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## Spotlight on Highlights of the Houston Horizon

*by Anthony H. Church*

### **Personal Narrative**

Born in Grenada West Indies, I migrated to the US some thirty years ago. Houston was virtually unknown to me at that time. New York (the big apple) was very familiar and so was Washington DC. As a young teacher in Grenada, I shared the responsibility of speaking to the high school students at my school once a month, usually on a Friday. It afforded me an opportunity to practice my "American accent", since I was awaiting an opportunity to migrate to New York City. I knew at that time that it drove the headmaster nuts but I did it anyway. The students loved it and so did some of the teachers. Upon my arrival in Brooklyn, the Brooklyn cabby understood me perfectly but it took me about ten minutes to understand that he was asking me what country I was from. That experience taught me a very valuable lesson, accents can be a blessing at times and other times can create the worst experiences possible. To this day I love Brooklyn and its accent. Mastering the Texas accent has been my greatest challenge. Since everything is so big in Texas I still have a long way to go. From Brooklyn I moved to Washington DC, where I obtained a graduate degree in City and Regional Planning from Howard University. I had the distinction of serving lunch to then President Carter while I was Maitre'd at a very exclusive Washington DC hotel. In search of new challenges and opportunities I moved to Houston the boomtown at that time. Shortly after moving to Houston the city went bust.

I made time to return to school on a scholarship to UT Tyler, where I obtained a graduate degree in Technology. In 1998 I was elected president of the Houston Technology Teacher's Association. In the fall of 1998 I was a member of the team of teachers involved in HISD/ Rice University writing project. In spring of 1999 SECME awarded me a certificate of appreciation for assisting students at my school with their science project. Working for HISD provided me an opportunity to assist in the production of three educational videos, two of which were made with students demonstrating skills learned in my classroom. One of which was the construction of a hovercraft. The third was made in the studio with HISD students from different schools and myself discussing the benefits of technology education. In 1997 my students were asked to participate in a project sponsored by the Museum of Fine Arts to build a model of the Bayou Bend Bridge spanning some 207 feet of Bayou Bend waterway. It is a drawbridge connecting the Imma Hog Museum to the parking lot. This model is on display at the Museum of Fine Arts.

In my classroom we see ourselves as inventors and problem solvers. Nothing is too challenging for us to attempt; after all it is all in the learning experience. At the end of this curriculum you will find a model of Houston's medical center made from 2 x 4 blocks of wood demonstrating creativity and teamwork.

## Introduction

This curriculum unit is designed especially for Vocational Construction students, grades 9 through 12. The unit is written in a flexible manner making it adaptable for team teaching in any given subject area of classroom teaching. The estimated time for completing the entire unit, including model building is six weeks. Each unit is 90 minutes per class period.

A principle goal from this unit is getting students to know more about their city. This teacher believes that a large percent of both high school and college graduates are lacking a comprehensive working knowledge of finding their way around the city in which they live and school. I think we all at one time or another had to ask for directions and can attest to the challenges we encountered. Construction aside, this course is designed to compensate for that lack. All students taking this course will be able to identify and intelligently discuss not only the highlights (buildings etc) of the city but also its history and how to get to and from each selected highlight, or point of interest. This will be accomplished through classroom discussions, special speakers, tours and visits to Houston's city highlights.

The need for such a unit is illustrated by the fact that Downtown Houston has an extensive underground tunnel system with shops, etc., but most students I talk to know nothing about its existence. In Houston we find that the names of people or companies are posted on buildings instead of a numbered street address. The founders of Houston, the Allen brothers, may have started this trend in that they were known to dedicate buildings and tracks of land to people in appreciation for favors received.

## Objective

Students will be able to:-

1. Geographically locate latitude and longitude of Houston on a US map.
2. Use local map of Houston and surrounding counties to identify Harris County and

Buffalo bayou.

(3) Identify and discuss two of the founders/developers of Houston.

4. Name three of the most important accomplishments of two of the founders.

(5) Use map of Houston to locate and identify as many highlights as can be found.

(6) Identify and discuss at least two of Houston's most prominent highlights.

(7) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of at least two highlights.

8. Name and discuss the newest Houston highlight, its advantages and disadvantages.
9. Construct a model of at least one highlight "**Houston's Medical Center**".

