

# Oil Industry Historical Markers of Harris County A Topical Collection

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## INTRODUCTION

This chronological list specifies of over 40 oil industry markers selected by the presence of key words. In some cases below, the dates are estimates. Also sometimes I have **emboldened** selected words to attract the reader's attention.

Along the way persons, geographical landmarks, a ranch, a ferry, cities and communities, houses of worship, a cemetery, schools, commercial and medical buildings, houses, a company, industrial facilities, an airfield, and finally a ballroom were captured as words in the markers' titles. The Table of Contents and alphabetical Index reveal the depth and breadth of the oil industry as omnipresent. The markers' inscriptions reveal even more.

Other markers might be added if explanatory contextual notes informed the reader of the particular connection. Closer, better informed reading could identify more. The list does only offer a patchwork of some Harris County stories and faint references. But as such it does offer a partial skeleton on which others can offer other bones, connective tissue and whole new organs. It makes clear that some additional markers could be appropriately established.



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# THE MARKERS

## By Chronology

### **Dowling, Richard William (Dick) ca. 1860s**

Marker Text:

(January 14, 1837 - September 23, 1867) Born in 1837 near Tuam, County Galway, Ireland, Richard Dowling emigrated to New Orleans in 1846 during the Irish potato famine. In 1857, Dick married Elizabeth Anne Odum in Houston. By 1860 he had owned 3 bars, installed **Houston's first gas lighting** in his home and business, and was a charter member of Houston Hook and Ladder company No. 1.

During the Civil War, Dick was first lieutenant, Company F, Cook's Regiment, First Texas Heavy Artillery. He was in command at Fort Griffin in 1863. On September 8 he held fast with only 6 cannon and 47 men inside the fort despite rumors of a Federal invasion and orders to retreat. Twenty-seven ships carrying Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin and 5,000 Union troops sailed into Sabine Pass; Dowling and "the Irish Davis Guards" shot so accurately that Franklin's forces surrendered in 45 minutes. The Confederate Congress called the Battle of Sabine Pass "one of the most brilliant ... achievements ... of this war."

Discharged as a major in 1865, Dick reopened his most famous bar, "The Bank of Bacchus." In 1866 he formed the first oil company in Houston. By 1867, he owned more than 22 square blocks of downtown Houston and vast lands across Texas. Dick Dowling died of yellow fever at age 30 and is buried in Houston's St. Vincent's Cemetery. (1998)

Precinct: 01 1700 blk North Macgregor Drive, Houston

### **House, Thomas William ca. 1866**

Marker Text: (March 4, 1814 - January 17, 1880)

A native of Stoke St. Gregory in Somersetshire, England, T. W. House emigrated to the United States in May 1835. A baker by trade, he soon was employed by the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans. By 1838 he had moved to Houston and established the company of House and Loveridge, Bakers and Confectioners.

Destined to become one of Houston's most influential citizens, House soon expanded his business interests to include general merchandise, cotton brokerage, and banking. He helped organize the Houston and Galveston Navigation Company; promoted the city's first street railway; organized the **Houston Gas Light Company**; and was a director and stockholder in several railroad companies, including the Houston and Texas Central. House was elected a city alderman in 1857 and 1861, and in 1862 became mayor of Houston. Eventually, his business empire grew to include properties in at least 63 Texas counties, the most notable being his sugar plantation near Arcola in Fort Bend County. Married to Mary Elizabeth Shearn (1822-1870), House was the father of eight children, including Edward Mandell House (1858-1938), principal advisor to President Woodrow Wilson during World War I. Thomas William House is buried in Houston's Glenwood Cemetery. (1991)

Precinct: 01 500 Blk Rusk at Bagby, Houston

## Moonshine Hill

1887, 1904

Marker Text:

Early reports of **natural gas seepages** in this area were not uncommon in the late 19th century. James Slaughter noticed such natural occurrences near the San Jacinto River in 1887. Several years later, with S. A. Hart, he set up a drilling operation in the area, but it proved unsuccessful. Charles Barrett, a former Houston merchant, also drilled wells here, but found the results limited. In 1904, the Higgins Oil Company brought in a major gas well and the following year, the first successful oil well was drilled.

This area, known as the Moonshine Hill section of the great Humble oil field, became the site of a boom town. Within months of the 1905 discovery, the population of the Moonshine Hill settlement increased to 10,000. Early operations associated with the site included the Moonshine Oil Company of Walter Sharp, Ed Prather, and Howard R. Hughes.

Although tents comprised most of the early structures, Moonshine Hill eventually included a church, school, postal station, stores, hotels, and saloons. Despite three separate boom eras, the last occurring in 1929, Moonshine Hill declined as a community. Its brief existence, however, had a dramatic impact on the economic development of Humble and Houston.

Precinct: 04 2735 FM 1960 E, Humble

## Naval Works at Goose Creek 1903

Marker Text:

In 1854, brothers Thomas and John Chubb bought land in the William Scott League on the east bank of Goose Creek at the mouth of Tabbs Bay. On this site, they established the Chubb Shipyard prior to the Civil War. At the time, Texas shipbuilding was a developing industry. During the war, however, in an effort to compensate for the Union's industrial advantage, the Confederate government encouraged Texans to engage in manufacturing ventures that would aid its military effort.

The Chubb brothers responded to this call with the Confederate Naval Works at Goose Creek, which built and repaired vessels during the war. Thomas Chubb also served in the Texas Marine Department, an element of the Confederate States Army operating independently of the Confederate Navy. He obtained the rank of Captain and later became superintendent of the Confederate Naval Works.

