



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Victoria Walker 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

4711 Seabird

The first school for blacks in Cedar Bayou was organized in 1894. It was called the Cedar Bayou Colored Elementary School. The name was later changed to the Victoria Walker Elementary School. It was located at the present-day intersection of FM 565 and State Highway 146, on the Chambers County side of Cedar Bayou.

It was taught in a commissary, by a minister. The commissary consisted of a store, church and living quarters for black families. Mt. Olive Baptist Church was organized in 1870 and the church building was used as a school and church until 1919, when the Cedar Bayou School District brought in an old discarded, one-room frame building, to be used as a school building. It was located near the church.

The one-room school was the only school for blacks in the area and only went to the sixth grade. There was no high school for blacks at that time period and black students that wanted to finish a higher grade had to go to Houston or to Prairie View Academy at Prairie View College. The local residents chopped the wood for the heater. There were no restrooms and no running water. Students had to cross Highway 146 to draw water from an artesian well.

Leah Cooper was the teacher from 1908 to 1922. Ms. Cooper taught one-half year in Cedar Bayou and one-half year at another black school in Chambers County. Mrs. Rosa Yoakum was elected as the teacher in 1922.

Mrs. C. B. George took over as the teacher in November 1924. She remained as the teacher until May 1926. Jesse B. Wells became the teacher in July 1926. Ester Lewis was elected teacher in November 1926. Victoria Taylor became the teacher, for one year, in October 1927. Jane Clay became the teacher in October 1928.

Victoria Taylor Walker returned, for the second time, as the teacher in August 1933, at the school where her educational journey had begun in 1909. She began at a salary of \$50.00 a month, \$300.00 a year, for a six-month school term. In 1936, despite opposition from the school board, she convinced the board to increase the school term to nine months for the black students. Her salary was increased to \$444.00 a year in 1936. She only had one room to work with, but she succeeded in creating a school that offered its black students a first-class education. She formed a basketball team, band, choir, and a Parent-Teachers Association in 1941. In 1950, Ophelia Henry was paid \$25.00 a month to transport the children in the community to the school. Beginning in 1950, Mrs. Walker held graduation exercises for students in the highest level-the sixth grade.

Also in October 1950, the Cedar Bayou School Board began the first discussions on getting cost estimates for a "new" school for Negroes. The school had been a one-classroom school since 1919. A \$300,000.00 school bond issue was passed in January 1951 and the proposed Negro school was included in the budget. Ralph Buffington was hired as the architect for the Cedar Bayou Negro School. In June 1951, the building construction contract was awarded to

E. Morrow for \$1,426.00 and the approval was given to purchase the land from W. J. Moreau. The new brick school building opened in the fall of 1951. Mary Lee Bousier was hired

In June 1989, the Goose CISD Board of Trustees approved the transfer of title to the Victoria Walker property to Chambers County for a small park site in honor of Victoria Walker. The property would be converted back to the Goose Creek School District should the property no longer be needed as a park.



VICTORIA TAYLOR WALKER

Victoria Taylor Walker (September 12, 1905-January 18, 2002) was born on the Chambers County side of Cedar Bayou, near the present-day intersection of Highway 146 and FM 565. Victoria started her education at the age of four, at the Cedar Bayou Colored School.

Her early life was spent in the small black settlement located just across the present-day Cedar Bayou Bridge in Chambers County. She says she can remember when there was no bridge, and a skiff provided the only transportation across the bayou stream.

The school only provided the equivalent of a sixth grade education. Victoria's grandmother, realizing that her granddaughter possessed a high level of intelligent and a strong desire to learn, decided to send her to Prairie View Normal and Industrial College to complete her education. She left for P V College, at the age of fourteen, in 1919, with money her grandmother had saved from taking in washing and ironing. The congregation at Mt. Olive Baptist Church also gave her financial support by taking up a special offering each month.

Victoria Taylor earned a two-year teacher's certificate after two years at P V and began her teaching career at Bayshore Elementary School in Anahuac, Texas in 1921. After one year at Anahuac, she returned to Prairie View every summer, and eventually earned her bachelor's degree

Building opened in the fall of 1951. Mary Lee Bowser was hired as the second teacher in August 1951. The new school had three rooms, including a kitchen; cooking and sewing were added to the school's curriculum. Mrs. Walker could now prepare hot meals for her students at lunchtime. Ray Ella Davis was hired as the second teacher in June 1952. Mrs. Walker also published a yearbook for the school in the spring of 1952.

The Cedar Bayou School Board gave the approval for the Cedar Bayou Colored Elementary School PTA to submit three names for a proposed school name change in 1953. The school board gave approval for colored children to transfer to the Goose Creek School District into grades that were not taught at the Cedar Bayou Colored School in August 1953. The Cedar Bayou ISD School Board officially changed the school name to the Victoria Walker Elementary School on October 12, 1953.

The Cedar Bayou Independent School District and Goose Creek Independent School District held a consolidation vote in 1954. The voters in both districts passed the consolidation issue by a vote of 1,579-For, 506-Against. In March 1954, the two districts became one and the name was changed to Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District.

The Walker Elementary School would continue to operate, but it then came under the Goose Creek CISD. Victoria Walker and Ray Ella Davis remained as the teachers. Mrs. Walker would continue as the head teacher for another ten years, but in June 1964 the Goose Creek decided to discontinue the operation of the school.

All of the elementary students at the school and Mrs. Walker were transferred to "Little" Carver Elementary School in Baytown. The school PTA continued to be active in the community as the Women's Achievement Club. The old Victoria Walker School building was demolished in 1988.

When the fast growing population on the northern side of the district required the construction of a new elementary the GCCISD Board of Trustees named it in honor of Victoria Walker. The new school opened in the fall of 2007 under Principal Sue Chatham and was dedicated on February 7, 2008. Although most of the original student body began their education on other campuses they quickly selected a school mascot and transferred their loyalty to create a new community – Walker Wildcats. Suzanne Keith took over the principalship in the fall of 2008 and continues as principal to the current date.

in education in 1937. She taught for one year at Cedar Bayou (1927-28). She would later earn two Masters degrees, from Atlanta University in 1945 and from Texas Southern University in 1952. When she earned her second Masters, her salary increased from \$50.00 to \$160.00 a month.

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The school name was officially changed to Victoria Walker Elementary School on October 12, 1953, by the Cedar Bayou ISD School Board. Mrs. Walker would continue as the head teacher for another ten years, but in June 1964 the Goose Creek school board decided to discontinue the operation of the school for financial reasons. She and her students were transferred to "Little" Carver Elementary School.

The school board started making plans for the integration of the Goose Creek school system in the mid-1960s and she was moved to Stephen F. Austin Elementary School in the fall of 1966, as the school's first black teacher. She was met with hostilities, as several parents transferred their children to other classes. However, her enthusiasm for education, plus her outstanding ability as a teacher eventually earned her the respect of parents, students and the faculty at the school.

Mrs. Walker retired from teaching in 1971. In her position as Stephen F. Austin's first black teacher, she helped white students learn to understand more about black teachers. She said that she also learned a thing or two. She got a chance to understand white students and teachers better.

Mrs. Walker's passion for education continued well into her retirement years, as she continued her own education, by attending Lee College. She took music and other continuing education courses. During her teaching career, she educated several generation of children that became productive adults. Victoria Taylor Walker died on January 18, 2002, leaving a legacy of educational excellence.

Source: *Oral interviews with Victoria Taylor Walker*

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