new expansion phase for the UH Battalion” as the ROTC sought to return to its earlier numbers and strength. According to then-battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Michael Smith, the new Rifles were intended to serve as a “key recruiting and retention tool” for the battalion, and as another front for the university to compete with other schools in the NCAA.¹⁵ However, an unexpected government shutdown in October 2013, Lieutenant Colonel Smith’s retirement, other personnel changes, and administrative difficulties left the Rifles at risk of disappearing into the realm of forgotten history again.

In the fall of 2015, the Rifles’s rebirth began when the ROTC program, now led by Lieutenant Colonel Neil Chaffee, reorganized the Cullen Rifles into a sub-organization within the program. The most athletic, tactically knowledgeable, and academically skilled cadets were hand-selected to join this new generation of Rifles who were no longer simply drill and ceremony professionals or expert marksmen.

For the last five years, U.S. Army Cadet Command has held Ranger Challenge, a national competition among ROTC programs that is regarded among cadets as the “varsity sport” of ROTC. Named after the U.S. Army Rangers special operations unit, annual competitions are held within each local brigade. They subject cadets to a rigorous thirty-six-hour gauntlet of events such as a ten-kilometer ruck march, nighttime land navigation, and combat skill proficiency tests.¹⁶ With their return, the Cullen Rifles took the reins as the premier competitive team for Houston ROTC.

The ROTC cadets themselves, said Chaffee, chose to resurrect the Cullen Rifles by taking the Houston Battalion Army ROTC Ranger Challenge team, which was already a highly successful team on its own, and transforming it into the Rifles to “[preserve] the legacy of the Cullen Rifles while modernizing the role, function and charter for the team.” This modernized the exhibition marksmanship and drill team iterations of the Rifles of yesteryear into the hard-hitting, fast thinking warrior leaders the Army needs today. This fundamental shift changed how the Rifles trained and the challenges they faced.

According to Cadet Edgar Orellana, the 2015-2016 commanding officer of the Cullen Rifles, today’s Rifles redirect the discipline and dedication it took to become a Rifle in the past. Instead of the voluntary physical training and rifle drills of the 1950s Corp of Cadets, these modern Rifles are up at 6:00 a.m., conducting their physical exercise with an intensity few can match, before most other cadets



The 1966 ROTC rifle team poses with the University of Houston’s varsity rifle team. While the Cullen Rifles began as a precision drill team, the name became associated with the two award-winning rifle teams, and the Cullen Rifles began to be called the Cougar Rifles. Featured in this photo is UH’s first all-American marksman, Jesse Reynolds (center front).

present for regular formation. Instead of the basic tactical lessons, the Rifles receive more in-depth, hands-on training, occasionally using the M4 rifles gifted to them by Lillie Robertson to hone their marksmanship.

As the new face of the Cullen Rifles, these cadets began by training for one thing—their official debut at Cadet Command 5th Brigade's Fifth Annual Ranger Challenge Competition on October 16, 2015. The Cullen Rifles sent nine of their most elite members, and they placed in almost every category by taking third place in casualty evacuation and the ruck march, second in one-rope bridge execution, and first place in communications and the hand grenade assault course.

Even though the major competition is over, the Cullen Rifles continue to train for next year. Plus, the organization has a reputation to live up to. The mission statement says it all:

**Be the standard for which all cadets should strive to be.
Leading in all aspects**

Physical Training, Academics, Community Service, and Military discipline. While maintaining the demeanor, respect and attitude of a silent professional.¹⁷

With these core values, the Rifles are high performance athletes and future military leaders. Each Rifle is expected to be an exemplary student and outstanding member of the community. According to Cadet Orellana, in addition to intense PT and battle drills, the Rifles also reach out to local disadvantaged youths around the University of Houston area. On a recent trip to Waltrip High School, the Rifles spoke to JROTC cadets about applying for college, receiving good grades, and potentially joining the Rifles's ranks in the UH ROTC program.

Today's Rifles may look and train differently than their predecessors, but the spirit remains. Their first year back has already garnered excitement among cadets and other students on campus. "I'm starting to hear more and more people start to wonder, 'Hey, who are those guys in uniform? Are those cadets?'" said Orellana. "And I'm just thinking, wow, four, five years ago, nobody even knew there was an ROTC program on campus. Now?"

Now, the Cullen Rifles are preparing to send off a new generation of senior cadets into the Army as officers and welcome a new generation of Rifles into the fold as spring graduations and commissioning approach. "Now, I hope that the Cullen Rifles become the face of the new program," remarked Orellana hopefully.

