Houston as the most rapidly growing city of the Southwest, is attracting national attention. Is the growth sound? Is Houston a safe investment? Is the faith of the people of Houston in their city based on fact?

It was my privilege at this season of the year 1926 to be quoted in your magazine, telling of the city as I first saw it in 1910 - (a city of one short business street) and of its amazing growth within sixteen years.

As I look back upon it, with the ordinary conservation of the New England Yankee, I really wonder why in 1910 Houston people expected to see the city lead the South. Except that nearly everything except the people themselves, needed to be changed, I still fail to see the seed of the ambition. But there is no denying the ambition was there and was real.

Houston people - native born Texas people -- have made Houston with their vision. Others have helped, others have become enthused, but Houston has been self-made. I remember distinctly the saying, "Once you have tasted the water of Buffalo River, you will come back to Houston." Why such an absurdity? No one ever drank those waters. Splendid artesian water was the rule. I see in it an idealism -- Houston's friendliness -- Houston's hospitality -- Houston's fair play to all, was a charm which even oil covered waters could not destroy.

If the future of 1910 offered, as it surely did, to the investor opportunities, hidden but intensely real, we can with profit scan again the words of Francis Bacon -- "There is surely no greater wisdom than well to time the beginnings and onsets of things."

Houston, much as it has done, is in its infancy. Its ocean trade is only attracting its initial attention - its manufacture is in its swaddling clothes - its farming territory is primitive - not a single element of ultimate dimension, but is still itself diminutive.

Behind Houston lies a state empire, rich in untold wealth of every conceivable kind - it too in its beginning.

In 1915 I had the temerity to suggest to the mayor of the city that time was opportune for the creation of a civic center. My scheme was modest (the clearing away of old buildings in the two blocks from Travis to Fannin Streets between Preston and Commerce, that the new court house and the old city hall may be with open space in the center of the city - form such a center). Years have passed. This space has really vast values - and a week ago Houston voted
A civic center about our new library, embracing some ten
blocks of property. Whereas such an idea in 1915 was
visionary in the extreme, in 1927 it is a commonplace and
receives a popular vote of six to one.

Cities grow according to the vision of the builders.
Amity of purpose, directness of action and fine high-standing
enthusiasm are the known attributes of Houston and its leading
citizens. Faith in cities is faith in the individuals who
make up the aims and ideals of the cities. Behind Houston
a vast country beckons, rich with opportunity. Houston steps
forward, ready to be at the front in its awakening.

WM. WARD WATKIN.

(1927)

Article on Houston