The design and structure of ships built at the Goose Creek shipyard were integral to the Department's effectiveness in running the Union blockade. The shallow draft of the centerboard schooners made them suitable for blockade running in shallow areas of the Gulf of Mexico, where deep draft vessels could not pass. These successful ships included the Royal Yacht, Bagdad, Phoebe, Henrietta, Marguereta and Altha Brooks. An important contributor to the Texas naval and industrial effort during the Civil War, the Goose Creek shipyard later built ships for the federal government and private mariners until Thomas Chubb left the business in 1869. The following year, the Thomas B. Gaillard family purchased the former shipyard and established Gaillard's Landing. Later, the site

became part of the **Goose Creek oil fields**. (2007)  
Precinct: 02 Bayland Park, 2641 SH 146 Business, Baytown

## **Humble, City of** **1904**

Marker Text:

A pioneer oil boom town. Originated as crossroads community named for settler Pleasant Smith Humble (1835?-1912), who lived here before 1889, hewing his timber into railroad ties, mining gravel from his land, keeping store, and serving as justice of the peace. Neighbors included the Bender, Durdin, Isaacks, Lee, Slaughter, and Williams families. Economic bases were farms and sawmills. The post office opened 1902. In 1904 C. E. Barrett (1866-1926) **drilled for oil** in this area, securing small production on Moonshine Hill. On Jan. 7, 1905, he brought in the No. 2 Beaty Well which yielded 8,500 barrels a day, opening the great boom. From a village of 700, Humble grew at once into a town of 20,000. Field production-- the largest in Texas for the year 1905-- was 15,594,923 barrels of oil. The field was named for the town. A group of its operators, including Ross S. Sterling, later (1931-33) governor of Texas, in 1911 incorporated a new oil company named for the field, thus spreading into the annals of world commerce the town's name.

Production from several strata here exceeded the total for fabulous Spindletop by 1946. Known as the greatest salt dome field, Humble still produces and the town for which it was named continued to thrive. (1972)

Precinct: 04 110 West Main, Humble

## **First United Methodist Church of Humble** **1907**

Marker Text:

Founded in 1886, Humble was an **oil boom town** in 1907 when the Rev. J. T. Browning of Houston began conducting Methodist worship services for residents of the area. The services were first held in a building that had housed a bottle factory. In 1908, this church was organized with 37 charter members. The following year, the congregation constructed their first building, a small frame structure later destroyed by fire. Subsequent church facilities have reflected the continued growth of the congregation and community.

Precinct: 04 800 Main St. at Ave. G, Humble

## **Lee High School, Robert E. (Baytown)** **1908**

RTHL Marker Text:

After a population increase due to the discovery of oil in 1908, local residents realized the need for permanent school facilities and formed the Goose Creek Independent School District in 1919, encompassing the cities of Goose Creek, Pelly, and Baytown and the Wooster community. Prominent Houston architect Harry D. Payne designed a new school, which opened in fall 1928. The Art Deco-style building with classical elements is concrete-framed with a stucco veneer on a concrete foundation. Notable features include glazed terra cotta roof tiles, brick trimmed niches with urns, and classical finials.

Robert E. Lee High School, named due to the confederate general's popularity in the area, served as a senior high school for the entire district. Sited between Goose Creek-Baytown highway (now market street) and the Dayton-Goose Creek Railroad (now union pacific), the school was centrally located in the tri-cities, allowing it to unite them and become the heart of the area.

As a stated purpose of the school was to become the center of all community activities, various organizations and churches were allowed to use its facilities, and the auditorium became a popular venue for civic events. Another purpose was adult education; from 1934 to 1951, Lee Junior College held classes at night on the high school campus. Disaster struck on April 29, 1987, when a fire, later determined to be arson, engulfed the main building. Alumni and citizens insisted on restoration of the building to its original appearance. From the beginning, Robert E. Lee High School students have won numerous honors in both academics and athletics. Over the years, the school has expanded and modernized to consistently meet the highest standards and remain a first class high school.

Precinct: 02 1809 Market Street Baytown

## **Humble Oil & Refining Company** **1909**

Marker Text:

Ross S. Sterling **entered the oil business** in 1909, when he invested in the Humble oil filed north of Houston. Two years later he formed the Humble Oil Company with five partners: Walter W. Fondren, Charles B. Goddard, William Stamps Farlish, Robert Lee Blaffer, and Harry Carothers Wiess. Sterling's brother, Frank, became a company director in 1914.

In 1917 the company obtained a state charter under the name Humble Oil & Refining Company. In order to finance the building of a refinery, fifty percent of the company stock was sold to Standard Oil of New Jersey. The first oil was pumped into a still at the new refinery on May 11, 1920.

As the company expanded and employed more people, a town grew up around the refinery. The company provided low-interest home loans to its employees. By the 1930s research was being conducted at the Baytown refinery, resulting in the production of vital products for the U. S. war effort during World War II. The post-war years saw additional expansion at the refinery, and the company was merged with Standard Oil of New Jersey in 1959. The Humble name was used until 1972, when Standard Oil Company (NJ) became known as Exxon Corporation. (1989)

Precinct: 02 Decker Road & Rollingbrook Dr., Baytown

## **Cooley, Daniel Denton** **ca. 1910s**

Marker Text: (April 15, 1850 - November 22, 1933)

A native of Binghamton, New York, D. D. Cooley moved to Omaha, Nebraska as a young man. In 1887 he joined the American Loan and Trust Company. The company bought a tract of land northwest of Houston in 1891 and sent Cooley and other representatives to oversee its development the following year.

As general manager of the Omaha and South Texas Land Company, formed by



American Loan and Trust in 1892, Cooley had direct input into the design of the Houston Heights community. Known later as the "Father of the Houston Heights," he laid out the main street, Heights Boulevard, and built his home here in 1892-93. He continued to promote real estate in the area after the company was dissolved about 1895.

The first school in the neighborhood was named for Cooley, and he was a member of the school board. After Houston Heights was incorporated in 1896, he was elected an alderman. Cooley was a respected civic and business leader, whose interests included banking, insurance, railroads, real estate, **and oil**.

Married to Helen Grace Winfield (1860-1916) in 1883, Cooley was the father of three sons. He died in 1933 and is buried in Glenwood Cemetery. The Cooley home was razed in 1965. (1991)

Precinct: 01 1802 Heights Blvd, Houston

## **Lambrecht's Artesian Well** **1912**

Marker Text:

An **oil well drilled** at this site in 1912 yielded not oil, but free-flowing artesian water. The following year, German native Nick Lambrecht (1855-1920) purchased the property. Lambrecht served as justice of the peace and mayor during Humble's oil boom days in the early 20th century and in 1904 had installed a water system to meet the needs of the many oil field workers who came to town. Lambrecht's artesian well was used to supply water to bathhouses and was also piped to nearby homes. In earlier years, water had been hauled to town in barrels on horse-drawn wagons.

