

SPRING BRANCH: ITS BIRTH AND GROWTH

By Mary K. Herolz

(Copied from The Houston West Side Reporter, October 21, 195?)

Spring Branch, a healthy sprawling area with boundaries lying somewhere in the Hempstead, Post Oak, Westheimer Road vicinities and the Addicks Dam, was spawned about 1848; and brought to life by the existence of five German immigrant families, Karl Kolbe, Daniel Ahrenbeck, Jacob Schroeder, Louis Hillendahl and Henry Hillendahl.

The oldest of these settlers, Karl Kolbe, had arrived in 1830 and lived on the banks of a creek where it emptied into Buffalo Bayou. No infant community ever had more intriguing history in its background! Its lungs were filled with the free air off of the prairie land, rustling through the majestic trees and set a tune by Attacapan Indian campsites.

As far back as 1824 this spirited territory harbored members of Stephen F. Austin's "Old 300" Colony. And the heart of the new-born community, though it never quite grew to become a townsite, lacked nothing in its tumultuous beat, nurtured in the reverent atmosphere of the first little Church of st. Peter which now stands on Long Point Road. First services in the Autumn of 1848, marked the founding of the Church and what was to later become the first school in Spring Branch.

FIRST SCHOOLS

Five years after the first service was held, a long cabin Church was erected on property given to the congregation by Mr. and Mrs. Wilhelm Rummel. With the erection of this first Church and the securing of the services of a minister, the first school was instituted in the Spring Branch community about 1865. The minister taught the week-day school and conducted services on Sunday. August Bauer and his wife donated four acres of land to be used as a playground for the children. The Church school continued until some of the members began to feel the need for a public school, taught by a trained teacher. The first public school then, came into the community in 1889 and was described as being a one-room school house, painted red, with green shutters.

It was on the northwest boundary of the property given to the



DO YOU REMEMBER THIS BUILDING?
It is one of Spring Branch School District's first school houses. It now stands on the campus of Spring Branch Elementary School and is used for the entire school system because of its historical significance. About 50 pupils attend the school.



Church by August and Emilie Bauer, and deeded to the Church by Louis and Emelie Kurtz, that the Church cemetery originated and still exists. It was here that the first victims of the yellow fever epidemic which swept Harris County, were buried.

In 1864 the congregation of St. Peter Church dedicated a new frame Church, 50 well constructed that much of it is still in use today. The beams in the attic were hand-pegged and the pews, many of them still a part of the present-day buildings, were hand-made. St. Peter Church became a part of the present Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1887.

The first public school was located at the present site of Spring Branch Elementary School. There are no accurate attendance records for those early years, but the school is known to have had about fifty pupils by 1900.



First Superintendent **(written circa 1979 by MDE PTA Historian)**

In 1941, H. M. Landrum, then Principal at Addicks, was asked to come to Spring Branch as its first Superintendent. There followed the years of World War II and the District felt transportation difficulties and a shortage of teachers. For two years, the school had an all-woman faculty. In 1942, figures showed the District had 14 teachers and about 450 students in its nine grades. Among the teachers of that period who have continued careers in Spring Branch schools are Mrs. Mildred Scully, Mrs. Elsie Pate, Mrs. Lois Land, Miss Helen Fulton, Forest and Mary Glaze, Robert Blankinship and Nancy Stewart. Supt. Landrum served for three and a half years of the World War II period as lieutenant in the U. S. Coast Guard. Mrs. Pate served as Superintendent in his absence.

The infant Spring Branch now burst forth with a lusty growth which was to reach momentous proportions in the next ten year span.



Eight in First Graduating Class

In 1945, the school system became independent. The four year High School at Spring Branch began in 1957. That first year, there were eight pupils in the graduating class, compared with 378 in May, 1948, the District had 22 teachers and 445 students. The school's football squad numbered 25 and the basketball squad 23. Figures since 1945 have changed almost rapidly to tabulate. In 1959-60, the District has over 512 teachers in its employ and enrollment has spread upward to almost 14,000 and that's not the end.

Looking ahead to the next ten years, a peak enrollment of from 35,000 to 40,000 has been predicted. The district in 1959-60 has fifteen schools: 12 elementary, two Junior High and one Senior High school. The growth of Spring Branch--not a town and yet a 32 square mile area with all the heart, s



spirit and promise of any solid community, is the story of an amazing evolution. Within the next ten years, this community which sought its beginning in a "little red school house" and found its heart in a log cabin, will burst forth with pride in its past, continued faith in the present and courage in the future, to boast one of the best school systems in the States and one of the most stalwart communities in the nation.