"I remain exceptionally proud of the cadets as they take the Cullen Rifles into the future," said Chaffee. "They had a guidon and unit T-shirts made to outwardly show their pride. They literally carried the Cullen Rifles legacy and name with them during each Ranger Challenge event and competition this year." While the future will hold challenges for the Rifles and certainly more victories, everyone involved is optimistic that the number of cadets will grow and, with that, the possibility of an increased size in the team, making select drill and ceremony and competition shooting events possible again.

Until then, the Rifles must be content with its recent tri-



Students protest the Vietnam War outside of the University of Houston administration building. Rising anti-war sentiments along with the counterculture movement of the 1960s helped to marginalize the Cullen Rifles's role as a campus tradition. Enrollment numbers for the Houston ROTC dropped dramatically and the Cullen Rifles eventually disappeared.

umphs and resurrection. From the atmospheric highs of the 1950s to pitch-black obscurity in the 1970s, today's chapter of the Rifles ends with a high note. While the past proves that nothing is certain, it is with great hope that the Rifles' mission and its creed are carried onwards with them.

James Wang is a Houston native and graduated from the University of Houston in 2015 with a bachelor of arts in history. He received his commission as a U.S. Army Second Lieutenant in 2015 from the Houston Battalion Army ROTC program.

The Cullen Rifles Creed

As a Cullen Rifle I will endeavor to be the standard for which all cadets should strive to be.

Leading in all aspects including Physical Training, Academics, and Community Service.

While maintaining the demeanor, respect and attitude of a silent professional.

As a Cullen Rifle, Integrity will be the foundation on which I am built.

Service will be the mission that I will pursue. Discipline will be the path on which I walk,

And Honor will be the Compass guiding my way.

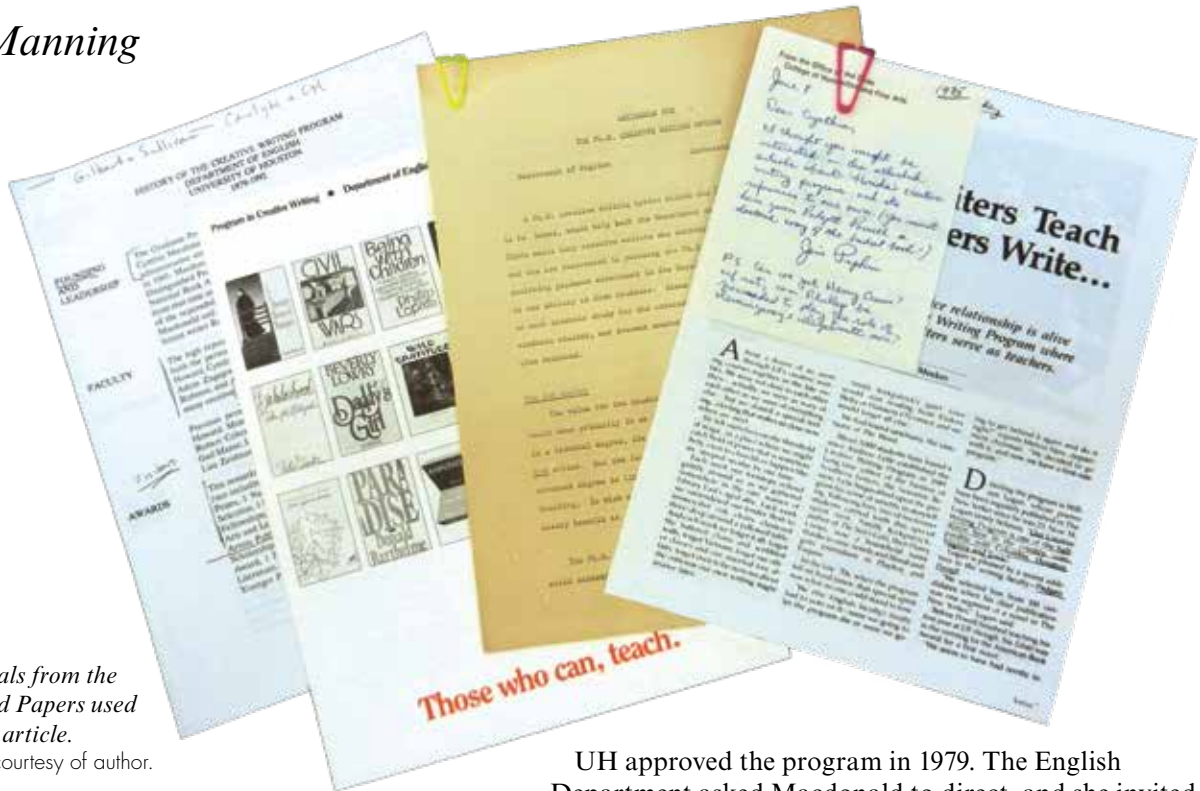
I will face these labors with Character, taking full responsibility for my actions.

