



Gussie A. Young, *Our Community War Services Memorial, Houston & Harris County*, Ilona B. Benda, 1919

## Gloom Chasers

In early 1921, an economic downturn pummeled Houston's economy. Harding had just been elected president in November of 1920 signaling uncertain political change, jobs were scarce and cotton prices low. Oscar Holcombe had just won the Democratic primary for mayor so Houston was also in a political transition period with expectations he would win the upcoming general election.

Gussie A. Young, former Executive Secretary of the Harris County Equal Suffrage Association, transitioned to a newly-created marketing position at W. C. Munn Company department store in downtown Houston after the successful passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Her work for suffrage was complete. Munn's as it was commonly known, supported Houston's suffragists as Mr. Munn generously provided free office and meeting space for the Harris County Equal Suffrage Association in the years leading up to the women's success. Mrs. Young's latest mission was training Munn's staff in the best methods of professional salesmanship. This was a completely new concept for shop clerks.

According to Gussie A. Young's great-granddaughter, Beth Phillips Engelhardt, Gussie was known for her funny sense of humor. We also know she was an incredible organizer because it was her systematic efforts canvassing Houston neighborhoods in both raising funds for World War I bonds, and to collect poll taxes that had such a powerful effect on Houston women. Now, she turned her talents to marketing efforts that improved spirits by creating a new club known as the "Gloom Chasers". Of course, this campaign was another way to generate newspaper attention and attract customers into W.C. Munn Company.

Gussie created "Gloom Chasers" club cards. Just as she organized registration tables to collect poll taxes in 1919 and 1920, she set-up a table in W.C. Munn Company department store to sign-up "Gloom Chasers".

Price of joining was a smile. Additional cards were free for sharing. Very quickly, other businesses, including other department stores formed "Gloom Chasers" clubs.



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**THE HOUSTON**

Capitol Avenue HOUSTON, TEXAS, MONDAY, FEB. 7, 1921

***Gloom Chasers All, You Bet!***

A black and white group photograph of seven women sitting on a bench. They are dressed in early 20th-century attire, including blouses, dresses, and hats. The women are smiling and looking towards the camera. The photo is framed by a thin black border.

Do they look gloomy? Nor does anyone else at the Foley Bros. Dry Goods Co., where a 100 per cent Gloom Chasing club has been formed. These seven members are, left to right: Libby Caplan, Irene Standre, Vivian Carson, Pearl Hurst, Corre Dollerhide, Florence Nolan, Pearl Boyd.

The Houston Press, 7 February 1921, p.1.

Gussie A. Young starts signing - up hundreds of store patrons. Momentum grows.



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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1921.

## GLOOM GETS HARD KNOCKS AT MUNN CO.'S GC BOOTH

A lot of gloom chasing philosophy is being picked up by Mrs. G. A. Young at her branch booth of the Noble Order in the W. C. Munn Co. store.

Mrs. Young signs up hundreds of members every day.

"I'm strong for this movement," said one man. "Give me about 13 cards. My wife's gone to St. Louis. My little girl is sick and I've been summoned on the jury. All that happened this week. Don't you think I need 13?"

"A fellow's education is lacking until he learns to meet the world with a grin," said a young man.

"Laugh and the world laughs with you," said J. J. Hill as his card was being signed.

"A smile a day" is the slogan of the War Mothers, too, said one member of that organization.

A. C. Maxwell said: "Let's put a knife in this 'hard-times' cry."

"It's the only life to live," said Rev. T. J. Windham.

Mrs. W. A. Lang, principal of Bellaire school, said: "This is just my idea of a good club. I want each child I teach to join and learn to smile and smile."

"Well, I suppose I've the right to be chasing gloom. I exceeded my sales quota 500 per cent during January," said J. J. Patterson of the Cleveland Metal Producing Company who chanced to be in Houston.

"I used to be called Sunshine, but somehow I've been all out of kelter lately. I'll sign. Maybe it'll help," said another.

