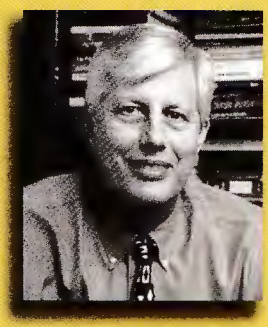
From the Editor



THE HOUSTON THAT WAS, MIGHT HAVE BEEN, AND COULD BE

I have watched our city evolve since the 1950s, and I have studied its history for most of my life. I understand that Houston's dynamism has been a central part of its allure. We are first and foremost a city of opportunity. But we have paid unnecessarily high costs for this dynamism. One such cost has been our regular destruction of the historic structures inherited from earlier eras of our city's past. Chicago and other major cities have demonstrated that the recycling of older structures for new uses can give a distinctive feel to a city, preserving a sense of history and a sense of place.

Two missed opportunities stand out as I look back over my years in the city. Having watched the transformation of Freedmen's Town in the last decade, I have a hard time driving through the area without seeing what could have been. Here was a central and distinctive piece of our city's history in an area in sight of downtown. My mind's eye still sees what might have been: a significant green space with preserved structures. I see families and visitors from around our city and from other cities walking through the preserved grounds and thinking about how Houston presented both opportunities and barriers to once enslaved people who came here with little more than their ambitions for better lives.

A second missed opportunity is the city block of space that once housed "The Oaks," a striking home on the south end of the city at 2310 Baldwin Street. Originally built as the home of Baker, Botts partner Edwin Parker and later acquired by his colleague Captain James A. Baker, the Oaks at times played host to firm meetings. After Captain Baker's death in 1941, the Oaks served for a time as the first home of the newly organized M.D. Anderson Hospital for Cancer Research of The University of Texas. It was demolished in 1955. When I look at the vacant lot once occupied by the Oaks, I see a beautiful preserved building perhaps used as a museum on the history of the region in a setting close to both downtown and the museum district. I imagine people sitting on benches in a pleasant pocket park outside the museum, thinking about the people who laid the foundation for modern Houston.

Such musings about what might have been are not meant to place blame, but rather to remind us that we can do better. What is required is a sense of history; a vision of development that embraces, instead of bulldozes, the past; a preservationist ethic that helps define a path toward a more humane approach to growth. The articles in this issue suggest that we are learning to do better. A greater sense of urgency is needed. It is past time for Houston to recognize the benefits of historic preservation, to provide stronger legal protections to historic structures, and then to find creative ways to make them a part of our living, evolving city.

ON THE COVER— In 1929, Jesse Jones dictated that his Gulf Building be beautiful and stand tall among the noticeable structures in the modern world. Today, this elegant relic of the Roaring 20s still holds its own among its taller, modern neighbors.

Dedication

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Ben Love (1924-2006).

His example reminds us all that one life, fully lived, can make a difference.

MUSEUM OF HOUSTON

www.museumofhouston.org

Houston's leading educational institutions, cultural organizations, and public archives are now cooperating to develop a digital storehouse of historic resources relating to Houston's past. Greater Houston Preservation Alliance (GHPA) is leading the effort to create the Museum of Houston Web site, www.museumofhouston.org. Houston Endowment Inc. has provided GHPA a $350,000 grant to fund the first two years of the project. Mayor Bill White announced the creation of the privately funded, online Museum of Houston during a news conference on April 4, 2006.

The Museum of Houston will bring together materials held by the city's leading research institutions and make them conveniently available to a broad, public audience. The site will eventually contain hundreds of thousands of digitized letters and documents, publications, maps, photographs, artwork, audio and video.

Rice University/Fondren Library is providing technical expertise on the project. In addition to GHPA and Rice, other institutions with representatives on the Museum of Houston steering committee are Houston Public Library/Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas Southern University/Robert James Terry Library, and University of Houston Libraries.

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Preservation Snapshots

Historic Preservation

by Minnette Boesel

"Houston historic preservationists have two tools; cajoling and bartering."

This statement made by Donna Kristaponis, director of the City of Houston Planning and Development Department in the early 1990s resonated with the audience. She made it while addressing a group of preservationists as they were struggling to pass Houston's first preservation ordinance. It was true! Houston, unlike almost every other municipality in the nation, had no public policy legislation that protected historic landmarks until 1995.

Nevertheless, as in other communities across the country where efforts were made to preserve historic buildings, Houston citizens over a 50-year period worked diligently, despite the many obstacles in their path, to ensure that its architecturally significant patrimony has remained.

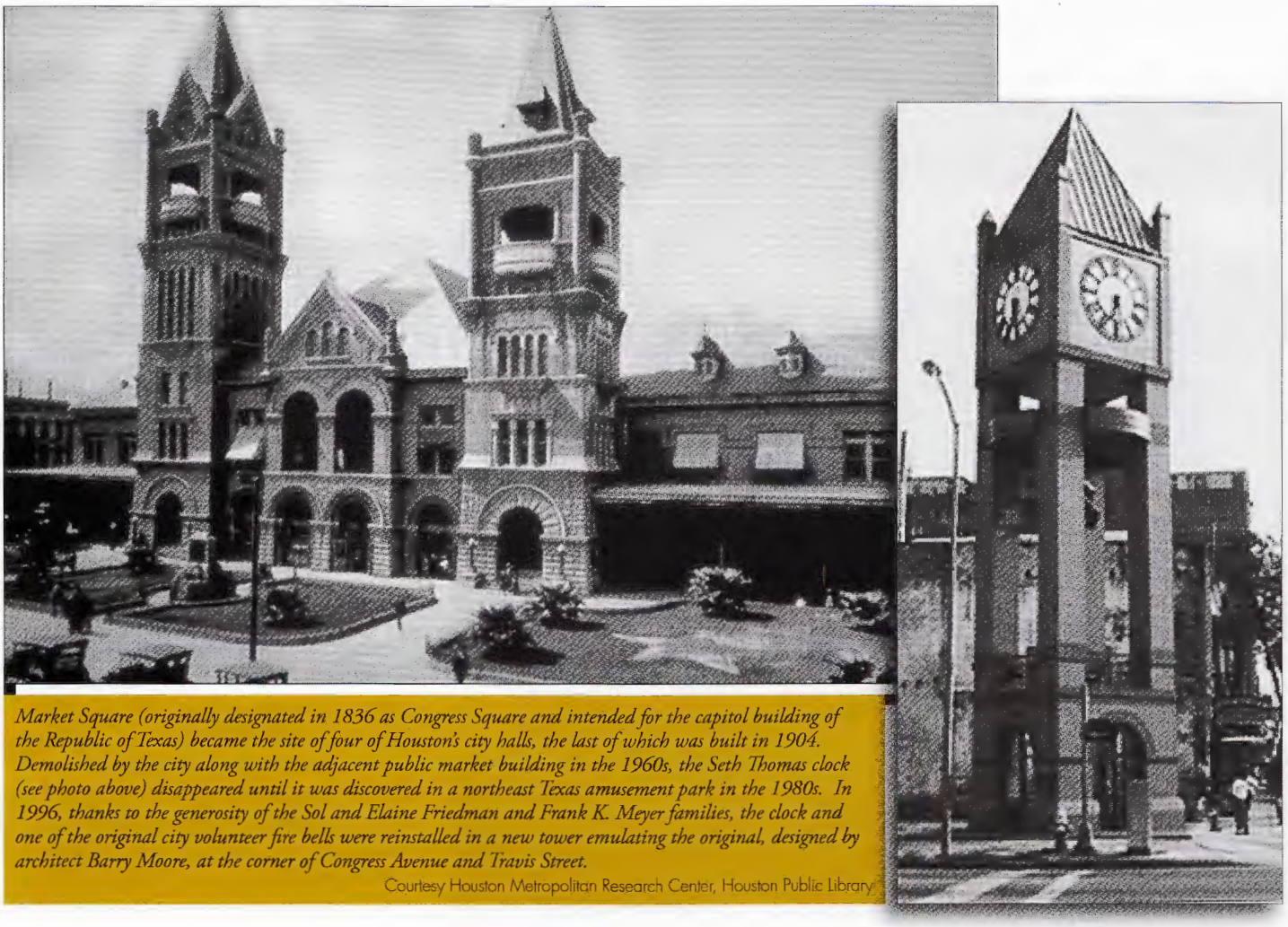
Early Years and Post World War II

The first U.S. cities to recognize the larger vision of community management and protection of historic resources in the form of preservation ordinances were Charleston, South Carolina, in 1931 and New Orleans in 1936.

The postwar 1940s not only brought national prosperity but a new patriotic ethic toward the historic past. In 1949 the U.S. Congress chartered the National Trust for Historic Preservation in order to elevate the protection of our nation's historic resources. In response, there was a proliferation of local, non-profit organizations dedicated to preserving history in the 1950s.

Houston was no exception. Along with other venerable organizations such as the San Antonio Conservation Society and the Galveston Historical Foundation, the Harris County Heritage Society was organized in 1954. Its original inspiration was to protect the 1847 Kellum-Noble House from destruction. Located in Sam Houston Park, Houston's first park established in 1899, this house remains on its original site and has served as the catalyst for the

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Minnette Boesel has a 25-year background in real estate and historic preservation. She received her Master's Degree in Historic Preservation from Columbia University. Minnette is the broker/owner of Minnette Boesel Properties, a real estate firm that specializes in downtown Houston. She is a Board Member and Past President of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance and has received a number of awards for her community involvement in the inner city. *Minnette extends special thanks to Stephen Fox and Randy Pace for their help with this article.*



Market Square (originally designated in 1836 as Congress Square and intended for the capitol building of the Republic of Texas) became the site of four of Houston's city halls, the last of which was built in 1904. Demolished by the city along with the adjacent public market building in the 1960s, the Seth Thomas clock (see photo above) disappeared until it was discovered in a northeast Texas amusement park in the 1980s. In 1996, thanks to the generosity of the Sol and Elaine Friedman and Frank K. Meyer families, the clock and one of the original city volunteer fire bells were reinstalled in a new tower emulating the original, designed by architect Barry Moore, at the corner of Congress Avenue and Travis Street.

Courtesy Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

proposal.[2] Hamilton Brown, a local architect, was also involved in the important preservation movement to save Market Square as well as Allen's Landing, the birthplace of Houston at the confluence of Buffalo and White Oak Bayous.[3] Finally, the city leadership yielded to the public square proponents and kept Market Square in city hands.

By the mid-1960s, the historic Market Square district became THE place to be. Clubs and restaurants burgeoned with musical talent. Tourists and residents alike visited the district, which even included an "underground" of shops. Outdoor art shows were set up. Even a newspaper called the *Market Square Gazette* was published. The attraction, of course, was Houston's pedestrian oriented historic buildings. Such preservation enthusiasts as young architecture graduate Bart Truxillo and preservation advocate Barrie Zimmelman began their involvement with historic preservation at Market Square. Although the square had been saved from developers, it was later turned into a parking lot to accommodate the increase in visitors to the area.

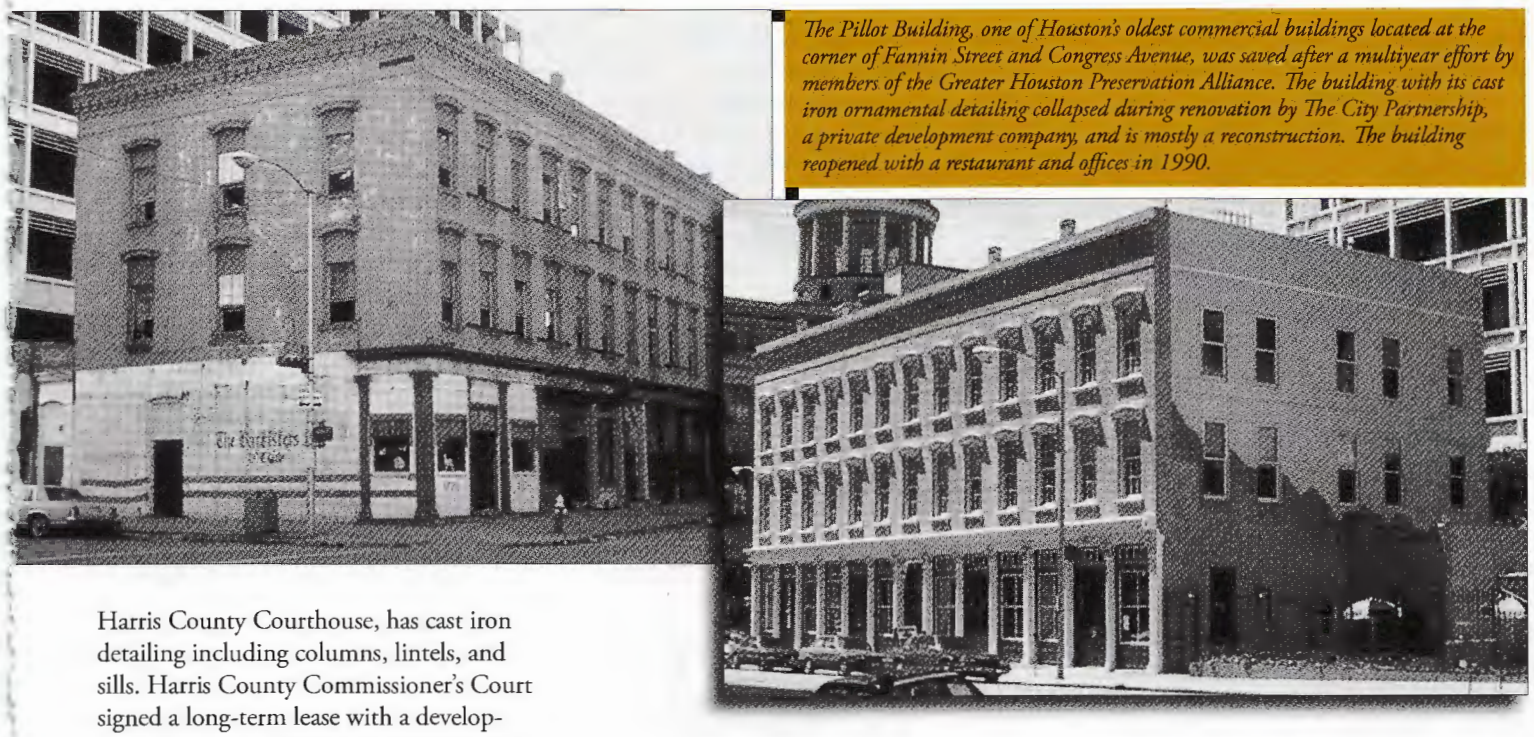
1970s and Early 1980s: Prosperity Hurts

The 1970s and the early 1980s brought unparalleled prosperity to Houston. A massive building boom was fueled by the success of the energy industries and a large in-migration of job seekers to the city. The downtown skyline, primarily south of Texas Avenue and the Market Square historic area, became a sea of cranes as developers such as Gerald D. Hines and others created a new skyline designed by internationally acclaimed architects such as I.M. Pei and Philip Johnson.

Amidst this prosperity, preservation seemed to be left behind. As more and more class A office space became available, the downtown historic area became less desirable to tenants. With no zoning or public policy in place to protect older or historic areas, neighborhoods on the fringes of downtown felt more development pressure. Texas Eastern Corporation bought scores of blocks on the east side of downtown in an effort to assemble land for future office tower development. Dozens of turn-of-the-twentieth-century houses and buildings were razed in this process.

In response to this, a handful of dedicated citizens began to organize, realizing the history of Houston's built environment was disappearing before their eyes. In 1978, several members of the Harris County Heritage Society felt there was a need for a stand-alone entity dedicated to preservation and formed the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance (GHPA). Bart Truxillo and Beverly Pennington were early leaders of this group. Walking tours of the Market Square area and a book, entitled *Last of the Past,* focusing on downtown historic architecture were some of this group's first projects.

The fledgling Preservation Alliance also led a successful decade-long effort to save from demolition one of Houston's oldest commercial buildings, the Pillot Building (circa 1860), which had been purchased by Harris County as part of an office expansion program. This significant building, across the street from the old



The Pillot Building, one of Houston's oldest commercial buildings located at the corner of Fannin Street and Congress Avenue, was saved after a multiyear effort by members of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance. The building with its cast iron ornamental detailing collapsed during renovation by The City Partnership, a private development company, and is mostly a reconstruction. The building reopened with a restaurant and offices in 1990.

Harris County Courthouse, has cast iron detailing including columns, lintels, and sills. Harris County Commissioner's Court signed a long-term lease with a development company, The City Partnership, led by Richard G. Knight, to renovate the building for use as commercial office space and ground floor retail. After years of renovation and reconstruction, the building reopened in 1990.

The 1976 United States Bicentennial also brought increased attention to Houston's heritage. The Junior League of Houston as a Bicentennial gift to the city raised several hundred thousand dollars to convert Market Square from a parking lot into a grassy park with large oak trees on the perimeter. As lakes and an underground parking garage were being constructed in conjunction with another new downtown park, Tranquility Park, dirt excavated there was brought to Market Square to create gentle berms[4] in the landscape design.

Neighborhoods near the edge of downtown, such as the Sixth Ward, formed their own organizations. Old Sixth Ward Association worked hard with historians Janet Wagner and Stephen Shannon to have the neighborhood (bound by Houston Avenue, Washington Avenue, Memorial Drive, and Glenwood Cemetery) designated as the first National Register of Historic Places district in Houston in 1978. The Houston Heights Association was formed in 1973 to promote and protect Houston's first "suburban" neighborhood. In 1983 and 1984, the Heights Association succeeded in having 95 individual buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a Multiple Resource Area. An additional 31 buildings have been listed since, albeit there is no protection for National Register designated properties, resulting in eight of those being demolished. The most recent loss was 1801 Ashland, which housed the popular Ashland Tea Room.

Neighborhood groups in Broadacres near Rice University and Courtlandt Place, two small early twentieth century elite neighborhoods, had their areas listed as historic districts in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

The Market Square district also formed its own organization called the Houston Old Town Development Corporation in the late 1970s. This group focused on the historic designation of the area and hired Minnette Boesel and architectural historians Barrie Scardino and Stephen Fox to compile the necessary documentation to have what became the Main Street/Market Square Historic District, bound roughly by Buffalo Bayou, Milam Street, Texas Avenue, and San Jacinto Street, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

African-American preservationists banded together to protect landmarks such as the late nineteenth-century Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, the oldest African-American Baptist church in Houston, located downtown at 500 Clay Avenue. When developers purchased blocks of property to create and build the Allen Center office complex, Martha C. Whiting, great-granddaughter of Rev. Jack Yates, the congregation's first pastor, twice persuaded church members to reject offers from developers and saved the church from destruction by refusing to sell. Its architectural beauty and tranquil site offer a respite to the office buildings around it.

The Winds of Positive Political Change

The new federal tax legislation passed in 1976 with revisions in 1981 and 1986 provided historic investment tax credits for qualifying rehabilitation expenditures for commercial, income-producing structures that were listed in the National Register (the current version allows a 20% investment tax credit). The work must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These tax incentives have led to an incredible renovation boom across the country. The single largest historic tax act project in the 1980s took place in Houston. Texas Commerce Bank restored and renovated the fabulous Art Deco Gulf Building originally built in 1929 by "Mr. Houston" Jesse H. Jones and designed by Kenneth Franzheim and Alfred C. Finn.

Local legislative change in Houston was led by Houston's first female councilmember, Eleanor Tinsley. Among quality of life issues such as parks, no smoking, and billboards, preservation was an important topic for Mrs. Tinsley. Her political courage led to the passage in the mid-1980s of a city tax exemption ordinance for Houston buildings listed in the National Register that were rehabilitated. She also

helped establish and appoint the Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission in 1984, an advisory body to the Mayor and Council. Preservation advocate Barrie Zimmelman became the city's first historic preservation officer.

Late 1980s: The Downturn Has a Silver Lining

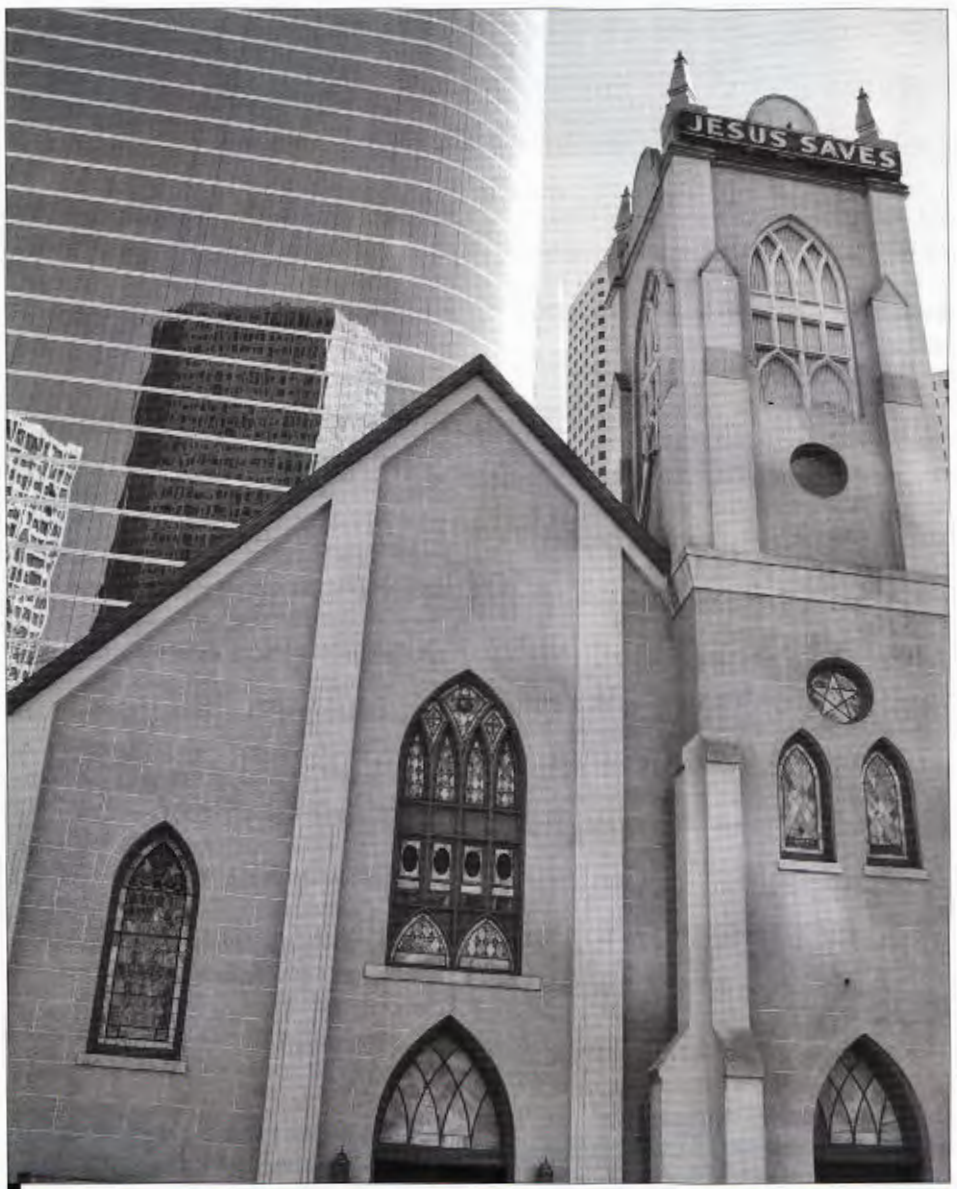
The economic downturn related to the oil bust of the mid and late 1980s was brutal in Houston and throughout Texas. At one point Houston unemployment reached a near-record 10%. Thousands of foreclosure postings were made by Harris County each month. The quip "Barely alive in '85, no quick fix in '86, chapter 7 in '87" seemed to ring true for many Texans. The massive building boom of the previous decade seemed to grind to an abrupt halt. The federal government set up offices for the Resolution Trust Corporation just for the state of Texas to dispose of foreclosed-on real estate. Joel W. Barna's book, *The See-Through Years*, chronicled the speculative real estate ventures that left a plethora of empty commercial buildings "seen through."[5]

The good news for preservation was that historic buildings and neighborhoods were not as threatened by rising property values and new development. The citizens of Houston had to pay attention to improving and enhancing their city. Too busy with a robust economy, Houston's leadership had never fully utilized or developed the kind of economic and development programs and tools that other American cities had been using for decades.

In Houston's trademark fashion of rising to the occasion, many of the city's residents formed organizations to enhance economic development and quality of life issues. Houston Proud organized in 1986 and garnered thousands of volunteers to help with special events, clean up parks and roadways, and help with neighborhood revitalization and other tasks. Trees for Houston formed to plant thousands of trees throughout the city. The Houston Economic Development Council (now a part of the Greater Houston Partnership) formed to help diversify the economy and attract new businesses.

Historic preservation benefited from these efforts. The Greater Heights Chamber of Commerce launched a division focusing on the neighborhood's 19th Avenue historic commercial corridor which had mostly vacant storefronts. This successful program became a participant in the Texas Main Street Program, a popular revitalization initiative of the Texas Historical Commission and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's nationwide Main Street Program. The first restaurant to open in the restored 1921 Simon Lewis Building was Carter & Cooley Deli, still in operation, by Neil Sackheim and Randy Pace. Successes of the program included the rehabilitation of 33 buildings, 27 new businesses established or expanded, and approximately 148 new jobs with a total private sector reinvestment of over $2 million. The city granted the Heights Chamber of Commerce a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to help administer the program. The area remains today as a successful and fun place to visit and shop.

Although buildings in neighborhoods like the Main Street/Market Square Historic District were not torn down for new construction, preservationists had the new challenge of encouraging property owners to keep their historic buildings standing, in many cases empty, so that when the economy did turn around they could be redeveloped into historic pedestrian areas. In an effort to encourage the revitalization of the Main Street/Market Square Historic District, the Downtown



African-American preservationists banded together to protect the late nineteenth-century Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, the oldest African-American Baptist church in Houston. When developers purchased blocks of property around the church, church members led by Martha C. Whiting, great-granddaughter of Rev. Jack Yates, the congregation's first pastor, saved the church from destruction by refusing to sell. The church is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.

The Kennedy Corner Building (c. 1860) served as a Confederate arsenal during the Civil War. GHPA and the Downtown Historic District group persuaded the city to commit $126,000 to the owner who, unfortunately, tore the building down anyway in 1991. It is now a vacant lot. Left to right: Jill Sewell, Past President of the San Antonio Conservation Society; Kent Millard, Greater Houston Preservation Alliance student intern; Margie Elliott, first Executive Director of Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, Guy Hagstette, architect; and Minnette Boesel, Executive Director (at the time), Market Square Historic District Project, Downtown Houston Association (later incorporated as Downtown Historic District, Inc.) Photo taken in 1990.

Courtesy Greater Houston Preservation Alliance

Houston Association and Diverseworks Artspace teamed up with the Parks and Recreation Department to redesign Market Square and erect artwork by international artists who collaborated on an urban design that spoke to the importance of preserving the area. Fragments of demolished buildings were inserted into the walkways and local photographer Paul Hester made photo tiles for the benches that depicted the loss of Houston's historic buildings.

In 1988, the Downtown Houston Association, the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, Central Houston, the Rice Design Alliance, and other organizations held a preservation conference entitled, "It's Time to Capitalize on Our Historic Assets." The main focus was on the Main Street/Market Square Historic District and how it would be saved and preserved. Experts were brought in from around the country. Following the conference, architect Guy Hagstette helped compile drawings and information on the historic neighborhood's future into a publication.

It was determined that a stand-alone organization was needed to help with the revitalization. The Greater Houston Preservation Alliance in partnership with the Downtown Houston Association launched the Market Square Historic District Project in 1991. This program began as part of the Downtown Houston Association and after three years of fundraising, included a Community Development Block Grant from the city and acceptance into the Texas Main Street Program. With two fulltime staff, including Minnette Boesel, the project was later incorporated as the Downtown Historic District, Inc. Over half a million dollars was raised through the generous support of the Houston Endowment and other sources for a façade grant program. Matching grants of up to $10,000 were given to owners rehabilitating the exterior of their historic buildings. Special events were held to promote the area and a committee was formed to promote business in clubs and restaurants. These efforts helped fuel millions of investment dollars in new residential, restaurant, and entertainment businesses and the renovation of over 30 buildings.

The 1990s: Resurgence Begins

As the economy began to improve in Houston in the mid 1990s, the city's preservationists began to see more positive change. First and foremost was public policy. The 1993 fall election had a zoning referendum on the ballot. After several years of work, mapping and scores of civic meetings throughout the city, this referendum of "Houston Style Zoning" as it was called, was defeated by a thin margin of 51%. The ordinance would have had a preservation component.

With the encouragement of Planning and Development Department director Donna Kristaponis and Mayor Bob Lanier, a stand-alone preservation ordinance was drafted by the city's legal department for consideration. The GHPA led the charge and appointed a special committee to work on educating the public at large, councilmembers, and planning commissioners on the merits of such an ordinance. After many meetings and multiple public hearings, Mayor Lanier appointed a special task force comprised of preservationists, developers, and others to study the issue. Chaired by Marvin Katz, the chair of the Planning and Development Commission, the task force finally came to a consensus and in March 1995, city council passed the ordinance.

A companion ordinance was also introduced by Mayor Lanier changing Councilmember Tinsley's original tax exemption ordinance to a more favorable

Continued on page 52

The Gulf

RENOVATEOR

by Barbara Eaves

In 1924, Jesse Holman Jones, real estate magnate, banker, *Houston Chronicle* publisher and, later, head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and Secretary of Commerce, went to his architect, Alfred C. Finn, and said: "We are planning a building – something better than what we now have."[1]

This brief announcement was the beginning of the Gulf Building, a "better" building commissioned in 1927. It officially opened on April 16, 1929; it was restored in 1986—reportedly the largest restoration ever undertaken in the country with private funds;[2] and today it remains a landmark in Houston's much loftier skyline. A full-color brochure published by the Jesse H. Jones Interests in 1929 trumpeted this "paramount office structure of the south" as "the tallest building west of the Mississippi."[3] At thirty-seven stories,[4] the Gulf Building was the loftiest skyscraper in Houston for more than thirty years.

Jones' biographer, Bascom N. Timmons, says the tall building seemed to symbolize Jones and reflect his character. "Many Houstonians," Timmons wrote, "felt that here surely would be the one that would be named the Jesse H. Jones Building, but he had no such intentions." It became the Gulf Building, named after its new chief tenant. The old ten-story Gulf Building, which Jones built for the company when it first came to Houston in 1914, was renamed the Rusk Building. Since his dream for a ten-story skyline in Houston had long been shattered, he made the new Gulf Building the "tallest and most outstanding in Texas."[5] The Gulf Building became the centerpiece of Jesse Jones' vast real estate empire—a half-hundred buildings in Houston alone.[6]

Even this banker's cool demeanor warmed considerably as he described the beautiful structure to a prospective lender: "This is really a remarkable

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Barbara Eaves is retired from Texas Commerce/Chase and Compass banks. She occasionally travels and does freelance writing.

Photograph by Cliff Gillock, Houston

Building RAZE?

building and is so regarded by everyone who sees it, so that I cannot help but be of the opinion that it would be a desirable loan for the Metropolitan Life to make entirely *aside from the security and revenue.*"[7]

The economic climate

Times were good during the 1920s. Times were even better in Texas' largest city. Census takers counted 292,352 souls in Houston in 1930, more than double their count in 1920. Its 111.4 percent rate of growth for the decade was "one of the most remarkable for a city of this size in the history of the United States."[8] An inland port connected the city to deep water by the fifty-mile Houston Ship Channel and was the shipping point for an enormous movement of cotton, petroleum products, lumber, rice and other Texas raw products. It was the terminus of eighteen railroads, home of nearly fifteen petroleum refineries, four rice mills, numerous cotton and textile mills, chemical works, fertilizer factories, iron foundries… and more.

When construction began in 1927, "the prosperity of the golden '20s was at its peak, and Houston was beginning to look like a city," wrote Sam Franklin in the *Houston Chronicle* on December 2, 1965. Yet by the time the Gulf Building opened in April 1929, the nation was just months away from the appalling Stock Market Crash of October 1929.

The *Houston Chronicle* called the "towering" Gulf Building a stabilizer of property values on Main Street. "What the modern Lamar and Democratic buildings, the Levy Brothers, the Kirby and the Humble buildings have done to move business southward, the Gulf Building is doing to insure that, in those blocks to the north, there will be no less bustle, and no decreased property values."[9]

The architects and builders

The Gulf Building's principal architect was Alfred C. Finn, with Kenneth Franzheim and J.E.R. Carpenter listed on all drawings as consulting architects. The W. E. Simpson Company of San Antonio was the structural engineer; Reginald Taylor of Houston and Robert J. Cummins of Houston were mechanical and consulting engineers, respectively. The initial general contractor was the Hewitt Company, but American Construction Company took over during the pouring of concrete slabs in 1927 and completed the project.[10]

Planning began in 1926 for new quarters for the National Bank of Commerce. In early 1927, the Gulf Oil companies (Gulf Refining Company, Gulf Production Company and Gulf Pipe Line Company) became involved because they needed more space. Press releases from spring 1927 indicated that the National Bank of Commerce and Sakowitz Brothers were to share frontage on Main Street, with the bank at the corner. However, the banking hall ended up in a westward extension of the base of the building, which ran back through the block to Travis Street, while Sakowitz obtained the Main-Rusk corner.[11]

Alfred Finn (left) was the principal architect for the Gulf Building and Kenneth Franzheim (right) was the consulting architect.
Courtesy Houston Public Library, Houston Metropolitan Research Center

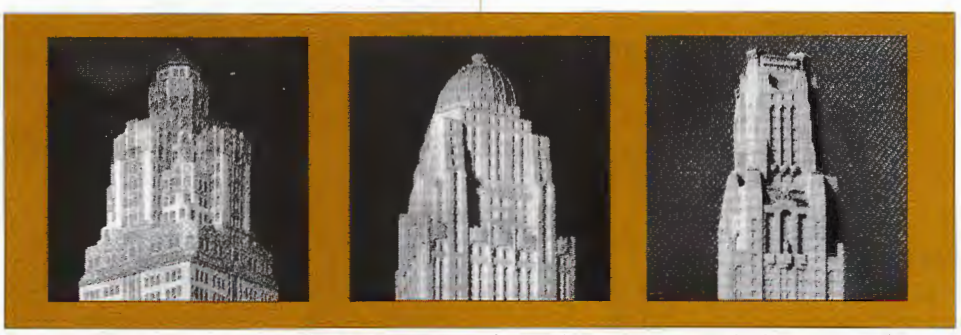
Finn, who received his professional training in Sanguinet & Staats of Fort Worth, the state's foremost commercial architectural firm during the '20s, was sent to work in its Houston office in 1913. His first large commission was Jones' ten-story Gulf Building. During his early years in practice in Houston, Finn designed a number of large homes as well as commercial structures, but after the early 1920s, he concentrated on commercial projects. Jones became his chief patron.[12]

Kenneth Franzheim, an MIT-educated architect, was stationed in Houston during World War I. By 1925, he was practicing independently in New York, and in 1928, he designed the temporary coliseum in Houston for the Democratic National Convention for Jesse Jones.[13]

J.E.R. Carpenter, also an MIT graduate, was best known for his many multistory apartment buildings in New York—which is probably where he met Jones. He collaborated with Franzheim on the Democratic convention coliseum in Houston.[14]

The division of responsibility among the three is open to debate. Franzheim was probably the design architect, with Finn doing the drawings and supervising, and Carpenter not contributing much to the final design.[15]

For four years, plan after plan and model after model were drawn and made in Finn's Houston office and in the New



Plans for at least three versions of the Gulf Building made it to the model stage. All display a six-story base from which a tower rises, but the exterior detailing—especially the treatment of the summit—was varied.
Unless otherwise noted, all photographs in this article ore courtesy Houston Endowment Inc.