Never, failing my school, unit or fellow cadet.

This is what I strive to be, this is what I am.
I am a Cullen Rifle.¹⁸

The First Decade of the University of Houston's Creative Writing Program, 1979-1989

By Mary Manning



Manuscript materials from the Cynthia Macdonald Papers used as research for this article.

Photo courtesy of author.

The UH English Department, with John McNamara as chair, shaped its creative writing program in the late 1970s, when such programs were sprouting up across the country, as a way to draw students at a time of “steadily declining graduate enrollment in the Department.”¹ In 1978, the department asked poet Cynthia Macdonald, then at Johns Hopkins University, to advise them on the proposed program.

One highlight of the program was the Ph.D. in literature and creative writing to be offered alongside the MFA in creative writing. Many college or university English departments offered curricula focused mostly on literature with just a few creative writing courses. The UH English Department theorized that having a Ph.D. in literature and creative writing would make UH graduates more marketable when applying for academic positions. The department’s “Rationale for the Ph.D. Creative Writing Option” explains:

The value for the student of the Ph.D. option in creative writing would come primarily in an enhanced ability to find a teaching job. As a terminal degree, the MFA is the highest qua artist. But the fact is that a majority of artists who take an advanced degree in literature earn their livings not by writing, but by teaching. In view of this fact, the Ph.D. looms as an increasingly necessary benefit to securing employment, promotion, and tenure.²

UH approved the program in 1979. The English Department asked Macdonald to direct, and she invited poet Stanley Plumly to join her in developing the program. The two served as co-directors, each serving as director on alternate years, until Plumly departed in 1985. From that point, the creative writing faculty collaboratively directed the program with Macdonald, Edward Hirsch, Phillip Lopate, and Donald Barthelme bearing much of the responsibility until Lopate left the program and Barthelme died in 1989. This left Macdonald and Hirsch “to assume co-directorship until mid-1991 when poet and fiction writer Robert Phillips became director of the program.”³

The department hired prominent, respected authors who published extensively and to great acclaim. Faculty during the program’s early years included the aforementioned Macdonald, Barthelme, Hirsch, and Lopate but also included Ntozake Shange, Rosellen Brown, Robert Cohen, and Richard Howard. Visiting faculty included Mary Robison, James Robison, Beverly Lowry, and Adam Zagajewski. The new UH faculty members came from teaching appointments at prestigious institutions, including Boston University, Columbia, Yale, Johns Hopkins, Brandeis, Princeton, Harvard, and other institutions.

UH Creative Writing faculty publications during this decade are too many to list here, but the faculty published for many major publishing houses and university presses as well as the most distinguished magazines and journals. Faculty included Guggenheim Fellowship Award winners and the recipients of many grants and awards as noted in the table

Selected List of Grants and Awards Received by Creative Writing Faculty, 1979-1989

National Endowment for the Arts grants
American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Awards
Janet Kafka Prize for the Best Novel by an American Woman
Lavin Younger Poets Award from the Academy of American Poetry
Delmore Schwartz American Poetry Award
National Book Award for a Translation
PEN Translation Medal
Academy of American Poets Fellowship
Whiting Foundation Award for Excellence in Writing
Richard and Hilda Rosenthal Foundation Award for Fiction
CUE Awards for Excellence in Teaching
PEN Syndicated Fiction Award

above. The strength of the UH faculty attracted the brightest, most talented writers, both faculty and students.

Getting published is a sign of student success for creative writers, and the first group of UH creative writing students did indeed succeed. They also received numerous awards such as the Richard Hugo poet-in-residence, Wallace Stegner Fellowship, Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, Whiting Foundation Poetry Award, Robert Frost poet-in-residence, Academy of American Poets Award, and Norma Farber

First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America as well as National Endowment for Poetry and Arts Fellowships, Guggenheim Fellowships, and PEN Awards, including Southwest Discovery Prizes. The creative writing students published extensively as illustrated in the table on page 41.