Precinct: 04 Business FM 1960 A at North Houston, Humble

## **Autry House, James L.** **1912**

RTHL Marker Text:

Mississippi native James L. Autry (1859-1920) moved to Corsicana in 1876. There he studied law and held civic offices at the time of the first oil discoveries in Texas. He was Chief Counsel for **The Texas Co. (later Texaco)** and a pioneer in the new field of Petroleum Law. Autry commissioned Sanguinet and Staats to design this home, which was constructed in 1912. The neoclassical design features a double balustraded gallery and large fluted Doric columns. Also prominent are a porte-cochere and fernery (sunroom), and a hipped Ludowici tile roof. The rear garage has upstairs servants quarters.

Precinct: 01 05 Courtlandt Place, Houston

## **Houston's Deep-Water Port** **1914**

Marker Text:

As early as the 1820s, ships began using Buffalo Bayou to connect Harrisburg, now part of Houston, to Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. As more people came to Houston, traffic and commerce along the bayou grew and the need for a deeper waterway became apparent. After Charles Stewart, U.S. Congressman from Houston, brought attention to the need for work along the bayou in the 1880s, U.S. Representative Joseph C.

Hutcheson championed a bill allowing for the committee on rivers and harbors to survey the waterway. Congressman Thomas Ball led the delegation on the survey tour and they agreed that Houston was destined to be a seaport. The destruction of Galveston's port during the great storm of 1900 created increased pressure for a larger and safer inland deep-water port.

During the early 1900s, Thomas Ball tried to convince Congress to support fully a deepwater port for Houston. Business and civic leaders joined forces in 1909, allowing Ball to propose the "Houston Plan," in which local constituents offered to pay half the cost of the deep-water dredging. Congress accepted the offer and this cost-sharing agreement set a precedent for funding of future federal projects. Work began in 1912 and the 52-milelong deep-water channel officially opened on November 10, 1914. By 1919, Houston was the second-largest spot cotton export port in the U.S., with exports growing exponentially each year during the 1920s. Business along the port grew, bringing new industries such as paper mills, **motor fuel refineries** and the first container terminal along the Texas gulf coast. Houston's deep-water port transformed a fledgling community into an internationally recognized center of commerce. (2013)

Marker is property of the State of Texas

Precinct: 02 Wayside & Clinton Drive, Gate 8, Houston

## Link-Lee House

1916

RTHL Marker Text:

Constructed in 1912 for businessman John Wiley Link, this building was designed by the firm of Sanguinet, Staats & Barnes and was the first home completed in the Montrose subdivision, which Link developed. **Oilman Thomas P. Lee** purchased it for his family in 1916 and in 1922 had Houston architect Alfred Finn make several alterations. An exceptional example of Neoclassical architecture, the Link-Lee house features a pronounced portico, elaborate brickwork and ornate terra cotta ornamentation. Sold to the Catholic Diocese of Galveston in 1946, it has served the University of St. Thomas since the school opened in 1947.

Precinct: 01 3800 Montrose Blvd. at Alabama, Houston

## Nazro House, Underwood

1916

RTHL Marker Text:

This house, the only one of Georgian Revival style in Courtlandt Place, is an example of the early 20th century residential work of Fort Worth firm Sanguinet and Staats. The red brick veneered house features a front entry portico with full entablature supported by slender columns with composite capitals. Underwood Nazro, his wife Clara, and their two children lived here from 1916-28. Nazro was vice-president of the **Gulf Oil Company** and also did business in finance and community investment. Banker Ike McFarland and his wife, preservationist Mae Wynn McFarland, lived here from 1940-69.

Precinct: 01 25 Courtlandt Place, Houston

## Donoghue House, Thomas J. & Mary

1916



RTHL Marker Text:

Thomas J. Donoghue, a **Texas company** (Texaco) founder and executive, and his wife, Mary, built this house in 1915-16. Designed by noted New York architect Whitney Warren of the firm of Warren and Wetmore, it is an excellent example of Georgian revival architecture with wood and stone carvings by master artisan Peter Mansbendel. A part of the exclusive early 20th century Courtlandt Place neighborhood, the house remained in the Donoghue family until 1966.

Precinct: 01 17 Courtlandt Place, Houston

## La Porte [City of]

1916

Marker Text:

Colorado-based land developers A. M. York, J. H. York, I. R. Holmes, and Tom Lee formed the La Porte Land and Town Company in 1890. They purchased over 1,000 acres of land in this area and began laying out town lots in the fall of 1891. Edward York later joined his two brothers and the other investors to organize the La Porte Investment Company.

Advertising to prospective settlers in New York State and the Midwest, the developers began selling lots by January 1892. Soon a hotel, general mercantile store, and U. S. Post Office opened in the new town. The La Porte, Houston, and Northern Railroad, chartered in 1892, completed a line to Sylvan Beach Resort in 1899. Along with agriculture, the beach became the town's main economic mainstay.

The original investment company became insolvent by 1895, but a new company purchased the land in 1898 and continued development efforts. Disastrous effects of the 1900 storm, as well as another storm and a fire in 1915, the discovery of the **Goose Creek oil field** in 1916, and the industrialization of the area following World War II, resulted in an increased population and a shift away from the agricultural character of the town. (1992)

Precinct: 02 604 West Fairmont Pkwy, La Porte

## Kemp, Louis Wiltz

1919

Marker Text: (September 4, 1881 - November 15, 1956)

A native of Cameron, Texas, Lou Kemp had a long career as an asphalt salesman and executive of the **Texas Company** (Texaco), but his passionate avocation, starting in 1920, was historical research. During the extensive travel required by his work, Kemp investigated and documented the facts of early Texas history in great detail. Upon discovering that the graves of many notable Texans were unmarked or neglected, he arranged for reinterment of more than 100 Texas heroes and statesmen in the Texas State Cemetery, where the roads were dedicated to Kemp in 1932.

