



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Alamo Elementary



Elementary Schools: Alamo | Bonnie P. Hopper Primary | David Crockett | George Washington Carver | Harlem | Highlands
James Bowie | Lorenzo De Zavala | Mirabeau B. Lamar | San Jacinto | Stephen F. Austin | Ashbel Smith | Victoria Walker | William B. Travis
Junior Schools: Baytown | Cedar Bayou | Gentry | Highlands | Horace Mann
High Schools & Others: Goose Creek Memorial | Impact Early College High School at Lee College | John M. Stuart Career Center
Peter E. Hyland Center | Robert E. Lee | Ross S. Sterling | School Community Guidance Center

302 YMCA Dr.

THE EARLY YEARS

In September of 1930, Alamo Elementary opened its doors to serve the families in the nearby neighborhood of Stewart Heights. The school zone included the area between North Main and the railroad on Cedar Bayou Road and Dyer Street on the south.

Alamo opened its doors with four classes; one class for each grade 1-4. It opened with no principal; a lead teacher held that responsibility. It opened to a neighborhood with no paved streets or sidewalks. It also opened with no cafeteria, a situation to remain unchanged for 32 years.

Alamo began as a dream of parents in the Stewart Heights neighborhood. A bond election was passed in 1929 to provide financing for the construction of three elementary schools: Alamo, San Jacinto, and Lamar.

Upon its opening in September, 1930, the spirit of the school was provided by a strong group of dedicated parents who organized a PTA. One of the beginning projects was to create paved streets for the children to walk to school.

In 1930, Alamo was a neighborhood school, the heart of the Stewart Heights community. There were no buses. Students either walked to school or rode their bikes.

Acquiring paved streets and sidewalks was a priority for the newly formed PTA.

According to the PTA minutes dating back to 1930, Alamo did not have playground equipment, water fountains, or bicycle racks. The parents began fund raisers to purchase these items for the school. Over the ensuing years, there were numerous lemonade sales and an annual Halloween carnival as fundraisers to provide for these items. A library was not added until 1980. According to Alamo alumna, Wilyne Laughlin, since there was no library, classrooms had book collections in their rooms to provide additional reading practice for students. Thank you notes were written by students thanking the PTA for the book donations over the years.

A DREAM IN THE MAKING

It was a dream of families in the Stewart Heights neighborhood to have a neighborhood school that was within walking proximity of the homes. Parents appealed to the school board.

According to school board minutes (November 16, 1929), the school board responded to a petition for "constructing and equipping a grade school building at Stewart Heights and purchasing the necessary site thereof." The board then acted on the petition from various citizens for a school bond election. The bond election was held December 14, 1929 to decide. The election returns were canvassed and the bond was approved by the voters.

At the January 9, 1930, school board meeting. "The architects being present submitted floor plans for the elementary building." On the January 22, 1930 school board meeting, "It was agreed to purchase from M. L. C.



Alamo Elementary, 1930's. More photos

Things began to move quickly to develop 6 more classrooms for Alamo. At the October 3, 1955 board meeting, final plans for the construction of these rooms were studied. By October 31, bids were tabulated for the construction of the Alamo addition. It was recommended that the construction contract be awarded to Kirsches-Construction Company for a bid of \$86,618.00. The architect's fee was \$5, 197.00. The total fee was \$91,815.00. The board recommended changes to lower the cost such as using tile floors instead of terrazzo floors. A completion date for the addition was established for August 1, 1956. By March 19, 1956, new teachers were being hired to staff the additional classrooms. An inspection date was to be held on April 26, 1956 on the addition. The first day of class of the 1956-1957 school year showed Alamo on the September 7, 1956 with an all-time high enrollment.

Enrollment

1946 - 195
1951- 123
1955 - 149
1956- 291 (103.5 % increase)

ALAMO CONSTRUCTION COSTS

1930 Construction of building.....	\$43,600
Purchase of property 2,400	\$46,000
1949 Annex	\$43,600
1955 6-Classroom Wing addition....	\$83,590

Kelly Martin came to Alamo to serve as principal from 1957 to 1970. When he arrived in the fall of 1957, he found Alamo with the addition of 6 new classrooms in place. There were 12 teachers, 12 classrooms (grades 1-6) and a cafeteria. He said, "The district gave me one year as principal at Alamo. The next year, fall 1958, they gave me Austin Elementary as well. I was principal of the 2 schools until 1970 when I transferred to another campus as a teacher in preparation for my retirement."