This first decade of UH's Creative Writing Program was marked by strong, rapid growth, which is reflected in the media of the period. A 1985 article in *University of Florida Today* states that UH's program is one of the top programs in the country, comparable with Columbia and Iowa.⁴ The article focuses in large part on the University of Florida's hiring of Padgett Powell who studied with Barthelme at the UH Creative Writing program. Powell's UH master's thesis was released as the acclaimed novel *Edisto* that was chosen one of the ten best novels in 1984 by *Time* magazine. In the mid-1980s, UH quoted *The Washington Post* in a fundraising brochure, "The new energy one feels in Texas letters is simply due to the fact that so many good writers are, for one reason or another, now living here, and nothing is more responsible for that than the creation of the state's—perhaps one of the nation's—most ambitious creative writing programs at the University of Houston."⁵ This brochure also asserts that the UH Creative Writing Program "is now considered one of the two or three most successful and distinguished such programs in the country."⁶ In 1989, *Esquire* magazine published a diagram of the literary universe with Houston and Columbia "as moons orbiting the original creative writing planet, Iowa."⁷

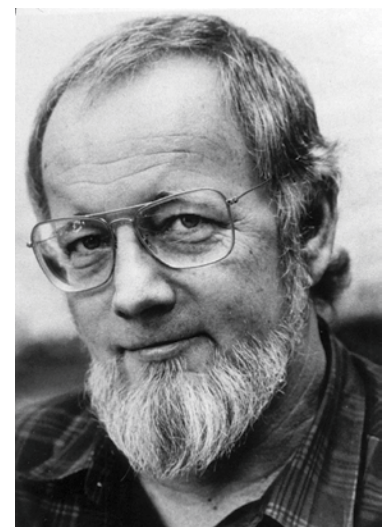
The UH Creative Writing Program also founded successful programs that contributed to student success and the creation of a literary community in Houston. In 1981, the UH Creative Writing Program teamed with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston to bring readings from renowned writers to the city. During the Creative Writing Program's first decade, the Houston Reading Series presented major, contemporary writers such as John Ashbery, Ann Beattie, Raymond Carver, E. L. Doctorow, Phillip Levine, Bobbie Ann Mason, W. S. Merwin, Grace Paley, Richard Price, Susan Sontag, and Mark Strand.



Cynthia Macdonald.



Edward Hirsch.



Donald Barthelme.

All photos from the University of Houston People Collection courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

Selected List of Creative Writing Student and Alumni Works, 1979-1989

Padgett Powell: *Edisto, A Woman Named Drown*

Pattiann Rogers: *The Expectations of Light, The Tattooed Lady in the Garden, Splitting and Binding, Legendary Performance*

Lynn Doyle: *Living Gloves*

Tracey Dougherty: *Desire Provoked*

Olive Hershey: *Truck Dance*

Arthur Smith: *Elegy on Independence Day*

Thomas Cobb: *Crazy Heart*

Richard Lyons: *These Modern Nights*

Marilyn Stablein: *The Census Taker: Stories of a Traveler in India and Nepal*

William Olsen: *The Hand of God and Few Bright Flowers*

Leslie Miller: *Staying up for Love*

Michelle Boisseau: *No Private Life*

Writers in the School (WITS) was formed by Lopate and Marv Hoffman in 1983. This collaboration with Houston Independent School District took UH creative writing students into HISD schools exposing K-12 students to poetry and fiction writing and offering workshops for teachers to develop their writing and teaching skills, while providing UH creative writers teaching experience and income.

Inprint, Inc. formed during the mid 1980s primarily as a fundraising group for the UH program. A UH Creative Writing fundraising brochure describes Inprint, Inc., during its early years, "In an effort to promote the vital activities which the program has engendered, a group of community leaders have [sic] come together to form a new organization, Inprint, Inc. Primary among Inprint's projects is the funding of twenty \$10,000 fellowships in writing for graduate students."⁸

Another major undertaking of Inprint, Inc. was "to provide financial backing for a journal of international stature which will publish new prose, poetry, and critical

articles of consequence." Emerging from its predecessor *Domestic Crude* (1982-1985), the journal *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts* published its first issue in 1986. This student-run journal of literature and visual arts provided opportunities for students to learn the literary publishing trade and is still funded, in part, by Inprint. The UH Creative Writing Program brought literature into the Houston community. As early as 1984, an article in the *Houston* magazine states that "from that seed" of Macdonald and Plumly "Houston's literary community has bloomed."⁹ Other Houston arts and literary organizations launched readings, and shelves of local booksellers such as Brazos and Diverse Works bookstores were soon filled with the poetry and fiction of UH Creative Writing faculty and students. The UH Creative Writing program grew to become part of the fabric of UH and the city of Houston. It is difficult to imagine UH or the city today without the program and its great impact.

