

# A History of the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School

Austin, Texas



William M. Holland (1841-1907)

First superintendent of the Deaf and Dumb and Blind Asylum for Colored Youths

On April 5, 1887, the 18<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature established the Deaf and Dumb and Blind Asylum for Colored Youths with an appropriation of \$50,000. A three-member board of trustees was charged with the responsibility of organizing and locating the school, which was to be in or near Austin on no less than four acres, as well as appointing a superintendent, who was to be a "man of mature years and experience." The board purchased 100 acres northwest of Austin, at what is now known as 4305 Bull Creek Road. The facility originally consisted of one house, which had 11 rooms, and served as both classrooms and boarding rooms for the students.

Establishment of a separate school or asylum for blind and deaf African-American children resulted from a combination of the heightened political influence of African-Americans during Reconstruction, as well as a marked rise in the passage of Jim Crow legislation by newly re-enfranchised whites after 1876. Reconstruction in Texas lasted roughly from 1866 to 1873, when the Republicans began losing significant ground to white Democrats. During the Reconstruction era and beyond, Republican-allied organizations such as the Union League and various Black State Conventions rallied to improve the situation of the state's newly-freed slaves. Along with the Freedmen's Bureau, the Union League promoted voter registration, education, community and political activism and the development of union-like organizations to protect African-American workers. Many, if not all, of Texas' African-American legislators during the Reconstruction era rose up through the ranks of the Union League. Similarly, "Black State Conventions" throughout the Reconstruction era and beyond, articulated the goals and concerns of African-Americans. In positions of power, either in the Union League or the state legislature, men such as Norris Wright Cuney and George T. Ruby of Galveston, and Meshack Roberts of Marshall, worked towards common goals of African-Americans, and focused their work on the establishment of educational facilities. Of these men, Norris Wright Cuney was perhaps the most powerful voice pushing for the establishment of a facility for African-American deaf and mute students; historian J. Mason Brewer characterizes Cuney's work as "unrelenting in his fight for a State School for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind of his race." (J. Mason Brewer, Negro Legislators of Texas, Austin and New York: The Pemberton Press, Jenkins Publishing Company, 1970). Although none were in office at the time that the bill creating the school was passed, African-American legislators worked diligently towards the goal of providing educational facilities for African-American Texans. Meshack Roberts, who served in the state legislature from 1873 to 1878, was instrumental in the establishment of Wiley College, the first true college for African-Americans west of the Mississippi, although was himself illiterate.

The first state educational institutions for African-Americans in Texas were an agricultural and mechanical college and a normal, or teachers' college, both at Prairie View in Waller County. The agricultural and mechanical college, established in 1876 and opened in 1878, was placed under the directorship of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A&M University). The normal school, designed to educate African-American teachers, opened at Prairie View in 1879,

primarily through the influence of William Holland, the African-American legislator from Waller County, who would go on to become the first superintendent of the Blind and Deaf and Dumb Asylum for Colored Youths. At the same time, the legislature, which was increasingly controlled by the Democrats, began enacting a large number of Jim Crow laws, which mandated the segregation of the races in almost every aspect of life. Segregation of the races in the public schools of Texas was legislatively-mandated, and appropriations from the state public school funds were to be made equally to white and African-American schools, in relation to the scholastic population of each race, with the approval of the county judge. The legislature went so far as to specify that the children of each race would be educated in separate facilities, and "in no case shall any school consisting partly of white and partly of colored children receive any aid from the public school fund." (Article 3709, 1884).

In this environment of *de jure* segregation and heightened racism, it is somewhat surprising that the Texas legislature continued to provide for the education and vocational training of African-Americans. Perhaps it is a tribute to the influence of the Union Leagues and Black State Conventions through the 1880s and early 1890s that an institution for blind and deaf African-American students ever came to be, but it is also worthy to note that the Deaf and Dumb and Blind Asylum for Colored Youths followed the establishment of institutes for blind and deaf white Texans by a good 30 years, and that in that 30-year period, no state-supported facility existed for blind and deaf African-American Texans. However, as a silver lining to the cloud of segregation, establishment of separate African-American schools required training for African-American teachers, which fueled the enrollments of normal schools, and helped to create the first true African-American professional class in this country.

Governor Sul Ross (term of office, 1886-1891), a Democrat, was also a strong supporter of public education. During his tenure, the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed a bill creating the Deaf and Dumb and Blind Asylum for Colored Youths in Austin. To carry out the responsibilities of organizing the school and purchasing land and facilities, the legislature appointed three prominent Austin attorneys, H.E. Shelley, Zachary T. Fulmore, and William M. Brown. General Henry E. Shelley, was an Alabama-born lawyer who lived at 1703 West Avenue and had his office in the 900 block of Congress Avenue. He had served in the Confederate Army, was superintendent of the Confederate Home in Austin, and at the time of his death in 1906, was on the state board of pardons. Zachary T. Fulmore, born in North Carolina, came to Austin in 1870 after Confederate military service. He practiced law with Alexander Penn Wooldridge, a later mayor of the city, and with Wooldridge, was the principal force behind the establishment of Austin's public schools in 1880. Fulmore served on the city's school board, was a Travis County judge, and served as a reporter for the corporation court. He and his wife resided at 310 W. 13<sup>th</sup> Street in Austin; he had his offices at 110 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Judge Fulmore had also served on the board of trustees for the white School for the Blind in the 1870s. He died in 1923 in Austin. William M. Brown, was also a prominent Austin lawyer. Like Fulmore, Brown had been born in North Carolina, and had served in the Confederate Army. After the war, he moved to Marlin, Texas, where

he was in the cotton commission business, and was elected to the legislature. He served as state comptroller from 1880 to 1883, and as state oil inspector from 1887 to 1891. Like General Shelley, Brown also had strong connections with the establishment of the Confederate Home. He died in Austin in 1902.