York office of Franzheim. As Finn said in an interview published in the *Houston Chronicle*, "The first model was very modest. But each building…became a little more ambitious. Each building went up a story or two. Each building was more magnificent. These…were the 'something better' which Mr. Jones sought."[16]

Revisions continued, especially to the top of the building, even after construction began. "The steel was up some 12 stories when …the present step-back top…was ordered."[17]

Jones apparently directed that the building, which was to exceed in height all buildings west of the Mississippi River, be of strikingly modern design. Franzheim later reproduced in his professional brochure a number of studies for the building. The resolution was derived from one of the most imitated precedents for American skyscraper design in the 1920s, Eliel Saarinen's second-prize winning entry to the Chicago Tribune Building competition of 1922. Although Saarinen's design was never built, it inspired buildings from the east coast to the west.[18]

Finn added: "In fact, Mr. Jones is a mighty good architect himself! He frequently draws the plan of the building himself. Then he calls in the architect and asks him to develop the plan."[19]

The Gulf Building souvenir booklet published by the Jones Interests describes this sequence of construction: "Ground was broken late in summer 1927. Mixers dumped load upon load of concrete into the hole and suddenly, like magic it seemed, on February 16, 1928, steel beams pointed their prophetic fingers skywards. On June 4, 1928, the first brick was laid …. Masonry 'topped out' on November 26 and excepting windows and ornamentation, outwardly the tower was complete. On Tuesday, April 16, 1929, the first tenant, Sakowitz Brothers, occupied their chosen location on the first five floors. Others followed rapidly so that by August 1, 1929, every tenant was at work in his new business home excepting the National Bank of Commerce, whose quarters had been used as a workroom."[20]

The building

The Gulf Building is one of the premier examples in the Southwest of 1920s Manhattan-style, set-back skyscrapers. The level of excellence exhibited in its Gothic design, coupled with extensive interior and exterior art deco detailing, evokes a feeling of confidence and stability.[21]

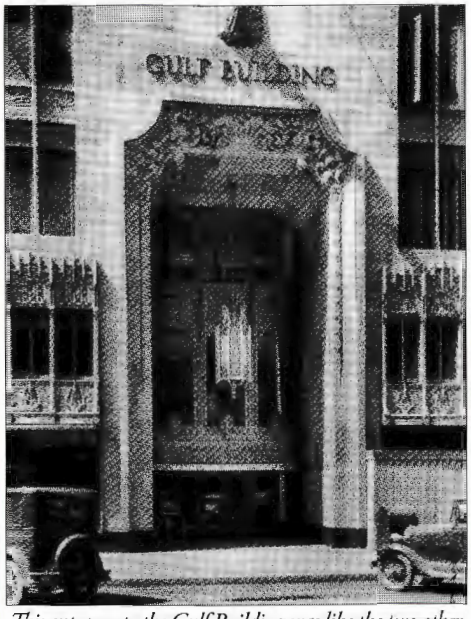
Its six-story rectangular base is clad in Indiana limestone. It supports a thirty-story tower, faced with tapestry brick, which diminishes in size at the 25th, 28th and 32nd floor levels. The Main Street (east) elevation is seven bays long; the Rusk Avenue elevation is eight bays wide.[22]

"A quarter of a century afterward, when he had seen all of the banking edifices in this country and Europe, Jesse Jones still believed his own were the most perfect banking quarters ever erected in any country."[32]

—Bascom N. Timmons

"At first, the builder installed the Jesse H. Jones Aeronautical Beacons at the top, with two huge beams –one pointing skyward, the other toward the airport to warn off airmail pilots."[23] Also mounted on the roof was an observation deck equipped with a powerful telescope.[24]

Of the beacons, the *Chronicle* reported that "the building is easily seen at night from Sugar Land."[25] Of the Heiss telescope with 30, 60, and 90 power magnifications, the *Chronicle* said: "With the third magnification, on a clear day…Galveston would be brought to within a half-mile by the telescope!"[26]



This entrance to the Gulf Building was like the two other principal entrances. The northern entrance on Main, shown here, still contains the original door treatment —although modern doors were added later.

There were originally three principal entrances to the building, two on Main Street and one on Travis. Each was set into a three-story-high portal outlined by scalloped molding. The deeply inset doors were framed by a header panel of abstractly patterned angular and scroll-like ornamentation supported on stylized corbels which merge with the ornament of the header panels. Bronze screens commenced above the ranks of the glazed doors. The screens' open work ornamentation framed three arched windows. Third story banks of windows were simply treated.[27]

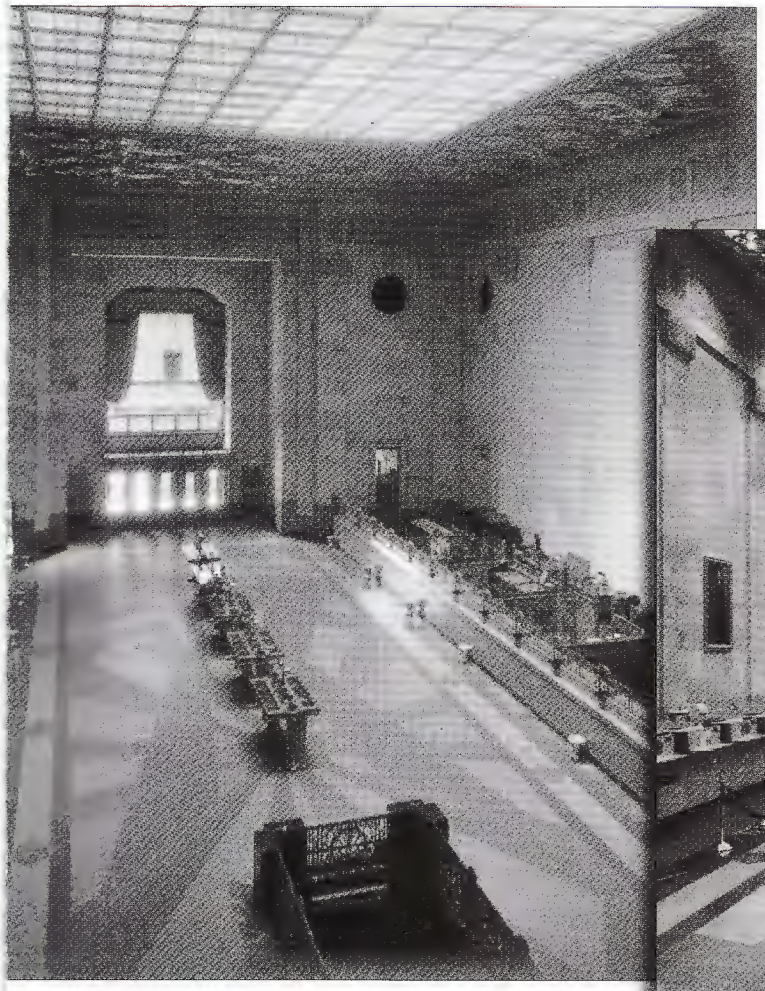
Frescos in the Main Street lobby depict scenes from Texas history by artist Vincent Maragliatti. The walls are faced with travertine marble; the floor is inlaid French marble; the elaborate detailing is silvered Benedict nickel. "National Bank of Commerce" is etched in nickel above the doors to the banking hall.[28]

The three-story banking hall features an ornate ceiling and skylight with gold leaf detailing. The walls are Indiana limestone; the floor is patterned terrazzo. The original art deco writing tables are still in place. Today, Jesse Jones' portrait hangs on the south wall alongside a portrait of Ben Love, the last chairman of Texas Commerce Bancshares, successor to the National Bank of Commerce.[29]

The banking quarters were of Jones' own design,[30] "an immense space, seventy by one hundred-twelve feet…the walls of which rise sheer and unobstructed to a ceiling forty-three feet from the floor, which, with the exception of a French marble border, is of terrazzo in a number of blended colors and aluminum strips laid in an intricate pattern of radiating designs. The walls are of French limestone, embellished with fluted pilasters supporting on their carved capitals an elaborately ornamented stone frieze, from which springs the cornice and richly decorated coffered ceiling. Panels of especially fabricated glass and metal ribs, which form an ornate design in the central area of the ceiling, supply the entire room with a flood of mellow daylight."[31]

The site

Located at the corner of Main and Rusk in the heart of Houston's downtown business



The three-story banking hall as it appeared in 1929 (left), looking toward the Travis Street entrance. The window above the door was replaced in 1959 by an impressive stained glass window commemorating the Battle of San Jacinto. In the 1940s, two additions were constructed on either side of the bank lobby. The banking hall was altered in 1959 and 1960 to permit the bank to expand into the new Bank of Commerce addition. Most of the tellers cages on that side of the lobby were removed as was the stairway (foreground) that went down to the Safe Deposit Department.

The banking hall today (right) appears much as it did in 1929. The room blends elaborate ceiling detailing in gold leaf with handsome proportions and silvered Benedict nickel metal work on balconies and entryways.

Courtesy Ben Love Estate

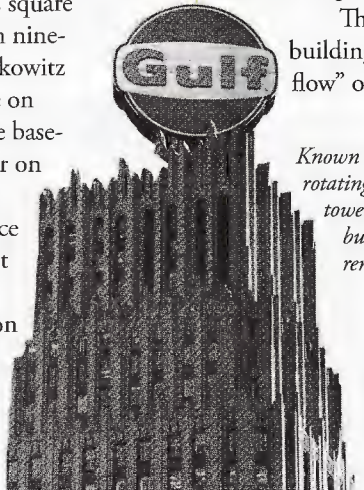
districts, the Gulf Building's initial tract consisted of all of Lots 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 12, and parts of Lots 3 and 11, in Block 81, on the South Side of Buffalo Bayou. This property ran 149 feet on Main Street, 252 feet on Rusk Avenue and 150 feet on Travis Street.[33] According to a 1929 loan application, "The thirty-seven-story Gulf Building covers all the property except eighty-two feet on Travis Street by 100 feet on Rusk Avenue on which there is a three-story building containing stores, offices and apartments on which we have disregarded the improvements."[34]

"They tore down a two-story building at Main and Rusk to make way for the mammoth tower," wrote Sam Franklin in the *Houston Chronicle*, on December 2, 1965. "It had, between the years of 1911 and 1927, been occupied by the Houston Trunk Factory. Before 1911 the site had gained historic distinction as the location of the home of Mrs. Charlotte Baldwin Allen, one of the pioneers of Houston."[35] Indeed, the Allen residence tract may be Houston's second most historic site. Jesse Jones reserved the city's *most* historic site, the home of the first capitol of the Republic of Texas, for his Rice Hotel.

The occupants

Gulf Oil occupied 110,522 square feet on floors seven through nineteen (twenty-year lease); Sakowitz had a twenty-five-year lease on 65,200 square feet from the basement through the fifth floor on the Main/Rusk corner; the National Bank of Commerce occupied 19,350 square feet in the basement and the main floor with entrances on Main and Travis.[36] Other "sundry tenants of high type"[37] among the forty-seven on the "list to date" published by the *Houston Chronicle* on July 28, 1929, included Lerner Shops, Western Union Telegraph Company, Harrison Oil Company, J. S. Abercrombie Company, Oscar F. Holcombe, and Maurice Hirsch. Most signed three-to-five-year leases[38] and paid between $2 and $3 per square foot.[39]

The estimated population of the building was 2,500, with a "lobby flow" of 30,000 to 35,000 persons



Known as "The Lollipop," Gulf Oil Co.'s rotating orange, white and blue logo towered above most other downtown buildings in the 1970s. It was removed in 1975.

Photo: ©Houston Chronicle.

daily. The *Houston Chronicle* reported: "Here's a small city in itself. Richmond or Conroe or Liberty, nearby county seats, each has only about 2,000 population. Every resident of one of these towns could be at work in this skyscraper and then there would be lots of … room."[40]

The story then cited some of the "fireproof" building's luxuries: "the most modern lighting system, steam heat, wire service … The elevators in the Gulf Building break all speed records in the world. These 'lifts' – as the English would say –take one aloft at the rate of a floor-and-a-half a second." [41]

Modifications and Modernizations

Not surprisingly, the building has been modified a number of times since 1929. A central air conditioning system was installed between 1938 and 1939.[42] Two annexes, one of thirteen stories, the other of sixteen, were added in a compatible style on Travis Street between 1946 and 1949.[43] The banking hall was altered in 1959-1960 to permit expansion of bank operations into the Bank of Commerce Building (the new building to the north). Galleries were opened in the north wall of the banking hall…the central stair (down to the Safe Deposit Department) was removed and the terrazzo floor was carpeted.[44] The original terrazzo floor was restored in 2002.[45]

An impressive stained glass window commemorating the Battle of San Jacinto was installed above the Travis Street entrance to the bank lobby in 1959.[46] The beacon and the public observation telescope were removed before 1965, when Gulf Oil installed a fifty-three-foot-high rotating, lighted disk of the company's logo, known as "The Lollipop." It, too, was removed in 1974, during the Energy Crunch.[47]

In 1969-1970 the bank expanded into the Sakowitz space on Main and Rusk. This new home for the Texas Commerce's Family Banking Center saw the street-level shop windows replaced with anodized aluminum framed bronze glass panels.[48]

Finally, the five-year, $50 million restoration of the Gulf Building that begun in 1981 not only preserved a landmark for the city and a glorious lobby for the National Bank of Commerce's successor, Texas Commerce Bank (today, JPMorgan Chase), but earned the building a listing in the National Register.[49] Work was done under the direction of Property Management Systems. The architect for the restoration was the Houston firm of Sikes, Jennings, Kelly and the general contractor was Warrior Constructors, Inc.[50] Work was completed in 1986, the bank's centennial year.

The bank's chairman at the time, Ben Love, recalled that, in 1977, the bank's need for space was critical. "We were faced with a decision: Renovate or raze?"[51] In his memoirs, he outlines the thinking in making this decision:

The Gulf Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986, following a $50 million restoration. The following year, the American Society of Civil Engineers designated the Texas Commerce Bank Building (as it was renamed in 1986) a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

> First, the elegant, historic Gulf Building was the bank's traditional home. More practically, space in a renovated Gulf Building would be cheaper than space in a new, Class A structure. Space in a Class A structure, however, would be easier to lease.
>
> Renovating around our major tenant, Gulf Oil Company, posed a daunting problem. But Gulf, which occupied twenty floors, solved that problem by moving into a new building in Houston Center…The significant investment tax credit that TCB [Texas Commerce Bank] could earn for restoring a landmark building was financial icing on the cake.

According to Ann Holmes, fine arts editor of the *Houston Chronicle*, "the deus ex machine which made possible the saving of the building—much to the delight of Love and the bank's officers and directors—was the tax credit the bank could take. It is an incentive for historic rehabilitation afforded by the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981. For this building, 25 percent (in this case $12.5 million) of construction costs could be taken against the corporation's income tax

Today, the Gulf Building faces a bright future as part of Houston's newly rebuilt downtown district.

bill, spread over the years of construction. Though the bank still pays 75 percent of the price, on a square-foot basis the cost is less than a new building."[52]

And so, the bank restored the Gulf Building and built two new buildings, the Texas Commerce Tower and the Texas Commerce Center, both designed by the internationally renowned architect I.M. Pei. These moves preserved a landmark, kept most of the Banking Department in its traditional home, provided other departments with space to grow, saved money on rent, equipped the bank with a modern, efficient garage, and provided world-class headquarters for the multibillion-dollar, statewide organization TCB had become. "The decision, although tough to make at the time, seems obvious in retrospect," Love added.

Interestingly, the Gulf Building was restored for $50 million at a tax-savings of $12.5 million. This is the same building and land that were originally appraised at less than $10 million.

Conclusion

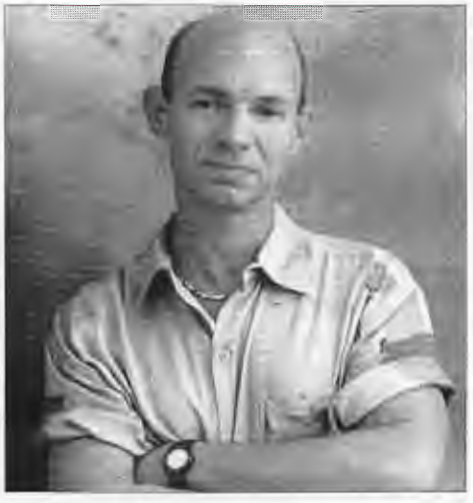
"The Gulf Building is remarkable in profile. Some of the detail—particularly the ornamental frames of the second-floor windows—is obvious in its Gothic recall, and the distressed limestone finish of the base has a texture which is almost fabric-like in appearance. These details contrast with the massing of the tower and help make up an interesting whole. By layering, chamfering and staggering the depths and heights of vertical piers on the uppermost setbacks, a romantic, soaring quality is achieved which both the builder and the architect sought. The detailing in the lobby and the banking hall comprise one of the most memorable and urbane sequences of public spaces in downtown Houston."[53]

Even today, with all the changes over time, Jesse Jones' elegant, "better" Gulf Building (now JPMorgan Chase Building) stands out as a landmark in a much loftier, more modern skyline which, thanks to the oil boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, has been called a portfolio of that era's best-known architects. Even among these taller, shinier buildings, the Gulf Building remains one of downtown Houston's most recognized landmarks.

Photo © Aker/Zvonkovic Photography, Houston

An Interview with Bart Truxillo

Bart J. Truxillo first came to Houston with his family in the early 1950s. He attended Mt. Carmel High School and then the University of Houston. He graduated from the College of Architecture at UH in 1965 and put his training to use as an architect. He now resides in his 1890s restored Victorian home in the Houston Heights and has helped lead the fight for preservation in this city.



BART TRUXILLO (BJT): In 1974, a friend of mine told me to drive out to a neighborhood I had not had any experience with, called the Heights. Before that I had been working almost continuously in architecture. I had worked in Charles Tapley's office, and Fred Buxton's, and I very quickly after that went out on my own, working for a group of investors. We started remodeling. The earliest remodelings of Montrose—in other words, Banks Street and Vassar and Bonnie Brae and the streets nearby. I did a lot of renovation. So for a long time, I was doing remodeling—not really restoration but renovation of Montrose bungalows.

When I first saw this house at 1802 Harvard, it struck me. One of those moments in life when the light bulb goes: Bing! It had been for sale for a year, but I didn't know about it. It was completely insane, and only an off-balanced person [laughs] would take this house on, because it was in really desperately bad shape. That was the bad part. But the good part was that it had not been "remodeled." It had not been "remuddled." It hadn't changed much since 1894. It was almost exactly the way it had always been. And the few renovations to the original floor plan were done in the 1920s, so in a sense it hadn't been touched. It's pretty much intact today except for some changes around the kitchen area.

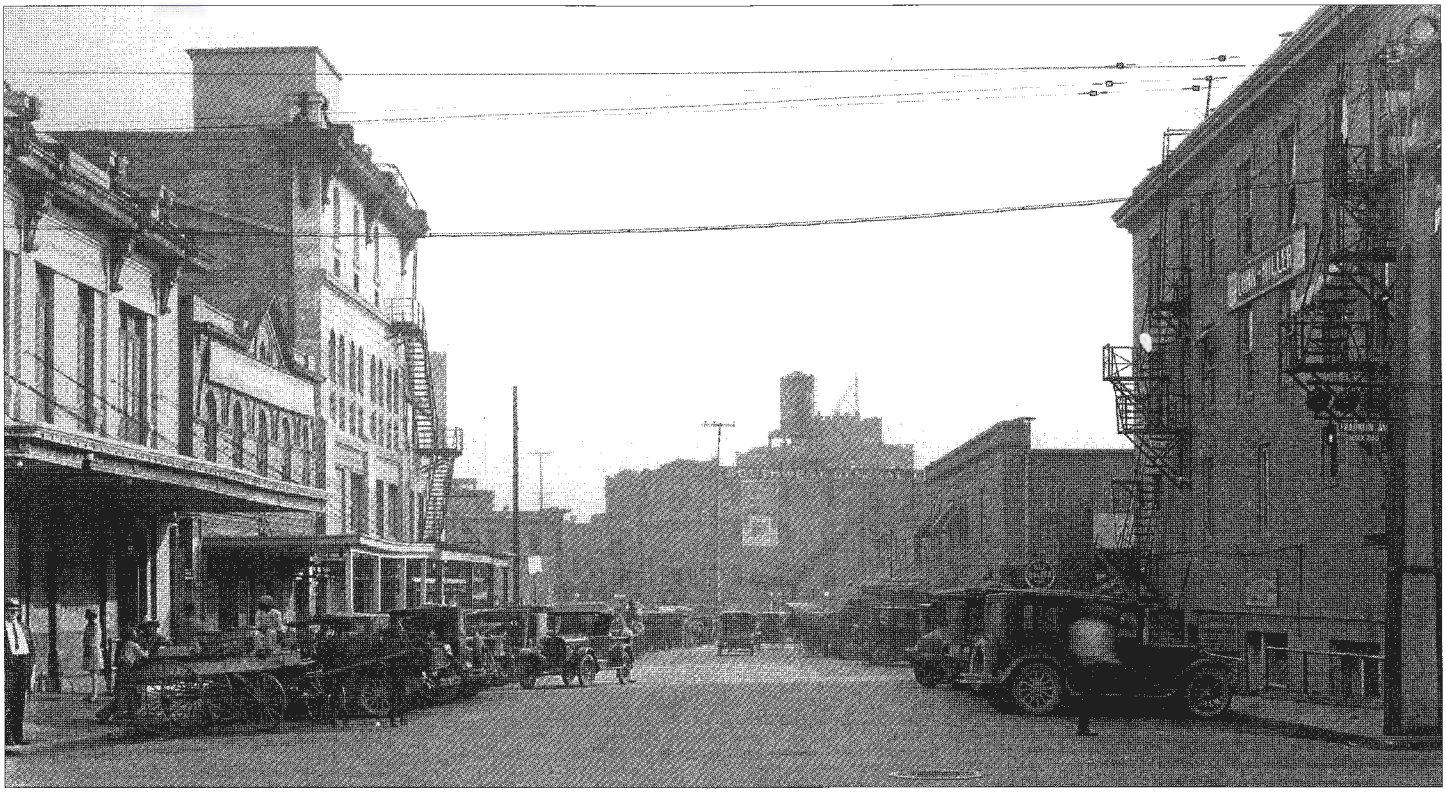
I really got involved with historic preservation after falling in love and restoring the house at 1802 Harvard. Although I had already purchased the historic Magnolia Brewery Building in 1969 and renovated it, my involvement with the house taught me even more about preservation—you know, on-the-job training, so to speak. Also, I adopted the neighborhood. I found this neighborhood that had extraordinary trees; it had beautiful old houses; it was convenient to downtown Houston, five and six minutes; it was neighborhood-y. And I started getting involved in the city's preservation movement as well.

In 1974, Bart Truxillo saw the potential in the Heights neighborhood and purchased the Victorian house on Harvard St. Thus began his on-the-job training in historic preservation.

But this house is what really got me going. I had a wonderful old carpenter and a carpenter's helper, and we just went at it. It was a two-year-long process. And in 1974 restorations of this sort were very rare, certainly in this state. People just weren't doing them. Now you have catalogs full of all kinds of materials that are much more suited to this sort of work, and replacement materials, and antique stores where you can find this and that. In those days, the materials were not so available. So it was kind of a winging-it situation for me. It was like taking a lengthy course at the University of Houston in historic preservation because I was just doing it. I had my architectural background, and I had a great carpenter who knew what he was doing, and we taught each other about what to do about historic preservation.

Living in the Heights

BJT: To me, the Heights felt like a little town. It had people that knew each other. It was going, certainly, through a downturn, and it was depressed, and in some cases people would consider it a slum, but I saw it as a huge resource. And in a city with no zoning, the only way to



Intersection of Milam and Franklin on August 9, 1928, with the Magnolia Brewery in the forefront right side.

get involved in trying to do something good is to get the neighborhood involved. And so, through the Houston Heights Association, we banded together and did some amazing things.

The Heights Association started early, like, say—well, I came here in 1974 to start work. Seventy-six was the bicentennial year and when I had my first Rice Design Alliance tour through the house. From that, we kind of got the idea that one of the ways for the Heights Association to make money was to have home tours, to bring people into these little Victorian houses and show it off. That was one of the biggest things that we could possibly do, because people would come on the tours, and they'd go, "This is neat! I could live here!" They'd "get it." And the next week, the realtors in the neighborhood would be selling the bungalows like crazy.

We realized that the home tour was one of our biggest assets, and we continue to do that. Marcella Perry, with Heights Savings and Loan, was our angel. Although she didn't exactly live in the neighborhood, this was her neighborhood, and she was a great support. She called me up and said, "I want you to be a part of the Heights Association." She knew that I was a renovator and architect and that I had moved into the Heights, so she called me. She was a wonderful go-getter lady, I tell you, just right in your face. She also had pull downtown.

With Marcella's power and prestige, and the Association's hard work as a squeaky wheel, we finally were attaining some success. We had home tours; we were making money; we purchased pieces of property that were in danger of being turned into truck repair facilities or horrible things that would blight the neighborhood. We put our money where our mouth was, and purchased them and turned them into something special. We organized an annual street festival on Heights Boulevard each October. And we went to City Hall and spoke about everything that we wanted to have happen. We would yell and scream and carry on and call up people and bother them and complain, and it worked.

We said that "we were voting citizens and we would corner our councilmen. You gotta listen to us. We're doing good stuff out here. You gotta help us." And what's happened is the Heights Association became one of the strongest civic organizations in the city because we were coming from so far behind, and we knew that you had to be organized. We saw the injustice of it all, so people learned that preservation was important, and it was our only avenue.

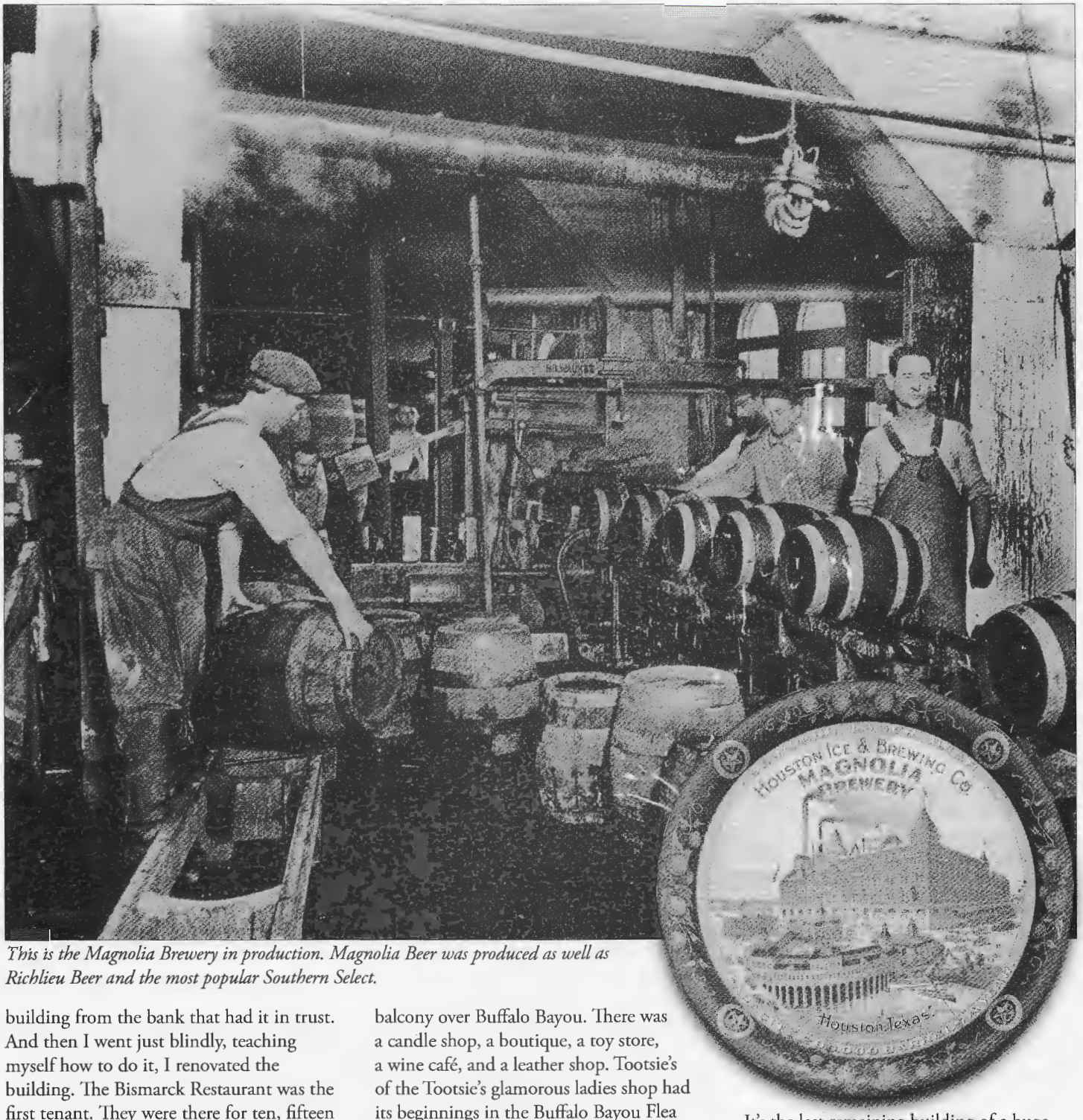
JOSEPH PRATT (JP): Have there been high-profile political figures who lived in the Heights?

BJT: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Heart surgeon Denton A. Cooley, M.D. and—oh, a lot of people. A lot of people who come through on tours and—oh, yes, lots of high-profile people. People have a love of it. Throughout all this, we qualified the neighborhood as a National Register Multiple Resource Historic District, and did what we could do to try to enhance the Heights and then, as success came to us, try to prevent the developers from destroying what it was that we had preserved. So that's one thing. You know, I adopted a neighborhood and was president of the Association two times. During our centennial celebration, I wore a lot of top hats and cut ribbons and all kinds of things like that. It was wonderful.

Magnolia Brewery Building

My purchase of the property at 715 Franklin, which is the Magnolia Brewery Building [Houston Ice and Brewing Company Building] came from my college days at the University of Houston, raising beers and having great visits at the La Carafe Bar on Congress Street. I'm happy to say it is still there and at the time was the most colorful mix of characters and the best juke box in town. It was a hangout. It's much the same today.

The whole area was beginning to emerge as Houston's version of the French Quarter. I saw the brewery building as a unique opportunity and negotiated for almost an entire year to purchase the



This is the Magnolia Brewery in production. Magnolia Beer was produced as well as Richlieu Beer and the most popular Southern Select.

building from the bank that had it in trust. And then I went just blindly, teaching myself how to do it, I renovated the building. The Bismarck Restaurant was the first tenant. They were there for ten, fifteen years on the top floor, which was the Tony's of its day. I mean, everybody of a certain age in this town, if they were being glamorous and going out to eat in those days, they knew about the Bismarck.

Anyway, it was wildly successful. In the basement was something called the Buffalo Bayou Flea Market, which was the first time "flea market" had been used in Houston. It was a lot of little shops and a place called Willy's Pub that actually went out under the bridge, which formed a balcony over Buffalo Bayou. There was a candle shop, a boutique, a toy store, a wine café, and a leather shop. Tootsie's of the Tootsie's glamorous ladies shop had its beginnings in the Buffalo Bayou Flea Market. A little T-shirt shop there was Tootsie's beginnings.

So the building was an incubator of businesses and that was quite wonderful. The various other places: Ruby Red's Hamburgers and—oh, a lot of restaurants have come and gone over the years, so there's really four locations: There's the basement location, there's two on the street level, and the one upstairs, which I've always retained—the historic Magnolia Ballroom.

Basically it was a brewery building. It's the last remaining building of a huge complex. In 1910 the company bought the building; 1911 they completely renovated it into the form that you see today, as their executive offices and a café called the Magnolia Café. And it was the place. I mean, all the muckety-mucks in town would hang out there and have a sandwich and a beer and talk about the goings-on in the city of Houston. Before the time where deals were made on the golf course, they were being made at the Magnolia Café.

It has a rich history and then Prohibition came along, shut everything down. It was then a meat packing facility, then clothing—it went through a whole bunch of different uses. But that part of town, Market Square, was in its early days the industrial and business part of Houston.

When I first laid eyes on the brewery building in the late sixties, it was abandoned. It was in really terrible shape. I was a young man at the time, and I asked the bank if I could board up the stained glass and leaded glass windows across the front so that they wouldn't be damaged while we negotiated for the sale. They told me that, oh, no, they wouldn't allow me to do such a thing, because I didn't own the building and this would be improper, blah, blah, blah.

Well, I know today, if I was that man, I would have gone down there [laughs] and nailed up the plywood over the windows to protect them. In the year it took me to negotiate the sale of the building, of course, the stained glass was stolen, broken, and destroyed, and I'd go down there and I'd call them up and say, "Do you know what happened?" And they said, "Oh, we're very sorry." And then, "Can I go down and board up?" "No, you can't touch that building. It doesn't belong to you." Well, I know better today. I'd just go do it. [Laughs.] It was ignorance on the part of the bank. One of the things about it is that the bank only saw it as land value. They saw no value in the wonderful old building.

I decided to restore and renovate just because I loved the building. I thought it was great. And at that same time, about '69, '70, '71, '72, Market Square was the hot place, the wonderful, happening place in the city. It was like the French Quarter in New Orleans. There were restaurants and clubs, people walked the streets. You know, you'd park your car and take your date to three or four places in an evening, and you'd hear live music. You'd hear great jazz, and you'd hear rock 'n' roll, and you'd hear heavy metal. It was a fantastic period.

Did it have its problems? Yes. Was there a stabbing? Yes. You know, things like that did happen, and it didn't play well in the press.

One of the other things—an amazing story about Market Square—is that when the Astrodome was being built, the unwise city fathers at the time thought that the Market Square area would somehow be competition to the Astrodome. So they very subtly took away our police protection; they took away services, etc. They kind of let that all fade away, hoping that we would not be competition to the Astrodome. Well, that's the stupidest thing because the Astrodome didn't have restaurants and clubs; it had one great big facility for sports. So, I mean, it didn't make any sense.

And in fact, the same city officials came back to the remaining property and club owners about five years later and said, "What happened to our entertainment district?" And we said, "Well, you know, you're asking five years too late." They knew they had done it to us, and they realized at that point that they had lost this entertainment district, which could have been a viable tourist attraction. But it was too late by then.

Market Square has had a couple

Continued on page 56

THE USS *TEXAS*: THE RESTORATION OF HOUSTON'S GREATEST WAR HERO

By Abbie Salyers

The city of Houston is home to numerous museums, historic buildings, and memorials that encompass topics ranging from natural history to African American history. Each site represents a unique time period or subject matter, yet each also has its own institutional history. The decisions behind the creation and interpretation of these sites reveal much about the interest, values, and public memory of both local communities and the nation as a whole. An analysis of a museum's developmental history can provide insight into changing public opinion, professional developments, and societal values.

The Battleship *Texas*, located in the Houston Ship Channel, is a museum that not only has a unique military service history, but also has an institutional history that provides a parallel to the development of the museum field as a whole. It represents both local and national memory. With service in both world wars and numerous military firsts, the *Texas* has a battle record that speaks for itself in its importance as a memorial to the veterans that served on board and as a museum of changing military technology of the early twentieth century. After the state of Texas obtained the ship, she was initially neglected and allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, but as the field of preservation and museum studies emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century, professional and public opinion forced the caretakers of the ship to conform to emerging professional standards.