Before Mr. Martin left Alamo, he saw further renovations to Alamo. At the May 4, 1967 board meeting the board approved capitol expenditures for the following items:

- Renovation of the 6 original classrooms
- Addition of 2 restrooms
- Replacement of the original tile roof with a composition roof
- Addition of a sick bay area

The estimated cost for these renovations was \$27,000. School began that year on Tuesday, September 5, a day after Labor Day with most of these renovations completed. A hard surface play area was released for bid on October 2, 1967. On November 2, 1967, the board approved that air

board meeting, "it was agreed to purchase from Mrs. J. C. Stewart, a block of twenty-four lots in Stewart Heights addition for a school site." The board also decided to change the assessment of Mrs. Stewart's property from \$200.00 a lot to \$100.00 per lot.

The board then awarded the construction of Mirabeau B. Lamar (8 room) and Stewart Heights Elementary to Myers and Knight of Beaumont. The bid for the Stewart Heights school was \$17,600.00.

THE NAME

At the March 4, 1930 school board meeting, "The name Alamo was suggested for the elementary school in Stewart Heights but it was decided it was best to defer definite action until it could be ascertained if the name is suitable to the Stewart Heights citizens."

On March 25, 1930, the board approved payment to Mrs. Alva Stewart the cost of \$2,400.00 for the site of the elementary school in Stewart Heights.

According to the May 7, 1930 board minutes, "A motion was made and carried naming the Stewart Heights elementary school, Alamo."

CONSTRUCTION

The road to completion was fast compared to current building standards. By the May 29, 1930 board meeting construction had progressed to the point that bids for light fixtures were in the making. Glass for lights was to be "Gull-Hyperion high efficiency and no glare."

On the 23rd of July, construction had progressed to the point that the "purpose of the school board meeting was to the Lamar and Alamo schools with the view of accepting them." After an inspection tour by the trustees, it was determined the contractors, Myers and Knight, had not followed plans and specifications. The board deferred to accept the buildings until the architect made an inspection."

Changes and corrections were made. At the August 6, 1930 meeting, a motion was made and carried to accept Lamar and Alamo buildings constructed by Myers and Knight and issue a voucher to cover the cost of balance due for construction expenses.

The cost for the original building in 1930 for the original 4 classrooms, small office, auditorium, and 3 restrooms (2 students, 1 teacher) was \$43,600. The cost of the property was \$2,400. That brings the total cost of the original building to \$46,000.

EARLY SCHOOL LIFE AT ALAMO

Records of the early years at Alamo are found in the minutes of the Parent Teacher Association. The parents in the Stewart Heights community wanted a strong parental connection with Alamo school. To begin this strong connection, plans were made to organize a PTA. Mrs. Mark Carter from Ashbel Smith came to the first meeting in October, 1930. Mrs. J. H. Macke was elected the first president. The first project the PTA undertook was to have the streets "graded and shelled" around Alamo. During the first ten years, the PTA gave the school a piano, typewriter, and silver loving cup for having accomplished more than any other PTA in the Tri-Cities area.

ALAMO CHANGES

When Alamo was built there was no cafeteria. Mothers in the neighborhood such as Mrs. Gertrude (Johnnie) Fulton prepared food and took it to the school. Students sat in the hallway for soup and sandwiches. Alamo alumni, James "Bitsy" Davis, who began his education time at Alamo in 1936, remembers his mom, Mrs. Jessie Davis, "helped fix lunch and served soups, red beans and rice, and sandwiches. From time to time, she made hot rolls and served them to the students."

The PTA held monthly meetings with planned programs with informational topics such as "Getting along with Others, Taking Care of our Community, and Taking Care of our Teeth." During World War II, Alamo followed the examples of other schools in the country and had programs focusing on patriotism and support of the military. Alamo participated in war bond sales and metal drives. Included in the monthly meetings was a program provided by the students. There might be an operetta, a play, or choral singing.

After a number of years, parents approached the principal, Major Garrett, with the question about arranging for cafeteria meals. Questionnaires were sent to the parents and the information was tallied. Parents responded that they would like to see an opportunity for their children to receive a school lunch. The questionnaire was dated

conditioning of Alamo was to go to bidders.