The three trustees were charged with the responsibility of appointing a superintendent for the school. Their choice was William Holland, who had been born into slavery in Marshall, Texas in 1841. His probable father, Captain Bird Holland, a prominent planter in Panola County, purchased his freedom in the 1850s and moved Holland and his brother to Ohio for their education at a school organized and run by free African-Americans. Holland attended Oberlin College in Ohio then returned to Texas to teach. He taught in several rural school districts as well as in the Austin schools before moving to Waller County. He was elected to the legislature from Waller County in 1876, and sponsored the bill creating the Normal School for Colored Teachers at Prairie View. He was extremely influential in the legislature's move to create the Deaf and Dumb and Blind Asylum for Colored Youths at Austin in 1887, and was appointed by Governor Sul Ross to serve as the first superintendent of the school. Holland was superintendent until 1897, then was reappointed in 1904, and served until his death in 1907. His wife, Eliza, was also on the early faculty of the school.

The trustees located a 100-acre site northwest of Austin on what is now Bull Creek Road between 38<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> Streets. They purchased the property from a Dr. W.C. Phillips for \$10,000; the property contained a two-story 11-room wooden house, a two-story stone building, a storeroom, and several outbuildings, including stables. Dr. Phillips also sold the trustees various farm and home implements, two mules, and seven head of cattle.

Before the school opened, Superintendent William Holland placed advertisements in newspapers throughout the state to publicize the existence of the school, but understanding that many African-Americans in Texas in the late 1880s were still unable to read, Holland embarked upon a tour of areas of the state with large African-American populations. The response was overwhelming; 31 students enrolled in the first session of the school in September, 1887.

When the school opened, the campus consisted of the two-story wooden house, which was used as the residence of the superintendent, female students, and female teachers. The two-story stone building was converted to classroom space, and a brick and frame cottage was erected as the dormitory for male students and teachers. The initial class at the school consisted of 17 deaf and mute boys, 7 deaf and mute girls, 4 blind boys, and 5 blind girls, ranging in age from 7 to 21. The faculty consisted of the superintendent, William Holland, a male teacher for the deaf and mute students, Julius Garrett of North Carolina, who was a deaf-mute himself, and Miss Cora L. Moore of Waco, who taught music and the blind students. Julius Garrett, an early graduate of the North Carolina School for Colored Deaf and Blind

(which had been established in 1869), was one of the first African-American deaf teachers in the country.

The students in the first class at the institution were primarily from county seat towns in the eastern half of Texas. Of the 17 deaf boys in the first class, 3 were from Austin, 2 each were from Giddings, Calvert, and Navasota, and the remainder were from smaller towns to the east and southeast of Austin. One boy was from Waco, but curiously, none were from the larger cities in the state. The geographical distribution of the deaf girls points more clearly to small town or rural backgrounds. Of the female deaf students, only one was from a city, Dallas; the remainder were from rural places. The blind boys in the first class also came from the eastern half of Texas; one was from Austin, two were from the Waller/Grimes County area, and one was from Jefferson in northeast Texas. Of the blind girls, two were from Austin, one was from Houston; the other two were from smaller places.

At the end of the first year of operation of the school, the board of trustees realized that enrollment would soon outpace the facilities. They made a plea to the governor for an additional \$22,000 for the construction of another building of similar size to the first new building on the campus, \$2,000 to electrify the building and do away with kerosene lamps, and an unspecified amount of money to provide a more constant supply of water to the property, which was too distant from the settled portions of Austin to be able to take advantage of city water improvements. An additional \$2,500 was requested to commence a program of industrial training at the school.

After obtaining the appropriation for new buildings, the trustees contracted with William Thaison of Austin to construct an additional building – a two-story brick building with stone trim with a central tower; the building was finished in November, 1888 and provided additional classrooms, living quarters, a chapel, and an office. The school also had a frame kitchen and a frame laundry on campus, and employed a cook, a farm assistant, a washerwoman, and a dining room servant. The school had a herd of five Jersey cows for milk and butter, and a 30-acre farm, which provided corn, hay, Irish potatoes and other vegetables for the school's food supply. The farm was worked by a single hand, with help from the male students. The school also had 2 horses, 2 mules, and some hogs.

The school's expenditures in 1887-88 indicate money spent on outfitting the school buildings, the purchase of kitchenware, groceries, and a wagon. In November, 1887, the school spent money on shoes, fresh beef, suits for the boys, blackboards, and raised print and point books. The purchase of cereal, corn, and garden seed is listed in the expenditures in the spring of 1888, as well as telephone service. There was a fairly significant purchase of school furniture in August, 1888, which was likely in preparation for additional students coming in the next month. The student population increased to 44 pupils for the September, 1888 sessions. There were 27 deaf and mute students (19 boys and 8 girls), and 17 blind students (10 boys and 7 girls). The geographical distribution of the students became a little wider, with new

students coming from Luling, Dallas, Waxahachie, San Marcos, Weatherford, Mineral Wells, Crockett, and Palestine.

The next superintendent's report, filed on October 31, 1889, revealed a great deal of growth at the school. The main building on campus now had steam heat and electric lights, two new cisterns had been built, the barn was expanded to hold the corn harvest from the school's farm, drives and walks had been installed on the campus, and the school had planted 160 peach and 60 plum trees. The number of livestock on the campus had also increased, and the farm provided sufficient corn and hay for their feed. The school had hired Theodore Lashwah, an expert boot and shoe maker in Austin, to instruct 9 deaf boys in the art of making shoes in the school's new shoe shop. The faculty had changed as well – Julius Garrett had moved on, and Mrs. Amanda Johnson now taught the deaf students, while the superintendent's wife, Mrs. Eliza James Holland, was listed as a teacher. Like Garrett, Amanda Johnson had been trained at the North Carolina School for Colored Deaf and Blind. Miss Cora Moore had resigned, and was replaced by Fannie Washington of Corpus Christi to teach the blind students. Fannie Washington taught music as well as reading, and Superintendent Holland delighted in reporting that older students could now read the Bible, story books, and some newspaper articles. A cultural life had also emerged at the school: preachers from some of Austin's African-American churches came out to the school on Sundays for religious services, and the students had organized a debating society. The 1888-1889 school term had an enrollment of 60 students – 25 blind pupils (15 boys and 10 girls), and 35 deaf students (24 boys and 11 girls). The students ranged in age from 8 to 24, and came from small towns in eastern and central Texas.