The story of the Battleship *Texas* and her preservation is significant for students of military, local, and museum history alike.[1]

On March 12, 1914, the United States Navy commissioned into service the USS *Texas*, a battleship similar in design to the British dreadnoughts. The *Texas* and her sister ship, *New York*, were the first ships in the U.S. fleet to boast ten 14-inch guns, in addition to twenty-one 5-inch guns, and four torpedo tubes. The $5.83 million

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Abbie Salyers received her B.A. in History with a concentration in Public History from James Madison University. She is currently working towards a Ph.D. in History at Rice University. She also volunteers at the Battleship *Texas*.

ship was over 570 feet long and 95 feet wide with a displacement of 27,000 tons. Fourteen coal-burning boilers provided power to the ship's two reciprocating steam engines, which could reach speeds of up to twenty-one knots.[2]

After her initial trials, the *Texas* participated in President Woodrow Wilson's intervention in Vera Cruz, Mexico, before joining normal fleet operations in 1915. In the early years of World War I, the *Texas* was involved in routine training and practice maneuvers as part of the Atlantic Fleet. After the U.S. entered the war, the *Texas* became part of the 6th Battle Squadron of the British Grand Fleet and served in the North Sea operations for the duration of the war.[3]

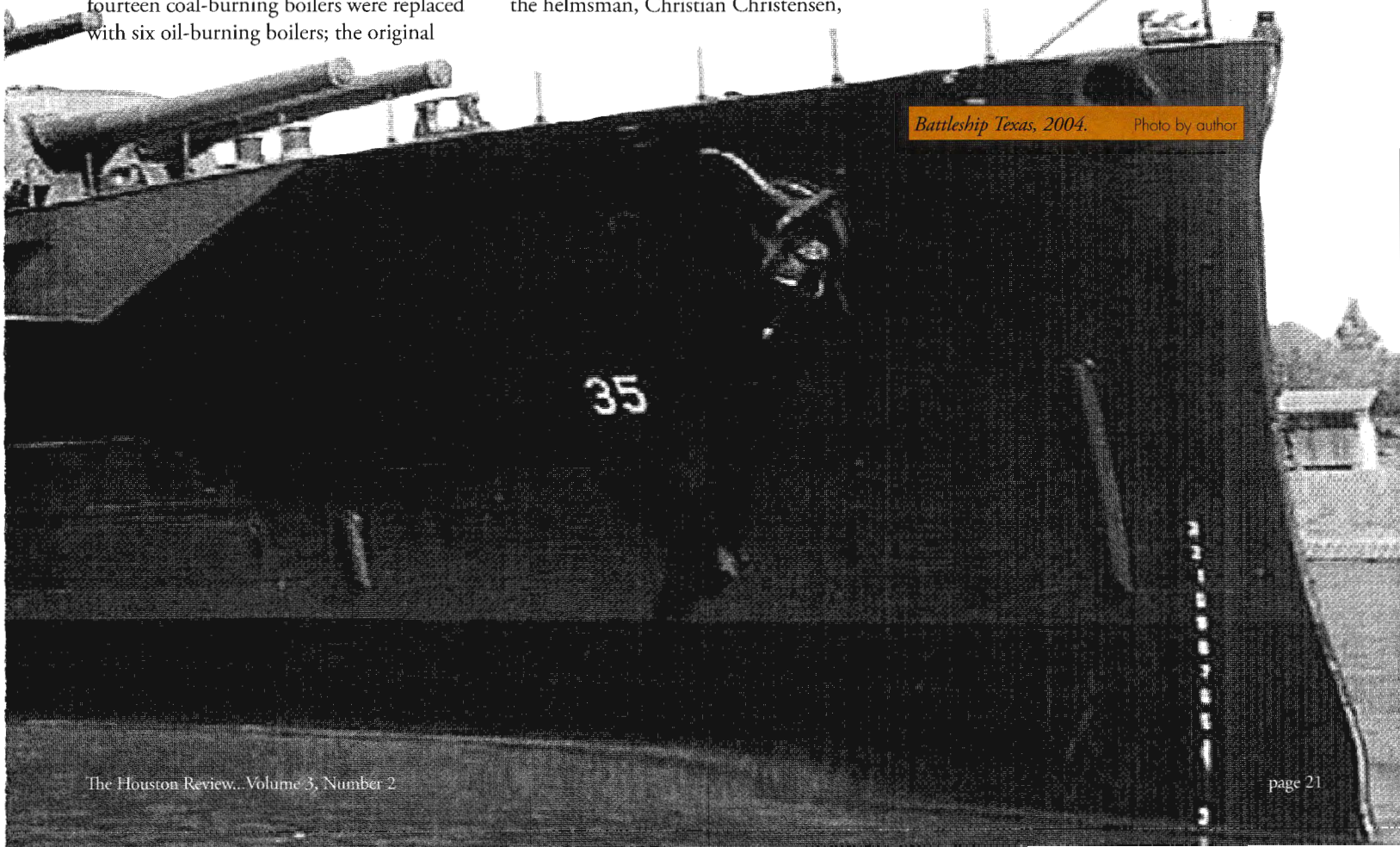
Between 1918 and the outbreak of World War II, the *Texas* was modernized and outfitted with many experimental new technologies. As the military recognized the expanding potential of aviation, the Navy built launching platforms, and later catapults on the gun turrets of the *Texas*, which was then able to carry seaplanes for use in reconnaissance and fire control. The Washington Naval Treaty of 1921 prevented the building of any new battleships, so the *Texas* received extensive refurbishing to keep her up to date. The fourteen coal-burning boilers were replaced with six oil-burning boilers; the original cage masts were replaced with more solid tripod masts; the torpedo tubes were removed; torpedo blisters were added for increased protection; and her fire control capabilities were improved. In 1928 the *Texas* emerged from her extensive overhauls as the flagship of the U.S. Navy.[4]

Prior to American involvement in World War II, the *Texas* conducted patrols in the Atlantic Ocean protecting neutral shipping interests and later joined in convoys shipping lend-lease materials to Britain. She also underwent more changes, as her deck was outfitted with 40mm and 20mm antiaircraft guns. In 1940 she was also equipped with a CXZ, a radio wave detection system that became one of the earliest models of radar.

After the United States declared war, the *Texas* participated in troop transport for Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, before returning to convoy escort duty across the Atlantic. On June 6, 1944, the *Texas* was at Normandy where she supported the invading troops with off-shore bombardment and served as a hospital ship for wounded soldiers.

Two weeks later, the *Texas* again provided supporting fire during the capture of Cherbourg, where she received her only two direct hits, one of which killed the helmsman, Christian Christensen, the one combat fatality suffered during all her thirty-four years of active service. In February and March of 1945, the *Texas* participated in the grueling invasions of the Japanese islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, where her crew remained at battle stations for almost two straight months. Having played a part in bringing about victory in both the European and the Pacific theaters, the *Texas* celebrated the end of war by participating in the "Magic Carpet" rides, transporting over 4,000 troops home to the United States.[5]

In September 1945 the *Texas* appeared on a House Naval Affairs Committee list of outdated ships slated for decommissioning, target practice, or the scrap yards. Two Texas congressmen with strong ties to Houston, Lyndon B. Johnson and Albert Thomas, began a campaign to save the dreadnought as a memorial to those who had served aboard. By October their efforts had convinced Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal to offer the *Texas* to its namesake state on the condition that the state agree to continue maintenance according to Navy standards. Governor Coke Stevenson confessed that the state government was unable to accept



Battleship Texas, 2004. Photo by author

the financial burden due to its postwar economy and internal infrastructure needs, so he sent the offer to the City of Houston with the understanding that if enough private funds could be raised he would accept the donation on behalf of the state. By the end of 1946, civic groups, individuals, and the Harris County Navigation District had contributed funds, but the total still fell far short of the $225,000 necessary to create a berth for the ship and provide for the first years' worth of maintenance.[6]

A Fitting Place to Anchor Houston Chronicle 24 Sep 1945

The fundraising process proceeded so slowly that in March 1947 the Navy issued an ultimatum declaring that either Texas find the funds or the battleship would be scrapped. According to *The Dallas News* on March 9, "for many months the Navy has been ready to turn the mighty battlewagon of the seas over to the state of Texas. But an uninterested or neglectful citizenry has made no move toward accepting the gallant vessel."[7] As the state faced the somewhat awkward situation of having requested the ship and yet not having provided the means to care for it, Governor Beauford Jester created the Battleship *Texas* Commission to lead the effort to raise the money necessary for acquisition.[8] Lloyd Gregory, Vice President and General Manager of the *Houston Post* and an outspoken advocate for the battleship, was appointed chairman of the new nine-member commission.[9]

A major fundraising campaign was launched on September 15 and included efforts from citizens of all ages across the state and even from other states nationwide. The campaign began with a radio broadcast featuring Governor Jester, Admiral Chester Nimitz, Secretary Forrestal, and actress Linda Darnell, all of whom collaborated to tell the story of the *Texas*' service, explain her possible fate, and solicit donations. Local Jaycee clubs visited area schools to encourage small donations, hoping for 100% participation from school children. On the suggestion of Senator Fred Harris, an honorary Texas Navy was established and each donor received a certificate declaring them an honorary Admiral in the new Texas Navy. The Governor also declared December 7, 1947, as Battleship *Texas* Day to raise awareness of the ship's plight. Popular film stars Linda Darnell and Dana Andrews produced a short movie on the *Texas* that was shown before feature films in theaters across the state to solicit donations.[10]

Despite these efforts, in March 1948 the donations still did not meet the $225,000 needed. The Navy became tired of the delays and the unwanted cost of upkeep for the *Texas*, so they informed Gregory that the battleship was departing Norfolk for the Houston Ship Channel. When she arrived, Texas should either have a slip ready or prepare to scrap her. With a month left to raise the remaining $25,000 before the anticipated grand opening on San Jacinto Day, April 21, 1948, Gregory told his readers, "If Texans want their ship they must put up or shut up."[11] In the final weeks of the fund-raising drive, the *Post* thanked every donor by name, from children who gave one dollar to corporate donations of hundreds of dollars, all in an effort to increase awareness of and interest in the project. The Battleship *Texas* arrived at the ordinance depot of the Houston Ship Channel at the end of March, where it received its final preparations from the Navy before its permanent placement at San Jacinto. The presence of the ship inspired increased donations, and the Commission met its goal.[12]

The battleship arrived under the care of Chief Machinist's Mate Johnny McKeown, who had enlisted in the Navy at the age of sixteen and served for thirty-one years, the last thirteen of which had been on board the *Texas*. The Commission appointed Joseph M. Strickling as the official caretaker of the memorial ship, with McKeown as his assistant and live-in keeper of the ship. Under their care, the *Texas* was pulled into the newly dredged slip and flooded below decks with three million gallons of water, which settled the hull into the mud to anchor the ship.

On April 21, 1948, the 112th anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto, the festivities at San Jacinto State Park centered on the arrival of the battleship. Former Captain of the *Texas* Charles A. Baker decommissioned the ship and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Mark Andrews presented her to the state of Texas, to be under the control of the newly designated commander in chief of the Texas Navy, Governor Jester.[13] The ship's logbook closed with the entry, "Presented to the state of Texas as a Permanent Shrine," and Admiral Nimitz, retired from the U.S. Navy and newly commissioned as an admiral in the Texas Navy, declared:

By demonstrating the fighting spirit of Texas to our enemies in two world wars, this gallant ship has proved worthy of her name...Texans are proud of the privilege of providing a snug harbor for the old "T," and preserving her as another symbol of Texas greatness. It is particularly fitting that her final resting place be adjacent to these historic battlegrounds where so much of the Lone Star State tradition was born.[14]

The *Houston Chronicle* reported that the ship "rivals the San Jacinto Monument in popularity with visitors," but controversy concerning the care of the battleship arose almost immediately. Strickling, the head caretaker, was fired in October 1948 after complaining that the ship was not being properly cared for, and even after McKeown took over the supervision of the *Texas*, more complaints followed in March 1949 from the Judicial Council of the Harris County Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW Post primarily opposed the gaudy concessions hawking their wares along the walkway to the ship, but they also cited neglect of the ship's proper maintenance. Complaints were made again in June regarding the condition of the battleship and the placement of hot dog and peanut stands on the deck of the ship.

In 1950 even more serious problems arose concerning the erosion of the banks of the slip, which would eventually cause the ship to tilt since it was anchored in mud deposits. The Commission declared the erosion a "crisis," and received over $5,000 in donated materials and equipment to construct temporary concrete supports until the state legislature could vote on appropriating more funds. Eventually the San Jacinto Park Board, which had jurisdiction over the shore facilities, took bids in late 1951 to construct one combined store and concession stand that would be less conspicuous, and the anchoring system was improved in the slip.[15]

PRESERVATION BEGINS

During the first twenty years of state possession of the *Texas*, the Commission did little preventative maintenance beyond painting and scraping and the placement of bulkheads to prevent further soil erosion. Ironically, Lloyd Gregory provided advice to visitors from North Carolina and Alaska concerning his process of saving the *Texas* so that they could do the same for their state's namesakes; however, his own ship

Tugs to Bring U.S.S. Texas Up Channel Today

Arrival of Ship Speeds Campaign

The gallant old Battleship Texas, nudged along by four tugs, will come up the Ship Channel Wednesday to the San Jacinto ordnance depot.

Comdr. A. Seward and pilots of the Coastwise Pilots association set 6 a. m. as the hour of departure.

THE SHIP was expected to arrive at the depot around 2:30 p. m.

The commanding officer of the depot issued positive orders that no visitors would be allowed on the ordnance grounds or on the ship during the nearly three weeks the Texas will be there getting her final spit and polish before being moved to her final berth at the San Jacinto battleground.

The famed battlewagon will be saluted at Baytown by school children, veterans' organizations and employes of the Humble refinery.

It will pass between Morgans Point and the Baytown docks be-

Houston Post, March 31, 1948, Front page coverage

suffered while he handed out recommendations. An editorial published in the *Houston Post* in 1966 criticized the condition of the ship and included pictures of rusted steel and trash littering multiple portions of the battleship. Gregory responded with the hopes that the article might raise awareness of the need for the ship to receive more funding and acknowledged that he was "partly to blame" because he "had become too complacent."[16]

The article brought about some changes, but unfortunately they proved detrimental to the preservation of the *Texas*. In 1968-69, the original teakwood deck was rotten and leaking and Gregory reported that replacing it with a concrete deck over the steel support beams would help decrease leaks and rusting. Although the records are not clear about who exactly made the decision to use concrete, an interesting factor to consider is that the staff of the *Texas* at that time consisted of only four men under the guidance of Captain McKeown, while the Commission itself included only four members of veterans groups, two members of the public, two representatives of the Sons and Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and one member of the Texas State Historical Association. Few veterans and representatives of the mentioned groups had much experience in either battleship maintenance or preservation techniques, especially considering the relative newness of the preservation movement. After installation, the concrete deck only increased the problems by soaking up water and expanding and shrinking during weather changes, causing cracking. The water absorbed through the concrete was simply channeled through these cracks into more concentrated leaks in the lower decks.[17]

During the early 1970s, some slight improvements were made to the ship, including sandblasting the hull, removing paint and rust, repainting the *Texas* battleship grey, and coating the steel with resin to prevent corrosion and strengthen rusted areas. But the *Houston Chronicle* still reported in March 1972 that the *Texas* was "under attack" from neglect due to a lack of funding that had allowed rust and decay to take their toll on the ship. The gunnery observation room and conning tower were closed as safety hazards from the amount of corrosion, and a Navy inspection estimated yearly costs would be nearly $300,000 to repair the damage and remain open to the public. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) reported improvements to the ship in 1976. At the same time, efforts were made to advance interpretation by placing audio stations in twelve different areas of the ship to tell the history of the *Texas* and describe daily life aboard the battleship. The Commission also installed a new theater on the second deck to show a fifteen-minute documentary with footage of the dreadnought's wartime service. In addition, a newly renovated stateroom was opened to the public in 1979 in honor of Gregory, who had passed away earlier that year, after retiring as Chairman of the Commission in 1975.[18]

Despite the minor improvements, the *Texas* Commission was the subject of a Sunset Commission inspection and audit in 1977. The function of the Sunset Commission was to eliminate unnecessary state agencies, and this particular study was to determine the future of the Battleship *Texas* Commission. Rather than suggest the complete dismissal of the *Texas* Commission, the Sunset Commission instead recommended that the *Texas* Commission be placed under the authority of another governing body, such as TPWD. Some members of the state

Battleship Texas in dry-dock, 1988.

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are courtesy Battleship *Texas* Archives

legislature disagreed with the recommendation and pushed for the continuation of the Commission's control, causing a debate that stalled in the legislature and forced the Commission to disband and TPWD to assume control.

Within a year, the state legislature had reformed the Commission and placed the ship under the care of Captain Andrew Garcia and his maintenance staff. Unfortunately the Commission faced more complaints within only a few years of reassuming control, when eighteen staff members joined forces with the Texas State Employees Union to protest unsafe working conditions and poor use of funding. The seriousness of the health charges and the estimated cost of repairs encouraged the state legislature to again take part in the debate, this time reversing their previous decision by permanently removing the *Texas* from Commission control and turning over the battleship to TPWD authority.[19]

A NEW ERA

On September 1, 1983, the Commission officially disbanded and TPWD took over the administration, preservation, and maintenance of the battleship, which was now under the command of Captain Dan Harrison. Under the TPWD, the *Texas* received a steady budget from the state for the first time, although the funding was still supplemented with private donations. All decisions regarding the care of and expenditures for the ship had to be approved by both the local and state TPWD office, and a newly created Battleship *Texas* Advisory Board made suggestions regarding the care of the ship as well. In 1985 the "First *Texas* Volunteers" came together to offer time and service to the upkeep and interpretation of the ship, and the Battleship *Texas* Foundation was formed as a separate fundraising committee.[20]

Initial structural investigations by the TPWD revealed fairly extensive rust damage to the hull and lower compartments that would likely require dry-docking to repair. In order to pay for the preservation and interpretation goals, the state launched a new fundraising drive, like those of the late 1940s, led by Governor Mark White to be completed before the sesquicentennial anniversary of Texas in 1986. The strategy was similar to the one presented forty years earlier as the newly created Battleship *Texas* Advisory Board urged local corporations, schools, and stores to donate proceeds or materials. Local radio stations launched the campaign "Save the Battleship *Texas*—She fought for you, now let's fight for her," while children participated in art contests, and corporations like McDonald's and JCPenney even joined the effort. Governor Mark White declared 1986 to be "Battleship *Texas* Year," and the *Post* published an article drawing attention to the deterioration of the ship and informed the public that only $200,000 of the desired $6 million had been raised by June of 1986. Orion Knox, director of the TPWD's Historic Site Restoration Branch, placed the blame for the condition of the ship on the financial constraints of the original Battleship *Texas* Commission and encouraged citizens to help avoid similar problems.[21] Former crewman Jeff Lacy remarked, "It breaks my heart to see the condition of the *Texas* today… We had pride in that ship – the beauty, the cleanli-

ness. I thought Texans were people of great pride. If they knew what this ship had done, maybe they'd try to save it."[22]

Just as it had years earlier, the attack on Texas pride stimulated citizens into action, and large fundraisers spread across the region. Channel 11 produced a short documentary, "The Pride of Texas," to give a history of the battleship's service record and explain the dangers facing continued neglect of the ship. The San Jacinto Mall launched chili cook-offs, swimsuit competitions, and eating contests to raise proceeds, and they also sold Battleship *Texas* merchandise. Whataburger, Pizza Hut, Fantastic Sams, Randalls grocery store, Greyhound, and the Houston Ballet all initiated programs to donate portions of their proceeds toward efforts to restore the ship. By October 1986 the Battleship *Texas* Foundation had received $2 million in private donations, $580,000 from a U.S. Navy Appropriations Bill, and $5 million from military appropriations legislation.[23]

Regardless of the widespread support for the improved preservation, some citizens objected to the work going into the restoration. Curt B. Thompson, who had served in the Navy, wrote an editorial to the *Post* declaring that, "the (Help the *Texas*) campaign [is] a foolish ideal. Let's scrap the pile of metal, sell it and put our money where it's most needed, into building a new modern fighting ship...." Although the editor responded that there already was a new USS *Texas* in the U.S. Navy, it seemed that others shared similar opinions. A later editorial in the *Post* entitled, "Let 'er die," offered a striking comparison: "the ship is rusting, peeling, leaking and settling in the mud. Millions to save it is compared to keeping alive a 100-year-old unconscious person by respirators, feeding tubes and I.V. medications."[24] The editorial continued that the state should, "allow the ship a timely and decent demise" and advised spending the money on people who were still alive by donating food and money to charities. An angry response asked, "Why not topple the San Jacinto monument? And raze the Alamo? It's roughly the same."[25]

Despite some opposition, TPWD made preparations for the *Texas* to be towed to dry-dock at Todd Shipyard in Galveston. Naval architect Ed Philips inspected the ship to ensure it would stand up to the pressures of towing and being lifted from the water, while engineers dredged the channel around the slip to allow enough space for the ship to move. After minimal repairs and the emptying of 600,000 gallons of water and fuel from her lower decks, the *Texas* rose out of the mud and proved herself seaworthy. In December 1988 the battleship moved at four miles per hour through the channel to the shipyards where she would receive extensive physical repairs while engineers improved her slip as well. Although the process took much longer than the intended six months, in late 1989 the ship finally left Galveston for Green's Bayou, where it received a new wooden deck and mooring collars to anchor it to pilings that had been planted seventy feet deep in the reconstructed slip. Almost two years after leaving, the *Texas* returned to her slip in September 1990.

> **"I thought Texans were people of great pride. If they knew what this ship had done, maybe they'd try to save it."**
>
> ***—Former Crewman Jeff Lacy***

The project had taken longer than expected and gone over budget, but since the TPWD had remained insistent on meeting historical accuracy standards, the newly renovated ship reflected the difference from earlier days. Now painted dark blue in accordance with Navy camouflage Measure 21, the battleship had over 350,000 pounds of new steel on the main deck and hull plus a new wooden deck. Former crewmen accompanied the *Texas* on her trip back to San Jacinto, and on September 8, 1990, the site officially reopened with a large ceremony featuring Governor William Clements and a 21-gun salute honoring the veterans of the *Texas*. With the worst of the structural damage repaired, TPWD turned its attention to modernizing the interpretation of the battleship.[26]

INTERPRETATION ON THE BATTLESHIP *TEXAS*

The interpretive changes that the *Texas* underwent throughout the years reflect the changing trends in the field of public history and museum studies. In the past, many people looked to history, not for what it could teach, but for how it could make people feel. European shrines and castles created a sense of nostalgia and commemorated heroes. Americans looked to museums and historic sites like Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon in much the same way: as a source to *feel* what life was like in the past. As emphasis on scientific methods increased in the late nineteenth century, the field of history became more confined to the university, more narrow in focus, and less appealing to the public. The idea of history as "a place to go" increased in popularity and many people looked beyond the academy to local museums, films, novels, and fairs for more enjoyable history. The field of museum studies grew at a time when historians faced decreasing academic opportunities, which encouraged many to move into the public arena.[27]

As the museum field became more professionalized and increased in popularity, the federal government instituted a series of laws providing funding and protection for historic sites. The number of museums in the United States continued to increase and many universities created museum studies curriculums to accommodate the growing interest. In addition, scholarly associations such as the National Council on Public History emerged and began publishing journals and holding conferences to discuss aspects of the museum field.[28]

The emergence of the public history field coincided with changing trends in the academic realm such as the development of social history and what would be labeled "revisionist" history. The study of history began to feature the average lives of commoners instead of focusing primarily on prominent men and women, while newly raised issues of race, gender, class, and imperialism complicated history and often ignited debates within the academy. The shift was slowly reflected in museums as well, as many attempted to move away from serving purely as shrines to people,

Continued on page 60

Preserving Temple Beth Israel: The story of one woman making a difference

By Carol Krauss Mark

Carol Mark proudly displaying a letter from the Texas Historical Commission informing her of the progress made towards her goal of preserving the old Temple Beth Israel building.

"Architecture is the printing-press of all ages and gives a history of the state of society in which the structure was erected."[1] This is the tale of a monument to religious freedom and my efforts to preserve this landmark.

The story begins with the discovery of the New World and the very first Jews to arrive in America. Documents show that Jews were working as part of the crew for Christopher Columbus in 1492. By 1776 and the War for Independence, there were an estimated 2,000 Jews residing in America and taking part in all facets of everyday life. The first Jewish synagogue had been dedicated in Newport, Rhode Island just a few years earlier in 1763.

Severe persecution of the Jewish people in the 1830s in Eastern Europe encouraged a major immigration of those "poor and oppressed" to America. They settled in various towns and cities throughout the country. Due to the small population of Jews in Texas, there were no synagogues or Jewish cemeteries. Back then, rabbis traveled between towns to perform services commonly known as "marrying 'em and burying 'em."

By 1844, the Jewish population in Houston had grown large enough to support the creation of the "Hebrew Cemetery," later renamed the Beth Israel Cemetery. The population continued to grow and ten years later, Congregation Beth Israel was formed, making it the first Jewish house of worship in Texas.

Needing a permanent meeting place, Congregation Beth Israel built its first synagogue on Franklin Street in the original Second Ward in 1874, just 29 years after Texas became a state. When the building became too small for their needs, the members of the congregation built a second temple several blocks south on Lamar at Crawford Street. Congregation Beth Israel's presiding rabbi, Dr. Henry Barnston, described the structure as, "the handsomest Temple in the States and one of the finest in the South."[2]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Carol Mark, a native Houstonian, has been recognized for her volunteer work and her courageous stance in the Jewish community. She is an award winning photographer, attending photography schools such as the Glassel School at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Anderson Ranch, Snowmass. Carol has two children and four grandchildren. Presently, Carol resides in Colorado.

The second temple building on Crawford Street displayed majestic Roman and Byzantine influences, as seen in the photograph. The building was vacated in 1948 and demolished in the early 1950s.

During his 49-year tenure, Rabbi Barnston became one of Houston's outstanding leaders, and was instrumental in forming the Houston Symphony Society and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.[3] He worked alongside such notable Houstonians as Miss Ima Hogg. The Congregation included several prominent Houstonians, who were also integrated into the larger business and cultural communities in the city. Among those were the Levy family, large donors to the Congregation and community. Miss Harriet Levy contributed significantly to the cultural life of Houston. Haskell and Abe Levy founded Levy Brothers, one of Houston's first department stores, located in downtown Houston. Another congregant, Simon Sakowitz, co-founded Sakowitz Brothers and also chaired the Beth Israel Building Committee.

Meanwhile, in 1908, a Jewish Austrian immigrant, Joseph Finger (1887-1953) arrived in Houston. He opened his own architecture firm in 1913, and embarked on a forty-year career as one of Houston's most successful architects. His distinctive works greatly affected the architectural landscape of the city. He designed such prominent buildings as the Plaza Apartment Hotel, the Beth Israel Mausoleum, and West House in Clear Lake, which is now the Lunar Science Institute. He also designed Jefferson Davis Hospital (with Alfred C. Finn), Houston City Hall, Houston Municipal Airport Terminal, the Harris County Courthouse, several distinctive homes, as well as Levy's and Battelstein's department stores in downtown Houston.

Congregation Beth Israel commissioned him to design their third temple building. His design exemplified a proto-moderne style of architecture, which he himself described as a Greek and Egyptian motif. This design reflected the nineteenth-century tradition of Jewish religious architecture. Completed in 1924, the new temple building was located at Austin and Holman, an area where a large population of the Jewish community resided. Most Jews lived in surrounding neighborhoods, such as the Riverside/MacGregor area. The Jewish Community Center was later built nearby on Hermann Drive at Almeda Road.

In the 1950s, the growth of the Congregation and the issue of "block busting" caused the migration of the Jews once again. This time the trend was to southwest Houston where Congregation Beth Israel followed with yet another new temple, at their present day location on South Braeswood.

This is where I entered the picture...

In 1984, while taking photography classes at the Glassell School at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, I was looking for interesting subjects. Something different I thought would be to photograph the lovely old temple building where my family and I had attended synagogue while I was growing up. The building, Mr. Finger's proto-moderne structure, had been purchased by the Houston Independent School District/Houston Community

The third Beth Israel building located on Austin Street was built in 1925 by renowned architect, Joseph Finger. Today, the building has been given a second life as the Heinen Theatre, a part of the Fine Arts Department at Houston Community College.

Courtesy Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

College, which used it for their Performing Arts theater.

While trying to get permission to enter and photograph the building, I found out that it was going to be defaced and made to look like the adjacent San Jacinto High School building. The high school was comprised of the South End Junior High School, which had been built between 1912-1914, and the two wings built in 1936 by none other than Joseph Finger. Many notable Houstonians attended San Jacinto High School throughout the years, including David Westheimer, Marvin Zindler, Denton Cooley, and Walter Cronkite. My mom, Beverly Nussbaum Krauss Sheer Painter, and I also graduated from there.

The Temple defaced! I was enraged! This building was not only part of our country's heritage, but it was part of my family's heritage. After all, my grandmother, Regina Nussbaum, served twice as President of the Sisterhood, and both my grandmother and my mother had taught religious school there. It was the hub of our social and family life.

I decided to find out more about the building, which led to an investigation into the history of Jews in Houston. Through my research I discovered that my mother's great-grandfather was one of the first rabbis in Texas—and for Congregation Beth Israel.

I began talking with various organizations trying to find 'the' group that shared my belief that the old temple building must be preserved and would work toward that end. Naively, I thought there must have been some group that could take over my crusade. All of the organizations I contacted offered vocal support for my efforts, but none offered to lead my crusade.

Phone conversations and meetings became my way of life. Through my grassroots movement I gained support from the following groups:

National Register Department, Texas Historical Commission, Peter F. Maxson
Texas Antiquities Committee, Texas Historical Commission, R. S. Mabry
Congregation Beth Israel
American Institute of Architects
The Heritage Society
Greater Houston Preservation Alliance
South Main Center Association
Historical Office of Rice University
Save the Arts, Restore
Students Group, HCC
Chief of Protocol, Mayor's Office
Women of Hadassah
Larry Mers, Head, Fine Arts Department, HCC
National Council of Jewish Women
Second Generation Holocaust Survivors
Texas Jewish Historical Society
Jewish Herald-Voice
Jewish Federation of Greater Houston
Midtown Civic Club
B'nai B'rith Youth Organization

I learned that even a building placed on the National Register of Historic Places could easily be altered or destroyed. If the owner decided to change the physical integrity of that building, it would simply be removed from the National Register. If, however, the building were accepted as a State Archaeological Landmark by the Texas Antiquities Committee, it would be protected. By the time I arrived on the scene, the temple was already on the National Register of Historic Places, but did not have the State designation. So I set out to have the building nominated for Texas recognition as a landmark. The designation would also make state funds available to help keep the building in good repair, which proved to be an added attraction.

The Houston Post/Sat., July 21, 1984/ 7G

Nostalgic visit prompts effort to save temple

Woman focuses on heritage thanks to photography course

I made an appointment with Tarrant Fendley, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Houston Community College System, to discuss the situation. He was very helpful and even arranged for Houston Independent School District Board/Houston Community College (HISD/HCC) to give some artifacts from the old temple building to Congregation Beth Israel for its new location. Most importantly, he explained that our meeting was very timely since there was going to be an open Board meeting with the architect, Charles Boelson, the next morning to finalize plans for Mr. Finger's temple building. The architect intended to make the entire campus of the Houston Independent School District, including our beloved temple, architecturally congruent. Mr. Fendley put me on the docket to go before the Board to state my case.

At the next morning's meeting, HISD/HCC planned to give their final approval of Mr. Boelson's architectural plans, as the money had already been allocated, with plans drawn. I had five minutes in front of the HISD Board to explain my desire to save the building. I was to address the HISD/HCC Board chaired by Superintendent Dr. Billy Reagen. Others present at that time were Dr. J.B. Whiteley, President of HCC Systems, and Board Member Kathy Whitmire, just to name a few. With little public speaking experience, I dreaded going in front of an audience of such prominent individuals. But I convinced myself that my cause was of the utmost importance. After a sleepless, angst-filled night, I went before the Board, stated my case, and even survived a long question and answer period.

I must have said something right, because the HISD Board and the architect asked for a meeting the next morning at the temple site for further discussions. Eventually the HISD Board agreed to preserve this old temple building. As a bonus, since there was enough money saved from sealing the brick instead of applying the marblecrete, a much-needed elevator could be purchased.

I was elated. The temple building is now a State Archaeological Landmark as well as listed in the National Register

of Historic Places, Antiquities National Registry, and on the Texas Registry for Historical Buildings. I think that my ultimate success in saving the Temple building from defacement was in getting so many diverse groups and organizations to back my endeavor. Not only did each group inspire me in its own way to continue my pursuit, but also, collectively the various groups presented an impressive coalition of support that the Board could not ignore.

Most excitingly, the building's adaptive re-use has brought it full circle. Throughout history, temples were not only places of worship; they were also used as cultural centers. With pride, this temple building serves a purpose every day as a cultural art center for the Houston Independent School District/ Houston Community College System. Renamed the E.R. Heinen Theater, the building now serves as a home for the Fine Arts Department's music, dance, and drama programs.

This landmark stands as a reminder that as temples in Europe were being destroyed and millions of Jews were being murdered, we Americans prospered and worshipped in freedom. This building is a monument to the liberty of all Americans and a reminder of the importance of preserving structures that symbolize that liberty.

100 YEARS OF DOMINICAN TRADITION AND EXCELLENCE

This year marks the 100th anniversary of St. Agnes Academy and the 50th anniversary of St. Pius X High School, two Dominican high schools in the Houston area. This year Dominican institutions all over the world will commemorate 800 years of collaboration with families and communities of faith and learning. Mutuality, equality, and respect between men and women engaged in a common mission of praising, blessing, and preaching have been practiced and renewed in institutions of study and prayer all over the world. It is the essence of Dominican spirituality and lifestyle and is taught as the four pillars of Dominican charism: study, prayer, community, and preaching.

St. Agnes Academy, 1906-2006. Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow

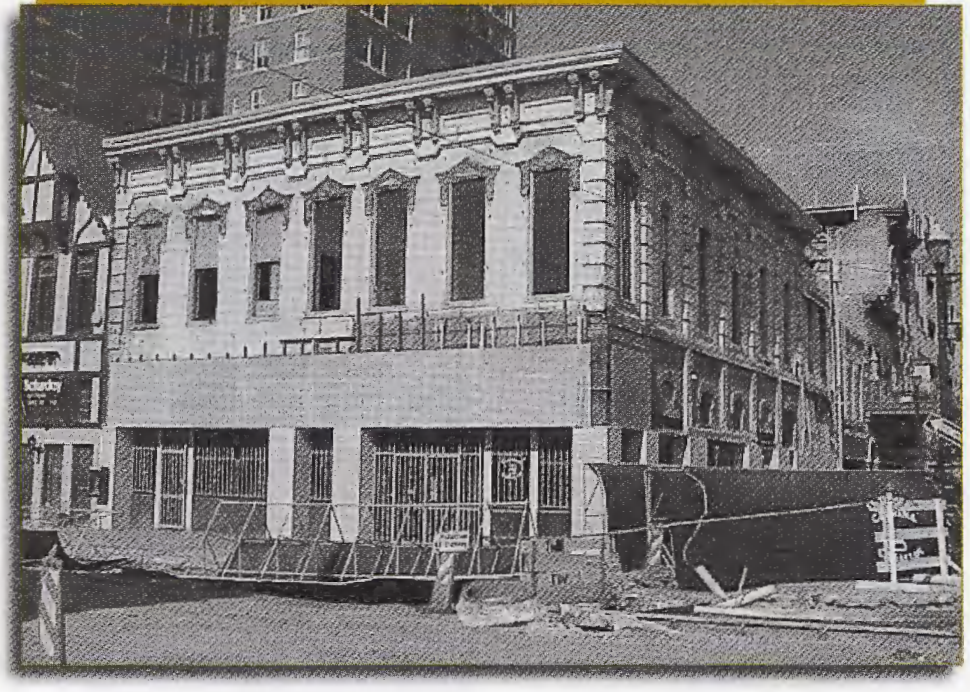
This important milestone year is dedicated to the memory of the sisters who founded St. Agnes Academy in 1906 and St. Pius X High School in 1956, including Mothers Agnes Magevny, Mary Pauline Gannon, Catherine Kenney, Angela O'Kane, and Adeline Tierney. Under the current direction of heads of school Jane Meyer O.P. and Donna Pollard O.P., the faculty and students of both schools continue to flourish in an environment of reciprocal respect and support in all areas of academic and extra-curricular activity.

St. Pius X High School, 1956-2006. Teaching Truth, Preaching Justice

The history of these schools and the lives of the sisters who built them were recorded in rich detail by Sister Sheila Hackett in her book, *Dominican Women in Texas*. The St. Agnes Academy centennial book, *St. Agnes Academy: 100 Years of Dominican Tradition & Excellence*, edited by Megan Clark Dillingham, further illustrated a tradition and memory beloved and honored by tens of thousands of benefactors, faculty, and students. This tribute is offered on their behalf with profound gratitude.

—The Dominican Community of Houston

The slipcovering of 1879 Stegeman Building at 502 Main did not fully obscure the upper ornamental brackets and cornice capping the building. These visible remnants of the past helped to inspire the building tenant to remove the slipcover and begin restoration work on the original façade beneath.

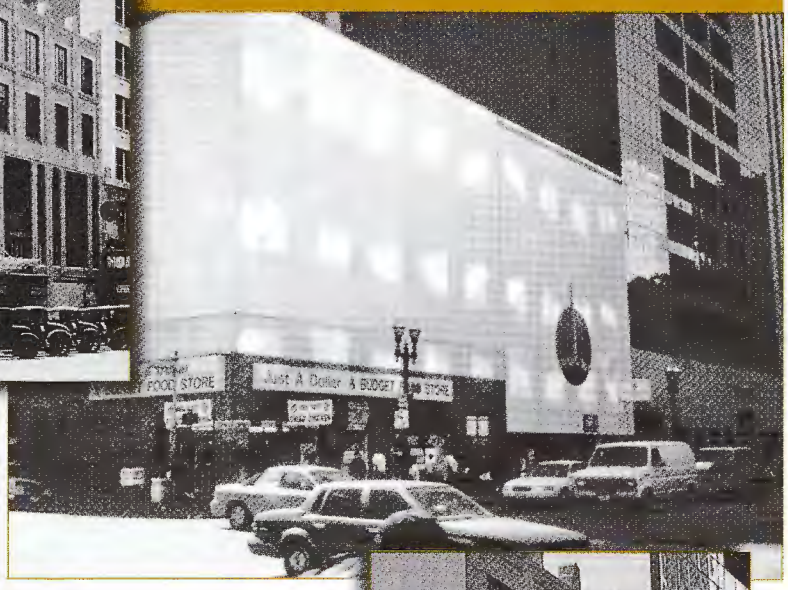


Building slipcovering was a national phenomenon from the mid-1940s through 1960s. In postwar America, the architectural styles popular at the beginning of the twentieth century were considered passé and not representative of the aspirations of the forward thinking generation. An obsession with the new and modern lead to the alteration of countless Victorian, Classical Revival, Art Deco, and other early twentieth-century American commercial styles. These alterations included the partial or complete masking or obliteration of the building's original character, composition, detail, and ornament. When total reconstruction of a pre-war structure was not practical, the cosmetic alteration of an older façade gave the appearance of a new building at a more modest cost.

