Grimes County Historical Commission

Photo of the Month

Odd Fellows Cemetery
Anderson, Texas

Meetings of the Grimes County Historical Commission are held on the Second Monday of the Month at 6:30 pm in the Courthouse Annex in Anderson, Texas

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History of Grimes County Schools

It would appear that there is no way to get the true facts about the beginning and early history of the office of the County School Superintendent of Grimes County, Texas, due to the fact that no complete records were kept by the agency responsible for establishing the office, the County Commissioner’s Court, and none of the early superintendents kept records of any sort pertaining to the office.

The minutes of the Commissioners Court of Grimes County reveal the fact that the office of County School Superintendent was created by the Court September 14, 1892 and at the same meeting W. L. Campbell was appointed to the office at a salary of $1,000 per year. There was no mention of his duties or responsibilities, and there is no mention of how long he served, or of the office being discontinued. This must have happened since there is no mention of the office again.

On July 30, 1907, J. Thomas Davis was appointed County Superintendent of Schools by the Commissioners Court at a salary of $375.00 per quarter. This must have happened after the Texas Legislature passed a law establishing the office for many counties of Texas. It was to be a regular elective office with a two-year term. Davis resigned August 19, 1910, and on that date the Commissioner’s Court appointed W. S. Barron to the office. Barron served until he resigned July 14, 1914. J. C. Crutchfield was appointed to the office when Barron resigned, and he was followed in office by Miss Lizzie Grissett, who served one term to December 31, 1920. George P. Barron was elected to the office and served until August 15, 1924, when he resigned, and the Court appointed Hammond Mallard to finish the term, which ended December 31, 1924. Emory Barrett was the next elected County Superintendent, and he served until the end of his last term, which was December 31, 1928. Miss Elizabeth Siddall was elected and served a two-year term ending December 31, 1930. In the meantime, the Texas Legislature had passed a law making the office of County Superintendent a four-year term; this law was to become effective January 1, 1931 so Siddall’s second term was for four years 1931-1934. Siddall resigned August 20, 1934, and the Court appointed Mrs. Robbie McCluskey to finish the unexpired term which ended December 31, 1934. M. B. Thomas was elected County Superintendent in 1934 and served two terms, with the last term ending December 31, 1942. Thomas joined the Navy in 1942, and his wife, Mrs. Virginia Thomas acted as County Superintendent until the end of the term.

W. T. Wilcox was elected County School Superintendent of Grimes County in 1942; re-elected in 1946, in 1950 and 1954. He resigned August 1, 1955, and the Court appointed his wife, Mrs. Ethers D. Wilcox to the office. She was elected in 1956, re-elected in 1958, 1962 and 1966. During the election campaign of 1966, Mrs. Wilcox told the voters repeatedly that there was no more need for the office. She informed the voters that all of the common school districts and the three small independent districts had been abolished, annexed or consolidated with the four independent school districts of the County at Anderson, Iola, Navasota and Richards, but she was re-elected to the office in 1966.

In 1967 the Texas Legislature passed a special law abolishing the office of County School Superintendent. The same law also abolished the Grimes County School Board. This Board had five members; one elected by the voters of each Commissioners Precinct and one from the County-at-large. They handled problems concerning the transfer of pupils from districts to other districts; they set up bus routes, they settled confusion over school district lines and boundaries; they also acted as an appeal court in settling trouble between teachers and trustees, etc. The County School Board served the schools of Grimes County long and well. It would seem very appropriate that recognition should be given to some of the citizens who served honorably for many years as County School Trustees. To name a few of them, A. P. Wickey, W. F. Atkinson, Mrs. Sallie Trant, Joe Batts, E. G. Youens and H. W. Haynie.
Some of the terms and agencies mentioned in this brief study of the County Superintendent’s office might need explaining, such as common school district and independent school district.

At an early date the Commissioners Court divided the County into a number of school districts seeking to make them as nearly equal in area and school population as possible. Each district was to elect three trustees who were to establish schools for the white and Negro children, hire teachers and to take care of the business affairs of the district. The district could levy and collect taxes which would be assessed and collected by the County Tax Assessor and Collector and deposited to the district’s credit in the County Depository. The only other revenue received by the district was the state per capita paid by the state for each child on the school census of the district. No warrant could be issued for any expense without the approval of the County Superintendent.

The Independent School Districts were created by the Legislature in the early 1900’s. Each district was to have an area of 25 square miles, and they were to have seven elected trustees. They could levy and collect their own taxes, and the County Superintendent had no control over their finances. They could vote bonds and build school buildings, and they elected their school superintendent through their school trustees. In 1943 the independent school districts of Grimes County were; Anderson, Bedias, Iola, Navasota, Plantersville, Richards, Shiro, and Victory. Three of these independent districts dropped below the requirement that an independent district have at least 150 children on the school census. This requirement resulted in Victory, Shiro and Plantersville losing their independent status and being taken over by the office of County Superintendent. The Bedias Independent School District came off that list of independent districts when they voted to consolidate with the Madisonville Independent School District, a school district in another county. This happened after a plan to consolidate the districts in the north end of Grimes County failed in an election in which the voters in all the districts, except those at Richards Independent School District, voted for the plan. Since it required an unanimous vote by all districts, the negative vote by Richards killed the plan. More information concerning the educational system of Grimes County would make this discussion more meaningful and understandable. A description of the system as it existed during 1943 might be sufficient to make the subject more understandable.

During the year 1943 there were 25 common school districts in Grimes County, and there were 18 white schools with 34 teachers. Those districts had 21 Negro schools and 24 teachers. All of these schools for both races were elementary schools, and pupils who were qualified for high school work transferred to districts where there were high schools.

In that same year, 1943, there were 3 independent districts which had failed below the required 150 on the school census and had come under the control of the County Superintendent’s office. These 3 districts had 3 white schools and 5 teachers. They also had 3 Negro schools with 5 teachers. During that same school year, 1943, there were independent school districts with high schools at Anderson, Bedias, Navasota, Iola and Richards.

A good way to end this discussion is to repeat that by 1967 all of the common school districts and the small independent districts had been annexed or consolidated with the larger independent school districts, and the office with the larger independent school districts and the office of County School Superintendent and the County School Board has been abolished.

