

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

Historic Name: Rockport School

Other name/site number: Rockport High and Grammar School, Rockport Elementary School

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 619 North Live Oak Street

City or town: Rockport

State: Texas

County: Aransas

Not for publication: N/A

Vicinity: N/A

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

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official / Title
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / Bureau or Tribal Government

12/27/23
Date

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

Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public - Local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	3	structures
0	0	objects
1	3	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: EDUCATION/School

Current Functions: Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification: MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne

Principal Exterior Materials: BRICK, CERAMIC TILE

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6–10)

Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Education, Architecture (local level)

Period of Significance: 1935-1974

Significant Dates: 1935

Significant Person: N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Hamon & Griffith, Inc. (architects), Cone & Clark (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 11–21)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets xx)

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
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: (Aransas County Historical Society, Aransas County Independent School District, Rockport)

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 1.3 acres

Coordinates

1. Lat: 28.028710° Lon: -97.052954°

Verbal Boundary Description: (see continuation sheet 26)

Boundary Justification: (see continuation sheet 26)

11. Form Prepared By

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Date: August 18, 2023

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 27–28)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 29–39)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 40–59)

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

Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photograph Log

Rockport School

619 North Live Oak Street, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photographed by: Mitch Ford, September 2022 and Mike Nowotny, December 2023.

All photos accurately reflect current condition of the property.

Photo 1: Front (east) façade; view facing west. September 2022.

Photo 2: Side (south) façade; view facing north. September 2022.

Photo 3: Side (north) façade; view facing southwest. September 2022.

Photo 4: Side (north) and rear (west) façades with gazebo and covered walkway in foreground; view facing southeast. September 2022.

Photo 5: West (rear) façade showing the auditorium volume at center; view facing southeast. September 2022.

Photo 6 Side (south) and rear façades; view facing northeast. September 2022.

Photo 7 Primary entrance; view facing west. September 2022.

Photo 8 Art Moderne-style sunburst and name plate over the front entrance; view facing west. September 2022.

Photo 9: Secondary (south) entrance; view facing north. December 2023

Photo 10: Decorative tile and brick panel; view facing southwest. September 2022.

Photo 11: Art Moderne-style chimney crown; view facing northeast. September 2022.

Photo 12: Entry vestibule; view facing west. December 2023

Photo 13: Stepped hallway surround (foreground), coved vaulted opening in front of the auditorium (center), and north-south hallway (background); view facing northwest. September 2022.

Photo 14: Auditorium entrances; view facing northwest. September 2022.

Photo 15: Auditorium door hardware; view facing northeast. September 2022.

Photo 16: North-south hallway; view facing north. December 2023

Photo 17: Auditorium; view facing southwest. December 2023

Photo 18: Auditorium stage; view facing southwest. September 2022.

Photo 19: Auditorium; view facing east. December 2023

Photo 20: Former classroom, future meeting room; view facing east. December 2023

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This project was funded through an Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the National Park Service that addresses damage inflicted by Hurricane Harvey. In January 2020, National Park Service (NPS) staff concurred that this property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Description

Rockport School is at the northwest corner of East Laurel and North Live Oak Streets in Rockport, Aransas County, Texas. The building is part of a four-block educational campus approximately one-half mile north of Rockport's historical commercial core. Rockport School is in the southeast corner of the campus and is the complex's oldest building. Mixed-age single-family residences and churches surround the campus. A flattened circular drive is in front of Rockport School and the building is surrounded by a grassy lawn and mature trees. The building is Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne style, one story, and has an F-shaped plan with two wings extending to the rear. It has a flat roof with cast stone coping, concrete foundation, and raked yellow brick cladding. The front façade is symmetrical. The center volume and both ends of the façade slightly project to the east. The main entrance is recessed in the center volume and has a decorative cast stone surround with a sunburst design over the entry opening. Windows are regularly spaced and have a soldier course lintel and cast stone sill. Decorative terra cotta tile panels are at either end of the front façade. The side and rear façades are similarly styled to the front façade and have secondary entrances. Two noncontributing covered walkways connect the building to adjacent buildings in the school complex. Rockport School remained in use until 2005, when the Aransas County Independent School District (ACISD) closed it and began using the building for administrative and community space. In 2006, it was designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (#5507013653).¹ The building is currently being rehabilitated to address damage caused by Hurricane Harvey. Overall, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance, with a period of significance of 1935-1974, the year of construction through the current 50-year point.

Location and Setting

Rockport School is in Rockport, a small coastal city in south Texas (Map 1). Rockport is in the southern part of Aransas County, a sparsely populated county comprising barrier islands and peninsulas. It is on the Live Oak Peninsula next to Aransas Bay. In the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, the city was developed on a gridded street pattern and grew to the north, south, and west in the mid to late twentieth century. Rockport is and historically has been the largest community in Aransas County.²

The 1935 Rockport School is in the southeast corner of a four-block educational campus approximately 0.5 mile north of Rockport's historical core and one block north of the State Highway (SH) 35, formerly SH 57, built in 1930.³ The campus is sited on level terrain and is bounded by East Orleans, North Live Oak, East Laurel, and North Pearl Streets and is closed to traffic (Map 2). Rockport School fronts North Live Oak Street. It is separated from the street by a grass verge, a flattened circular drive and parking lot paved with asphalt, and a band of grass and live oak trees in front of the building. Mature live oak trees are also north and south of the building, and grass surrounds the rest of the building. A historic-age concrete sidewalk extends from the circular drive to the front entrance of the building, a historic-age concrete sidewalk runs along East Laurel Street, and recently poured concrete sidewalks are on the south side of Rockport School and line the circular drive. A flagpole is centered in front of the building, next to a Texas historical marker (neither counted in the property inventory). The campus has four other one-story buildings of varying ages, parking lots, and grassy lawns with mature trees.⁴

¹ Texas Historical Commission, Rockport School, Atlas Number 5507013653, 2006, Official Texas Historical Marker.

² *Texas Almanac*, "City Population History from 1850–2000," 2023.

³ Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson, "Historic Resources Survey of Aransas, Refugio, and Calhoun Counties: Aransas County Survey Report" Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson for the Texas Historical Commission (2023) 101.

⁴ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport* (Sanborn Map Company), 1931, Fire Insurance Map; Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport* (Sanborn Map Company), 1943, Fire Insurance Map.

