

The HHA Courier

The Newsletter of the Houston History Association

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Message from the President

The Houston History Association's first annual history conference, "Milestones and Arrivals: 175 Years of Coming to Houston," on October 29, 2011, proved to be a wonderful success. Approximately 100 people attended the conference to hear a panel of experts featuring Stephen Klineberg, PhD, Rice University; Joseph Pratt, PhD, University of Houston; and Bernadette Pruitt, PhD, Sam Houston State University, explore different aspects of the notion of Houston as a city of immigrants including the impact of the oil industry, the African American migration, and the meaning of the city's changing demographics. A luncheon followed the morning program with presentations by author Stephen Fenberg, former Houston Mayor Bill White, and the presentation of what has been named the Betty Trapp Chapman Award to its namesake, Betty Chapman. Some twenty exhibitors had tables in the foyer where conference attendees mingled and visited, making new friends and renewing old connections. During the afternoon, two sets of break-out sessions with presentations on various topics related to Houston's history wrapped up the day-long conference.

Everyone left looking forward to the next conference, which moves to its permanent date on the first weekend of June.

Save the Date—June 2, 2012 and plan to attend the second annual conference, "Building Houston: From Allen's Landing to the Moon." The event will be held at the Hilton-University of Houston Hotel on Saturday, from 8:30-3:30. There is a \$50 registration fee which includes admission to all presentations, the luncheon, and parking.

If you would like to organize a panel or present a paper at one of the afternoon breakout sessions,

visit our website for more information and to view the Call for Papers. We look forward to seeing you on June 2. www.houstonhistoryassociation.org.

—*William H. Kellar, PhD, President*
Houston History Association

Preservation Spotlight: The Lancaster Hotel

Houston's historic Lancaster Hotel, located at 701 Texas Avenue at Louisiana, originally was known as the Auditorium Hotel when Italian immigrant and Houston investor Michele DeGeorge opened it in 1926. The hotel stood directly across Texas Avenue from the City Auditorium, where Jones Hall is located today, and was designed by renowned Houston architect Joseph Finger.



The Lancaster Hotel (center) at 701 Texas Avenue.

The Lancaster dates back to the birth of the Houston Theater District and many of the theatrical stars who performed at the neighboring theatres were regular guests at the Auditorium Hotel.

In 1983, the Auditorium Hotel was renamed the Lancaster Hotel, becoming Houston's first boutique hotel. In 1984, it received a Texas State Landmark and more recently, became a member of the Historic Hotels of America, the only hotel in Houston qualified for this honor. The Lancaster is also the only historic hotel in the City owned and operated by descendants of the original developer.

Throughout the years, the Lancaster has enjoyed a colorful history serving as host to performing artists, wrestlers, boxers, cowboys, and two horses as well as business and leisure travelers. During World War II, the basement served as the Stage Canteen, a cabaret for military servicemen where some 200,000 men in uniform enjoyed the warm hospitality of free food and drinks during its three years in operation.



In celebration of its history, the Lancaster has an exhibit of over 60 historic photographs on the first floor, mezzanine level and in the basement where the Stage Canteen once operated.

In addition to the photo exhibit, on Sunday, February 5, 2012, the Lancaster Hotel and the Buffalo Bayou Partnership will host a book signing with Louis Aulbach, author of *Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston's Wilderness Beginnings*, from 2:30-4:30.

The book is a culmination of Aulbach's twelve years of research and historic discoveries along this historic Houston waterway. Aulbach will share stories of the Allen brothers, the founders of Houston, and provide historical information about some of the first families and businesses of our city. Admission is free and profits from the books sales will benefit the Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

For more information about the book signing, contact: Trudi Smith - Director of PR and Events Buffalo Bayou Partnership at 713.752.0314 ext. 3 or visit the website: www.buffalobayou.org

For more information about the Lancaster Hotel call 713.228.9500 or visit the hotel's website at: www.TheLancaster.com

Houston History Spotlight: Johnson Space Center to Get Consolation Prize

-by Leslie Richards

Many Houstonians were disappointed last April when Houston was not among the cities awarded a Shuttle orbiter by NASA at the end of the Space Shuttle Program.



Mockup Shuttle Explorer is coming to Houston.

However, a silver lining came last October with the news that the Johnson Space Center (JSC) would receive *Explorer*, an orbiter mockup currently on display at the Kennedy Space Center's Visitor Complex. One big advantage that *Explorer* has over any of the orbiters is its accessibility. Visitors can walk inside and outside the mock-up and experience the true size of the Shuttle, from the massive expanse of the Payload bay to the cramped quarters of the crew compartment.

JSC has already received the Orbiter Access Arm and white room from Launch Pad 39B at Kennedy that supported 54 launches from 1986 to 2009. Shuttle astronauts would ride the elevator up to the Orbiter Access Arm and walk down the gantry to the White Room, a clean room where the final touches were added to the launch and entry suits,

Finnigan had donated two thirds of the Museum of Fine Art's collection, with the oldest piece dating to 2500 BCE. She gave illuminated texts and a Bible owned by William of Orange to Houston Public Library along with an endowment that continues to supply new acquisitions to the Texas Room. She might be Houston's best kept secret, but we all owe her our thanks!

Museum: In "Any day above ground is a good one": A Conversation with National Museum of Funeral History's Director, Genevieve Keeney," Anna Burke Herrera asks the museum's director to tell the history of the museum, the focus of the exhibits, and what her goals are for Houston's funeral museum.

Please visit the magazine's website, www.houstonhistorymagazine.org, for a look at current and past issues as well as information on how to subscribe, or call 713-743-3123.

Houston Hosts the Texas State Historical Association's One Hundred and Sixteenth Annual Meeting

Celebrate Texas Independence Day (and Sam Houston's birthday) by registering now to attend the Texas State Historical Association's 2012 Annual Meeting. It will be held March 1-3, 2012 at the Omni Houston Hotel in Houston, Texas. To view the Annual Meeting Program detailing all sessions and events, register online or download a Registration Form, visit the TSHA website: <http://www.tshaonline.org/>.

Accommodations at the special rate of \$139 are available through January 30, 2012, at the Omni Houston Hotel. To make reservations, [book online](#) or call directly at (800) 843-6664 and use the code: TSHA.

The conference Program Committee, chaired by John Miller Morris, has created a meeting program with sessions on all aspects of Texas history, from before Spanish colonial rule through the 20th Century. Joint sessions with Texas historical societies and associations include the Texas Baptist

Historical Collection, the Texas Oral History Association, the Texas Folklore Society, the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society, and the Society of Southwest Archivists. Also available will be the workshops on the Handbook of Texas, TSHA Publications, and Educational Programs. After the closing of the conference at noon on Saturday, March 3, attendees can participate in one of three optional tours of Houston:

San Jacinto Tour: Jeffrey Dunn and Gregg Dimmick will guide an extensive tour of the San Jacinto Battleground to better understand the Battle of San Jacinto and will conclude with a visit to the San Jacinto Monument.

African American Tour of Houston: Visit the Gregory School; Texas Southern University for the Biggers Collection of murals, the Barbara Jordan Archives, and the Thurgood Marshall Law Library; and Project Row Houses.

Houston City Tour: Visit Glenwood Cemetery and Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, for a docent-guided tour of Ima Hogg's home, its exceptional furnishings and collections, and Bayou Bend's Gardens.

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We appreciate your continued support. Feel free to email us at: info@houstonhistoryassociation.org.