

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places Registration Form****1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: Stephen F. Austin Elementary School

Other name/site number: Abell Street School (1969), Minnie Mae Hopper Elementary School (1996)

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

**2. Location**

Street &amp; number: 500 Abell Street

City or town: Wharton


State: Texas

County: Wharton

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
(☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National  
Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the  
property (☒ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☒ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

State Historic Preservation Officer

12 | 22 | 21  
Date

Signature of certifying official / Title

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

	Private
<b>X</b>	Public - Local
	Public - State
	Public - Federal

### Category of Property

<b>X</b>	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	2	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** EDUCATION: School

**Current Functions:** VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Modernistic Colonial Revival

**Principal Exterior Materials:** BRICK, STUCCO

**Narrative Description** (continuation sheets 8 through 12)

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

X	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** n/a

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture; Education; Ethnic Heritage/Hispanic (Mexican)

**Period of Significance:** 1930-1972

**Significant Dates:** 1930, 1935, 1939, 1955

**Significant Person:** n/a

**Cultural Affiliation:** n/a

**Architect/Builder:** Giesecke & Harris, Architects; Hedrick & Lindsey, Architects; Albert A. Reber

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (continuation sheets 13 through 25)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet 26 through 30)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on (date)
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government (*Wharton County Historical Commission*)
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: *Austin History Center (Austin, Texas)*

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): n/a

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property:** 4.4766 acres

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: n/a

1. Latitude: 29.312649° Longitude: -96.091761°

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The property is bound by Abell Street, Center Street, Alabama Street, and Speed Street, with a recorded legal description being "RUST 3 BLOCK 7 LOT ODD." See map on Page 36.

**Boundary Justification:** Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Patricia M. Blair, Chair WCHC, Delaney Harris-Finch, and David Bucek, FAIA

Organization: Wharton County Historical Commission

Street & number: 1406 Kelving Way

City or Town: Wharton State: Texas Zip Code: 77488

Email: blairpatm@gmail.com

Telephone: 979-532-8023

Date: 07/30/2021

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (continuation sheet MAP 31 through MAP 33)

**Figures** (continuation sheets FIG 34 through FIG 54)

**Photographs** (continuation sheet PHOTO 55 through PHOTO 68)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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## Photographs

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas  
Photographed by Sharon Joines, June 12, 2020

Photo 1

West (front) elevation, south side

Photo 2

West (front) elevation

Photo 3

West elevation, front entrance detail

Photo 4

West elevation, front entrance detail, south side

Photo 5

West elevation, front entrance detail, south side

Photo 6

West and south elevations

Photo 7

South elevation of 1990s south building; SFA original building in background (left)

Photo

South elevation of 1990s south building; SFA original building in background (left)

Photo 9

South and east elevations of 1990s south building

Photo 10

East and north elevations of 1990s building at south courtyard

Photo 11

South and east elevations of SFA original south wing at south courtyard

Photo 12

East and north elevation of SFA original south wing at south courtyard

Photo 13

North and east elevations, SFA original building at south courtyard

Photo 14

East and south elevations of 1955 restroom addition at south courtyard

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Photo 15

South elevation central wing and 1955 cafeteria addition at south courtyard

Photo 16

South and east elevations, 1955 cafeteria addition

Photo 17

East elevation of 1955 cafeteria addition

Photo 18

East elevation of storage sheds and service area at far east side of property

Photo 19

East elevation of 1990s south building and SFA original building south wing

Photo 20

East elevation of SFA original building north wing and 1990s north building

Photo 21

North, east and south elevations of SFA original building at north courtyard

Photo 22:

East and north elevation of SFA original building north wing

Photo 23:

South elevation of 1990s north building

Photo 24:

North elevation of 1990s north building

Photo 25:

North and west elevations of 1990s north building and SFA original building (right)

Photo 26:

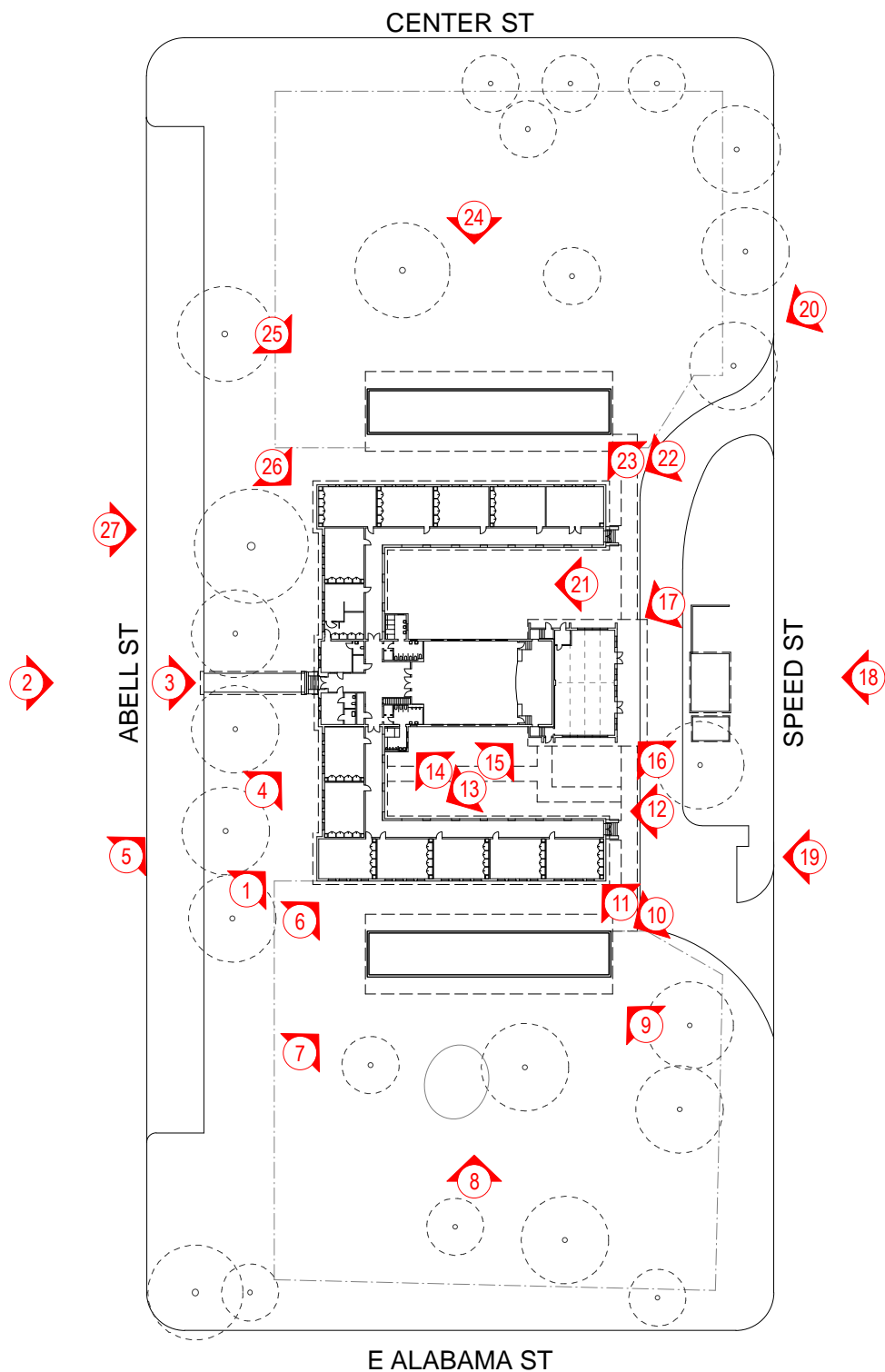
North and west elevation of SFA original building north wing

Photo 27:

West elevation of SFA original building at north end

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

## Photograph Log Diagram



Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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## Description

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is a Modernistic Colonial Revival style, Depression Era school featuring the symmetry of both Classical and Colonial styles with an expression of monumentality, with a period of significance of 1930-1972. The formal primary entrance features an entablature with a broken scroll pediment that reflects Colonial Revival. The flanking entrance windows are set within vertical recessed panels, similar to many of the New Deal era Public Works Administration (PWA) and Works Project Administration (WPA) Moderne buildings, which also employ classical balance and symmetrical forms sheathed in smooth flat surfaces, sometimes associated with Stripped Classicism. The school was largely constructed in three major phases in 1930, 1935 and 1939 utilizing federal funds for public building projects under the New Deal. Construction of the original 1930 4-room ward school began just as the 1929 Stock Market Crash occurred utilizing salvaged brick from the former 1899 Wharton Public School, to save money. The 1935 addition represents the majority of the school construction and was designed by Giesecke & Harris (August Watkins "Watt" Harris and Bertram Giesecke), of Austin, Texas. The 1935 addition established the current Modernistic Colonial Revival style, by incorporating the sloped roofs, massing and window fenestration patterns of the 1930 stucco ward school into an overall composition utilizing both traditional and modern design elements. Matching the 1935 design, subsequent additions were added in 1939, designed by Hedrick & Lindsley, (Wyatt C. Hedrick and Claude H. Lindsley) with local Wharton architect Albert A. Reber. The 1939 additions were funded as part of the second round of PWA matching grants.

Also known as Abell Street School and Minnie May Hopper Elementary, the current facility is approximately 20,000 square-feet (including the enclosed corridor spaces and 1955 rear additions). Located on a portion of the former McWillie Plantation Tract, the school is centered on a 4.48-acre, double-block property nestled in a residential neighborhood and across from the Wharton Cemetery. The single-story building has an 'E' plan including north and south courtyards. The main building includes principal's and nurse's offices, 14 classrooms, boys' and girls' restrooms, an auditorium with stage, and a cafeteria/multipurpose room. Two additional single-story, single classroom-width buildings were constructed on-site in the 1990s. Although altered over time, changes to the school have been additive, not reductive to the original design, with the majority of the alterations occurring within the period of significance to further the original intended educational use. The school served as a public elementary school through 2009; subsequently, space was used by the Wharton Independent School District's alternative school program, special education administration, and the Upbring Head Start Preschool program 2010-2021.

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## Site

The Stephen F. Austin Elementary School building is located at 500 Abell Street in Wharton, Texas, within the William Kincheloe League, Abstract No. 38, east of the Colorado River and being a portion of the former McWillie Plantation Tract. The 4.48-acre property is the size of two of the adjacent regular neighborhood blocks, with north and south property lines of approximately 300 feet and east and west property lines of approximately 650 feet. The property is bound by Abell Street to the west, Center Street to the north, Speed Street to the east, and Alabama Street to the south. The original Stephen F. Austin School building, constructed in phases between 1930 to 1939, sits at the center of the property, with the main entrance facing Abell Street. According to an early Wharton map, the McWillie Place was located adjacent to the current school property opposite the main school entrance. Directly to the south of the school property is the Wharton Cemetery, which began as a graveyard for early settlers prior to the creation of Wharton County and the selection of the townsite of Wharton. To the west, north, and east are residential neighborhood blocks.

The 1930s-era original school plan has an 'E' shape, with north and south courtyards bound on three sides by the building, and open to the east (rear) side facing Speed Street. Two small additions were constructed at the central inner corners of the building to expand the restrooms. In the 1990s two additional freestanding rectangular classroom buildings (**noncontributing**) were added, one adjacent to the north wing and one adjacent to the south wing. Since 2010, the freestanding additions have been utilized by the Upbring Head Start Preschool program. Two fenced play yards take up

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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the remaining north and south sides of the property. The play yards were fenced when the freestanding additions were constructed in the 1990s. Directly northwest of the north play yard is the relic waterway of Caney Creek, known by early settlers as Canebroke Creek, which was formerly the main channel of the Colorado River. The school property also contains several mature trees. Two redbud trees were planted at the front of the building in memory of Jennifer Leigh Speidel (1974-1981); a dedication plaque for the trees hangs near the front entrance (one tree remains north of entry). Remnants of a memorial garden exist in the north rear courtyard for John Earl Cochran, II (1988-2004). The original flagpole circa 1939 remains at the front of the property, to the south of the main entrance. There is a small round sandbox with play equipment at the south play yard.

Along Abell Street, a large portion of the property has a single row of perpendicular head-in parking spaces. At the center is a walkway leading to the front entry of the building; the walkway cover, consisting of metal pipe columns clad in brick and metal flat roofing, was added in the late 1990s. At the back of the property, adjacent to Speed Street, there is a curved drive with a covered drop-off area in front of the entrances to the 1955 cafeteria/multipurpose room addition. Similar to the front walkway, metal pipe and roof coverings were added to connect the freestanding north and south classroom buildings to the main school building; additional covered walkways were added at the south courtyard. At the island of yard between the curved driveway and Speed Street are two non-historic metal sheds (not counted on inventory per NRHP guidelines) and a walled-off, open service area.

## Exterior

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is a Modernistic Colonial Revival style Depression-Era school, partially funded with a matching grant from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, later known as the Public Works Administration (PWA), Project No. 5142. Stylistically, the building is not highly decorated and has the symmetry of both Classical and Colonial styles, but the formal primary entrance features an entablature with a broken scroll pediment that places the building firmly in the Colonial Revival category. Conversely, as with many of the schools and public buildings designed by Giesecke & Harris in the 1930s, the overall massing, simplified decoration and expression of verticality at the entrance of Stephen F. Austin Elementary, conveyed by the flanking entrance windows set within vertical recessed panels, is also similar to many of the New Deal era Public Works Administration (PWA) and Works Project Administration (WPA) Moderne buildings, which also employ classical balance and symmetrical forms sheathed in smooth flat surfaces, sometimes associated with Stripped Classicism.

