

THE TEXAS ROOM DISPATCH

A Publication of Friends of the Texas Room
P.O. BOX 27827 * Houston, Texas 77227-7827

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MEETING NOTICE ... Tuesday, April 29 at 7 p.m. at the Long Row building at The Heritage Society in Sam Houston Park. Corner of Bagby and Allen Parkway, near the Houston Public Library. Arrive a few minutes early and get acquainted. See MAP on last page of this Newsletter. Note parking instructions, please.

SPEAKER: Dr. Don E. Carleton has been director of The University of Texas at Austin Center for American History (CAH) since its creation in 1991. From 1979 until 1991, Dr. Carleton was head of the University's Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center. From 1975 until 1979, he served as founding director of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC). At HMRC, he established *The Houston Review: A Journal of History and Culture of the Gulf Coast*.

Immediately following Dr. Carleton's presentation we will present the proposed bylaws for adoption. A copy of these will be sent via e-mail (to be sure we have yours, please reply to treviawbeverly@aol.com with the words BYLAWS on the subject line. If you do not have e-mail and wish a copy mailed to you, contact Betty Chapman at 713.974-9970

The following **Nominations** will be offered at our April 29th meeting:

President - Dorothy Knox Houghton
Vice President - George Werner
Secretary - Betty Trapp Chapman
Treasurer - Marks Hinton
Directors: Jim Glass, Marvin Rich Anne Sloan, Elizabeth Whitlow

March 31, 2003, Report:

Current membership (Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties) is 88.
Membership Funds \$1,355.00 Additional Unrestricted Funds \$2,155.00
Restricted Funds \$ 0 In-kind gifts \$ 75.99

Remembering "Letters to the Editor"

I am a new researcher and am not from one of the old families of Texas, but I have become inspired by the passion of others who respect the information archives hold and the buildings that are part of Houston's history.

I am a native Houstonian and spent many wonderful hours in the Julia Ideson Building. I loved the sound of my footsteps echoing on the staircase as I approached the

second floor. A booklover, this was hallowed ground. As a busy adult, I haven't been in the building in years and am glad to know that it is still "hallowed ground" for you and others. I'd be happy to do what I can to make sure the building and its contents aren't destroyed and lost to future Houstonians.

Julia Ideson is buried in Hollywood Cemetery. I see her monument when I visit my mother's grave. Next time I visit I'll tell her what [the Friends] are doing. <smile>. I'm sure she'd appreciate it.

Lana Sullivan

Thanks for initiating this effort. My dad, Eugene B. Church, a long-time Houston architect believed the Ideson Building--then THE library--was the most beautiful building in Houston. I concur even 50 years later. My parents took me to the Norma Meldrum children's room often. How could I not be enthusiastic about supporting this program?

Gene Church Schulz [Richmond, Texas]

Editor's Note: The **Norma Meldrum Room**, mentioned in the letter above, was named for little Norma, who loved reading and who died just before the original 1904 building opened. Her parents subsequently established a fund to purchase children's books. This room is wonderfully appointed with delightfully carved wooden details, tables, chairs, and bookcases reflecting nursery rhymes. The adjoining **Harriet Dickson Reynolds Room** was named for the third library director. These rooms are not regularly opened (although available on occasion for meeting rooms) but every other year there is an excellent children's literature conference for local librarians interested in such.

I came to Houston in 1984 to visit a relative for one month. I'm still here – and now known as “the Tunnel Lady.” My business is “discovering” Houston and designing tours and publications that reflect this wonderful city's past and present.

As I realized that family concerns would keep me in Houston longer than planned, I began to look around for some information about Houston's history. I found the Texas Room – and fell in love! I would never have stayed, started my business, or gained my nickname if it were not for the materials and staff I found there.

Here, in books and vertical files, on old maps, and in the architectural and photographic archives, was an incredible treasure-trove about Texas' “Unknown” and “Forgotten” city – including extensive clippings about the mysterious Downtown Houston Tunnel System.

Since I began offering guided and self-guided walking tours in Houston in 1988, I have frequently called for the assistance of the Texas Room staff. They've been knowledgeable, always friendly, and extremely helpful. And as a small token of payment I've donated copies of my publications back to the Houston Public Library for the Texas Room collection.

And now I feel that with the assistance of the Friends of the Texas Room, more and more of Houston's hidden stories will be discovered, preserved, organized, and published.

Sandra Lord.

