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## New book tells female role in Houston's history

HOUSTON — On Jan. 2, 1839, the Rufus Putnam landed at the foot of Houston's Main Street after a hazardous journey up Buffalo Bayou.

Among the passengers were Millie Gray and her six children, traveling from the more civilized state of Virginia to a small, primitive town. Gray was not happy.

This is how the pioneer woman recorded her feelings in her diary that day: "Although everything looks better than I had expected, my heart feels oppressed and it requires an effort to wear the appearance of cheerfulness: I could (if I were a weeping character) sit down and fairly weep. ..."

Luckily, Gray was not the weepy type, according to historian Betty Trapp Chapman. In *Houston Women: Invisible Threads in the Tapestry*, Chapman writes that Gray went on to become a mainstay of the young community.

Her diary, according to Chapman, is a treasure trove of life in early Houston, from the perspective of wife, mother, neighbor, churchwoman and citizen.

Gray is one of more than 300 women and groups whose lives Chapman documents in her latest book.

She looks at the famous and not so famous who helped make Houston the city it is today — known for its oil and business successes, but also for its rich arts scene.

The book is divided into chapters: settling Texas, defining women's sphere, building community institutions, going to work, expanding education, cultivating the arts, enriching the community and opening new doors.

It's not a comprehensive survey, but it is a fascinating look at a side of Houston history that has been largely ignored. The 275 pictures that illustrate the book are particularly special.

Chapman begins with the first

women believed to be indigenous to the area — the Karankawas. Though the individual lives and names of these American Indian women have been lost to history, their roles were not. A Spanish explorer described their strictly defined, gender-related division of labor, Chapman said.

"Their women toil incessantly," noted Alvar Munez Cabeza de Vaca, the earliest of the Spanish explorers to interact with the Karankawas.

Most land grants were given to men, but exceptions were made by Stephen F. Austin to women who were heads of households. One was

*"Although everything looks better than I had expected, my heart feels oppressed and, it requires an effort to wear the appearance of cheerfulness."*

— Millie Gray

Jane Wilkins, who owned land where the George R. Brown Convention Center is now located.

Pioneer women had no schools or churches to support them. Household duties, including family health, rested on their shoulders and was time-consuming. It took two weeks of steady labor to spin enough thread for a dress.

What women did was not deemed worthy enough to document, Chapman said.

One of her favorite women from that time is Obedience Fort Smith, a 64-year-old widow who immigrated to Texas in 1835. She was granted 3,370 acres of land in Houston that encompasses much of the present-day Fourth Ward, Montrose and Rice University. It's still called Obedience

Smith's survey, and Smith's descendants still live in Houston.

Outside home, churches were the only other places of activity for women, but the Civil War got them involved in nursing and fund-raising activities.

The Civil War, Chapman writes, radically changed the lives of African-American women by giving them freedom and legalizing their marriages.

After the Civil War, more women began teaching, the only profession open to black women at that time.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, Houston women started clubs such as the Ladies Reading Club (still in existence). Kezia Depelchin founded a home for children in need. When she died in 1893, club women, friends and church members got together and continued her work. The board was all-female for 40 years.

In 1904, women's efforts resulted in Houston's first public library. In 1900, the Public School Art League was founded, and artist Emma Richardson Cherry provided strong leadership. Its mission was completed in 1924, when the Museum of Fine Arts opened.

This was also a time when many women got involved in the fight for suffrage. A local leader was Annette Finnigan, who graduated from Wellesley College in Massachusetts in 1894, a time when only two percent of the country's women attended college.

When she returned to Houston, Finnigan and her sisters founded the Houston Equal Suffrage League and later the Women's Political Union. She became state president of both organizations.

Chapman tried to make her book as diverse as possible — including photos of well-known local African-American women like pianist Jessie Covington, whose mother, Jennie, founded an all-woman orchestra.

## Bodyguard Puffy did not have gun

NEW YORK (AP) — A former corrections officer who was highlighted as a bodyguard for rapper "Puffy" Combs testified Wednesday that he had never once seen the rapper carrying a weapon.

Prosecution witness Leonard Curtis Howard said he never had associated himself with Combs if the defendant carried a firearm.

"If he is going to carry a legal firearm, there is no reason for me to be there," Howard said under cross-examination. "I'm going to put my job in jeopardy, Mr. Combs."

The rapper and hip-hop businessman was arrested on Dec. 1999, after he fled a nightclub near Times Square with his friend, actress-singer Jenni Lopez. Combs, 31, was charged with gun possession and bribery for allegedly offering his \$50,000 to take the rap star a gun found in their vehicle. He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of bribery.

Earlier Wednesday, defense attorney Benjamin Brafman moved unsuccessfully for a trial because he was upset by assistant District Attorney Matthew Bogdanos' use of Howard's jury testimony to contradict his own testimony.

Howard told the grand jury he had never seen Combs in that situation — an important distinction, since prosecutors claim Grammy-winning rapper carried a gun into the nightclub and fired shot on the night of his arrest.

"When a witness lies as egregiously as Mr. Howard did, it is incumbent upon the questioning attorney to point that out to the jury," Bogdanos said.

2001 Texas A&M Baseball

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Applications may be picked up at the G. Rollie White ticket office and must be returned by the start of the lottery drawing on Thursday.

2001 Texas A&M Baseball

THE DEPARTMENT OF RESIDENCE LIFE

Invites all students to

An Open Forum

Topic: Residence hall rental rates for academic year 2001-2002.

When: Monday, January 29, 2001 & Thursday, February 1, 2001

Time: 6:30-8:00pm

Where: Room 146 in the MSC

Department of Residence Life  
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## Archer Daniels Midland

ADM will be hosting an information night to discuss internships and career opportunities!

Careers Highlighted: Commodity Trading

Majors Welcome: Agricultural Business, Agricultural Economics

Freshman, Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors are all welcome!

Refreshments will be served - Door prizes will be given

Dress: Casual



Tuesday, February 6th at 7:00PM



Harrington Education Center (HECC) Room 200

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Feb. 20-22

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Tuesday, Feb. 6  
7:00-7:30 p.m.  
Wehner 132

Wednesday, Feb 7  
9:00-9:30 p.m.  
Wehner 130

Career Fair Website: <http://wehner.tamu.edu/bsc>