

I wrote this paper for Dr. Kyle Shelton's American Urban History class (HIST 201) in the fall of 2015. I became interested in Houston's bayous after working on a research project with Dr. Jim Elliott in the Sociology department about city parks in Houston. As part of my research for that project, I came across a report commissioned by the City of Houston (Crompton) to study the effects of the Bayou Greenways Project, which aims to convert the city's long-neglected bayous into beautiful linear greenspaces carrying hike and bike trails throughout the city. To my surprise, I learned not only that the report was incredibly specific with the benefits it listed, but assigned dollar values to benefits like physical and mental health of park users (\$13.9 million), increased property values (\$3.1 million), and better filtration of water runoff (\$1.3 million). The Bayou Greenways Initiative, which I thought of as an environmental and quality of life improvement project, was being sold to Houston voters because of its economic value. I embarked on this project in order to understand the peculiar relationship between Houston and its natural environment, and the historical roots of the city's treatment of its bayou ecosystem.

I began my inquiry by searching for previous scholarship about Houston and its bayous. I began with the Web of Knowledge database, which I accessed via the Fondren Library website, because I was already familiar with it. I used search terms like 'Buffalo bayou', 'Houston bayou', and 'Houston environment' in an attempt to catch as much information as possible. What I found was that my search terms were too broad, and were not capturing much that I was interested in. Even after narrowing results to only include the fields of History, Sociology, Economics, and Environmental Studies I still receiving far too many results to reasonably sift through on my own.

After perusing Fondren's website a little bit more, I found the library's research guide for American History, which suggested using the America: History and Life with Full Text database. This database was much more tailored to my area of research, and returned much better results. Through this database I discovered the Houston History magazine. Although Houston History is not a scholarly publication, its articles about the bayous and the Port of Houston provided me with an overview of the topics at hand and pointed me towards valuable secondary and primary sources, including the work of Teresa Tomkins-Walsh on environmentalism in the city of Houston.

After reading several secondary sources about the role of the bayous in Houston's history, I decided to further explore the Port of Houston Authority and the Bayou Preservation Association. I chose these two organizations because they represented two different visions for Houston's bayous: the Port of Houston had dredged and transformed Buffalo bayou into an industrial asset, while the Bayou Preservation Association sought to stop such alterations and maintain the bayous as green spaces. I had to travel to the University of Houston to view materials from the Bayou Preservation Association, but to my delight I discovered that the papers of J Russell Wait, former director of the Port Authority, were available at Fondren in the special collections of the Woodson Research Center.

Fondren's finding aids were indispensable for navigating the immense amount of documents left behind by Mr. Wait. After some deliberation I decided to focus on the advertisements for the Port of Houston left in the collection, because I assumed they would

shed light on how the Port Authority wished the public to view the port and, by extension, the bayous. I was not disappointed. The most revealing advertisement featured a picture of an unnamed bayou with the caption "Houston's wealth of streams offers unlimited development possibilities." The advertisements convinced me of the soundness of my original assumptions. Houston business interests had indeed seen the bayous as little more than infrastructural assets.

Unfortunately, I did not have adequate time to further sift through the wealth of information available in the Wait papers at Fondren (although I did find some interesting correspondence with the Rockefeller family). However, I was able to search through the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive to find historic photographs of the bayou. These easily accessible primary sources provided further depth to my argument.

Fondren's resources were invaluable in helping me complete this research project. Without access to the online databases provided by the library, I would not even have been able to begin my search or formulate an argument. Fondren's wealth of primary source materials, available digitally on the web and in their original format at the Woodson Research Center, provided me with fascinating source material with which to write this paper. Every book, journal article, photograph, and primary source document cited in this essay, with the exception of Dr. Crompton's online report and materials from the Bayou Preservation Association available only at the University of Houston, was provided to me by Fondren. I am proud of my accomplishments with the project, and grateful to Fondren Library for providing myself and all Rice undergraduates with so many amazing resources.