Standing at the corner of Main and McKinney looking north one can compare the view to a c.1920 photo taken from the same vantage point. The interesting thing is that almost all of the buildings seen in each view are the same. They have been altered so much in the past eighty plus years, however, that the casual observer would likely not recognize but a few.

A fire at the West Building at the corner of Main and Walker in 2000 revealed what had been a secret for years. Behind the gold grille work encasing the top three-quarters of the building resided a 1912 façade of brick and stone that had been hidden for decades. The current owner of the building has since removed the remaining panels to expose the entire façade and plans a restoration of the building in the near future.

The slipcovers in Houston run the gamut from small two and three story Victorian structures near Market Square to high rise office buildings on Main Street. The slipcover materials vary as much as the buildings they cover. Plaster and marble were popular materials and their installation often resulted in extensive damage to the original façade beneath. Grille work, like that encasing the West Building, were typically more lightweight, hung out further away from the original face of the building



The Krupp & Tuffly Building at 900 Main Street and its neighbor at 905 Main Street (right side of image without awning), fell victim to the slipcovering trend. San Jacinto Savings took occupancy of 905 Main in the mid-1960s and covered its façade with a mosaic of the San Jacinto Monument.

Courtesy Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

and did not require as much of the original ornamentation to be removed—thereby better preserving the original façade.

The exterior walls of many older buildings were built of permanent materials like cast iron, brick, stone, and terra cotta. These materials were an integral part of the façade making their removal during a cosmetic update more difficult. More often than not, they were simply covered over and, although they have sustained some damage, are still intact beneath the slipcover. Ironically, in some cases, the mask of the slipcover has helped to preserve the architectural features behind it.

The degree to which the slipcover altered the original appearance of the building also varies. The alterations to the 1879 Stegeman Building at 502 Main included the slipcovering of the upper façade but failed to obscure the ornamental brackets and cornice capping the building—leaving little doubt that there was an older building behind the visible façade. These visible remnants of the past helped to inspire the building tenant to remove the slipcover and begin restoration work on the original façade beneath.

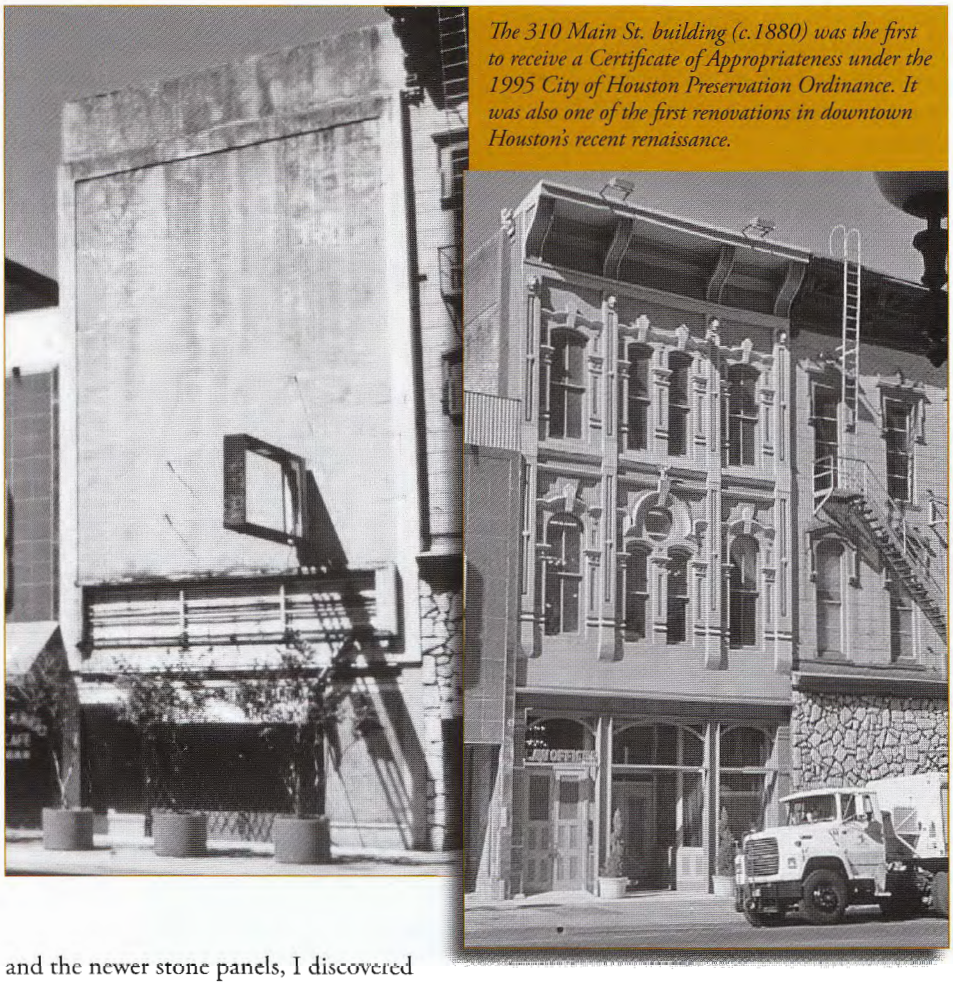
In contrast to the Stegeman Building, the original exterior face of the building at 905 Main was completely sheathed in granite panels—giving no indication of what lay behind. Even upon further investigation at the interior of the upper floors it is not immediately apparent that there was more to this building than met the eye. Great care, it seems, was taken to infill the original window openings with concrete block and cover over them from the interior as well as the exterior. The primary clue to the building's original identity were the historic photographs depicting a building of identical massing. The slipcover of 905 Main was removed in 2002 and the façade meticulously restored to its original appearance.

Next door to 905 Main, the Krupp & Tuffly Building, a fanciful art deco edifice designed by prolific Houston architect Alfred Finn, was slipcovered around the same time as its neighbor. The only hint of what lies behind the current dull monolithic façade is the deco detailing decorating the elevator penthouse visible from the street.

The upper façade of smaller, low-rise buildings such as these was often completely covered in order to create a cleaner looking, monolithic appearance and in so doing, covering the windows. This large new unobstructed area often served as a billboard sized space to identify the occupant of the building. Unlike 905 Main, in many of these buildings, the windows—as well as the back of the slipcover—are visible from the interior.

A visit to the unoccupied second floor of the nondescript commercial building at Main and Lamar—which was once home to Everitt-Buelow Clothiers—led to the discovery of the original arched steel sash casement windows still intact behind storage shelving lining the outer walls. These windows had been hidden from the exterior for years by a slipcover of travertine panels encasing the upper façade of the building. While investigating the 16" space between the original façade

In 2002, the Holy Cross Chapel restored the façade to its original appearance, and later received a Good Brick Award from the GHPA for their efforts.



The 310 Main St. building (c.1880) was the first to receive a Certificate of Appropriateness under the 1995 City of Houston Preservation Ordinance. It was also one of the first renovations in downtown Houston's recent renaissance.

and the newer stone panels, I discovered glimpses of glazed terra cotta acanthus leaves surrounding the windows, medallions, Corinthian pilasters, and other ornate architectural detailing. The subsequent acquisition of photos taken of the building sometime in the 1940s confirmed that the behind the monolithic travertine panels covering the second floor existed an exquisite Spanish Renaissance Revival façade designed by noted Houston architect Joseph Finger—apparently considered out of style at some point in the building's recent history.

Attorney Scott Arnold was one of the first building owners in downtown to reverse the modern alterations made to his Victorian storefront building near the county courthouse complex. Arnold says that he knew intuitively that there was more than first met the eye to the bland plaster façade at 310 Main when he was looking for a building to house his law offices in 1994. In a similar manner to the Everitt-Buelow Building, Arnold's building had been altered in such a way that completely covered the windows on the second and third floors facing Main Street—at least from the exterior.

"We were able to get up to the second floor...and get up to the front of the building. Then of course we could see the back of the windows." explained Arnold. "The window sashes had been taken out... The wooden window frames were still there but none of them had been filled in. And you could look out the window and you could see about six or eight inches of fairly ornate corbels and pediments and columns and all that kind of stuff... Unfortunately, the stuff that stuck out the furthest had been knocked off with a hammer prior to putting the (new) façade on...About that same time I think I had acquired a picture of the building so I had a pretty good idea of what it looked like originally and what was likely underneath..."[1]

Since larger commercial buildings were typically occupied predominantly by office space and relied on access to natural light and ventilation, it was not practical or common to cover the windows as often happened to smaller structures. The 1960s looking office high-rise now known as 806 Main was originally built as a sixteen story structure in 1910 by Samuel Carter and was at the time of completion the tallest building in Houston. The building was referred to as "Carter's Folly" during construction by skeptical Houstonians who scoffed at the idea of a building so tall. Despite its critics, the Carter Building proved so successful that six additional stories were added in the 1920s.

In an effort toward modernization, the building was sheathed in Georgian marble in 1969. Remnants of the original Beaux Arts detailing are still visible at the corners where the new slipcover did not completely cover the original brick quoining. The elaborate conference room on the second floor, originally serving as the Second National Bank Board Room, as well as other vintage architectural elements remain intact, betraying the attempts at modernization of the rest of the building. After nearly forty years of wear, the marble panels installed in 1969 are beginning to show their age. Some have warped to the point of nearly cracking, prompting the building owner to replace them with painted plywood out of concern that they may pose a safety risk to pedestrians. As of this writing, 806 Main is under contract to a developer who plans to remove the entire slipcover and restore the façade to its historic appearance.

Slipcovered buildings were not limited geographically to downtown Houston. Further south on Main Street—outside of what is considered downtown sits an art deco gem, though you wouldn't know it by looking. Sears & Roebuck opened in 1939 to much acclaim. At the time of its completion it was the largest department store in Houston and the first major department store located outside the central business district. Sears boasted the city's first escalators that were capable of carrying 6,000 people per hour between the three levels. In the late 1960s, fearing that the race riots that had ignited in other cities following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. would erupt in Houston, the powers that be at Sears had almost all of the show windows at the ground floor bricked in. At the same time, the sleekly elegant upper façade was clad in beige metal siding.

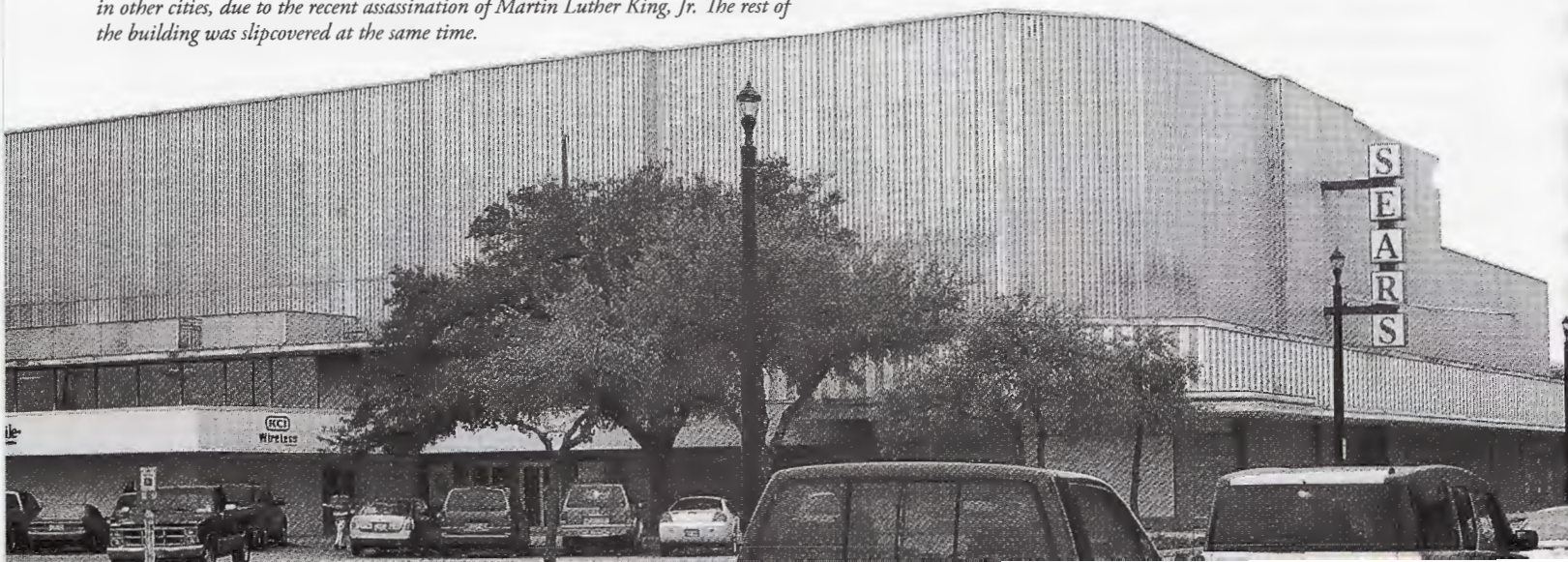
While some slipcovers can—and should—be removed, each building should be considered individually when contemplating the merits of exposing its original façade or restoring its original appearance.

Unfortunately, too much historic fabric has been lost in the process of slipcovering some buildings to justify restoration. Preservation philosophy may also influence the treatment of a building's slipcover. Some historians and preservationists view the slipcovers as part of a building's history and evolution. The lathe and plaster slipcover covering the Richardsonian Romanesque façade of what was originally the Kiam Annex building is, itself, over fifty years old. The current owner of the building has no intention of removing it—and in fact—has recently completed a restoration of the slipcover.

While the recent reversal of many of these cosmetic "updates" signals a renewed interest in historic preservation and sensitivity to the original integrity of a building's design, we would be wise to be vigilant that the same pattern is not repeated. Today's irony is that many worthwhile examples of modern architecture are being—if not slipcovered—altered in ways dramatically inconsistent with their original appearance in an effort to make them look more traditional. Buildings of architectural merit add richness and texture to our cityscape regardless of their period.

Courtesy Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

In the late 1960s, almost all the show windows on the ground floor of the Sears building were bricked in. Sears feared that riots might erupt in Houston, as they had in other cities, due to the recent assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. The rest of the building was slipcovered at the same time.



Preservation Snapshot

William Stamps Farish Quadrangle at St. John's School

The William Stamps Farish Quadrangle, or by its familiar name "The Quadrangle," was the first building on the original five and a half-acre site of St. John's School. Since its establishment, the St. John's campus has expanded to twenty-eight acres. In June 2004, a two and half year, $25 million construction project got underway at the school. A combination of both new building and renovation of existing structures, the project represents the largest in the school's history. One phase of the development includes demolishing three sides of the Quadrangle and reconstructing it to meet contemporary disability codes and upgrade electrical wiring for new technology. The intention is that a fully functioning Quadrangle, rebuilt in the same Austin limestone, will allow larger classrooms and enhanced educational facilities designed to better serve students and teachers.

Originally designed by Houston architect Hiram A. Salisbury, the Quadrangle, the school's main building, was built around a central courtyard bordered by cloistered walkways. In keeping with the quality of Eastern U.S. college preparatory schools, St. John's represented the efforts of several prominent local citizens to create "a school of exacting standards" for Houston students, so that they could go on to attend demanding universities.[1]

The "Master Plan for the Development of St. John's School," written in the early 1950s, states the school's founding objectives:

> St. John's School was established in 1946 as an independent school sponsored jointly by the Parish of St. John the Divine Episcopal Church and by a group of citizens who recognized the vital importance of good educational facilities to the community of Houston. The school was founded by a Board of Trustees representing various religious preferences and was incorporated as a non-profit institution under the laws of the State of Texas. It is a school which welcomes students of all denominations as a strength in its pursuit of Christian ideals.

Students on the west lawn, c. 1950s. Courtesy St. John's School

By the end of World War II, the great demand for petroleum products brought Texas and Houston into the national spotlight. Very few building projects happened during the war, but afterwards the city was booming and the downtown skyline was under rapid construction. With this new expansion came an increase in Houston's population and, as a result, a demand for higher caliber educational opportunity, a feature that the city lacked. In 1945, only one independent school existed in Houston: The Kinkaid School. It was a relatively small school, unable to handle an influx of students and still function efficiently. For this reason, as well as Houston's need for improved schools as a way to attract families to the city after the war, St. John's School was founded and the Quadrangle was built.

For five years, Ellen Clayton Garwood, a prominent Houstonian whose husband, W. St. John Garwood, became Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas and whose father, Will Clayton, was president of the Anderson Clayton Cotton Company and undersecretary of state for foreign affairs prior to World War II, had considered the idea that the city needed a new college preparatory school with the highest of standards. Because the options were scarce in Houston, many parents who preferred this quality of education for their children sent them to independent boarding schools in other states. In December 1945, Mrs. Garwood and Reverend Thomas Sumners of the Church of St. John the Divine invited Alan Lake Chidsey to Houston to help establish St. John's School. Chidsey was appointed founding headmaster of St. John's at the school's first organizational meeting on January 4, 1946.

By January 27, a founding board of trustees was in place, the school was named St. John's School, the official seal of corporation was adopted, and the chairman of the board was authorized to negotiate purchase of the proposed site property. On February 5, 1946, Mr. James O. Winston, the chairman of the founding board of trustees, a group known as "Founders," received approval to secure bids based on building plans submitted by architect Hiram A. Salisbury. Also in February, Mrs. William Stamps Farish, Sr. made the school's first sizable donation. The Founders used the funds toward construction costs of the

first building wing, West Farish, named as a memorial to her son, Williams Stamps Farish, Jr., who died in World War II combat. Later in the year, a second gift from Mrs. Farish, in memory of her husband, made possible the addition of the East Farish wing (the original Arts and Sciences Building) and completed the Quadrangle. This endowment formed the nucleus of the physical plant at St. John's School.

In early March 1946, oil magnate Hugh Roy Cullen and his family donated the five and half acres for the school and the building contract gained approval. Cullen had originally bought the land with the intention of erecting an oil company building on it, but the land had real estate deed restrictions set by the River Oaks Corporation.

Also at this time, the board of trustees entered into a joint operating contract with the neighboring St. John the Divine Episcopal Church to govern the use of mutual facilities. Although physically connected, the church and school have never had an administrative association. Construction of the Quadrangle commenced in late March 1946. Beginning June 13, 1946, progress on the building was stalled for seventy-seven days when a city-wide builders' strike occurred. The Houston Building Trades Council picketed work on construction jobs to force general contractors to require all common laborers and truck drivers to join unions, under penalty of losing employment status for failing to comply. Contractors refused to sign the building trades agreement and shut down all development projects in Houston.

Finally, a compromise was reached and construction of the school resumed on August 30, 1946. After the strike ended, it was heralded as the most paralyzing labor-management dispute in the history of Houston, stalling all commercial construction amounting to more than $50,000,000 in projects.[2] Despite construction being behind schedule, St. John's opened for classes as planned on September 27, 1946. The 310 enrolled students were shuffled between various locations, including nearby churches and business offices, as well as a temporary building ("Hoodwink Hall") erected by the school's engineer, Walter Hood, and two other craftsmen.

The original building plans had ten apartments on the second floor of West Farish to accommodate the school's first faculty members. When the school was founded, the newly hired teachers lived

Salon Juárez

Between 1910 and the Great Depression, Houston's Mexican American population became a truly viable urban community, called "*la colonia*." In response to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution and attracted by new economic developments in Houston during these years, large numbers of people of Mexican descent came to make a new life in Houston. This period of influx resulted in the expansion of small, developing Hispanic neighborhoods, known as *barrios*, the term for Spanish-speaking quarters in U.S. urban areas.[1] By 1930, Magnolia Park in Houston's east end was the city's largest *barrio*.

These new Houstonians often found it difficult to adjust to the new American culture that surrounded them. Many were looked down upon for not being able to speak English and were considered uneducated. As a result, they felt they needed support from one another. One of the most effective ways in which they were able to provide such support was through the creation of cooperative and protective service organizations.[2] Mutual aid societies, or sociedades mutualistas, provided Mexican Americans with crucial financial and emotional support, a sense of common experience and Mexican identity, and a cultural frame of reference for them in public life. Their fundamental concern was to help each other survive the very difficult conditions under which they lived and worked.[3]

In May 1919, sixteen Mexican Americans met in Magnolia Park and founded one of the first mutual aid associations, Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana Benito Juárez. In 1928, men from the society, which offered its members life insurance and a social outlet, built a two-story, forty-eight by eighty foot meeting hall, or *salon*, at 7320 Navigation Boulevard. This prominent community building, Salon Juárez, became "a beacon with a welcome mat,"[4] a place where Mexican Americans, who were discriminated from many local businesses and services, could come to dance, watch movies, see plays, celebrate special occasions, attend school where Spanish was allowed to be spoken, buy groceries, and simply gather with other Mexican Americans outside of a church setting.[5] Salon Juárez, according to architectural historian Stephen Fox, was the first purpose-built, nonreligious public institution constructed by and for the local Mexican American community.[6] Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez sought members from all over the city and, spurred by the construction of Salon Juárez at the end of the 1920s, helped to make the Magnolia Park neighborhood into Houston's hub of Mexican culture.

At the same time, however, the Great Depression was beginning. At least two thousand Mexican Houstonians, approximately fifteen percent of the *colonia's* population in 1930, left during the Depression; the era's economic hardship worsened the degree of already existing poverty in their communities. Members of the Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez could not pay their dues to meet expenses, so in 1932, they had to relinquish management of the *salon* they had so proudly dedicated only four years earlier. At some point after the mutualistas lost the hall, probably in the 1940s or 50s, the surrounding community began referring to the *salon* as Magnolia Hall. Over the years, the hall was rented to groups and organizations for various purposes, including many of its original uses, such as a place where dances were held, entertainers performed, and where the community gathered for special events.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, maintenance of the *salon* switched hands several times. During this evolution of ownership, the *salon's* roof was removed with the intention of replacing it, but the project was never completed. Lacking a roof, the building started to deteriorate. Now Salon Juárez is on the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance's "Endangered Buildings" list, appraised at $83,790. The *salon* was recently a subject of local news, when it was determined by the city as a hazard and was scheduled to go on the auction block on July 6, 2004, for failure to pay back taxes of nearly $20,000. Just days before the land was to be auctioned, the owner

out-of-state. To guarantee these employees' jobs in a booming city where housing was scarce, St. John's provided on-campus residences for them. Beginning in 1952, after Houston built more residential areas to accommodate the growing postwar population, the faculty living in the Quadrangle apartments found suitable homes off-campus and the apartments were converted to classrooms and administrative offices.

Faculty and students gradually occupied the new building throughout the first school year, teaching and attending classes amid noises of beating hammers and buzzing saws. Full use of the building began in early 1948, when construction of the entire Quadrangle was finally complete. The dedication ceremony for the new school was held in the courtyard on April 10, 1948.

In the fall of 2004, former St. John's School board member Deborah Detering contacted historic preservation instructor Jim Arnold at University of Houston's School of Architecture to propose a documentation project for his 2005 spring semester class. St. John's still held architectural drawings from the building's original construction in the 40s, but the Quadrangle had not been fully documented again since changes were made over the years. For Detering, who sent three children to the school and is an alum herself, St. John's is a meaningful piece of her personal history and she did not want to risk losing the history of its original structure.

Arnold's Spring 2005 historic preservation class began the drawing and historical research process, and, as three sides of the Quadrangle were gradually torn down for new construction, his Spring 2006 students carried on the project. Although the exterior design of the new building is sympathetic to old construction, much of the original materials and limestone patterns cannot be repeated. As renovations and rebuilding continue, Detering meets with a building committee once a week to attempt to retain historically significant features of the Quadrangle. It is a hard fought battle, but Detering has made it a goal to preserve as much of St. John's history as possible. Despite its new walls, the most crucial element is that the school embodies the historic spirit that spurred on its growth and prosperity for nearly sixty years.

—Leigh Cutler

paid the taxes owed to the county and the *salon* was removed from the list of properties to be sold.[7]

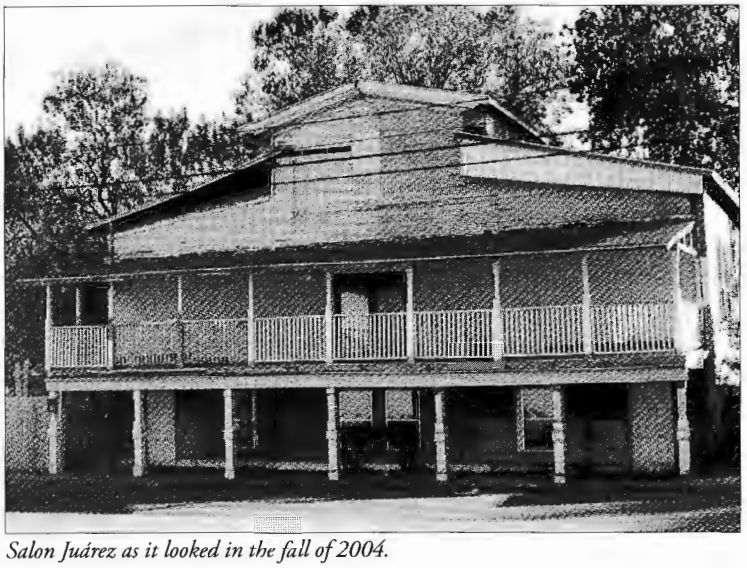
By just driving down Navigation Boulevard, past Salon Juárez, and through the immediate surrounding neighborhood, it would appear that renovating the hall would not serve much benefit to the area since the residential pockets nearby are so impoverished. The question arises of whether an improved building will remain in good shape if the currently poor conditions of the neighborhood persist. In order to answer this question, it is important to explore existing plans for the future of the community while continuing to consider its past.

In 1998, the Houston Planning and Development Department published an economic development plan for the East End area with strategies to revitalize the community. The issue of rebuilding the East End's economy came from the decline in the area, economically and socially, as a result of the 1980s oil bust in Houston. The city collaborated with the East End Chamber of Commerce on an analysis of the underlying factors inhibiting a full recovery of the East End's economy. As a result of this research, the Greater East End Management District was formed in 1999 to promote economic development, improve infrastructure and amenities, provide services to commercial property owners, and create opportunities for workforce training and development. With five years of tangible accomplishments in that area of Houston, the management district designed a Ten-Year Service Plan, anticipated to run until 2014. The district is making progress toward changing public perception of the East End as rundown, unsafe, and unappealing for business or as a destination.[8]

Although only islands of stability exist in Magnolia Park today, such as the YWCA and Community Family Center, plans are in the works to uplift that community and transform it into an enduring, secure environment. With a vision, mission, and objectives already in place for the neighborhood where Salon Juárez is located, a renovated version of the building could become a contributing catalyst for revitalization.

Salon Juárez represents the strong potential for architecture and landscape to be primary sources for understanding the past. Preservation of Salon Juárez, a place that brought together people of the Houston Mexican community, represents a project in true following with Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez's motto, "Union y Progreso," or unity and progress. Perhaps these two words can inspire community leaders, activists, historians, preservationists, and other interested Houstonians to unite and make further progress toward saving the first, and now one of the last, historic landmarks to the city's Hispanic heritage.

—Leigh Cutler



Salon Juárez as it looked in the fall of 2004.

Preservation Snapshot

DEW PLANTATION

In the spring of 2004, a group of students at University of Houston embarked on a class project that brought them off campus and into the community. Led by instructor James P. Arnold, the historic preservation class was given the project of documenting a turn-of-the-century plantation house in Missouri City, Texas, just outside Houston. Plans were underway to demolish the house and the class project was a small way of preserving the structure's past.

The Dew Plantation House is one of the last remaining buildings of its kind in Fort Bend County. The Dew Brothers' business was one of the plantations central to the production of sugar cane in the region and contributed to the Imperial Sugar Company's thriving business. This house represents a way of life that existed throughout the region over a century ago.

The Dew Brothers were among the founding fathers of Missouri City, and were central in the development of the area into a viable economical district. They were also very involved in the Houston community. Henry Wise Dew was one of the eight men involved in establishing the Houston Fat Stock Show and Rodeo in the summer of 1931. Since then, the Houston Rodeo has gone on to become the largest rodeo in the country.

Until recently, the future of this house was bleak. The house had been vacant for several years and the owner, Muffie Moroney, could no longer afford its upkeep. Much of the house had fallen into disrepair, and developers were buying up the land on either side of the house. It would only be a matter of time before the house would be slated for demolition and lost forever. Moroney, a descendent of the Dew family, did not want to see her family's history disappear; therefore, she worked with Jim Arnold and Historic Houston to help preserve the history of the home through a Historic American Buildings Survey.

The house received several additions since it was originally built. In the late 1920s, the second-floor porch was enclosed, a new roof line was created, and two room additions were made on the north and south sides of the house. This Colonial Revival Conversion only changed superficial aspects of the house, so the original architecture, fabric, and feeling were still evident.

In order to move the Dew Plantation House to its new home, Historic Houston first removed parts of the structures that were not original to the house. Next, the house was cut into two pieces to facilitate the difficult move. Historic Houston, a non-profit organization, has had over 35 houses donated to them for relocation purposes since its founding in 1998.

After the semester ended and the project was completed, the land was eventually sold to the developer. With the demolition date set, Muffie Moroney decided to host a going away party of sorts for the house. Friends and family got together to say goodbye to the house. It is rare when preservation can actually occur at the eleventh hour, but something happened at this farewell gathering that will change the course of the plantation house's history.

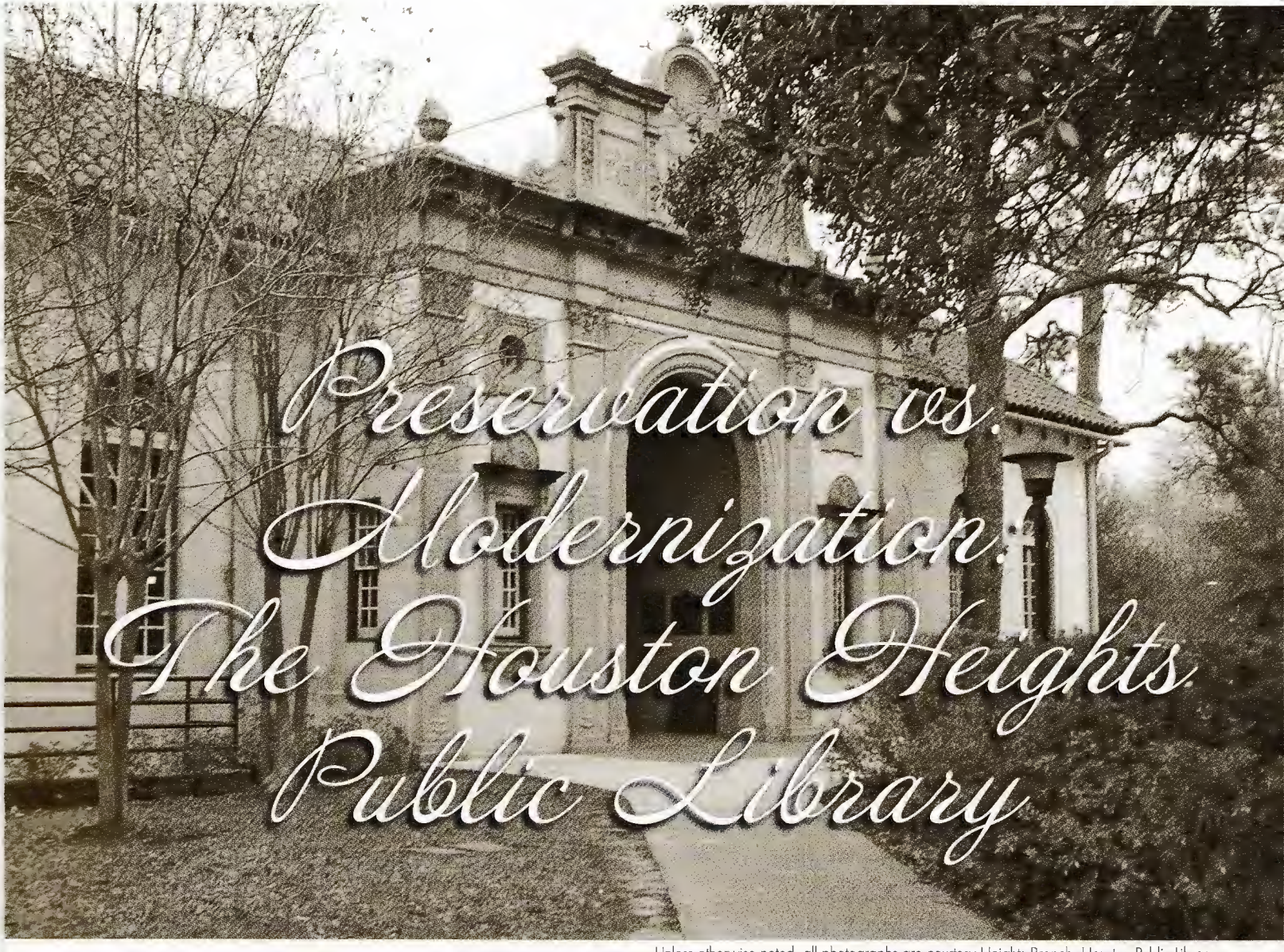
A plan unfolded to move the house to the nearby Kitty Hollow Park within the Sienna Plantation development. Muffie Moroney donated the house to Historic Houston, which in collaboration with Johnson Development Corp. and Fort Bend County Commissioner Grady Prestage, arranged to relocate the house. Johnson Development Corp. and Ms. Moroney decided to share the cost of this move.

One of the first rules of preservation is that once a historic structure is disconnected from its original land and environment, the historic value diminishes. Undoubtedly, moving the house off the plantation land and away from the majestic, century-old oak trees would take away some of the house's distinction. However, this solution was better than completely destroying the structure.

On February 25, 2006, Texas Highway 6 was shut down in both directions from 11:00 p.m. – 4:00 a.m. as the Dew House slowly crept down the road to its new home in Kitty Hollow Park. County Commissioner Prestage would like to see the house restored and preserved for public use. He is working with Barry Moore, FAIA, and the University of Houston School of Architecture's 5th year design studio. Together they are looking at possible design plans for the house at its new site that would involve the entire park.

Preservationists in Houston often fight losing battle after losing battle. The historic preservation students that became involved with this project two years ago were able to experience the feeling of preservation success and recognize that such successes are few and far between.

–Jenna B. Leventhal



Preservation vs. Modernization: The Houston Heights Public Library

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are courtesy Heights Branch, Houston Public Library

by Jason P. Theriot

Just before seven o'clock on the evening of March 1, 2001, more than one hundred residents of the Houston Heights community gathered outside of the historic Houston Heights Public Library for a monumental town hall meeting. The group closed ranks and marched into the library's community center where a public hearing on the library's future had just begun. Three library administrators and three consultants sat at the head of the meeting table and welcomed their unannounced guests. Recommendations from the "Library 2010 Strategic Master Plan" highlighted the opening discussion. As the Houston Public Library director laid out the recommended plans to "replace the Heights neighborhood library," shouts and angry comments burst from the agitated assembly.[1] The well-motivated, well-informed, and well-organized petitioners made clear their intentions to preserve their current historic structure and keep it a functioning library. In a jarring display of community action, preservation won a small victory over modernization. "Community action," the *Houston Chronicle* declared, "has ended worries [that] the Houston Heights Library could be closed."[2]

The Houston Heights community has a unique and prestigious heritage dating back to its development at the end of the nineteenth century. In the post-Civil War period, Houston and Galveston became the two major cities along the northwest Gulf Coast. By the 1880s, the railroad came to southeast Texas and connected Houston to the rest of the growing industrialized nation. Within a decade, the population of Houston nearly doubled (from 9,332 in 1870 to 16,513 in 1880).[3] However, a terrible outbreak of yellow fever prompted many inner-city residents to move further north to a tent city that had been erected along White Oak Bayou. This track of land, twenty-three feet higher in elevation than downtown, with rich fertile soil and illustrious vegetation, became known as "Houston Heights."

