



Calanthe Historical Society - (Formerly Known as Grand Court Order of Calanthe)

Grand Court Order of Calanthe was organized in White Hall, Louisiana in 1883 as an auxiliary to the Knights of Pythias. The Knights of Pythias was founded February 19, 1864, in Washington, D.C. by Justus Henry Rathbone and nine others. It is the first fraternal order ever chartered by an Act of Congress. It traces its historical and symbolic roots from the friendship of Damon and Pythias. Legend has it that Damon was imprisoned by the King. Pythias ask the King if he could take Damon's place in prison to allow Damon to go home to set his business in order. Damon returned to prison and the King was so impressed with this brotherly love that he released both men. "**Calanthe**" was the wife of Pythias

Grand Court "Independent" Order of Calanthe was organized and established in the State of Texas May 30, 1897. In 1905, the name was amended to Grand Court Order of Calanthe. Calanthe continues to confidently pave the way in this century. Calantheans volunteer their time and raise money for local charities, needy families, and children throughout the State of Texas. In 1907, Calanthe began providing youth with planned activities geared toward leadership development and social interaction.

The organization previously operated its offices in the home of Fannie A. Robinson, the Secretary-Treasurer in the late 1930s. In 1948 Calanthe built its headquarters on 2411 Dowling Street (June 19, 2017 the street name changed to 2411 Emancipation Avenue) in Houston. At the time of its construction, it was one of the most modern structures built, financed, owned, and managed by African-American women in the U.S.

After the war, Calanthe began making mortgage loans; provided insurance benefits to its members, developed a modern, automated office system; and operated an employment service.

For more than seven decades, Calanthe's headquarters was a vital center of business, community, religious, and civic activities in Houston's Third Ward. Calanthe leased space to other African-American businesses and professionals. Many of the African-American churches in the Third Ward neighborhood of Houston had their genesis in Calanthe's free community meeting rooms.

In 1951, Calanthes originated and completed the first federal farm home loan by an African-American organization in the Southwest. Since 1954, Calanthe offers college scholarships through the V. A. Bradford Fund.

Calanthe reflects the difficult but inspiring history of African-American women, and it remains a living testimony to the optimism, determination, and generosity that lie at the heart of the American experience.

Calanthe is on the brink of a new chapter in history. July 13, 2018 Calanthe became known as the **Calanthe Historical Society**. This re-structuring of the Calanthe organization will allow the world to see the strength and resilience in this great body of women while yet preserving its rich history. We are beginning this new era by "Remembering Our Legacy and Pursuing Our Destiny." Times change, things change and people change, but Calanthe's change will be to make our community, our city, our state, our nation and our world a much better place because we have made and will continue to make our mark on this entire society.

January 1, 2019, one hundred and six (106) Calanthes officially became members of the Calanthe Historical Society. Since then, the membership is steadily increasing. We will become stronger and better than ever.

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