By 1892, the school's enrollment had grown to 86 students, although the superintendent's report relates that only 70 were in actual attendance. Many of the students had returned home for the summer, and were engaged in farm labor, which prevented their return to class. Still, the school had already outgrown its early facilities; the superintendent noted that the chapel had been converted to a boys' dormitory for lack of space, and that overcrowding was hampering realization of the best educational results at the school. Fannie Washington remained on as a music teacher and teacher to the blind; Mrs. Holland was teaching the primary classes to mutes. Miss Washington and Mrs. Holland had also organized a kindergarten department at the school, which was in its first year of operation. The industrial department also experienced growth – Lashwah's supervision of the shoe shop continued, and the apprentices were able to furnish shoes for all students on the campus. A girls' industrial training program had been inaugurated, focusing on sewing. Nine mute and two blind girls were engaged in the sewing department. In addition to their industrial training, the students were expected to help out around the campus – girls helped with housework and they boys helped with groundwork and building maintenance. Superintendent Holland expressed his dismay at not being able to yet establish a broom- and mattress-making program for the blind, male students, but noted that overcrowding had thus far prevented this endeavor.

The 1891-1892 superintendent's report reveals that the school was doing business with many of the most prominent businessmen in Austin. They bought fresh beef from H.E. Seekatz; groceries from Nelson Davis and John Bremond, hardware from Walter Tips, furnishings from McKean, Eilers and Company, medical services from Dr. Thomas Wooten, and leather goods from Padgitt and Warmoth. Student enrollment, while increasing in number, was not necessarily increasing in diversity. The vast majority of the students still came from eastern and central Texas; only a handful came from Fort Worth or anywhere west of Austin. Most of the students also still came from small towns, although there is a noticeable increase in the number of students hailing from the state's larger cities, such as Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Galveston.

The 1910 report revealed continued growth. Superintendent Holland had passed away in 1907, but his widow, Eliza, was now the principal teacher at the school, under the superintendency of H.S. Thompson. Thompson reported a school enrollment of 93, consisting of 59 deaf students and 34 blind students, with a faculty of 15. The industrial departments were faring well, with about half of the deaf boys learning to make shoes, and the remainder engaged in tailoring, cleaning, and pressing clothes. Deaf girls were taught sewing and dressmaking, and did all of the sewing for the school. Blind students of both genders could learn to make brooms, mattresses, and mats; their industry provided all that the school needed, and extras for public sale. The superintendent reported on the success of some recent graduates, some of whom had gone into a line of work based upon their training at the school. Several of the blind students had gone into the ministry or music.

Overcrowding remained a major concern in 1910. The boys occupied a portion of the mess hall as their dormitory, and older buildings on campus were deteriorating at an alarming rate. The superintendent also related a need for a hospital for the school, as there was no facility to isolate sick students. The school had inaugurated a cooking department, and the superintendent suggested a program to teach stock raising and scientific farming to the deaf male students.

The 1910 report contains the daily schedule for students at the school. Awake at 6 a.m., they had breakfast from 7 to 7:30, "recreation and work" until 8:30, when they began their schoolwork and industries. From 11:30 to 1 p.m., the students had a lunch break, and were back at school and industries until 3:30. They had recreation and reading until 5, when it was time for supper. From 6:30 to 7:30, they were expected to study, and retire by 9 p.m.

The 1930 U.S. Census report for the institute reveals that the superintendent was John D. Martin, a 51-year old African-American who had been born in Texas to Louisiana-born parents, and his wife, Lula, who were resident on the site. The teachers listed in the census report included Lillian Holden, Lizzie Lee, Mathew Givens, Victor Cook, Mattie White (proprietor of the first private school for African-American girls in Austin, and wife of Thomas White, organizer of the movement to establish Emancipation Park in East Austin), Clara Dennis (wife of E.F. Dennis, a

prominent educator at Huston-Tillotson College), Vivian Perry, Grace Bryan, George Elliott, Thelma Smith, and Velma Bledsoe, a music teacher. Other people noted in the census report include the school's storekeeper, matrons, janitors, farmers, laundry workers, cooks, seamstresses, and stenographers.

By the 1930s, the old buildings on the campus had largely been replaced with two- and three-story brick buildings dating from the 1910s and 1920s, housing classrooms, dormitories, a dining hall, and kitchen in addition to other outbuildings. The school now had a faculty of 28 teachers and 6 teachers in the household department. J.D. Martin, the superintendent, had been appointed to his post in 1921. Under Martin's tenure, the school's curriculum had become more formalized and expansive. The catalogue and announcements for the school in 1938 detailed the courses of study, which mirrored the courses of study for seeing and hearing students in public schools with certain exceptions: industrial training was required of all students above the 5<sup>th</sup> grade unless excused for reasons of physical inability or a special musical talent, students could not leave the campus, and students were required to attend Sunday school and religious services on campus every week. The students were taught to read in the first grade; by the second grade, they were learning reading, spelling, telling time, the fundamentals of arithmetic, and written composition. Third, fourth and fifth grades expanded upon the lessons of the first two grades with more advanced materials and additional subjects such as geography, citizenship, and hygiene. By high school, the curriculum included history, literature, civics, elementary economics, general science, and physiology. Learning to use a typewriter began in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and was mandatory throughout the high school years at the school.

Once the boys were old enough to enter the industrial department (5<sup>th</sup> grade), they were expected to devote one hour per school day and four hours on Saturday in the shop. They were taught to make brooms, mattresses, and to cane chairs. The girls' industrial department taught sewing, both by hand and with a machine, knitting, crocheting, basketry, rug weaving, and dressmaking. The school had a music department which taught piano, voice, and band instruments. Deaf students could also enroll in programs for handicrafts, drawing, painting, and art, beadwork, embroidery, cooking, tailoring, shoe-making, carpentry, and house painting.