Total Enrollment: Forty
Spring Branch schools in the early 1900's

In 1918, a two-room stucco building was built on the same site and later was converted into a shop for Junior High School students. In 1920, a Miss Reynolds was the principal of the school. She taught fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades, and a Miss Schleup taught the primary grades. There were about 15 in the upper grades and 25 in the lower classes.

Children rode horses to school and teachers came by horse and buggy. In 1928, two rooms were added to the south side of the stucco building. These later became the cafeteria of the Junior High School and Elementary School.

A homemaking cottage of two classrooms was built in 1931. Meanwhile, two small frame buildings, one on Bellshire Drive, called Neiman School, and another on Witte Road near Old Katy Road, were in use. Neither of these sites is owned by the present school system.

By 1935, the district had graduated from horse and buggy days and had acquired two school buses. One of the first drivers was Stephen A. Brown. When he first began to drive the buses there were few streets in the entire area. Once, during 17 days of rain, he doubled as mailman and bus driver, chugging through the muddy roads of Spring Branch.

The oldest employee from the standpoint of service is Mrs. Nancy Stewart, who has taught at the African American school on Lily White Road for over twenty years. In 1937, the Spring Branch School District was consolidated with Addicks. Spring Branch by then had a total of about 150 students. One school year later, however this consolidation was dissolved. In 1938, the stucco building and gymnasium were built on the campus of the present day Spring Branch Elementary School.

MDE viewed from the southwest corner in 1965.
MDE viewed from the same corner in 2002.



Ms. Stokes' 5th grade class in 1962.
Ms. Kellogg's 2nd grade class in 1962.



Edna Kellogg
Teacher - Second Grade

MEMORIAL DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Spring Branch I. S. D.
1963-64

M. J. Eldridge
Principal

SECOND GRADE STUDENTS AT MEMORIAL DRIVE ELEMENTARY, 1962 - 1963



50TH ANNIVERSARY. Former Memorial Drive Elementary Principal Jane Williams receives a 50th anniversary T-shirt from current Principal Elayne Kuehn and PTA president Jana Williams during an assembly to celebrate the school's 50th anniversary. Williams, who was principal in the 1950s, talked to students about what the school was like then. The choir sang songs from the 50s, and a giant birthday cake was unveiled and served during the lunch period. The celebration continued that evening with greetings and remarks from Spring Branch ISD Superintendent Hal Guthrie and Duncan Klussman, Memorial Learning Community superintendent. Several hundred current and former students, teachers and administrators returned for tours, and a reunion reception was held in the library.



Top left and right: Former MDE Principal Jane williams receives a 50th Anniversaary T-shirt from current Principal Elayne Kuehn and PTA President Jana Williams.

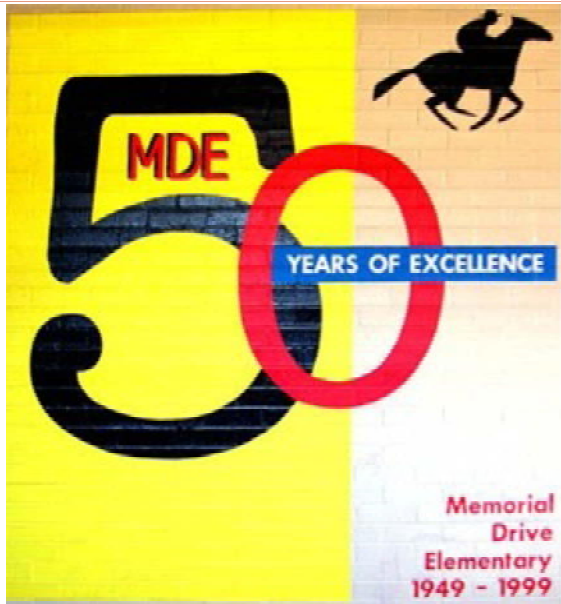
Middle right: Past Principal Joe Airola

Bottom left: Previous faculty members Phyllis Ashley, Penny Heap Bryant, and Ruby Blue

Bottom right: MDE chorus

In September 1999, Memorial Drive Elementary celebrated its "50 Years of Excellence."

An evening performance was highlighted by the attendance of dignitaries from our early years, including principal, Melvin Eldridge, and teacher, Ruby Blue.



Memorial Drive Elementary Campus Expands in 2004

This familiar banner welcomes students back each year.



Our students love the new space in the Health Fitness Multipurpose Area (Gym)!



The newly built Primary wing seems to stretch for miles.



Our dining hall mural was completed with the Astros, Mary Kay Cosmetics, George W. Bush, and Dan Rather representing Texas in the '90s.