**Independent School Districts**

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<th>1929</th>
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<td>Anderson</td>
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### Common School Districts in Grimes County

| Apolonia   | Mesa       |
| Bethel Grove | Northwood  |
| Buff Lake  | Old McCary |
| Carlos     | Pankey     |
| Concord    | Piedmont   |
| Courtney   | Pine Grove |
| Cross      | Poole      |
| Dry Creek  | Red Hill   |
| Erwin      | Retreat    |
| Eureka     | Roans Prairie |
| Evergreen  | Salem (Bedias) |
| Fairview   | Salem (Navasota) |
| Freeman    | Sand Prairie |
| Gelsinger  | Singleton  |
| Good Hope  | Spring Branch |
| Grimes Prairie | St. Louis |
| Grimes Switch | Stone      |
| Harmony    | Stoneham   |
| Hopewell   | Sulphur Branch |
| Hughey     | Todd       |
| Independence | Tom Wall  |
| John Conn  | Union Hill |
| Keith      | Victory    |
| Klein      | White Hall |
| Lake Grove | Wilkinson  |
| Lynn Grove | Womack     |
| Macedonia  | Yarboro    |

### Early Teaching Experiences in Grimes County Rural Schools

There were many little one-room school buildings in our County after the turn of the twentieth century. In the Stoneham Common School District alone, there were three white schools and as many black ones. Stoneham School, two rural schools; Grimes Prairie, Red Star, Chatham, and one just north of our community on the Stoneham’s Farm. Mrs. Eva Hill Aerl, now past ninety years of age, remembers teaching at a Polish school in Grimes Prairie, a trustee, some three miles from Stoneham behind the Southern Breeze Plantation, but is no longer standing. Mrs. Hill arrived early that fall and range the school bell day after day, but no one came until Peter Yorek had ginned his first bale of cotton. Then his four children came to school, greeting their teacher, bowing and kissing her hand. Attendance increased to twenty. The benches with slanting board for writing were their desks and the wall, painted black, was the blackboard; a water bucket filled from the neighbor’s well provided water from two dippers used by all. The teacher furnished supplies. Due to lack of funds, the term ended in less than six months, and Miss “Eva” conducted a pay school in Yarboro, boarding with the August Meineke family in exchange for tuition of their children.

The 1911-1912 term found Miss Hill at the Geisinger School near Boehm’s Gin, where we boarded with the Boehms and recalls Mrs. Boehm having her daughter, Ellie, start fires early on cold mornings at the school. She credits her predecessor, Miss Allie Smyth (Jones) with laying a fine foundation of love, inspiration, and patriotism as well as book learning there, saying “her methods were far above her time.”

### Schools in Rural Areas Around Stoneham and Plantersville

Hughey School, on land given by Mrs. Nancy Hughey, grandmother of the families now living in the Navasota area, served the children of families living southwest of Stoneham, Taylor, Pattersons, Danford and Hughey. In the Plantersville area we have confirmed a number of rural schools; Butler School; Klein School, Giesinger School, (where Miss Allie Smyth taught in 1906-1907); and four schools in the Victory Common School District; two for blacks and two for whites; on the eastern edge of Grimes County. One two-teacher school in the Blackberry community, where Rebecca Johnson Simonton remembers teaching, as well as her mother and aunts. Her mother was Lillie Mae Nickerson Johnson, who taught in 1912-1913 and where Eva Nickerson and Odessa Hines taught later. Another colored school was the Smyth Institute on the road that crossed Caney Creek at Clay Hill, where Lillie Mae Nickerson and Maggie Nickerson Lewis taught utile the school was disbanded in 1937.
Two schools for white children, also known as Smyth Institute located on Smyth property one-half mile from Clay Hill, where twenty to thirty children attended classes from Grades 1-8 from the Diehl, Hoffart, Klovenski, Mattern, Mock, Pavalock, Tomcavits and Rosalier families. The writer started to school here in 1937 under Wm. Halata, when she was five. The other white school was one-half mile south of Highway 105 and one mile west of the Grimes-Montgomery County line, known as the Womack School. Early teachers were Simon Wagner, who recently passed away at the age of 95, Ellie M. Imhoff and Lillian L. Phillips and others. Board meetings were held at the Mike Mock home, around the dining room table. Mr. Mock was trustee from 1937-1946, when the district was dissolved and consolidated with Navasota Independent School District.

**Independence School**

The responsibility of rural teachers was more than the subject matter. With no telephone, no nurses aid, they had to be everything a child needed using their own judgment. I am thinking of the time when Mrs. Essie Kennard (Mrs. Lockett) and Mrs. Ruby Greenwood saw the tornado cloud headed for their schoolhouse. They had to work quickly and fast. They had the children outdoors and had them down on the ground, face down, with arms overhead. When the storm was over the only thing that reminded one that there had been a school house were the safe but muddy, wet children and two teachers.

**John Conn School**

One of Grimes County’s old schools has long been closed. When the school year began in 1921 the Independence School was located in FM 2620 on what was then a dirt road. Miss Ethel McGilberry, later Mrs. Ed Foster, was the only teacher for all grades. They had a large wood heater in the center of the building. One very cold day Mrs. Ethel said “Children there will be no school tomorrow unless someone brings some fire wood”. Wouldn’t you know, Van Rigby carried a load of wood to school and they had no days off from school after that.

There was also another small school at Mustang Prairie with one teacher, Jewel Colburn, and not too many children. So, in early 1922, Mustang Prairie and Independence Consolidated and the new school was called John Conn. Eleven acres were given to the school by Mr. Billy McGilberry, and I believe he and Mrs. I. D. Cleghorn were the first two trustees.

Other trustees were Earl McGilberry, Van Rigby, Jeff Henderson, Jessie Lucas, Ed Oberli, Charlie Thomas and several others. Some teachers were Ethel McGilberry Foster, Jewel Colburn Kelley, Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Stone, Nolan Williamson, Daisy Shepherd Spell, Mae and Opsie McLain, Ewing Trant, Ollie Kolb, Mattie B. Thomas Cleghorn, Euna Rigby, Maggie Davis, Vernon McAdmas, Albertha Martin Swinyer, Christine Wilson Brooks, Lela Norman, Jennie Mae McBride and a Mr. Gilpin and others. John Conn was a ninth-grade school so after finishing there, students went to Shiro High School. In 1960, Iva Thomas and his wife Dona Mae Rigby Thomas bought the school ground and Marshall Cleghorn bought the school building.
Keith School

The Keith School was built about 1910 on the site of the present building. At that time Keith was a thriving community with over 200 students enrolled in the ten grades. There were only eleven grades in high school until about 1940. Some of the teachers were Noah Cole, Lucille Sandel, Inez Nation, J. d. Nelson, Edna Mallett, Irma Loy, H. C. Ellis, Bess Lewis Cook, Sallie Sandel Trant, Robbie Shannon, Ewing Trant, Nolan Williamson, Aubrey Ferell, Ruby Harrison Manley, Texas Lee, and Zera Mae Williamson. Some of the principals of the school were Miss Texas Lee, Ewing Trant, H. C. Ellis and Nolan Williamson, who was the principal when the school burned in 1927.

Several of the boys were oiling the floor and one set fire to a broom and ignited the floor. The building was completely destroyed and the new one that replaced it was far inferior in design. While the new school was being built, the younger students went to school in the Evergreen Free Will Baptist church building and the High School students went to Iola. They went in a truck with a tarpaulin over it. When the 1928-29 school year arrived, the new building was finished. Whereas the old building had two stories, the new one had only one. School was held in this building until 1949 when it closed its doors forever, and the pupils went to Iola as the school was consolidated with it.

Old Field School Teacher

Alice Hill was the daughter of Carolina Hadley Martin and Oliver H. P. Hill of Anderson, and a sister of Benjamin J. Hill who later married Branch Jennings. The location of this old field school was in a thickly populated area of Grimes County just off the Anderson-Plantersville road about three to six miles from Anderson. The exact spot of this old field school is not known, but it was in the midst of this neighborhood.