Male students could wear suits as they would at home, but female students were required to wear a standard uniform, which was supplied by the school. Parents were expected to furnish all other clothing for their children, but if a child was determined to be indigent, the school would provide clothing. The personal lives of the students were strictly regulated: all mail could be inspected by the superintendent, parents were warned not to send sweets or other packages to their children, and the students were expected to remain on campus over Christmas to avoid the problems of holiday travel. Students were able to write home once every two weeks; if a child wanted to correspond more frequently with his or her parents, the family was expected to provide additional stationery and stamps. Every other aspect of the child's life was provided by the school, including tuition, books,



stationery, musical instruments, board, laundry, medical supplies, and medical services.

The school continued to grow in the 1940s when about 100 students from the Negro Orphan School at Gilmer were transferred to Austin. The Negro Orphan Home had been established in 1900 by African-American Baptists as a private facility. The home maintained a school and a farm, and provided vocational education for its students. In 1929, the state took over the facility. Depression-era legislatures never provided the money necessary to upgrade the buildings on the Gilmer campus, and in 1943, the State Board of Control decided to sell the property and transfer the students to Austin. Blind and deaf students resided and attended classes on the Austin campus; orphaned students resided on campus, but attended Austin public schools. Accordingly, the name of the school changed to the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School by legislative act in 1947.

A 1954 document noted that the curriculum consisted of three years of pre-school education to acclimate the students to campus life, encourage the ability to communicate, and to promote good health habits. Following this pre-school education came a curriculum which followed that of regular public schools, with additional vocational training to encourage the students to be self-sufficient. The vocational course included agriculture, cooking, sewing, weaving, and cosmetology. For the 1954-55 session, plans were underway for adding equipment to teach clothes cleaning, pressing, and woodworking.

Although the student population remained relatively stable during the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s, the older buildings on campus began to deteriorate. There had been a fairly constant call for a new boys' dormitory; this concern started to become acute in the 1940s and 1950s, especially after the influx of the students from Gilmer. Additionally, there was a "wait-and-see" attitude in the late 1950s and early 1960s when making determinations about funding for still-segregated schools because of mandated integration. The legislature was hesitant to repair deteriorated buildings on the campus in the 1950s, even after several descriptions of the campus facilities as downtrodden and over-used, because of the possibility of closing the school if and when integration orders took effect. In the late 1950s, especially as residential development continued to creep closer to the northwest Austin campus, talk began of relocating the school and the construction of new buildings as preferable to maintaining the existing campus and repairing the old buildings.

The last superintendent of the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School was J.C. McAdams, who was appointed in 1951 and served until the facility was integrated in 1965. McAdams had a long career in education, having attended the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia and being one of the first African-American students at Colorado State University. His father, J.C. McAdams, Sr. (1860-1940) was also a prominent educator, having graduated from Fisk University in Nashville, and teaching in segregated schools in the Shelbyville area of Tennessee. The 1900 U.S. Census shows J.C. and Lizzie McAdams living in Bedford County, Tennessee

(Shelbyville), where he was listed as an African-American teacher. Prior to coming back to Tennessee, from 1896-1898, the elder McAdams was the principal of the Fessenden School, an African-American institution near Ocala, Florida. In addition, the elder McAdams also apparently served as principal of the Union School in Martin, Florida from 1897 to 1898. Around 1928, either the older or the younger McAdams was a teacher at the Hardeman County Training School in Tennessee; it is unclear to whom the reference is made, since both men were actively teaching in segregated schools at that time, although it would appear that it was J.C. McAdams, Jr., as his father was teaching in Shelbyville, Tennessee at that time. The younger McAdams then moved to Crockett, Texas, and finally to Austin, working first as a consultant for the Texas Education Agency before his 1951 appointment as superintendent of the school.

Under McAdams' leadership, there were improvements made to the school facilities, but in the end, the decision was made to move the school from northwest Austin to the site of the old Montopolis Drive-In at what was then known as 601 Airport Boulevard. The school was then functioning as a combination school and orphan home, having absorbed the students from Gilmer in the late 1940s. By 1960, plans were underway to move the school from its original site on Bull Creek Road to what is now known as 7201 Levander Loop. Legislative appropriations paid for the purchase of the property, architectural fees, and the construction of new buildings on the site, which reportedly took 200 days to complete. The architects of the new site were George Rustay and Foy Martin of Houston, who had designed several public and commercial buildings in Houston as well as many modern residences in the River Oaks section of Houston. The majority of the buildings planned for the site were low, utilitarian, gable-roofed brick buildings, some built in a duplex format for residential purposes, and others with long bands of horizontal windows for classrooms. The two principal buildings on the new site were the auditorium (named for J.C. McAdams in 1989), and the gymnasium, which is notable for its arched roof similar to the construction of a Quonset hut. The auditorium and gym are both brick buildings, with exposed metal arches and supports. The gymnasium has industrial-style metal-framed glazing in the arched tympanum of the roof.

The school moved to the new site in 1960-1961, and took up business as usual in the new buildings. However, the separate identity of the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School did not last long. In 1965, to comply with state integration orders, the school merged with the all-white Texas School for the Deaf on South Congress Avenue. Although African-American children attended classes at the South Congress campus, they continued to reside separately at what became known as the East Campus. The East Campus still retained programs in early childhood and elementary education, as well as programs for multi-handicapped students, but in 1989, with significant renovations and new construction on the South Congress campus, all of the programs were moved off the East Campus. The facility was sold to the City of Austin in 2002 and currently houses offices of the Department of Health and Human Services in renovated buildings.