Kemp became a Texas history expert, a tireless speaker and a prolific writer of books, articles and biographies (notably *The Heroes of San Jacinto* and *The Signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence*). He was president of the Texas State Historical Association and an original member of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee (now Texas Historical Commission). He chaired the advisory board of Texas historians for the 1936 Texas Centennial, directing placement of more than 1,100 markers,

monuments, and buildings across Texas. An organizing trustee and long-time president of the San Jacinto Museum of History Association, he was instrumental in creating the San Jacinto Museum and monument, on which is carved Kemp's summary of the battle of San Jacinto.

Kemp married Violet Volz in 1925, and they had three sons. He lived at 214 Westmoreland Avenue in Houston from 1919 until his death, amassing an extensive collection of books and records on Texas history. Kemp is buried in the Texas State Cemetery. Governor Price Daniel wrote, "Louis Wiltz Kemp ranks with the immortals of Texas history. To my knowledge, no other person did more during his lifetime to preserve the great heritage of Texas." (2013)

Precinct: 01 214 Westmoreland Avenue, Houston

## Pasadena, City of ca. 1919

Marker Text:

This area has progressed from Indian territory to pioneer ranch land to space-age Pasadena. Known at one time for its strawberry patches, it is now acclaimed for its **oil and chemical industries**. The Vince brothers members of Stephen F. Austin's original 300 settlers, developed area as ranch land.

The armies of both Sam Houston and Santa Anna traveled through what is now Pasadena in 1836, to San Jacinto to decide the future of Texas. "Deaf" Smith destroyed a bridge on the Vince ranch to block possible escape by the Mexican army. After the brief battle, Santa Anna eluded the victorious Texas army on a horse stolen from Allen Vince. He was captured approximately one mile from this marker. Site of the bridge and capture may be seen by following signs to the north.

In 1850, surveyors of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad called the area "Land of Flowers."

Col. J. H. Burnet, a land developer from Galveston, founded Pasadena in 1895. He said, "Pasadena will be the hub of a vast rich agricultural area." The area fully justified his vision, for by 1908, "delicious strawberries, figs, oranges and vegetables" were the boast of Pasadena. (1967)

Precinct: 02 Eagle Street & Main St., Pasadena

## Lynchburg Town Ferry 1920

Marker Text:

The Lynchburg Town Ferry, founded in 1822 by Nathaniel Lynch, crosses the Houston Ship Channel downstream of the confluence of the San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou. In 1829, the authorities at San Felipe de Austin requested that Lynch move his ferry service, which had been running from Crystal Bay, upstream to a peninsula formed by a meander of the San Jacinto River. He satisfied the requirements in 1830, moving to an area near the present landing. Lynch passed away in 1837, but his family continued to operate the ferry service until 1848. Between 1848 and 1888, various operators bought and ran the service. During this time, Lynchburg experienced many changes. A fire in 1874 and a series of storms dating from the late 1800s to the early 20th century devastated the town and hastened its decline. In 1888, Harris County purchased the ferry and in **1920** put the diesel-powered, cable-free Chester H. Bryan boat into service. They

added the *Tex Dreyfus* in 1945. The two boats were replaced in 1964 by the *William P. Hobby* and the *Ross S. Sterling*, which have served the area for a number of years. By the 1950s, business returned to Lynchburg; a shipyard, marine service companies and the Coastal Water Authority all opened in following years. Today, the ferry continues to serve Harris County residents who work at the Port of Houston and at **petrochemical plants** along the ship channel. It remains an important economic contributor to the area, promoting tourism and helping to maintain Lynchburg as a focus of industry on the Houston Ship Channel. (2006)

Precinct: 02 North ferry landing on S. Lynchburg Rd, Houston

## Allen Ranch

ca. 1920s

Marker Text:

This busy commercial area was once part of the Allen Ranch, one of the oldest and largest ranches in southeast Texas. A portion of the land was granted to Morris Callahan in 1824 by Mexico and inherited by his niece Rebecca Jane Thomas (d. 1919), who married Samuel William Allen (1826-1888) in 1844. Allen bought additional land, including a 1300-acre tract belonging to his friend Governor Francis R. Lubbock, and began operation of a prosperous cattle ranch. He helped organize the firm of Allen & Poole to ship cattle to eastern and foreign markets.

Samuel Ezekiel Allen (1848-1913) took over operation of the ranch from his father in 1881. He and his wife Rosa Lum (d. 1931) built a large home near the junction of Buffalo Bayou and Sims Bayou (1 mi. N). Allen was a leading Houston businessman as well as a cattleman.

At the time he died, Allen's property included 13,000 acres in Harris County and 10,000 acres in Brazoria County. In 1917, Rosa Allen sold 700 acres to the **Sinclair Oil Company (now Atlantic Richfield Corporation)** as a refinery site. The remaining land was later divided for industrial, commercial, and residential use. The ranch house was moved to Galveston Bay, where it became Camp Allen of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. (1976)

Precinct: 02 101 South Richey, Houston

## Crown Hill Cemetery

ca. 1920s

Marker Text:

Permanent settlement of this area began about 1891. Lot sales in the new town of Pasadena began in 1893, and the town was officially platted three years later. The first recorded burials in this vicinity occurred about 1894, although the exact locations of the graves are unknown.

This graveyard, originally known as Pasadena Cemetery and the town's only community burial ground, was established in 1906 on a knoll overlooking Vince's Bayou and Buffalo Bayou. The first person buried here was E. P. Pomeroy, who died on October 24, 1906. Those interred here include many of Pasadena's early settlers and community leaders, and veterans of the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, and World War II. The graveyard became known as Crown Hill Cemetery following World War I, possibly as a result of its proximity to the **Crown Central Refinery**. It has also been referred to as the Mexican Cemetery due to the numbers of Mexican-American farmers

who were interred here beginning in the 1920s.

Although surrounded by 20th-century industrial development, this cemetery survives as a link to the area's pioneer heritage. (1991)

Precinct: 02 813 North Richey Street, Pasadena

## Taylor, Edward R. and Ann 1921

Marker Text:

Edward Ruthven Taylor, born in August 1845 at Independence, Texas, moved with parents Edward Wyllys and Caroline Taylor to Houston in 1848. Here, in the city's formative years, the family made an impact in the cotton business and in the public education system.