The 1935 addition to Stephen F. Austin Elementary also incorporated the sloped roofs, overall massing and window fenestration patterns established in the design of the original 1930 stucco ward school, in combination with the described traditional and modern design elements to create a new overall Modernistic Colonial Revival composition. The traditional elements of the 1935 Giesecke & Harris addition, while simplified, appear influenced by their earlier work in South Texas, such as their prototype design for a 6-room rural school for Edinburg, Texas, that was likely influenced by the regional design studies "Watt" Harris experienced early in his career while working in Tampico, Mexico, with his fellow University of Texas classmate, David R. Williams. Influences for the 1935 addition to Stephen F. Austin Elementary reflecting many of the New Deal era buildings Giesecke & Harris designed, in composition, overall massing, use of verticality and expression of monumentality have parallels with the firms designs for Navasota High School (1930) and the Austin State Hospital, Ward Building #522 (1934).

The front façade of the Stephen F. Austin Elementary expresses a staunch symmetry, with five bays. The two end bays and central bay slightly protrude from the elevation face, representing masses that extend behind. The building floor level is elevated approximately 3-4-feet above ground, and a set of stairs the same width as the entry leads to the inset entrance. The floor level sets a belt course that continues around the entire building. Historically, the stucco wall below the belt course was painted the same tone as the upper stucco walls; however, it has been painted a darker tone over the past several decades.

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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The central bay's dominance is further asserted through a flat roof, extending above the low-hipped roof of the rest of the building. The symmetrical front central bay features a recessed entry and two windows to each side. Rectangular panel relief details are above and below each of the central bay windows. The recessed entry face features solid pedestals that extend out to flank the stairs, pilasters with elongated scroll capitals, an entablature with dental frieze, and a broken pediment. The solid wood front double-entry doors have lower panels, with upper 2-over-2 divided glass lites; above is a 6-lite transom. The original entry exterior light fixture remains.

The school building exterior retains a high degree of original fabric and detailing, with the exception of the replacement of the wood windows with aluminum frame windows. The original wood windows had a 6-over-6 lite configuration; two smaller original windows remain at the boys' and girls' restrooms. Each exterior window has a simple inset stucco frame detail. The large steel arched windows at the north and south side of the auditorium had a 6-over-5 lite configuration, with two operable 8 lite panels; the upper arch had 10 fanning lites. These window frames remain, exposed on the interior and infilled at the exterior.

As mentioned in the previous section, coverings over the main entrance walkways were added in the late 1990s, consisting of metal pipe columns (clad in brick at the front entry), and corrugated metal roofs. Although obstructive of the original front entry detailing, the walkway cover construction is freestanding from the building, with the metal roof slightly slipping under the ceiling of the inset entry opening. Another physical change to the building is a result of the placement and shape of the two added free-standing 1990s buildings to the north and south of the original school building. These buildings obstruct the ability to experience the monumentality and massing in full of the original Stephen F. Austin Elementary School building.

### **Floor Plan & Interiors**

The completed 1930s era school has an 'E' plan shape, consisting of an administrative and classroom spine; a north classroom wing, a south classroom wing, and a central mass with communal spaces. Open-air covered walkways originally connected the classrooms, spanning the inner north, east, and south façades with arched openings facing the courtyards. Of the vast number of schools designed by Giesecke & Harris, Stephen F. Austin Elementary is a rare example of a single-loaded corridor configuration.

The school was largely constructed in three major phases in 1930, 1935 and 1939 utilizing federal funds for public building projects under the New Deal. In 1930, the school consisted of 4 rooms located at the southwest corner of the building (classrooms 7, 9, 11 and 13). According to former student Darwin "Tex" Johnson, who attended the school in the early 1930s, there was a temporary wooden addition on the north end, where the principal's office and restrooms were located. Construction began on the 4-room ward school just as the 1929 Stock Market Crash occurred. WISD school board minutes indicate the stucco masonry structure was to be constructed utilizing salvaged brick from the 1899 Wharton Public School, designed by Eugene T. Heiner, to save money. Construction methods included installing stucco over thin welded wire fabric reinforcing where future additions were anticipated, still visible in the attic and crawlspace.

The central mass, including the front entry, administrative rooms, restrooms, and auditorium with stage, were added in 1935 along with 6 additional classrooms (classrooms 6, 8, 10, 12 14 and 16). The 1935 addition, designed by Giesecke & Harris, established the overall design direction for the majority of the school construction, and the interior detailing is consistent with the firm's interiors for school design. The 1935 work was completed with a matching grant from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, later known as the Public Works Administration (PWA), Project No. 5142.

The symmetrical 'E' shape plan was completed in 1939 with the addition of 3 classrooms (classrooms 15, 17 and 19) at the south wing and space for a cafeteria (now classroom 18) at the end of the north wing. The 1939 additions were

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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designed by Hedrick & Lindsley (Wyatt C. Hedrick and Claude H. Lindsley) in association with local Wharton architect Albert A. Reber. The 1939 additions were funded as part of the second round of PWA matching grants.

The school's 14 classrooms (including the original northeastern cafeteria) are all of similar size, approximately 20 by 30 feet. Each classroom was equipped with a wall of storage closets with solid wood doors with lower panel louvers and unique pivoting hardware that is seen in several Giesecke & Harris school projects. Most of the closets and closet doors remain; the pivot hardware has been removed, but placement is evident through ghosting at the hardwood floors. The original solid-wood 6-panel classroom doors, jambs, ball finial hinges, mortise door locks, and transom windows with 3 divided wire-glass lights remain intact.

At the central area of the building, the doors at the front administrative rooms are similar to the solid-wood-paneled classroom doors. The nurse's door matches the classroom doors but with a louvered wood transom, another typical Giesecke & Harris school design detail, to promote cross ventilation. The principal's office wood door is of the same panel configuration as the others but with glass lites in the upper 2 panels. The solid-wood auditorium doors and front-entry doors match the other doors at the lower panels but have upper 2-over-2 divided-glass lites. These doors' transoms match those of the classrooms with 3 divided lites over the single doors and 6 divided lites over the double doors. These doors all remain intact.

Student restrooms flank each side of the auditorium entry, girls to the north and boys to the south. At the original, 1935 section of each restroom the original toilets, sinks, metal stall partitions (girls' room), plaster walls, and tile base remain intact. The original tile floors also remain intact with the exception of a portion of the floor in the boys' restroom where plumbing fixtures were removed, and new urinals installed. There are private restrooms inside the principal's office and nurse's room which also retain original plumbing fixtures.

The flooring throughout is currently covered with carpet. The original edge-grain pine wood floors are known to be intact and in good condition under the carpet in the auditorium. Sections of wood flooring have been seen in the classrooms under pulled-up areas of carpet; it is assumed the original wood floors remain throughout; condition unknown. Limited investigation above the dropped ceiling in the classroom and corridor areas revealed original extant wood cornice trim, light fixtures, and metal vents.

In 1945, the open-air covered walkways were enclosed, the arches infilled with walls with wood double-hung windows with 6-over-6 divided lites, matching the existing building windows. The shape of each arch is still apparent from both the interior and exterior as the infill is inset. It appears that the two sets of original doors (matching the auditorium doors) from the main central entry hall to the covered open-air classroom corridors were removed and installed in the arched openings at the east end of both the north and south wings. New doors with upper 3-over-3 divided lites were subsequently installed at the main central entry hall; the original transoms remain in place.

Sometime between the late 1960s and early 1970s, the original double-hung wood windows with 6-over-6 divided lites were removed, with the exception of two windows, one at each of the original student restrooms. Aluminum frame windows with 6 horizontal glass panels were installed to fit the existing openings. During this period the arched windows at the auditorium were encapsulated, the exteriors finished in stucco with the sills and outline of the arched openings still visible.

The auditorium was renovated in 1989 in effort to update the space for extended community and public use. Needed repair work included fixing crumbling plaster walls and addressing interior damage due to roof leaks. During this renovation, University of Houston architecture student and Wharton native David Bucek, initiated a mural project at the north and south sides of the auditorium. During the process the original window frames were found within the walls that had been covered in the 1970s. A decision was made to leave the brick and clay tile walls exposed, and not to replaster the

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auditorium side walls. Bucek completed the design and painting of 10 murals depicting nursery rhyme stories at the arched 10-foot tall semi-exposed window openings. Frames from the original windows were incorporated into the design. The murals remain intact.

The cafeteria/multipurpose room was added to the back (east) side of the auditorium in 1955, along with two small additions to expand the restrooms, all with flat roofs. The roof of the cafeteria/multipurpose room extends to provide a covered drop-off area served by the school access driveway off Speed Street.

### Development & Alteration Timeline

- 1930** Four classrooms, room numbers 7, 9, 11, 13, constructed
- 1935** Main entry, six additional classrooms (6, 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16), office, auditorium, teacher (Nurse) Room, and restrooms constructed under Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, later known as the Public Works Administration (PWA), Grant Project No. 5142
- 1936** New school named Stephen F. Austin Elementary
- 1939** Three Classrooms (rooms 15, 17 and 19), and east wing Cafeteria (currently Classroom 18) constructed under Public Works Administration (PWA) Grant Project No. 2637
- 1945** Renovation work including enclosure of covered walkways, arches facing the inner courtyards and east end infilled with walls, windows and double doors. *The Wharton Spectator* reported on August 10, 1945 that the “undergoing repairs and additions ... will make the building much more comfortable for the students during the forthcoming winter term.”
- 1955** Existing eastern Cafeteria/Multipurpose Room addition constructed
- 1969** Renamed Abell Street School
- c.1970** Auditorium arched windows infilled/encapsulated, wood double-hung windows removed and replaced with aluminum frame windows
- 1994** Northern freestanding structure constructed adjacent to original north wing of school, designed by Coltzer / Hamilton Architects
- 1996** Renamed Minnie Mae Hopper Elementary
- 1999** Southern freestanding structure constructed adjacent to original north wing of school, designed by Blair Hamilton, AIA with Bay Architects

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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## Statement of Significance

Stephen F. Austin Elementary in Wharton, Wharton County, Texas, is a Modernistic Colonial Revival style school featuring the symmetry of both Classical and Colonial styles. The school was largely constructed in three major phases (1930, 1935 and 1939), utilizing federal funds for public building projects under the New Deal. Construction of the original 1930 4-room ward school utilized salvaged brick from the former 1899 Wharton Public School. The 1935 addition, representing the majority of the school construction, established the current Modernistic Colonial Revival style, incorporating the sloped roofs, massing, and window fenestration patterns of the existing ward school into a composition utilizing traditional and modern design elements. Matching the 1935 design, subsequent additions were added in 1939, funded as part of the second round of PWA matching grants. The period of significance is 1930-1972, marking the first year of construction through the current 50-year point, in recognition of the building's continued use as a public school campus until 2009.

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is significant under Criterion A in the area of Education and Ethnic Heritage/Hispanic (Mexican) at the local level, as a property that represents local changes in race and ethnic relations through the prism of education and early efforts to promote integration of Hispanic students in Texas. The school was utilized strategically by local Mexican-American community leaders who were well-connected with Mexican-American activist leaders in Texas to promote early statewide school integration efforts. These efforts received national attention in 1952 in a *Saturday Evening Post* Article titled, "Texas Tackles the Race Problem.: The school is also significant under Criterion A in the area of Education in Wharton at the state level as one of the nine original sites for the 1958 LULAC funded preschool program "Little School of the 400." The program was developed to teach four hundred basic English words to Spanish-dominant children in order to help them effectively succeed in the public educational system. The "Little School of the 400," which was planned, financed and implemented by Mexican Americans, represents the first successful educational programing for non-English speaking Latin American students in Texas. The program was so successful it was incorporated by the State of Texas in the drafting and passage of Texas House Bill 51 creating "The Preschool Instructional Program for non-English Speaking Children in Texas." Stephen F. Austin Elementary is one of the two last remaining schools of the original nine "Little Schools" that maintain a high degree of physical integrity.

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level. The Depression Era school is a good example of Modernistic Colonial Revival style, and a fine example of the numerous South Texas public schools designed by August Watkins "Watt" Harris and Bertram Giesecke. The school features symmetry of both Classical and Colonial styles with an expression of monumentality. The Public Works Administration (PWA) building program financially supported the completion of the school in phases during the 1930s. What began as a four-room ward school, constructed in 1930 with salvaged materials was later expanded in 1935. Matching the established design intent, subsequent additions were added in 1939, designed by Hedrick & Lindsey (Wyatt C. Hedrick and Claude H. Lindsey) with local Wharton architect Albert A. Reber.