Nearby lived a Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy who were one of the nearer neighbors and friends of Carrie Alice Greene and James W. Barnes. Eva Barnes Ethridge Hill was their youngest child (Mrs. B. J. Hill). These three families were very good friends and visited often.

When the need for a teacher arose, Alice Hill was selected. She boarded only on school days with Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy. What she paid we don’t know. Mrs. McCarthy seemed to stress Alice Hill’s fortunate ability to adjust herself to any situation and stated she was glad they could share their home with her because she was so neat and trim and kept her room accordingly. She was full of spunk and vim. On Friday afternoon when no one came for her, she struck out for home afoot. The best I can figure, her old field school teaching days were about 1800-1882.

The Old Field School had no such furniture as desks, tables or chairs. The main type of school furniture were the homemade benches. They were made from tree trunks. After the tree was cut down and the branches cut off, they decided on the desired lengths of the to be made benches. They sawed off the trunks into the desired lengths and then split every trunk lengthwise. The split parts were to be the bench seats. Holes were bored at the end of each bench and into these holes were fastened selected branches. In that way the tree became the bench. Those children had no paper, no lead pencils or erasers. How did they learn to write? They used slates. After the teacher had checked their written work on the slate, they were
cleaned for another assignment. The slates were kept clean by a prized article hard to get – a sponge. The teacher had no bell. She stood outside the door when it was time to “take in” school and called “books, books, books”. The nearest children took up the call until all were inside.

**Red Star School**

Red Star School was one of the many schools in Grimes County which served small communities before improved transportation spurred the consolidation movement. It was located about three hundred yards behind the old Smith Store building near the intersection of FM 1774 and 2445. The first teacher in 1917-1919 was Miss Florence Rice of Hempstead. After she married Jack Floyd, there were two other teachers who remained one year each before the school was discontinued. Most of the students then attended Grimes Prairie or Klein Schools.

Mrs. Floyd, now eighty-five years old, remembers the school as a rectangular room with windows on the longer sides. The students sat on straight back benches according to their grade levels, one through eight. Most did not begin school until they were eight years old, Mrs. Floyd explained, because walking several miles to school was difficult for younger children. She remembers that some came only one day a week, partly because they had to work in the fields. Most of the children were of German or Polish origin, many of whose parents spoke little English. Molitor, Demny, Zarsky, Pavlock, Metz, Noski, Urbanoski, and Floyd are some of the surnames of her students that Mrs. Floyd remembers. The rapport she established while teaching was to remain a vital influence in the lives of her students for many years thereafter. Even during WWII, some of their parents brought letters to “Miss Florence” from servicemen all over the world to be read to them and then answered. Mrs. Floyd realized a teacher’s fondest wish; a continuing awareness of the later accomplishments of her students.

**Stoneham White School**

Before 1900 some of our families hired teachers to teach their children. I remember Annie Crittenden Stoneham telling of the Bramletts teacher her and Miss Cherry Dean (Waters) also Miss Eleanor Meachum, later James T. Johnson, who married her oldest sister. Later they were taught by Miss Jean Womack. Then she went to Marlin and Itasca High Schools, where her sister’s husband was superintendent of schools. She graduated in 1902.

There was a frame building near the entrance of the S. L. Stoneham home in the heart of town, where Miss Sallie Tucker earlier taught the dictionary and the Bible and where Church services were held. Here, Miss Jean Womack (Greenwood) and Miss Maggie Spann taught after 1900. Many of the pupils still live in our community; Mrs. Ella T. Keyser (Beckham), George M. Keyser and Miss Evelyn Stoneham. In 1910 the present frame school building where many of us started was build.

At first, they had a one-teacher school, Miss Amy Barron Neely taught here. Later Miss Coma Gandy; then a second room was added. During WWII, Miss Myrtle Barry (later Mrs. Irvin Stoneham, taught with Miss Ruby Barnett (Steele). Others were Misses Riley, Randel, Grace Coker; Misses Winnie and Josephine Heath; Miss Eva Hill; Misses Blanch Hensley, Ella T. Keyser, Nelda Loftin, Kathryn Koonce and later, Frances Stoneham in 1926 with Miss Allie Smyth. After five years, Frances Stoneham joined the Conroe system teaching seven more years, then serving as librarian thirty-three years there in the Travis Junior High. After she left Stoneham, Miss Katie Loggins and Mrs. Myrtle Stoneham taught there. The school was consolidated with Navasota Independent School District in 1951. The building has now become our Stoneham-Plantersville community Center.
Yarboro Independent School District

The educational facility known as Yarboro Independent School District #24 was located approximately 10 miles from downtown Navasota directly off Highway 105 enroute to Conroe. It replaced a one-room facility at another location approximately ¾ miles away. Highway 105 at that time passed directly through the town of Yarboro. Yarboro at the time of the erection of this new school building had two general stores, a post office, a Santa Fe train station, and a population of several hundred people. Approximately 135 students attended the school, attending the first through the ninth grade. There was no busing of course, children either were within walking distance of rode horseback. The new school building was blueprinted by Mr. Taylor McMillan, architect and contractor who had this office in Houston. When the plans were finished, Mr. McMillan brought his carpenters to Yarboro where they were boarded by a nearby family, Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Meineke.

The new building was completed in 1914. The floor plan for the school was split level, having two large rooms erected approximately four feet above ground level, separated by a wide hall with steps the full width of the connecting hall. A concrete entrance hall was poured at the foot of the steps. Double doors opened from the concrete entrance way to the outside. Storage closets were located at each corner of the large connecting hall and a back entrance similar to the front had steps leading up into the hallway whereby one could travel either right or left to the school rooms. In other words, one could have entered the double doors in the front of the building, crossed the concrete entrance way, mounted the steps to the large connecting hall, proceeded straight ahead, and he would again descend steps and pass out of the back entrance.

To the left of the front entrance could be found the water cooler, individual drinking cups for the students, and facilities for hand washing. When everyone was dismissed for lunch, a line was formed and all hands were washed before lunch could be eaten. Water was supplied from a nearby well and it was usually the duty of the oldest boy student to see that the school water supply was adequate.

An area in the back entrance was set aside for storage of the firewood. The school rooms were equipped with wood burning stoves or heaters. These heaters were not the upright type, actually they had a flat surface with lids similar to a cook stove on which foods could be warmed in the winter. The stoves were located in such a manner that recitation benches could be moved near them during severe weather when it was difficult to warm the entire schoolhouse.

Each classroom was equipped with a large cloak room in which books and supplies were kept and coats were hung in the winter. Each of these class rooms had a stage to the left of persons entering the school room. These stages were almost the entire length of the rooms and in late years a novel curtain, given by the merchants of Navasota was installed in one of the rooms most frequently used. This room was also equipped with an upright piano. This room of the school with its new stage curtain was used for activities other than school events. Educational movies were shown to the townspeople, plays were presented, protracted church meetings were held and various elections were held there during the years.

The exterior of the school building was shiplap covered with buff paint and the large windows were decorated with dark green shutters or blinds. The school ground was spacious and in late years was equipped with a swing set and facilities for playing baseball and volleyball. One of the highlights of the 1930’s was when an animal trainer brought a small elephant by the name of “Bonnie” to the school yard and all of the students received an elephant ride.