(Political Advertisement)

# E. B. HADSALL

MOST CAPABLE MAN FOR

# WATER COMMISSIONER

The Houston Press, 8 February 1921, p.2, col. 2.

In case you are not up on the latest slang from 1921, “biffing” is to “whack” or “blow”.

All sorts of Houston businesses join in the fun.



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**BIFFING THE BLUES**

There was no gloom lurking around the Liberty theater Wednesday afternoon. The Gloom Chasers are being given a free theater party by Manager Shea of the Southern Enterprises.

“I never saw as many people with so many smiles in all my life,” said Mrs. F. F. Kohnke, at the ticket window.

\* \* \*

Gloom Editor:  
I’m a GC. Boarded a car; seated myself alongside pretty lady — smiled sweetly — she scowled terribly. Please get to join.—A. E. Southward, 912 Preston-av.

\* \* \*

“This gloom chasing is the spirit I have been wishing for a long time. I sincerely hope it will spread broadcast over our lovely and prosperous city.”—Mrs. Virginia Barefield, 1809 Silver-st.

\* \* \*

“S’pose you do own a grouch—what’s the use of displaying it in your show window?”—Alex Pastoriza, 2003 Lamar-av.

\* \* \*

**SMILING BY WIRE**

“What are the dues?” asked Mrs. E. C. Malott.

“A smile,” answered the Gloom Chasing editor.

“Well, I’m paying them,” she replied over the phone. “Can you hear me smile?”

“You bet I can!” said the GC editor. Mrs. Malott also asked a membership card for her husband.

\* \* \*

**100 PERCENTERS**

“A smile every minute today will keep old man gloom away” is the slogan adopted by the employes of the National Life Insurance Co., who formed a 100 percent gloom chasing club. Members are C. D. Livingston, Mrs. C. D. Livingston, J. M. Bobo, W. W. Campbell, C. S. Arnold, S. S. Gray, A. C. McKowen, T. D. Harrison, J. F. Kern, F. N. Graves, P. Weiner, T. G. Jones, D. B. Hurlburt and I. P. Fluitt.

\* \* \*

The Houston Press, 9 February 1921, p. 1, col. 6.

\* \* \*

**Gloom Chasers All**

Miss Diana Solmer, Atlas Gas Appliance Co., 1806 Washington.  
Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Dozier, 2105 Clark-st.  
Mrs. J. Davis, 2002 Clark-st.  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Nash, 2216 Chapman-st.  
Mrs. Leo Klopman, 207 Vincent-st.

The following from the Bemis Bag Co.: Ben Kyle, T. O. Moye, Elma Scherrous, Anne Marshall, Mrs. M. Hall, Ruby Rich and Harriett Criss.

Mrs. M. Walters, 805 James-st.  
F. W. Thomas, 2117 Chenevert-st.

Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Adams, 502 Capitol-ave.  
Marama Thurston, Rice Hotel.  
R. A. Daniell, Leader Transfer Co.  
A. P. Martial, Leader Transfer Co.

Miss Helen M. Cheatham, 801 Irvin-st.  
Donovan Link, 516 East 21st-st.  
Wilbur Boyett, I&GN freight office.

C. F. Jenkins, 2409 Crawford.  
Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Escue, 2007 Lamar-av.  
Ruth Escue, 2007 Lamar-av.  
Archie Frucht, 1207 Providence.  
Mrs. E. J. Sickert, 6719 Ave. J.  
Miss Doris Jones, 6719 Ave. J.  
Frank Tortorice, 2519 Leeland.

Beautiful Clara Kimball Young, popular performer, is greeted upon her arrival in Houston by future mayor, Oscar Holcombe and other dignitaries. They give Miss Young a tour of the growing Port of Houston's turning basin and instead of a key to the city- what else? - a membership in the Gloom Chasers.



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### Clara Joins the Gloom Chasers



It's "Clara Kimball Young, GC," now! She joined the Noble Order soon after her arrival in Houston Tuesday. The above photograph, taken at the turning basin, shows her holding an official Gloom Chaser membership card. At Miss Young's right is Mayor-elect Holcombe, and at her left Rev. William States Jacobs.