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## Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

"The town of Wharton was founded as the seat of Wharton County in April 1846. Land for a courthouse, named Monterey Square, was given from the land grant of William Kincheloe, one of Stephen F. Austin's 'Old Three Hundred' colonists who settled in this area in 1822. The townsite was surveyed by Virgil Stewart and William J. E. Heard, and the rich farmland attracted many settlers. The advent of railroads and irrigation brought increased settlement to the town, which remains a center of agricultural, educational, industrial, and medical services for a large area." (City of Wharton Historical Marker, 1986)

Prior to the permanent settlement by colonists from Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred," the fertile valley of the lower Colorado River was initially inhabited during the Paleo-Indian period with occupation continuing through the Late

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Prehistoric period. Native American people of the Coco band of Karankawa occupied the area, and the Mayeyes and Tonkawa resided just north the area, through the early 1800s. Understanding of these early occupants has been facilitated through archeological excavation projects by the Houston Archeological Society. In 1981, the Crestmont archeological site (41WH39), was discovered on a relic waterway of Caney Creek, downstream from the Stephen F. Austin school site, after a number of new homes had been constructed along Crestmont Street. The site is significant for the sustained occupation that was documented, revealing successive habitations of hunter-gatherers. Artifacts and skeletal remains found ranged from roughly 800 B.C. to as late as 1500 A.D. Skeletal remains were also discovered beneath one of the newly constructed homes on Crestmont where the remains are still located. Native American sites in Wharton and Wharton County have been found along areas of high ground adjacent to rivers and creeks, including relic waterways whose physical location is not always identified on present-day maps. These excavations indicate Native Americans chose to live on higher ground proximate to water and associated resources. Burials found suggest Native American were buried where they died, with burials primarily found within the campsites of their riverine habitation.

The north playground of the Stephen F. Austin School is an area of high ground adjacent to the bank of the former Caney Creek, indicating the possibility that Native American habitation and/or burials may have occurred at the school site. Caney Creek was channelized within the town of Wharton in the early 20th century, but during times of flooding the creek reemerges and can be seen in aerial imagery.

*Karankawa Kadla*

The Native Americans who historically lived along Caney Creek in the vicinity of the school, are the Coco Karankawa. Just as there were originally five bands of Karankawa, the descendants of the Coco Karankawa are today one of five bands currently organized as Karankawa Kadla, which translates “mixed Karankawa.” The Karankawa are a cultural group comprised of several bands whose coastal habitation extended from West Galveston Island down to Corpus Christi Bay. Their inland riverine territories extended north of the coast, with each band separated by major rivers. The northeastern band of the Karankawa, the Coco, lived between the Colorado and Brazos Rivers, along the coastal deltas of the rivers as well as the small Bernard River up to present-day I-10. Their territory included what is currently Wharton County. The interior riverine territories of the Coco Karankawa in Wharton County include habitation and burials between the Colorado River and the San Bernard River, including Caney and Peach Creeks. Known archeological sites in present-day Wharton, Texas, include numerous recorded and unrecorded sites along the high banks of Caney Creek and relic waterways of the Caney (originally Canebrake Creek) which was the main channel of the Colorado River approximately 1,000 years ago. The creek was named for the bamboo cane (*Arundinaria*), which grew as high as thirty-five feet, through which the Caney flowed, making the soil fertile by its yearly decaying and renewing.

*Wharton County*

Anglo-American colonization of the Wharton County area was secured as part of the land grants obtained by Stephen F. Austin to settle 300 families in Texas. Starting in 1823, land titles were granted in current day Wharton County to thirty-one of Stephen F. Austin’s “Old Three Hundred.” Early Wharton area settlers settled in the alluvial land adjacent to Caney Creek and the Colorado River, which afforded access to fresh water, just as the Coco band of the Karankawa who occupied the land when the settlers arrived. In 1845 parts of Colorado, Matagorda, and Jackson Counties were carved-out to create Wharton County and establish a county seat in the new town of Wharton.

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is located within the Kincheloe League #1 on a portion of the former Abram A. and Jane S. McWillie plantation. McWillie’s 512-acre plantation (later divided as 212- and 300-acre parcels), was the smallest plantation in the area, stretching from the river along the east boundary of Kincheloe’s league, wrapping around the north end of the town’s platted 5-acre lots. His deed stated that the tract contained a five-acre graveyard the Kincheloe family had set aside earlier for local burials. The tract included land east of the current East Avenue to Alabama Road and land

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north of the current Alabama Street. Abram McWillie died in 1862 and left his property (minus the graveyard) to his wife, Jane S. (Andrews) McWillie, but records show he had been unable to make payments on the property due to the war. The property was foreclosed and sold to Daniel Kincheloe at \$10 an acre, which satisfied the terms of the judgment against Jane. The McWillies only owned their cotton plantation for a short time, but the 1902 City of Wharton map refers to the property on the west side of the Stephen F. Austin Elementary as McWillie place.

As the county transitioned from plantations to farming and industrial productions, Swiss, German, Mexican, Czech and Jewish immigrants settled in the county. Industrial output included cotton gins and a cotton oil mill, dairy processing plant, molasses and sugar cane factories; and an ice plant. Railways established as early as 1881 including the New York, Texas and Mexican, and the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railways contributed to the population increase and establishment of the farming economy. Steady population growth spurred Wharton's development in the late 1880s and early 1900s establishing civic institutions such as an opera house, library, public park, as well as buildings and infrastructure for new private merchants and professional services.

Currently Wharton County encompasses 1,086 square miles of land with a population of approximately 41,556. Wharton County includes the cities of East Bernard, El Campo, and Wharton; and several small towns and unincorporated communities. According to 2019 US Census data, Wharton County is 43 percent white, 43 percent Hispanic, and 14 percent black or African American. The City of Wharton encompasses 7.5 square miles of land area with a population of approximately 8,640 and is 33 percent white, 37 percent Hispanic, and 30 percent black or African American.

### Wharton Independent School District

Presently, Wharton County has five Independent School Districts; all established by the early 1900s: Wharton ISD (1896), Louise ISD (1903), East Bernard ISD (1916), El Campo ISD (1918), and Boling ISD (1928). At one point in the early 20th century the county had 56 school districts, which over time were consolidated and annexed into the five listed ISDs. As the Wharton County school system organized in the early 1900s, segregated schools were established for white, black and Hispanic children. The first Wharton County school board was elected in 1911.

By 1930 the following Wharton ISD schools were operating: Ward School for Hispanic students; Dunbar School/Wharton Negro Training School, Alta Vista School, Dave Woods School, Jake Ford School, and Mackey Negro School for black students; and Wharton Primary School, Wharton Upper Grade (Intermediate) School and Wharton High School for white students. In 1930, the Wharton ISD board student census reported 841 Mexican students, 521 Negro students and 570 White Students, for a total of 1,932 students.

The Wharton ISD scholastic census reports recorded in the school board minutes provided separate student counts for "White, Mexican and Negro" students through 1941. After 1941 the student count includes "White and Negro" students. The change in record keeping indicates the ISD's documentational recognition of the legal classification of Mexican students as white per the "separate but equal" clause in the Texas Constitution. In the 1950s Wharton ISD annexed several ISD's from the county: Sorrell (1951), Pierce (1953), Mackay Land portion of Crescent ISD (1953), Lane City (1957), and Magnet (1957). The chart below is a sample of the Wharton ISD scholastic census reports.

	1930	1938	1940	1942	1948	1950	1958	1960
<b>White Students</b>	570	712	767	1,117	1,027	1,218	1,853	2,120
<b>Mexican Students</b>	841	329	416	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Negro Students</b>	521	607	640	547	575	589	780	830
<b>Total</b>	1,932	1,648	1,823	1,664	1,602	1,807	2,633	2,950

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In 1948 the Wharton ISD Latin-American school (formerly known as the Mexican School) was renamed R.H.D. Sorrel Elementary School by the school board. In 1949 Sorrel Elementary School was closed and the building relocated to the high school for use by the band. After 1949, there is no record of a separate school for Latin-American students in Wharton, indicating Mexican students were placed into the district's white schools as of the 1949 school year.

While efforts to integrate Mexican-American students in Wharton ISD schools began in the late 1940s, the segregation of African-American students remained intact through 1965 when the School Board adopted a compliance plan with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Over the next three years Wharton ISD schools become fully integrated.

**Stephen F. Austin Elementary School Building**

On July 12, 1929, the WISD Board voted to purchase 4.48 acres from the Rust Estate located on Alabama Street at Abell Street. After B. D. King surveyed the tract, a sale price of \$2,800 was agreed upon (\$800 cash in hand, plus \$500 per year for four years). The 1929 deed and survey for Stephen F. Austin Elementary School identify the land for the school as located on the former McWillie Plantation. The McWillie farm also surrounded the Wharton Cemetery to the north, east and south – historic accounts indicate the Kincheloes gave 5 acres for a graveyard that was excluded from the McWillie Plantation.

At the end of August 1929, WISD secured a contract with H. E. Sutton of El Campo to construct the school, with work to begin in mid-September 1929. To alleviate school overcrowding, a new four-room brick and stucco primary school was to be constructed. Bricks from the Eugene T. Heiner designed 1889 Wharton Public School torn down in 1928 were used on the new structure in order to save money. Surprisingly, work did proceed despite the Stock Market Crash of 1929 which began in September, hitting an all-time low on October 29, 1929.

Based on site analysis and interviews, it is understood that four classrooms with masonry construction and a connected temporary wood frame restroom facility structure were built in 1930 on the acquired property. Marvin E Defee, architect, is mentioned in the Wharton Independent School District (WISD) Board of Trustees meeting minutes on January 6, 1929, in association with a new ward school with four classrooms and two toilets at the cost of \$17,000.

In September 1934, the WISD moved forward to expand the four-room school utilizing a matching grant from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, later known as the Public Works Administration (PWA), Project No. 5142. A bond election passed approving \$36,000 to build a school structure worth \$47,000. The school district entered into a contract with architects Giesecke & Harris (Bertram Giesecke and August Watkins "Watt" Harris) of Austin. Giesecke & Harris designed a major addition, including a main entrance, six classrooms, an office, auditorium, restrooms, and a teachers/nurse's room. Contractor A. N. Evans of Seguin received the construction contract to build the addition; construction began in January 1935. On December 2, 1936, the School Board approved the name of Stephen F. Austin for the new elementary school's name as recommended by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Parent-Teacher Association.

In 1939, three additional classrooms and a cafeteria were added to the school designed by Hedrick & Lindsey (Wyatt C. Hedrick and Claude H. Lindsey) in association with local Wharton architect Albert A. Reber (1906-1984). Knutson Construction Company was awarded the addition construction contract. The 1939 additions were funded as part of the second round of PWA matching grants. In 1955, two restrooms and a cafeteria/multipurpose room were added. In the 1990s two freestanding classroom structures were completed, the north building by Coltzer / Hamilton Architects (1994), and the south building by Blair Hamilton, AIA, Bay Architects (1999).

In September 1938, WPA funds were used to pay for landscaping and as matching funds for construction of additional classrooms. In September 1938 the Superintendent visited Houston architect Claude H. Lindsey to request drawings for

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three additional classrooms for the school. A bond was passed, and the construction bid of Knutson Construction Company was accepted. By June 7, 1939, the work was reported completed.

In December 1939 bids for construction of a gymnasium and auditorium were considered. Knutson Construction Company's bid was accepted but later put on hold.

As the school was beginning to be over-crowded, the Board discussed a possible addition to the building on June 6, 1945, and on June 28, 1945, contractor C. E. Jopling presented his plan for enclosing the arched exterior corridors. During the summer of 1945, the corridors were enclosed. In July 1946 W. E. Hall was named Principal. In December 1955, a renovation project expanding the boys' and girls' restrooms and the addition of a new cafeteria/multipurpose room at the rear of the school with an exterior covered area for onloading and offloading cars and buses was completed.

In 2009, as part of a bond, Wharton ISD announced it had no future use for Hopper Elementary School as a functioning school campus. The preschool classes were moved to Sivells Elementary School. Since then, at different times, the main building has housed the ISD's alternative school program and special education administration. The Upbring Head Start Preschool program functioned in the outer freestanding buildings from 2010 through the summer of 2021. The school district stores supplies in some classrooms and maintains a wood shop on campus.

### **Mexican American Civil Rights Movement & Texas School Desegregation**

#### *Statewide Actions*

As early as the 1920s, Mexican-Americans began organizing social and political groups in Texas to facilitate community advancement and respond to widespread discrimination. Prevalent Texas organizations included Cruz Azul Mexicano (Mexican Blue Cross), 1921 (the Wharton chapter formed in 1924); League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), 1929; American G.I. Forum (AGIF), 1948; American Council of Spanish-Speaking People (ACSSP), 1951; and the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (1961).

Dr. Hector P. Garcia of Corpus Christi founded the AGIF, a civil rights organization focused on Mexican-American veteran civil rights. The ACSSP, a national Mexican-American civil-rights organization, was based in Austin and was directed by University of Texas Professor George I. Sanchez, who in 1941-1942 served as LULAC president. Dr. Hector P. Garcia and Professor George I. Sanchez are now nationally recognized as Mexican American civil rights movement trailblazers.