In 1886, Oscar Martin Carter, a self-made millionaire from Nebraska, came to Houston with an inspiring vision to build one of the nation's first "planned communities" along the outskirts of the growing metropolis city. Improvements to the ship channel, a rise in downtown construction, and a growing population fueled Carter's ambitions for developing the "ultimate neighborhood." The

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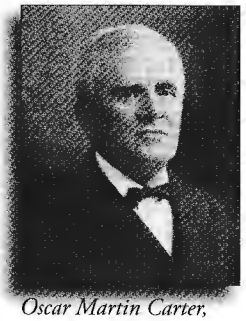
entrepreneur set his sights on the Houston Heights.[4]



Oscar Martin Carter, Founder of the Houston Heights.
Courtesy Christopher Luke

Carter, who foresaw the future need for a well-developed, middle-class community to support the emerging commercial city, convinced investors from the Omaha and South Texas Land Company to endorse his idea. In 1890, he purchased the existing trolley system—two mule-pulling carriages—that brought workers four miles from the Heights to downtown, and replaced it with a state-of-the-art electric streetcar operation—the first of its kind in Houston. The following year, Carter and his investors purchased 1,765 acres of land from Sarah Brasheur for $45 an acre.[5] Construction soon began on two bridges spanning White Oak Bayou, as workers cleared a track of land for the future Heights Boulevard. Carter not only influenced his partners to invest in the development of the Heights, including utilities, streets, parks, schools, and waterworks, but he also encouraged them to purchase lots and build homes of their own. In 1893, Silas Wilks, a carpenter for the Omaha and South Texas Land Company purchased the first lot in the Heights. That same year, the company's treasurer, D. D. Cooley, built the first home and the first two schools in the Heights. Other prominent businessmen within the firm followed suit: C. A. McKinney, N. L. Mills, David Barker, and John Milroy. These gentlemen and their families became the first citizens of the Houston Heights.

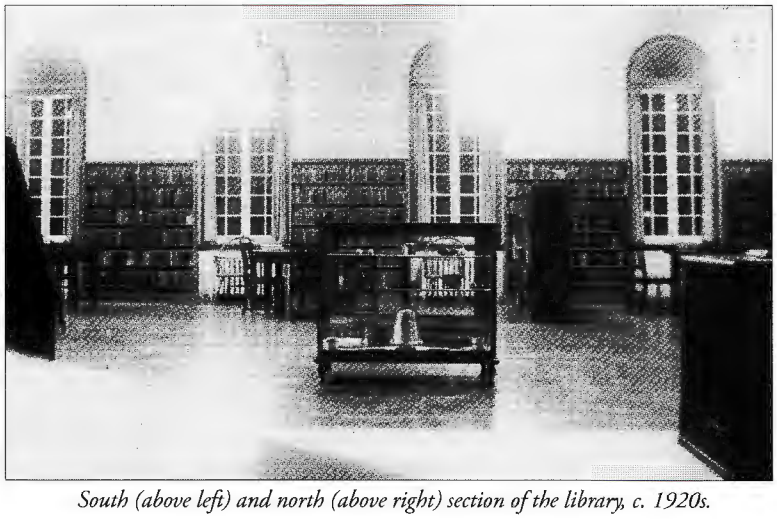
Within a few years, these real estate powerhouses turned an overcrowded tent city into a booming urban community. Business developments added to its appeal: a textile mill, a railroad station, a mattress factory, an electric company, a commercial strip with a grand hotel, and ice plants provided an economic boost to the new neighborhood. On July 1, 1896, the Houston Heights village became a municipality, and the community leaders elected William G. Love as their mayor.[6] By the turn of the century, the Houston Heights had a post office, a volunteer fire service, and 800 residents, according to the U.S. Census of 1900.[7]

Community activities bustled down the beautiful Heights Boulevard with its plush scenery and grand Victorian-style homes. Civic clubs, such as the Heights Woman's Club, began holding regular meetings. Children and nature lovers flocked to Coombs Park—a 50-acre park along the White Oak Bayou—to swim and visit the zoo. A new theater opened and held frequent performances. The first local newspaper, the *Suburbanite*, went into print, and Reverend Fred Huhns founded the Baptist Temple Library—the precursor to the Heights Branch—in 1909.

Although the Heights flourished at the turn of the century, community and governmental leaders could not appropriate and collect the necessary taxes to fund all of the community's growing needs. It was therefore decided that the residents of the Heights would be best served under the municipal jurisdiction of Houston. In 1918, the city of Houston annexed the Heights.

In the late 1910s, as millions of barrels of crude oil gushed out of the rich Texas soil, and the population of the Heights increased accordingly, so too did the need for a fully functioning public library. Funds for such a project, while not available before the oil boom and the annexation period, began to surface in 1921. Soon thereafter, the Trustees and the Heights Committee decided to purchase a 150-by-150 foot site on the corner of 13th Street and Heights Boulevard for $7,000. Centrally located in the heart of the Heights, this site would become the cultural center of the community—as it remains today. J. M. Glover was chosen as the architect and the Universal Construction Company received the contract to build the Houston Heights Public Library. In November 1925, the library moved from its vastly outgrown location at Heights Senior High School on 20th Street and Heights Boulevard (where it had been located since moving from the Baptist Temple Church in 1918), to its brand new building in the neighborhood's epicenter. The following year, on March 18, 1926, the Houston Heights Public Library received a formal dedication from the community in a grand ceremony.

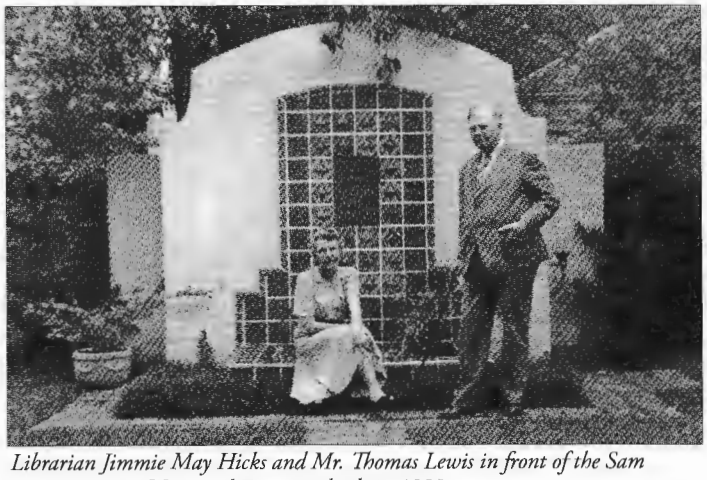
Built in an Italian Renaissance Revival style of pale pink stucco, high ceilings, and beautifully arched windows and doors, the Heights Branch—one of the first libraries built in Houston—became an instant hit with the community. A 1926 dedication summary reported, "Good advertising resulted from the move as evidenced by the first day's circulation, when 674 books were circulated, and from the first month's registration, when 215 persons became holders of library cards." During that same period, the branch circulated well over six thousands books from its collection. "Visitors come to the Library to inspect the new building," Branch librarian Harriet Dickson noted in the summary report, "and many of them express pride in its beauty to the desk assistant."[8]



South (above left) and north (above right) section of the library, c. 1920s.

In its first fifty years of service to the public, the Branch acquired numerous gifts from the community and allocated many improvements to the facility. In 1939, the Heights Woman's Club created a reading garden at the rear of the building. The club raised money and purchased a wrought iron fence to enclose the lush area. The women sought to pay tribute to the Heights' founder, O. M. Carter, by attaching the Victorian veranda railings from his demolished home to the latticework overgrown with vegetation in the north corner of the garden. That same year, Thomas B. Lewis, a Heights resident, donated a fountain in memory of his son, Sam Houston Lewis. Neighbors brought in plants and ferns, while the Heights Theater staged a benefit to raise money for the garden's new furniture. "The garden stands as a monument to the civic co-operation of scores of Heights residents," a local newspaper of the time stated.[9] This "civic co-operation" became a driving force in preserving the Heights Library throughout its longevity.

In the early 1940s, the Houston Heights Public Library boasted more than 20,000 volumes in its collection. The library



Librarian Jimmie May Hicks and Mr. Thomas Lewis in front of the Sam Houston Lewis Memorial Fountain built in 1939.

lived up to its label as "the focal point of the Heights' cultural and civic life."[10] It became a special place, not just for its beauty and as a center for learning, but also for community gatherings. Here local groups met to discuss important civic and local governmental issues. The first renovations came in 1951, which added a second floor to the north side of the building. Six years later, Mrs. A. A. Lesikar, a well-known library patron, began a campaign to have the Italian Renaissance building air-conditioned. When the city denied such an expensive upgrade, "civic co-operation" and community action made the addition a reality. Lesikar collected thousands of signatures and petitioned the city to act on the community's request. In the summer of 1957, the city approved more than $86,000 for the Heights Library air conditioning project.[11]

For more than three decades, one person helped the Heights Library evolve into a neighborhood cultural center: Miss Jimmie May Hicks. Hicks, an Irish Catholic born in southern Georgia, began her tenure as the Heights Branch Director in 1931. This extraordinary librarian had a special passion for books. "She was the most beloved member of the staff, both by the public and the other staff members," one librarian stated in a 1964 *Houston Post* article. "Her great talent was working with people. She had a real flair for understanding their needs."[12] As a leader, Hicks took great pride in educating and elevating her staff to a status that transcended their own capabilities as librarians. "We train them in the essentials of taking care of the public—which is our main purpose," Hicks stated in an article, "then we expect them to carry on in their own way. I believe in every tub standing on it[s] own bottom."[13]

Miss Jimmie May Hicks, Heights Branch Librarian, 1931-1964.

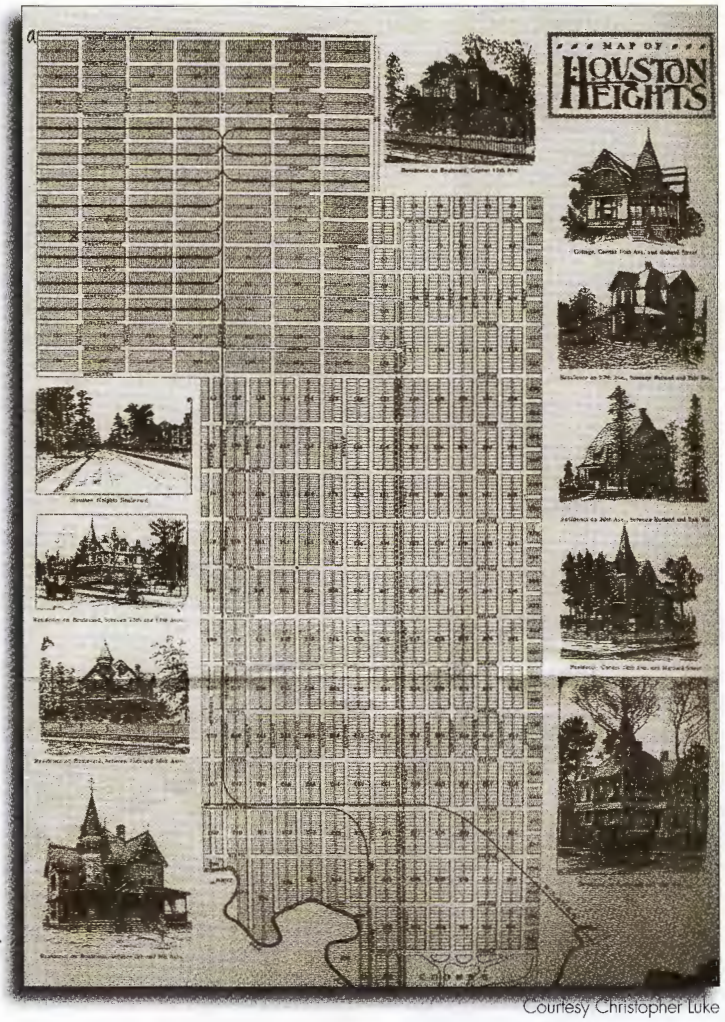
In 1946, as the Heights community celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, Hicks organized a committee to collect rare documents and photographs relating to the history of the neighborhood. Much of the research for Sister M. Agatha's 1956 book, *History of the Houston Heights*, originated from Hicks' undaunted determination to preserve the history and the story of the Heights. According to friends and library patrons, Hicks personified leadership with a "warm and charming personality and [a] manner [that] came naturally to her in showing courtesy, consideration, kindness, compassion, affection and love for others."[14] In the beautifully preserved entry vestibule of the Italian Renaissance building hangs a bronze plaque that commemorates the life and work of the Heights' most beloved librarian, Jimmie May Hicks.

During the 1940s and 1950s, major additions to citywide infrastructure in Houston had a reciprocating effect on the Heights. A massive increase in the Houston population, spurred by the region's booming oil, natural gas, and petrochemical industries, necessitated the expansion of the city's roadways. The opening of major highways in Houston allowed for an increase in mobility throughout the city and facilitated the rise of suburbia. As a result, the Heights suffered a sharp decline in residents, as a new class of Houstonians raced to the 'cookie-cutter' neighborhoods that popped up along the outskirts of the city. This period saw the Houston Heights go through its second major transformation: first from wilderness to development at the turn of the century, then to low-income housing that began invading the Heights district by the mid-twentieth century. Age-old Victorian-style homes that dotted Yale, Harvard, Oxford, and Tulane streets were left dilapidated and vacant, and many of them became low-rent apartment complexes.

Children's Room at Heights Branch Library, 1961.

To combat the decline of the neighborhood, the Houston Heights Association (HHA) formed in 1973 to preserve the integrity of the Heights and to help restore the community to its former self. In 1974, the Heights Branch Library was named one of the bicentennial beautification projects. As the oil boom of the '70s caused an unprecedented increase in the local economy and population, it became apparent to the Heights community and to the Houston Public Library System that the 7,000-square-foot library facility on 13th Street and Heights Boulevard had outgrown its services. The first major confrontation with modernization emerged in 1977.

According to an article in *The Leader*, a local newspaper from the 1970s, "severe structural problems" led to the library's first major renovations, which took almost three years to complete.[15] Len Radoff, chief of branch services of the Houston Public Library System in 1977, stated that heavy annual rainfall caused water damage to the walls, leaks in the roof, and flooding in the basement floor. With a price tag of $800,000, the monumental renovations sought to restore and enlarge the historic building. Once finished, the improvements more than doubled the library's square footage, but it also drastically altered the allure of the handsome Italian Renaissance design. Nearly thirty years later, Heights' residents still question the unusual design scheme and why it was chosen.



Courtesy Christopher Luke

"The Heights Library needed more space," stated Laura Thorp, former HHA president. "What was approved and built was a modern structure in total contrast to the original building. Not all in the community were pleased with the outcome, but that was the architectural trend of the times."[16] The "modern structure" in question was a 3,000-square-foot addition along the north side of the building designed to enhance library functionality. The low profile backdrop encased in glass to promote "openness" is in sharp contrast to the library's handcrafted stonework, staccato roof, grand columns, and arched windows from the original 1920s design. The three-foot webbed steel trusses hover just over the tops of the added bookshelves in the new area. The entire wing is separated from the original building by a skylight. In continuing with the north wing addition, the architects designed three unique circular window frames to replace the original arched windows. On the east side of the library, architects designed a second modern wing to perform as a community-meeting center, which the Heights lacked at the time. For Ray Bailey and Associates, the architects of the 1977 renovation, this contrasting style characterized the cornerstone of their design concept.

The architects stated their mission at the outset of the project: to maintain and enhance the integrity of the building and to provide much needed floor space and shelving to the library. "We wanted to maintain all the nice features of the old building and yet meet the requirements of the new library programs," Ray Bailey remarked in a 1977 newspaper interview.[17] Prior to receiving the job for the '77 renovation, Ray Bailey had been involved in the renovation and restoration of several older buildings in Houston. With a completely renovated facility on 13th Street and Heights Boulevard, the architects aimed to have the Heights Branch meet the standards for library safety and function.

City funds for this project, however, limited the scope of the design and eventual construction. It was not economically feasible to design and build an addition that mirrored the 1920s craftsmanship of the existing building. Additionally, the designers from the Ray Bailey firm expressed the concern that designing the addition in the same style as the existing building would disrupt its vibrant architectural symmetry. According to Sims McCutchan, former Heights Branch manager, it was possible that the later National Register listing might have been compromised had such an addition been made.[18]

The decision was based largely on the amount of funds available for the project. The bond's funds allotted for the renovations were not sufficient; therefore the library turned to the community development programs to cover the remaining costs.[19] An estimated $650,000 became available from a municipal bond, with the extra $150,000 coming from community development funds.[20] Unable to match the style of the original building given the enormous cost of building materials, the architects developed the modern "adjoining building" concept. The architects hoped that by updating the old library building with modern adjoining buildings, they would achieve a harmonious balance that would not detract from the beauty and the essence of the Italian Renaissance look.

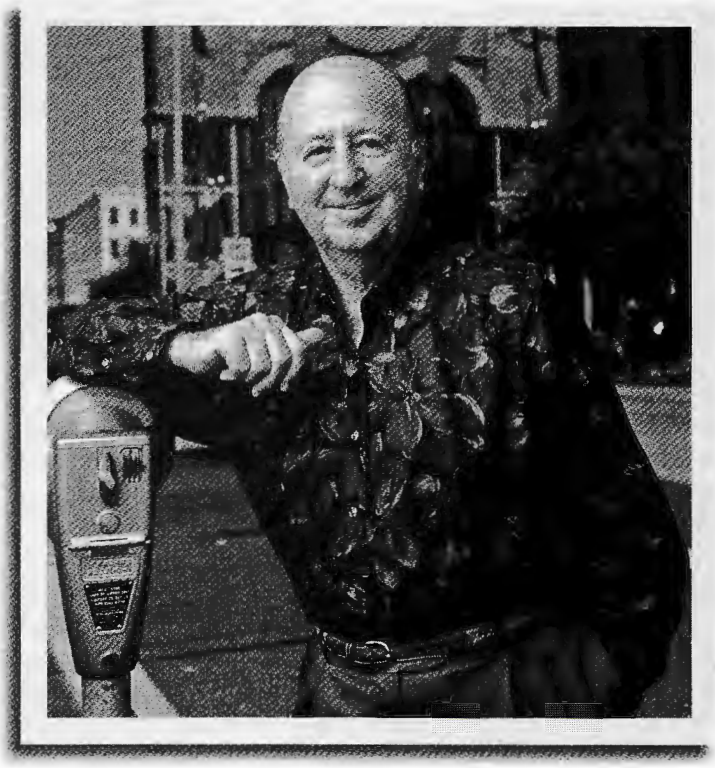
According to McCutchan, Ray Bailey's team made "informal efforts" to solicit ideas and advice from the staff and the community.[21] The architects gave presentations on the design scheme to the Heights Association and its Restoration Committee.

Unfortunately, one of the long appreciated features of the Heights Branch had to be replaced in order to accommodate for the east wing addition. The architects designed the much-needed

Continued on page 64

An Interview with George P. Mitchell

Interviewed by Marsh Davis, Executive Director of the Galveston Historical Foundation and Joe Pratt, Center for Public History at the University of Houston



GEORGE P. MITCHELL AND HIS WIFE CYNTHIA HAVE played pivotal roles in the rebirth of downtown Galveston. The Mitchells have personally undertaken the restoration of some eighteen historical structures in the area around The Strand. They have contributed their money, leadership, and passion to historic preservation in Galveston, helping to create and sustain the "preservation ethic" needed to rebuild historic Galveston.

George Mitchell's family immigrated from Greece to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, coming to rest in Galveston in 1907. His father, Savvas Paraske Vopoul Os, worked his way up from a railroad gang to the proprietorship of a dry-cleaning shop in Galveston. While Savvas worked on the railroad, a paymaster named Mitchell, despairing of pronouncing the Greek name, simply changed it to match his own. The name stuck, as did the work ethic that had motivated Savvas to immigrate in search of better prospects for himself and his family.

George, who was one of four children, took advantage of his parents' hard work and gained an excellent education in the public schools in Galveston. He went on to graduate in 1940 with a degree in petroleum engineering and geology from Texas A&M University. After service in the Corps of Engineers during World War II, he built a major energy company, Mitchell Energy & Development Corporation. As this company succeeded, he also turned his attentions to the development of The Woodlands, originally a 25,000 acre planned community north of Houston, where his energy company had its headquarters.

Yet George and Cynthia remained attached to Galveston, and frequent visits there led to their commitment to do something to stop the urban blight that threatened. They devoted considerable personal energy and money to restoration efforts, playing an important role in the growing importance of historic preservation in Galveston.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER: Marsh Davis is the Executive Director of the Galveston Historical Foundation. Before moving to Texas, Marsh worked for the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. He received his training in historic preservation from the College of Architecture and Planning at Ball State University. Davis and Joe Pratt interviewed Mr. Mitchell on February 4, 2006 at The Tremont House in Galveston.

George Mitchell (GM): I was born [in 1919] and raised in Galveston. It was a very interesting area because it was great time to be born as a young boy, where you had a chance to go to school and go with your friends down the west end of the island and catch fish and go hunting and do many things that most boys don't have the freedom to do. So Galveston was really a wonderful town, as a young person.

My parents couldn't speak much English. In fact, my mother never spoke English, and because [of that] I had to speak Greek until I was thirteen years old. She died when I was thirteen. And my father had a very broken English vocabulary, but he got by somehow. He had a lot of perseverance, so he managed to get by.

It was an interesting childhood, and I think there were many immigrant families here at that time. In fact, I played with a bunch we called the "League of Nations," on 23rd and P. We had all nationalities you could think of as part of that gang. We played football on the sandlot street nearby, and on another paved street, we would have hockey matches on roller skates.

A young George Mitchell after a very successful fishing trip.

Joe Pratt (JP): Do you have strong memories of what downtown Galveston looked like when you were growing up?

GM: Yes, when I was younger, say 1936, 1938, you couldn't get the rats to come down here. It was that bad. It was terrible. Derelicts all over the place. You could buy about half of this stuff for one-tenth of the price.

But Galveston was a great place as a young boy. I was very fortunate because our high school, Ball High, was a very fine high school. In fact, I used to comment to my fellow students at [Texas] A&M [University] that when the Catholic schools' graduates came to A&M, they could not do the engineering. The students were not trained enough to be able to take engineering courses and science courses, and [I was] lucky that at Ball High, I had the experience to have great teachers, and that's why I decided to take petroleum engineering and geology.

JP: Did you have a sense when you were a boy that you were living in a historically-rich environment?

GM: Well, I say that I was on this side of Broadway. I wasn't invited to the Artillery Club functions, or any of those functions over there. They were on the other side of the railroad track, as I'd call it. But we had a wonderful group on our side--a lot of people who were immigrant families....We never did too much association with those on the other side.

About twenty years ago, the Artillery Club sent someone to come to see me. He said, "We want you to be a member of the Club. They delegated me to get you to be a member." I said, "Oh, Bill, tell them thanks, but they didn't invite me back in the thirties and the forties, so I'm not going to be a member." And they said, "No, you can't do that." They screamed all over the place, and I turned them down. So they came back about three months later, and said, "I'll tell you what. They want you to get in so bad, they'll give you a half-price deal. Because you're a Houstonian." So, I mean, that's where we started the Houston memberships. So I said, "Well, okay." If I got a bargain, I did it. [Laughs.]

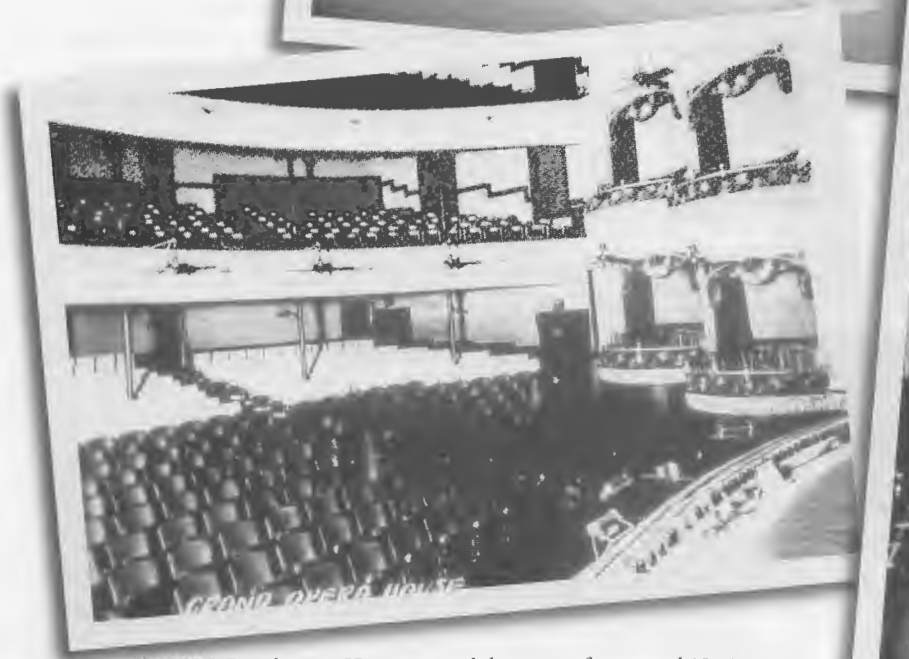
I graduated [from Ball High School] in 1935, but I went back a year because I wanted to go to Rice [Institute]. My mother wanted me to be a doctor, so I had to go back to take third-year Latin, but when I was doing that, I was able to take...solid geometry, advanced trigonometry, advanced algebra. I did well in them. I worked in the oil fields that summer with my brother, who is a graduate of A&M and also worked with Exxon. Now he's an independent [oilman]. So I worked as a roustabout out in the fields, and I decided I wanted to be a petroleum engineer and geologist. So I changed from Rice, because I had been accepted by Rice that summer. I changed, and I went to A&M instead because Rice didn't offer petroleum engineering. They offered geology but not petroleum engineering. So that's why I changed, even though my mother had wanted me to be a doctor.

Well, I went off in 1936 or '37 to go to A&M, and I graduated Class of '40. I mean, those were years that we knew the war was coming, and then those of us that served in the Reserve also knew we had limited time, and I was interested in getting to be in petroleum engineering and geology....So then I went off to southern Louisiana to work for Amoco Petroleum for a year and a half, a tremendous opportunity, to get the experience. The Army grabbed me, anyway, a year before Pearl Harbor. The thing was, I knew at the time that being a second lieutenant or a first lieutenant, in the [U.S. Army] Corps of Engineers was canon fodder. Ten percent of my classmates were killed, and 10 percent were wounded in World War II.

By that time in Galveston, they had the Navy, I think. They had Fort Crockett; they had the Galvez Hotel at that time, and we knew about all those things that went on. But we never really got into historic preservation during the war.

After the war is when [my wife] Cynthia and I began to notice. We'd come down, and we had a summer place here, even early on, in '46 and '47, because that was my hometown, and we'd bring the children down here, and then I would commute back and forth to Houston. But we noticed, driving around, all the destruc-

In 1976, the Mitchells purchased and restored the 1871 Thomas Jefferson League Building (above). This was one of Mitchell's first restoration projects (right).



The 1894 Grand Opera House survived the storms of 1900 and 1915, Hurricanes Carla and Alicia, as well as years of neglect. In 1974, the Opera House was finally restored (right) after concerned Galvestonians rallied in support of this historic landmark.

tion of the beautiful homes on Broadway. Every corner was being supplemented by service station sites or strip center sites. They were destroying the whole fabric of the town. And that bothered Cynthia and me. And, of course, that made us aware—and there was an old society, you know, [the Galveston] Historical Society.

So we began to think about, well, what should we do about it, if we could? And we became, of course, busy working in oil and gas, and we were very successful finding oil and gas for a lot of people, as well as ourselves. And we began to build an interest in the historical preservation thing.

About that time, I got to know Peter [Brink, former Galveston Historical Foundation Executive Director and current National Trust for Historic Preservation Senior Vice President of Programs], so Peter talked me into going to Charleston. He went with me. Charleston showed me what they had done, and they had restored a thousand proj-

ects already at the time we went there, and how they did it. They did a great job. And they had four or five contractors that were buying [historic buildings] and redoing them with reasonable architecture and reasonable cost, and selling them to people from the east coast, and doing very well. We should be doing more of that in this area.

We came back, and we offered that the historical society here, East Texas or whatever it was east of Galveston—we'll pay your way to go to Charleston. I said, "I'll pay your way, to see what they've done." So they took me up on my deal, went there—it took them several months to take me up on my offer. It's tough to get things done. They had a limited budget. Yet there's wonderful people trying hard. So they went to Charleston and Savannah, and our friend [Lee Adler] from Savannah showed them around. Anyway, then they came back on through, so they talked to Mary Moody Northen, and she said, "I'll help you." And she did the revolving fund for them.

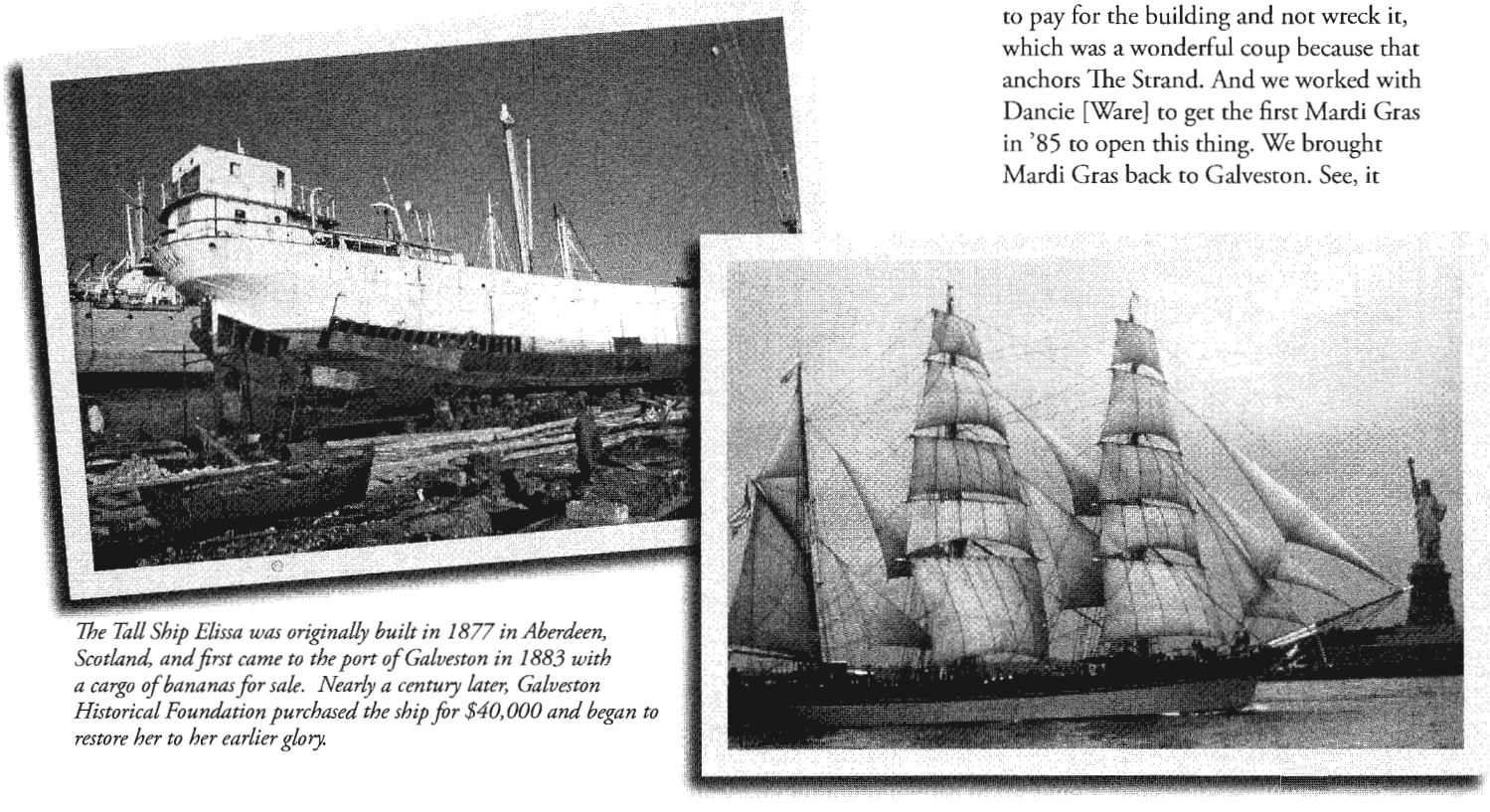
I think that the person who did the Emporium—[William] Bill Fullen, he did the first reconstruction down here. I guess the first [project] that we really took on was around 1975, when we took on the Wentletrap Restaurant [in the Thomas Jefferson League Building]. So we agreed to do that. Well, now, by that time we were busy working with David [Brink, Peter Brink's brother] helping to restore the *Elissa*, and had very good luck with these foundations in Texas, the Houston Endowment, the Meadows Foundation in Dallas, and others to help raise money for the *Elissa*. And also, working with Evangeline Wharton, we helped restore the Opera House—with the Houston Endowment and others to help...and then whatever local people [we found] to get some help, too.

And, you know, we've had glorious ideas, but the *Elissa* budget was $ 750,000; it ended being six million. And the opera house budget of $ 750,000 became six million [also]. So that just shows you what happened when the historic restoration comes around. But they did a great job on both of them, so we're very thankful. This place here [The Tremont House]—it is unbelievable what it was before Cynthia and I took it on.

Those were very major restoration projects. And then, of course, the people had come back from Charleston with a lot of enthusiasm to preserve what we had. We had so much still left here; we were in much better shape than New Orleans was. They were getting ready to start. They've done a good job since then, but when they first started in the late sixties, early seventies, Galveston was far ahead on still having historic structures, because we knew Galveston had the best Victorian-style structures in the Southeast, well the Southwest. Vicksburg had some, and a few others along the area. [In Texas,] Nacogdoches and others have a little up the state, but nothing had the quantity you had in Galveston, because Galveston's wealth was because [of] shipping, of the port, the cotton that came through here and the grain that was coming back and forth, so their wealth was so good among the wharves and the people here, they built beautiful structures here. Most of the areas have a few good structures but nothing of the magnitude Galveston had, because the economy was a booming economy in the sixties, really from about 1850, 1860, 1880.

One thing we did—Peter would get me to help him when he had real problems, so he was trying to get the railroad museum building, and the Union Pacific had made a contract to sell the building to the wrecker's crew. So he had me call the head of Union Pacific and others, and we begged them to hold off, to let Peter see what he could negotiate with Mrs. Northen [Mary Moody Northen].

So we got them to hold off the wrecking crew for about six weeks or something like that, whatever it was, and he worked out with Mrs. Northern who agreed to pay for the building and not wreck it, which was a wonderful coup because that anchors The Strand. And we worked with Dancie [Ware] to get the first Mardi Gras in '85 to open this thing. We brought Mardi Gras back to Galveston. See, it



The Tall Ship Elissa was originally built in 1877 in Aberdeen, Scotland, and first came to the port of Galveston in 1883 with a cargo of bananas for sale. Nearly a century later, Galveston Historical Foundation purchased the ship for $40,000 and began to restore her to her earlier glory.

The Hotel Galvez was known as the "Queen of the Gulf" on the day it opened in 1911. Over the past century, the hotel has hosted such famous guests as Teddy Roosevelt, Howard Hughes, and Frank Sinatra. In 1993, renovations began with the intention of recreating the original feel of the hotel.

started in 1867 in Galveston, and then it died during World War II, and we started it back when this building was put on the market in '85. So we got Dancie to have seven of the great world's architects to do the [Mardi Gras arches]. One of them is here now. The other five, we have models made of them, and we had them at the Smithsonian the whole summer because they thought it was such a beautiful design, and the architect did it for nothing, just to have a relation to the Mardi Gras, [the] first Mardi Gras we had. And so we built those two temporary structures…only lasted a year or two. This one, we kept it ten or fifteen years, and they finally raised enough hell so I just finally refinished it to be permanent.

[In these years] we were involved in Houston doing oil and gas, and then eventually started the Woodlands Project. I still was interested in Galveston, and Cynthia was very interested in Galveston, and did a lot of work for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and really tried to restore things here. We took on fourteen buildings on The Strand and the three hotels: the Galvez, this hotel [The Tremont House], and the Harbor House. So we restored the ones here, and I just said today, had we not restored what we did, you wouldn't have a downtown.

We worked with the people here and got interested, and we had some good help—certainly the Kempner Fund and, of course, the Moodys have done a share of work here—so I think that their activity was very important to help get the projects moving. And I think that they were really good at fund-raising in those days.

