

A Teenager in Houston

Dilue Rose Harris wrote a memoir about growing up in Texas during the days of the Republic. The memoir was called *Reminiscences*, and it was written when she was 74 years old. She wrote several accounts of her social life in the young town of Houston.

We will look at three of these social events. They all happened in 1838 when she was between 13 and 14 years old.

Read her accounts and answer the questions at the bottom of each one.

Then, pretend that you are a teenager living in Houston in 1838. Write a letter to a friend or family member who lives in Mississippi. Tell your friend about your social life. You would have probably attended the same events that Dilue Rose did, but you will need to describe them from your point of view, using your own words.

The Full Text of Mrs. Dilue Rose Harris's *Reminiscences* was first published in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly, and can be found on the Internet Archive site at this address:
<http://www.archive.org/stream/southwesternhist04texauoft#page/84/mode/2up>

San Jacinto Anniversary Ball

Excerpt from the memoir of Dilue Rose Harris:

Make notes in the margins as needed.

Mr. Ben Fort Smith built a large two story house to be used for a hotel. It was opened with a grand ball on the 21st of April, the second anniversary of the battle of San Jacinto. Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, and I were at the ball. The second story of the house had not been partitioned off for bedrooms, and it made a fine hall for dancing. There were three hundred people present, but not more than sixty ladies, including little girls and married women. There were but few unmarried young ladies at that time in Texas, and as Miss Mary Jane Harris, the belle of Buffalo Bayou, was married, I, as the Rose of Bray's Bayou, came in for considerable attention. . . . General Houston was talking with Mother and some other ladies, when Father presented Sister and me to the president. He kissed both of us and said "Dr. Rose, you have two pretty little girls." I felt rather crestfallen, as I considered myself a young lady. It had been the height of my ambition to dance with the president.

1. Make sure you know these words as used in context:
 - a. partition
 - b. considerable
 - c. crestfallen

2. What event is being described?

3. Where is the event taking place?

4. What anniversary are they celebrating?

5. What does Dilue Rose hope will happen?

6. Does it seem to you that Dilue Rose is enjoyed the ball?

Theatrical Performance

Excerpt from the memoir of Dilue Rose Harris:

Make notes in the margins as needed.

The second anniversary of the battle of San Jacinto had come and gone and Mother said she hoped there would be nothing else to distract us from our studies, as the school would close in June.

But there was another sensation. One Monday morning in May on our arrival at the school-house, we found the town covered with play bills. A theatrical company had arrived and would give the first performance Friday night, June 11. This was the first theatrical company to come to Texas. It not only ran the young people wild, but the old people were not much better. The manager's name was Carlos, stage-manager, Curry, company, Mr. Hubert and family, Mr. Newton, Miss Hoke, Mr. and Mrs. Barker and several children.

The school teacher, Mrs. Robertson, and pupils had received complimentary tickets to the theater that evening, as had also the president, his staff and the Milam Guards. Rain and mud did not deter us. We were all at the school house before dark. From there we marched to the theater. . . . The front seats were reserved for ladies and the school children, the next seats for the president, his staff, and the Milam Guards.

The school arrived early, found the reserved seats occupied, and was accordingly seated in the second seats. There was considerable confusion, as the house was crowded. As the president and escort entered, the orchestra played "Hail to the Chief," but there were no seats vacant to accommodate them. The stage manager, Mr. Curry, came out and requested the men in front, who were gamblers and their friends, to give up the seats. This they refused to do. Then the manager called for the police to put them out. They became enraged, and drawing weapons, threatened to shoot. The sheriff called upon the soldiers to arrest and disarm them. It looked as if there would be bloodshed, gamblers on one side, soldiers on the other, women and children between, everybody talking, women and children crying. The president got on a seat, commanded the peace, asked those in front to be seated, ordered the soldiers to stack arms, and said that he and the ladies and children would take back seats. This appeared to shame the gamblers. One man acted as spokesman and said that if their money was returned they would leave

the house, as they had no desire to discommode the ladies. He said that they would have left the house at first if the police had not been called. After the gamblers left, the evening passed very pleasantly. The president addressed the audience, particularly the children, as the term for which he was elected president would close soon. He admonished them to be obedient and diligent in their studies. The first theatrical company to perform in Houston closed its engagement the next day.

1. Make sure you know these words as used in context:
 - a. play bills
 - b. company
 - c. complimentary
 - d. discommode
 - e. addressed
 - f. admonished

2. What event is being described?

3. Where is the event taking place?

4. The soldiers at this event were the Milam Guards. They were the militia for the town of Houston. What is a militia?

5. What happened that nearly caused bloodshed?

6. How was the situation settled?

Henry-Hunt Wedding

Excerpt from the memoir of Dilue Rose Harris:

Make notes in the margins as needed.

The wedding came off the 15th of June. The groom was Mr. Flournoy Hunt, the bride, Miss Mary Henry. The wedding was at the mansion house, the home of Mrs. Man, mother of the groom. It was a grand affair, but I was snubbed again by a pretty widow. General Houston and I were to be the first attendants, Dr. Ashbel Smith and Miss Voate, second, and Dr. Ewing and Mrs. Holliday, third. At the last moment the program was changed. Mrs. Holliday suggested that I was too young and timid, and that she would take my place. General Houston offered her his arm. They took the lead, and Dr. Ewing escorted me. Everything passed off very pleasantly. As soon as congratulations were over, General Houston, who was the personification of elegance and kindness, excused himself and retired. Mrs. Holliday took possession of Doctor Ewing and left me without an escort till Mr. Hunt introduced Mr. Ira A. Harris. He was young, handsome, and had been but a few weeks in Houston; and, as I did not have the president for a partner, I was well pleased. As there was no pretty widow to interfere, we were subsequently married.

1. Make sure you know these words as used in context:
 - a. snub
 - b. personification
 - c. subsequently
2. There are several idioms used here that we don't often use today. Highlight those and write beside them the way we would say them now.
3. What event is being described?
4. Where is the event taking place?
5. Who was she supposed to walk down the aisle with? What happened?
6. Who did she meet at the wedding who would become important in her life?