LULAC, AGIF, the American Council of Spanish-Speaking People, and other organizations all widely identified school segregation as a priority discrimination practice to challenge. A series of court cases in support of this effort, largely backed by these organizations, began in 1930 and continued into the 1970s attempting to desegregate Texas public schools. The cases mainly prompted school desegregation under the assertion that Mexican-Americans were racially classified as white and therefore the Texas constitution's article declaring "separate schools shall be provided for the white and colored children, and impartial provision shall be made for both" did not include a third segregated group for Mexican-American students. Although this legal approach was specific to Hispanic students, excluding arguments against the segregation of black students, these cases set precedent for *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1952-1954), the landmark case which ruled racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

One of the earliest of cases was *Del Rio Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930) in which a group of Mexican-American parents challenged segregation practices in Texas' Del Rio school system that placed their children in separate, and inferior, classes from white children. A Texas Court of Civil Appeals in San Antonio ruled that arbitrary segregation was unjust, but sided with the ISD in accepting the classification and placement of students based on English language

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proficiency. The decision was considered a loss by Mexican-Americans in the fight for equal educational opportunities; however, the case galvanized community organization.

In 1948 LULAC partnered with the American G.I. Forum of Texas (AGIF in the case *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District* which followed precedent set in the 1947 California case, *Mendez v. Westminster*. The judge in *Mendez v. Westminster* dismissed the claim that proficiency in English warranted separate classrooms, and further asserted that segregation of non-English speaking students made learning the English language more difficult.

In *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD*, the Federal District Court of Texas concluded that the segregation of Mexican-American students was not legal in that no Texas State law upheld the separation of racially classified white children. The *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD* ruling also upheld *Del Rio ISD v. Salvatierra*, allowing for the placement of lower-grade students with English language deficiencies in separate classes, but demanded stringent classification standards based on scientific language tests applied to all students. LULAC and the American G.I. Forum would spend the next decade trying to enforce and codify this ruling.

In the late 1950s, National LULAC President, Felix Tijerina and other LULAC members, including Tony Campos, David Adame, and Jacob Rodriguez, created the "Little School of the 400," a preschool program to teach dominant Spanish-speaking children English words to break the language barrier prior to completing first grade. None of these men could speak English when they entered the first grade, and recognized the inability to speak English was one of the primary reasons for the high dropout rate of Mexican American students resulting in the failure of Mexican Americans to compete successfully in the job market. During this period, it was estimated as many as 200,000 Texas five-year-olds could not speak English. To address these concerns, the nonprofit LULAC Educational Fund, Inc., was established to fund the "Little Schools" effort. Dr. J.W. Edgar, Commissioner of the Texas State Educational Agency, endorsed the program, joined the board the "Little Schools," and authorized the use of public classrooms for the "Little School" classes. The program started in 1958 with classes in nine Texas cities, including Sugar Land, Aldine, Ganado, Edna, Brookshire, Rosenberg, Vanderbilt, Fort Stockton, and Wharton. The program was based on the success of a 1957 pilot project in Ganado, Texas, taught by Isabel Verver and financed by Felix Tijerina. On June 23, 1958, the "Little School of the 400" instructional program was inaugurated in a formal program in Sugarland, Texas, attended by Texas Governor Price Daniel. The "Little School of the 400" educational project sought to teach four hundred basic English words to Spanish dominant children in order to help them effectively cope with instruction given in English in the regular public educational system. Prior to implementation of the program, 80% of Mexican American Children failed the first grade, whereas 98% percent of the children who participated in the "Little Schools of the 400" passed to second grad. The "Little School of the 400," which was planned, financed and implemented by Mexican Americans, represents the first successful educational programing for non-English speaking Latin American students in Texas. The program was so successful, it was incorporated by the State of Texas with the passage of Texas House Bill 51. The bill called for the implementation of The Preschool Instructional Program for Non-English Speaking Children in Texas in 1960, and by 1962 one hundred and fifty-five schools participated in the "Little Schools of the 400." The "Little School of the 400" served as a model for the 1965 federal educational program Head Start. Head Start was introduced by the Lyndon Baines Johnson Administration, and was also influenced by President Johnson's student teaching experiences, teaching Mexican American students, many of whom were not English proficient.

The 1957 Texas case of *Hermina Hernandez v. Driscoll Consolidated Independent School District* revisited the segregation of students disguised as language deficiency classroom placement. The court determined the Driscoll ISD placement system of students into a series of remedial classes was arbitrary and did not follow the language exam requirements established by *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD*. The trial made apparent that Driscoll ISD policy was specifically placing Mexican-American students into separate "beginner" classes regardless of English language proficiency. The case decision again reinforced the illegality of segregating Mexican-American students in school.

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*Wharton Actions*

On November 12, 1950, a LULAC mass Meeting was hosted in Wharton, Texas, with approximately 250 members joining from Laredo, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Victoria, Ganado, Palacios, Bay City, Richmond, Rosenberg, Alvin, Texas City, Galveston, Pasadena, and Houston. Mexican-American discrimination problems of Wharton County and surrounding area was the main topic of discussion and galvanization of LULAC councils in the five counties surrounding Wharton. Shortly after the conference, the LULAC El Campo Council No. 170 helped establish the LULAC Wharton County Ladies Council No. 186, 1951, and the LULAC Wharton Men's Council No. 216 in 1952.

High level LULAC attention to the conditions in Wharton is also documented in a 1948 letter written by Gus C. Garcia, Legal Advisor for LULAC San Antonio to *The Wharton Spectator* publisher, Frank A. Shannon. The letter was in response to an editorial by Shannon in which he mischaracterizes LULAC actions effecting the City of Wharton and asserts that a "class discrimination line was necessary ...if American culture is to survive." Gus C. Garcia's letter addresses in full the misconceptions, prejudices and bigotry presented in the editorial. C. Garcia details LULAC's campaign against the segregation of school children of Mexican or Latin-American descent as a means to end the "vicious circle" of hatred by illuminating racial dividing lines at the earliest public social engagement level.

As the segregation of Mexican-American students in public schools was being challenged in southwestern US courts, desegregation of Hispanic students in the Wharton ISD was occurring due to the efforts of Mexican-American parents in Wharton. Gustavo "Gus" Gonzales, Sr., and wife Josefina "Fina" were involved in efforts to improve Anglo-Latin relations in Wharton and Texas. The Gonzaleses had direct close social and working ties to Hector P. Garcia, founder of the AGIF and member of the 1957 formed U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. The Gonzaleses were members of the Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations (PASO). Josefina Gonzales served as founding president of the LULAC Wharton Ladies' Council No. 186 in the early 1950s. Gus, Sr. and Josefina were also active in the Wharton education system as appointed census trustees, Gonzales, Sr. in 1955, and Josefina Gonzalez in 1956-1957. Gus Gonzales Senior was also involved with the Little School of the 400 distributions of books to Stephen F. Austin Elementary as documented in the Little Schools archival records.

Gus, Sr. and Fina Gonzales enrolled their son, Gustavo "Gus" Gonzales, Jr., in first grade at Stephen F. Austin Elementary, the district's "white" primary school, in 1946. It is of note that "Gus" Gonzales, Jr. was not English proficient and the Wharton ISD Latin American School (also known as the Mexican School) was still in operation at this time, closing in 1948.

The December 1952 *Saturday Evening Post* article "Texas Tackles the Race Problem," attempts to explain the development of Anglo-Latin relations in the state of Texas to its readers. Wharton is described as an unexpected place to lead integration efforts in Texas as an area feared by migrant workers as a place not to remain in after dark. The article accurately points out that race relations, and the treatment of Mexican-Americans in Texas at the time, differed widely across the state. It is mentioned that "some forty Texas towns have taken up Anglo-Latin friendship as a community project," of which Wharton was one of as of the late 1940s led by the Gonzales family and allies.

Two photos in Wharton are featured in the *Post* article, one of first grade classmates and friends, John Medrano and Richard "Dick" Frazar drinking from the same water fountain at Stephen F. Austin Elementary School with the caption, "Mexican-American kids are no longer segregated in Wharton, Texas, primary schools."<sup>1</sup> The second photo is of a Wharton Human Relations Council at City Hall, with the caption "discussing ways of solving the town's interracial problems." One of the unnamed men in the photo is Gus Gonzales, Sr., father of Gus Gonzales, Junior.

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<sup>1</sup> See Figure 53. Sutherland, Thomas S. "Texas Tackles the Race Problem." *The Saturday Evening Post*, 12 Jan. 1952, p. 22.

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The local school desegregation movement in Wharton, as an effort to further human relations and civil rights for all Texans, was significant as Wharton was one of few participants in the Texas Council on Human Relations (TCHR). The TCHR, established in 1950 by Governor R. Allan Shivers and financially backed by oil millionaire Robert E. Smith (also profiled and photographed in *Saturday Evening Post* article), sought to improve Anglo and Hispanic relations. The TCHR contacted Texas towns with populations over 2,500 to encourage the formation of local human-relations councils; by 1952 approximately forty local councils were formed. As part of the efforts to form and educate local councils, the TCHR mailed the Texas Board of Education's post *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD* statement and regulations on the illegality of discriminatory school practices to local Texas governments.

In a report published in the Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review in 1972, "De Jure Segregation of Chicanos in Texas Schools," Wharton ISD is mentioned in footnote:

"Wharton ISD historically operated a separate school for Chicanos. The evidence indicates that when the Mexican School was abandoned in 1948 the district contemporaneously initiated an ability grouping program. U.S. Dep't of health, Educ. & Welfare, On-Site Review of Wharton ISD, at 12 (June 1970). In the 1969-70 school year, fifty-two percent of Anglo and four percent of Chicano first grade students were in "accelerated" classes. ... The extent of segregation in the Wharton district is demonstrated by the fact that ninety-three percent of Chicano first graders were in predominantly Chicano classes and sixty-three percent of Anglos were in predominantly Anglo classes. Segregation was even greater in the second and third grades."<sup>2</sup>

The 1970s report establishes segregation within the Wharton ISD educational system through the use of a tiered class structure that was subject of the school segregation court battles. However, experiences in the early 1950s described by former students of SFA Elementary School indicate that the classrooms were integrated from the late 1940s through at least the late 1950s or early 1960s - prior to the establishment of the ability grouping program that attempted to re-segregate Wharton school children in the third and higher grades.

The troubled history of race relations in Wharton, Texas both complicated and fueled efforts to integrate local schools. White supremacy was deeply rooted in the region; Wharton was first settled as a plantation community during the time of the Old 300. The Ku Klux Klan established a strong presence in the area. The White Man's Union Association was established in Wharton just after reconstruction in 1889 as a political association that disenfranchised people of color from local politics.

The specific, exacerbated racial climate of Wharton, Texas advanced the town to regional and national attention during the civil rights movement, with national press articles in the Nation Magazine (1946), Life (1950) and the Saturday Evening Post (1951 and 1952). Adding to the spotlight on Wharton, was the growing fame and popularity of playwright and screenwriter Horton Foote, a Wharton native and Wharton County Sheriff T.W. "Buckshot" Lane.

### **Giesecke & Harris, Architects**

Bertram E. Giesecke (1892-1950) was the son of Hulda (Gruene) Giesecke and Frederick E. Giesecke. His father, Frederick, was a distinguished Texas architect, engineer, and educator associated with both Texas A&M University and the University of Texas. Bertram Giesecke received a degree in architecture from Texas A&M and a degree in architectural engineering from the University of Texas; Giesecke is honored as the first graduate from UT's architectural

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<sup>2</sup> Rangel, Jorge C, and Carlos M Alcala. "De Jure Segregation of Chicanos in Texas Schools." *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, vol. 7, no. 2, Mar. 1972.

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school in 1913. It is at the University of Texas where Giesecke met August Watkins Harris as a classmate in 1912. Shortly after graduating from UT, Giesecke served in the Signal Corps of the United States Army during World War I, achieving the rank of first lieutenant. After the war he was a partner in the architecture firm Kuehne, Chase & Giesecke, followed by partnership in the firm Walsh & Giesecke in 1920.

August Watkins "Watt" Harris, Sr. (1893-1968) began his education in architecture in 1910 at the University of Texas, where he also founded the campus chapter of the Theta Xi fraternity. During and after his time at UT he worked for architect Dennis Walsh. Harris served as an officer in the United States Army during World War I, including deployment time in France. Subsequently he worked in Tampico, Mexico, with architect David R. Williams (also a University of Texas classmate) designing residential facilities, plants, dormitories, and office buildings for major oil companies operating in Mexico.

Upon returning the United States in 1921, Harris formed the architecture firm Giesecke & Harris with Bertram E. Giesecke. Based in Austin, Texas, the firm designed residential, commercial, and public buildings throughout the state of Texas. The firm is well known for designing numerous school buildings, many of which are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places or are Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks. The firm also completed a substantial number of projects during the Public Works Administration Program in the 1930s. Throughout the 1930s, Giesecke & Harris served as Consulting Architects in the design, planning, and cost-estimating and Supervising Architects of design participants in the PWA Program. Watt Harris returned to military service in 1940 upon American involvement in World War II. The architecture firm of Giesecke & Harris was dissolved in 1942 by necessity due to Harris's absence.