Buy 1925 the school had been reduced to a one room school in which grades one through seven were taught by one teacher, all in the course of a day. Despite the reduction to a one room school, one teacher taught all seven grades. Entered her students in every interscholastic league event available to them, coached them in several plays
per year, and prepared numerous exhibits for the County Fair each fall. The Yarboro students excelled in the interscholastic league events, several of them winning in county contests, district contests, and going on to State competition. The County Fair exhibits always brought back a collection of blue ribbons.

Teachers for the Yarboro school would include Misses Gladys Barron, Lela Dedmon, Mary Hill, Mr. Jimmy Lyles, Misses Johnny Holcombe, Ethel Leake, Edna Walker, Emma Hurst, Stella Ashford, Mary Stone, Doris Stoneham, Armilda Hoke and Evelyn Stoneham.

Miss Evenlyn Stoneham of Stoneham, Texas was the last teacher to teach in the Yarboro School. Miss Stoneham’s students received many honors for their excellent work in County, District, and State events. In 1941 she was invited to come into the Navasota School system on the merits of her teaching abilities and the excellent students that she had sent into the Navasota system following their completion of the work required by the Yarboro School. The trustees of the Yarboro School consolidated with the Navasota system. Miss Stoneham taught in Navasota until her retirement in 1969.

Markey School at Plantersville

The following is an account of the Markey (pronounced Mar-key) school is found in the following letter from James K. Markey’s daughter Bettie to E. L. Blair, author of “Early History of Grimes County, published in 1930.

November 12, 1927
Chatfield, Texas

“In answer to your letter of Nov. 7th I will give you the information I have concerning my father’s early days in Texas. Of course, you know that Grimes County was created from part of Montgomery County in 1846 and organized that same year.

My father came to Montgomery County to a place near what is now Anderson, in 1845, and from there he went to San Antonio and joined Hayes Rangers. In December 1846 he went back at the place near Anderson teaching school. In 1850 he was teaching school at “The Grove” which was near what is now Dobbin but in Grimes County about 4 miles from Plantersville. Between 1850 and 1853 he taught in Palestine in Anderson County.

In 1853 the farmers or planters as they were called then who lived in the county around what is now Plantersville, desiring to have a school and church donated 30 acres of land for that purpose and my father, James K, Markey, being a surveyor, helped with the survey of this land which was donated by Ike Baker, Dr. Mitchell and my grandfather, Henry Gripp, 10 acres each, divided thus; one four acre lot for the Girl’s school; one four acre lot for a Boy’s school; one four acre lot for church purposes; and a four acre lot to anyone who would build a two story house on it, till three last were taken. The remaining six acres were for streets.

This was the origin of Plantersville. One of the original houses remains. It was built by Mr. Ike Baker, commonly known as “Devil Ike” Baker, he was not the Ike Baker who donated the land. This house is now occupied by Mr. R. J. Tucker.

My father built a school house on the lot set aside for a boy’s school, and taught in it until the last Friday in November 1855. The community built the girl’s school and it was taught by a Mr. McCan and Mr. Carrol., but I do not know who
taught it first. My father married in 1855 and did not resume teaching until 1959. The schools in Plantersville, after my father stopped teaching there, were taught by two brothers, Messrs. Jon and Dick Pie. Dick Pie taught the boy’s school; subsequently the Pies taught in Anderson, Texas.

My father built and opened the school or boys on his own premises in February 1860. This school he named “Paul and Henry Institute” changing it to “Joseph and Henry Institute” and later to “Markey’s Seminary”. His school roster shows the name of every student at his school from 1860 to the day he was stricken with his last illness in the school from September 1886. He died in October of that year. I can give you all these names if you wish them, but will have to get the book from Plantersville.

My father taught boys only up to 1865. From the book spoken of above I can learn when he taught a girl’s school and when a mixed school, also the number taught in a given year.

After the Messrs. Pie left Plantersville which was in 1857 or 1858 the boys and girls school were merged into one and taught in the building known as the girls’ school by a Mr. Ledbetter. This school building was used for school purposes till the building was moved some little distance from its original place and used as a store. It burned a few years afterwards.

A Miss Martin and a Miss Wallace were early teachers in Plantersville and Prof. W. W. James taught there at the beginning of and perhaps during the Civil War. This information I have from a diary of my father from his school roster and from the recollections of my half-brother, Joseph p. Thorp, which whom I live and how is the Joseph (and Paul) for whom my father named his first school after his marriage. Henry being my other half-brother, younger brother of Joseph, who died in Plantersville some 10 years ago. After my father’s marriage his school was a boarding school as well as a day school. Most of the students being boarders up to the time of the Civil War. As I said, I can procure these students names for you if you wish.”

A partial list of names submitted March 1982 by Mrs. Marie Huebel, Sr., great, great niece of Miss Bettie Markey are as follows:

Delia Baker
Cross Baker
Franny Baker
Jack Baker
Mary Blake
Sally Blake
Eddie Blackshear
Benjamin Beveaux
Willie Cabeen
Cameron Cabeen
Kit Cawthon
Arthur Hardesty
James Lawrence
Evelyn Lawrence
Grace Lawrence
Bettie Markey
George McDaniel
Eleanor Meachum
Mattie Roan
Crowder Stoneham
Eratus Stoneham
Frank Stoneham
Henry Stoneham
John O. Stoneham, Sr.
John H. Stoneham, Sr.
Johnnie Stoneham
Sebron Stoneham
Ray Teale
Joe Thorp
Henry Thorp
Arcola Wilkerson
Mike Wooly
Annie Womack
Ralph Yarborough
Lon C. Yell

The following account concerning the Markey School, a portion from “Recollections” by John C. Amsler, is taken from the Amsler family history book. One of the last acts of patriarch was a visit to the Saw Mill and arrange to put me in boarding school with Mrs. J. KL. Markey at Plantersville, about ten miles northwest from the Saw Mill. Here began a very sad separation from my daily tasks and pleasures and the acute homesick ness seemed unbearable, but in Mr.
and Mrs. Markey I had friends good and true. Their daughter Beth was of the household. Willie Griggs, a few years my senior was my companion most of the time. A number of Bakers, Searcy, Jack, Cross, Willie and John, Crowder, Henry and Bebe with some Kendricks and Duprees were school mates, including Misses Mollie and Mattie Baker, Miss Mattie Blakes, other rise up in my consciousness whose names I can’t recall just now.

Mr. Markey showed me the first multiplication table neatly printed on a green card. It was a great mystery to me and seemed altogether useless for me to try to memorize as I was asked to do. A great rambling school house with homemade seats and desks rises before me. The Most tantalizing piece of furniture was an old battered clock that hung on the wall. It seemed to contain all the cause of my unhappiness, and often when I gazed at its unhandsome face, I would imagine some hidden force within, causing an awful explosion and thus ending my misery, but it went on its weary way.