At the start of the Civil War, Edward Ruthven attended private school in New York. In 1862, at age 16, he returned to Texas and joined Waul's Texas Legion. He served with the unit at the battle of Vicksburg, Mississippi, where he was captured. While held as a prisoner of war, he contracted tuberculosis and the Legion later discharged him from service.

As he recuperated at home, Edward became close to one of his family's slaves, a girl named Ann. Some sources indicate Ann came from Hungerford, Texas, and slave papers list her name as Ann George. Edward and Ann fell in love and unofficially married, as interracial marriages were not legal in Texas at the time. At the age of 25, Edward moved to Myrtle, later known as Pierce Junction, with Ann and their first child, Pinkie. Establishing a farm of more than 600 acres, the family grew, and Ann and Edward had five more surviving children: Major Julius, Samuel, William E., Nettie C., and Burt Taylor. In 1903, Edward deeded half of his property to Ann. She lived until 1909 and is buried on the original Taylor homestead with three children who did not reach adulthood.

A few years before Ann's death, the family became aware of potential oil deposits on their land. In 1921, the Pierce Junction field had its **first substantial oil strike**. The oil rush continued beyond Edward's death in 1924, and his children, given equal shares of the property, continued to maintain the land and its resources. Family members donated the original homestead to the City of Houston in 1986. (2003)

Precinct: 01 1900 Reed Road, Houston

## Autry House 1921

RTHL Marker Text:

This house was **built in 1921** by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas as a student center for Rice University. It was designed by Houston architect William Ward Watkin and the Boston architectural firm of Cram & Ferguson in the Italian Mediterranean style featured on many Rice University campus structures. The house is named for James Lockhart Autry (1859-1920), Texaco general counsel and husband of Allie Kinsloe Autry who donated funds for its construction.

Precinct: 01 6265 Main Street, Houston

## Aldine [Community]

1923

Marker Text:

The railroad arrived in this area, first called Prairie Switch, in 1873. The Aldine Post Office was established in 1896; twenty-five to thirty families, most of Swedish descent, settled on Aldine's fertile land. Here they grew such products as Satsuma oranges, pears and magnolia figs. In 1900 developer E. C. Robertson and his partner, F. W. Colby of Kansas, began to market parcels of land to out-of-state speculators, many of whom bought tracts sight unseen. A Presbyterian Church was organized from a Union Sabbath School in 1902, and the town began to grow. It soon boasted a hotel and general store, a two-room schoolhouse erected on this site in 1910, and a cemetery deeded for community use in 1911.

Aldine resident J. C. Carpenter operated a small fig cannery until 1914 or 1915 when the Carpenter Fig Company opened a cannery nearby. Reportedly one of the largest fig preserving plants in the U. S., it employed twenty-five to thirty people during the canning season. The fig industry died out from 1918 to 1920 because of freezes, blight and lack of sugar during World War I.

Dairy farms replaced fruit farms and the **Magnolia Oil Company** established a large crude oil pumping station in Aldine in 1923. The Aldine Railroad Depot shut down in 1931 or 1932, and the post office closed in January 1935. The community turned to automobiles for transportation. Farmers began marketing their wares in Houston. The town of Aldine gradually declined. In 1932 four area common school districts joined to form the Aldine Independent School District. Now a part of the metropolis of Houston, the townsite of Aldine remains only in the annals of Texas history. (1999)

Precinct: 01 905 Aldine-Bender Road, Aldine

## Fondren Mansion [Colombe d'Or]

1923

RTHL Marker Text:

Designed by noted Texas architect Alfred C. Finn (1883-1964), this house was **built in 1923** for the family of Walter W. Fondren (1877-1939), one of the founders of Humble Oil & Refining Company. Built in the Prairie School style, the impressive structure reflects the wealth and influence of its original owner. Prominent features include symmetrical massing of bays, dormers, and chimneys; tile roof; and Sullivanesque friezes on the entry bay and chimney caps.

Precinct: 01 3410 Montrose & Harold, Houston

## Temple Beth Israel [now Heinen Theatre]

1925

RTHL Marker Text:

Congregation Beth Israel is the oldest Jewish congregation in Texas. Early Jewish families that settled in the area formed the Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1844, under the leadership of Lewis Levy. By 1854, seventeen adults organized themselves into the Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel, and the congregation received a state charter in 1859. Members first met in a small room on Austin Street between Texas and Prairie, but later moved to a frame building on LaBranch Street. The congregation's first

permanent synagogue was dedicated on Crawford Street in 1874. A larger synagogue followed in 1908, but waves of immigration, **the oil boom** and the deepening of the ship channel brought explosive growth to the congregation, and the need for another, larger building became urgent. The new synagogue, located at the corner of Holman and Austin Streets, was designed by congregation member and noted architect Joseph Finger. When the temple was dedicated in 1925, the Houston Chronicle called it "the finest house of worship of its kind in the entire south."

The temple's architecture combines traditional classical and near eastern elements, such as large columns and entablatures, in a stylized art moderne style. The brick and limestone building's square plan and high facades enhance its monumental scale.

In 1969, the congregation moved to a new site in southwest Houston and transferred the property to the Houston Independent School District. The facility served as the first home of Houston's High School For The Visual And Performing Arts before it was passed to Houston Community College in the early 1980s.

Precinct: 01 3517 Austin at Holman, Houston

## **Sullivan, Maurice J.**

**1927**

Marker Text:

Maurice J. Sullivan, son of Maurice and Margaret (Fitzsimons) Sullivan, was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He attended Detroit College (1901-1903) and studied structural and civil engineering at the University of Michigan (1904-1906). While working at engineering firms from 1909-1912, Sullivan taught himself architecture. He married Anne Winston and they had four sons and three daughters.