(10) Discuss how the highlighted model was constructed.

## Geographic Location of United States and Texas

The first assignment of this lesson will require the use of a world map from which students will locate

the United States. They should identify the hemisphere in which it is located and its neighbors with whom it shares borders, as well as the oceans lapping its western and eastern shores.

Having located the United States, students will now locate the longitude and latitude of Texas on a US map, along with its regional location, N, S, E or W. Students will also learn that Texas is second in size only to Alaska among the 50 states in the union. That makes Texas fifty eight times the size of Rhode Island, the smallest state in the nation. Some one once said that every man, woman and child in the world could fit in Texas with a four-inch space between each person.

### **Geographic Location of Houston**

Houston is 29 degrees North Latitude and 95 degrees East Longitude and lies in the eastern portion of Texas. It is the fourth largest city in the United States. Today the city has 1.8 million people and the metropolitan area more than four million. Houston is called the Bayou City since many of these waterways criss-cross the city. It was founded by the Allen brothers in April, 1836. They decided to place the city at a point easily accessible by water, as boats provided the chief method of transportation in those early days.

### **The Allen brothers**

Augustus Chapman Allen, early settler and founder of Houston, was born at Canaseraga, New York on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1806. He was the son of Ronald and Sarah (Chapman) Allen. At age 17 he graduated from Chittenango Polytechnic Institute New York and began to teach mathematics there. He resigned his professorship to work as a bookkeeper for H&H Canfield Company New York. Two years later he and his brother John K. Allen bought an interest in the Canfield business. In the summer of 1832 the brothers moved to Texas and settled first at San Augustine. In 1833 they moved to Nacogdoches where they joined with land speculators and soon were trafficking in land certificates. When the Texas revolution broke out the Allens instead of joining the Texas army outfitted a vessel at their expense to protect the Texas coast and ferry troops and supplies for the army. Late in 1836 the brothers bought the John Austin half league along Buffalo Bayou. They found the water in the bayou deep enough for navigation and decided to establish a town and name it for Sam Houston. By 1837 the entire Allen family took up residence in Texas. In developing the town the Allen's adopted a policy of donating many town blocks to institution, municipal and religious, and also to many persons they wished to honor. The Allen's made a promise to congress in 1836 that they would construct a town with their own capital and donate it to the government. Congress agreed and early May 1837 the seat of government was moved from Columbia to Houston. The point was determined at the headwaters of Buffalo bayou fifty miles inland on land owned by the Harris family. This was not to be, for a disagreement developed between the Allen family and the Harris family, because of this the Allen's deserted the Harrisburg town and moved three miles further up the bayou, where they founded Houston. The city was set far enough inland to protect it from hurricanes.

The city of Houston was one of the first products of the new republic of Texas. In those days travelers found it difficult to find food and accommodations. The Allen's opened their own comfortable home without charge to all those who needed help at that time. They were sewing the seeds of rich return in the development of Houston.

### **Jesse Holman Jones**

Jesse Holman Jones, born 1874 in Tennessee, the son of a tobacco farmer, was privy to only eight years of formal education, before going to work for his father. In 1898, at age 24 he moved to Houston to

manage his uncle's lumberyard. He became engaged in a whirlwind of business activities including banking, construction and publishing. Fourteen years later he became known as the "big daddy to the city's big dreams" and was often referred to as "Mr. Houston". He was a power to be reckoned with. His philosophy expressed the following "there wasn't anything wrong with Houston that a little building wouldn't fix". When his rival builder S. F. Carter constructed a sixteen-story tower, "MR. Houston's flirtation with gentility was over, and the birth of the 17 story Rice Hotel began. In 1914 he played a major role in raising funds for the opening of the Houston ship channel. It was a move that would make landlocked Houston one of the nation's greatest ports. Mr. Jones was a staunch supporter of Woodrow Wilson who appointed him to an important position with the American Red Cross during World War 1. After distinguishing himself with the American Red Cross he returned to Houston and became deeply involved with the Democratic Party. He even managed in 1928 to arrange for the Democratic National Convention in Houston, and was credited with bringing fame to the city. In 1932 he was named to the newly created Reconstruction Finance corporation by then President Hoover. For the next 13 years he wielded power in that capacity and was considered the most powerful man in these United States. It was largely through his foresight and efforts during the Great Depression that the United States had the industrial capacity to wage World War II. Jesse Jones was forced out of office in 1945 and returned to Houston where he devoted himself to philanthropic, civic and business interests until his death in 1956.