By this point, the entire business and Houston booster community is behind the GC effort.

Where is this going to lead?

They decide to have an entire week of promotions encouraging optimism including window displays, giveaways, fashion shows and a big funeral for that “Old Man Gloom” on Main St..



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WEDNESDAY, FEB. 23, 1921

## OLD MAN GLOOM WILL GET BOOT NEXT TUESDAY

**BULLETIN.**  
The Kiwanis Club voted Wednesday to join the festivities March 1, when Old Man Gloom will be exterminated.  
The Conopur Club took similar action Tuesday.  
The YMBL and Advertising Assns. started the movement.

There'll be "big doings" in Houston next Tuesday. That's the first day of the YMBL "Prosperity Week." Other organizations will lend their aid, and merchants practically are a unit in supporting the movement.

The first feature will be the death and burial of Old Man Gloom, to be conducted in grand style by the Advertising Assn. The funeral procession will be one of the niftiest affairs seen in Houston in many a day.

With Gloom stowed safely away deep down in the earth, the YMBL

ton in many a day.  
With Gloom stowed safely away deep down in the earth, the YMBL and co-operating organizations will set out to enliven the spirit of optimism which should pervade with the coming of the spring-time. Merchants will provide special window displays; several hundred valuable prizes will be given away; a style show will be held at the City Auditorium in connection with the Southern Shoe Retailers' convention, and there will be numerous other stunts.  
The spirit of Sam Houston will take a prominent part in the assassination of Old Man Gloom. Sam will be represented in the person of "Shorty Libbock."  
These merchants have promised the YMBL their whole-hearted assistance:

The Houston Press, 23 February 1921, p. 1, col.6.

This a a partial list of sponsoring  
Businesses providing prizes.



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C. L. Bering Co.  
P. C. Doehring.  
C. L. & Theo. Bering.  
Harris-Hahlo Co.  
Oliver's Music House.  
John McClellan & Co.  
Parish's Book Store.  
Booth Bros.  
Swan Studio.  
Leopold & Price.  
J. & R. Landers.  
Sweeney Jewelry Store.  
L. Lechenger.  
Buckley Shoe Co.  
Columbia Dry Goods Store.  
Pesses & Sons.  
Rolle-Jewett & Beck.  
Barringer-Norton Co.  
Kiesling's Drug Store.  
Carroll Floral Co.  
Shotwell's Inc.  
W. C. Munn & Co.  
Crown All Hat Co.  
Battlestein's.  
Carl Ries Co.  
McCardell & Sauer  
Goggan's Music Store.  
Rainbow Waist Shop.  
The Vogue.  
Houston Trunk Factory.  
Josephine George Co.  
American Drug Co.  
Geo. L. Glass & Sons.  
Kerr The Florist.  
Fifth Avenue Hat Shop.  
Joe Trum.  
Teetshorn's.  
Public Drug Co.  
Bush & Gerts.  
Jas. F. Gorman Co.  
Boyle & Pendarvis.  
The Goodwin Shop.  
Goodman's.  
Everitt-Buelow Co.

The Houston Press, 23 February 1921,  
p. 1, col.6.

Harris-Hahlo Co.  
Oliver's Music House.  
John McClellan & Co.  
Parish's Book Store.  
Booth Bros.  
Swan Studio.  
Leopold & Price.  
J. & R. Landers.  
Sweeney Jewelry Store.  
L. Lechenger.  
Buckley Shoe Co.  
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Bush & Gerts.  
Jas. F. Gorman Co.  
Boyle & Pendarvis.  
The Goodwin Shop.  
Goodman's.  
Everitt-Buelow Co.  
Eganhouse Optical Co.  
Houston Sporting Goods Co.  
Smith-Woodward Piano Co.

**Job Hunters Get  
No Encouragement  
From Mayor-Elect**

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Hard to believe a funeral pageant for "Old Man Gloom" on Main St. complete with the Rice Band and a steam calliope playing funeral dirges.

"Movie men" were on hand to record the occasion with plans to show scenes at theatres across America.