Editor's Note: So obviously, without the Texas Room and HMRC archives, Houston would not have "The Tunnel Lady!" Sandra has given over 3,000 tours within and without the confines of "the tunnel." By class or tour (walking or bus; day or night) you'll learn about Houston – our nation's fourth largest city. In fact, a visit to Sandra's website is an education in itself! Visit at <http://www.discoverhoustontours.com/>

It is interesting that the tunnel system in Toronto is larger than ours, and growing, and that there is also an extensive system in Montreal. Both for the same/opposite reason as ours – weather. Ours, too hot; theirs, too cold. Houston's system is unique because of three factors: size, ownership (over 75% privately owned; all others owned/controlled by a governmental entity), and mode of transportation (ours, pedestrian; theirs, connected to an extensive subway system). The Downtown Houston Tunnel System is the oldest and largest pedestrian tunnel/skywalk system in the world that is most privately owned.

We'd like to hear from others that have found the HMRC collections useful in their businesses or chosen profession, as well as with some specific area of research.

Thank you for letting us know about the new Friends group. I applaud your efforts and will help you in any way I can. The Library department certainly needs your support, and I am hopeful that we can at least keep the department at or near current funding levels during this budget crisis. Once again, good luck and let me know how I can help.

Annise D. Parker City Council, At Large Position 1

Mission Statement. The mission of the Friends of the Texas Room is to support the collections of the Texas and Local History Department, the Archives and Manuscript Department, and the Special Collections Department of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center of the Houston Public Library.

Friends of the Texas Room seek to support the Houston Metropolitan Research Center collections by

- 1) Voluntary involvement and advocacy in meeting the needs of the collections,
- 2) Raising funds for selected needs,
- 3) Creating and participating in programs highlighting the resources of the collections,
- 4) Establishing a publishing program based on the collections,
- 5) Providing support and recommendations to the Library administration,
- 6) Cooperating with and enlisting assistance of other professional and volunteer groups to achieve these goals, and
- 7) Meeting other needs as appropriate.

Approved October 8, 2002

HOUSTON METROPOLITAN RESEARCH CENTER

It has been said that people do not get as excited about preservation of records as they do accessibility! That may be true in some areas but the **Friends of the Texas Room** are greatly concerned with both. Without preservation there is no accessibility!

The Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC) was established as the result of a cooperative program begun in 1974 by the Houston Public Library, Rice University, the University of Houston, Texas Southern University, and the Southwest Center for Urban Research. Then known as the Houston Metropolitan Archives and Research Center, archival materials were first gathered at Rice University's Fondren Library, moving to permanent quarters in the Julia B. Ideson Building in July 1976, where they would complement the holdings of the Houston Public Library's Texas and Local History Department, and the name then changed to the Houston Metropolitan Research Center. This project was funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from local sources.

Collecting information on Houston's founding, growth and development has included the collection of photographs, business records, city records, personal records and those of various organizations. We'll highlight some of these items in future issues.

Records on the move

"The Local Records Division of the Texas State Library administers the regional historical resource depository system and is responsible for collecting, preserving, and making available to researchers historical records of counties, cities, and other local governments of Texas." In 1971, the RHRD system was established with nineteen public and private universities, one junior college, and five public libraries - one of which was the Houston Public Library. These institutions were to provide physical facilities for the archival preservation of local government records in both hard-copy and microfilm. These local records include court dockets and case papers, brand books, poll lists, election records, minute books, etc. Administered by the Archives Division of the Texas State Library in Austin, HMRC has housed these selected governmental records of both Harris and Galveston counties.

The county records originally deposited at the HMRC through the Regional Historical Resources Depositories (RHRD) Program, will now be removed to the new (November 2002) Harris County Archives. Under the direction of our new archivist, **Sarah Canby Jackson**, the anticipated move is June. Once the records are processed, a complete inventory will be available.

Microfilm of some of these records will remain in the Julia B. Ideson Building. A statewide descriptive list of each county's records on microfilm can be found in [Texas County Records, A Guide to the Holdings of Local Records Division of the Texas State Library of County Records on Microfilm](#) (Texas State Library, Austin, 1978, 1990). Counties other than Galveston and Harris counties are available through library loan to HMRC from the Texas State Library or from other RHRD depositories around the state.

Records NOT on the move

The Sanborn Map volumes are NOT being discarded, although they may be moved. *Some* of them have been housed in a room that is being discussed for other uses (meeting rooms to include social events – on a rental basis), but we are assured that they are not going to be discarded. See page 7 for a discussion on these maps –

New support/informational group formed

The National Genealogical Society (NGS) and the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) have recently formed a joint preservation committee . “The most immediate task is to develop a cohesive and coherent long-term strategy to deal with records preservation and access issues at all levels, from local to national. [While their] “..mission is to advise the Genealogical community on ensuring proper access to *historical records of genealogical value* in whatever media they are recorded, on means to effect legislation, and on supporting strong records presentation policies and practices,” the **Friends of the Texas Room** are concerned not only about the genealogists but also historians and other researchers who use the various collections housed in the Julia B. Ideson Building.