## Summary

1874 Jesse H. Jones was born in Tennessee

1893 He went to the Chicago world fair.

1898 Mr. Jones moved to Houston to manage the estate of his uncle

1898 USA fights war with Spain

1914 Houston Ship Channel opens

1914 World War I erupts in Europe

1917 USA enters World War I

1917 President Wilson appoints Mr. Jones to American Red Cross

1919 Constitution amended allowing women the right to vote

1920 Mr. Jones marries Mary Gibbs Jones

1928 Mr. Jones brings Democratic National Convention to Houston

1928 Herbert Hoover elected President

1929 Jones solves Houston bank crisis

1932 President Hoover appoints Jones to the Reconstruction finance committee

1933 One year after the election of President Roosevelt Jones appointed to chair the RFC

1939 All Federal lending agencies are headed by Jones

1939 World war 11 erupts in Europe

1940 Roosevelt elected for a third term in office

1940 Jones begins conversion to military economy

1941 USA formally enters World War 11

1944 Roosevelt elected to a fourth term in office

1945 Jones resigns as Secretary of Commerce

1945 World war 11 ends

1946 Jones returns to Houston

1956 Jones dies in Houston

## **Highlights**

Location and description

- Downtown Houston
- The Rice Hotel
- Houston Medical Center
- The Enron Field

## **Houston – Downtown**

When Mexico was forced to relinquish claims to Texas in 1836, a stupendous task lay before the small body of men and women in the vast Texas Empire. This vast undeveloped land spanned 825 miles in length from north to south and 740 miles in width from east to west.

Today's Houston has an impressive downtown marked by dozens of skyscrapers that jut upward from the flat Gulf plains. Until recently, downtown was primarily a business center where some 140,000 workers were concentrated. More recently, downtown has begun to revive with new entertainment and residential construction, and the future for the central city now seems bright.

## **The Rice Hotel**

The Rice Hotel, a Houston legend, stood vacant for more than 20 years before it was sold to developer Randall Davis in 1997. He gutted the building and created 350 apartments in the structure. Most were quickly sold or rented. The "new" Rice Hotel has become one of the cornerstones of downtown redevelopment. Developer Davis secured a national historical designation for the remodeled structure by restoring as much of the original design as possible.

The Rice hotel first became a downtown landmark 85 years ago. This outstanding landmark was the brainchild of one of Houston's most impressive premier banker, builder and developer, Mr. Jessie H. Jones. The hotel occupies the site where, Houston's founders in 1837 constructed a two story wooden structure that until 1839 served as the temporary capital of the Republic of Texas. By 1883 the same site became the home of an ambitious Victorian hostelry, the Capitol Hotel. In 1907 the Capitol Hotel was demolished and replaced by the seventeen-story, steel framed, U-planned, 650- room skyscraper, named the Rice Hotel. The Rice Hotel was opened in 1913. It was the tallest reinforced concrete building constructed in Houston during the 1920's.

Architect's Mauran, Russel & Crowell of St Louis created the red bricked-faced building. They adorned the structure with ample cream-colored terra cotta sculpture and architectural decorations. The detailed cast iron canopy surrounding the first floor and doubles as a terrace for public rooms on the second floor. Early photographs seem to indicate the first floor was once fitted with rows of rocking chairs, affording guests the opportunity to survey the world at Main and Texas; considered the center of downtown Houston in those glory days. The design included a "cooled washed air ventilating system" and an open air, pergola-covered roof garden for dining and dancing. In 1924 a proto-air-conditioning system was installed in the basement cafeteria. Continuous alterations were made to the original French style interior, and in 1926 Mr. Jones added a third wing to the hotel at Texas and Travis. In 1929 KTRH radio began its broadcast from the Rice hotel. In 1950 the Old Capital club and Flag Room were formally dedicated. In 1958 the new five-story fireproof, air-conditioned dining room in the annex was erected. October 24, 1960 President Dwight D. Eisenhower was a guest at the hotel. The new lobby was completed in 1961 making it one of the most modern and most beautiful in the nation. August 21, 1962 all of America's original Astronauts and others responsible for the nation's space program were guests at the Hotel; to participate in the seventh Mercury Atlas mission (MA-7) conference of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's manned Spacecraft Center. This event was conducted in the grand ballroom. September 11, 1962 President John F. Kennedy arrived in Houston for his speech. The Gold Suite of the Rice hotel was his Houston headquarters. August 12, 1963 Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson returns home to Houston where he once taught school and makes a major policy speech in the Grand ballroom of the Rice Hotel. It is believed that beneath the Rice Hotel is an oil structure of great promise although no one has ever dug for oil beneath its surface. The Rice hotel with its legendary past is synonymous with this city's seemingly limitless energy.