Not bad for a fun joke and a month's work. Thanks, Gussie.



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**THOUSANDS WILL HELP KILL GLOOM**

**Plans for Pageant on March 1 Practically Completed; 'Twill Be Great Turnout of Optimists.**

Plans for the downtown pageant March 1 when Old Man Gloom is led to his death and burial were practically complete Thursday. Thousands will assist in the function, actively or by their presence. The pageant will be directed by the Advertising Assn. It will be the first big feature of the YMBL's Prosperity Week. There'll be fun-making galore—with a feeling of rejoicing over the return of "normalcy" in the business world as the serious vein running thru the affair.

**NEXT TUESDAY**

Old Man Gloom will come to the "jumping off place" shortly after 5 p. m. next Tuesday. Hundreds of paraders will be there ready to give him the last fatal shove. Here's the way the paraders will line up:

Mounted police.  
Death chariot.  
"Shorty" Lubbock as Sam Houston.  
Advertising Assn.  
Young Men's Business League.  
Labor organizations.  
Salesmanship Club.  
Conopus Club.  
Kiwanis Club.

**PARADE ROUTE**

The parade route is from Franklin to Walker-aves on Main-st. There one-half of the procession will go Travis-st and the other half to Fannin-st.

They will come back to Main-st on McKinney-ave, where the final ceremonies will be staged.

Fox and Pathe movie men will be on hand to picturize the occasion. The scenes will be flashed on thousands of screens throught the country. The movie men were obtained by J. Frank Shea, Southern Enterprises city manager.

**MORE MERCHANTS SIGN**

Merchants still are signing up for the YMBL's prosperity drive, which lasts from March 1 to March 5. Valuable prizes will be given away. These merchants, in addition to those already published, will co-operate:

The Fashion.  
Nathan's.  
Hawkins-Schultz Auto Supply Co.  
Mrs. C. Shepherd.  
A. Schwartz.  
Anderson Drug Company.  
Alaskan Fur Company.  
Continental Trunk Factory.  
Ladin's.  
Foley-Baehr Shoe Company.  
St. Regis Confectionery Company.  
Loftis Bros. & Company.  
Houston Optical Company.  
Krupp & Tuffly.  
Foley Bros. Dry Goods Company.  
Teolin Pillot.  
Landers Company.  
Levy Bros. Dry Goods Company.  
Morris Brothers.  
Hammersmith's.  
Colman's.  
B. O. Kreiter.  
Turner Millinery Company.  
The Toggery Shop.  
The Wonder.  
Schepp's Ready-to-Wear.  
Kaplan's.  
Alkemeyer's, Inc.  
Davidson's Ready-to-Wear.  
A. M. Levy.  
Southern Hat Company.  
H. Grossman Dry Goods Company.  
The Economy.  
The Famous.  
Ben Zindler's Sons.  
Ben Lewis.  
Allmakes Typewriter Company.  
Hariburt Still Electric Company.  
Stowers Furniture Company.  
Hudson Furniture Company.  
John L. Jones Furniture Company.  
Brook-Mays Piano Company.  
Jonathan Cox Phonograph Company.  
Brown-Wood Electric Company.  
Gidden Stores Company.  
James Furniture Company.  
Houston Watch Company.  
Lewis-Blumrich Company.  
The Grand Leader.  
Cockrell's Drug Store.  
H. Becker & Sons.  
Dovers.  
G. A. Mistrot & Company.  
Green & Bridges.  
Sakowitz Bros.  
Peine & Reinstein.  
Keown Hardware Company.  
Hutchinson & Mitchell.  
Jacobs & Lipoff.  
Jones & Hoffman.  
Gordon Jewelry Company.  
American Confectionery Company.  
Hamilton Bros.  
Gazin's Drug Store.  
Newton, Allen & Caspersen.  
Foley & Courtney.  
Tuffly & Seoggins.  
Lewis & Lewis.  
The Parisian.  
Black Bros. Furniture Company.  
Dixie Furniture Company.

The Houston Press, 24 February 1921, p.3, col. 1.