The legacy of the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School is replete with the associations with prominent African-American educators, accomplishments of its graduates, and even the survival of a fairly unique means of sign language. John Tabak, the author of Significant Gestures: A History of American Sign Language (Greenwood Press, 2006), a study of the evolution of sign language in the United States, notes the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School as a case study for the longevity of certain "dialects" of sign language, especially those involving exaggerated, expansive, and open-handed signs and little or no lip movement, which is in direct contrast to modern American Sign Language, which uses more angular, compact, and rapid movements, and relies heavily on the speaker mouthing the words. Tabak notes that many graduates of the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School still use an old-fashioned "dialect" with expansive hand movements and facial expressions rather than lip movements. Recognizing that the first teachers at the School were themselves deaf, and that there was little interest by white deaf educators in African-American youth, the Austin school was somewhat isolated from the mainstream of deaf education for many years, and through a period of "benign neglect" allowed this older means of communication to survive.

Some of the best known teachers, students, and graduates of the school include Blind Arizona Dranes, one of the country's foremost gospel piano players, who graduated in 1910. She received her first music lessons at the institute, and went on to develop her own distinctive piano style. Blind Arizona was affiliated with the Church of God in Christ, and after helping establish churches in Oklahoma, went on the road with singing preachers to establish new churches throughout Oklahoma and Texas. She recorded 30 gospel tracks for Okeh Records in the 1920s, but the Great Depression of the 1930s stalled her career. She moved to California in the late 1940s and died in Los Angeles in 1963.

Azie Taylor Morton was appointed Treasurer of the United States by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 and served until 1981. She was born in Dale, Texas to a deaf mother and an unknown father. Raised by her maternal grandparents, and technically an orphan, she attended the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School for high school, as there was no high school for African-Americans in Dale. She graduated when she was 16, and went on to Huston-Tillotson College. In the late 1950s, she became a staff member for the Texas AFL-CIO, then went to work on President Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity before her appointment as Treasurer. She died in 2003.

Betty Henderson, a nationally-known advocate for the deaf, attended the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School in the late 1950s and early 1960s through its period of integration. Henderson resided on the East Campus of the School for the Deaf but attended classes at the South Congress campus after the school was desegregated. She was a member of the National Theater for the Deaf after graduating from the institute, and has promoted equal rights for deaf people through her work with the National Black Deaf Advocates in both Philadelphia, where she currently resides and is a post office manager, and Houston, where she grew up.

Mattie White was an art teacher at the institute for 40 years, but is best known as the operator of Austin's first private school for African-American girls, which she established in her home on Hackberry Street in 1892. Her husband, Thomas J. White, was the president of the Emancipation Celebration Organization, which purchased land in East Austin in 1905-1907 as a park and site for the city's Emancipation Day celebrations.

Mathew Givens was one of the first students enrolled in the school in 1887. Givens was born (1868) and raised in Austin, and after his graduation, returned to the school to teach fellow blind students for many years. He was also active as an evangelist of the Tenth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. City directories from the 1910s on refer to him as Reverend Mathew Givens. He had his wife Mary lived in the 900 block of E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street from the 1910s until his death in 1940. The 1930 U.S. Census lists Givens at the school; the 1900 U.S. Census shows an 1868 birth year but shows Givens living in Marlin, Texas, where he was married to a woman named Eva, and worked as a school teacher. He and Eva lived with his father, Thomas Givens, who was then in his 80s. The 1900 census report also shows Mathew Givens as a native of South Carolina rather than of Texas. The 1910 U.S. Census shows Mathew Givens living at 902 E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, which corresponds to city directory information for the period. Givens was listed as being 40 years old, and a native of Texas. He listed his occupation as a church preacher. His wife's name listed here is Annie, and he had been married for 9 years, which invites speculation that Eva, the woman listed as his wife in 1900, had passed away in 1901.

The Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School operated on Bull Creek Road from 1887 to 1960 and at 7201 Levander Loop from 1960 to 1965, when it was fully incorporated into the Texas School for the Deaf.