Included in the changes in the 1960's was the change to move the sixth grade classes to junior high. Alamo had its first sixth grade class in the year 1952-1953. Its last sixth grade class was May 1966.

Alumna Nan Tiller was a member of the sixth grade class in 1966. She recalled, "When my sixth grade class left Alamo, there were no more sixth grade classes. Mr. Martin was our principal and we remember being the last sixth graders." In 1966 Goose Creek completed the building of R. S. Sterling High School. School zones were realigned to make the shift to this new school. When students entered Sterling, a shift was made that all sixth grade classes go to junior high. The ninth graders of Goose Creek began their education in high schools that fall rather than junior high. This "trickle down" effect was felt at Alamo as the sixth graders went to junior high.

The 1970's-1980's

By the 1980's steps were being made to propel schools forward for more expansion. Alamo added a 2-classroom expansion directly behind the main building. Bobbie King came to Alamo that fall and was the first teacher in her brand new room. Besides benefiting from the addition of classes, Alamo was also recognized for its fiftieth birthday. Alamo had been established for 50 years (1930-1980). Included in the school's birthday was also the Alamo PTA's fiftieth birthday. The Alamo PTA was recognized for a half-century of activity. Former students, teachers, and principals gathered together to honor the active PTA group. Mrs. Gertrude Fulton was also honored for her years of dedication to the PTA.

In the fall of the 1981-1982 school years, the board enacted measures to provide for libraries with librarians. For many years elementary schools did not have libraries. Former student Jean McLeod remembered classrooms having bookshelves with collections of books that were kept in the classroom for students to check out. Many of the collections of books were provided by the PTA as a result of various fundraisers such as the Halloween carnival or lemonade sales. The PTA minutes over the years contains numerous thank you notes from the students in appreciation for these book collections.

A library addition was made to Alamo in the 1980 renovation and was placed adjacent to the office area in the original building. A media aide acted as a librarian to the students. The first professional librarian was Jean Wheelis in 1983-1984. She was followed by Rae Clarke who served as the district's head librarian and as Alamo's part-time librarian. She was followed in the years to come by Sarah Wahl who served in these dual roles until Alamo moved to the Kilgore location on Wye Drive in 2002. Mrs. Wahl continued to serve as librarian until this time.

The 1990's to PRESENT

By the 1990's there was an increased emphasis on academics with state testing standards, Alamo had secured a full time principal. Special programs had been added to Alamo such as Dyslexia, Title I, Speech Therapy, and Resource. New staff was hired to fill these positions and adjustments for classroom space were made. Some staff positions were still on a half-time basis such as counselor, speech therapist, and nurse. The fine arts teacher served in a dual capacity: Music and Art. Other innovative programs were begun such as the DARE program that promotes drug prevention for fifth graders. Because Alamo was the smallest school with the fewest number of fifth grade classes, the Baytown Police Department chose Alamo to pilot the DARE program. Former Police Chief Byron Jones personally taught those first classes in 1991. The classroom instruction time was followed by a graduation. The DARE program continues to this day for the fifth graders.

Over the years Alamo students have been treated with visits from a variety of areas. Sports figures such as NFL great Rosie Grier and Astros Brad Lidge and Alan Ashby have spoken to the students. Sports mascots like the Texans Toro and Astros mascot Orbit presented topical programs to the students. A Harlem Globetrotter visited and demonstrated basketball handling skills. For many years each spring the PTA organized Heritage Day. Various historical re-enactment groups demonstrated military skills and life styles of years past. These included a blacksmith, Republic of Texas volunteers and Confederate soldiers. Policemen and firemen have visited Alamo over the years to discuss various safety and self protection techniques. Ronald McDonald has also made several appearances.

Alamo staff and students made great performance strides in academics in these years. Repeatedly the school scored, "Recognized" for achievement in TAAS testing. This recognized status was displayed proudly in the front of the school on a sign under the sprawling oak trees on Austin Street. Each school year the "recognized" status was maintained. In the year 2000 Alamo achieved the sought after "Exemplary" status. Alamo was honored with the "Exemplary House" recognition where the superintendent, administrators, and school board members served catered meals as waiters in a transformed cafeteria that resembled a prestigious restaurant.