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A 1957 Postwar Modern classroom building is behind Rockport School to the west (outside the nominated parcel); the two buildings are connected via a covered walkway leading from a door in the southwest corner of Rockport School.⁵ A c.1960 cafeteria is northwest of Rockport School, and a 1963 Postwar Modern-style school building is north of Rockport School; covered walkways extend from Rockport School's north door and lead to these buildings.⁶ A building was added to the north part of the campus along East New Orleans Street between 1995 and 2004.⁷ Temporary buildings and small-scale modern ancillary buildings are also on the campus, including a gazebo northwest of Rockport School. Parking lots are northeast of Rockport School, between it and the 1963 building, west of the ca. 1960 cafeteria, and between the cafeteria and the 1957 building. A chain-link fence encloses the parking lot northeast of Rockport School. The northwest corner of the campus is an undeveloped grassy lawn void of trees, and the southwest corner is a grassy lawn with mature live oak trees.

Development surrounding the campus varies but is primarily residential. Undeveloped land is immediately across North Live Oak Street from Rockport School. A pre-1951 church is to the southeast, and a modern church is across East Laurel Street to the south.⁸ Residences constructed on an ad hoc basis, most of which were built between 1943 and 1972, surround the rest of the campus.⁹

Exterior

Rockport School is a one-story PWA Moderne building with an irregular F-plan. The longest part of the building is a north-south volume that fronts North Live Oak Street (Photo 1). A southern rear wing and a slightly longer central rear wing project east to west. The building is constructed of structural clay tile block and sits on a continuous concrete foundation. It has a flat roof except over the auditorium in the central rear wing where it is slightly gabled.¹⁰ The auditorium volume is slightly taller than the rest of the building. The building's parapet is flat except for over the front entrance where it has a small step. A simple cast stone coping caps the parapet and a brick soldier course frieze provides modest decoration. The walls are clad in raked yellow brick of varying shades manufactured by Acme Brick company's Perla, Arkansas plant.¹¹ The yellow brick is set in a running bond pattern and contrasting raked yellow-orange brick is used to create quoins, rowlock lintels, the frieze, and other decorative elements. The yellow brick face is approximately twice the size of the yellow-orange brick used for the lintels and frieze.

The east (front) façade is symmetrical and horizontal in nature and has a slightly projecting center and ends. The primary entrance is in the center of the central volume. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant concrete ramp leads to a recessed entry area with a concrete floor and scored concrete walls made to look like stone blocks (Photo 7). It has double wood doors with a transom, each door with six lights over a panel. The ceiling is plaster and has a flattened ceiling molding with two layers. A 1935 PWA bronze plaque and tablet identifying the board of trustees, architects, and contractors responsible for the building are next to the door. A single lightbulb is located over

⁵ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Aransas County Is Opening Two New Schools-Junior High and Elementary," August 25, 1957, 8A (Newspapers.com).

⁶ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "School Bond Election Set For May 28," April 13, 1962, 1B (Newspapers.com); *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Aransas Board Okays Suit for School Tract," June 29, 1962, 2B (Newspapers.com).

⁷ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County (2004), Aerial Image; Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County (1995), Aerial Image.

⁸ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County (1951), Aerial Image.

⁹ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County (1972), Aerial Image; Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County, 1951.

¹⁰ Hamon & Griffith, "PWA Project Docket No. 2813: Plans for Combined High School and Grammar School, Rockport, Texas," 1934, Aransas County Independent School District; Wame J. Hallmark, "A Survey of the Present Conditions and a Proposed County Unit Plan of Reorganization for the Schools of Aransas County, Texas" (MEd Thesis, University of Texas, 1938) 27.

¹¹ Company stamp observed on bricks removed during construction.

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the entry porch. The entrance is framed by a Moderne-style cast stone surround, the building's most prominent architectural feature. The surround is stepped with three levels and is wider at the bottom than at the top. Immediately above the entryway, "Rockport School" is carved into the cast stone in capital letters in an Art Moderne-style script (Photo 8). Above this is a cast stone sunburst. It has a vertical convex centerpiece and linework radiating outward from the base of the centerpiece and nameplate. The centerpiece extends slightly above the roof's cast stone coping and a small cast stone parapet with two steps extends from it. The stepped parapet is slightly wider than the entrance surround. Paired metal sash windows flank the entrance. At either side of the front façade in the projecting ends are decorative tile panels (Photo 10). The panels are rectangular and slightly taller than they are wide. The center of the panel has square red clay tiles laid diagonally surrounded by a regularly laid clay tile border. Yellow-orange brick arranged in a basketweave pattern surrounds the tile. Each end volume has a single small window on the side that projects from the main volume of the building. Bands of regularly spaced metal sash windows are between the center volume and the end volumes. Three grouped windows are on either side of the entrance and paired windows are next to each end volume. These windows are taller than the windows in the center volume and the same height as the tile panels. All windows have a rowlock lintel and cast stone sill. Four flue boxes project from the roof, two at either end of the central volume, and one each from the end volumes. They are clad in brick and have a soldier course below a decorative cast stone crown. Each side of the crown has smooth geometric panels with raked triangular corners (Photo 11).

The south (side) façade fronts East Laurel Street (Photo 2). A secondary entrance is slightly to the right of center. Concrete steps with a low concrete curb lead to the entrance, which like the front entrance, is recessed and surrounded by stepped cast stone (Photo 9). The double glazed metal doors are topped with a transom. Six metal sash grouped windows are arranged in pairs; one pair is to the right of the door and two pairs are to the left of the door.

The north (side) façade is similar to the south façade, but narrower and with a symmetrical design (Photo 3 and 4). It has five bays with a central recessed entrance surrounded by a stepped cast stone surround. A concrete entry ramp leads to the metal double door entrance. On either side of the door are two pairs of grouped metal sash windows. A metal shed-roof awning projects over the entry ramp and connects to two covered concrete walkways leading to other buildings on the campus.

