

Captain Barbour's Dream Is Coming True— Fifty Years Later



Editor's Note: When the Houston Port Authority announced its plans for a dramatic new terminal at Barbours Cut, estimated to cost \$100 million or more when completed, memories of the late Captain Clyde A. Barbour, who first developed the area, were brought to mind. Here Lucile Barbour Holmes, daughter of Captain Barbour who now resides at Oaklawn Gardens on Irish Bend near Franklin, Louisiana, writes for the Port of Houston MAGAZINE of her father's dreams for Barbours Cut and of his life in developing river trade and industrial empires. (For the sake of consistency, the Port of Houston MAGAZINE uses the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' punctuation rule of omitting apostrophe's on place names, hence Barbours Cut instead of Barbour's Cut, as employed by Mrs. Holmes here.)

BY LUCILE BARBOUR HOLMES

The great activity now under way at Barbours Cut, La Porte, Texas, is the culmination of the dream of one man, Captain Clyde A. Barbour, who in the 1920's was foresighted enough to see the need and potential of this development.

He was familiar with the great industrial center of Manchester, England, and he wrote in his first plan for Barbours Cut ". . . the dream of another Manchester has come true! Each year brings more industries to the Ship Channel and \$6,000,000 have been made in improvements. Another great development project has been launched by C. A. Barbour and associates just above Morgan's Point, at La Porte. Faith in the Houston Ship Channel has been justified."

The founder and original developer of Barbours Cut was born in Jeffersonville, Indiana, on the Ohio River in 1874. Captain Barbour had the unique experience of working as a young boy on the produce boat of his father, James A. Barbour. This was a traveling wholesale store supplying the towns along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

The large boat would float down South in the spring and summer and be towed back to Indiana in the fall. Young Clyde would then go to school in New Albany. The story is told of his being so familiar with currents and eddies of the Mississippi that he would be awakened and asked to help steer the boat safely through the night.

During his twenties he owned a tow boat business and had stern wheelers and barges operating on the bayous and lakes of South Louisiana, where transportation was primarily by water. Moving to Houston around 1910, one of his businesses took him to Mexico where he barged petroleum into Tampico. Here he became acquainted with many of the early oil producers of that day.

There are two memorials standing to Captain Barbour. Barbours Cut, the hundred million dollar development, and Oaklawn Manor, the antebellum sugar plantation home on Bayou Teche, near Franklin, Louisiana.

As a young steamboat captain he would pass the white columned brick house with its huge live oaks growing down to the water's edge and, turning to his young wife beside him would declare, "Jennie, some day that is going to be ours!"

He returned in 1925, restored the manor, grounds and gardens and filled the house with European furnishings and jewels "fit for the Queen of Bayou Teche".

When Captain Barbour passed on in 1931 at the early age of 57, the Houston Chronicle wrote in part—"Captain Clyde A. Barbour was one of the builders. Wherever he saw a new and ambitious project for development was planned, Captain Barbour was in the forefront of those who hoped to see growth and progress"

"Captain Barbour was a pioneer of industry, fearlessly striking out on untried paths in an effort to create capital for the development of the Southwest. He prospered as South Texas and Louisiana changed from an agriculture state to an empire of industrial development. In bringing about that change, he did his full share."



The stern wheeler JENNIE BARBOUR, named in honor of Capt. Barbour's wife, takes on a load of sugar cane on Bayou Teche.