In the year 2000 not only did Alamo attain Exemplary status, the school was also recognized for its seventieth birthday on November 10. Former students were in attendance. Dignitaries who visited Alamo to wish the school a happy seventieth birthday included Mayor Pete Alfaro and Lee College President Dr. Jackson Sasser. Honored special guest was Mr. Johnnie Fulton. Mr. Fulton was a familiar face to the students at Alamo. He described to the students how he had planted the majestic oak trees that shaded the front of the building on Austin Street. He told the students how the trees after he planted them from a "five-gallon bucket." Mr. Fulton was accompanied by four of his children, all of whom had attended Alamo.

In December 2000, Alamo students and staff assembled again. This

December 16, 1940. Since there was no cafeteria, arrangements were made for the meals to be prepared at nearby Lamar Elementary and be delivered to Alamo. Former student Wilyne Laughlin recalls classes passing in classroom lines by the little office in the hallway to receive a lunch tray through the "little" window. Some students ate in the hallway. However some students carried their trays to the classrooms and ate on their desks.

The 1950's

Alamo began with classes for grades 1-4. Later another grade was added to make 5 classes. By 1952, changes were in store for Alamo again.

On May 12, 1952, the board minutes show bids were being made for the purchase of cafeteria equipment for Alamo. "It was pointed out that such a small operation as the Alamo Elementary School cafeteria would not pay expenses, it would be a sound policy to continue to transport the food already prepared from another cafeteria to this one." It was board opinion that only the bare essentials in equipment be purchased for this cafeteria. At the June 9, 1952 board meeting, it was approved to purchase the needed equipment for the Alamo cafeteria.

On July 7, 1952, the classroom and cafeteria additions were accepted. Inspection by the Superintendent, architect, and contractor gave way to this approval.

Included in the addition was a teacher's lounge. The board later approved for furniture for the teacher's lounge on October 13, 1952.

When Alamo Elementary began school in the fall of 1952, it began for the first time with 6 classrooms, grades 1-6, and a cafeteria. Until this point, there had been 5 classrooms. A large classroom was added across the hall from the cafeteria in the south side of this building. A small restroom was included in the newly constructed classroom making it ready for a first grade class. Mr. Hairgrove was hired as the first sixth grade teacher at Alamo. Wilyne Laughlin and Paul Nichols were students in the newly formed sixth grade class. Wilyne remembers Mr. Hairgrove's beautiful handwriting.

Alamo's largest renovation came in 1955. At the August 4, 1955 board meeting. Mr. Daniel Perkins, Architect, submitted a tentative layout for the classroom addition to Alamo Elementary and a typical classroom arrangement. The additional classrooms were to be constructed of brick, with double hung windows, metal doors, and frames.

A motion was made that the architects tentative layout for the classroom addition to be approved.

In December 2000, Alamo students and staff assembled again. This assembly had a surprise purpose. Third grade teacher Jennifer Bishop was awarded the Milken Prize. Mrs. Bishop was not only recognized for her teaching achievements by the Milken Family Foundation, TEA commissioner Mr. Jim Nelson, and football great Rosie Grier, but she received a monetary prize for her outstanding dedication to helping students.

ALAMO DOUBLES

In May 2002 a decision was made to move Alamo from the 1801 Austin Street location to 302 Wye Drive at the Kilgore campus. In the fall of 2002, the student population and number of teachers remained the same. In the fall of 2003, Alamo doubled in size with the number of classrooms changing from two to four classes per grade level. Special programs were added in 2002 in the expanded space: Pre-K and Life Skills. In the fall of 2003 a full time nurse and counselor were on duty. An assistant principal was also added. In the years that followed student enrollment was increased. Some grade levels had to add a fifth teacher due to larger class sizes. Rezoning of school district attendance zones also contributed to this increased enrolment.

Today Alamo has an enrollment of 627 students with 30 classrooms. Some classrooms are housed in portable buildings adjacent to the main building. At the 1801 Austin campus, most students either walked or rode their bicycles to school. Only three school buses were used to transport students. Once the transition was made to the Wye Drive Campus, more buses were needed. The change from three buses to eleven buses was made.

Although Alamo Elementary had its beginnings on Austin Street, it has continued its academic performance at the new location 302 YMCA Drive. The strong spirit of the Alamo has traveled with it.

The majestic oaks that Mr. Johnnie Fulton planted are remembered. To honor his memory an oak tree was planted at the new site for all future Alamo students to enjoy and watch grow just like the two trees at the Stewart Heights school. Those trees will live on as a part of Alamo Elementary.

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