### **The Texas Medical Center**

The Texas Medical center is an organization of non-profit healthcare providers. It is comprised of some 42 non-profit member institutions. Together they are staffed with more than 50,000 employees and respond to over 4.5 million patients annually. They welcome on a daily basis some 100,000 patients and visitors. The center covers more than 675 acres and has over 100 permanent buildings.

The Texas Medical Center Campus is the world's largest medical and health center for quality patient care, research and education. There are more than 40 medical treatment and research institutions in this complex and much more than \$350 million in funded research is conducted annually. Over 90,000 people attend classes on the campus. 20,000 are full time students 68,000 take courses or professional training while another 1,800 are participants in short courses, seminars, or workshops. "This city within a city" may seem overwhelming to new comers and has always been a fascination to Houstonians and visitors alike. Many consider the work done here near miraculous.

### **The Enron Stadium Downtown**

The Houston Astros will move into one of the nation's finest stadium when they begin play in Enron Field during the year 2000. The HOK Sports Facility Group is the design firm. Brown & Root, one of

Houston's largest construction contractors, was awarded the contract in mid December 1997. Groundbreaking for "Enron Field new home of the Houston Astros began October 30,1998. The 42,000-seat stadium has been designed as an open-air ballpark with a natural grass playing field. The ability to close a retractable roof and air condition the seating bowl on hot summer days or in bad weather is one of its most outstanding features. The Stadium is so designed that weather closed or open its moving west roof wall will feature 50,000 square feet of glass. Because of its design it is perhaps the most cost-effective ballpark retractable roof system in the world with an estimated life cycle of 50 years and approximately 730 miles. The low track/high track configuration and the roof's built in glass wall will not only offer valuable efficiency but also allows the fans a panoramic view of the beautiful Houston downtown skyline. The weight of the entire roof structure is 18,000,000 lbs., with the approximate weight of steel in the roof at approximately 10,000,000 lbs. The roof's operating speed is 24.1 feet per minute and needs 20 minutes to be completely opened; it is also designed to withstand severe hurricane condition. At the end of March 1999 the roof was approximately 75 percent complete. The "Enron Field" is considered to be a world class, state-of- the-arts stadium that will carry into the next century. The stadium will be managed by none other than Enron Corporation a world class energy company specializing in integrated natural gas and electric companies. With some \$30 billion in assets Enron produces electricity and natural gas, develops, constructs and operates energy and water facilities worldwide and delivers physical commodities and risk management and financial services to customers around the world. Enron will manage the energy contracts as well as provide services for ventilating, air conditioning and heating. Enron will also administer various contracts for maintenance of all mechanical and electrical equipment, and has agreed to develop a parking structure adjacent to the ballpark, pending Harris county-Houston Sports Authority approval.

Added to all this is a world-class baseball organization –The Astros. They won a franchise record 102 games last season. The Astros has had winning seasons in each of the past six years. The only other teams with such outstanding accomplishments are the New York Yankees and the Atlanta Braves.

## **Stadium facts**

### **Building and playing field**

Along Texas /Congress Avenues 735 feet; along Crawford/Hamilton streets 897 feet. Building height fixed 139 feet.

Moving roof facts building area new and renovated 1,261,798 square feet.

Playing field natural grass surface 6.7 acres.

Left field foul line 315 feet, Left Field Power Alley 362 feet, Center field 435 feet, Outfield deepest point 436 feet,

262 seats Right Field Power Alley 373 feet,

Field Level 19,174 seats Right field foul line 326 feet,

Right Field Mezzanine 2,572 seats Outfield wall Heights 21feet (LF Line)

Club Level 4,857 seats 10 feet(LCF-CF), 7feet (CF-RF)

Suite Level 882 seats Home plate to first row of seats distance min49 ft.