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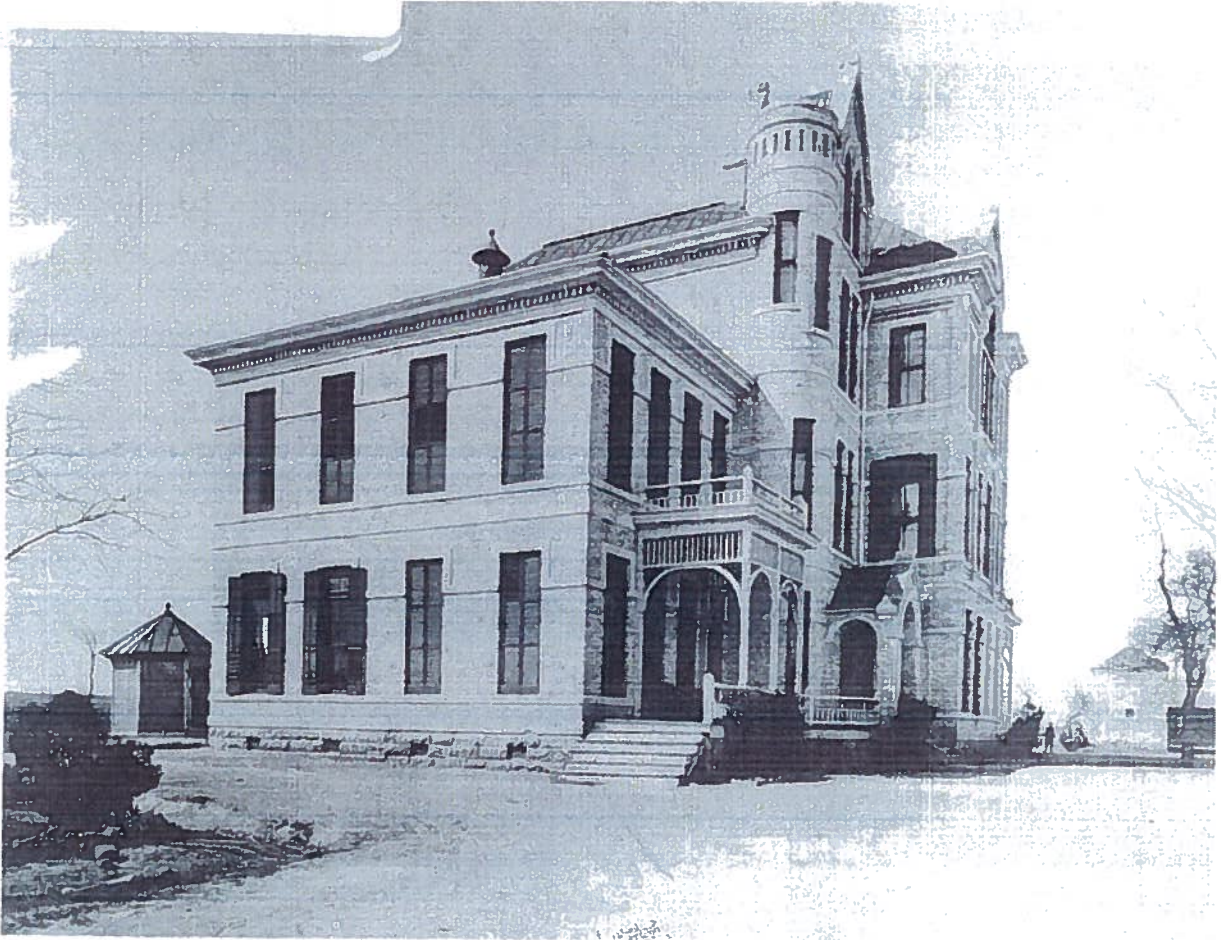
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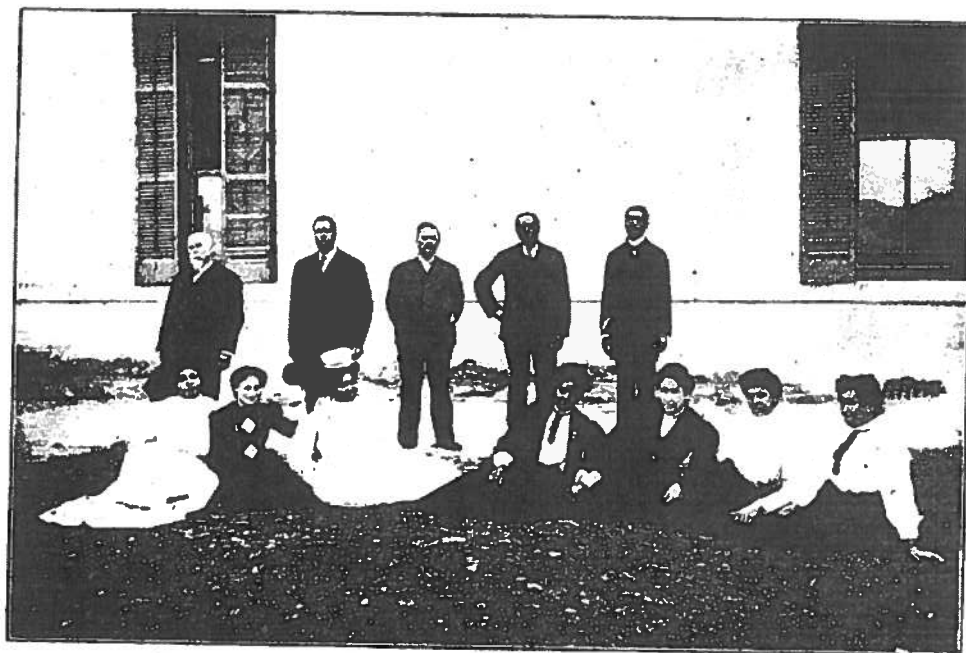


INSTITUTE FOR DEAF, DUMB AND BLIND COLORED YOUTHS

The ca. 1888 building constructed by A.W. Thaison for the original campus of the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Dumb School on Bull Creek Road.



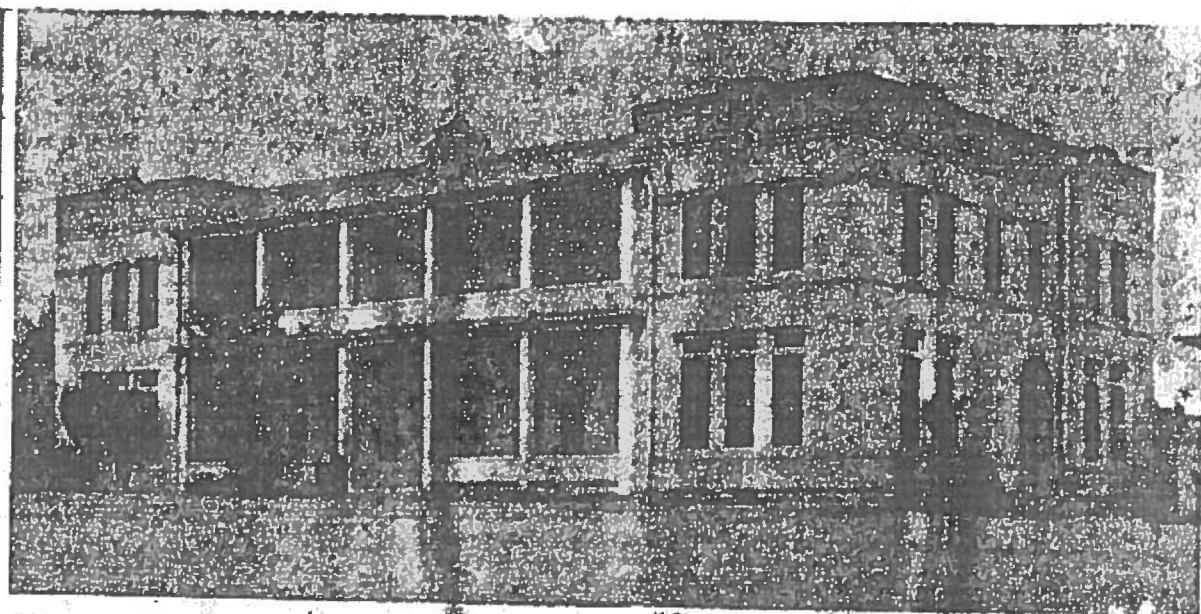
**The Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute for Colored Youths, Austin, Texas**



**The Faculty of the D. D. and B. Institute for Colored Youths of Texas, Austin, Texas**

1907 photograph from Metropolitan AME Church Historical and Biographical Souvenir and Program and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (1907). The original two-story wooden house may be the one shown at the right of the top picture.





