



# CIVIC ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Newsletter Published Monthly September — June  
Vermont Commons Civic Association  
PO Box 130891, Houston, TX 77219  
Issue No. 94



## Upcoming Happy Hours

VCCA monthly happy hours are on the 2nd Monday at 6:30pm, September through June, at Churrascos on 2055 Westheimer. At the May Happy Hour, Stephen Costello, former City Council member and now the head of Flooding in Houston, will give updates about what the City of Houston is doing to prevent another disaster.

June Happy Hour will feature Houston Councilperson and Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen. Both speakers requested to have residents' questions about the neighborhood and the city ahead of time. Please submit your questions to Jeanette Hix at [hix@rmi.net](mailto:hix@rmi.net).

## Graffiti Committee

Many thanks to the four caring residents, **Nancy Higgs, Kristina Ireland, Becky Moriarty, and Sheila Armsworth**, for stepping up after VCCA's call to take over the Graffiti Committee, due to the previous members retiring after many years of serving. By dedicating their time and effort to remove graffiti, these volunteers demonstrate that Vermont Commons is not a neighborhood you can mess with. Please take a moment to thank them whenever you catch them out and about!

## VCCA Coffee



Every first Wednesday of the month at 10am there's a chance to share a laugh with your neighbors at La Madeleine French Bakery, 2047 West Gray. Hope to see you there on April 3rd!

## VCCA Annual Spring Picnic

Ready for some fun in the sun? So are we! Join us at **1605 Woodhead at 4:00pm on Sunday, April 7th** for an afternoon of food, friendship, and spring festiveness.

Again Jim and Sheila Armsworth welcome all VCCA neighbors and friends to their "park" - a lovely shaded lawn - to enjoy fun activities

for the whole family, including face painting and a "tattoo parlor". Take part in the potluck by bringing a dish or

two and your favorite beverage (water will be provided); don't forget your lawn chairs, too! Looking to show off your green thumb? We'd love your help in decorating with flowers from your garden. Can't wait to see everyone!

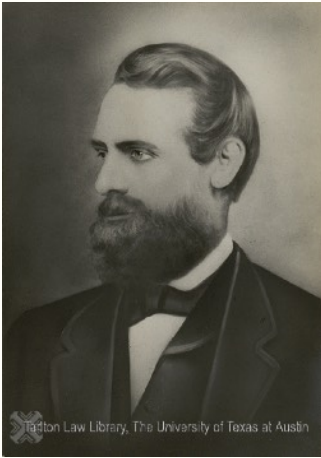


Lots of happy smiles and engaging conversations at our March Happy Hour. Join the fun at the next get-together!

## Houston Street Name Origins - West Gray: A Street Name with History

By Michael F. Forlenza

(This is **Part 3**. Find Part 1 in the *December 2015 issue*, and Part 2 in the *December 2018 issue* at [vccahouston.org](http://vccahouston.org))



West Gray Street, which runs through the River Oaks shopping district north of the Vermont Commons area, was named for Peter W. Gray, an early Houston lawyer, jurist, civic leader, politician, and secessionist. West Gray Street becomes Gray Street near downtown Houston and turns into Inwood Street west of South Shepherd Drive.

Peter W. Gray was born in December 1819 in Fredericksburg, Virginia, one of the twelve children of William Fairfax Gray and Mary "Millie" (Stone) Gray. The family moved to Houston in 1837, shortly after the founding of the Republic of Texas in 1836. W. F. Gray practiced law, served as clerk of the Texas House of Representatives in 1837, as the secretary of the Senate in 1838, and was appointed Houston's district attorney in 1840. His son, P.W. Gray, was also a practicing attorney in Houston at the time, at the young age of 21.

After W. F. Gray died in 1841, Sam Houston appointed P. W. Gray as Houston's District Attorney. He retained this position until Texas became a state in 1845. He also served the city of Houston as an alderman and on the local board of health. During this same period, he founded both the Houston Bar Association and the law firm that would eventually become Baker Botts L.L.P.