The school house and Markey’s home, where a few boarders, with myself, were located in a lovely grove of immense red oak trees. Here I viewed Town Ball progenitor of Baseball never having been athletically inclined. I only played with the girls when they needed a substitute. Another game called Bull Pen was alleged too rough a game for a ten-year-old shy kid. A regular game during recess was to find an isolated red oak with one or more squirrels in it. The tree was surrounded with club bearing boys and good climbers were sent into the trees to force the occupant to jump, and it happened several times that the squirrel was clubbed and secured. It was the most hilarious fun for the boys, but the little grey or red denizens of the tree had a hard time. There was a large lake or “tank” among the trees which furnished the scene for various water sports. The residence which was the dormitory of the boarders had its windows furnished with iron bars like a jail. These iron bars had outlived their usefulness. During the recent Confederate war, they were held to be necessary to restrain the wayward boys whom Mr. Markey taught and tried to manage. He told the writer he had flogged many a boy as large as himself, and sometimes wondered that he had not been killed.

The culinary department of the Markey boarding school may not be forgotten. Markey’s Boarding School culinary department was under the charge of Aunt Mary Butts, an old-time member of the Ike Baker house staff, presided over by Mrs. Mary Markey, raised in Georgia, whose knowledge of these matters probably dated from Oglethorpe’s days. Her hot gingerbread, savory and spongy, which the diner was admonished to eat with plenty of fine fresh butter. Fine biscuits with some butter tickled the palate, and beefsteak beaten tender and well browned with cream gravy was enough to satisfy any appetite, and the way a hungry ten-year-old school boy devoured such fares was a caution, and the memory dwells with him yet. When this school boy was afflicted with a hacking cough, Mrs. Markey would come up the creaking stair and administer disagreeable bitter effective doses of kerosene oil. When his arm was cut to the bone near the shoulder by pranking Searcy Baker, she sewed up the wound. Her ministration to this boy will last while life endures.

Every Friday evening someone was sent from home to take me home for weekend and I would be returned to school each Monday morning. Most generally, this service was performed by a young Swiss boy Henry Urich, horses were being furnished by my parents. I remember at the end of the year my grandmother gave this boy a suit of clothes. The second year of my attendance, Sister Mollie, two years my junior, was added to the boarding school attendants. Sister’s companion and chum was a Miss Sanders. Each Friday evening was to me a new source of joy because of the return to my home and each Monday morning was the time of sorrow and distress because of returning to the task which then seemed endless.

Among other students were Miss Mattie and Mary Blake, half-sisters and daughters of General Thomas Blake, leader of the Masonic Order, sometimes preacher and civic leader.
The town of Plantersville was an idealistic little town, located at the corners of four large estates. The site was selected by the estate owner, the Bakers, Sterling were two of the contiguous plantations. The site, a high rolling plateau covered with immense red oak trees, a large part of this natural park set aside for churches. Methodist, Baptist and Catholic Churches were represented, also Masonic hall occupied it place. On this lively town site was spread the first public barbecue dinner the writer recalls. The writer was also introduced to ice cream here. Recollections of sorrows creep into these events about this time. I visited the grave of my grandfather at Hempstead, buried May 1874, and that usual lump rose up in my throat when gazing at the last residing place of an early companion and true friend. After two years Markey’s School was followed by the employment of a governess at the Saw Mill, in the person of Miss Etta Davis, who had taught at Markey’s in last session. Fine looking red headed ex-newspaper correspondent, brilliant but not ideal for her job. Here she met Charles Vogel on one occasion, whom she later married.

Navasota Independent School District

Navasota’s public-school system was organized on May 16, 1854, by the County Commissioners’ Court. The Texas Legislature had authorized the establishment of local school districts on January 31, 1854. One of the first schools was the Atchinson Institute in Navasota, which flourished as a private school and was maintained largely through tuition and payments by students.

The first Navasota School Board meeting of record was held in May 1899 with W. J. Foster serving as president and Gordon Boone as secretary. The first thirty years passed without much incident. The school was located on Washington Avenue, across from the present site of the Medical Center. In May 1930 a new high school was completed a block from the original structure and across the street.

In 1934, a new gym and a stadium were completed with the aid of the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) programs of the 1930’s. The stadium was named Brule Field in honor of its architect R. J. Brule. In October 1947, Navasota became an Independent School District by a divorcement election from the city. By June of 1948 plans were discussed for the construction of a grammar school. Two years later the school accepted the swimming pool and playground area from the city. These facilities are still in use today by the school district.

In 1951, seven common districts were annexed as part of Navasota ISD. By June of the same year, contracts were awarded to being construction of a new auditorium and an addition to the elementary school. April 1953, saw the AM T (Allenfarm-Millican-Terrell) common school district of Brazos County annexed to Navasota. Even though the Navasota School District was growing, it was still a segregated district.

Black students attended George Washington Carver School. Black students began attending classes in 1865 at the Navasota Colored School founded by Reverend J. J. Reinhart. Classes were held in Gibbs store in downtown Navasota, and teachers were men from the North. Classes were also held in the Methodist Church on LaSalle Street. The cost was $1.00 per month plus 25 cents for a speller. Mr. Malcolm Camp gave land on which a new school could be built on LaSalle Street. This is the land where the Carver School would one-day stand. The first Colored school to be built on this new location burned twice, but was rebuilt for use each time. In 1928, a four-room building was
erected on the LaSalle Street campus to accommodate the Home Economics and Manual Training programs which were added to the curriculum. In 1940, the school was named George Washington Carver High School. Under the leadership of J. H. Payne, Carver expanded its curriculum to include science, audio visual and athletic programs. Carver soon became an accredited four-year high school. Stewart Field was also constructed for football programs. By 1955, Carver had tripled its enrollment. The first Navasota Independent School District Tax Office was established in 1960. The following year, because of an increase in enrollment the swimming pool dressing rooms were made into classrooms. The entire Navasota School System was growing with the increase in population throughout the district.

By 1964 a Freedom of Choice plan for Navasota ISD was to be put into effect. The first day of the 1964-65 school year, grades 1-3 were included in this plan. The next year grades 4-6 would fall under the plan. The 1966-67 school year saw grades 7-9 integrated. Grades 10-12 were added in the 1967-68 school year. Carver High School closed at the end of the 1967-68 school year and was then converted to a Junior High School for the Navasota District. The A-M-T and the C-L-W (Courtney-Lynn Grove-White Hall) schools also closed at the end of the 1967-68 year. Today, the Carver campus is used for shop, storage, and athletic programs. In August of 1968, the Navasota Elementary School was opened on Neal Street. Seven years later the new Navasota High School was opened on Highway 90. The old High School on Washington Avenue became the Navasota Junior High School and buildings on the surrounding campus housed grades 4-6. In May of 1981 a new track was completed in front of Navasota High School.

Following are the superintendents who served the Navasota school system.

