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Magnolia Park, TX

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MAGNOLIA PARK, TX. Magnolia Park, near the **Houston Ship Channel** (</handbook/entries/houston-ship-channel>) in eastern Harris County, is one of Houston's oldest Hispanic neighborhoods. It was laid out in 1890 on a 1,374-acre site belonging to Thomas M. Brady, on Harrisburg Road across Bray's Bayou from Harrisburg and seven miles downstream from Houston. It was named for the 3,750 magnolias that developers planted there. The community became an independent municipality in 1909. Though Whites first inhabited the town, **Mexican Americans** (</handbook/entries/mexican-americans>) from South Texas began arriving by 1911, first settling in the area filled by sand dredged from the turning basin and known as El Arenal or the Sands. Most of the new settlers worked as laborers, laying railroad tracks or dredging and widening Buffalo Bayou. Others loaded cotton on ships and railroad cars or helped construct the ship channel. Mexican-American women worked in jute mills, making gunnysack material for binding cotton bales. Residents of Mexican origin purchased lots at the townsite, built single-family homes, and fostered an active Mexican cultural life through clubs, fraternal organizations, theatrical groups, and events. Organizations like the Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez, founded in 1919, provided mutual aid and a rented hall for social functions. Immaculate Conception Church, which predated the arrival of the Mexicans, prohibited them from entering pews and required them to stand during services, but Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, organized in 1912, provided schooling, and, along with the Heart of Mary Catholic Church, established in 1926, became a community center. By 1920, with an influx of immigrants from northern Mexico, the community had become a barrio with its own business district of Mexican-owned firms. A school named for **Lorenzo de Zavala** (</handbook/entries/zavala-lorenzo-de>) was established in 1920, and a Mexican chamber of commerce looked after the community's interests. Sports associations sponsored by Mexican-owned businesses flourished, along with social clubs like the **Club Cultural Recreativo Mexico Bello** (</handbook/entries/club-cultural-recreativo-mexico-bello>), founded in 1924. Magnolia Park was annexed to the city of Houston in October 1926. By 1929 Magnolia Park, surrounded by refineries, factories, textile mills, industrial plants, and wharves, was the largest Mexican settlement in Houston. The Escuela Mexicana Hidalgo, a private school organized to preserve Mexican culture, was established in the community by 1930. Political organizations developed, and groups like Club Femenino-Chapultepec provided recreation, promoted Mexican-American culture, and protested segregation in the city. A branch of the **League of United Latin American Citizens** (</handbook/entries/league-of-united-latin-american-citizens>) was organized at Magnolia Park in 1934, and a **Ladies LULAC** (</handbook/entries/ladies-lulac>) council in 1935. By World War II the area from Segundo Barrio to Magnolia Park was referred to as the East End and youth gangs were active. The local population increased in the early 1940s, as war-related jobs drew Mexican Americans to Houston from across the Southwest. By the 1960s the middle class had expanded under the programs of President **Lyndon Baines Johnson** (</handbook/entries/johnson-lyndon-baines>)'s Great Society, but the bulk of the local Mexican-American residents remained poor. *Papel Chicano*, a **Chicano** (</handbook/entries/chicano>) movement newspaper with offices in Magnolia Park, reported on area activism in the 1970s, and in 1971 women of the Magnolia Park YWCA hosted the **Conferencia de Mujeres por**

[la Raza \(/handbook/entries/conferencia-de-mujeres-por-la-raza\)](#). In 1978 up to 20 percent of local residents were below the poverty level. In 1990 the community was a working-class neighborhood with a population of 14,000. No population figures were available after that time. The neighborhood celebrated its centennial in 2009.

Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican-Americans in Houston* (University of Houston Mexican American Studies Program, 1989). Houston *Chronicle*, October 17, 2009. Marguerite Johnston, *Houston, The Unknown City, 1836–1946* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991). Thomas H. Kreneck, *Del Pueblo: A Pictorial History of Houston's Hispanic Community* (Houston: Houston International University, 1989). Thomas H. Kreneck, "The Letter from Chapultepec," *Houston Review* 3 (Summer 1981). Roberto Pérez, "A Story of Survival," *Houston City Magazine*, July 1978. F. Arturo Rosales, "Mexicans in Houston: The Struggle to Survive," *Houston Review* 3 (Summer 1981). Texas Board of Trade, *The Industrial Advantages of Houston, Texas and Environs* (Houston: Akehurst, 1894).

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Linked Data from the Texas Almanac:	USGS ID
	1340850
Place	Town Fields
Magnolia Park	Has post office: No
	Is Incorporated: No
Currently Exists	Belongs to
No	Harris County
Place Type	Coordinates
Town	Latitude: 29.73245080°
	Longitude: -95.29215840°