According to the Texas State Historical Association's Handbook of Texas, P. W. Gray was elected to the first state legislature in 1846. While there, he authored the important Practice Act regulating Texas court procedures. In 1848, he became a founder of the Houston Lyceum, which eventually became the Houston Public Library. P. W. Gray was elected to the

fourth state Senate in 1854 and subsequently served as State District Court judge for the Houston district, a jurisdiction stretching from the Sabine River to the Brazos River.

Although he had been a strong advocate for the annexation of Texas into the United States, Gray was a strong believer in states' rights, and at the outbreak of the Civil War was elected as a delegate to the state Secession Convention, where he voted in favor of taking Texas out of the Union. In November 1861, he was elected to the first Confederate House of Representatives serving until 1863.

At the end of his term, Gray became a volunteer aide to the Confederate General John B. Magruder and served at the battle of Galveston. In 1864, Confederate States of America President Jefferson Davis appointed Gray fiscal agent for the Trans-Mississippi Department, a position that he accepted with some reluctance. He was unsuccessful in raising funds to retire the Confederate debt in the region and thus left General Edmund Kirby Smith's army virtually without financial means through the final months of the war.

After the Civil War, Gray returned to his Houston law practice, which he built into one of the largest in the South. In 1874, Governor Richard Coke appointed him associate justice of the Texas Supreme Court upon the resignation of William P. Ballinger, but Gray resigned within two months, on April 18, due to worsening pulmonary tuberculosis. He died in his home in Houston on October 3, 1874 at the age of 54 and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery. In 1876, the Texas legislature named Gray County in the panhandle in his honor.

P. W. Gray was a devout Episcopalian, a charter member of Christ Church in Houston, and an active Mason. He reportedly assumed his middle initial W, which stands for no other name, in later life. Peter W. Gray's legacy in Houston and the Texas legal system is commemorated in many enduring institutions, but also in the tony thoroughfare where one can catch an art film or shop for a Steinway piano.

### VCCA OFFICERS 2019

**Directors:** Jeanette Hix, Stephanie Taylor, Nina Westerfeld, Janet Meyer, BR Simon, Lillian Skogsberg, Ann Green Terrel

**Treasurer:** Chuck Randall

**VP Deed Restrictions:** Andy Tallin

**Newsletter:** Natalia Podosinnikova



### VCCA Finances



Curious about how VCCA is making a difference in the neighborhood? Copies of the financial report will now be available at the monthly Happy Hours!

Send news, notices, photos, editorials, advertising requests to [nat.podo@gmail.com](mailto:nat.podo@gmail.com). Submissions are due the 15th of the month preceding the newsletter.

Natalia Podosinnikova, Editor



# VCCA Yard of the Month



2201 McDuffie

## VCCA Event Schedule for 2019

- April 3 — Coffee
- April 7 — Spring Picnic
- May 1 — Coffee
- May 13 — Happy Hour/Speaker: Stephen Costello (aka Houston's Flood Czar)

## New Captain on the Block

**Bob Costello**, one of our original Block Captains, recently retired from his volunteer position. He and his neighbors always had great Halloween parties by his town house on McDuffie. VCCA thanks Bob for the many years of generosity and service, and extends a special thanks to **Lillian Skogsberg**, who volunteered to replace him.

## CITIZEN PATROL

Citizen Patrol volunteers completed a total of 159 hours of walking and driving patrol in February. That amounts to an average 6 hours of volunteer patrolling daily! Many thanks to the eight patrollers **Rob Fuller, Cathryn Gabor, Marilyn Fehrenkamp, Andy Tallin, Tom Hix, Maria Rodriguez** and especially **Bob "Iron Man" Costantini** who did 91 of those hours. If you'd like to learn more about Citizen Patrol, or to become a volunteer, contact David Hoyer at [davidhoyer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:davidhoyer@sbcglobal.net).

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