The west (rear) façade shares the same materials and finishes as the front and side façades, but decoration is more restrained and the fenestration more varied (Photo 5 and Photo 6). It has a combination of single, paired, and grouped windows of varying sizes. The auditorium wing projecting from the center of the building has paired and grouped metal sash windows separated by three brick pilasters topped with classically inspired cast stone coping. The west side of the auditorium volume is clad in nonoriginal brick and has minimal fenestration since the stage and dressing room occupy this space. A single-door entrance with a transom is on the southwest side of the auditorium volume below a flat metal roof awning supported by metal rods. Another single-door entrance with a transom is on the northwest side of the auditorium volume. Unlike the building's other doors, they have no surround. Another single door is in the northernmost corner of the southern wing's west side within a recessed entry vestibule. It has a stepped cast stone surround and a shed-roof metal awning that connects to a covered walkway leading to the building to the west. The rear wings create open outdoor space where a concrete courtyard with a brick pony wall has been added.

Interior

Rockport School is currently under construction to repair damage from Hurricane Harvey and adaptatively reuse the building for administrative educational purposes. The following description reflects conditions observed in September 2022 and December 2023, supplemented by the construction plans. The construction floor plan is provided in the Additional Documentation section (Figure 7).

Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Two sets of double doors at Rockport School's front entrance create an entry vestibule (Photo 12). A waiting room with a small restroom, a reception desk, and an office are on either side near the entrance. The vestibule intersects the building's main hallway in front of the auditorium; here, it opens to a raised, coved-vault plaster ceiling (Photo 13). Two original concrete steps the width of the vaulted space lead to two sets of double doors to the auditorium (Photo 14). The doors are original wood paneled units with original brass Art Moderne-style hardware (Photo 15). Each door has five rectangular panels above a single square panel. Non-original metal safety rails are outside each door. Each of the three hallway entry points to this area are framed by a geometric stair-stepped opening that mimics the cast stone entrance surrounds on the exterior (Photo 13).

The auditorium is a large open room with a stage at the west end and banks of curtained windows on the north and south sides of the room (Photo 17). Two aisles run at a slight grade from the double door entrances to the base of the auditorium. Three sections of original wood seats are attached to the floor with metal supports (Photo 19). The central section is eight seats wide and the outer sections are five seats wide. The stage is a proscenium stage with a flattened arched opening framed by a ropelike plaster mold (Photo 18). A curved apron projects from the arched opening. In front of the stage sits a non-original dais for public meetings. A single door on either side of the stage leads to backstage and changing and shower rooms. Above each of these doors is a rectangular metal grille. Single door exits to the exterior are next to the backstage doors in the northwest and southwest corners of the room. The room has a non-original dropped ceiling for heating, ventilation, and cooling (HVAC) ductwork. Original milk glass pendant lights hang from the ceiling.

The main north-south hallway is lined on either side with rooms of varying functions. Moving north, a restroom is the first room to the left. Though it is being remodeled, it is in the location of the original girl's restroom. The former study hall, library, science laboratory, and one of the two classrooms in this wing have been reconfigured for office space, storage, and a break room. The former classroom in the northeast corner of the building retains its original size and layout, with the exception of a small mechanical closet added to the southwest corner of the room. It is now used as a meeting room (Photo 20). The north wing ends with two sets of double doors leading to the exterior.

The south side of the main north-south hallway has similarly been reconfigured. Moving south, a remodeled restroom in the location of the original boy's restroom is the first room to the right. The four former classrooms in this wing have been reconfigured into nine offices and multiple storage rooms. The south wing of the north-south corridor terminates at a double door exit to the exterior.

Before reaching the south exit door, the north-south hallway turns west through a stepped opening to an east-west wing. The east-west hallway is narrower and shorter than the north-south hallway and only has rooms on the south side. The north side is lined with windows. The first two former classrooms in this wing were reconfigured into a large open office area and one enclosed office. The former classroom in the southwest corner of the building has retained its overall original size, but three closets have been added to the west wall. This wing ends with a double door exit to the exterior.

Alterations and Repairs

The exterior of the school is more intact than the interior. The most significant change to the exterior was the replacement of the original wood double-hung windows with aluminum units. However, the window openings are intact, and the metal windows will be replaced with hurricane-rated wood units that closely resemble the building's original units as part of the Hurricane Harvey Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund repair and restoration work. The west wall of the auditorium collapsed during Hurricane Harvey and has been reconstructed; the new brick is smaller and less yellow with a different texture than the original Acme brick. The pony walls at the rear of the building were recently added to conceal HVAC equipment; these use the same brick as the reconstructed wall. The

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front door may not be original, but if it is not, it is a replica or historically appropriate replacement.¹² Some of the secondary doors are not original but will be replaced with historically accurate units as part of the Hurricane Harvey work. The metal awnings and canopies over the secondary doors are recent changes; however, they are removable.

Many aspects of the interior have been remodeled but several important original character-defining features are intact. The overall interior circulation pattern and the vaulted volume in front of the auditorium are unchanged. The auditorium's layout, chairs, stage, light fixtures, and double doors and their hardware are original. The only major changes to it are the drop ceiling and the dais; however, the dais is removable. The most major change to the interior of the building is the reconfiguration of classrooms, specialty rooms, and former school administrative spaces and the installation of a drop ceiling in these areas. Most other changes are material modifications. In some places the original plaster walls have been replaced with drywall, including the stepped arch openings where corridors intersect. The wood floors will be replaced in kind as part of the repair and restoration work. The original boys' and girls' restrooms will be remodeled with ADA-compliant stalls, among other changes. The lockers, water fountains, and most light fixtures have been removed. Non-original interior doors will be replaced with close replicas with transoms, though the original wood surrounds have been removed.

Integrity

Once the Hurricane Harvey Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund work is complete, Rockport School will have integrity of design and feeling through its intact PWA Moderne-style architecture, plan, and original and replica exterior materials. Its integrity of workmanship and materials will be enhanced by the window and door restorations, though much of the original interior features are not extant, which compromises integrity of workmanship and design. However, the building is being adaptively rehabilitated for continued use, and will still serve an educational function as administrative offices for the ACISD, maintaining its connection to its educational history. The building retains integrity of location because it has not been moved. Overall, the school retains the setting from the period of significance. It still has a grassy lawn with trees and a circle drive in front of the building. The drive has been paved but the overall shape has not changed. Covered walkways have been added to the rear and side of the building and a wood gazebo was added at the rear but these resources minimally affect the school's setting (Photo 4).

¹² Aransas County Historical Society Digital Photograph Collection, Honorable Mention 2020 ACHS Historic Photo Contest (1941), Photograph.