**YOUNGSTERS' "HOME"**—This forlorn dormitory is one of the older buildings of the Texas Deaf, Blind and Orphan School in Austin where over 200 Negro children live nine months in the year. The Board for Hospitals and Special Schools Monday took under study a staff recommendation that a frame building on the same campus, used as a boys' dormitory, be torn down. Altogether the

board was told \$350,000 of repairs and construction is needed to bring the school buildings and dormitories up to satisfactory condition. The board said its study will include the possibility of building a modern new school elsewhere and giving up the present location, around which Austin residential areas have built up in the past years. Legislative action would be required for such a move.—(Neal Douglass Photo.)

Austin Statesman article, July 15, 1953, relating the poor conditions of the buildings at the Texas Blind, Deaf and Orphan School





### Texas Blind, Deaf and Orphan School

The Texas Blind, Deaf and Orphan School was established by the 18th Legislature in 1887, as the Texas Institute for Deaf, Dumb and Blind Colored Youths. The school is located at 4104 Bull Creek Road, Austin. In 1942 the Negro Orphan School at Gilmer was closed, the children transferred to this school and the name changed to the Texas Blind, Deaf and Orphan School. The buildings pictured above are quite old and look much better in a photograph than they actually are.

The curriculum includes three years of pre-school training designed primarily to develop the ability to communicate and to live with other students, and to learn good health habits. Although the pre-school work is designed for three years, it is permissible for a student to complete the work in two years. With the exception of the pre-school work, the curriculum is patterned along lines of the regular public school offerings, with emphasis on encouraging handicapped children to learn a vocation that will permit them to be self-supporting. Vocational offerings include agriculture, cooking, sewing, weaving, and cosmetology. Plans

are almost complete for greatly strengthening the vocational training in 1954-55 by adding equipment for teaching cleaning, pressing and woodworking.

Since a limited amount of money has been spent during the last few years, the needs of the school center largely around the following: adequate housing for boys; suitable aids for teaching blind and deaf children; adequate distribution of electricity and water through the campus; classroom furnishings; equipment for instructing students in the vocations of cleaning and pressing and woodworking; library books and facilities; recreational facilities; street and walk repairs; band instruments; housing for employees, and adequate classroom and recreation facilities at the primary building. The problem of adequate personnel to meet the many needs in an institution for handicapped children is felt most in the matter of plant operation, maintenance and child care. The pupil-teacher load, although high, is being adjusted to approach the load recommended for schools teaching handicapped children.

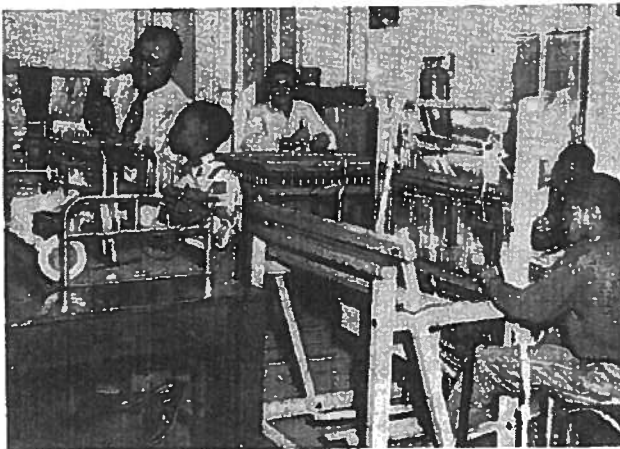
Undated article (probably late 1950s)



**Cosmetology Appeals to Girls**  
(Many of the girls now earn their livelihood in shops throughout the State)



**Modern Auditory Equipment for teaching the hard of hearing**



**Boys' Weaving Class**



**Homemaking is taught to both blind and deaf girls**



**Folk and Square Dancing enjoyed by all**

From Educational Institutions of Austin, Texas  
Austin Education Association (1960)

# *Blind, Deaf and Orphan School*



May Day, 1957



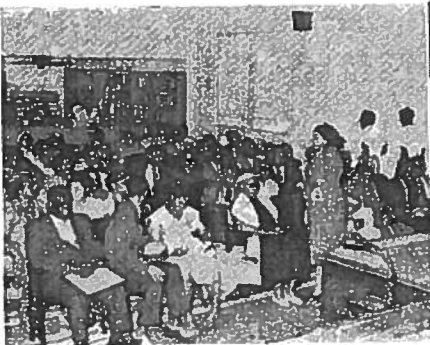
Girl Scouts of America



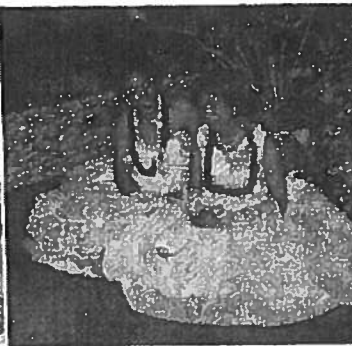
Girls' Basketball Team



Boys' Basketball Team



Alumni Group



Social Activities



Educational Tours

From Educational Institutions of Austin, Texas  
Austin Education Association (1960)

The photographs show the newer buildings at the original campus

# Last campus takes off

By JOAN PENZENSTADLER

East Campus was originally the site of the Montopolis Drive-In Theater. In 1981, the land was cleared and the present buildings were constructed (in the record time of 200 days) to house the Blind, Deaf and Orphan School for Colored Youths. The BDO was formerly located on Bull Creek Road between Thirty-eighth and Forty-fifth Streets. The school, which offered a program through secondary level, was under the Texas Youth Council at the time. Control was transferred in 1963 to the Board for Texas State Hospitals and Special Schools.