MD: *But as far as the architecture, though, you saw the value here before a lot of people did.*

GM: Well, that's right. We realized that the Victorian architecture here was very important to preserve, and then when we would redo a project, we worked very hard with the good architects that worked with us. Boone Powell [the architect] did a lot of work for us. And so I think that preserving the architecture was very important, and a lot of people didn't understand that…. So many people ask me, "Why do you waste your money?"—because it costs perhaps a hundred percent more to do restoration. So there are ones that really and truly didn't understand why you would do that when you could do it cheaper by doing a conversion, more like what's going on now. And therefore, Cynthia and I first were strong to keep the architecture as much as we could.

And we had to fight the state on this project here [the restoration of the Tremont House]. We had some of the environmentalists fighting us. In that main lobby there, you see that beautiful red brick wall on this side. They said I had a $3 million tax claim they wouldn't allow. And they said, "Well, you got to cover it up with plaster." I said, "Like hell I am. That's the most beautiful part of the whole project." So we argued for three years. They turned down my tax claim. So finally I got two people to make an analysis of the damage from the 1900 storm, and they found two areas where bricks didn't have plaster. And then the mansard roof on this would have been torn off by the storm. And we had struc-

ture that showed where it should go. So we convinced the people in Washington, not those around here, to allow my tax credit… Sheridan [Lorenz, my daughter] has the same attitude. They're fighting now about hand rails on loft spaces. I said, "Well, you just have to do what's sensible."

We'd work with Peter to identify buildings that we thought we would try to help on. I guess really the last one that we worked on was probably the Galvez, you see? We spent about $5 million about five years ago to remodel it completely.

I don't know if you know what it was before. They had the entrance from the back. The inside was poorly done. They had a pool in the front there, and a lobby that had chlorine coming out all over the place. I said, "How can people eat [in] this damn place?" When we bought the Galvez, what happened was I mentioned to Cynthia that the Galvez was for sale, and she said, "Well, if you care about Galveston, you'll buy that hotel." I said, "All right..." So we made a deal, and at first she said, "All right, you own it now. Tear out that damn smelly pool in the front lobby." But we completely redid it. We did the entrance, the front. We planted those beautiful trees from Arizona. Sheridan just redid the windows. They're beautifully done. Sheridan has done a great job on remodeling the basement and the first floor as well as all the other floors, so Sheridan now runs the three hotels, and she's tough.

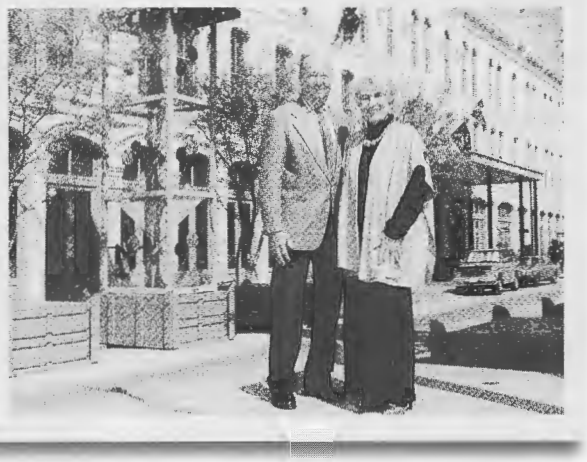
MD: *She's absolutely sincere in her love for this. I think my favorite thing that she did—it's kind of inconsequential here, but when she was living over on M, in that great house on Avenue M, she had a policy that when the school children were walking by in the morning, if her gate was open, they knew that they could come in and have breakfast, and they would make a little assembly line. They'd make scrambled eggs and toast, and they'd have a good meal before they went to school.*

GM: She's helped a lot around the school area, and she helped their families because they have some destitute—and she told them, "I'm going broke helping families." I said, "Well, we'll give you some money to help the families," so we gave her something to parcel out.

But anyway, we did fourteen buildings [in Galveston], and we spent a great deal of money, and like you say, it's tough to make The Strand turn around. It's doing better, but my prediction is that in five years, it will be the best shopping center in

Continued on page 68

The Tremont House hotel has a long and storied history in Galveston. The first Tremont House opened in 1839 but later burned down. The second hotel (above), which hosted dignitaries from around the world, survived the 1900 storm, but succumbed to the wrecking ball in 1928. In 1984, the Mitchells revived the spirit of the Tremont and rebuilt the hotel just a half a block away from the original. The new Tremont House hotel occupies the 1879 Leon and H. Blum Building.



As early as 1867, Mardi Gras celebrations were held on Galveston Island. George and Cynthia Mitchell are credited with bringing Mardi Gras back to Galveston in 1985, the same year the restored Tremont House hotel (in the background) had its grand opening.

FOURTH WARD: A conversation with Stephen Fox

by Tim O'Brien

The Freedmen's Town Historic District in Houston's Fourth Ward was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Since 1995, the vast majority of its historic fabric has been demolished. The ninety-block neighborhood just west of downtown Houston was not filled with singular buildings designed by famous architects. Instead, Fourth Ward contained a rich array of historic vernacular structures. Stephen Fox, Houston architectural historian and preservationist, shared his thoughts on Fourth Ward and all that has been lost with Tim O'Brien.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER: Tim O'Brien is a graduate student in the Department of History at University of Houston. On April 7, 2004, he interviewed Stephen Fox, a Fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas and an adjunct lecturer in architecture at Rice University and the University of Houston. Fox is also the author of numerous books on Houston's architecture.

TIM O'BRIEN (TO): *Are there any architecturally significant structures still standing?*

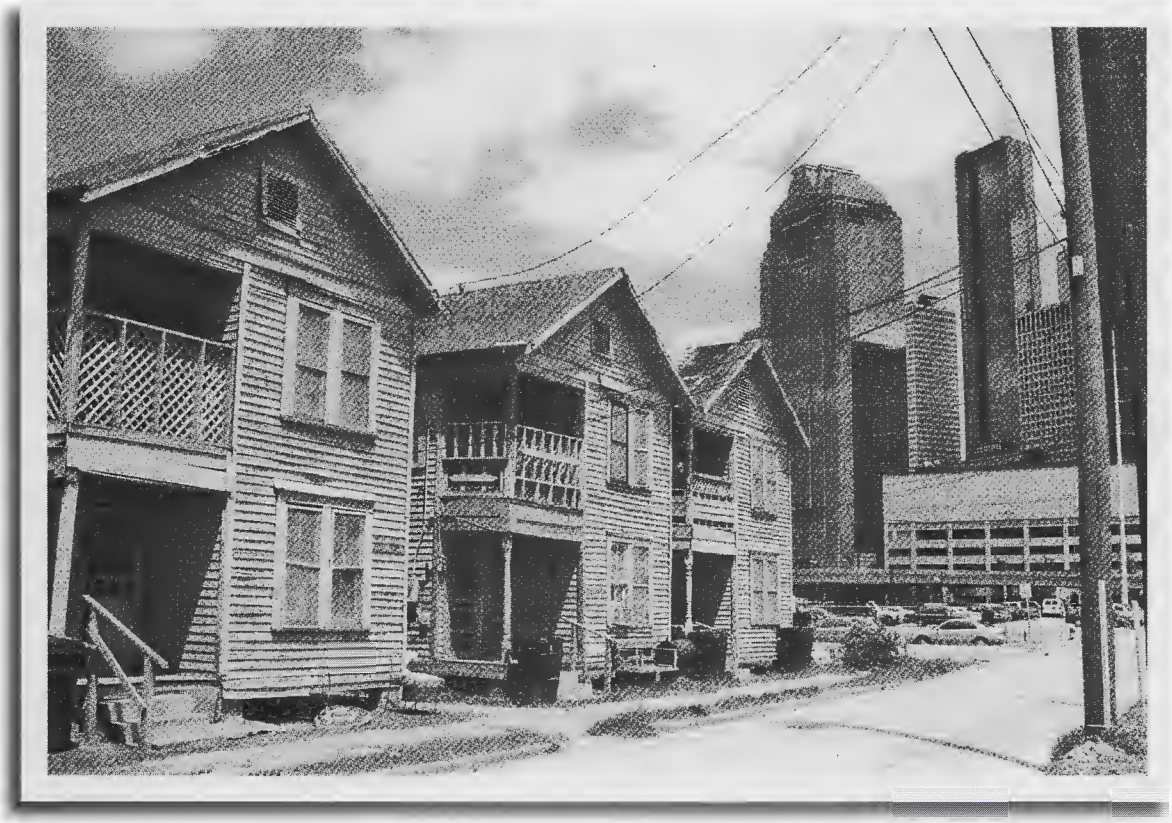
STEPHEN FOX (SF): Yes. But it's not so much the architectural significance of individual buildings that made the Freedmen's Town Historic District and the rest of Fourth Ward notable as it was the historical significance of vernacular architecture and the way that vernacular building types represented the lifeways of working class African American families in the segregated south during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fourth Ward, and the Freedmen's Town Historic District within it, represented what the cultural geographer Carl Sauer called a "cultural landscape."

Fourth Ward was significant for the range of different house types it possessed (the "shotgun" cottage is one example of a vernacular house type associated with Fourth Ward). Institutional buildings—churches, businesses owned by African Americans that catered to African American clients (such as barber shops and beauty shops), fraternal organizations, and funeral homes—were part of this cultural landscape. Also, corner grocery markets, which were often owned by immigrants. Sicilian immigrants who came to Houston around 1900 lived in Fourth Ward for at least a generation as storekeepers. They were white people living in a black neighborhood during the segregation era, as M. Louise Passey discovered when doing research for her 1993 history thesis at Rice University, "Freedmantown: The Evolution of a Black Neighborhood in Houston, 1865-1880."

These vernacular building types were important because they materialized the history of Fourth Ward. In American preservation during the last quarter of the twentieth century, the issue of addressing the preservation of working class cultural landscapes, which do not usually involve exceptional, architect-designed buildings but are composed of repeated vernacular building types, emerged strongly. That was one of the exciting things about Fourth Ward: it was remarkable in being one of the few remaining segregation-era neighborhoods of late-nineteenth century origin still intact in a major southern city because Houston, with its lack of zoning, could not qualify for federal urban renewal funding,

African Americans fought for and finally achieved building a colored library in 1913. The Colored Carnegie Library grand opening (above), at the corner of Frederick and Robin Streets, was an important event for the community and was attended by many. By 1962, the building was torn down to make way for Houston's growing freeway system.

Courtesy Houston Metropolitan Reseorch Center, Houston Public Library



Now in the shadow of downtown Houston's towering skyscrapers, much of the Freedmen's Town neighborhood (left) is falling victim to gentrification. Inner loop real estate is becoming popular once again and developers are taking advantage of this change in attitude. Older homes throughout the Fourth Ward and other neighborhoods such as Montrose are being torn down as fast as new luxury town homes are erected.

Courtesy Tim O'Brien

the funding source many other southern cities used to destroy the comparable neighborhoods in the 1950s and 1960s.

TO: Despite the importance of this neighborhood, opposition to its preservation continued from developers as well as local government.

SF: The powers that be were never willing to concede that Fourth Ward had any cultural importance; that buildings, streets, the people who lived there in any way contributed to the identity of Houston. There was never any opportunity at the top to address the situation in a positive way. They—city officials, officials of the public housing authority, prominent citizens involved with a series of redevelopment initiatives—were all so sure that they could come in and sweep everything away. When they encountered resistance, they would never make any substantive compromise to achieve what they wanted… It was very frustrating: the unwillingness of the city government and the civic elite to revise their conviction that Houston had no history worth preserving and that if it did, it wasn't to be found in Fourth Ward.

TO: Do you see any success in Freedmen's Town?

SF: For the most part, no. I'm too aware of what was lost. I guess the good thing is the city maintained the historic widths of the streets, one of the most unusual features of Fourth Ward, rather than widening them. In other nineteenth-century Houston neighborhoods, you find isolated instances of unusually narrow streets, but no other neighborhood where all the streets were consistently narrow. Some houses and institutional buildings in Fourth Ward have survived. The Housing Authority of the City of Houston created a "historic district" of moved and rehabilitated houses in the 1500 and 1600 blocks of Andrews Street. The Rutherford B. H. Yates Museum, a non-profit neighborhood preservation group begun by Catherine Roberts, has succeeded against great odds and continuing tribulations in preserving several significant buildings and carrying out archaeological and historical research. But tragically, the Freedmen's Town Historic District has lost its integrity. This is not simply an issue of the loss of buildings but of a cultural landscape preserved by generations of Houstonians of color who made Fourth Ward, in the words of writer Olive Hershey, the "soul of Houston."

Bethel Baptist Church on Andrews St. was founded by Rev. Jack Yates in 1891. The current structure was erected in 1923 and over seventy years later was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Over the past several years, the church has fallen into disrepair as the congregation's members could not afford the upkeep. On January 24, 2005, fire gutted the already damaged church and the wrecking ball quickly arrived. Community and church leaders immediately stepped in and saved the building's walls from total demolition. Efforts continue to create a feasible plan that would preserve this historic structure.

Courtesy Tim O'Brien

Freedmen's Town in the 1920s has been described as Houston's Harlem. Restaurants, jazz spots, and night clubs dotted the landscape, and were frequented by Houston's white citizens as well. The main commercial strip was along West Dallas Street. Since its heyday, most of Freedmen's Town, like the Rainbow Theatre seen here at 907 W. Dallas St., has been demolished.

Courtesy Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

PRESERVATON

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one that allowed a full five year 100% city tax exemption on land and improvements. The exemption would be given to city-designated landmark buildings that were substantially rehabilitated in keeping with their historic architecture.

The passage of these two ordinances was a huge accomplishment for preservationists. Preservationist Randy Pace was hired as the city Historic Preservation Officer to administer the program. Although the preservation ordinance is one of the weakest ordinances in the nation, it does establish criteria for local historic designation of buildings, sites, objects, and districts. It provides an educational vehicle to property owners on the merits of preservation. The city-appointed volunteer Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission serves as the review body for historic designation and for exterior changes beyond ordinary maintenance and repair to designated buildings. If a change is denied by the Commission, a 90-day waiting period from the date of application is imposed so that the owner can have dialogue with neighborhood groups and others to work out a favorable solution to restore/rehabilitate the building in question. The Commission forwards its recommendations for landmark and historic district designation to the Planning and Development Commission and, ultimately, to city council for final approval.

In addition to the legislative victories and as the Houston economy began to improve, many rehabilitation projects began, particularly in the downtown area around Market Square. With many of the buildings vacant and values diminished from the downturn in the economy, these projects became more affordable to achieve.

Developer Randall Davis bought the historic Bute Paint Company Building (now Dakota Lofts) out of foreclosure in the Warehouse District north of downtown and the Hogg Building (now Hogg Palace Lofts) on Louisiana Street near Market Square and converted them into loft apartments. Minnette Boesel, in partnership with Guy Hagstette and several others, bought the historic 1889 Foley Dry Goods Building at 214 Travis, which had been partially burned in a fire, and restored it as art galleries and loft apartments.

The first condominium loft conversion in downtown was the Hermann Estate Building built in 1917 and vacant for over 20 years. Developer Doug Crosson, in partnership with Minnette Boesel and others, set a benchmark project in terms of legal documents, finishes, and floor plans that opened in 1998 with 25 condominium units.

The major project of the decade was the redevelopment of the Rice Hotel by Randall Davis and partners into over 300 loft apartments. Vacant for over 20 years, the Rice, originally built by Jesse Jones, had been a symbol of Houston's prosperity from World War I until the late 1970s. An elaborate financing package was put together by Mayor Lanier and Michael Stevens, a developer and advisor to the mayor on urban initiatives, to insure the success of the project. The Main Street/ Market Square Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) was approved by city council in a nine-block area around the Rice Hotel to recapture incremental tax value and put dollars back into improving the district. The Houston Housing Finance Corporation was a party to the project. The development partnership also was approved and received federal historic investment tax credits on qualifying rehabilitation expenditures since the building was an income producing property listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The success of this $34 million plus project and the others mentioned helped to catalyze the adaptive re-use of almost a dozen other historic buildings into housing. Five others were redeveloped as hotels, including the Texas State Hotel (now Club Quarters), the Sam Houston Hotel (now the Alden Hotel), the Post Dispatch Building on Texas Avenue (now the Magnolia Hotel), the Union National Bank (now Hotel Icon), and the Humble Building, an approximate $60 million plus project (now two Marriott Hotels and an apartment tower).

The downtown population in the last ten years has gone from about 1,000 residents to over 3,500. Other projects such as Minute Maid Park, which incorporates the historic 1911 Union Station in its design, a new 7.5 mile light rail system, expansion of the George R. Brown Convention Center, several new hotels including the 1,000 plus room Hilton Americas, and multiple restaurants and clubs have all helped galvanize downtown into a destination for residents and visitors alike.

While preservation downtown was burgeoning, historic inner city neighborhoods including Houston Heights, Woodland Heights, Norhill, and Eastwood were fast becoming sought after residential locations. Many of them are seeking local

HOUSTON HISTORIC DISTRICTS

National Register Of Historic Places Districts

Freedmen's Town
Independence Heights
Broadacres
Boulevard Oaks
Houston Heights Multiple Resource Historic District

City And National Register Districts

Main Street/Market Square Historic District
Sixth Ward Historic District
West Eleventh Place
Westmoreland
Courtlandt Place

City Districts

Norhill
Avondale East

Houston's Parks and Recreation Department collaborated in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the Downtown Houston Association and DiverseWorks Art Space to redesign Market Square in an effort to help revitalize the Main Street/Market Square Historic District. What resulted was a collaborative urban design put together by nationally known artists that spoke to the importance of preserving the area. The sculpture "Points of View" is by former Texas artist James Surls. Four pairs of ceramic tile benches depicting colorful scenes of the old City Market were created by Austin artist Malou Flato. Eighty-six enamel photo tiles by Houston photographer Paul Hester depict the area's history and California artist Richard Turner created the "Walkways" as a walk through Houston's history with fragments from demolished and existing buildings including a slab from the Shamrock Hotel (built 1949; demolished 1989) swimming pool.

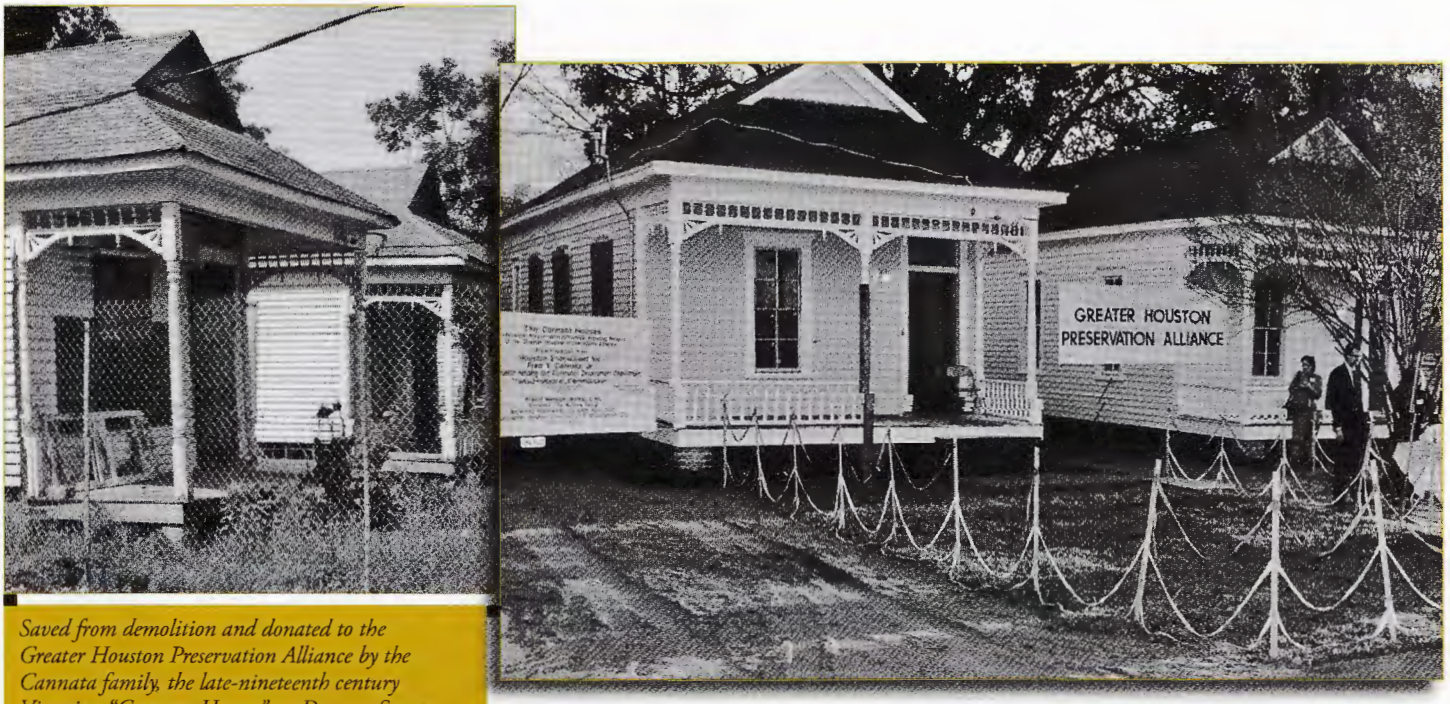
historic designation. Norhill accomplished a huge neighborhood initiative when they received city historic district designation. Other inner city areas such as Midtown, Third Ward, and First Ward are experiencing redevelopment pressures and the threat of the loss of historic fabric. And while new construction integrated with the old or historic can be a good thing, without zoning, design guidelines, or deed restrictions, it becomes hard for many older neighborhoods to protect their historic assets once property values begin to rise.

A neighborhood that has received many blows from these pressures is the Fourth Ward. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Freedmen's Town Historic District in 1985 as home to emancipated slaves after the Civil War, Fourth Ward's shotgun houses and narrow brick streets nestled in the shadows of downtown once contained a thriving neighborhood.

Lack of local political initiative, the untimely deaths of potential supportive leaders such as former Congressmen Mickey Leland and Barbara Jordan, the fragmented and ill-fated attempts at planning for the future of this important neighborhood by varying entities, and the lack of protection under local ordinance has led to the demise of most of the structures in this neighborhood in the last ten years. New construction of town houses has replaced many historic homes.

A number of houses have been restored by the Houston Housing Authority as part of a federal grant for replacement housing when a major portion of Allen Parkway Village, originally called San Felipe Courts, was demolished. San Felipe Courts was designed with local architectural design participation by MacKie & Kamrath and was the largest low-income housing project of its kind in the South in the 1940s. It was listed as a National Historic District in 1987 even though it was less then fifty years of age.[6] After its partial demolition, it was de-listed.

In the 1990s many new non-profit



Saved from demolition and donated to the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance by the Cannata family, the late-nineteenth century Victorian "Cannata Houses" on Decatur Street in the Old Sixth Ward Historic District were renovated, restored, and sold as affordable housing in cooperation with the City of Houston's HOME Program and the Old Sixth Ward Community Development Corporation (now Avenue CDC). The after photo was taken in 1995 as GHPA volunteers were setting up for the dedication ceremony.

Courtesy Greater Houston Preservation Alliance

organizations committed to enhancing neighborhoods emerged. The Avenue Community Development Corporation (formerly Old Sixth Ward Community Development Corp.) set about revitalizing the historic Washington Avenue Corridor and saving older houses to be renovated for affordable housing. (Most recently, in 2005, this group completed the rescue, renovation, and adaptive use of the neo-classic 1924 Jefferson Davis Hospital as affordable housing for low-income artists in conjunction with Artspace Projects, Inc., of Minneapolis.) Other entities such as the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation also focused on housing goals utilizing existing housing stock. In addition to a proliferation of community development corporations, many neighborhoods (over twenty now) initiated tax increment reinvestment zones and redevelopment authorities to revitalize their neighborhoods and plan for the future.

Such non-profit entities as the GHPA began moving houses or acquiring them by donation to save. GHPA accepted the donation of two shotgun type houses, the Cannata Houses, in the Sixth Ward which were redeveloped in partnership with the Old Sixth Ward Community Development Corporation under the city's "Home" program as affordable housing.

Project Row Houses, located in Third Ward, was founded by artist Rick Lowe in 1993. The project formulated a new model for historic preservation in low-income minority communities by integrating preservation with provisions for a wide range of community services including art installations focusing on local community awareness. This project featuring almost an entire square block of narrow shotgun houses has garnered national recognition and funding.[7]

Older neighborhoods without deed restrictions began using alternative tools to preserve the historic character of their areas. These include "prevailing lot size" and "prevailing building line setback." Through a petition process to the City Planning and Development Department, blockfaces and/or areas can have overall setback and lot sizes put in place for twenty years. These tools can help insure that the size of additions and new construction will be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. Value is then maintained for the neighborhood or area as a whole.

The New Millennium and a Preservation Future

In 2001, Houston's Historic Preservation Ordinance was amended. The original version required that in order to qualify for the city tax incentive, the property owner must have begun work within six months of landmark designation. There was no incentive for the owner, if they were not planning renovation, nor if they sold it to someone else. The Planning and Development Department did a survey of ordinances around the country and found that this provision needed to be deleted so that owners would want to have their buildings designated historic and always would be eligible for a city tax incentive. The present version provides for up to a 100% city tax exemption on improvements for fifteen years.

In 2003, Houston elected a new mayor, Bill White, whose political platform was built on business acumen, political savvy, and an extraordinary belief that quality of life issues (he was a founder of Houston's Quality of Life Coalition) equates to a better city and hence a better economy. Mayor White has and is providing his leadership for the enhancement of Houston's urban environment.

The new millennium not only brought new thinking but new organizations, such as Houston Mod, which is dedicated to the preservation of mid-twentieth century modern architecture; of which Houston has a large inventory. Historic Houston was formed to rescue buildings from destruction, often by relocating them, or through a salvage warehouse program saving architectural and building features so

that others can reuse them in rehabilitation projects.

In 2005, an amendment strengthening the Historic Preservation Ordinance was unanimously passed by city council to establish a "Protected Historic Landmark" designation whereby a Houston building designated can never be torn down unless there is a life-safety issue. This is certainly a good step toward enhancing the historic preservation ordinance and hopefully can lead to the adoption of further amendments that will give the same level of protection one finds in San Antonio and Galveston. Mayor White also initiated a History Task Force that, as of this writing, will be issuing its findings in the coming months on how we can engage Houstonians in a better awareness of their own history including the built environment and make public policy recommendations.

Under Houston's Preservation Ordinance, the city presently has over 125 individually designated landmarks, 20 Protected Historic Landmarks, and over 3,000 structures within 7 City Historic Districts. There are also 10 National Register Districts in addition to 222 individually listed National Register landmarks.

We must continue to improve public policy, initiate a citywide survey of historic properties and neighborhoods (there are perhaps 50,000 historic resources in Houston), adopt building codes sensitive to historic structures, create design guidelines for appropriate rehabilitation and compatible new construction, and promote Houston's historic sites for heritage tourism.

It can often take a generation to make urban change happen. It takes political courage, public policy change, and vision.

It takes the organizational skills and perseverance of many individuals and organizations to affect an ethic that history is worth preserving. It takes the commitment of thousands of property owners investing their time and resources in preserving historic structures. Without our past, we have no point of reference. Never before have we had such an opportunity than the present to preserve our past for our quality of life, for our economy, and for our future.

PRESERVATION IN HOUSTON TIMELINE

1931: Charleston, S.C., passes first Historic Preservation Ordinance

1949: National Trust for Historic Preservation chartered by U.S. Congress

1953: Establishment of Texas State Historical Survey Committee

1954: Harris County Heritage Society founded

1966: National Historic Preservation Act passed by U.S. Congress establishing National Register of Historic Places and other programs

1973: Texas State Historical Survey Committee renamed Texas Historical Commission and given broader responsibilities

1978: Greater Houston Preservation Alliance founded

Old Sixth Ward, first historic district in Houston, listed in National Register

1980: First architectural survey completed of important historic buildings in Houston by Barrie Scardino and Stephen Fox

1983: Main Street/Market Square Historic District listed in National Register

1984: Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission (HAHC) approved and appointed by city council as an advisory body

1986: Tax Reform Act Passed by U.S. Congress (Updated previous 1976 and 1981 tax bills providing investment tax credits for qualifying renovations of National Register income-producing properties)

1995: Houston Historic Preservation Ordinance (with HAHC as the review body) and City Tax Exemption for Rehabilitated Historic Structures Ordinance approved by City Council

1998: The Rice Lofts opens for leasing

2001: City Tax Exemption Ordinance amended

2005: Houston Preservation Ordinance Amendment adds "Protected Historic Landmark" category of designation providing permanent protection

of renaissances over the years. I think the current one going on is the most viable because people are living down there. It's a neighborhood. Every old office building that did not get torn down in the rush of destruction of historic buildings in Houston is now a condo. You know, we told them way back, "Don't tear it down for a parking lot. It's going to be wonderful."

A Community Mobilizes

JP: Why don't you discuss your involvement in the creation of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance?

BJT: About 1975, a group of concerned people started getting together. A lot of these people were involved with the Heritage Society. Of course, Sam Houston Park and the Heritage Society is an early preservation story in itself. But this was the beginnings of the concerned people for historic preservation. We started a committee, but, see, the Heritage Society—it's all about Sam Houston Park and those historic buildings. They were restricted about what was happening outside of the park, because the park itself was a huge responsibility.

Slowly other people joined with us to try to do something about this wholesale destruction that we saw going on everywhere, blatantly, with no regard for history or architecture. We were witnessing extraordinary, fabulous, sound buildings being torn down for no particular reason.

The frustration was so extraordinary, and those of us who had traveled and seen what protections historic buildings had in other places, like Savannah, New Orleans, Atlanta, and Charleston and anywhere up East, in Boston, you name it. These cities had a head-start in looking at their historic buildings and forming different preservation protections. They got it.

Houston has no zoning. Every other big city in the United States has zoning and whatever preservation protections they have, come underneath these ordinances. And so in a city with no zoning, that means you really don't have any preservation protections. It was a real problem here, and there was a real need, and these were impassioned people who were trying to do something.

In 1978, the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance was formed, and it got its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status and was a legal organization. We thought that we could then be more proactive outside of Sam Houston Park; in other words, anything that we might do—i.e., pickets, talking about a particular owner—would not reflect on the Sam Houston Park and would not cause them problems, because they had their own funding agenda and they had their own specific needs. And we were going outside, and we could flirt with being controversial. So we separated not in philosophy but in logistics. Certainly a lot of the Heritage Society people were involved in the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance. So that was the group's beginnings.

We didn't know exactly what to do. We had no power. For the city fathers, the mayor and council, preservation was just way down on their agenda. Houston was all about the future and space and looking forward. The inner city was not considered desirable, so they couldn't understand why we would even care what happened to any old building.

So we tried to change that, tried to change the perception through education, and so one of the earliest things we did was create the Good Brick Awards. In fact, at the very beginning, we had the Good Brick Awards and the Bad Brick Awards. And although we got a lot of publicity for our Good Brick Awards, we got the strangest kind of publicity for our Bad Brick Awards. We were more about the positive rather than the negative end, and we didn't get as far with the negative end anyway, so we cancelled the Bad Brick Awards after about three years, although I always thought it was very appropriate.

JP: Who was your all-time Bad Brick Award winner?

BJT: Oh, there've been a number of them, and I can tell you a lot of stories of that. We had very few successes, very few. The city council was s-l-o-o-w to listen to us, and even if they were sympathetic and we'd come before them and say, "Oh, you don't know what we're losing. This is so important. It's a treasure. It's a jewel in Houston's history, and these are the reasons, and here's the architect, and he was the same architect that did this, this and this, and for that alone"—even if we would get a sympathetic ear, there was still not much they could do. The property owner was all powerful. There was no tool for a sympathetic mayor or council to do anything. They could only say, "This is terrible." Sometimes we'd have the Texas Historical Commission try to get involved, but their slim power over Houston was to no avail.

A classic story—and one of the problems we had, and we'd get this from the press, is that "you guys wait to do something about a particular building until the bulldozers are coming." They said, "It's too late by then." You know, the truth is, nobody will listen until there's something dramatic. The press doesn't show up until there's some startling last minute thing.

We learned from that, so we started identifying buildings. We started making a list of endangered buildings. We could tell. They were vacant; they were sitting there; nobody was repairing them. And so we thought: All right, we're making a list of those important historic buildings, and we're going to see if we can get some interest in protecting them.

In one particular case, there was a building on the corner of Main Street and Congress, I believe. It had a club in it called the Pink Pussycat, which did not, of course, help—but it was a great, classic Houston building, with extraordinary carvings and brickwork. It was just a stunning building by a top-name architect. We had been talking to the owners of that building. They had an asking price, and we didn't have the wherewithal to go buy the building, but we did everything. They knew the historic importance of the building. The owners started to realize that there was a large group of Houstonians who were against the destruction of this historic building. They knew that these people could be out there picketing and they didn't want this negative publicity.

Some unscrupulous owners would—and this is a classic case—on an Easter Sunday morning, arrange for the bulldozer to arrive, unbeknownst to us. They put up a barrier. The bulldozer knocked in a side of the building, they secured the site, and went home for the day. They didn't have to go any further. They just needed to destroy it while no one was around to watch. At that point, there was nothing the preservation community could do once a side of the building was bashed in.

In another case, one of our leading restaurant chains owned some buildings catty-corner on Market Square. Today, it's a parking lot next to Cabo's. It was a precious little one-story building with turrets and gables. It was stucco on brick, and they were lovely little buildings. We knew that this restaurant chain owned it. In this case, we were proactive. We went and talked to them. We said, "Houston downtown is coming alive. You all should open one of your restaurants down there. You've got the building." And we said, "This is historic, and what a good guy you'd be to restore it" and blah, blah, blah. So we just did everything. We met with them. We entreated. We talked to various people. We did everything we could possibly do, we thought. And they would tell us, "Oh, nothin's happening downtown." And sure enough, the same situation. The bulldozers came on a weekend.

For the first time though, this restaurant chain was getting a lot of negative press. The city saw that it was a mistake to tear down the building. Of course, there was nothing that could be done at that point. After the destruction, we saw workers very carefully chipping away at the old bricks and saving them. The chain wanted the antique bricks so they could create an "antique building look" in their new restaurant outside the Loop somewhere. So, one of the reasons they destroyed the historic building was so they could have authentic historic decor. Do you get what I'm saying? That was one of the deciding factors to tear the building down. It was just an investment piece of property that they were waiting to get some huge amount of money for. They didn't need to tear it down. But they wanted the bricks.

Do you know how heartsick we were? We were devastated, because this time we thought we had done everything. We talked to them, we were nice to them, we gave them alternatives, we said this and we said that, various scenarios. We had architects talk to them. We did everything. That's when we realized that the only way to make any progress with preservation is to implement some laws that say, "No means no."

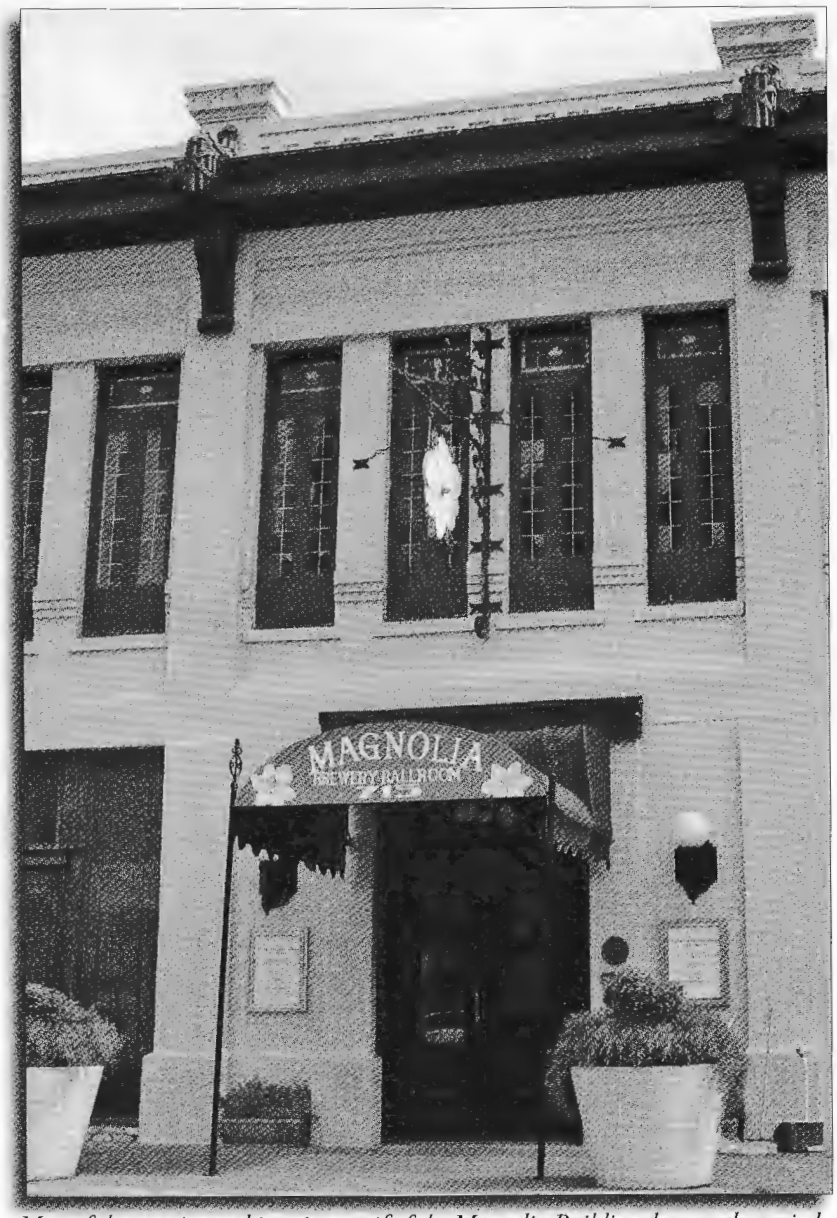
So now with much work we have attained a preservation ordinance in a city with no zoning. However, it's the weakest preservation ordinance in the United States of America. It is hardly worth the paper it's written on. But does it do some good? Yes, it does some good. But no does not mean no. No means we give you ninety days, and in that time, basically, we as preservationists are supposed to get down on our knees and beg you not to tear down your building. That's what that ordinance says. So if you want to tear down an historic building, you just wait ninety days and do what you want. But, hey, for Houston, the preservation ordinance was a huge step forward.