In 1989, at the tail end of the first decade of the UH Creative Writing Program, the program's leadership was in flux. Lopate left the program and Barthelme died that year, leaving many to wonder whether the program could sustain its level of success. It did, and it grew.

The programs developed by UH Creative Writing in its early years have also grown. Inprint assumed custodianship of the Houston Reading Series, now called the Inprint Margaret Brown Root Reading Series. It still funds graduate students in the UH Creative Writing Program, including "\$3 million to date in Inprint fellowships, juried prizes, and other direct support."¹⁰ Adding writing workshops and additional readings series, Inprint currently serves more than 12,000 readers and writers annually. Writers in the Schools still brings creative writing to K-12 students and provides professional development to their teachers but has expanded its services to approximately 36,000 children, making it the largest literary arts organization in Texas. The *Gulf Coast* journal is still student run and going strong. Enjoying a readership of 3,000, *Gulf Coast* has added community programming such as the Gulf Coast Reading Series and its MenilFest, held at The Menil Collection with more than seventy-five local and national exhibitors and over 2,500 visitors attending each April. The University of Houston's Creative Writing Program is still one of the top programs in the country—still attracting eminent faculty and the best and brightest students.

Mary Manning MA, MLIS is the university archivist and curator of Performing and Visual Arts Collections at the University of Houston Libraries' Special Collections.

THE UH CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM EXHIBIT

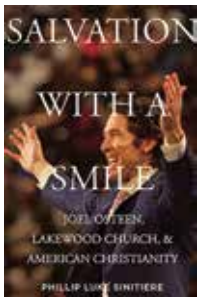
UH Libraries' Special Collections will exhibit materials related to the founding and first decade of UH Creative Writing Program in the exhibition area on the first floor of M. D. Anderson Library in Fall of 2016. The exhibit will run from August 22 - December 31, 2016. Please contact exhibit co-curators Mary Manning (mmmanning@uh.edu) and Julie Grob (jgrob@uh.edu) for more information.

The Special Collections Reading Room is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays when school is in session.

News Updates & Books *by Barbara Eaves*

BOOKS

The Texas State Historical Association is releasing two books. One is a reprint edition of *Stephen F. Austin, Empresario of Texas*, Gregg Cantrell's path-breaking biography of the founder of Anglo Texas. Cantrell portrays Austin as a borderlands figure who navigated the complex cultural landscape of 1820s Texas, then a part of Mexico. (Texas A&M Press, \$30.) The other, *Washington on the Brazos: Cradle of the Texas Republic* by Richard B. McCaslin, is the story of the Texas Republic that begins and ends at Washington, now a state historic site that commemorates its role in the Texas Revolution and Republic. Earlier, Washington was a center of political power, a thriving river port, and a haven for freed slaves and German immigrants. (Texas A&M Press, \$15.95.)



Salvation with a Smile: Joel Osteen, Lakewood Church and American Christianity by Philip Luke Sinitiere, visiting assistant professor of history at Sam Houston State University. How did Joel Osteen become one of the most recognizable Protestant leaders in the country? Sinitiere excavates the life of Lakewood Church founder John Osteen to explain how his son Joel expanded and

fashioned his congregation into America's largest megachurch. Extensively well researched, the book is the first devoted to Lakewood and situates the church in the context of American religious history. (New York Press, \$35.)

Allie Victoria Tennant and the Visual Arts in Dallas, by Light



Townsend Cummins. Many recognize the iconic bronze Native American figure at the Hall of State at Fair Park in Dallas, but few know much about its sculptor, Allie Victoria Tennant. Cummins traces the life of this pioneering female artist who succeeded in a male-dominated profession to advance Texas regionalist art before World War II. (Texas A&M Press, \$35.)

NEWS

The Texas State Historical Association's *Handbook of Texas*, a 26,000-entry digital project, is generating supplements focused on Houston, Tejano history, and African American Texas. All need ideas and contributions from scholars, historians, and writers. All acknowledge the support of Randolph "Mike" Campbell, Texas chief historian, and Stephen Cook, chair of the TSHA Handbook Committee. The *Handbook of Houston*, a joint project between the Houston History Alliance and TSHA, is the first city-centric handbook. It showcases Houston's development, people, places, and diverse cultural heritage under the direction of

Lindsay Scovil Dove, M.A., University of Houston, lscovil@houstonhistoryalliance.org. The *Handbook of Tejano History* is supported by Tejano Monument, Inc., and the UT-Austin Department of History. Project co-directors are Emilio Zamora, Ph.D., at UT-Austin and Andrés Tijerina, Ph.D., at Austin Community College. The *Handbook of African American Texas*, now past 1,100 entries, covers African Americans in the state dating back to Cabeza de Vaca's 1528 expedition. The project is directed by Merline Pitre, Ph.D., Texas Southern University. www.tshaonline.org/handbook.

