



Houston: The Unknown City, 1836-1946

Marguerite Johnston

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In their willingness to leave home and country to create a new city and a new nation, the first Houstonians were a special breed. They were adventurers and builders; they were citizens of the world. This is the story of these people, their descendants and like-minded successors, and their city, up to the end of the Second World War.

It is a history marked by murder, mutiny, and the ironies of war, by comedy and high jinks, by heroism and a remarkable generosity. This fascinating social history grew out of Marguerite Johnston's forty years of friendship with the city and its people. It traces Houston's first families through interlinking marriages, charitable associations, and business partnerships.

In this book, Johnston brings to light unpublished letters and diaries from those who served with Perry in Japan, who helped Maximilian design Mexico City, who acted for Woodrow Wilson at Versailles, who helped Roosevelt restore the national economy, and who, by conceiving and negotiating the Marshall Plan, saved Western Europe from collapse. She also sketches in warm detail the gentle life of a Southern town and portrays a people of intellect and a natural elegance.

Ima Hogg, Houston philanthropist and patron of the arts, once said that Houston was lucky because the first Houstonians who got rich gave their money for schools, parks, hospitals, and the arts. "This set the pattern," she said. "This is what Houstonians do once they get a little money." Since 1836, their continuing philanthropy has totaled more than a billion dollars, yet remains personal. It has created a lively cultural scene, a prestigious educational establishment, a pace-setting medical center, and a gracious life-style.

Old Houstonians rarely speak of themselves as Texans--they are Houstonians. Their story--not without problems, challenges, and conflicts--is the story of people who have shaped a major American city and who from it, have influenced lives around the world.

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