JP: When was that passed?

BJT: March 1, 1995. But that was a huge, huge thing for us. As part of the ordinance, the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) was created. I served as chair of the HAHC and I'm still serving as a commissioner. It does do good things. Randy Pace, the preservation officer with the city, is extraordinary because people come in and say, "My house is historic? What do you mean?" And he says, "Yes you're in a historic district, and it's really valuable for these reasons." It's a whole education scenario. Then the couple will go, "Oh, that's kinda cool."

He convinces them, influences them to try to do it the right way. I mean, it has helped a huge amount. But has it stopped the guy with big bucks who wants to do whatever and who wants to put a three-story townhouse next to a Victorian bungalow? No. Uh-uh. That doesn't stop him. And he has the right, then, to put a three-story, front-loading garages, next to little Victorian bungalows, and when he does that, it ruins the streetscape. He has the right to ruin the value and the streetscape on that particular block, no matter what anybody says, because all the inner-city neighborhoods' deed restrictions have expired long ago.

JP: And you have to win forever, and he has to win one time.



Most of the exterior and interior motif of the Magnolia Building dates to the period just before Prohibition when the building served as executive offices and "tap" room for the Houston Ice and Brewing Company at the turn of the century. Today it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is used for special events.

The Rice Hotel, which was boarded up in 1977, sat vacant for over twenty years. The adaptive reuse of the building as apartment lofts and ground level retail space signaled a change in attitude toward historic preservation in Houston's downtown area. By the time the $27.5 million renovation project had completed in 1998, a renaissance of downtown Houston was underway.

BJT: Right. So once it's done, it's ruined. I'll tell you about another preservation story. There was property on the corner of Heights Boulevard and I-10. It is a critical entrance to the Heights and our historic district, and we wanted it to be special. It was commercial property, and it had been misused over the years. The owners of that property were selling it, but they agreed to meet with us. So we had them to my house for tea. We had the two owners sitting on the couch with about three of our Heights preservationists talking to them. We were being as nice as we could possibly be and trying to say that this was our neighborhood and this was a very important keynote place for our boulevard and that whatever goes there would make or break the entrance feature.

And he said, "Well, I'll sell it to whoever comes along. It's my college fund for my son." Of course, he had big bucks anyway. It was obvious. His son was going to college regardless. But anyway, that's what he told us. We were trying to make him understand that this is where people live. This is our neighborhood. So we asked him, where does he live? How would he feel if a filling station was put next to his house where he lived? He said, "Ha, ha, that's impossible. I live in a restricted neighborhood. That couldn't possibly happen." We said [whispers], "That's what we're trying to do." He didn't equate the fact—because where he lived in a protected neighborhood was perfectly fine, but where we lived didn't count.

That was the mind-set everywhere. You know, "Do you want to live in a neighborhood that might have a filling station?" "Noo-o-o-o." No one would want that. But outside of the Loop, most neighborhoods are protected. They've got deed restrictions. The developer left us that day not understanding why we would want to prevent him from doing what he wanted to do with his property, just because we live next to it.

JP: What happened to the property?

BJT: It's a shopping center now, one story, not too bad. The people that developed it were somewhat sympathetic to the neighborhood, and they did a few good things. They set it back, and they did some planting, and we got the best that we could do. I mean, it's not seventeen stories, and it's not wall to wall, so we considered it a plus.

Those are the kind of stories. There are hundreds of them that fall into each of those categories. We were just squeaky wheels, and we still are squeaky wheels.

JP: How much different now is the standing of preservation versus when you started?

BJT: Oh, it's so much better. Houston and Dallas used to be the worst cities in the country for preservation, but Dallas got smart about fifteen years ago. This is how a government or city and council can make a difference. They said: Oh, we want to develop our downtown. Oh, we have a historic district. Well, then, let's turn this into a tourist attraction. Pass a few laws and give a tax break and give an incentive,

and—bam! That's all you needed to do. Dallas has a thriving inner-city historic neighborhood.

I had a meeting with Mayor Bill White—well, we've met with all the mayors over the years, but Mayor White has been the most sympathetic. He understands. You can't do everything overnight. He wants to focus on Houston's history. He's very much into it. He's got a task force going, and we're all trying to figure out what to do. The problem in Houston is that the property rights people are so powerful. We've had Bob Lanier and developer-driven, property rights people, and no zoning—it is almost impossible to fight that. There are those lately who have made millions of dollars selling their historic properties, squelching the bad publicity, sometimes embarrassing their wives, but "it's my property and I can do what I want."

Today, Mayor White is trying to do the things that won't rile up the developer community. One of the latest things is the protected landmark status. If I have a historic house and I apply for protected landmark status, as the owner, whoever I sell it to or my heirs sell it to cannot tear it down. That's a huge step. And who can complain? Because I, the owner, am doing it. The new protected landmark status includes protection for city-owned historic properties, such as the Julia Ideson Library. Magnolia Brewery is already on its way to being a protected historic landmark, which means that if I go bankrupt or my heirs want to sell it, whoever buys it or gets it, cannot tear it down. So that's a huge step, and the mayor and Pam Holm, the councilmember, deserve credit for that.

When I met with the mayor, I told him the scenario about Dallas. I said, "A tax incentive would do it. It makes people pay attention." What historic buildings we have left that would qualify for historic status is such a minuscule portion of the tax base that it would hardly make any difference in the revenues to the city, but it would make a huge difference to whether those buildings are protected. To give them just 5 percent, 10 percent, 15 percent, some kind of a tax freeze, any kind of a tax incentive, developers would pay attention.

One of the things that helped protect the Heights, is that people came here a lot of times from other places. They didn't understand that you weren't chic unless you lived outside the Loop. They saw a neighborhood that looked pretty much like the one they moved from. They saw trees; they saw front porches; they saw ten minutes to where they worked. What's the problem? They bought the bungalows and added $100,000 improvements such as a walk-in closet, master bedroom, sauna, new kitchen—you know. But the front porch and the bungalow looks exactly the same. It kept the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. That's why I'm proud about the Heights. You can't tell the ones that are $300,000, $400,000 worth of renovation and the one that hadn't been touched; they all look the same. And that's good!

However, inappropriate developers can find houses that have the original owners where nothing has been improved. They will snatch that up, tear it down, and put up a three-story townhouse. But the developers have learned that they get the negative feedback, because this is a very organized neighborhood.

But the other, more important thing is that Midtown opened up, and other parts of the inner city. Suddenly it became okay to live anywhere in the inner city and Midtown just exploded. Did we lose some historic things in Midtown? A few, but not many. It was pretty much a wasteland anyway. When I say "a wasteland," it had been undeveloped. You know what I'm talking about, that whole area.

JP: What was the turning point?

BJT: We lost building after building after building. I had people who said, "Oh, I'll chain myself to the building"—you know, that kind of thing. But it's usually after the fact. There's nothing you can do. But I tell you where the turning point was. I always knew it would be the looming Rice Hotel, as it sat there vacant for a long time, and all preservationists knew—we had several wonderful men who were preservationists, who attempted to do the right thing with the Rice Hotel. The timing wasn't right, the money wasn't right, the partners weren't right. It just didn't work until Bob Lanier, the mayor at the time, and Randall Davis, the developer, cooperated. The city gave Davis a little bit of an advantage here and there. The $27.5 million renovation project began in 1995.

The exterior of the building turned out beautifully; you can debate whether it's great apartments or not all day long, and that doesn't really matter to a preservationist, although in the best of worlds, we would have liked to have seen more of the interior saved, which could have happened. But the greatest part of it is that it was then a building, a statement saying: We're here. We're historic. We're not going anywhere. We're a place to live, and there are a lot of us. And it's smart and clever to live here; you can walk to the opera, restaurants, theaters, and ball games.

It was the dream that people would live in the old part of downtown. And when that started to happen, everybody paid attention. They went, "People will live [in] downtown Houston." I mean, we knew it all along. It's just a matter of giving them someplace to live. And it's the same thing with the light rail. [Speaks in someone's disparaging voice]: "Nobody's gonna use the light rail." Well, they don't have any vision. Of course they're using the light rail. Is it the best kind of solution? No. Is it on Main Street, where you give parties and the most important street—you know, and kind of messing up Main Street? Is it in the right place? No. But is it being successful? Yes! It brings people downtown.

But it was really the Rice Hotel and those kinds of elements that sort of made it cool. You know, if you're single, young, married, and what they didn't anticipate is the empty nesters. The kids have gone off, and you don't want to give up your house in Kingwood, Sugar Land, or whatever, but you're still working downtown and your wife likes to go to the opera, and I've got disposable income, so I'll write a check for a one-bedroom place. They come in on Monday, go to the opera and the ballet and the symphony during the week, and then on Friday they take a trip out to their "country place" in the 'burbs. Do you want to go to the opera or the ballet? I mean, it's a no-brainer for people on certain levels.

So the Rice Hotel was a huge, huge turning point, and we all knew it, and so did all the developers. Since then, downtown has been growing and becoming a rich, viable inner-city neighborhood and historic buildings are a big part of it. We have a mayor and city council that are open to preservation. Things are looking better than they ever have for historic preservation in Houston. It's hard for me to forget the extraordinary losses that can never be reclaimed, but things are looking better for the future.

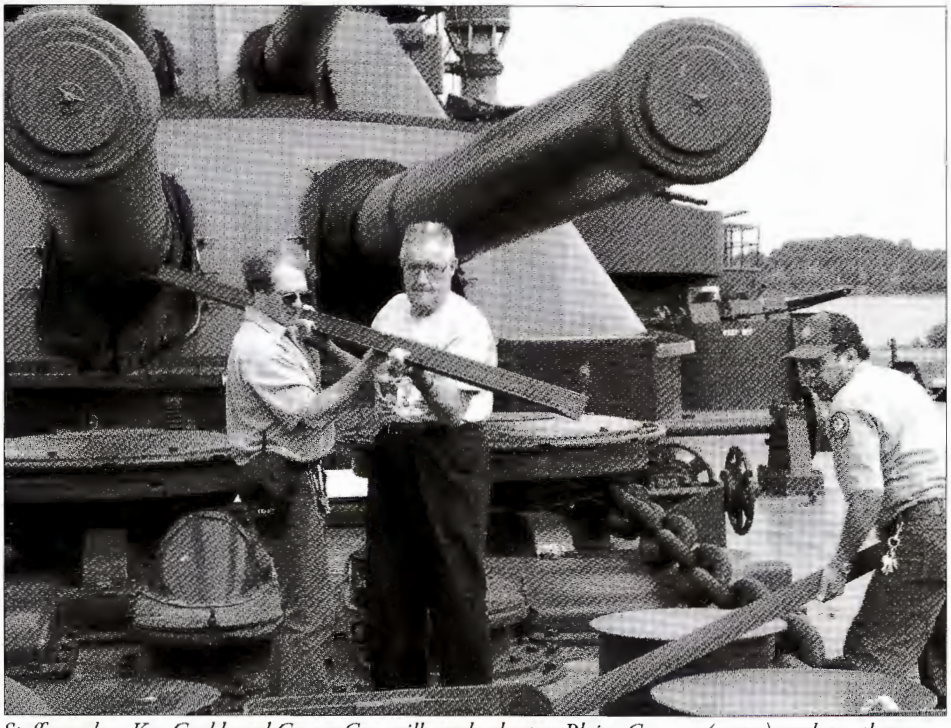
USS TEXAS

continued from page 25

objects, or earlier times, and began to qu estion previously held conceptions and to incorporate new perspectives. This revisionism was reflected in the museum field by a movement towards historic accuracy and improved preservation techniques.[29]

Perhaps one of the best examples of the development of the preservation field as it relates specifically to the Battleship *Texas* was the creation of the Historic Naval Ships Association (HNSA). In 1966 representatives from the battleships USS *Texas*, USS *Massachusetts*, USS *North Carolina*, and USS *Alabama* and from the cruiser *Olympia* met for the first time as members of the newly formed Historic Naval Ships fleet and elected Lloyd Gregory of the *Texas* as the first president. By 1980 the original fleet of five had increased by only thirteen new ships, but as interest in preservation increased during the 1980s and 1990s the number grew to fifty-seven in 1992 and currently includes over 150 ships from around the world. In addition to hosting an annual conference for members, the HNSA provides educational information, preservation resources, and funding for research to both members and the public through publications and their website. While the HNSA is just one of many organizations concerned with standards of preservation, it serves as an example of the changing trends that affected the care of the *Texas* since its decommissioning.[30]

The original bill that created the Battleship *Texas* memorial provided for its "exhibition as a permanent memorial for the purpose of commemorating the heroic participation of the State of Texas in the prosecution and victory of the Second World War II." While plaques and ceremonies on board did honor the veterans of the ship, the Commission paid little or no attention to aspects of historic interpretation or authenticity. The absence of leadership with historic experience and subsequent lack of planning and restoration efforts contributed to the decline of the *Texas*, not only structurally, but also historically, as significant artifacts and educational opportunities were neglected and lost. The Commission had hired F. A. Pellerin as the first curator; however, his efforts consisted only of commemorating the veterans with displays of flags, uniforms, and pictures in "T" shaped frames throughout the ship. Historical accuracy was all but nonexistent as vendors sold peanuts on the deck of the ship, and the original teak deck was replaced with concrete in an unresearched and inefficient attempt to eliminate leaking in the least expensive manner.[31]



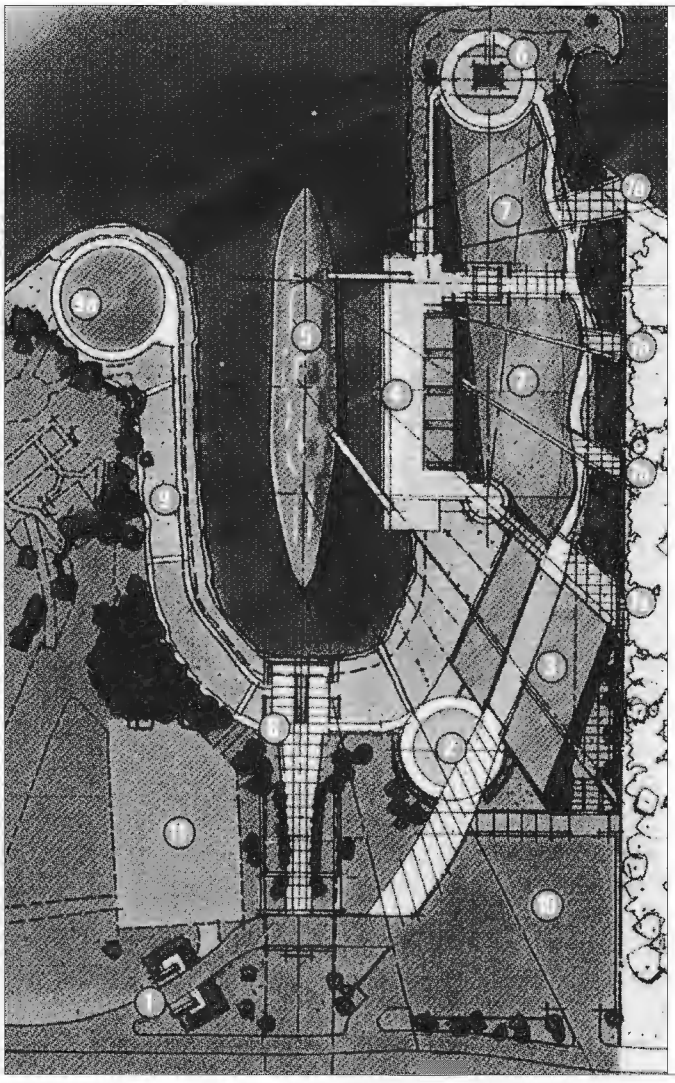
Staff members Ken Grubb and Gaspar Camarillo and volunteer Blaine Corman (center) work together on the main deck of the ship.

The ongoing damage to the ship and the changing academic and public opinion towards proper restoration helped bring about the move from the Commission to TPWD control in 1983, and with the change in command came a change in interpretation as well. Within the first year of TPWD control, James Bell, TPWD Director of Parks, published an article in *Sea History*, the journal of the National Maritime Historical Society, which detailed the plans for the restoration of the *Texas*. The first and most important stage was an investigation of the condition of the hull and lower tanks of the battleship to determine the extent of damage. Preservationists would then consider different options of structural restoration and discuss the addition of shore facilities and the further interpretation of the ship's compartments. This approach marked a decisive shift in tactics from the Commission's tendency to make only surface repairs and minimal aesthetic improvements to an in-depth study of necessary structural repairs and potential interpretation questions.[32]

One of the first projects was the identification and cataloguing of all the spaces and artifacts onboard the ship. After the original docking of the battleship, the Commission had not only flooded some lower tanks, but also sealed off approximately eighty percent of the ship from the public. According to Board Chairman Denny Hair, many of the sealed compartments had become at least partially flooded due to leaks; however, their contents remained untouched since 1946 and items such as pin-ups, cigarettes, and personal belongings were found in many of the areas. TPWD found over 60,000 items in their initial investigations just within their first year of control. Unfortunately, in addition to the historic artifacts, reports also mentioned the large amounts of litter left over from the Commission days when visitors brought food onboard and often left trash and vandalized the ship to document their visit.[33]

Under the new leadership, research was conducted to determine the best and most successful ways to present the ship. Dr. Wilson E. Dolman of TPWD set the interpretive goals of the *Texas* as the representation of five aspects of the ship's history: the operational history, the role of the ship as the last remaining dreadnought, the function of battleships in naval operations, the daily life for sailors aboard the battle-

ship, and the unique aspects of her engines and riveted construction. In addition, the ship itself would reflect the condition it was in during its service in the Pacific in late 1944 and early 1945 based on the most recent changes that had been made to the ship prior to its decommissioning. Dr. Dolman explained that in the view of the TPWD, the ship "should be respected as a unique artifact of great historical significance (in the museum sense) and should not have to experience intrusions on it any more than is necessary."[34]



MASTER PLAN, 1999

1. Entry Markers
2. Memorial Plaza
   - Outdoor Lecture Space
   - Plaza Map
3. Interpretive Center
   - Main Exhibit Hall & Display
   - Interactive Exhibit Space
   - Classrooms
   - Offices
   - 100 Seat Theater
   - Gift Shop
   - Café
4. 1945 Wharf Area
   - Restoration Workshop
   - Public Restrooms
   - Storage
   - Portside Public Access
   - Gangway
5. Battleship *TEXAS*
6. Battleship *TEXAS* Commemorative Park
7. Macro-Artifact Park
   - Landscaped mall commons with natural circulation path
   - Picnic tables and benches

7a. Artifact Node
8. Promontory Point
9. 100 foot Reflective Zone Around Perimeter of Battleship

9a. Houston Ship Channel Park Point
10. Parking Area
11. Overflow Parking Area

The new plans called for the creation of self-guided tours through newly restored and reopened portions of the ship, with the primary goal being to, "preserve, restore and reclaim the historic fabric of the ship." The overhauls in 1925 changed the ship so drastically, it would have been nearly impossible to return to her WWI appearance; and the repairs done in the fall of 1944 had changed the mainmast to an extent that it also would have been difficult to return to the appearance of the ship during the D-Day invasion without "destruction of …historical fabric," so TPWD decided that the restoration would reflect the *Texas*' service in the Pacific. As research continued into the history of the ship, curator Jerry Moore also made an effort to correct inaccurate restorations from the Commission era, such as a series of incorrect stenciled labels on different compartments.[35]

In addition to having specific interpretive goals, the introduction of experienced historians and museum specialists to the staff was a contrast to past Commission members who had limited or no historical experience and applicable knowledge on interpretation, research, and preservation. Under the direction of the TPWD, decisions followed extensive research and documentation, which although limited by time and money, still conformed to a higher standard of historical study.[36]

The TPWD managed to achieve their primary structural restoration goal through the dry-docking in 1988-1990, but they still faced interpretation decisions for the deck spaces that were to be opened to the public. The 1999 Master Plan reflected the increasingly specific goals for maintaining historic integrity aboard the battleship and preserving not only the structure, but also the historic narrative of the *Texas* for future visitors. According to the plans, "Unlike other historic naval ship museums that restore compartments to general Navy specifications, TPWD's restoration efforts are intended to recreate conditions as they existed specifically on the Battleship *Texas* in 1945. This includes many 'unofficial' modifications that were added by the sailors to make life aboard ship more comfortable." These specific interpretive goals called for extensive research and veteran interviews, both of which show a marked change away from the less exacting standards of the Commission days.[37]

The staff of the battleship also recognized that, "modern museum visitors desire—and expect—a more sophisticated experience than that offered by the traditional museum exhibit. This shift in visitor expectations has prompted most modern museums to adopt new interpretive strategies in an effort to create a blend of education and entertainment." Because of these changing desires for modern museums, TPWD instituted a series of new interpretive techniques including audio features throughout the ship, living history special events, and educational outreach programs.[38]

The 1999 Master Plan also first introduced an extensive modernization plan that was expanded upon in 2004 to include new onshore support facilities, increased

interpretive space, a 1945-era wharf, and a memorial park. The existing structures on the south side of the ship would be removed to allow the parkland to revert back to its conditions in 1836 at the time of the Battle of San Jacinto. Visitors would gain access to the ship via a reconstructed World War II-era dock, complete with period vehicles and supplies, and ship restoration facilities along the wharf would also be available for public viewing. A memorial plaza area would honor the veterans who served on board the ship, while an outdoor artifact park would also allow visitors to view some of the larger artifacts that cannot be displayed on board. Perhaps the most important addition to the site would be a new interpretive center, which would include additional historic information, artifacts, and theaters, as well as a gift shop and restaurant.

The location of these extensive new facilities, as well as the location of the ship itself raises questions of interpretation. When the ship was brought to San Jacinto in 1948, the property was already owned by the state, so it seemed a convenient and inexpensive location for the ship. However, as one might imagine, just as efforts to improve the accuracy of the battleship's interpretation have increased, so have efforts to improve the presentation of the San Jacinto battlefield. The setting of the *Texas*, and particularly its onshore facilities, currently rest on part of the site that is believed to be the original Texan camp during the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. According to the 1998 Master Plan of the San Jacinto Battleground:

> The specific location of the ship, its support facilities and parking, which are adjacent to and on the Texian Camp portion of the Battleground, conflict with the optimal context, ambience and interpretation of the 1836 Battle and the Battleground. Accordingly, the Master Planning Committee recommends that consideration be given, when feasible, to the possible long-term relocation of the ship to another site within the park, where it can be a focal point with enhanced interpretive opportunities.[39]

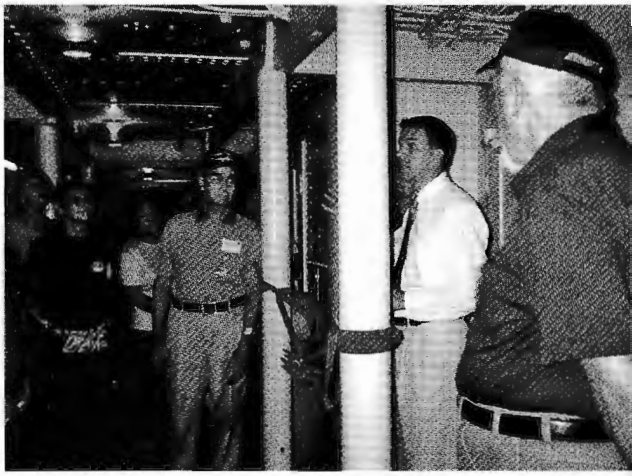
The plan recommends the relocation of the surrounding buildings to the north side of the ship until the time that the complete removal of the ship is a possibility.

In a 1999 article, Caroline Gregory, a trustee of the Foundation, stated that there are "absolutely no future plans to move the ship from its present berth."[40] Instead she cited the previously mentioned plans for relocation to the north side and the creation of additional interpretive buildings. Although it is obvious to staff that the close proximity of the ship and battlegrounds offer interpretive problems for both sites, San Jacinto Advisory Board Member Jan DeVault explained that it is often less obvious to visitors, particularly young children who may not understand that the guns of the *Texas* did not provide artillery support to Sam Houston's men. Even after acknowledging the problems, there is no easy solution. As the ship continues to age, the likelihood of its ability to survive another move decreases. In addition, private donors have offered money to provide improvements to the existing slip and new requests for more money to move it would not be taken well by those who already paid to have it stay in its current location.

While some may argue for its removal, the TPWD is currently attempting to ensure its long-term residence at San Jacinto by installing a dry-dock or cradle in the slip at the battleground, which would allow the ship to be permanently displayed out of the water. There is concern that the ship will not survive further towing to distant dry-docking facilities, and the removal from the water will not only prevent further rust and hull deterioration, but also allow visitors to view the entire ship, including the rudder and propellers that are normally underwater.

The continued blending of time periods within one site may cause some confusion, but improved interpretation at both the battleship and the battlegrounds can in fact provide a broader understanding of American history. According to the 2004 interpretation plan, "while the San Jacinto Battleground speaks to Texans' attainment of liberty, the USS *Texas* speaks to Texans and all citizens concerning the maintenance of that freedom." Improved interpretation of the battleship through the planned interpretive center and onshore facilities combined with the restoration of the Texan camp on the south side of the ship will provide visitors with a more accurate understanding of each site individually, while providing parents and teachers with an opportunity to teach about different eras and changing technologies throughout history. Research by TPWD has also shown that the close proximity of the sites increases the attendance at both the battleship and the battlefield, so financial consequences must also be taken into consideration when discussing the removal of the ship.[41]

Today, the staff continues to fundraise for the permanent dry-dock, onshore interpretive center, and 1945-era wharf, and the staff is hopeful that a proposal to use $16 million in federal highway funds will be approved by Congress and allow them to begin work. While preservationists must hope that these improvements will be made in the near future before the structure of the ship incurs any more damage, one cannot help but recognize the immense improvements that have already taken place aboard the ship.



During the crew reunion in October 2005, Director Barry Ward (center) addresses veterans and visitors prior to the revealing of a newly restored stateroom.

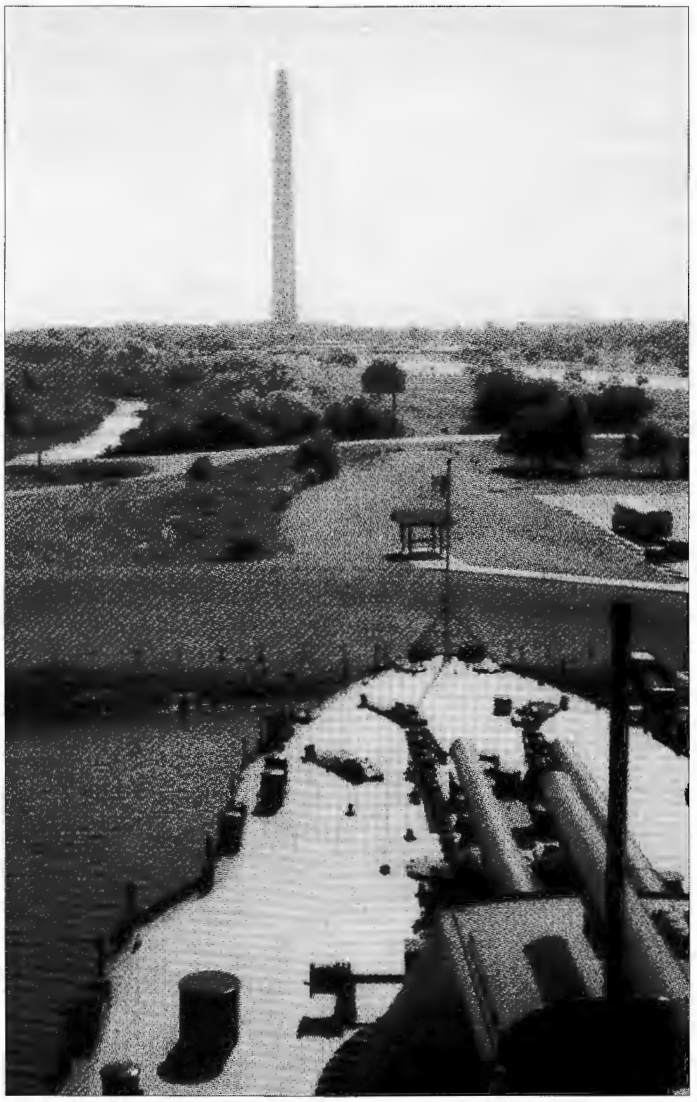
The *Texas* welcomes over 150,000 visitors annually, and in 2004 she hosted over 2,700 students and adults as part of an overnight educational program. Over thirty-five percent of the ship is open to the public at all times, while additional restored spaces are available through special guided tours. Volunteers are currently working on projects to restore officer staterooms and the combat information center, and efforts are ongoing by the staff and volunteers to improve interpretation through explanatory signs, rotating exhibits, and guided tours. In addition to the maintenance crew, the staff itself now includes historians, archivists, a collections manager, trained interpreters, and a curator, all of whom have experience

in preservation and interpretation techniques and serve as living proof of the increased dedication to accuracy and conservation.[42]

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Battleship *Texas* is its ability to shed light on a number of different historical currents of the twentieth century. The ship sits at the intersection of the regional, national, and institutional history of the last hundred years. The list of names associated with the preservation of the *Texas* reads as a roll call of prominent Texans, including Admiral Chester Nimitz, Lyndon B. Johnson, Albert Thomas, Mark Andrews, and Lloyd Gregory. The campaign to raise money to save the ship involved numerous local organizations and individuals, and there is no way to know how many Houston school children of the 1940s are honorary admirals in the Texas Navy through their contribution to the fundraising drives.

Whether it is an ideal location or not, the placement of the ship at San Jacinto has also associated the *Texas* with Texan independence in the state's public memory. Admiral Nimitz described the location as "fitting" in 1948, and Assistant Secretary of Labor John J. Gilhooley declared on San Jacinto Day in 1958, "Texas, has, I think, few more gallant symbols of its own bravery and tenacious purpose than this ship, moored now in its home earth. Texans, then, may see in this ship the Lone Star State in miniature—its past, and by the bright lights of its past, its future." It was largely the citizens of Texas who fought to save the ship from destruction in the 1940s and the 1980s, and the story of the preservation of the *Texas* is impossible without an understanding of the role of state involvement.[43]

The national significance of the ship is an important part of the story as well, in both a military and a cultural sense. The military career of the battleship lasted thirty-four years, spanned two world wars, and boasted a number of groundbreaking innovations including radar and naval aviation. At her commissioning and again after modernization in the 1920s, she was the flagship of the U.S. fleet and represented the height of modern military capabilities. She participated in some of the most famous engagements of World War II, yet through it all, she sustained only two direct hits and suffered only one combat fatality. In addition to her military exploits, as a museum ship she serves as a constant memorial to the thousands of Navy and Marine veterans from around the country who served on board during her active career.



View of the San Jacinto Monument from the bow of the ship, 2004.
Photo by author

Culturally, the *Texas* is also important as a medium through which to examine society during the first half of the twentieth century. As anthropologist and ship's interpreter Kenneth Grubb has explained, "the social construction aboard *Texas* throughout her years of service is a reasonable approximation of the social construction of American society...during the time of *Texas*, the definition and understanding of class and racial divisions were altered in both civilian and military culture, and...these shifts can be examined through *Texas*." During the same celebratory speech, Gilhooley recognized the ship's military and cultural significance claiming, "For Americans, this monument is a miniature of the United States Navy and of the men of her service in war and in peace; those ships and men...whose firm blue line has never failed the United States and never will. For Americans, it is a symbol, then, of bravery, and duty, and history."[44]

The ship's importance and significance in national memory is also related to its institutional role and development as a museum. In a nation where heritage tourism is of growing interest to the population, the accurate preservation and maintenance of historic sites is important, and the story of the *Texas* is indicative of the national trend. As the first memorial ship of its kind, the *Texas* was a pioneer not only in the military but also in the museum field. While her first thirty years left much to be desired, the improvements of the last twenty years parallel the developments across the country in preservation and interpretation, and according to the TPWD, "the Battleship is viewed now by other historical naval vessels as the standard for historical preservation." Between current exhibits and interpretation, living history events, and archival opportunities, "the potential utility of *Texas* as an educational, interpretive, and research vehicle is virtually unlimited."[45]

Although funding and staff shortages often prohibit ideal restoration and interpretation on board the battleship, the current state of the ship provides a safe and accurate venue for a trip back in time. The regional, national, and institutional significance of the *Texas* provides visitors with a multi-faceted museum experience that offers something to guests of all ages and interests, and represents a remarkable combination of military power and civic cooperation.

Preservation vs Modernization

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community meeting center in place of the existing reading garden. The Heights Library archives are rich with articles, stories, and photographs of the garden's past. For many years, annual Easter egg hunts in the botanical oasis brought in dozens of neighborhood children and their parents. A handful of residents from the area complained about the garden's replacement, however, a transition to a large community meeting center became necessary. With seating available for seventy people—plus a smaller conference room,

The Heights Woman's Club raised funds to build a wrought iron fence for the Heights Library Garden in 1939. Many Heights residents were sad to see the library's garden be replaced by the new community meeting room nearly four decades later. Photograph by Damon D. Hickey, c. 1956.

modern wheelchair accessible restrooms, and a projection booth (for watching movies out on the lawn)—the community center not only provided a buffer between the library and the adjacent property, but it finally gave the Heights residents and civic groups a location to hold monthly meetings. Great care was taken to preserve and relocate the memorial plaques that once graced the garden grounds.

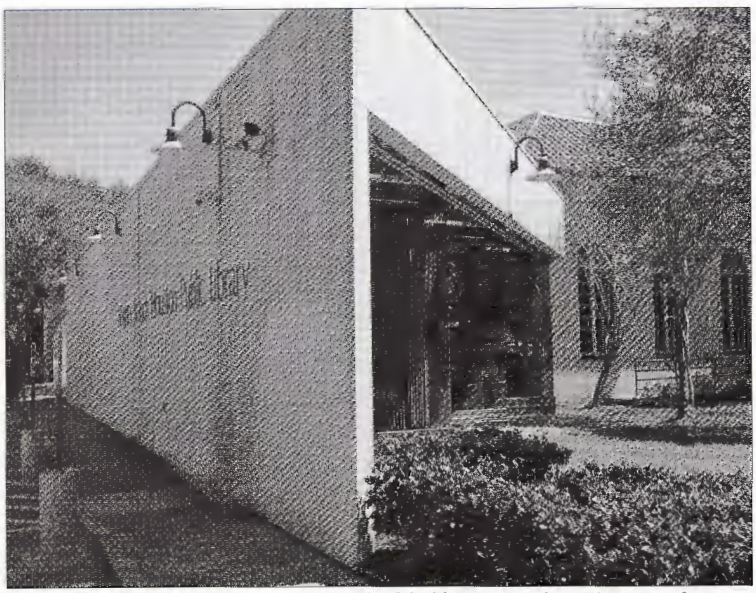
Before beginning the three-year renovation project, a temporary home for the library needed to be found. The library staff and two-thirds of the branch's volumes relocated a few blocks away to a vacant building in Merchant's Park at 11th Street and North Shepherd Boulevard. With all the design plans finalized and details carefully smoothed over, the general contractors, Volume Builders, began construction. In a 1977 article announcing the renovation project, McCutchan poignantly stated, "The old building served the people well for more than fifty years… With the new building we're getting ready for another fifty years—or more."[22]

Other improvements to the library during this remodeling included correcting some of the botched renovations made during the 1950s. For example, the original skylight over the foyer, which had been covered over, was restored; a huge stairwell, which led to the second floor balcony, was removed from the foyer and rebuilt near the librarians' work area; fluorescent lighting installed in the library during the 1950s was replaced with incandescent lighting in the hopes of recapturing and recreating the warmer, visual essence of the original building from the 1920s. The builders also reapplied molding and repainted the interior to match the colors used in the Italian Renaissance design of J. M. Glover.