After moving to Houston in 1912, Sullivan was appointed City Architect by Mayor Baldwin Rice and took on numerous projects, including Dora B. Lantrip elementary school (1916). Known for being an eclectic architect who frequently worked in popular revival styles including Romanesque, Mediterranean, and Neo-Gothic, Sullivan opened his own practice in 1919, sharing an office with Birdsall P. Briscoe for 35 years. His ecclesiastical work is considered his most significant and includes the Villa de Matel Chapel (1923-28), Holy Rosary Church (1933), St. Anne Catholic Church (1940) and First Presbyterian Church (1949). Other prominent buildings include the **Petroleum Building (now the Great Southwest building)**, which introduced the stepped-back skyscraper to Houston, Houston Negro Hospital (now Riverside Hospital), St. Thomas High School, Ripley House, and St. Mary's Seminary.

In 1922, Sullivan designed his family home at the corner of Southmore Boulevard and Fannin Street in the picturesque Manorial style, exemplifying the houses associated with 1920s and 1930s elite Texas residential neighborhoods. In 1924 and 1933, he served as president of the South Texas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Sullivan is buried in Holy Cross Cemetery. In 1992 private citizens purchased the home for use as a commercial property.

Precinct: 01 Southmore Boulevard and Fannin Street, Houston

## **Katy, The City of**

**1927**

Marker Text:



Karankawa Indians hunted buffalo on this site as late as the 1820s. Present Fifth Street follows the course of the San Felipe Road, which was opened to Austin's colony in that decade. In 1836 Santa Anna used that road in his march toward San Jacinto.

This site was in the 1839 land grant of Republic of Texas citizen James J. Crawford. In 1863 at their camp on San Felipe Road, 35 Confederate soldiers died and were buried in the locality. Cane Island, the original settlement, was known as a stagecoach stop. Developers platted Katy townsite after Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad ("The Katy Line") reached this point in 1895. The post office opened Jan. 23, 1896, in the postmaster's mercantile store. In 1897, William Eule grew a rice crop, initiating the locality's major industry. Eule's son Fred dug an irrigation well for the rice fields in 1899. The 1900 hurricane razed or damaged all improvements except two houses in Katy, but the town was soon rebuilt. Beginning in 1927, nearby **petroleum developments** enhanced the local economy. Incorporated in 1945, the town had 849 people in 1950 and 3800 by 1970. It is a tri-county municipality, lying in Fort Bend, Harris, and Waller counties.(1978)  
Precinct: 03 5200 Second Street at Ave. B, Katy

## **Sterling Mansion, The Governor Ross 1927**

Marker Text:

Architect Alfred C. Finn of Houston drew the plans for this scaled-down replica of the American White House for oil executive Ross S. Sterling (1875-1949). **Completed in 1927** on the residential "Gold Coast" stretching from La Porte to Morgan's Point, it stood as a landmark on the Houston Ship Channel. By night its roof deck commanded a view of the lighted industrial plants in this region.

Layers of stone, concrete, air space, and plastered lath form the thick exterior walls. Deeply sunken foundations and huge beams running the length of the structure give it hurricane resistance.

With 21,000 square feet of floor space, this was known as the largest private residence in Texas at the time it was built. It has seven fireplaces, 15 baths, 34 rooms-- including a dining room seating 300 guests. Silver and gold inlaid sconces, fine cared woods, and Tiffany chandeliers form some of the adornments. There were elaborate facilities for recreation and for efficient housekeeping. Sterling and his wife Maude Abbie (Gage) had several children.

Ross Sterling was governor of Texas 1931-1933. In 1946 he donated his mansion to a civic club and it was used as a juvenile home until 1961. (1978)

Precinct: 02 515 Bayridge Road, Morgan's Point

## **Deer Park [City of] 1928**

Marker Text:

Illinois native Simeon Henry West (1827-1920) settled in this vicinity in 1892 hoping to develop the area, with its mild climate and proximity to waterways, into a farming and trading center. By the year's end, he had purchased property and platted the town of Deer Park, naming it after a nearby private park inhabited by many deer. After completing the Deer Park Hotel in 1893, West marketed his development primarily to Northerners. More than ninety settlers moved here, attracted by the prospects for fruit

and tobacco farming and the trade links to the Houston & Northern Railway and Houston's waterways that West was developing.

The promising town was nearly destroyed in the hurricane of 1900, after which every family except one returned North. A few people moved to Deer Park in later years. In 1905, the Edwin Rice Brown family leased as their family home the Deer Park Hotel, the focal point of area social life. However, the town's population remained very small. Not until 1928, when **Shell Chemical Company** relocated here, did a new period of growth begin. Deer Park's business district, churches, and schools were reestablished, and in 1948 the citizens of Deer Park voted to incorporate. (1992)

Precinct: 02 1402 Center St., Deer Park

## **K'Nesseth Israel Synagogue** **1928**

RTHL Marker Text:

In response to area population growth following the early 20th century **Goose Creek oil field** boom, twenty incorporating members formed the K'Nesseth Israel congregation in 1928 to serve the area's Jewish residents. They hired Houston architect Leonard Gabert to design this synagogue, which was completed in 1930. Outstanding features of the structure include its barrel vault roof, round-headed stained glass windows, and arched brickwork entry.

Precinct: 02 W. Sterling Ave. & N. Commerce St., Baytown

## **West Mansion** **1929**

RTHL Marker Text:

Lumber, **oil**, and ranching tycoon James Marion West (1871-1941) and his wife, Jessie Dudley (1871-1953), hired eminent Houston architect Joseph Finger to design this 17,000-square foot house as headquarters for their 30,000-acre ranch. Built in 1929-30, it is an excellent example of the Italian renaissance revival style. It features exceptional ironwork by Berger & Son, classical pediments and arched windows. Subsequent owners include Humble Oil and Rice University.

Precinct: 01 3301 NASA Road One, Webster

## **Gulf Building** **1929**

RTHL Marker Text:

Prominent real estate developer, publisher, statesman and banker Jesse H. Jones opened the **Gulf Building in 1929** with Gulf Oil, National Bank of Commerce, and Sakowitz Brothers as primary tenants. Alfred C. Finn designed the 430foot high Art Deco edifice with a six-story base topped by a tall tower that diminishes in size as it rises. The 37-floor, steel-frame structure remained Houston's tallest skyscraper for 34 years. In 1986, the building, then owned by a successor bank, underwent a \$50 million restoration. It was renamed the JPMorgan Chase Building in 2000 and continues to be a monument to the city's growth, modernity and financial prosperity.