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Statement of Significance

The Rockport School in Rockport, Aransas County, Texas, is a 1935 Moderne building built with PWA funds to replace an aging and outmoded school built in 1892. Designed by architects Hamon & Griffith, it is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture and Criterion A in the area of Education at the local level of significance. By replacing an earlier, poorly equipped nineteenth century school, the 1935 building provided a modern learning environment and improved health and sanitary conditions for students based on the educational and school planning and design philosophies of the Progressive Era. Built with PWA funds and designed in the classically inspired but modern style the PWA preferred, Rockport School additionally illustrates the critical role the agency played in improving the country's educational facilities during the Great Depression and the agency's impact on the design of the schools they funded. Rockport School is the only resource of its type in Aransas County that illustrates these trends in architecture and governmental planning as they applied to improvement in educational facilities. Overall, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance, with a period of significance of 1935-1974, the year of construction through the current 50-year point.

Rockport Historical Background

Rockport's developmental, economic, and social history is characteristic of a small coastal Texas community. Settled in 1866 on Aransas Bay, Rockport quickly became an important cattle processing and shipping center for the area's ranches.¹³ It was named the county seat in 1871 and has remained the center of county government since, as well as Aransas County's largest city.¹⁴ The arrival of the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad in 1888 resulted in a period of substantial new development and economic diversification, with new commercial fishing, canning, and tourism industries taking root.¹⁵ The bustling town suffered extensive damage from 1911 and 1919 hurricanes. Recovery was slow, but the tourism and commercial fishing and seafood industries eventually rebounded and new industries emerged like oil and gas extraction and shipbuilding.¹⁶ Rockport's population slowly increased between 1890 and 1920 from 1,069 to 1,545 residents, before dipping to 1,140 in 1930 following the 1919 hurricane and the advent of the Great Depression.¹⁷ In that year, the Texas Highway Department built SH 57 through Rockport, bringing increased automobile traffic, including automotive tourists, to the city.¹⁸ The population grew to 1,729 in 1940.¹⁹ Most of the city's early twentieth century residential development was built north of the historical core, near SH 57.²⁰ After World War II, Rockport expanded to the north and west as the population grew to 2,989 in 1960 and 3,879 in 1970.²¹

Rockport has historically been populated by White people of European descent, Black residents, and Mexican immigrants and their descendants. White people historically comprised most of the population. In 1930, five years before Rockport School was built, only 48 Black people resided in Aransas County. The US Census Bureau did not enumerate the number of Hispanic/Latino residents until 1980; however, the population was of sufficient size to support a Mexican Hall and a school for Mexican American children by 1931.²²

¹³ Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson, "Historic Resources Survey of Aransas, Refugio, and Calhoun Counties: Aransas County Survey Report," 62.

¹⁴ Ibid. 84.

¹⁵ Ibid. 40–41.

¹⁶ Ibid. 72–73.

¹⁷ Texas Almanac, "City Population History, 1850 to 2000."

¹⁸ Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson, "Historic Resources Survey of Aransas, Refugio, and Calhoun Counties: Aransas County Survey Report," 101.

¹⁹ Texas Almanac, "City Population History from 1850–2000."

²⁰ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1943.

²¹ Almanac, "City Population History, 1850 to 2000"; Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County (1956), Aerial Image; Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County, 1972.

²² Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1931.

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National Trends in Education and School Design

Early education in the United States was highly decentralized and more commonly private than public. English educational philosophies calling for economical and efficient teaching were replicated in America in the nineteenth century. They focused on rote and passive learning, and little attention was given to supporting individual abilities or classroom participation. Public investment in the education system was modest, especially in rural communities and for children of color. Attendance was not compulsory, and many schools were segregated. School buildings reflected these trends. Buildings ranged from vernacular one- or two-room schoolhouses, common in rural places and for children of color, to styled schools with multiple classrooms, more typical in urban locations and for White children. Larger schools were often imposing in design and siting, reflecting the authoritarian nature of education at the time. Some schools had administrative rooms and programmed spaces for specific activities like an auditorium, science lab, or gymnasium, but often these amenities were overlooked. Classrooms were large and packed with pupils facing forward toward a single teacher and a chalkboard was likely the room's only instructional device. Coal or wood stoves supplied heat, and toilets were outdoors.

The progressive education movement, conceived as part of the larger progressive movement, transformed the state of education in the United States beginning in America's urban communities in the late nineteenth century before becoming more broadly influential starting around 1915. The movement's leaders, John Dewey, Francis Parker, and William Kilpatrick promoted child-centric learning and participatory rather than authoritarian classrooms. They advocated for public investment in secondary education, expanded curriculum and educational services, compulsory school attendance, and improved school buildings and campuses, among other changes. Transformational laws based on the movement's principles were passed at the federal and state levels. New secondary school attendance requirements caused high school enrollments to increase across the United States from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century by more than 900 percent, creating intense pressure for new school buildings.

New schools built following the progressive education movement's ideologies looked much different from their predecessors. Educators and designers collaborated to create thoughtfully planned school buildings that considered the physical and mental development of children. Unlike the imposing appearance of earlier urban schools, the ideal progressive-era school building was one-story tall, particularly for elementary schools, and arranged in an elongated rectangular or L-, U-, H-, E-, or T- shape. Their plan and siting on large lots allowed for future expansion. High schools were larger but not forbidding and generally two or three stories. Revival styles popular at the time replaced the Victorian-inspired designs of earlier school buildings. Sanitation, comfort, safety, and health were important considerations. Maximum natural lighting and ventilation were achieved through plan, siting, and window size and placement; fireproof construction and multiple exits improved safety; easy-to-clean materials like tile were used on interior surfaces; restrooms were moved inside; and forced heat replaced wood- and coal-burning stoves. Because progressive educators believed exercise would uplift students' health and values, new schools often had gymnasiums or outdoor space for physical education and play. Auditoriums were designed for communal use and had separate entrances to facilitate public access after school hours. Most elementary schools had an office, cafeteria, and kitchen. Most high schools also had a library and specialty classrooms for science laboratories, vocational education, home economics, art, and music. Many one- and two-room schoolhouses were closed and consolidated during the Progressive Era and replaced with new and improved facilities; however, rural children and children of color often continued to attend poorly equipped schoolhouses for many years.