During WWII, August "Watt" Harris served with the Air Force Materiel Command in the Chief Structures Evaluation Unit. Harris was charged with analyzing structures and construction costs of major American private aviation and automobile manufacturing plants in expansion efforts to supply aircraft and parts for the war effort. This position provided Harris the opportunity to make architectural and engineering contacts throughout the country. In 1946 Harris returned to Austin, Texas, and the private practice of architecture, partnering with his son, William Harris. August Watkins Harris participated in many civic and charitable organizations including the Austin Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee, the Heritage Society of Austin, Austin's Zoning Commission, the Travis County Historical Survey Committee, the American Legion, the National Housing Agency, and the Austin Emergency Housing Commission. Harris wrote two books, *Minor and Major Mansions in Early Austin* (1958) and *The Elgin-Butler Brick Company, 1873-1963* (1963).

Bertram E. Giesecke went on to establish the architecture firm Giesecke, Kuehne, and Brooks in Austin, Texas. Giesecke was active in many professional and governmental organizations. He held leadership roles in the American Legion, Austin Chamber of Commerce, Sons of the Republic of Texas, and Sons of Confederate Veterans. In 1946 Giesecke served as the president of the Texas Society of Architects. His state and federal government positions included: charter member of the board of governors of the National Association of Housing Officials, chairman of the Texas Relief Commission, consulting architect for the United States Treasury Department, member of the Texas Postwar Planning Commission, chairman of the Texas Roadside Council, member of the Texas Centennial Commission, member of the administrative committee of the Texas Safety Association, chairman of the Department of Defense Housing Commission, and a gubernatorial appointee to the State Hospital Advisory Council.

Building Designs of Note by Giesecke & Harris:

- 1921-1922, Bryson Residence, Enfield Road, Austin, Travis County, Texas
- 1924, Eagle Lake High School, Eagle Lake, Colorado County, Texas
- 1924, Kurt and Meta Schmedes House, 804 Baylor Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas, National Register of Historic Places

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- 1925, Brenham High School, 1301 South Market Street, Brenham, Washington County, Texas, National Register of Historic Places
- 1925, Norwood Tower and Motoramp Garage, 114 W. 7th Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
- 1926, Edinburg Junior College Auditorium, 415 W. University Dr., Edinburg, Hidalgo County, Texas Historical Marker
- c.1925, Taylor High School, Taylor, Williamson County, Texas
- 1926, Pease Park Gates and Tudor House, Austin, Travis County, Texas
- 1926, Nellie Schunior Memorial High School, La Joya, Hidalgo County, Texas
- 1927, Edinburg Texas Consolidated Schools (7 major buildings including Stephen Austin School, Sam Houston Elementary, A.Y. Baker Junior High school, and more), Edinburg, Hidalgo County, Texas
- 1927, Robert J. Kleberg Public Library, 220 N. 4th Street, Kingsville, Kleberg County, Texas, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
- 1929, Bryan Municipal Building, 111 E. 27th Street, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas, National Register of Historic Places
- c.1930, Bryan High School, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas (also credited for the design of seven Bryan elementary schools around the same time)
- 1930, Mathews School (renovation), 906 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
- 1930, Merchants and Manufacturers Building (now University of Houston Downtown), 1 Main Street, Houston, Harris County, Texas, National Register of Historic Places, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, and contributing building in the City of Houston Main Street/Market Square Historic District
- 1930, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (Texas Prison System) Central State Farm Main Building, 1 Circle Drive, Sugar Land, Fort Bend County, Texas, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
- 1930, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (Texas Prison System) Central State Farm Two Camp (now Houston Museum of Natural Science at Sugar Land), 13106 University Boulevard, Sugar Land, Fort Bend County, Texas
- c.1930, Lovenburg Junior High School, 39th Street and Avenue T, Galveston, Galveston County, Texas
- 1935, Wharton Elementary School (Stephen F. Austin) (major addition), 500 Abell Street, Wharton, Texas
- 1935, Raymond and Tirza Martin High School, 2002 San Bernardo Avenue, Laredo, Webb County, Texas Historical Marker (also credited for the design of three Laredo elementary schools around the same time)
- 1936, Becker School, 906 W. Milton Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark
- 1936, Palm School (addition), 744 TX-343 Loop, Austin, Travis County, Texas
- 1936, Zavala Elementary School, 310 Robert T. Martinez, Jr., Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas, Texas Historical Marker
- 1938, Santa Rita Courts, Austin, Travis County, 2341 Corta Street, Texas, Texas Historical Marker
- 1938, House Park Football Stadium, 1301 Shoal Creek Boulevard, Austin, Travis County, Texas
- 1938-1939, Austin High School Annex (John T. Allan Junior High School), 1212 Rio Grande Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas
- 1939, Robert E. Lee Elementary School, 3308 Hampton Road, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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- 1929-1930s, Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School: Dining Hall, Hospital Building, Dormitory Building, Trades Building, Shop Building, Laundry Building, Boiler Building, and Gymnasium, Bull Creek Road, Austin, Travis County, Texas
- Additional schools: Columbus High School, Weimar High School, Orange Grove High School, Freeport High School, Navasota High School, Angleton High School, Madisonville High School, Robstown High School, Alice High School and Alice Elementary School, New Braunfels High School and two New Braunfels elementary schools, Shiner High School, and St. Mary's Parochial School
- Additional buildings: Ward Building and minor structures, Austin State Hospital; The Capitol Group, Power House, Austin; Y.W.C.A. Dormitory and Administration Building, Austin; Goodyear Service Station (1st and Congress), Austin; Zilker Ice Plant, Austin; Citizen's Industrial Bank, Austin; Scott & Gregg Clinic, Austin; A.M.E. Baptist Church, Austin; Edinburg City-County Hospital; John B. Ashe Apartments, Houston; First National Bank Building, New Braunfels; Dittlinger Office Building, New Braunfels

### **Notable Stephen F. Austin Elementary School Faculty & Alumni**

Stephen F. Austin Elementary has local significance attributed to the educators and students who taught and attended the school. Many educators in Wharton ISD served the district for their entire educational careers, contributing to the education of countless numbers of Wharton students. Many former Stephen F. Austin Elementary School students went on to graduate from high school and college and achieve successful, fulfilling lives and careers in Wharton and around the country. Brief descriptions of a small sample of significant faculty and alumni are included below.

#### *Sergeant Minnie Mae Hopper*

In the mid-1990s, Stephen F. Austin Elementary (Abell Street School 1969-c.1990) was renamed Minnie Mae Hopper Elementary honoring Hopper's long service to education and national service during WWII. Hopper was a well-respected educator in Wharton County, beginning with her position of Wharton County Superintendent of Rural Schools from 1929-1935. In the early 1940s she taught in Louise, Texas, in southwestern Wharton County. In October 1942, Hopper left her teaching position to enlist in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in Houston, Texas. Hopper served in the WAAC through June 23, 1944; she was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant. She attended the Ft. Des Moines Motor Transport School specializing in auto service repair. After her service Hopper became Principal of the Wharton Independent School District Latin-American School, later known as Sorrel Elementary. In the late 1940s she held dual positions as teacher and principal at Stephen F. Austin Elementary, transitioning to the sole role of principal from 1951-1969. Hopper is remembered by students as a small woman in stature yet sizeable in presence - equally kind and "tough as nails." Hopper's students still talk about their fear of her rumored electric paddle. At 86 years old, on May 25, 1988, Minnie Mae Hopper passed away at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Waco, Texas. Hopper is buried alongside her father, mother, and brother at the Wharton Cemetery located across the street from Stephen F. Austin Elementary School.

#### *Gustavo "Gus" Gonzales, Jr.*

In an interview with Gus Gonzalez Jr., he recalls that he spoke only Spanish as a young child, and on his first day of school at SFA Elementary in 1946 he was unable to understand his teacher and classmates. He remembers the students and adults as being kind and welcoming; his teacher engaged him with coloring activities on that first day. His memories of school after the first day continue to be positive and Gus Jr. quickly learned English. Gus Gonzales Jr. went on to graduate from Wharton High School. Post high school he attended Tulane University, played college and professional football, and attended law school at the University of Portland and Osgood Hall Law School in Toronto. Gus Gonzales Jr. returned to Texas to work for the federal government in Austin, followed by the Dallas Independent School District before establishing his own law practice, and later serving as a Dallas Municipal Judge.

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*John J. Medrano*

John J. Medrano, the Mexican-American student pictured in the *Saturday Evening Post* article in 1952, described his experience at SFA Elementary in correspondence with the Wharton County Heritage Partnership. Medrano recalls that his first grade class included white and Hispanic students. Similar to Gus Gonzales, Jr., Medrano remembers that all the children were friendly and “being in a mixed class did not matter to me and did not seem to matter to the other children. We all got along well and went on with our school learning.” Medrano had fond memories of his teachers, especially Ms. Kral, his first grade teacher and Mrs. Sorrel, the music teacher. John Medrano continued his education through the Wharton ISD, graduating from Wharton High School in 1963. After graduation, Medrano enlisted in the U.S. Navy serving from 1963 to 1967. After Medrano’s tour of duty, he settled in Connecticut, working for 48 years at General Dynamics Electric Boat Division constructing US Navy submarines.

*Raymond David Vela*

Raymond “David” Vela entered Stephen F. Austin Elementary School as a first grade student in 1966, and graduated from Wharton High School in 1978. Vela began working for the National Park Service in 1981 while still in school at San Antonio Missions Historical Park. Returning to the NPS in 1998, Vela became the Superintendent of Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site in Brownsville, Texas. In 2002, he was appointed Texas State Coordinator for the NPS Intermountain Region; in 2004 Superintendent of Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park; in 2006 Superintendent of George Washington Memorial Parkway; and in 2008 NPS Southeast Regional Director. In 2012, he was named Associate Director for Workforce Management at NPS Washington D.C. headquarters. Vela became the Superintendent of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway in 2014. President Donald Trump nominated Vela for director of the National Park Service in 2018, but the Senate never confirmed the nomination. Vela served as deputy director for operations and was named acting NPS director in October 2019 following the departure of the former director.

*Fred S. Zeidman*

Fred S. Zeidman entered Stephen F. Austin Elementary School as a first grade student in 1952, and graduated from Wharton High School in 1964. In 2002 Fred Zeidman was appointed chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Museum by President George W. Bush, serving as Chair through 2010, and as a Chairman Emeritus through present day. A prominent Houston-based business and civic leader, Fred Zeidman is Chairman Emeritus of the University of Texas Health Science System Houston, interim Chief Financial Officer of the Texas Heart Institute, and is Vice Chancellor of the Houston Community College System.

**Conclusion**

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level. The Depression Era school is a good example of Modernistic Colonial Revival style, and a fine example of the numerous South Texas public schools designed by August Watkins “Watt” Harris and Bertram Giesecke. The school features symmetry of both Classical and Colonial styles with an expression of monumentality. The school retains a high degree of original fabric and the interior detailing is consistent with the school interiors designed by Giesecke and Harris in the 1920s and 1930s, yet is a rare example of a single loaded corridor configuration. The Public Works Administration (PWA) building program financially supported the completion of the school in phases during the 1930s. What began as a four-room ward school, constructed in 1930 with salvaged materials was later expanded in 1935. Matching the established design intent, subsequent additions were added in 1939, designed by Hedrick & Lindsey (Wyatt C. Hedrick and Claude H. Lindsey) with local Wharton architect Albert A. Reber.

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Stephen F. Austin Elementary is significant under Criterion A for its role in Education in Wharton at the local level, as a site where early efforts in the late 1940s and early 1950s promoted the integration of Hispanic students in Texas against the backdrop of racial discrimination and intimidation. The school was utilized strategically by local Mexican-American community leaders who were well-connected with Mexican-American Texas activist leaders to promote early statewide school integration efforts. These efforts received national attention in 1952 in a *Saturday Evening Post* Article titled, "Texas Tackles the Race Problem," featuring a photo taken at Stephen F. Austin Elementary, of two classmates and friends, John Medrano and Dick Frazar, with the caption, "Mexican-American kids are no longer segregated in Wharton, Tex." Furthermore, the unsegregated school, playground and sports fields, served as an important location where all children interacted.

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is also significant under Criterion A for its role in Education in Wharton at the local and state levels as one of the nine original sites for the 1958 LULAC funded preschool program, the "Little School of the 400." The program was developed by Felix Tijerina and funded by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), to teach four hundred basic English words to Spanish-dominant children in order to help them effectively cope with instruction given in English in the regular public educational system. The "Little School of the 400," which was planned, financed and implemented by Mexican Americans, represents the first successful educational programming for non-English speaking Latin American students in Texas. The program was so successful, it was incorporated by the State of Texas in the drafting and passage of Texas House Bill 51, creating The Preschool Instructional Program for non-English Speaking Children in Texas, and most observers agree the "Little Schools" became the model of the federal Head Start program. Stephen F. Austin Elementary is additionally significant as one of the two last remaining schools (the other being Travis Elementary in Rosenberg) of the original nine "Little Schools" that maintain a high degree of physical integrity.