Precinct: 01 700 block between Main and Travis, at Rusk, Houston

## Matthews-Johnson House

1930

RTHL Marker Text:

William and Regina (Meyers) Matthews had this house built in 1915. William, a civil engineer and chief draftsman for the Sunset Central Lines, contracted with W. T. Carter Lumber And Building Co. to erect the house. The house is a well-preserved early craftsman bungalow with late Victorian influences. Significant architectural elements include a hipped roof, gabled front entry, l-shaped porch with tapered square wood columns, tracery windows and exposed rafter ends. In 1930, the Matthews sold the house to Ernest and Gertrude Johnson. Ernest was a pumper and labor leader for the **Sinclair Oil Co.**, and the Johnsons converted attic spaces to bedrooms with dormer windows for their five daughters.

Precinct: 01 1833 Cortland St., Houston

## Minchen House

1930

RTHL Marker Text:

A pioneer in the **oil and gas industry** in Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana, real estate investor Simon Minchen (1886-1958) and his wife, Mamie (Pesses) (1887-1986), purchased this lot in 1930 for \$4,500. They paid noted Houston architect Joseph Finger \$1,250 to design this house for their family, and contractor w. J. Goggan, known for his exceptional craftsmanship, completed it in 1931 for \$25,000. A rare example of Italian Renaissance architecture in Houston, the Minchen House exhibits prominent characteristics of that style, including the clay tile roof and arched windows and doors.

Precinct: 01 1753 North Boulevard, Houston

## Frenchtown Community

ca.1930

Marker Text:

A distinct ethnic cultural group, "Creoles of Color," developed in Louisiana in the 18th and 19th centuries. With roots in French, Spanish and Native American cultures, they spoke standard or Creole French and practices Catholicism. Free persons before the Civil War, they lost their special status with the onset of Jim Crow laws, and many turned to sharecropping to survive but suffered further with declining agricultural prices and drought. Escaping the devastating 1927 Mississippi River flood, many fled west via highways and rail lines.

In Houston, they took jobs in **industries related to oil**, construction and railroads. They established a tight-knit, culturally unique community called Frenchtown, today bounded by Collingsworth Street, Russell Street, Liberty Road, Quitman Street and Jensen Drive. In 1929, residents built Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church, which later established a parochial school. Families maintained their cultural identity by marrying within the community and closely supporting their neighbors. They held la-las, social gatherings centered on food and music, to raise funds for building new homes. Zydeco music, a blending of Creole la-la and the blues, also played a vital role in distinguishing this

community.

Frenchtown began to lose its identity as a Creole enclave after World War II as segregation ended, U.S. Highway 59 expanded and more non-Creole families moved here. Later, the popularity of Zydeco music and a renewed interest in Creole culture brought attention to this unique community and led to various preservation efforts. The Frenchtown Community Association has aided in the reclaiming of this vibrant, distinctive area of Houston. (2007)

Precinct: 01 2900 Quitman Rd and US 59 north frontage road, Houston

## Bryan-Chapman House

1935

RTHL Marker Text:

Envisioning a thoroughly modern home for themselves, sisters and Houston arts community leaders Caroline Bryan Chapman (1859-1933) and Johnelle Bryan (1861-1935) had this house constructed in 1925. The home was a showplace of strong Mediterranean influences such as arched windows, multi-light doors, a Ludowici tile roof, and balconets. The sisters enjoyed their Courtlandt Place home for less than a decade. It was purchased in 1935 by **Oilman Joseph F. Bashara**, whose family remained in the house until 1980.

Supplemental Plaque: This home was designed by 26-year-old Texas architect Carlos B. Schoepl (1898-1990). He later moved to Florida where he had a distinguished career.

Precinct: 01 15 Courtlandt Place, Houston

## Ellington Field

1940s

Marker Text:

In 1917, during World War I, the Houston Chamber of Commerce lobbied the federal government to establish an air field here. Named for Lt. Eric Lamar Ellington, an Illinois aviator killed in a California plane crash in 1913, it opened in November 1917.

The site transferred to the National Guard during the 1920s, and following a fire and demolition, all that remained by the 1930s was a concrete water tank. The government retained ownership, leasing the site for grazing cattle. By the 1940s, the threat of another world conflict caused the U.S. to reactivate the base. Ellington was vital to American war planning during World War II due to its strategic location **near oil refineries** and the Houston Ship Channel. Construction began in 1940, and among the first improvements was a service apron believed to be the largest concrete slab in the world at the time.

Troops began arriving at the modernized facility in April 1941.

Ellington was primarily a pilot training center, but navigators and bombardiers, as well as aviators from other countries, also trained here. Because the field was operational prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, one of every ten Army pilots went through its flying school in the first two years of the war. Later, the Army Air Force ran an advanced navigator training school here. After the war,

Ellington was home to a Texas Air National Guard unit. During the Cold War, it again became an active Air Force base, primarily for navigator training. The Air Force abandoned the base in 1976, and the site has since been shared by the Texas Air National Guard, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Texas Army Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the City of Houston, which, since 1984, has used

much of it for a municipal airport.

Precinct: 02 Challenger 7 Parkway at Aerospace Ave, Houston

## **Cullen Building** (Baylor College of Medicine), Hugh Roy and Lillie **1947**

RTHL Marker Text:

The Baylor University College of Medicine moved to Houston in 1943 from Dallas to launch the proposed Texas Medical Center. The building to house Baylor's medical school was named after Hugh Roy and Lillie Cullen who moved to Houston in 1911 and made their fortune in oil. The Cullen foundation's first **check was written in 1947** to fund the new medical building. Architects Hedrick and Lindsley designed the building with modern deco elements and Texas cream limestone. A portico was added in 1982 to enhance the main entrance. The Cullen building remains at the heart of the Texas Medical Center.