The progressive education movement continued to impact school design during the second quarter of the twentieth century. Child-centric buildings; health, comfort, and safety; and diverse curriculum were enduring considerations. Outdoor spaces were now essential, so more attention was given to site selection. New schools were built next to an existing park or on ample grounds with space for outdoor play and sports fields. Some schools had landscaped grounds, courtyards, and other designed site improvements. The rise of the automobile influenced campus planning and design.

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Schools could be on larger lots on the outskirts of towns rather than within walking distance of students' homes. More small rural schools closed and consolidated. New schools commonly had setbacks from roadways to safely buffer children from automobile traffic. Some had formal driveways.

The Great Depression had an enormous effect on education and schools in the United States. Many children who lived in states where education was not compulsory worked prior to the Depression but were now out of work. This led to a dramatic increase in secondary school attendance while funding and resources became scarce. School construction had all but ceased. Many rural families migrated to cities in search of jobs, further putting pressure on strapped urban schools that were poorly equipped to handle additional students. President Franklin Roosevelt's PWA, part of his New Deal program, provided relief with much-needed funding for school construction and modernization. Between 1933 and 1939, 70 percent of the country's new schools were built with PWA funds. Many of these buildings replaced several smaller schools or an existing school that no longer met modern educational standards.

PWA schools reflected the progressive education movement's ideals for modernization, enhanced curriculum, and health, safety, and recreation but had an increased focus on practicality and affordability. New buildings were more functional and flexible than before and designed to serve student and community needs. They might accommodate evening adult education classes or serve as community centers on nights and weekends. An auditorium and gymnasium were often combined into one space with a separate public entrance. School buildings and sites were designed for expansion when enrollments rose, and additional funding was available. Though local districts were responsible for architectural designs, schools had to be constructed within strict time constraints to secure matching PWA funds; therefore, reuse of standardized plans was common. The low-rise, elongated plans of the Progressive Era continued to be common, but exterior design became restrained as historical ornament was now considered a frivolous expense. The federal government promoted a conservative, simplified, and classically inspired yet modern style for its public works projects that became known as PWA Moderne. This style is characterized by a symmetrical façade; brick, stucco, or concrete exterior walls; repetitive geometric lines and motifs; and cast stone or terra cotta medallions, carvings, and reliefs. The appearance of these buildings was intended to symbolize stability at a time when the nation was in economic turmoil.²³

Learning conditions remained poor for children of color in the early twentieth century. Schools continued to be segregated following the 1896 United States Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* which legalized racial separation as long as accommodations for each race were equal; however, separate but unequal facilities persisted in practice. Per-pupil funding was generally lower for children of color, and school buildings were older, in poorer condition, and had inadequate equipment. PWA funds were used to build and modernize many schools for Black children; however, local districts often blatantly provided less in matching funds despite the federal mandate for equality. The resulting schools presented an improvement from earlier facilities but were still inferior to and less equipped than new schools for White children.

School building was again a critical need in the United States after World War II. This was due to the unprecedented rise in American birth rates following the war's end and continued migration from rural to urban communities. Schools were built, expanded, and modernized in record numbers. As planned, many earlier schools located on large lots were enlarged or entire new school buildings were added to the same parcel to accommodate increasing enrollments. Other schools were added in the country's freshly built suburban communities. Many existing K through 12 and K through 8 buildings became elementary schools when new junior and senior high schools were erected in the postwar era. As educational philosophies evolved in the mid-to-late twentieth century and again changed school design trends, many of the country's early twentieth century schools became obsolete and were replaced with new modern facilities.

²³ Katie E. Horak et al., "L. A. Modernism, 1919–1980" City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources (2021).

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State Trends in Education and School Design

The public education system was slower to develop in Texas than in other parts of the country.²⁴ Both the Spanish and Mexican governments failed to establish a system of public schools. In 1839 and 1840, the Republic of Texas legislature adopted a public school plan and gave counties the authority to administer it; however, many counties were indifferent to public education, and schooling, if it existed, was typically private or run by religious institutions.²⁵ After statehood, one-tenth of Texas' annual tax revenue was to be set aside to support free public schools, though the funds ended up being reappropriated. In 1854, a new law was passed that officially created the Texas public school system; however, without sufficient funding, organization, leadership, and community support, public education remained sporadic through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.²⁶ A 1914 study revealed that Texas was one of just five states that did not have a compulsory attendance law.²⁷ The legislature quickly responded by enacting a law in 1915, but it was weak and poorly enforced. It required just 100 days of attendance per year and for children ages 8 to 14 to attend school unless properly excused; however, many were excused without appropriate justification.²⁸

By the 1920s, public education in Texas was in a critical state. Scholars ranked the effectiveness of its school system as 39th among 48 states, despite Texas having the fifth largest population, a strong economy, and the country's largest endowment for public education.²⁹ In 1923, the Texas legislature funded the state's first study of its public school system. The report by experts Frederick Eby and William Seneca Sutton was scathing, describing public education in Texas as "disappointing" and "backward."³⁰ Eby and Sutton stated that the deplorable conditions of county schools was the greatest problem that Texans faced. They found that the state still had 4,831 one-teacher schools, most of which were in rural communities, and that 80 percent of rural school buildings were inadequate and poorly equipped. They were understaffed by poorly trained teachers and overcrowded with 40 to 75 children typically in a single classroom. Lack of funds constantly threatened rural schools to close. Eby and Sutton reported that most children in Texas only attended school for six months or less and that despite the state's compulsory attendance law, the proportion of Texan children who did not attend school was significantly lower than the national average (16 percent in Texas compared to 9 percent nationwide). Among the most critical concerns raised by the authors was the state's lack of high schools. Nearly half a million children had no public high school to attend. Poorly organized and incompetent educational administration at the state, county, and local levels; insufficient teacher training programs; low teaching certificate requirements; inadequate teacher pay; and unstable financing were among their other critiques. The authors noted that the state's strong road building campaign afforded the opportunity to consolidate small rural schools and transport children to larger schools in towns and cities, a positive trend they indicated had already begun.

If public education was lacking for White children in Texas, it was even worse for children of color. Public schools for non-White children were nearly nonexistent in Texas' early years.³¹ After the Civil War, schools for the state's substantial Mexican American community and newly emancipated Black population emerged.³² If Black and Mexican American

²⁴ Frederick Eby and William Seneca Sutton, *The Development of Education in Texas* (The Macmillan Company, 1925).