The Heritage Society has made two interesting diaries available for researchers. The first was kept by E. S. Perkins, a New York preacher who arrived in Houston just before New Year's Day, 1839. His letters written to family and friends and recorded in a small book contain some of the earliest descriptions of the city. The second, written by J. L. Watson, recounts his journey from St. Louis down the Mississippi River to New Orleans and then west to Houston, where, in 1886, he bought a newspaper that became the *Houston Post*. He acquired one of the first linotype machines for the paper and later became wealthy promoting its use throughout the country. Contact Wally Saage, 713-655-1912.



In 2011, The San Jacinto Museum of History displayed an 1841 Tyron Flintlock Rifle, one of only five thought to remain of the 850 shipped to President Mirabeau Lamar to outfit the Santa Fe Expedition. Lamar had sent the expedition's traders to New Mexico to divert some of the profitable trade traveling over the Santa Fe Trail and, if possible, to establish Texas's jurisdiction over the region. The traders got lost, encountered hostile Indians, and, three months later, finally reached Santa Fe where they met armed resistance from New Mexico's governor. The Texians were ordered to surrender and their muskets were carted off and supposedly destroyed. After a heated diplomatic controversy, New Mexico released the Texians a year later. "As frequently happens when a rare artifact gains media attention (as in 2011), people search their attics and collections for similar items," said curator Liz Appleby. "In this case, Tom O'Neal learned that a previously undocumented Tyron musket had been in his family for generations!" O'Neal has placed the musket on a five-year loan for display at the San Jacinto Museum of History.

Andrew C. Baker's article, "From Rural South to Metropolitan Sunbelt: Creating a Cowboy identity in the Shadow of Houston," which ran in the July 2015 issue of *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, won the Western History

Association's Michael P. Malone Award for the best article on territorial history in North America appearing in a periodical. Baker, now assistant professor at Texas A&M-Commerce, was a Ph.D. student at Rice University when the article was published.

Stacey Eisenstark has joined Texas A&M University Press as acquisitions editor for natural resource science, agriculture, and the environment. She brings six years of editorial experience at the University of California Press. Director of TAMU Press, **Shannon Davies** formerly devoted full time to acquisitions in these areas.



SPARK School Park Program celebrated the opening of seven new parks in the area. Council member Eleanor Tinsley began the program to create parks on school grounds in 1983. Today over 150 unique parks serve the needs and of the nearly 300,000 people who live nearby. Houston Endowment, a supporter of the program, found that the parks are well-maintained, promote community involvement, and offer a great way to get residents, particularly young people, outdoors.

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD) is celebrating its centennial. Created by city ordinance on March 15, 1916, the department originally managed approximately 750 acres of parkland. Today, the HPARD system includes 370 developed parks and more than 220 greenspaces totaling over 37,851 acres. The May 14 grand opening of renovated Gragg Park will include the installation of a time capsule to commemorate the department's 100th anniversary. www.houstonparks.org.



Preservation Houston believes that showcasing the year's best historic preservation projects and the people who make them happen helps foster a preservation ethic for Houston. To that end, since 1979, the group has presented the Good Brick Award to outstanding projects. In February, Preservation Houston presented fifteen 2016 Good Brick Awards and, on Saturday and Sunday, April 30 and May 1, from noon to 5:00 p.m., these winning homes and businesses will be open to visitors.



Barry Moore, FAIA.
Photo courtesy of Gensler.

Barry Moore, FAIA, Gensler senior associate architect, won Preservation Houston's President's Award for outstanding personal contributions to preservation in Houston. Among his recent Houston projects are the Julia Ideson Building and Willow Street Pump Station, and the Texas Quilt Museum in La Grange. Its "next-generation" member group, Pier & Beam, honored the **McGovern Centennial Gardens & Cherie Flores**

Garden Pavilion for their architectural significance and impact on Houston. Taking home these trophies were **Hoerr Schaudt** and White Oak Studio (landscape architects) and

Bohlin Cywinski Jackson (pavilion architect). Finally, Preservation Houston's two AIA Houston Awards went to **Sesquicentennial Park** (TeamHouston with 3/D International and Ray + Hollington) and **The Astrodome** (Lloyd, Morgan & Jones and Wilson, Morris Crain & Anderson). www.preservationhouston.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PROFILE OF A HOUSTON OIL FAMILY: PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE STAITI/REISNER FAMILY COLLECTION will be on display through July 2 at The Heritage Society. The exhibition captures the lifestyle of this prosperous young Houston oil family making the most of this nascent industry.