Precinct: 01 One Baylor Plaza, Houston

## **Wooster Common School No. 38** (Replacement) **1950s**

Marker Text:

In 1891, Quincy Adams Wooster visited Texas from Iowa. He was so impressed with this area that he sold his farm and moved his family here. With his business partner, Willard D. Crow, Wooster bought thousands of acres along Scott's Bay. He had the town of Wooster surveyed and platted on January 20, 1893. During World War II, the population increased greatly due to the nearby **Humble Oil & Refining Company** and the humble docks. In the 1950s, the City of Baytown annexed Wooster, then still a rural community. Hurricanes Carla (1961) and Alicia (1983), extensive subsidence, and industrial-use property acquisitions have removed most historic resources from Wooster. The Wooster schoolhouse was built in 1894 on First Street near Market Street Road (later Arbor Street and Bayway Drive) on land donated by Junius Brown. It was designed by Q. A. Wooster and built by Wooster, Brown, and their sons and sons-in-law. Cypress was chosen for the frame and exterior siding and Longleaf Heart Pine for the interior. On April 9, 1895, Harris County Commissioners Court was petitioned to create School District No. 38, to include Scott's Bay and Lynchburg. Q. A. Wooster, Junius Brown, and John Wesley Crow were elected the first trustees. Serving seven grades, the school became part of the Goose Creek School District in 1919. The schoolhouse closed and reopened several times, and was moved in 1937 to the new David G. Burnet Elementary School and used as a classroom, cafeteria, and music room. The building was also used for Sunday School lessons and as a voting place. It closed as a school facility for the last time in 1980 and was moved in 1986 to Republic of Texas Plaza for use as a museum. As the oldest known existing one-room frame schoolhouse in Harris County, it continues to have educational and historical value to the community. (1990, 2012)

Precinct: 02 5117 North Main, Baytown

## **Carver Hi. Sch., George Washington** **1955**

Marker Text:

The first public school for African American children of this area was Goose Creek School for Coloreds. Founded in 1921 as a grade school, it served the children of the

Baytown area, as well as those in La Porte, Cedar Bayou, and McNair. Classes were also held in Mt. Rose Baptist Church. The school's first principal, Anna B. Edwards, was paid \$90 per month. A frame school building constructed at the northwest corner of Carver St. and Oak St. (now Martin Luther King Dr.) opened in the Fall of 1924; a brick addition in 1927 expanded it to the ninth grade. The school's name was changed to honor scientist, educator, inventor and botanist George Washington Carver by June 1940, and it was accredited as a four-year high school in 1941. In 1948, a larger, modern campus was opened four blocks east at Carver St. and Lee Dr., and the old building became an elementary school.

Carver High was consistently ranked as one of the top segregated schools in the state, and students excelled in both academics and athletics. Carver won nine state band competitions and eight state sports championships in the Prairie View Interscholastic League. There were just five principals in 46 years: Ernest A. Archia, William M. Davis, Clyde J. Messiah, Edward F. Green and George Perkins.

The high school closed after the 1966-1967 school year as a result of desegregation.

Carver Elementary School was then located here from 1967 until 1995, when **a former oil storage pit was discovered on the property**. The buildings were demolished in 2002 and a new Carver Elementary was dedicated at a nearby site. Carver school, which originally laid the educational foundation for area black children, continues to educate the Baytown Community. (2010)

Precinct: 02 800 Carver Street, Baytown

## San Jacinto Community College 1960

Marker Text:

The greater Pasadena area grew rapidly from industrialization during and after world war II, with the city's population increasing from 3,436 in 1940 to 22,483 in 1950 and to 58,737 in 1960. In the late 1950s, community leaders and school district representatives from along the Houston ship channel discussed educational opportunities for graduating students and **petrochemical industry workers**. In March 1960, college supporters presented petitions to the county and state Boards of Education.

A May 1960 election created the East Harris County Union Junior College District, a board of regents and a supporting property tax. The effort withstood early opposition including legislation and lawsuits. The federal government gave the college 141 acres for its Spencer Highway campus in Dec. 1960. Two months later, regents approved Dr. Thomas Spencer as the first president. One week after hurricane Carla damaged temporary classrooms in downtown Pasadena, the college opened on Sep. 18, 1961, and the opening enrollment of 876 set a new record for first-year enrollment for Texas junior colleges. With completion of the Vincent Heinrich science building and McCollum administration building, all classes moved to the main campus in 1964. The college quickly achieved state and national accreditation. Voters have approved several bond elections, building north (1975) and south (1979) campuses. The college sustained further hurricane damage from Alicia (1983) and Ike (2008) but has rebuilt with enrollment steadily growing at all three campuses. San Jacinto College has added new buildings and programs, community extension centers, online and hybrid courses, and continuing education courses to meet the educational and workforce training needs of the region.



Precinct: 02 8060 Spencer Highway, Pasadena

## Eldorado Ballroom

1984

Marker Text:

Between 1900 and 1920, a residential building boom fueled the establishment of a commercial district on Dowling Street, the Third Ward's main artery. The bustling district included restaurants, shops, churches, stores, professional offices, movie theaters and nightclubs. Located at the corner of Elgin and Dowling Streets, the Eldorado Ballroom was designed by architect Lenard Gebart for the prominent philanthropists and business owners Clarence Arnold Dupree and his wife Anna Johnson Dupree. The ballroom opened in 1939 and was named for one of the social clubs to which the black community's most prominent professionals and business people belonged.

The Eldorado Ballroom provided opportunities for members of the black middle and upper classes to demonstrate their wealth and sophistication. The ballroom launched the careers of musicians and band leaders such as Milton Larkin, Illinois Jacquet and Arnett Cobb. In the late 1950s, the Eldorado Ballroom hosted popular entertainment acts from nationally-known black artists in the blues and R&B genres.

By the 1960s, migration out of the inner city resulted in the relocation or closure of many businesses in the area. In addition, the declining importance of social clubs, inadequate parking, and competition from other venues cumulatively led to the ballroom's closure in the 1970s. Following the deaths of the Duprees, **oilman Hubert Finkelstein** purchased the property in 1984 and 15 years later donated it to Project Row Houses, a community organization. The Eldorado Ballroom is one of the few historic buildings remaining in the third ward's former commercial district.

Precinct: 01 2310 Elgin, Houston