²⁵ Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson, "Historic Resources Survey of Aransas, Refugio, and Calhoun Counties: Aransas County Survey Report."

²⁶ Eby and Sutton, *The Development of Education in Texas*.

²⁷ Eby and Sutton, *The Development of Education in Texas*.

²⁸ Eby and Sutton, *The Development of Education in Texas*.

²⁹ Eby and Sutton, *The Development of Education in Texas*; Leonard P. Ayres, *An Index Number for State School Systems* (Russell Sage Foundation for the Department of Education, 1920).

³⁰ Eby and Sutton, *The Development of Education in Texas*, 305.

³¹ Albert H. Kauffman, "Latino Education in Texas: A History of Systematic Recycling Discrimination," *St. Mary's Law Journal*, Volume 50, No. 3 (2019); Anna Victoria Wilson, "Education for African Americans," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2020; Guadalupe San Miguel, "Mexican Americans and Education," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2020.

³² Kauffman, "Latino Education in Texas: A History of Systematic Recycling Discrimination."; Wilson, "Education for African Americans."

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students attended school, it was often in non-purpose built or primitive schoolhouses open for fewer days a year than schools for White children. Other disparities included fewer dollars spent per pupil, inexperienced teachers fresh out of college, and classrooms that were even less well-equipped and more crowded than those of their White peers.³³ Whereas segregation of Black children was established by law, segregation of Mexican American children was not universal in Texas. In some districts Mexican American students attended school in a separate building, while in others, classrooms were integrated, or they attended school in the same building as White children but in separate rooms.³⁴

The PWA provided Texas with much needed support for its public schools. By March 1, 1939, the agency had completed 96 new schools and 23 additions to existing schools in Texas, including in Rockport.³⁵ As in the rest of the country, school building in Texas stalled during World War II and then exploded after the war to accommodate the state's rapidly growing population and suburban communities. These new schools often replaced their predecessors or changed how earlier buildings were used.

Public Education in Rockport

The history of early public education in Rockport follows state and national trends. The city's early schools were private and would have been attended primarily by children of parents with economic means.³⁶ The first public school was established in 1884 in an existing multi-purpose building.³⁷ In 1890, residents voted to fund the construction of a public school. Completed by 1892, the first Rockport School was sited on an entire block in a sparsely developed area northwest of downtown bordered by North Church, East Nopal, North Pearl, and East Laurel Streets.³⁸ It was a two-story T-plan brick building with a Gothic Revival-style belltower on the front façade (Figure 3). It had pairs of tall double-hung windows, a fire-resistant roof, three fire escapes, a double-arched entrance, a string course, and other decorative elements.³⁹ Lower grades met in classrooms downstairs and upper grades were upstairs.⁴⁰ Oral diction and replication of information on the chalkboard were the primary pedagogies.⁴¹ The school had a book room, but no other specialty spaces such as administrative offices, a cafeteria, an auditorium, or a gymnasium.⁴² The building did not have electricity, water, or indoor restrooms.⁴³ Coal or wood stoves provided heat. Though conditions were primitive, the building was the finest school in Aransas County and likely one of the most prominent buildings in Rockport. The 1911 hurricane caused significant damage to the building, requiring the removal of the bell tower and other repairs.⁴⁴ By 1931, a one-story, wood-frame annex building had been added north of the 1892 school within the same block (Figure 1).⁴⁵ It was also heated with a stove and had outdoor privies. Athletic fields had been constructed on the block to the southwest of the school property, and the block to the north was a park, reflecting the progressive education movement's promotion of outdoor recreation for students.⁴⁶

³³ Wilson, "Education for African Americans."; San Miguel, "Mexican Americans and Education."

³⁴ Kauffman, "Latino Education in Texas: A History of Systematic Recycling Discrimination."

³⁵ Lionel V. Patenaude, "The New Deal and Texas" (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1953), ADD.

³⁶ Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past* (Coastal Printing Company, 1970).

³⁷ Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past*.

³⁸ Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past*; Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport* (Sanborn Map Company), 1914, Fire Insurance Map.

³⁹ Anonymous, "Public School, Rockport, Texas," ca. 1915, Aransas County Historical Society, Courtesy of Kam Heinsohn Wagert.

⁴⁰ Mary Pearl Herring Patrick, *Growing Up in Rockport, 1910 to 1921* (1971), Aransas County Historical Society, Rockport, Written personal history.

⁴¹ Anonymous, *History of Schools in Rockport* (ca. 1970), Aransas County Historical Society, Rockport.

⁴² Patrick, *Growing Up in Rockport, 1910 to 1921*; Anonymous, *History of Schools in Rockport*.

⁴³ Anonymous, *History of Schools in Rockport*; Patrick, *Growing Up in Rockport, 1910 to 1921*; Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1914.

⁴⁴ Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past*.

⁴⁵ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1914; Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1931.

⁴⁶ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1914; Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1931.

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Increasing student enrollment and the need for modern school facilities contributed to the replacement of the 1892 Rockport School. Between 1925 and 1935, Rockport's student population more than doubled, placing stress on existing school facilities that were now considered outdated and inadequate.⁴⁷ In 1933, voters approved bonds totaling \$60,000 for the construction of a new school and Rockport Independent School District (RISD) officials applied for additional funding from the PWA.⁴⁸ The PWA contributed 30 percent of the building expenses, with the remaining funds appropriated from the bond.⁴⁹ The new one-story brick building was completed in 1935 one block east of the 1892 school (Figure 2).⁵⁰ It housed grades 1 through 11 and had nine classrooms, a science laboratory, an auditorium, a library, and offices.⁵¹ Raymond Eugene Black was superintendent, Weldon Arthur Smith was principal, and early teachers included Ruth Lipscomb, Ellen Johnson, Robert A. Stone, Nancy Estill, Bertha Harper, Ollie Newton, Lura Lee Bogan, Laine Faire, and Freda Peckenpau.⁵²

When it was built, the 1935 Rockport School provided the best educational opportunity for children in Aransas County.⁵³ All the other schools in the county were primitive one- or two-room schoolhouses that provided only a basic education. Rockport School was in session for more days than the schoolhouses and its nine teachers and two administrators, who taught part-time, were more likely to be college educated.⁵⁴ At 38 students per teacher during the 1937 to 1938 academic year, classroom sizes at Rockport School were large; however, students benefited from a wider curriculum, the school's specialty spaces, and the division of grades.⁵⁵ Though the new 1935 Rockport School addressed many of the issues Eby and Sutton identified as plaguing Texas school buildings, it was still less equipped than others of the era and lacked a cafeteria; a gymnasium for physical education; and agricultural, vocational, home economics, and music classrooms.⁵⁶ The school's siting on a full block next to other district-owned land implies that school officials anticipated future additions to the school and campus.