Those interested in learning more about the activities of the Joint Committee of NGS and FGS, go to the Committee’s Web site at <http://www.fgs.org/rpa/> -- and membership in the Friends of the Texas Room will continue bring you news on the local level through **The Texas Room Dispatch**.

PEOPLE GOOD TO KNOW

Andy Hempe (Archivist I) is a Certified Archivist, with the HPL archives department for almost five years, processing archival collections and providing reference services to patrons. Andy has also developed several special exhibits using archive materials. He is an active member of the Society of American Archivists, the Society of Southwest Archivists, and current Treasurer for AHA! (Archivists of the Houston Area).

Ron Lee (Librarian II) is a native Houstonian who received his PhD in history at Notre Dame, and later his Library of Science Degree at University of Texas. With the Houston Public Library since 1999, prior to coming to the Texas Room in March 2001, Ron was at Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research. Experience in the genealogical field supplements the service Ron gives us through the Texas Room.

WHO WAS Ralph Adams Cram? He was the son of a Unitarian minister, born at Hampton Falls NH, 16 Dec 1863, and died at Boston MA, 22 Sep 1942. American architect, cultural critic, and author (27 books), MIT professor – and perhaps the leading ecclesiastical architect (Episcopal, Presbyterian and Unitarian churches, including St. John the Divine in New York City) in America, he was known for buildings at Princeton, MIT, West Point, Williams, Wellesley, and Sweet Briar, as well as many other places.

Ralph Adams Cram was *The Boston architect who detailed the Julie B. Ideson building with Spanish Platersque ornament to insinuate a connection with Texas’ architectural-historical past.* (Houston Architectural Guide. Text by Stephen Fox).

PRESERVATION of personal papers and books

Probably all of us have personal papers, old letters, photographs, etc. that need preserving. We all loathe the idea of parting with such precious things (although we should think about will eventually happen to those items).

So while they are in our care, we may be looking for items to help us with their preservation. While there are several local establishments that have preservation

materials, here are a few catalogs our Readers might be interested in (keep your mailman happy and working!):

- . Light Impressions . 1-800-828-6216
- . Gaylord Archival Catalog . 1-800-448-6160
- . The Hollinger Corporation . 1-800-634-0491
- . The Drawing Board . 1-800-527-9530
- . Exposures . 1-800-544-0880
- . Levenger . 1-800-544-0880
- . Hold Everything . 1-800-421-2264

From *The Haversack*. Issue #8 – March 2003

The Newsletter of the Archivists of the Houston Area (AHA!)

Houston Metropolitan Research Center Benefits from Lone Star Program

The Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC) will be hiring 3-4 contract staff people to work on processing collections through August of this year, thanks to funding from the state's Lone Star Libraries Program. Lone Star Libraries is a grant program that was recently created by the Texas State Legislature to provide supplemental resources to public libraries in the state. One of the most significant criteria for financial consideration is that requesting libraries must provide their library services to non-residents in the same manner that they provide them to their residents. Another criteria for funding is that support expended on library services must directly benefit the public and cannot be used for capitol expenses.

The HMRC continues to participate in the Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO) Project and the staff is working to encode finding aids in EAD. While several large collections are currently being processed, the latest to be completed is the **George Ebey Collection**. Dr. Ebey was superintendent of HISD in the early 1950s and was fired by the school board for supposed "un-American" activities. The collection consists of his personal and professional correspondence, research, publications, speeches, news articles, and other items. This collection also includes material related to the investigation by Houston Post reporter Roger O'Leary into the right-wing women's Organization known as the Minute Women, which was behind Ebey's firing.

Concerning Volunteers The Texas Room had a librarian position cut in 2000 and currently has an official vacancy of a Library Assistant. The Archives and Manuscripts Department is currently without two of its archivists; the position of Archivist III has recently been posted. Volunteers from **The Friends of the Texas Room** are very much needed! There are many things you can do whenever you have the time. We have a target date for ready Volunteers set for fall. Training will be available; education will be one reward. **Will you become a volunteer?** If you did not check the Volunteer Box on your membership form, you may contact either Dorothy Houghton at 713.622-5578 or Betty Chapman at 713.974-4970.

Concerning funds Monetary gifts and gifts-in-kind by individuals, as well as genealogical, historical, and lineage organizations, companies and foundations, for the benefit of the collections in the Julia B. Ideson Building are encouraged and needed. A reminder that current employees, retirees and surviving spouses of many companies are

eligible to participate in matching funds programs of various kinds. It is important to note that when gifts are given *through* the **Friends of the Texas Room** to purchase books, microcopy, equipment, etc., you can be certain that your money is spent the way you want it to be spent. When you donate directly to the Houston Public Library system, your money may or may not be used in the way you desire, and it often takes *months* for an item to be processed. **Friends of the Texas Room** will publish an annual list of Contributors and their categories, and the annual audit report will be open to anyone who requests to see it.