THE 16TH ANNUAL SAN JACINTO SYMPOSIUM will be held on Saturday, April 9 and feature six speakers who will concentrate on the often-overlooked roles of people of African descent from the sixteenth century to annexation in 1845. The United Way Community Center, 50 Waugh Drive, Houston, TX 77007, will host the event. www.sanjacintoconservancy.org.

THE BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO annual commemoration will be held on Thursday, April 21 at 11:00 a.m. at the San Jacinto Monument. It is open to the public.

THE SAN JACINTO DAY FESTIVAL AND BATTLE REENACTMENT will be held Saturday, April 23 from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and promises a full day of family fun — food, craft demonstrations, quilting, a petting zoo, and more. The battle reenactment is at the actual time of the battle, 3:00 p.m., at the San Jacinto Battleground.

THE BRYAN MUSEUM will launch a new exhibit, *La Cruz Blanca* (The White Cross) in the late spring. The emergency aid group organized by Leonor Villegas de Magnón and others in Laredo and El Paso during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) treated wounded Mexican soldiers. The museum is partnering with the University of Houston Special Collections to present this inspirational cross-border history. The *San Jacinto Diorama* was unveiled last fall featuring a seventy-square-foot display with more than 1,200 hand-painted miniature soldiers depicting the entire Battle of San Jacinto. www.thebryanmuseum.org



National Trust for Historic Preservation®

THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION will hold its PastForward Conference in Houston November 15-18, 2016, at the Hilton Americas. Visit www.PastForwardConference.org.

ENDNOTES

HOME IN THE PINES: CREATING THE WOODLANDS

- 1 For more on Mitchell's background, see Diana David Hinton, "The Seventeen-Year Wonder: George Mitchell and Unlocking the Barnett Shale," *Journal of American History* (June 2012): 229-235. Also, Marsh Davis and Joe Pratt, "An Interview with George Mitchell," *Houston History* (formerly *The Houston Review of History and Culture*) Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 2006): 42-48, 68-71.
- 2 George T. Morgan, Jr. and John O. King, *The Woodlands: New Community Development, 1964-1985* (Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 7-8. This book, written by two former colleagues and friends of mine at the University of Houston, was the primary source for my article. It is rich in information about the formative years of The Woodlands, and it draws on interviews with George Mitchell and others instrumental in the planning of the development. I have drawn heavily on the research and writing of George and John, both now deceased, and I have used several quotes from their interviews. For that reason, I have given them credit as co-authors of the article.
- 3 Christopher Long, "Montgomery County," *Handbook of Texas Online*, modified November 24, 2015. Published by the Texas State Historical Association. www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcm17.
- 4 For some basic background on the building of IAH, see Joseph A. Pratt and Christopher J. Castaneda, *Builders: Herman and George R. Brown* (Texas A & M University Press, 1999), 167-170.
- 5 Morgan and King, *The Woodlands*, 46, 91-94.
- 6 Morgan and King, *The Woodlands*, 65-80.
- 7 Morgan and King, *The Woodlands*, 83.
- 8 Morgan and King, *The Woodlands*, 39, 94-99, 114-15, 145-46.
- 9 Morgan and King, *The Woodlands*, 81-83.
- 10 Morgan and King, *The Woodlands*, 143.
- 11 Morgan and King, *The Woodlands*, 146-8.
- 12 Mark Odintz, "The Woodlands," *Handbook of Texas Online*, modified November 24, 2015, Texas State Historical Association; Long, "Montgomery County," www.tshaonline.org/articles/hlgtl.