In 1965, East Campus became part of the Texas School for the Deaf; the blind students were sent to the State School for the Blind. At first, East Campus contained only the middle school program, while elementary and secondary programs were on South Campus. Black residents at all levels lived on East Campus. The middle school supervisor was Helen Weckert.

In 1966 the East Campus cottages were integrated. Middle school moved to South Campus and primary grades, for students age six to 10, came to East Campus; the program had three years of "preparatory," followed by first and second grades. Thus, children spent three years, mainly in oral language training, before beginning first grade at age nine. The supervising teacher was Golda Caldwell, who in 1970 became elementary principal. Sue Drake took her place as instructional supervisor, a position she still holds.

The East Campus pre-school program opened in 1972 with Ann Olmstead, present supervisor, as lead teacher. The same year, the teaching approach changed from oral to total communication. The elementary program dropped the preparatory years and instituted a grade one through five for students beginning at age six.

It was during these years that the "rubella population" of children, born during the mid-1960s, swelled East Campus to 250 students and the teacher-student ratio, one to nine. Special programs were developed for these students' learning needs.

In 1976, Golda Caldwell retired and Joe Salinas, assistant principal, moved to East Campus for one year. The following year James Howze, assistant superintendent, became the administrator with responsibility for all East Campus departments.

In 1979, Sandra Burke became the East Campus administrator, with the title of Director of Admissions and Developmental Programs.

Her department expanded to include assessment, occupational and physical therapy, and counseling for East Campus students. The same year, a program for multi-handicapped students opened under Rick Craig.

At the beginning of the 1981-82 school year, Sandra Burke resigned to work on her dissertation, and East Campus was re-organized into its present form according to the plan presented by Dr. Victor Galloway and approved by the TSD Governing Board. Walter Camenisch, in January of 1982,



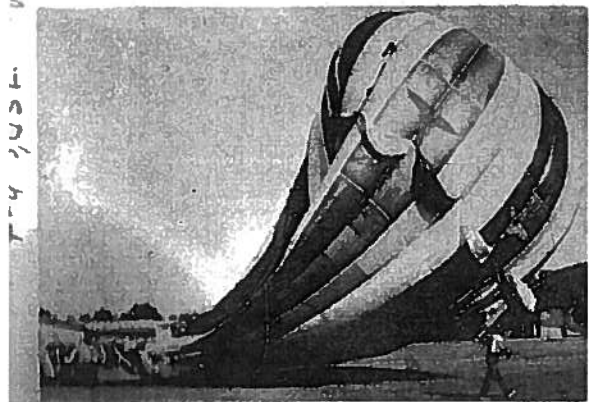
Shella Bacon and a stubby Edna Esparza (who graduates this year) demonstrate the day's lesson, "taller than" and "shorter than" in a 1972 language class.

became principal of the Lower School, which included East Campus' early childhood and elementary programs.

The multi-handicapped program, still under Rick Craig, is now the responsibility of Claire Eugen, Upper School principal. The occupational/physical therapy, counseling, admissions, speech therapy, audiology and educational diagnostic programs are combined under Pupil Personnel Services directed by Dr. Robert Mehan.

The student life department, which is responsible for the cottage life of all East Campus students, is headed by Phillip (Flip) Darce, and is under Charles Horton, director of student life.

Today East Campus serves 75 students in the elementary school, 35 in the multi-handicapped unit and 30 in early childhood education.



The highlight of the East Campus's history was the day when the airship descended from the sky, a visit arranged by the dean of education and the Chamberlain. Each student was given a short tour of the airship, which was on route to an air show.



Since she became the supervising teacher of the elementary program, Mrs. Sue Drake has made it her practice to hear student reports at the end of each unit of study. Day student Van Hickman in 1971 gave his report on a unit on Japan.





Gymnasium (1961), TSD East Campus



Gymnasium (1961), TSD East Campus





J.C. McAdams Auditorium (1961), TSD East Campus

# Memory of 2 to be honored in dedication of buildings



B.J.  
Taylor

On Saturday, the Texas School for the Deaf will dedicate two buildings in memory of former Superintendent J.C. McAdams and former teacher Jack H. Hensley.

Bronze plaques will be dedicated at the Hensley Library and the McAdams Building during ceremonies at 10 a.m. at 1102 S. Congress Ave. and 10:45 a.m. at 610 E. Airport Blvd. A reception will follow.

McAdams' contributions in civil rights and education include serving as superintendent of the Texas Blind, Deaf and Orphan School from 1951 to 1965, when the all-Black campus at 610 Airport Blvd. became part of the unified Texas School for the Deaf.

McAdams received a bachelor's degree in agriculture from Hampton Institute at Hampton, Va., and a master's degree in agriculture education from Colorado State University. He was a consultant with the Texas Education Agency before becoming superintendent in 1951.

McAdams' father was born a slave and became one of the first Black lawyers in Tennessee, providing his son with exemplary values. McAdams died on Sept. 15, 1988, and is survived by a daughter, Bettye Joanne McAdams of Austin.

Hensley was a student at Texas School for the Deaf from 1932 to 1939. After graduating from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., in 1945, he taught at the School for the Deaf for 39 years at the elementary, junior high and high school levels. Hensley retired in 1984, and was appointed by Gov. Bill Clements in 1988 to the school's board of directors. He died in January.



J.C. McAdams

*Austin American-Statesman  
Oct. 5, 1989*

Article in the Austin American-Statesman, October 5, 1989 with the dedication of the auditorium on the East Campus to the memory of Superintendent J.C. McAdams