B. F. Peters 1899-1899
B. H. Brown 1899-1903
W.B. Bizzell 1903 - 1910
J. Thomas Davis 1910 - 1919
L.G. Andrews 1919 - 1934
J.T. Ferguson 1935- 1949
O. Dan Carter 1949 - 1962
Ben Hansen 1988 - 1992
Elizabeth Abernathy 1992 - 1999
Willis Mackey 2000 - 2003
David J. Faltys 2003 - 2005
Jennings Teel 2006- 2009
Rory Gesch 2009- 2016
Dr. Stu Musick 2017 – PRESENT
The Singleton School

All that remains today of the Union Hill Community is the cemetery, located between Singleton and Bedias, approximately one mile off State Highway 90. Near the year 1906 the school children were moved from the Union Hill School to the newly constructed school building in Singleton. The first floor of the building was divided into four classrooms. The entrance and exit to the building was by way of a small roofed front porch with entrance door, and the same size porch at the back. The second floor was one large room, designated as the auditorium. They first year classes were held, the enrollment was between 140 and 150 students with the ten grades being taught. Mr. Elton Key was not only the principal but also taught regular classes. Mrs. Lillie Dreher, Miss Ruby Isabell and Miss Dosie Mallett completed the faculty. Miss Mable Brown from Bremond, Texas taught private piano lessons on a piano furnished by the school with classes being held in the school building. The piano recitals were held in the auditorium, and without exception, each performance was a sell out with standing room only. The group presented their plays in communities throughout the county with the same welcome reception.

During the year 1922-23 the boys, only six were available, were coached in basketball by one of the teachers. Mr. Loy, and the team became a winning one, losing in the county only one game, and that to Navasota score 14-15. The members of the team furnished their own uniforms and each contributed to the cost of one basketball. To be able to compete with Navasota, the Singleton team with their coach traveled by train, spent two days and two nights in Navasota, with each member paying his own expenses.

Mr. Loy was not only an excellent teacher and basketball coach, but also provided his Model T Ford coupe with a flatbed built in the back for transportation for the team to nearby schools to Keith, Bedias, and Shiro.

Approximately 125 to 130 families lived in or the surrounding area of Singleton, their children attending school, many walking many miles each day to attend classes.

The Baptist Church represented the only religious body in the community, where services were held each Sunday. A student from the Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth arrived by train once each month on a given Saturday. He preached that night, the following Sunday Morning and Sunday night. The following Monday he spoke in the school auditorium to students and faculty before leaving on the late morning train for Fort Worth to resume his duties as a student. Once again, folks traveled by whatever means were available to attend these services in the church. This was a special time in family life.

Iola School District

The town of Iola had its beginnings approximately one and a half miles west of its present location. It was at this old location that the first school known as the Iola School was located. In 1852, the Methodist Church was built near the present Zion Cemetery. This church also was the home of the Iola School.

Because of fire, the town moved southeast to a location known to the older residents as “Old Town”. The main part of “Old Town” was about one mile south of today’s main street on Farm Road 244 toward Keith. The school was located on a lane east of the town at a location where today’s Farm Road 39 intersects that old lane, approximately one mile south of town. The school remained at this location until a devastating fire destroyed it in 1908.

In 1909, the school was moved to its present location, and the attractive brick building was erected. Photographs of this building remain and Iola’s first graduating class, the class of 1909 had a right to be proud of their school.

During the years that followed, Iola’s population grew to around 500. The town was known as an area trade center and enjoyed a reputation for
its neatness. It had a well-kept business district and lovely homes. The school served as the center of community life. In 1924 the old nemeses fire once again reared its ugly head and the school building that everyone had been so proud of burned. The building which was rebuilt on the same location in 1924 is the one most adult residents remember as the old school building. It was a brick two story modern building equipped most appropriately with a fire escape which thankfully was never used for that purpose. In November of 1927 the school at Keith burned and they transferred to Iola for the rest of that year. The students were transported from Keith in a make shift school bus which was actually an open truck covered by a tarpaulin. There was no heater and according to those who rode it, it was very cold back there.

In the early 1930’s Keith and Grimes Switch consolidated their school districts with Iola and in 1949, Cross did also. This brought the district to its present size. The present gymnasium was built in 1937 as a part of the Federal Government Program to aid the economy. It was built of brick and over the years has had very little repair. The basic structure is unchanged. The playing court still has the same floor. Dressing areas were added on the back in 1954.

The school building which was erected in 1924 served until it became unsafe for occupancy and the present school was built in 1959. In the year 1981, two portable classrooms were constructed to relieve overcrowded conditions. Iola School over the years has produced a number of students who have been successful in several fields. Many graduates have gone on to high education, receiving degrees from various universities. There has always been a good student-teacher ratio at Iola School and students have received help and support from a faculty which hover the years has included outstanding educators. Faculty and students alike have always carried with them found memories of their school at Iola. Wherever they are, whatever they are doing, you can rest assured that in their hearts they are “Backing the Bulldogs”.

Prior to 1893 the only schools available to the general public were operated by private individuals who charged fees. These schools were generally operated in the homes of the teachers. No free textbooks were available and books were usually limited to a speller, reader, arithmetic text and a grammar book. Other materials were non-existent. One such school for girls was operated by James V. Pye in Anderson from just prior to the Civil War until about 1866. At about the same time Professor William A. Patton operated a school for boys. His school was closed about 2 years after the end of the Civil War. Other individuals also operated schools in Anderson on a fee basis until 1893.

During the period in which private schools were offering basic elementary education, the Masonic Collegiate Institute was established in the spring of 1846. The Masons in 1847 built a frame building to house the institute. The institute was located on what is now the site of the Anderson-Shiro School. The institute was closed in 1851. During the same year the Protestant Episcopal Church accepted an offer of the buildings that formerly housed the Masonic Institute, and certain subscriptions for support from citizens of Anderson for the establishment of an academy in Anderson.
In May 1851, the Trustees of Orphans Friend Lodge No. 17 deeded the school property to Trustees of the new school, name St. Paul’s Academy. Among the trustees of the new school was Anson Jones, last President of the Republic of Texas. The school received its first students in January 1852. A charter to grant degrees was granted to the college in February 1853. By 1854 there were about 100 students enrolled in preparatory subjects and later in chemistry, higher arithmetic, philosophy, history, Greek and Latin. Despite an increase in enrollment and the charter to grant degrees, the school was forced to close in 1856 without awarding a degree. After the close of St. Paul’s Academy, the land and buildings were re-conveyed to the Orphans Friend Lodge No. 17 in May 1857. These same buildings housed Patrick Academy from about 1861 to 1902. The Academy provided basic instruction in reading, spelling, arithmetic and grammar.

For a period of about 8 years (1897-1905) the Catholic Church of Anderson operated a school. The school provided basic elementary education and religious instruction. In 1882, Anderson’s Zion Lutheran Church opened an elementary school. This school was operated until August 1938. The teacher in the school at the time it closed was C. Y. Best. Mr. Best joined the faculty of Anderson School in September 1938.

In August 1893, the Commissioner’s Court of Grimes County, by authority granted by the state legislature, divided all the county into school districts. The Anderson School District No. 1 consisted of approximately 34 square miles. The new Anderson School District purchased some land from Orphan Friend Lodge for a school ground. In March 1905 the Lodge deeded 17 acres and buildings that had previously housed Patrick Academy to the school district. Around 1915 the Anderson School District issued its first bonds, in the amount of $6,000. In April 1930 the issue was retired.