HOUSTON: BECOMING THE RANCH HOUSE CITY

- 1 "Historical Population: 1900 to 2014," City of Houston, www.houstontx.gov/planning/Demographics/docs_pdfs/Cy/hist_pop_1900_2014.pdf.
- 2 City of Houston, "Zoning District Map, December 15, 1947," Paddock Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Council Records, University of Houston Libraries, Special Collections Department. The city published this map in connection with the proposed zoning ordinance that voters rejected in January 1948. Nevertheless, it is a detailed snapshot of the city's boundaries, street system, and land uses on the eve of its great suburbanization.
- 3 "City Annexes 115 Square Miles," *Houston Chronicle*, December 31, 1948. See also City of Houston Planning and Development Department, "Annexations in Houston or How we grew to 667 square miles in 175 years," www.houstontx.gov/planning/Annexation/docs_pdfs/HoustonAnnexation History.pdf.
- 4 U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Number of Inhabitants, U.S. Summary (US GPO, 1983): 1-154.
- 5 The iconic study of suburbanization is Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 6 Roger A. Clouser, "The Ranch House in America," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1984), a good general history of the ranch house, discusses both its early days and its postwar popularity. See generally Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 103-130; 193-216; Alan Hess, *The Ranch House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004).
- 7 "A New Type of California Ranch House," *California Arts and Architecture*, April 1930, 45-46; "Without benefit of cattle: ranch house for Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. O'Melveny," *California Arts and Architecture*, March 1936, 20-21; Eloise Roorbach, "The California hacienda develops into the modern rancharia," *Arts and Decoration*, September 1936, 23-25; "In New Homes," *Sunset*, June 1936, 26.
- 8 These popular domestic publications are one of the best primary sources for studying the rise of the ranch house, and the broader phenomenon of mid-century suburbanization. Others have also found the home magazines important for the study of material culture in the mid-twentieth century. See Martha Self Burpitt, "The Evolution of the Social Areas in the Modern American Home as Depicted in Selected Shelter Magazines from 1945 to 1965" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Georgia, 1988).
- 9 Cliff May described the important role played by the magazines in making the California ranch house a national phenomenon. Cliff May, interview by Marlene Laskey, 1982-1983, "The California Ranch House," unpub. transcript, Oral History Program (Los Angeles: UCLA, 1984).
- 10 *House Beautiful*, June 1944, cover. See also Helen Weigel Brown, "Meet a Family That Really Knows How to Live," *House Beautiful*, April 1946, 74-99; Brendan Gill, "Remembering Cliff May," *Architectural Digest* 48:5, May 1991, 27; Mary A. van Balgooy, "Before LA: Cliff May's Beginnings in San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 57:4, Fall 2011, 255; Mary A. van Balgooy, "Designer of the Dream: Cliff May and the California Ranch House," *Southern California Quarterly* 86:2, Summer 2004, 127.
- 11 By 1950, nine out of ten new houses were ranch houses. Witold Rybczynski, *Last Harvest: How a Cornfield Became New Daleville* (New York: Scribner, 2007), 207.
- 12 The author's conclusions about the role of the domestic architectural magazines in promoting the sudden rise of the ranch house are supported by a study of *Better Homes & Gardens*, *House Beautiful*, *House & Garden* and other publications aimed at women, for the decades from 1930 to 1960. See Stephen James, "Magazines and Modernity: The 'Home' Magazines and the Making of the Ranch House, 1945-1950," in *Redefining Suburban Studies: Searching for a New*

- Paradigm*, Daniel Rubey, ed. (Hempstead, NY: Hofstra University, 2009).
- 13 Walter Adams, "What America Wants to Build," *Better Homes & Gardens*, June 1946, 23; Herman York, *Houses and Plans 1950: 55 New Homes Construction-Tested for Today's Trends Towards the Ranch House and Ease of Living* (New York: Archway Press, 1950).
- 14 A review of Houston newspapers shows that a weak postwar economy and materials shortages slowed home building for several years, but ranch houses were available in Houston subdivisions by 1948. "Home Sales in Houston Still Slow," *Houston Chronicle*, Sept. 21, 1947, A22; "Shortage in Building Materials Pondered," *Houston Chronicle*, July 2, 1950, A29.
- 15 Joseph B. Mason, *History of Housing in the U.S., 1930-1980* (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1982), 46-53 (housing shortage and postwar homebuilding).
- 16 Mason, *History of Housing in the U.S.*, 50 (Sharp and Oak Forest); Betty T. Chapman, "Sharp developed Oak Forest as prelude to grand Sharpstown plan," *Houston Business Journal*, April 9-15, 2010, 24A.
- 17 "Frank Sharp is Dead at 87; Financier in 70's Stock Scandal," *NY Times*, April 5, 1993.
- 18 Greg Hassell, "Developer was ahead of his time," *Houston Chronicle*, Oct. 6, 1999, 1C (Ira Berne and Westbury Square); Westbury Civic Club, www.westburycivic.com (area of Westbury and number of homes).
- 19 Meyerland Community Improvement Association, www.meyerland.net/ (Meyerland history); Katherine Feser, "Bigger houses transforming neighborhood," *Houston Chronicle*, March 30, 1999: 8D (Tanglewood history).
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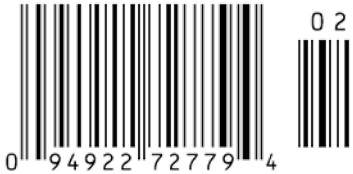


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