



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Good news, Ganders

State designates REL as historical site

Robert E. Lee High School has stood on Market Street since 1928. It is the oldest campus in the Goose Creek school district. And now, it is a state historical landmark, adding another chapter to its storied life.

This means that Robert E. Lee High School will be listed in the state register of historic places and that a state historical marker will be placed in front of the building. (Both the 1928 original main building and the two wings that were added in 1937 are included in the designation.)

Lee principal Bruce Davis said he was extremely pleased when he heard the news.

"This is a great tribute to the current and former Gander family and to the city of Baytown. Lee High School has been such an integral part of this community for the past 82 years, and it is wonderful for this beautiful building to be recognized," he said.

"It has been a long process that has been in the works for about two years, and this is just the beginning of another phase," said Jean Laughlin McLeod, REL Class of 1962 and chairwoman of the marker designation drive.

When the marker is cast and delivered to the Baytown Historical Preservation Association, a time will be set for the dedication of the marker and a reception to celebrate this great honor. "Hopefully, there will be a huge crowd of Ganders to help us celebrate," said McLeod.

The marker should be ready this summer, and a ceremony should follow in the fall.

In the meantime, members of the Baytown Historical Preservation Association must get donations to cover the \$1,500 cost of the marker.

The BHPA will be accepting donations from individuals and from graduating classes, as well. Donations in excess of the cost of the marker will go toward the reception.

Any remaining money will be kept in a permanent marker fund to help defray costs of future marker projects

This is how the school was described in the 1929 yearbook: "In the beautiful Robert E. Lee High the students have a school of which they may be justly proud. ... The building, in itself a fitting tribute to the great Southern General, surrounded by clustering trees and overlooking the stream from which the city derives its name, is a sight that is never forgotten when it is once seen."

Because of its age, unique architectural facade, and its importance to the Baytown community, the Historical Preservation Association believed that Lee deserved to be recognized.

In a letter to Goose Creek CISD Trustees, who had to approve the request, Historical Preservation Association stated, "Robert E. Lee High School has a rich history. For over 80 years, it has served the students of our community and prepared them for life's many challenges. But Lee has been more than just a school. It was the heart and soul of the communities within the Goose Creek district for decades as Baytown's only high school.

"The history of Lee is inextricably intertwined with the history of Baytown. The rival communities of Goose Creek, Baytown, Wooster, Pelly, and Highlands shared the same high school. Therefore, Lee has served not only to educate the students who attended there, but it also helped bring the communities together as Ganders.

In 1927, a bond issue was passed for \$450,000 to build Robert E. Lee High School and other facilities.

Robert E. Lee opened in 1928, and students recalled carrying their desks down the railroad track from Goose Creek High (to become Horace Mann Junior) to occupy the new building.

During the 1960s Lee High School had the largest high school band in Texas with 350 band members. The band won many awards and gave an annual concert under the leadership of Band Leader Doc Severinsen of the Johnny Carson show.

From the early 1930s to 2001, Lee High School was also home to a unique and famous tradition, the Lee Brigadiers Drum and Bugle Corp. The Lee Brigadiers were an all-female group drum and bugle corps that marched military style in football games and parades. In 1955 the Lee Brigadiers were featured in Life Magazine. The Brigadiers continued the tradition of marching in maroon military uniforms with boots and skirts until they were the last group of its kind.

In 1976, Lee High School was honored to have U.S. President Gerald Ford to visit during the Robert E. Lee and Aldine MacArthur football game. There were about 19,000 fans that attended the Gander victory over Aldine.

In April 1987, Robert E. Lee had a major fire that gutted the main portion of the complex. After a petition by nearly 6,000 citizens, it was decided to reconstruct Robert E. Lee High School on its historical site. The 2,179 students from Lee attended Ross S. Sterling High School with its 2,383 students to complete the school year. Students returned to Robert E. Lee High School on January 19, 1988.

Over the years, Lee High School has undergone numerous renovations, including the reconstruction of the main building following the 1987 fire and a new Art and Science building.

These renovations have allowed the high school to offer a state-of-the-art learning facility while preserving the beauty of this historical landmark. In 2000, a new cafeteria was added along with 13 classrooms on the second floor.

Recently, the building's exterior was cleaned and painted, and grounds workers personnel worked onsite to protect and trim existing trees. They also assisted in sprucing up the site, adding Crepe Myrtles and removing some of the portable buildings.

Today, Lee High School has an enrollment of 1,847, and has 182 teachers and staff members.

For more information about the REL marker fundraising drive, call McLeod at 281-422-9957 or 832-262-9566. To stay informed of up-to-the-minute changes, please visit the BHPA website at www.baytownhistory.org.

"The Spanish mission style architecture was the predominant style of all Goose Creek schools in the early years of the District. Today, Robert E. Lee High School is the only remaining school of the early era. Its original facade is unique among Baytown schools today, and it is easily recognizable to many current and former Baytonians," the request stated.

Please send checks to:
Baytown Historical Preservation Association
PO Box 1244
Baytown, Texas 77522-1244

Make checks out to BHPA; note it is for the Lee Marker Fund.

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