SANBORN MAPS – or more appropriately known as the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. A thorough knowledge of one's city is imperative for both historical and genealogical research. Current maps may certainly introduce the researcher to some current points of interest, but old ward boundaries, street names, and street numbers change over the years and often become "lost."

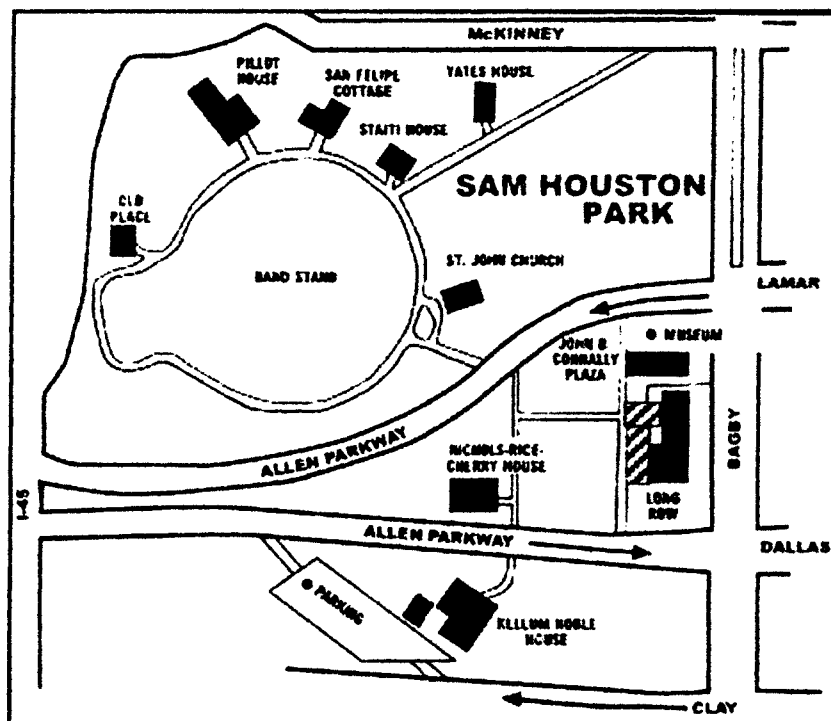
Founded in 1867 by D.A. Sanborn, the Sanborn Map Company produced some 700,000 sheets of detailed maps for over 12,000 cities and towns in North America from 1867 to the present. There were a few other companies that began producing similar maps as early as 1846, but Sanborn Maps retained the leadership identity. Used by insurance agents to determine hazards and risk in underwriting specific buildings, each map is produced on a large over-size sheet in gentle pastel colors with a specific legend: olive drab for abode, pink for stone, blue for brick, yellow for wood, gray for iron. Other details were clearly indicated as to size, shape, and construction of buildings; locations of windows, doors, firewalls, roof types; widths and names of streets; property boundaries; ditches, water mains, and sprinkling systems. Information on buildings range from symbols for generic terms such as stable, garage, and warehouse, to names of owners of factories and details on what was manufactured in them. Other features shown include pipelines, railroads, wells, dumps, and even heavy machinery.

Individual residents do not appear on the maps by name, as business owners are, and the specific addresses are shown. The Sanborn map Company kept updating their maps every few years, and you may find, in some cases, seven or eight different editions. These maps are valuable historical tools for urban specialists, planners and environmentalists, social historians, architects, geographers, genealogists, and local historians. Anyone who wants to learn about the history, growth, and development of their city or town, and neighborhood, will find these maps useful. When used in conjunction with the census and city directories, your research will have a more complete and detailed conclusion.

The Sanborn Map Company was eventually purchased by other companies and is now owned by Environmental Data Resources, Inc. from whom you can order copies of the maps. A new Web site recently appeared, called *Digital Sanborn Maps*, created by Bell & Howell. The Houston Public Library is a subscriber and patrons may have access through the World Wide Web.

In addition, 18 volumes of these maps are part of the Texas Room collection, and other items within the HPL system: *Fire Insurance Maps: Their History and Applications* by Diane L. Oswald may be found at Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research (368.11 086 USA) and *Fire Insurance Maps in the Library of Congress: Plans of North American Cities and Towns Produced by the Sanborn Map Company: A Checklist* (LC5.2:F 51) in the Government Documents Reference, main library.

PLEASE NOTE our new Post Office address. All mail, except for matters concerning *The Texas Room Dispatch* should be sent here. Submissions for the Newsletter should be sent directly to the editor [see return address].



*Those with computers may access the Houston Public Library on the Internet at
<http://www.hpl.lib.tx.us/hpl/index.html>*

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