Design and Construction of Rockport School

RISD officials retained the firm of Hamon & Griffith of Corpus Christi to design Rockport School, PWA project number 2813.⁵⁷ The firm's design was a one-story PWA Moderne-style building with a balanced and symmetrical form, classical

⁴⁷ Hallmark, "A Survey of the Present Conditions and a Proposed County Unit Plan of Reorganization for the Schools of Aransas County, Texas", 14.

⁴⁸ *San Patricio County News*, "Rockport School Bonds Carry," December 21, 1933, 1 (University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History).

⁴⁹ *San Patricio County News*, "Rockport School Bonds Carry."

⁵⁰ Hamon & Griffith, "Rockport School Building Plaque," 1935; Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1931; Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1943.

⁵¹ Hamon & Griffith, "PWA Project Docket No. 2813: Plans for Combined High School and Grammar School, Rockport, Texas".

⁵² Texas Department of Health Resources, Raymond Black, Ancestry, 1978; *Victoria Advocate*, "Raymond Black," December 18, 1978, 10 (Newspapers.com); *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Principal W. A. Smith Dies at 55," June 13, 1962, 1A (Newspapers.com); *Aransas Pass Progress*, "Welcome Teachers to Aransas Pass," September 3, 1936, 4A (University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History).

⁵³ Hallmark, "A Survey of the Present Conditions and a Proposed County Unit Plan of Reorganization for the Schools of Aransas County, Texas"; Texas Board of Education, *Report of the Results of the Texas Statewide School Adequacy Survey* (Works Progress Administration for the Texas Board of Education, 1937).

⁵⁴ Hallmark, "A Survey of the Present Conditions and a Proposed County Unit Plan of Reorganization for the Schools of Aransas County, Texas".

⁵⁵ Hallmark, "A Survey of the Present Conditions and a Proposed County Unit Plan of Reorganization for the Schools of Aransas County, Texas".

⁵⁶ Hallmark, "A Survey of the Present Conditions and a Proposed County Unit Plan of Reorganization for the Schools of Aransas County, Texas".

⁵⁷ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Well Known Architects Doing Work," November 25, 1934, 8A (Newspapers.com); Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Everett Hamon, Ancestry, 1956, Death Certificate; Hamon & Griffith, "PWA Project Docket No. 2813: Plans for Combined High School and Grammar School, Rockport, Texas".

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horizontal proportions, unadorned wall surfaces, flat roof, rhythmically arranged windows, stone and terra cotta details, and stylized sun motif at the front entrance characteristic of the style (Figure 5 and Figure 6).⁵⁸ Hamon & Griffith used structural clay tile block and brick on the exterior for its fire-resistant properties and affordability.⁵⁹ The building had an irregular plan with a central entrance, a symmetrical front façade with wings extending to the north and south, and two wings extending to the west (rear), forming an F-shape: a southern classroom wing and a centrally located auditorium (Figure 4).⁶⁰ Classrooms were sited to the south and east, providing ample natural light and a coastal breeze. The building was set back from the street to protect children from automobile traffic and had a semi-circular driveway where students would be dropped off and picked up (Figure 8). The F-shaped footprint of the building created courtyards at the rear, and a lawn surrounded the school. Early Photos show Rockport School with shrubs in front of the building and newly planted trees in the lawn (Figure 8 and Figure 9).⁶¹ Plans called for a flagpole directly in front of the main entrance and fountains on the north and south sides of the building but these features were not constructed.⁶²

The interior of the building reflected typical school plans of the era. Off the main entrance was the principal's office and restroom, an administrative area with a reception room, a teacher's room and restroom, storage closets, and a small library for state books (Figure 4).⁶³ Beyond the administrative zone was the auditorium with a stage (Figure 10). Wings with wide central corridors lined with lockers extended to the north and the south from the administrative and auditorium area. The north wing had two classrooms, a science laboratory, a study hall room, a library, and a restroom for female students. The south wing had four classrooms, a restroom for male students, and a janitor's closet before wrapping around to an east-west corridor extending to the west. This wing had three additional classrooms on one side of a narrow hallway and windows lining the opposite side. Secondary doors were located at the end of each wing. Each of the building's classrooms had two blackboards, a wardrobe, and closets, and were oriented so that windows provided light from one side of the classroom, rather than from the front or rear. All walls were plaster and floors were a combination of wood in the classrooms and on the stage, and easy-to-clean surfaces like cement and tile in the hallways, offices, restrooms, storage areas, and auditorium. Electricity and water serviced the building. Original plans called for a glass partition separating the study hall from the library, drinking fountains in the hallways, brass doorway thresholds, and a combination of wood paneled and glazed wood paneled doors, most with operable transoms.

Rockport School architect Everett Elijah Hamon (1885–1956) was a prolific educational designer, responsible for over 50 schools in South Texas and Oklahoma over the course of his 40-year career.⁶⁴ Hamon was born in Kearney, Missouri and lived in Frederick, Oklahoma before moving to Corpus Christi, Texas in 1906 where he found work as an apprentice carpenter. After being promoted to foreman, Hamon took architecture coursework through the American Correspondence School and apprenticed with a local architect.⁶⁵ He began practicing architecture in 1912.⁶⁶ After designing his first school in Riviera, Texas in 1919, Hamon decided to specialize in schools; however, he also designed numerous houses, churches, hotels, and commercial buildings during his career.⁶⁷ In 1934, Hamon, engineer Lewellyn Brooks Griffith, Sr. (1895–1990), and architect Morris Levy (1891–1983) organized the firm of Griffith, Hamon and Levy, Inc. to pursue PWA

⁵⁸ Hamon & Griffith, "PWA Project Docket No. 2813: Plans for Combined High School and Grammar School, Rockport, Texas"; Horak et al., "L. A. Modernism, 1919–1980."