The new and improved Houston Heights Public Library reopened in 1980. Twenty-five years later, opinions of the late 1970s modernization efforts still vary among the individuals involved in the Heights Branch. According to one librarian, the new modern additions on the north and east side keep the library balanced. Another, however, noted how unpopular the new look has been within the community. Laura Thorp remarked, "Adding the space in 1980 was a good thing, but unfortunately, in my opinion, and in many people's opinion, it distracts from the library building. That was the thought at the time. If it were done today, it would probably be done differently."[23] Sims McCutchan commented, "It's the only thing they could have done; they didn't have much choice. Once we returned to the facility, I personally enjoyed the aesthetics of the restored 1920s portion the most, but it was nice to have a meeting room and we needed more space to better serve our clientele."[24] In the end, the architects achieved their goal to enlarge the library while preserving its integrity.

Although the Houston Heights Public Library had not been registered as a historic landmark prior to the late 1970s renovation, the architects and the library system looked to the state's preservation agency for guidance and informal approval. David Henington, former director of the Houston Public Library System, stated that it is indeed appropriate to have a completely different architectural style added on to a historic building, rather than try to mimic the original 1920s design.[25] And according to John Fokkie, an architect for Ray Bailey Associates during the project, "We did, to a certain degree, acknowledge the Texas Historic Commission's criteria," in designing the 1977 renovation.[26]

By the mid-1980s, the Heights Library contained state-of-the-art amenities and services that could not be found at other Houston-area libraries. Screen projectors, GED courses, and classes in English as a second language became available at the new and improved library. The Heights Branch received the first caption recorder television set of any library in the city. The new library also came equipped with the Kardex Automated Kompact system for shelving, which, according to a 1980 brochure, "cuts the storage space by more than half in the workroom."[27] With experience in

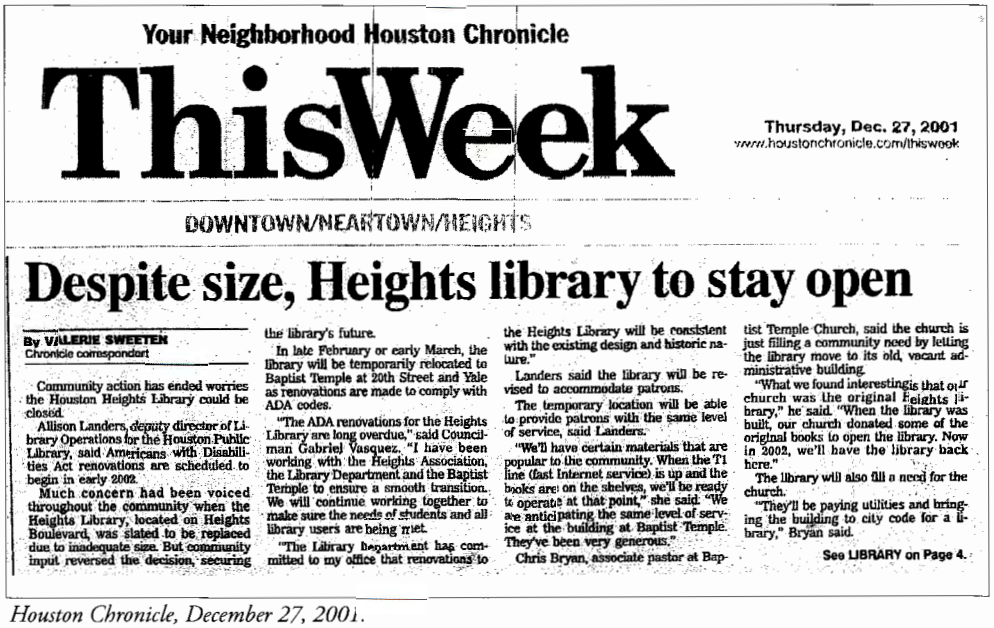


The modern additions to the north and east side of the library received mixed reactions from Heights residents.

designing children's playgrounds, Ray Bailey architects included in the design of the children's section a life-size kiosk structure where kids could play, climb, enjoy puppet shows, and read at their leisure.

In 1984, the Heights Library building was added to the National Register of Historic Places. For the next two decades the Houston Heights Branch Library enjoyed its "celebrity" status as a Texas Historic Landmark. It remained the cultural center of the historic Heights district, which received that distinguished designation the year before.

By the turn of the century, however, radical improvements proposed on the entire Houston Public Library System threatened the Heights Branch's very existence. Residents, community leaders, and civic groups banded together to fight for the library's rightful place at the corner of 13th Street and Heights Boulevard. Led by a determined and politically powerful Houston Heights Association, the library entered its second confrontation with modernization. Yet this time, there would be definite winners and losers.



Your Neighborhood Houston Chronicle

ThisWeek

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DOWNTOWN/NEARTOWN/HEIGHTS

Despite size, Heights library to stay open

By VALERIE SWEETEN
Chronicle correspondent

Community action has ended worries the Houston Heights Library could be closed.

Allison Landers, deputy director of Library Operations for the Houston Public Library, said Americans with Disabilities Act renovations are scheduled to begin in early 2002.

Much concern had been voiced throughout the community when the Heights Library, located on Heights Boulevard, was slated to be replaced due to inadequate size. But community input reversed the decision, securing the library's future.

In late February or early March, the library will be temporarily relocated to Baptist Temple at 20th Street and Yale as renovations are made to comply with ADA codes.

"The ADA renovations for the Heights Library are long overdue," said Councilman Gabriel Vasquez. "I have been working with the Heights Association, the Library Department and the Baptist Temple to ensure a smooth transition. We will continue working together to make sure the needs of students and all library users are being met.

"The Library Department has committed to my office that renovations to the Heights Library will be consistent with the existing design and historic nature."

Landers said the library will be revised to accommodate patrons.

The temporary location will be able to provide patrons with the same level of service, said Landers.

"We'll have certain materials that are popular to the community. When the T1 line (fast Internet service) is up and the books are on the shelves, we'll be ready to operate at that point," she said. "We are anticipating the same level of service at the building at Baptist Temple. They've been very generous."

Chris Bryan, associate pastor at Baptist Temple Church, said the church is just filling a community need by letting the library move to its old, vacant administrative building.

"What we found interesting is that our church was the original Heights Library," he said. "When the library was built, our church donated some of the original books to open the library. Now in 2002, we'll have the library back here."

The library will also fill a need for the church.

"They'll be paying utilities and bringing the building to city code for a library," Bryan said.

See LIBRARY on Page 4.

Houston Chronicle, December 27, 2001.

The story of the 2001 Houston Heights Public Library renovation is one of intrigue and miscalculations, of civic co-operation at its best, and of a city bureaucracy at its worst. At a time when much of downtown Houston and other parts of the city underwent a major transformation and restoration—nightclubs, restaurants, and sporting arenas—the Houston Public Library System became earmarked for re-evaluation of its overall "standards of excellence," which would carry the system into the twenty-first century.

In the summer of 1924, Julia Ideson, the most well-known and influential librarian in Houston's history, set out on a journey to tour libraries across the country in hopes of finding new ideas and innovations in library design. She returned with a wealth of research and information, which may have influenced the planning, designing, and construction of the Houston Heights Library, among others. Nearly eighty years later, a similar process for improving the entire library system involved a plethora of political committees, city council members, and highly paid consultants. According to several library sources, for the biggest most expensive renovation project in the Houston Public Library System's history, the staff members who actually work in the facilities were rarely asked for input on the renovation of their work place.

In planning and preparing for the Houston Public Library System's future, library administrators requested an unusually large sum of money in bond funds to be submitted for voter approval, nearly $150 million, according to one library source. The city subsequently hired a number of consultants to put forth a "Strategic Master Plan," which made specific recommendations for individual libraries to "achieve the Standards of Excellence by 2010."[28] The consultants researched and analyzed the demographics of each area to determine estimated population increases by 2010. The team also evaluated each facility's ability or inability to handle large-scale renovations that would bring the libraries up to code with new governmental regulations. Finally, the consultants looked at each facility and determined whether or not that building needed to be added onto or be replaced altogether.

According to one former Branch manager at the Heights, the consultants and city envisioned creating five major libraries in the most populated areas. The Central Planning Sector, as designated by the Strategic Master Plan, of which the Heights Library is a part, had population increases projected in the twenty to twenty-five percent range over a ten-year period. The consultants listed several technological updates and facility improvements that would be necessary to keep the Heights Branch up to "standards" in a growing, ethnically diverse community. They placed emphasis on world languages, children's books, and adult collections. However, at only 14,500 square feet, the old Italian Renaissance building and its 1980 addition, could not handle such demands.

The Library 2010 Strategic Master Plan consultants recommended the following:

> Due to the historic nature of the [Heights Branch] building, the building layout is inefficient and cannot accommodate current and future library services. The facility is undersized and will be difficult to expand adequately. The recommendation is to replace the Heights Neighborhood Library with a 22,000 GSF building on a new site in the same general vicinity.[29]

The planners did not single out the Heights Branch for replacement; other "inadequate" and "undersized" branches fell into this category as well, including Smith, Looscan, and Frank Public Libraries to name a few. Given the Heights Library's prominence in the community, the city selected the branch for its initial experiments in launching this transformation. They faced a tremendous uphill battle, however, once word reached the Heights community of the consultants' recommendations.

In response to the report, HHA sprang immediately into action. Members of the organization met to discuss and brainstorm courses of action. These issues were outlined in a memo dated the week prior to the unsettling March 1, 2001, town hall meeting.

Those involved agreed on two major points: first and foremost, the Heights community wanted to preserve the historic library building where it stood and second, if a replacement building became a necessity, the community wanted a modern facility conveniently located in the Heights near the schools. The memo took notice that these two ideas may "come into collision with each other." Moreover, the author of the memo, Laura Thorp, HHA president at the time, warned of the possibility that if HHA stood firm in its decision to save the historic library building "at all costs," it must understand the repercussions of that decision.[30] Thorp cited the Heights Firehouse as a prime example of when modernization threatens preservation. When the city decided to move the firehouse out of the Heights, the community fought to preserve their historic station (it also doubled as a jail house during the turn of the century). Unwavering in its plan, the city built a new station at a location on the outskirts of the neighborhood. HHA ultimately chose to lease the building from the city (for $1 per year). The association restored the station house and continues to maintain the building's upkeep into the twenty-first century. Thorp warned that this could happen again. How far would the association be willing to go? She asked in the memo, "Would HHA be willing and financially able to take over the library building, to preserve it and use it?"[31]

But what if HHA could not handle the burden? Or what if the city sold the building to a developer? What was the price tag on preserving their library? In her original correspondence it appeared that the HHA president tried to cover as many angles of the problem as possible, formulate a plan of action, and prepare her civic group for a possible showdown with the city. This memo displayed the initiative, the imagination, and the hawkish determination of a well-organized civic association. They would not let their library go down without a fight.

On March 1, 2001, Barbara Gubbin, Director of the Houston Public Library System, opened the town hall meeting in the Heights community meeting center. Other members of the committee included Gubbin's Deputy Director, Alison Landers, Councilman Gabriel Vasquez, and three consultants. More than one hundred Heights residents stood anxiously in the meeting room as Director Gubbin read the recommendations to replace the Heights Library.

The director and her entourage had a preconceived belief that the community would embrace and relish the idea. But to their dismay, the townspeople immediately and soundly rejected any proposal to replace the library building. In short, the crowd of supporters from the neighborhood grew distraught and demanded a halt to the proposal. The committee, it appeared, did not expect such a negative reaction from the community, and they were not prepared to deal with such an aggravated situation.

Eleven days later, HHA formally responded. In a letter to Director Gubbin, Laura Thorp came out and stated that HHA had formed a Library Task Force to "evaluate alternatives" and had requested full-blown involvement in each step of the Strategic Master Plan process, including selecting an architect for the eventual renovations. "We want to make it very clear," Thorp stated, "that we wish for the original building to remain a functioning library because of its historical significance, [and] central location, and [continue] as a focal point for the community."[32]

In the letter, HHA also recommended radical measures of their own, suggesting that the city demolish the 1980 renovations and rebuild a new 2001-style addition. The letter went even further to suggest that the city purchase the adjacent apartment building to be used as a future site for library additions. In the end, the letter lent "general and conditional support" to the city's overall master plan.[33]

Barbara Gubbin responded two weeks later and stated that "there are no funds available at this time to implement any part of the Strategic Master Plan," including investigating HHA's suggestions.[34] Six months later, however, the director drafted a letter to HHA and listed final figures for the proposed renovations, most of which would make the library in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): $70,000 for the design, $684,000 for construction, half of which came from a Community Development Block Grant.[35]

The community uproar in the Heights created a domino effect that spread throughout the Houston Public Library System. All across the city, library patrons and community residents shot down the Strategic Master Plan recommendations. In the end, civic co-operation and public demands outgunned the city's radical proposals, at least for the time being.

"I'm sure that we probably shook it up a little," Thorp explained, "because they thought they could just come in and do what they wanted to do and maybe people wouldn't be concerned. But they found out that Houston Heights is a pretty strong neighborhood."[36] Sims McCutchan, while acknowledging that there are compelling arguments for a more up-to-date facility somewhere in the northwest area, remarked, "As one of the two oldest library structures in Houston, the Heights Branch should have been considered from the beginning in the context of the neighborhood character and historical preservation. I believe both the library, the neighborhood, and the city were better served by keeping the building."[37]

One librarian stated that it was an extremely positive gesture for the city to set aside money for the libraries' future. However, choosing out-of-town, objective consultants, who were unfamiliar with the communities in Houston—and their resources—may have had a diminishing effect on achieving the overall goals of the plan. Most of the consultants involved in the project were not native Houstonians. Moreover, the director, Barbara Gubbin, had come from England where "old" and "historic" in building terms meant that the building was at least a few hundred years old. In addition, Gubbin's deputy director hailed from California. The administrators and the consultants may have possessed good intentions in their ideas, but they neglected the importance of the Houston Heights Public Library to its community. A prime example of this miscommunication occurred when the consultants failed to understand why the Heights residents did not want a bigger parking lot at the library. One patron from the Heights responded that most people preferred to walk to their library.

In the fallout from the Strategic Master Plan, the city focused its attention on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) renovations throughout the entire library system.[38] The city hired architects to work the designs and contractors to remodel the buildings up to code. First on the list was the historic Houston Heights Branch. Following relocation to a temporary facility at, ironically, the Baptist Temple Church (20th and Yale), the Heights Library's long overdue ADA renovations began in earnest in early 2002.

A year later, having shed a new skin and shaved off a few dozen bookshelves, the Heights Library reopened to the public. The

library now contained new landscaping, sprinklers, carpet, furniture, and handicap railings. Other improvements included new lighting, new computers, a new reference desk, a new circulation desk, a security system, a T1 ethernet connection, and after-school programs. The kiosk where children watched puppet shows was removed to make room for wheelchair access. In the children's area, the designers replaced the colorful arrangement with dark, drab-colored furniture. The contractors also removed the stairwell in the foyer leading to the balcony citing that if it was not accessible to the handicapped, then it should not be open to the public. The designers made no considerations for storage or closet space. The once enjoyable, relaxing workroom became cramped with cubicles and extra shelving, prompting one librarian to vent her frustration on the radical new changes, especially with respects to the work area.

The $1.2 million "reconfiguration" of the Heights Library to meet ADA requirements was the result of the efforts made by various individuals, including consultants, architects, and senior project managers from the city's Building Services Division. But apparently, during the eighteen-month renovation period, no one listed above interviewed or asked opinions from any Heights librarian, patron, or community leader. In the Library 2010 Strategic Master Plan, a section of the report listed three resources as the basis for establishing recommendations: demographic analysis, physical assessment, and interviews with neighborhood librarians. Yet not one librarian had the opportunity to share his or her thoughts about the building and environment they would be working in.

Throughout this entire debate, no one argued against the idea of providing public services to all members of the community, including those who are handicapped. However, all the individuals from the "save the library" point of view openly expressed their disdain for how the renovations were handled, and more importantly, what was sacrificed to accommodate ADA spacing regulations. The removal of valuable shelving space to meet ADA specifications resulted in a net loss of more than fifty percent of the children's collection and a large percentage of the adult collections, according to one staff member. In direct contradiction to the Strategic Master Plan's "emphasis on children's collection and adult collection,"[39] an estimated 15,000 items were deleted from the library's database, according to the librarians.

From a public service point of view, at what point do governmental regulations exceed their boundaries and infringe upon an institution's possessions? From a public historian's perspective, at what point does this infringement alter the historic nature of a landmark, such as the case with air conditioning Mount Vernon? And at what point do the rights of a few impede the services to the many. The Heights community expressed their discontent with the new modern renovations of late 1970s, and they combined forces to stop the library's replacement in 2001. There was, however, no compromising with ADA.

In the case of the Houston Heights Public Library, the community fought for and preserved their old neighborhood library, but at a significant cost, financial and otherwise. The original 14,500-square-foot facility could not accommodate all the modern improvements and still continue to circulate its high volume of materials, including periodicals from the 1920s and '30s and a substantial rare book collection. From a historian's perspective, given the historic nature of the library, would it not have been logical to simply build a new "technological" facility that would provide the community with a modern computer center, leaving the Heights Branch in a position to expand upon its historic collection and originality? From another angle, would purchasing the adjacent apartment building not have provided the Heights Branch with an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for future expansion well into the twenty-first century? The "complex issue" of the land purchase probably never made it past the discussion table at the city council. At the time (October 2001), the planning team may have been more concerned with adapting ADA renovations to satisfy federal mandates. City planners, to their defense, had the library system and the accompanying neighborhoods in their best interest. However, with respect to the Houston Heights Public Library and the surrounding community, the city planners failed to utilize local knowledge, much to their detriment.

As humans, we associate our lives, our culture, and our history with "place." The idea of the neighborhood—the "ultimate neighborhood" in the case of the Heights—is an open door to understanding who we are and where we come from. Remembering our past, as historian Robert R. Archibald stated, "is the underlying premise of historic preservation and of public history."[40]

When it comes to preserving a building or landmark, the community it serves should determine the ultimate fate of such an entity, rather than outside, impartial persons and institutions. But like many historic buildings, such as the Alamo, the Houston Heights Branch Library's fate is yet to be determined. The "standards of excellence by 2010" may again be re-evaluated in the near future. And when the next confrontation between preservation and modernization emerges, the Houston Heights community—with HHA at the helm—will certainly have a distinct advantage over its opposition. The veterans of community justice and preservation may again have to rely on civic co-operation to save their library. Laura Thorp stated, "That's the way we battle for everything in this neighborhood."[41]

Mitchell Interview

continued from page 48

this part of the country. I've got to get about four or five more good merchants like Chico's and a few others....We lost Morgan's [a women and dress shop on The Strand], and I hated to lose him because his health—he went back to the family up in Missouri. But we [must] get more action.

We worked hard to get the cruise ships down here, and people keep wondering, "How in the hell did you get the cruise ships down here? We're going to come down and buy some real estate." It made everybody realize something's going on down here. So we're now pushing...to put two more cruise ships at the Del Monte terminal, which would give you the fifth place. They would have seven cruise ships in a row, and you get a picture of that, an aerial picture of that, Fort Lauderdale would be jealous. I'm telling you, they would be. And everybody's going to realize, "What the hell is going on in Galveston?"

There's an interesting story about that, because I kept asking the cruise terminal people—we had a committee, but they weren't very strong—so I'd ask the port, "Why don't you work on cruises?" They said, "Well, no, we don't have a chance." So I sent [a representative] to Miami four years straight, at my expense, five thousand dollars, to talk to the cruise ship companies: "Why don't you come to Galveston? Give it a try." Every time I do that, the port would send me a message, "You're wasting your time, Mitchell. You're wasting your money, and you're wasting your time. They won't come here."

I said, "Give me a package. Let me see what I can do." So I finally got them [to] say, "Okay, this is what the taxes will be; this is what this would be; this is what that would be," and it looked pretty good to the cruise ship people. Then I said, "We'll help you do the promotion for the first year." We raised $250,000 of which I gave $100,000 to do the promotion, to try it out. And Carnival accepted the deal. And they were so surprised after a year or two that 75 percent of the people were driving in, not flying. And that made all the difference in the world to them. So that's why they came, and then the other companies. Now, Carnival is the biggest company in the world on cruise ship lines. They're a $5 billion company. And they got four or five separate companies.

JP: Could you discuss some of the challenges that you've faced with preservation projects?

GM: I think one of the biggest problems is when you estimate the cost. I built The Woodlands, so that's a billion-dollar project, so I've had a lot of experience worrying about the cost on structures. When you estimate the cost, like in the hotel, you probably spend at least 50 percent more than you think, even though you know you're going to have some problems when you get into it. So I guess that's what scares most people off; the cost escalation is really frightening sometimes, and you've got to have good architects work with you to try to keep it down. And I think that—it costs more. You can do it, tear and down and do it better with a contemporary situation, but you don't have the beauty of it like this place. I have people from all over the world come and they say, "I've gone all over the world, and this hotel is nicer than anything I've been in," and they say that about the Galvez now because it has a history from 1911.

I think in five years [The Strand] is going to be a very fine shopping area, and it's getting to be a good shopping area now. So I think most of the structures we have will be self-sufficient even with the later costs.

Yet, most people say, "You're losing money." And let me tell you what hurts you: The taxes are too damn high, and insurance is too high....We did all the stuff across the street because of the hotel here. We wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for the hotel here. We're trying to preserve the street. [Ship's Mechanic Row] is a beautiful street, and it's probably one of the most beautiful streets in town. So by fighting hard, the tax structure and the insurance, and finally getting the Strand more alive. If we get two more cruise ships, it would really take off.

So I think that if your location is on the Strand, you hear a lot of complaints now; you don't have enough income stream, because the cost is higher to repair them and to restore them. But I think they are getting very close to making money. Some are, and a few of them, most of them are not. My hotels [The Tremont House, the Galvez, and Harbor House] are just now making cash flow before capital. That's getting pretty close to profit. Give it another couple of years, and I think they'll be profitable after capital. And we're watching them now because it would be nice to see that they're all making a profit, and then all your stuff would go good, and people would help you with more deals.

MD: Beach Town, to me, is fascinating. It

Like the Darragh House (1886), the historic 1873 Washington Hotel was lost to a devastating fire. Because of extensive visual evidence, both photographs and drawings, the building was able to be reconstructed (right). The Darragh House was demolished following its fire. The ornate fence that stood in front of the historic house, however, was preserved.

must give you some satisfaction, because the way they're marketing Beach Town is traditional neighborhoods, like Old Galveston, the quality of Old Galveston. And I'm thinking about what you've promoted for years and what we try to promote as well, is saving the real thing.

GM: I think they're trying to do a good job, because we did Pirates Beach and several of them down the island, and they were very successful, but they were just resort developments. We did adhere to the design of that era, mostly contemporary design, but they've been very successful for the island.

JP: How hard has it been to convince people to move into the downtown area in Galveston?

GM: We made a study, I did, thirty years ago. We recommended 500 families would be down in the Strand area. So, I mean, we've had two or three projects done like that. So the downtown is very important, and that's why we're doing the loft spaces now. We're trying to do thirty or forty of them…You probably have five or six developments now with loft space that are looking very promising. And it looks like there's pretty good demand for them. So I think that we're trying to adhere to the architecture of the outside of the buildings, like you have them, and then the inside you can do some things, more difference. But I think that the downtown is looking very promising because people want to live downtown now, and they like Pirate's Beach, but that's a different type living. That's resort living. And the west end of town has a big future, if it doesn't erode away, and that's what you have to worry about.

Until seeing *The Great Storm* [a documentary about the 1900 Galveston Storm], I didn't realize that the federal government did not pay for our raised levy and our seawall. The City of Galveston sold bonds for it. The federal government helped them design the seawall, which they just won a national award for the design three years ago. From a hundred years ago to three years. Can you imagine that? Boy, they're really alert.

[The seawall] is a magnificent structure—it probably will protect Galveston from another hurricane about 70 to 80 percent, so they're lucky, because if Katrina had come through, it would have been tough, or Rita. Of course, a major storm like that will hurt us, but not as bad as it did in 1900. You have to see *The Great Storm*. If you want to understand Galveston, I tell everybody, go see *The Great Storm*.

What bothers me is why the hell they let Pointe San Luis be there because they just are in the path of tragedy in the future. Well, you get the hell out of there if there's a hurricane coming. But if you have a home with a bunch of pictures and a bunch of things, people won't leave. They will not leave, and that's a danger.

Now, if you have a second home and have access, a way back to the causeway, above five-foot tide, it's okay. But if you don't watch it, you're going to have another storm like Rita come right in the island, you're going to have a disaster on the west end, so that's why I recommend this city on their planning to think about—be sure they have the road access, and the developments are really second homes.

JP: In your opinion, what was the turning point in coming to believe this process was going to work in Galveston?

GM: Well, I think, when the people came back from Savannah and Charleston, when they saw what had been accomplished there, and really it's remarkable they had already started a thousand structures, and

The 1858 Hendley Building, Galveston's oldest brick and granite commercial building, is on Galveston Historical Foundation's "Heritage at Risk List." Historic preservation graduate students from Ball State University's College of Architecture and Planning completed a week-long survey of the building in March 2005. This resulted in a full report on the status of the structure, including options for rehabilitation and future use. These options will be explored further.

they had a good program. They had a program where they would buy the structure with a revolving fund. And then restore them, and they had, like, five contractors that did good work, reasonable. Did it for profit. And Galveston never did do that. I said, "Get four or five contractors that'll help you do that." Well, you got some little ones doing it now, but not on a massive scale.

JP: What do you consider your greatest success here and your most disappointing setback?

GM: Well, I think that trying to help the Galveston Historical Society [Foundation] get stronger and to keep pressure on restoration like they're doing now, and work for the city, and try hard to preserve the structures that you have.

The most beautiful structure we had was a home [the Darragh House] that was on [Howard] Barnstone's book, *The Galveston That Was*, on the front. It was a beautiful historic building. And it had some damage. They had a person that wanted to buy it, and they had the fire and had other damage, $100,000 of damage.

So I said, "All right, you got this structure. Someone was wanting to buy it, and they had the capital because you had a fire. And you got a contractor who said he could repair that damage for $110,000. And you can probably still sell it to somebody, because the iron fence and the structure is just gorgeous." So I said, "I'll tell you what: I'll put the money up if you do it, and if you get the money back, you pay me, and if you don't, then that's okay." They decided to turn it down so they'd get the insurance. I just can't believe it....Well, I talked to Peter [Brink]. He tried to stop it. I called him. I said, "Peter, you got to stop it. It's so stupid." And I talked to the board. I said, "You people don't have any guts anymore." I told them that.

What happened, they turned it down, and they tore it down to collect the $90,000 insurance that they had, because they wanted to do other things with it. Someone wanted to do other things with it. Now, they regret that.... It made me mad as hell; you can imagine. I had it wired where they didn't have to lose anything.

Another thing that bothered me was the Buccaneer Hotel. I hated to lose that beachfront structure because it disrupts the whole beachfront, and the Buccaneer Hotel—I tried to save it, but it had already been committed to that group from The Woodlands, the church group, and they were going to remodel and build it. It's still being built there.

MD: Are there any landmarks here in Galveston that you see that are really threatened, still, that you think we ought to focus on?

GM: I think downtown, the produce plant on the other side of the Strand— yes, the Hendley Building. Someone ought to talk to them about loans that they could

discount and get a tax write-off.

MD: We're working on that one.

GM: That would really finish off your Strand if you got that all developed.

MD: That's a tough one.

GM: I think also finishing off the post office, and then--what puzzles me--is this Medical Arts Building--why someone doesn't finish doing something about that. Then all the loft spaces....We get that money to do the post office, and keep the loft spaces moving, get them done and see what happens.

Your insurance and your taxes are too high. The merchants on The Strand can't make it with the insurance and taxes we got. So we're fighting hard, trying to keep it down, but it's tough with Rita coming by. That's what makes it so impossible for these merchants to make a go of it. So out of [our] fourteen buildings, we probably lose money on every one except one or two. And I keep telling them, "Just give us five years. They'll start making money." They said, "You better have a lot of oil and gas money." [Chuckles.]

[To address the problem of high costs,] we worked with Peter...on the law where they got commercial tax deductions; that was done twenty-five years ago. Now I told Peter, "You ought to get people to do structures on the east end, housing structures that have a tax write-down if they do their money on their own home.

MD: Yes, there are commercial rehabilitation tax credits that the income-producing properties can get, but there's never been a federal income tax credit for residential.

GM: That's right. You see, that would really fire up his whole east end.

MD: From your perspective, how would you compare historic preservation in Galveston as opposed to Houston.

GM: Houston is a tragedy. They've done nothing to try to prevent loss of beautiful houses. Fact is, a new one was just torn down in the Heights last week. There's no excuse for that. Houston has destroyed most of the historic houses, and they had quite a few. Galveston has had more; Galveston had more wealth in the 1860s and 1870s than Houston.

JP: Can you imagine changes in Houston's law that would actually make a difference in terms of preservation?

GM: Yes, I think the city council ought to figure out how to stop tearing down these structures right now. You know, they

claim they have done something, and they have stopped a few, but there are so few left in Houston now. Really, they've lost the critical mass, in a way, but I still think whatever they have, they ought to preserve. That means that they'll have to get the city council to have regulations that really have severe approval on tear-down efforts, and I really think they should do that.

MD: Mr. Mitchell mentioned what works here in Galveston. I call it a preservation ethic that you have to have even before you can get a law passed. And that's what Mr. Mitchell and Mrs. Mitchell did, by setting an example, they created a preservation ethic here that people can see.

GM: We're lucky we had the small east end group. They're very small, but a pretty good bunch of people, back in 1970 and '80. And they did the east end district things like that very early on. But then they really got fired up when I sent them to Charleston and Savannah, and they've been very helpful, and they kind of watch things now.

You have some people in Houston, but they are probably not strong enough to get the city council to really put a strong moratorium on structures. A lot of them come at me. I say, "Listen, I'm so busy in Galveston." [Laughs.]

Cynthia was very involved. She won the national award about seven or eight years ago. She's done a lot with the National Trust [for Historic Preservation], and helped them.

MD: The Louise DuPont Crowninshield Award, which is the National Trust's highest award.

GM: Yes, she did a lot of work here. She worked with every project I did around here, and even The Woodlands. We had a lot of things going, but we didn't do anything there for preservation. The Woodlands was nothing but twenty-seven acres of forest when I took it on. Peter was a good motivating force, and now Marsh is here to take up where he left off. And it's tough.

JP: Do you have any closing thoughts on the future of Galveston?

GM: I tell you, Galveston is really on the upswing. I think price is picking up. I know Tiki Island, Galveston prices are up 25 or 30 percent on the beachfront. On the west beach and other places, so I think everybody is beginning to wonder what the hell is going on down there because cruise ships and everything else, so they're all moving in here.

Take A Walk In Houston's Historic First Ward

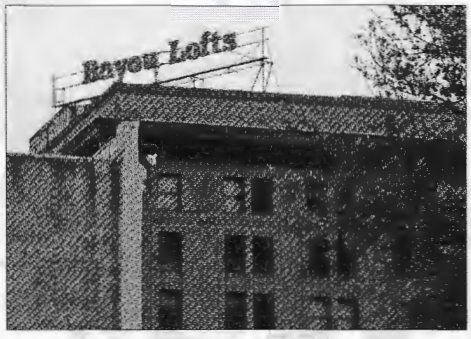
By Sandra Lord

ORIGINAL WARD BOUNDARIES
1st Ward, West of Main, North of Congress
2nd Ward, East of Main, North of Congress
3rd Ward, East of Main, South of Congress
4th Ward, West of Main, South of Congress

In 1840, Houston's 62 blocks were divided into four political wards, governed by a mayor and up to eight aldermen—two from each ward.

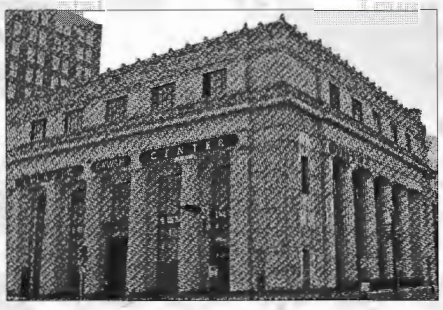
This walking tour takes you past two sides of one block in Houston's original First Ward. Start your walk inside the Franklin Street Coffeehouse at 913 Franklin.

By 1873, Houston's growing railroad system had integrated with the national network. The Southern Pacific Railroad arrived in Houston in 1881 and, by 1912, was the city's largest local industry, employing over 6,000 people. In 1911, the general offices of the SP's Sunset Limited line moved into the Southern Pacific Building at 913 Franklin, designed by Chicago architect Jarvis Hunt. Hunt decorated the ninth floor façade with turquoise insets to remind customers that the Sunset Limited traveled through the Southwest.



Today, as the Bayou Lofts, the building houses 106 condominiums, as well as the Franklin Street Coffeehouse. The coffeehouse occupies space that was once home to Corrigan's jewelry store, as evidenced by the 1870 safe still residing in the ladies restroom.

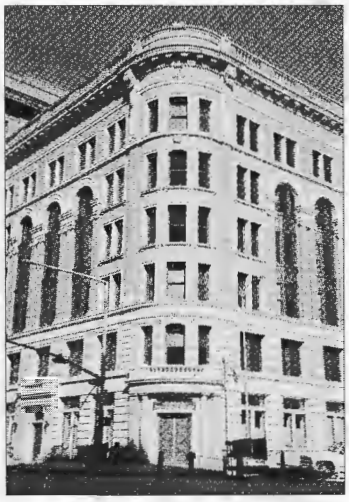
The Islamic Da'Wah Center at 202 Main Street occupies Texas Governor Ross Sterling's 1928 Houston National Bank Building. With its eight imposing Doric columns facing Main and Franklin, the building resembles the Lincoln Memorial, which had opened six years earlier.



Inside, lavish Sienna and Belgian marble adorns pillars, counters, and railings, while Roman travertine and black Belgian marble cover the floors. A five-story vaulted ceiling soars 56 feet above the center of the lobby; it is covered with intricate tile designs accented by extensive gold leaf.

The mezzanine, with its original arched marble railing, overlooks red rugs covering a central prayer hall. In the basement, an open bank vault holds an Islamic library.

The six-story, 1904, neo-classical, limestone-faced Commercial Bank Building located at 917 Franklin, is the oldest of the three remaining bank buildings occupying the Main and Franklin intersection, once the hub of Houston's financial district.



In 1886, with capital of $500,000, Commercial became Houston's second national bank, with William Chew and John Dorrance as the main stockholders. Chew was also involved in cotton, wholesale grocery, dry goods, printing, railroads, and shipping, and served as vice president of the Driskill Hotel Company in Austin. Dorrance founded Dorrance & Co., one of Houston's oldest cotton firms.[1]

On the Franklin Avenue and Main Street façades, notice the Ionic columns on either side of the curved gray-granite entry and the two trios of recessed arches simulating huge three-story windows on the third through fifth floors. A sixth floor was added later.

The Commercial Bank Building currently contains 40,000 square feet, has 15-foot ceilings on the first floor, and 11-foot ceilings on the remaining five floors.

Three buildings dating between 1872 and 1903 fill out the west side of the 100 block of Main Street.

The 1903 Italian Renaissance Dorrance Building at 114 Main Street is named after John W. Dorrance. The building was originally home to the Postal Telegraph Co. and several banking companies, including Jesse Jones' National Bank of Commerce. Other tenants included William Marsh Rice and, after his death, the first offices of Rice Institute, the law offices of Baker & Botts, and the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. In 1915, Western Union, the successor to the Postal Telegraph Co., took over the building as principal tenant until 1970.

Early photos show that the façade of the 1876 Raphael Building at 110 Main Street originally matched that of the neighboring Brewster Building.

In February 1991, the three-story, 1872 Brewstet Building at 108 Main Street was purchased by brothers-in-law John Anderson and Dave Edwards (not the same Dave Edwards who owns The Mercury Room).[2] Serving early Houston businesses as an office/warehouse building, this slim Italianate structure is Anderson's and Edwards' proudest possession.

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