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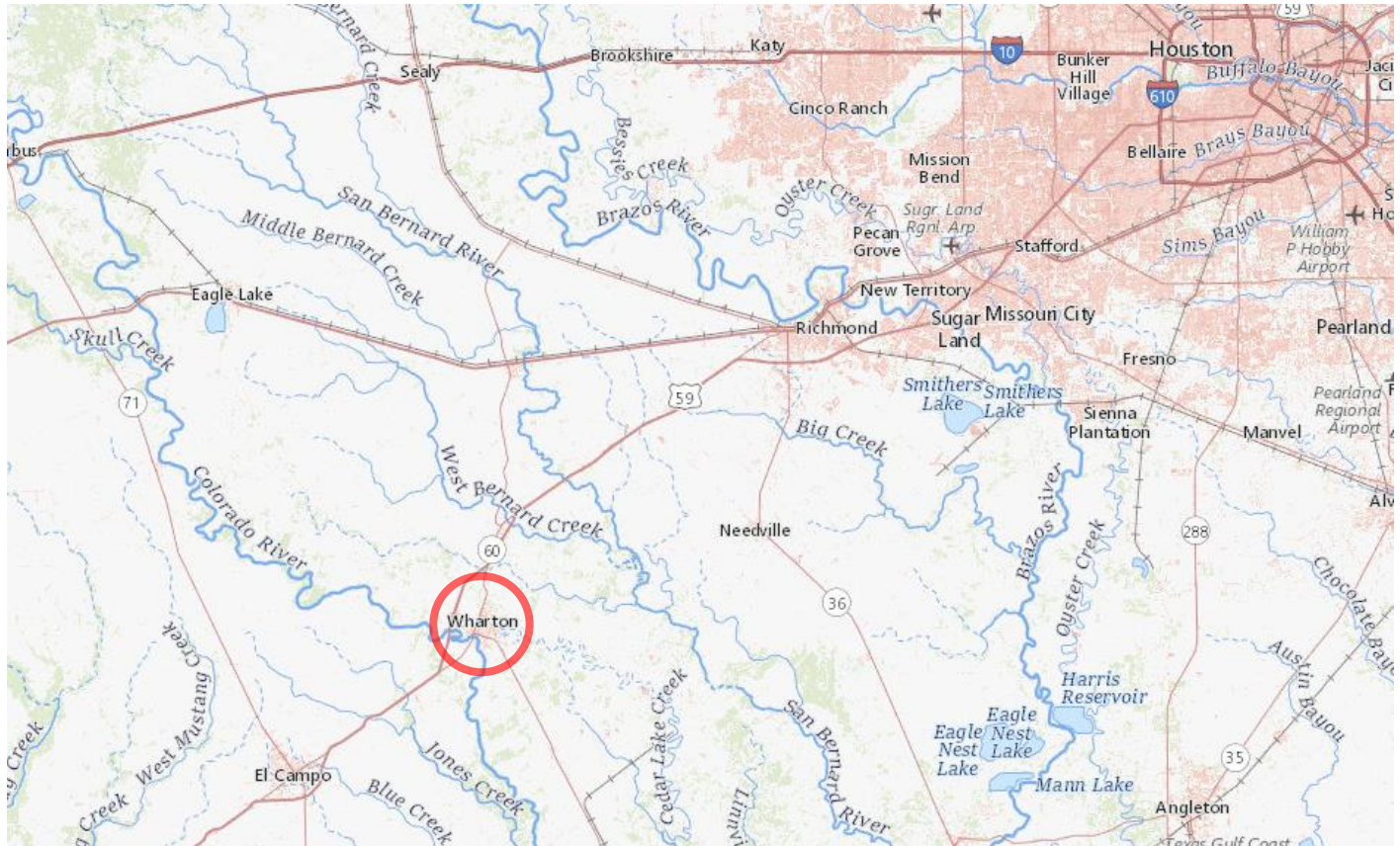
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## Maps

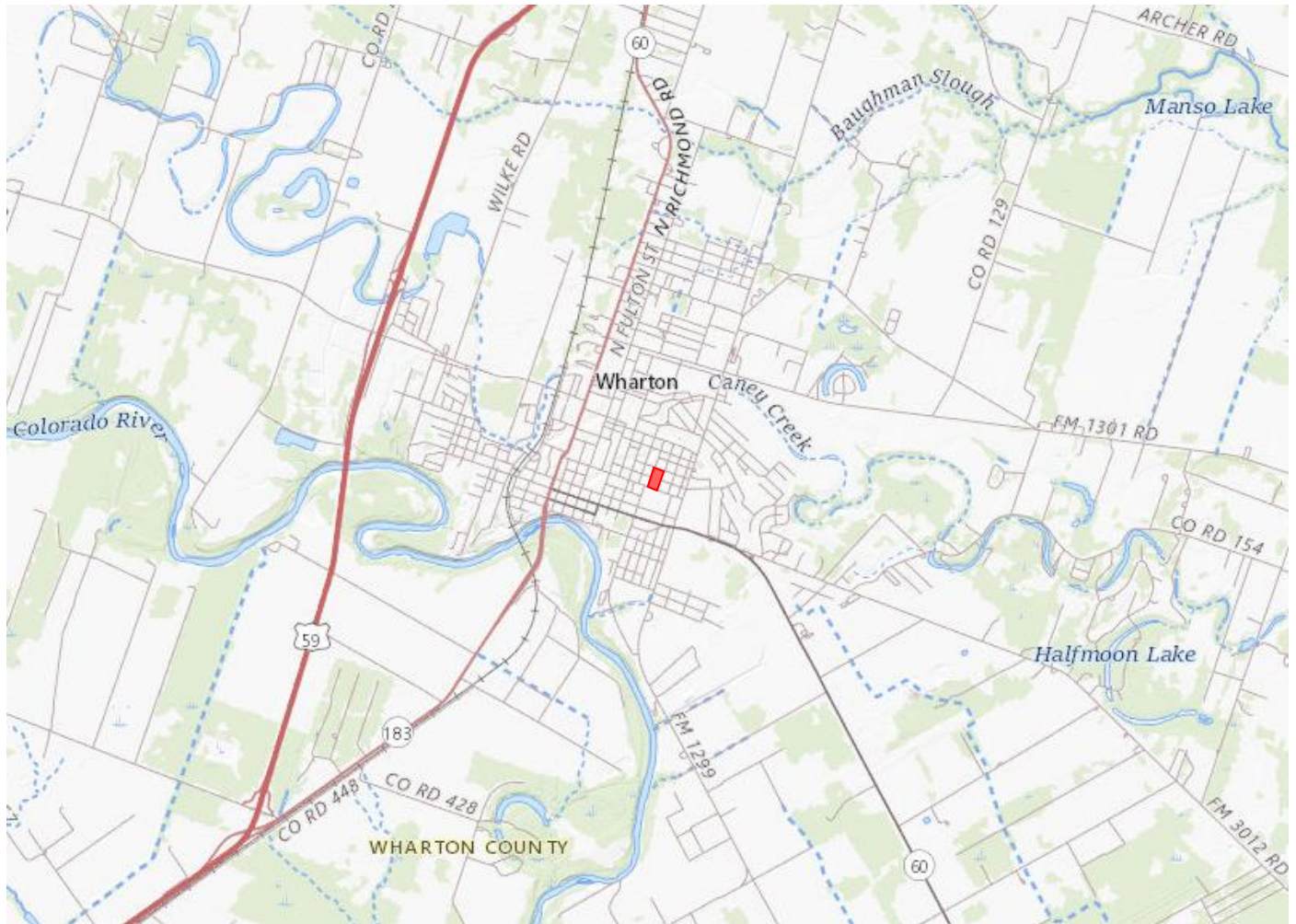


**MAP 1:** City of Wharton, Wharton County, Texas, Location Map  
Source: arcgis.com, USGS National Map, accessed May 2021

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Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**MAP 2:** Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas, Location Map

Source: arcgis.com, USGS National Map, accessed May 2021

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Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



**MAP 3:** Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas, Site Map  
Source: Google Earth, accessed July 2021

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Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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## Figures



**FIGURE 1:** January 1939 Aerial Photograph  
Prior to south and north wing additions



**FIGURE 2:** February 1956 Aerial Photograph  
Cafeteria and restroom additions (1955) visible



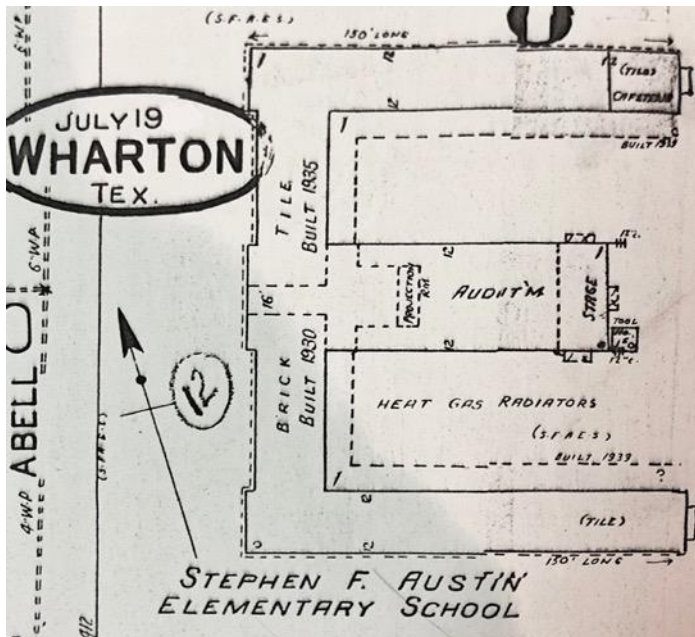
**FIGURE 3:** January 1962 Aerial Photograph  
Cafeteria and restroom additions (1955) visible



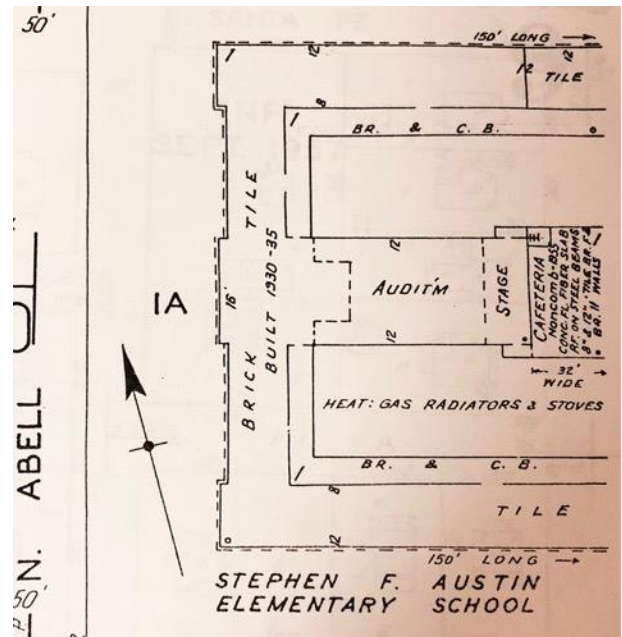
**FIGURE 4:** February 1995 Aerial Photograph  
North freestanding classroom structure (1994) visible

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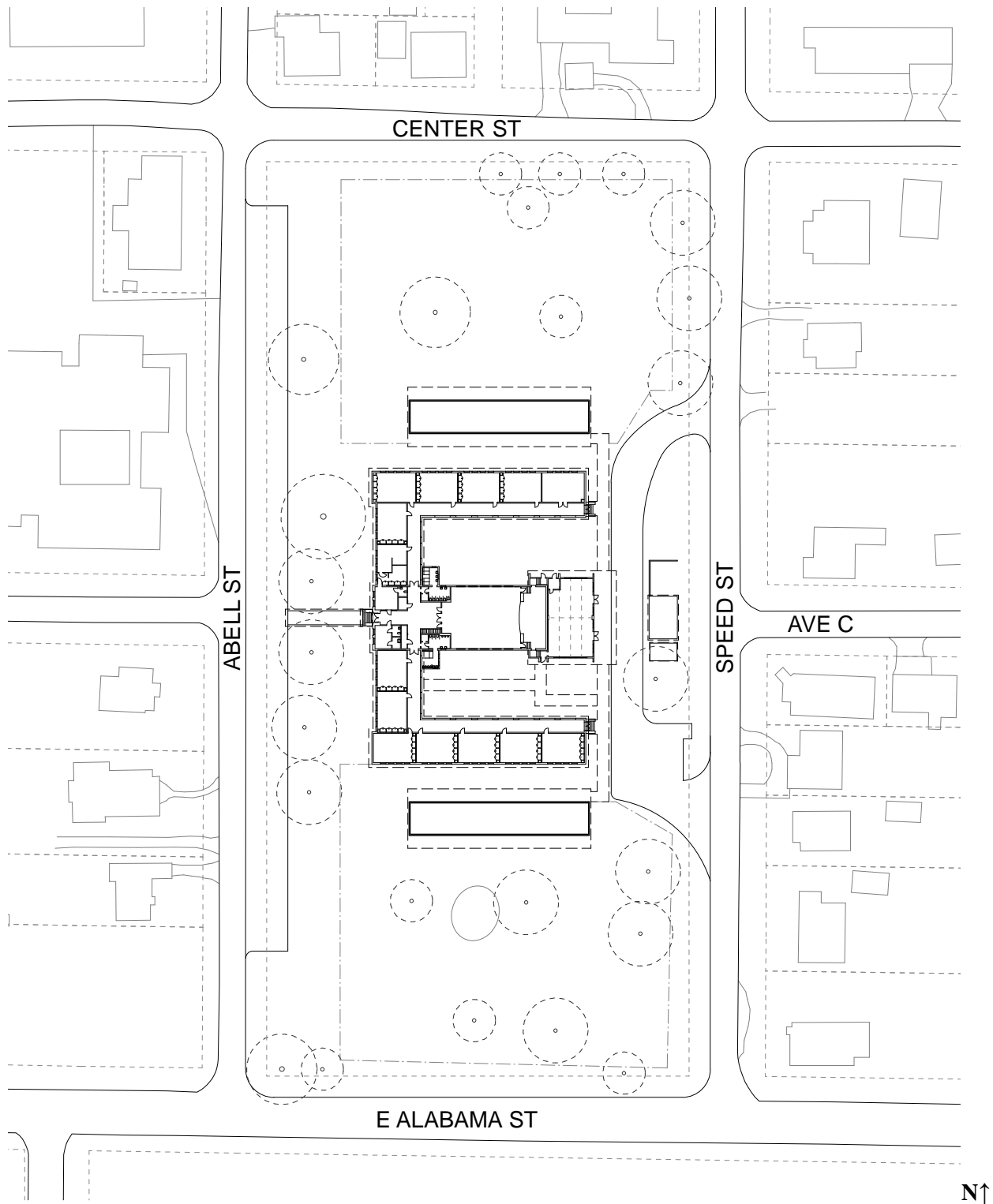