Upper Level 13,903 seats 1<sup>st</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> Baseline to nearest Spectator max 43 feet

Disabled seating (all levels) 420 1st/3<sup>rd</sup> Base to first row spectators 57feet /Left

Right field seats to foul line : 5feet min

Field Natural-turf fully integrated playing surface is real grass.

### **Guest speaker / site visits**

One or more guest speaker from industry (Architectural/planning or construction industry) will be invited to speak to the students about construction in Houston. Emphasis will be given to teamwork, safety in the workplace, importance of building codes, Just in Time management and quality assurance.

Planned site visits to one or more highlights, Enron Field and or Medical center.

### **Presentation**

#### **Week 1**

Introduction,

Using a world map locate the United States, its boundaries, its neighbors, and its oceans that caresses its shores

**Unit A** Using a US Map find (1) Texas using coordinates. (2) Locate Houston.

Using coordinates give its latitude and longitude.

**Unit B** Using local map of Houston and surrounding counties identify Harris

County and name a few bayous around Houston, the bayou city.

#### **(Week 2)**

**Unit A** Identify and discuss the founders and developers of Houston.

**Unit B** Using maps and other resources of downtown Houston locate and identify as many highlights of Houston as can be found.

**Unit C** Name three important accomplishments of the developers of Houston.

#### **Week 3**

**Unit A** Identify and discuss at least three of the most prominent highlights of Houston.

**Unit B** Name the advantages and disadvantages of at least two highlights.

#### **Week 4**

**Unit A** Gathering materials for construction project; photographs, maps etc.

**Unit B** Purchasing lumber 3 lengths (2"x 4"x 8"), ½ sheet of ¾" plywood to be used

For the base, (48" by 38") exacto knives, sandpaper, glue and matting.

Green and brown bond paper, landscape materials - trees, shrubs, phone booth, people and cars etc.

#### **Unit C MANDATORY: SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS**

**All students must receive adequate safety instructions on all tools necessary for completion of the project. Safety goggles a must for all students.**

**Daily reminders of safety procedures and proper use of tools must be given.**

Begin work on model – Students working in groups on assigned tasks.

Each group will comprise of no more than 4 or 5 students; have a leader and

Clearly written instructions with a designated time for completion. Allow at

least 3 weeks for completion, cutting and shaping wood to represent

buildings will require attention to details. Recommend that teacher and one

student always perform quality assurance checks, have extra wood on hand as

some structures will have to be recut). Patterns are first made from

graph paper pasted unto wood and then the shapes are cut. In some instances

the shapes can be more easily obtained by using only a belt sander.

Tools needed: Computer (optional) band saw, chop saw, hacksaw, and hand

drill with small bit, 6" disc sander, a 4" belt sander, palm sander, fine

sand paper, Colored pencils, ruler or tape measure and colored chalks. Exacto

knives, also carving knife.

**Week 5** Construction continues: Students working in groups on assigned tasks.

Each group will comprise of no more than 4 or 5 students; have a leader and  
Clearly written instructions with a designated time for completion.

*Group A* cutting and sanding 2"x 4" blocks into shapes of the area buildings.

*Group B* preparing platform. Colored chalk is used to mark out the roads and  
Locations of buildings. Using the chalk lines as guides matting for road  
Construction, are cut and pasted.

Landscaping; model grass, trees, shrubs, people, phone booths, benches, street  
identification and stop signs at designated intersections are posted next with  
either glue or plastic cement.

*Group C* reading maps and laying out finished model pieces on platform.

## **Week 6**

**Unit A** Construction continues and final touches are made. Quality assurance checks  
are made.

**Unit B** Demonstration and discussion of constructed unit highlights. Last class period.

## **Strategies**

### **Discussion / written assignment.**

Questions (1) What have you learned from these experiences, please describe in detail?

(2) If you had to do this project all over what would you do differently?

(3) Of the people studied, with which one do you identify the most?

4. (4) Do you have any suggestions for some new city highlights?.

5. (5) Name at least three things you think is important for Houston in the

21<sup>st</sup>.century.

(6) Do you see yourself playing a role in the future development of Houston;

if so, what do you see yourself doing?

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