The next bond issue of $10,000 was passed in 1935 for the purpose of construction a new school building. The rock building was designed by Robert Brule of Navasota. Native rock for the buildings was obtained near Anderson. Labor for construction was provided by Works Program Administration. Construction required ten months, utilizing a work force of some 30 local men. After completion of the building Superintendent J. L. Southerland applied for, and received affiliation. This affiliation is equivalent to today’s accreditation.

During the late 1940’s and early 1950’s with the passage of the Gilmer-Aiken laws, many small school districts were either annexed or consolidated to adjacent districts. Pine Grove District No. 3, Spring Grove District No. 1, Carlos and Eureka No. 26 were added to the Anderson ISD. After these additions the district contained about 95 square miles. The Trustees of the district in 1953 issued bonds in the amount of $45,000 for construction of a frame gymnasium-auditorium. The building was first used in 1954-55 school year, ushering in Anderson’s UIL basketball participation.

In 1959 the northern half of Klein CSD was annexed to the Anderson ISD. As a result, the district was increased to about 120 square miles. The trustees in May 1959 in response to dire need to maintain accreditation passed a $45,000 bond issue to provide housing for science and homemaking as well as upgrading existing buildings. The building was completed in February 1960. After this improvement program, the district has maintained continuous accreditation with no substantive violations.

Probably the single most important event in the school recently was the consolidation with Shiro in June 1970. The consolidation more than doubled the area of the Anderson district. The newly created Anderson-Shiro CISD contains about 263 square miles. In addition to the additional area, and tax base, the pupils acquired increased pupil enrollment and otherwise aided the district, particularly in prospects for long range existence.
In 1971, after the consolidation of Anderson and Shiro Districts, the new board called an election, issued bonds, and built a new brick building consisting of 22,000 square feet at a cost of $351,000. A new agriculture shop and classroom was constructed at the same time. The new buildings provided 14 classrooms, library, cafeteria, restrooms offices and shop space. The trustees of Anderson-Shiro CISD in December 1979 called another bond election for $450,000. The proceeds of the issue were used to add 9,400 square feet of additional space to the building constructed in 1972. The addition provided spaces for high school science, homemaking, health services, offices, and classrooms.

The Richards School District

In 1909-1910 Richards had her first school taught by Miss Ollie Bay (Mrs. J. C. Crutchfield) in a small building near the Howard McCune home. The next year the school was moved to a two-story frame building where the Methodist parsonage now stands and was taught by Mrs. Fountain and Mr. Yarborough. In 1911-1912 Mr. Robinson taught in the same building. In 1911 by a special act of the Texas Legislature, Richards Independent School District was created and the next year, 1912-1913 John A. Pirtle was the Superintendent.

In 1913 a brick school house was built near the railroad. A $6,000 bond was voted on March 12, 1912 for the purpose of constructing this building. A second bond of $7,000 was voted June 1, 1918 for enlarging the building. For one year, 1913-14, J. C. Crutchfield was superintendent. Miss J. Rosa Engleking served next for a period of two years. During this time Richards had her first graduating class that sent out invitations and received diplomas. This class consisted of four members.

During Mr. W. T. Wilcox’s administration, Richards became a four-year accredited high school, offering 17 credits. Three schools at Montgomery County; Pool’s Independence, Bay’s Chapel, and Northwood in Grimes County, consolidated with Richards.

During the 10-year period of 1947-1957, $25,000 worth of improvements were added to the school. The Homemaking Department was moved from the basement to the first floor. Hot running water, electric stoves, refrigerators, and a double sink made the homemaking department a workable unit.

In the summer of 1956, renovation of the inside of the school took place, and the old wood stoves were removed and gas heaters were put in. The PTA bought a merry-go-round and a jungle gym for the playground and assisted the senior classes of 1954 and 1955 in buying a scoreboard for the gym. The gym was a new building erected in 1956 and named the “Glenn L. Morris Gymnasium” in honor of the superintendent.

In 1959-60 upon completion of the new cafeteria, Richards students were eating a hot lunch at noon. In 1965 under the Title One Program, the basement was transformed into a Reading Room, a Counselor’s Office and a Nurse’s office.

During the administration of Mr. Haynie, the Sandy Community was consolidated with the Richards District. Mrs. Dorothy Turner and about thirty students came to Richards from the Sandy District. The W. E. Hall School, so named for the principal by an act of the school board, was integrated with the Richards School beginning in 1965.

In 1966 the town of Richards, under the supervision of Mr. Haynie, voted to build a new school. The bond issue carried for $180,000. A location near the gymnasium was chosen and purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Tom Lucas.

In 1967, under the supervision of Mr. George Wilcox, the location for the school was filled in and levelled off. On May 1, 1967 the contract for the construction of the new school was signed by Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Charles Rosenbaum of the Chappell Hill Construction Company in Brenham, Texas.

In 1970, students of Richards were required to have twenty-two credits for graduation, two of
which would be earned in physical education. Spirit in the Richards School and the entire community reached an all-time high in 1975 when the Richards Panthers basketball team went to State. Then in 1976, the Panthers under Coach Bill Shaw won the state championship. Members of that team were: Clifford Kroll, Sam Johnson, Merion Dean, Larry Carruthers, David Dean, Dennis Malone, Kenny Bay, Perry Espinosa, Benny Lewis and Charles Dorsey.

White Hall School

There was a school in the Sawyer community east of White Hall around 1865, but there is no trace of that community now. In 1860 East Academy was built on the south side of the present property of Union Grove Baptist Church. This was a large one-room building and housed a “private subscription” school. Some of the known teachers were a Mr. Curtis, Cornelius Nolan, Mr. Wilson, Marzee Bauguss, Bryant Bauguss, Robert Siddall, Vivienne Taylor (Buffington), Jimmy Lyles, and in 1913-14, Ruby Isbell.

In 1915 a two-story white frame building was erected and the White Hall School started, this on the site where the Community Center is now standing. There were two large rooms downstairs, and the upstairs was all one room, with a stage at one end. This upstairs was used as a classroom, as an auditorium, and also as a place to have dances. Faye Holderby played the piano by ear, and she would play all evening long for a dance. She would “tear up that piano”.

For the first 10 years there were three teachers and nine grades. In the first years Latin, civics, home economics and manual training were taught. Following is a list of individuals who served as teachers at the school. Myrtle Gaut, Mattie Furnace, Edna Leake, Mr. Burckalow, Claude Crutchfield, Lyda Baker (Kennard), Bertsie Stone, Jimmie Rene Ogg, Carrie Alexander, Elizabeth McNew, Trannie Franklow, Hallie Bolton, Ruby Willson McAlpine, Lois McGilberry, Vera McGilberry, Irene Furman, Leone Mason, Lelia Reed Reikard, Mrs. Lena Mae Moore, Jim Bay, Miss Meredy, Maggie Spann Greenwood, Winnie Sandel Harris, Katherine Sangster, Alixe McAlpine, Louise Goodwin, Mrs. Madge Hutson Cliford, Mrs. Robert Foster, nee Willie Thomas, Mrs. Gussie Ruth Cochran.

In 1949 White Hall School was consolidated with the Navasota school district. When the school was discontinued, the White Hall Tax Payers Association was formed and assumed legal title to the school property. This association took down the building and from the materials erected the one-story White Hall Community Center and it was dedicated May 9, 1959.