**FIGURE 5:** 1929-1942 Sanborn Insurance Map  
Construction dates noted: 1930 south “brick” wing; 1935 north “tile” wing; 1939 west and east “tile” ends of north wing (Cafeteria)



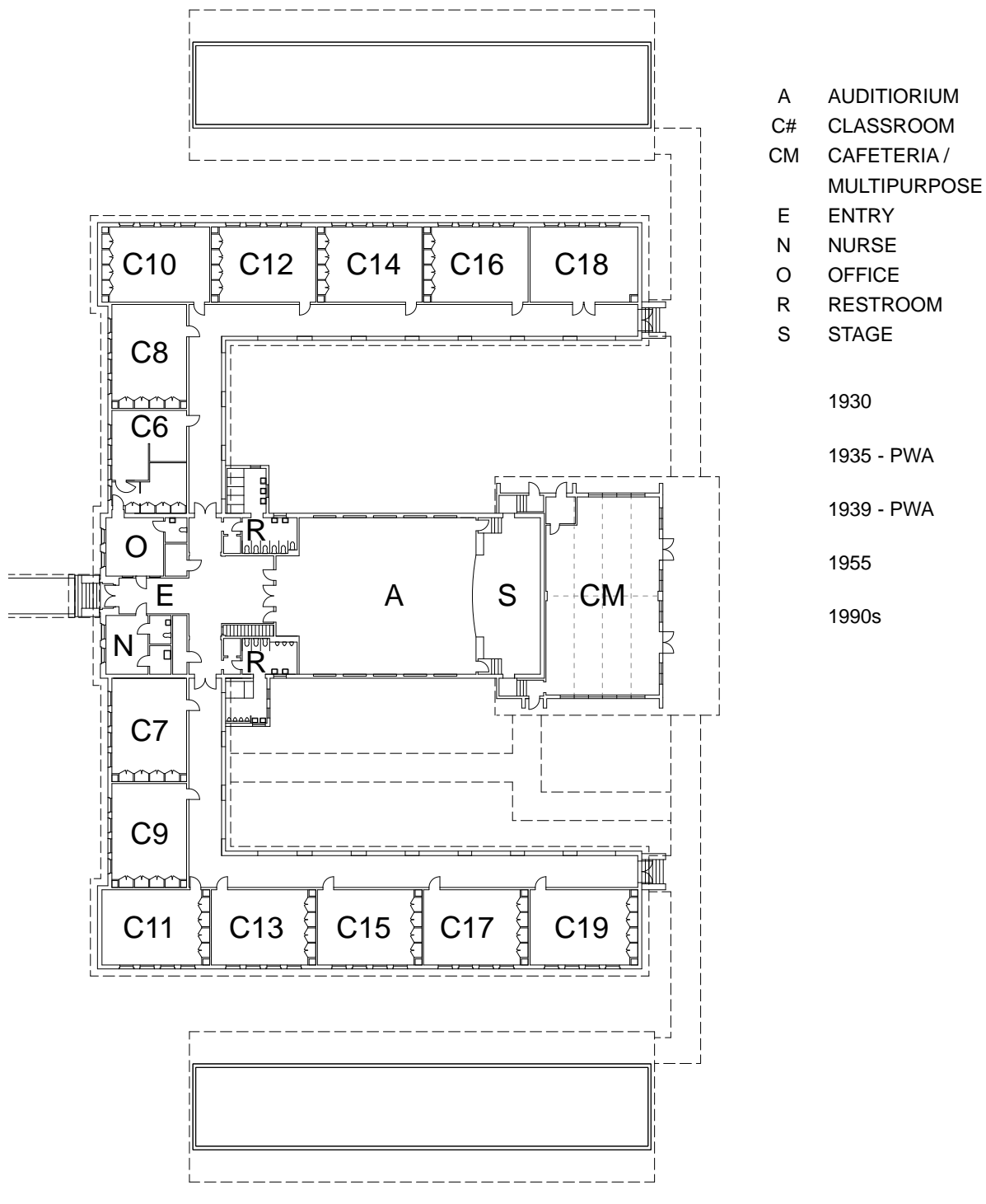
**FIGURE 6:** 1929-1957 Sanborn Insurance Map  
Cafeteria at east side of central mass added

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**FIGURE 7:** Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, 2020 Site Plan, existing conditions  
Source: Stern and Bucek Architects

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

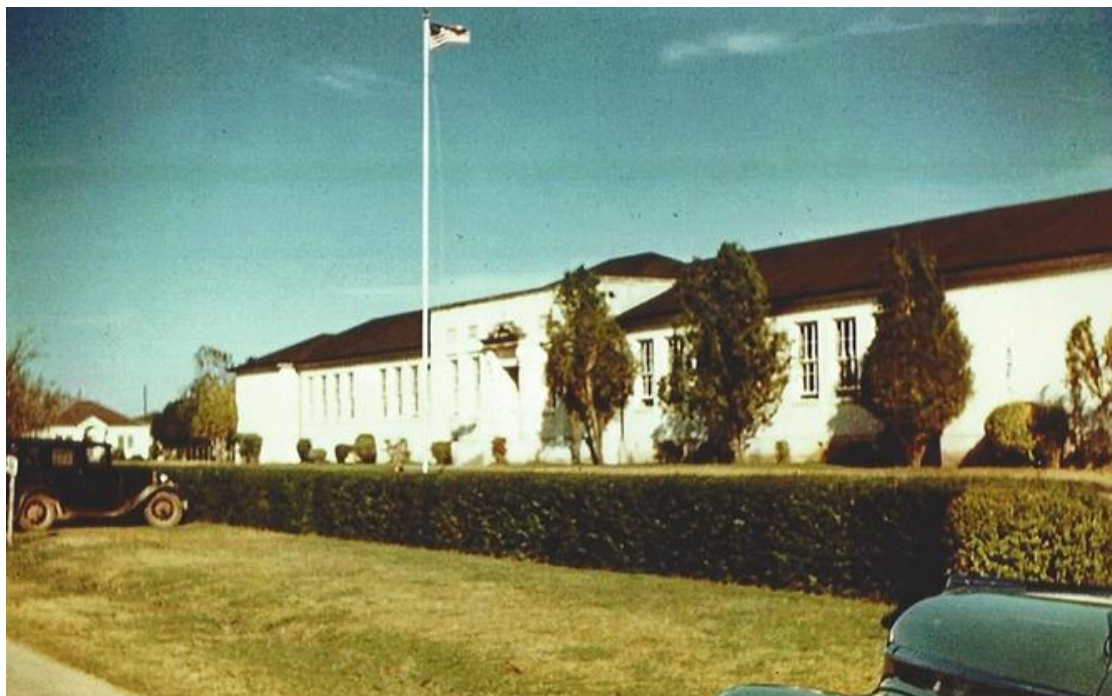


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**FIGURE 8:** Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, 2020 Floor Plan, existing conditions  
 Source: Stern and Bucek Architects

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**FIGURE 9a:** c.1945 SFA Elementary, front (west) elevation, looking northeast



**FIGURE 9b:** 2020 SFA Elementary, front (west) elevation, looking northeast

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**FIGURE 10:** c.1935 SFA Elementary, south facade; 1st Principal E.S. Sides (2nd from right), 2nd Principal Johnnie Mercer (3rd from left), teacher Ruth Suttle (4th from left)



**FIGURE 11:** Sergeant Minnie Mae Hopper; SFA Elementary renamed Minnie Mae Hopper Elementary in 1996



**FIGURE 12:** 1954 SFA Elementary, one of the wing's east elevations in front of the doors at an infilled arch; Mrs. Ripper with her first-grade class

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**FIGURE 13:** 1935 SFA Elementary, rear (east) elevation and partial north courtyard, stage access door visible at far left, covered walkway arch visible at far right



**FIGURE 14:** 1936/1937 SFA Elementary, north courtyard covered walkway arches visible at right, auditorium arched windows with lower hoppers visible at left; Second grader Eleanor Grace Jett (2nd row, 2nd from right) became a first-grade teacher at SFA Elem. in 1951.

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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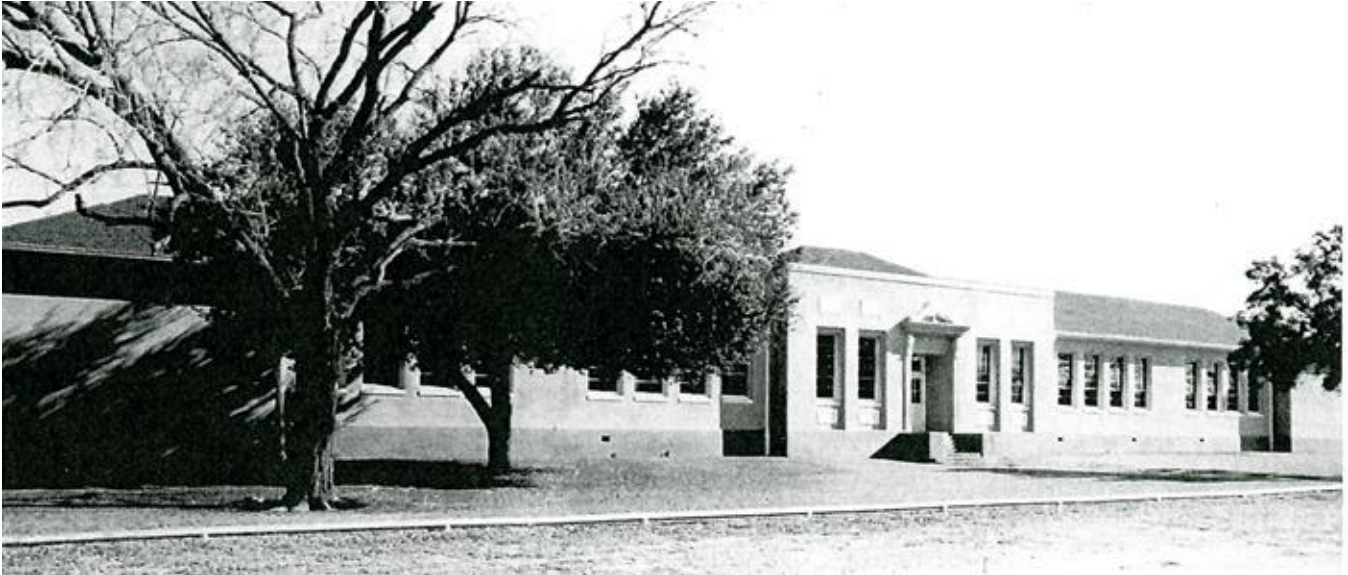
**FIGURE 15:** 1951/1952 SFA Elementary, south and east elevations of the north wing; covered walkway arches infilled, windows installed at south side and door east end (1945)



**FIGURE 16:** 1951/1952 SFA Elementary, west (front) elevation main entrance, original wood windows visible at left; Teacher Eleanor Grace Jett (Holland) with her first-grade class

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**FIGURE 17:** c.1965 SFA Elementary, front (west) elevation



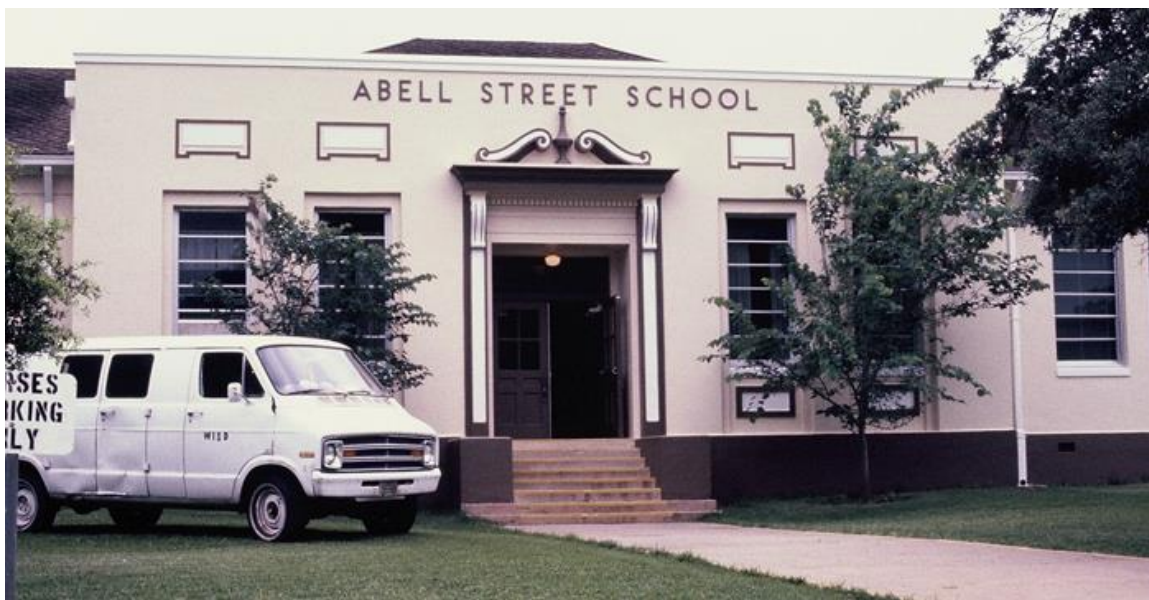
**FIGURE 18:** 1989 SFA Elementary, west (front) and south elevations; replacement windows with horizontal divides visible

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**FIGURE 19:** 1989 SFA Elementary, west (front) elevation, main entrance; original porch detail, front doors, and exterior porch lighting remain; renamed Abell Street School 1969



**FIGURE 20:** 1989 SFA Elementary, west (front) elevation, main entrance

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



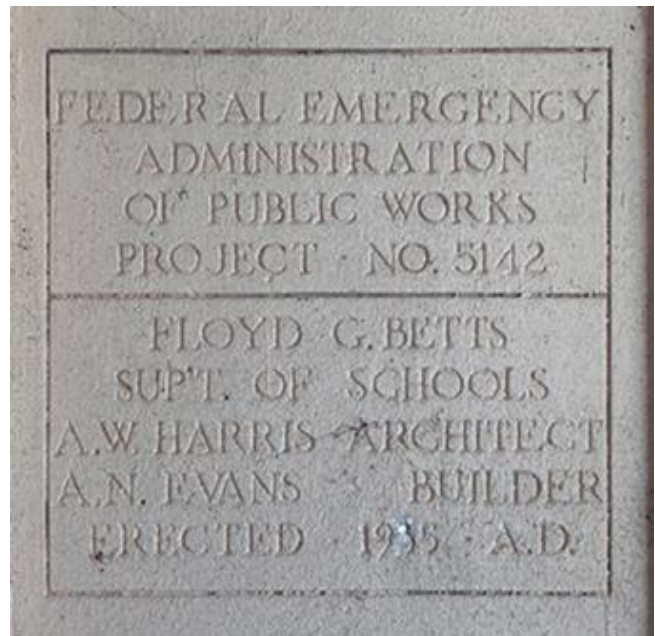
**FIGURE 21:** 2020 SFA Elementary, west (front) elevation, main entrance, original light fixture, doors, hardware and transom remain



**FIGURE 22:** 2020 SFA Elementary, original inscribed plaster plaque at entry north elevation



**FIGURE 23:** 2020 SFA Elementary, front entry south corner, original plaster details



**FIGURE 24:** 2020 SFA Elementary, original inscribed plaster plaque at entry south elevation

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



**FIGURE 25:** 2020 SFA Elementary, S. wing east elevation 1935 doors relocated here



**FIGURE 26:** 2020 SFA Elementary, N. wing east elevation 1935 doors relocated here



**FIGURE 27:** 2019 SFA Elementary, nurse's room door and louvered transom remain



**FIGURE 28:** 2019 Zavala Elementary School, Austin, TX, same Giesecke & Harris interior door detail

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**FIGURE 29:** 2019 SFA Elementary, east interior elevation of entry hall, original auditorium doors and transoms



**FIGURE 30:** 2019 SFA Elementary, west interior elevation of auditorium and entry hall



**FIGURE 32:** 2020 SFA Elementary, interior entry hall looking southwest, original doors and trim, base matched Giesecke & Harris typical detail



**FIGURE 34:** 2019 SFA Elementary, nurse's office and restroom, original plumbing fixtures remain, wood floor visible (right)

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



**FIGURE 35:** 2019 SFA Elementary, entry hall looking north towards classroom corridor, girls' restroom door to right, original transom at corridor over new doors (original location of relocated doors)



**FIGURE 36:** 2019 SFA Elementary, girls' restroom original plaster, cornice, fixtures, tile remain



**FIGURE 37:** 2019 SFA Elementary, girls' restroom original door, partitions, tile base, tile floor remain



**FIGURE 38:** 2019 SFA Elementary, girls' restroom original, partitions and fixtures remain

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



**FIGURE 39:** 2019 SFA Elementary, girls' restroom addition, finishes match original portion of restroom



**FIGURE 40:** 2019 SFA Elementary, boys' restroom, urinal area modified



**FIGURE 41:** 2019 SFA Elementary, boys' restroom original fixtures and window remain



**FIGURE 42:** 2019 SFA Elementary, boys' restroom, original plaster walls, tile base, sinks remain

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



**FIGURE 43:** 2019 SFA Elementary, typical classroom interior condition



**FIGURE 44:** 2019 SFA Elementary, typical classroom door trim and transom with wire glass details



**FIGURE 45:** 2019 SFA Elementary, south classroom corridor, looking west, originally covered open-air corridors, infilled arches (right) opened to courtyard, entrance to classrooms (left)



**FIGURE 46:** 2020 SFA Elementary, original north classroom corridor exterior light fixture and stucco ceiling concealed above drop-ceiling

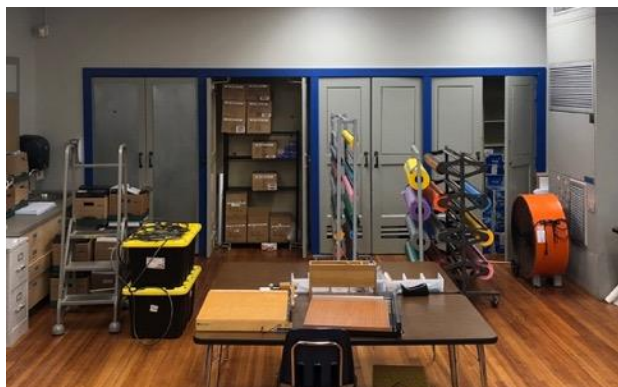
Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



**FIGURE 47:** c.1930 Edinburg Ward School, Hidalgo County, TX, Giesecke & Harris



**FIGURE 48:** c.1925 Eagle Lake High, Colorado County, TX, Giesecke & Harris



**FIGURE 49:** 2019 Zavala Elementary School, Austin, TX, Giesecke & Harris (1936),



**FIGURE 50:** 2019 SFA Elementary, Giesecke & Harris, typical closet details remain



**FIGURE 51:** 2019 Zavala Elem. Austin, TX, Giesecke & Harris, closet door pivot hardware



**FIGURE 52:** 2020 SFA Elementary, ghosting of closet door pivot hardware

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



Mexican-American kids are no longer segregated in Wharton, Tex., primary schools. About forty Texas towns have started community projects to improve Anglo-Latin relations.



The Wharton Human Relations Council meets in City Hall to discuss ways of solving the town's interracial problems.

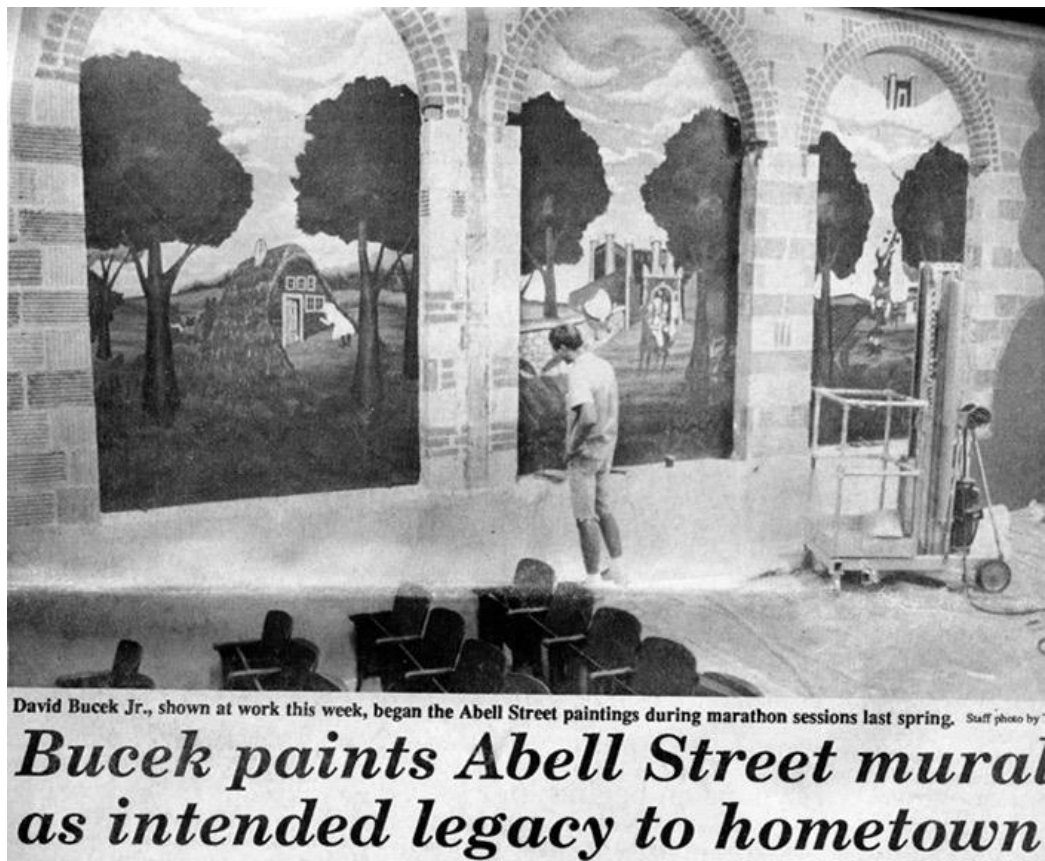
**FIGURE 53:** January 12, 1952, *Saturday Evening Post*, "Texas Tackles the Race Problem".

Left: John Medrano and Dick Frazar at drinking fountains; Right: Wharton Human Relations Council at City Hall



**FIGURE 54:** 2019 SFA Elementary, pair of original drinking fountains at north wing

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas



**FIGURE 55:** 1989, *The Wharton Journal-Spectator* article, renovations to SFA Elem. Auditorium



**FIGURES 56:** 1989 SFA Elementary,  
before auditorium renovation



**FIGURES 57:** 1989 SFA Elementary,  
after auditorium renovation

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**FIGURE 58:** c.1939 Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, front (west) elevation

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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## Photographs

All photos this section taken by Sharon Joines, June 12, 2020



**Photo 1:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0001  
West (front) elevation

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 2:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0002  
West (front) elevation



**Photo 3:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0003  
West elevation, front entrance detail

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 4:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0004  
West elevation, front entrance detail, south side



**Photo 5:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0005  
West elevation, front entrance detail, south side

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 6:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0006  
West and south elevations



**Photo 7:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0007  
South elevation of 1990s south building; SFA original building in background (left)

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 8:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0008  
South elevation of 1990s south building; SFA original building in background (left)



**Photo 9:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0009  
South and east elevations of 1990s south building

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 10:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0010  
East and north elevations of 1990s building at south courtyard



**Photo 11:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0011  
South and east elevations of SFA original south wing at south courtyard

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 12:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SFAElem\_0012  
East and north elevation of SFA original south wing at south courtyard



**Photo 13:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SFAElem\_0013  
North and east elevations, SFA original building at south courtyard

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 14:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0014  
East and south elevations of 1955 restroom addition at south courtyard



**Photo 15:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0015  
South elevation central wing and 1955 cafeteria addition at south courtyard

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 16:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0016  
South and east elevations, 1955 cafeteria addition



**Photo 17:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0017  
East elevation of 1955 cafeteria addition

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 18:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0018  
East elevation of storage sheds and service area at far east side of property



**Photo 19:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0019  
East elevation of 1990s south building and SFA original building south wing

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 20:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0020  
East elevation of SFA original building north wing and 1990s north building



**Photo 21:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0021  
North, east and south elevations of SFA original building at north courtyard

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 22:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0022  
East and north elevation of SFA original building north wing



**Photo 23:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SF AElem\_0023  
South elevation of 1990s north building

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 24:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SFAElem\_0024  
North elevation of 1990s north building



**Photo 25:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SFAElem\_0025  
North and west elevations of 1990s north building and SFA original building (right)

Stephen F. Austin Elementary School, Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

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**Photo 26:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SFAElem\_0026  
North and west elevation of SFA original building north wing



**Photo 27:** TX\_WhartonCounty\_SFAElem\_0027  
West elevation of SFA original building at north end

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