History of the Black Schools

History of the black schools of Grimes County from 1887-1937 as given by the late Alex S. Terrell who taught in the black schools for more than fifty years.

The schools were one, two and three teachers. A term of 5, 6, 7 and 8 months. Seven grades were taught in one teacher schools, which made it very difficult but by having short noon hours and combining subjects in grades, teachers were able to give more time to the grades. In the two and three teacher schools, teachers gave instructions for health in the opening exercises. They would carry the pupils on tours and school visitations. The three “R’s” were given special emphasis. Reading was a major problem; special attention was given to it. Most schools took part in such school activities as baseball and basketball, wildflower shows each year, county singsong leagues, county wide examinations, and graduation programs for all 7th grade pupils. For a period of twenty years, from 1887-1907, progress in black education in Grimes County had an upward trend.

Records in the office of the county clerk in Grimes County show their school districts for public education were established May 16, 1854. The schools were under the direct control of the County Judge and Commissioner’s Court.
The State Board of Education made appropriations for the maintenance of the schools. This provision applied to white children, since blacks were slaves. After the adoption of the Constitution of 1876, the same provision applied to black students. There were no school houses for blacks. Schools were taught in a church with practically no school equipment. This situation existed as late as 1918.

In 1918, County superintendents began to have an interest in education for all children, white and black. Then the black schools of Grimes County began to improve. In 1921, with the aid of the Home Demonstration agent, industrial work was carried on in the black schools. The Interscholastic League for Blacks was organized.

The first jeans teacher (Miss Fuchels) began work in the black schools of the county. She visited schools and homes. She encouraged teachers to improve instruction in classrooms and held health clinics. In 1935-1936 Mary T. Birdwell, was appointed as jeans (Supervisory) teacher. Her goal “The best in education for every child and adult in Grimes County.”

The black schools were all in need of improvement. These achievements were made: teachers attended summer schools, county workshops, read educational magazines. Black schools began to receive rural aid. School buildings improved. Teachers’ salaries increased and water wells were dug on school campuses. Also, toilets were built and health examinations were given, bus transportation to high school and county wide examinations given to 7th grade pupils. Graduation exercises for all 7th grade children in the black schools, etc. The school lunch program was carried on in most of the black schools.

We had twenty black schools. Considering the advantages and disadvantages of the black schools of Grimes County we note we have black men and women in all professions, of which we are proud. Thanks to all who made it possible but above all we are thankful to our Heavenly Father.
The Texas Brazos Trail

The Texas Brazos Trail Region is an 18-county area of Central Texas. It is part of the 10-region Heritage Trails Program of the Texas Historical Commission. The Texas Brazos Trail seeks to promote heritage tourism, historic preservation, and economic development.

Although, a driving trail is marked out on the map, visitors are encouraged to travel the entire region experiencing the charm and heritage of this mainly rural area of the state. Visitors to the region can explore state parks, visit a presidential library, sample some of Texas’ best BBQ, or enjoy one of the many local festivals and events. The region is filled with historic towns, unique downtown shops, museums, beautifully preserved homes, and more.

About the Texas Heritage Trails Program

The Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP) is the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) award-winning heritage tourism initiative. This economic development initiative encourages communities, heritage regions, and the state to partner and promote Texas’ historic and cultural resources. These successful local preservation efforts, combined with statewide marketing of heritage regions as tourism destinations, increase visitation to cultural and historic sites and bring more dollars to Texas communities. This in turn supports the THC’s mission to protect and preserve the state’s historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education economic benefit, and enjoyment of present and future generations.

History

The THTP is based around 10 scenic driving trails created in 1968 by Gov. John Connally and the Texas Highway Department (now the Texas Department of Transportation) as a marketing tool. The trails were established in conjunction with the HemisFair, an international exposition that commemorated the 250th anniversary of the founding of San Antonio.

In 1997, the State Legislature charged the THC to create a statewide heritage tourism program. The THC responded with a program based on local, regional, and state partnerships, centered on the 10 scenic driving trails. These trails serve as the nucleus of 10 heritage regions, and include heritage tourism attractions and communities both on and off the trail.

The program began with the establishment of the Texas Forts Trail Region in 1998. Other heritage regions made a formal application to the program, demonstrating knowledge of area attractions and broad support from organizations and local government. The suite of heritage regions was completed in 2005 with the additions of the Texas Pecos and Hill Country Trail Regions.

The THTP received national recognition with the Preserve America Presidential Award in 2005. This award was given for exemplary accomplishment in the preservation and sustainable use of America’s heritage assets, which has enhanced community life while honoring the nation’s history. The following year, the program was awarded a Preserve America grant for developing the Heritage Tourism Guidebook and for providing heritage tourism training across the state.
Enjoy a twilight/night-time walking tour, presented by the Navasota Theatre Alliance (a non-profit organization) in partnership with the City of Navasota. As you stroll through the historic Navasota Oakland Cemetery by lantern light, your guide will provide local history notes and you’ll meet living history characters that help you discover local legends who have made their mark on the rich history of the region.

This year we’ll explore the legacy of Thomas Scott Deaderick; businesswoman Louisa Smith and the wife of Capt. Philip Aurene Smith; farmer Martin Joseph Fahey; farmer’s wife and mother Emeline C. Nettles and her sons Thomas, Willie, and Little Bob; businessman Robert Shaw and his dog “Jackie Boy” Shaw; and twins Julia and Jessica Owen who were music teachers, performers, and staunch Baptists.

Tours start every 15-minutes and are limited to groups of 15 persons, so advance registration is strongly suggested. Larger groups will be split and scheduled for the next available tour. This fun history tour and lesson is a great grown-up event. Wear insect repellent, comfortable shoes, and a flashlight is recommended.

Sponsored by the Classic Rock Coffee, Navasota located downtown on Washington Avenue. Check out their Facebook page @crccnavasotatx. Drop by before your tour and grab a cup of coffee or a bite to eat!

For questions or to purchase your tickets over the phone, call our box office at 936-825-3195.

Start your Holiday Season with an evening at Fanthorp Inn!

Looking for something to do with the family after Thanksgiving? Why not travel back in time and discover the 1850s at Fanthorp Inn!

Twilight Firelight brings the old stagecoach inn to life where visitors enjoy the ambiance of the candlelit inn, period music, dancing, mule-drawn stagecoach rides and reenactors clad in period attire. Inns like Henry Fanthorp’s were places where news from far away was spread, ideas were exchanged and communities developed.

Activities begin at the Grimes County Courthouse in Anderson, where you'll board a replica stagecoach or wagon for a ride down Main Street to Fanthorp Inn. Upon arrival you will step off the coach and into 1850 as the soft glow of a candle flickers in the parlor window and the sound of fiddle fills the air. The atmosphere of the inn and living history personalities brings the holiday season to life. Take a break from the hectic holiday pace and re-focus on your family and friends at Fanthorp Inn’s Twilight Firelight celebration!

Twilight Firelight at the Fanthorp Inn
4:30p to 7:00p
Sat, November 25, 2017
Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site
Map & Directions
Jonathan Failor
(936) 878-2214
jon.failor@tpwd.texas.gov