⁵⁹ Hallmark, "A Survey of the Present Conditions and a Proposed County Unit Plan of Reorganization for the Schools of Aransas County, Texas", 27; Jeremy C. Wells, "History of Structural Hollow Clay Tile in the United States," *Construction History*, Volume 22 (2007).

⁶⁰ Hamon & Griffith, "PWA Project Docket No. 2813: Plans for Combined High School and Grammar School, Rockport, Texas".

⁶¹ Aransas County Independent School District Collections, Rockport School (ca. 1935), Photograph; Rockport School, *The Pirate: 1946*.

⁶² Hamon & Griffith, "PWA Project Docket No. 2813: Plans for Combined High School and Grammar School, Rockport, Texas".

⁶³ Hamon & Griffith, "PWA Project Docket No. 2813: Plans for Combined High School and Grammar School, Rockport, Texas".

⁶⁴ Hoyt Hager, "Architect Here 30 Years Has Designed 50 Schools," *Corpus Christi Times* (Newspapers.com), June 23, 1947.

⁶⁵ Hager, "Architect Here 30 Years Has Designed 50 Schools."

⁶⁶ Hager, "Architect Here 30 Years Has Designed 50 Schools."

⁶⁷ Hager, "Architect Here 30 Years Has Designed 50 Schools."

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projects.⁶⁸ In 1935, the firm became Hamon and Griffith, Inc.⁶⁹ Griffith was a civil engineer with degrees from West Point and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.⁷⁰ Prior to partnering with Hamon, he worked as the city engineer of Corpus Christi from 1923 to 1926, where he supervised the construction of the city's port, and served as the Chief Engineer of the Works Progress Administration's Texas office and State Director for public works programs for the National Youth Administration, among other roles. He also acted as the director of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers and the National Society of Professional Engineers.

Hamon contributed to the design of at least three schools in Corpus Christi—Charles W. Crossley, Solomon Coles, and Wynn Seale—but most of his schools were in small South Texas communities, including Agua Dulce, Banquete, Calallen, Driscoll, George West, Gregory, Odem, Petronila, Pettus, Port Aransas, Premont, Robstown, Skidmore, Smiley, Three Rivers, and Tuloso-Midway.⁷¹ The 1936 Spanish Colonial Revival-style Wynn Seale Junior High School is documented as one of the most architecturally significant public buildings in Corpus Christi; however, the project was a collaboration between Griffith, Hamon & Levy and architect Harry D. Payne, who is believed to have played the leading role in the school's design.⁷² The 1950 Moderne-style Galvan Building in Corpus Christi is Hamon's most prominent commercial design.⁷³ No other Hamon buildings are known to have been recognized for their architectural merit.

RISD officials retained George H. Cone and Ed Clark of Cone & Clark of Corpus Christi to serve as general contractors for Rockport School.⁷⁴ The firm also worked with Hamon on the 1934 addition to the Charles W. Crossley School and the construction of the 1934 Petronila School.⁷⁵ A notable building completed by Cone & Clark was the PWA-funded 1936 Refugio City Hall, which the agency recognized as an excellent example of a civic building erected following its design principles in its 1939 survey of projects completed with PWA funds.⁷⁶

New Rockport Schools and Campus Expansion after 1940

As enrollments continued to rise in the following decade, RISD officials sought to address the shortcomings of Rockport School and expand the campus. In 1940, a separate high school building by architect Glynn L. Harris of Corpus Christi was under construction to free up space in the 1935 Rockport School.⁷⁷ The Art Moderne-style building was built immediately north of Rockport School on a separate block.⁷⁸ During World War II, additional training facilities were needed for wartime production, so a vocational building was built behind the new high school in 1940.⁷⁹ In 1941, the

⁶⁸ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Well Known Architects Doing Work."; Peter Flagg Maxson et al., "Wynn Seale Junior High School, Corpus Christi, Nueces County" Texas Historical Commission, 1996), National Register of Historic Places Designation.

⁶⁹ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Farmers Gin Company is Granted State Charter," January 8, 1935, 1 (Newspapers.com).

⁷⁰ *Austin American-Statesman*, "Llewellyn Brooks Griffith Sr.," September 30, 1990, 4B (Newspapers.com).

⁷¹ Hager, "Architect Here 30 Years Has Designed 50 Schools."

⁷² Maxson et al., "Wynn Seale Junior High School, Corpus Christi, Nueces County."

⁷³ Gregory Smith, "Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County" Texas Historical Commission, 2015), National Register of Historic Places Designation.

⁷⁴ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Legals," November 29, 1935, 15A (Newspapers.com).

⁷⁵ *Corpus Christi Times*, "Petronila School Job to be Awarded," August 23, 1934, 8A (Newspapers.com); *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "School Contract Is Reported Let," September 25, 1934, 1A (Newspapers.com).

⁷⁶ *Refugio Timely Remarks*, "Hall Contract Let To Corpus Firm," June 7, 1935, A1 (University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History); Rudolph Stanley-Brown, *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939* (Public Buildings Administration of the Public Works Administration, 1939), 31.

⁷⁷ *San Antonio Express*, "Rockport School Building Started," July 28, 1940, 1C (Newspaper Archive); *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Rockport School," June 9, 1940, 27 (Newspapers.com).

⁷⁸ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1943.

⁷⁹ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Two Classes in Boat-Building Get Under Way at Rockport," February 22, 1941, 7B (Newspapers.com).

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school district added a 12th grade and became accredited.⁸⁰ By 1943, Rockport's school campus comprised four blocks closed off to traffic and bounded by East Orleans, North Live Oak, East Laurel, and North Pearl Streets (**Figure 2**).⁸¹ The ca. 1940 high school and the shop building were in the northeast block, the 1935 Rockport School was in the southeast block, the early twentieth century wood-frame annex building was in the southwest block, and a park with bleachers was in the northwest block. The athletic fields southwest of the campus were still in use.

After World War II, officials from the ACISD, which had organized in 1949 from the county's seven school districts including RISD, struggled to keep pace with the county's rising population growth and school enrollments.⁸² In Rockport, a two-story former army building was moved to the Rockport School and Rockport High School complex in 1950 to serve as a gym, cafeteria, and extra classrooms, and two army barracks provided additional classroom space.⁸³ In 1953, Aransas County High School opened 1 mile northeast of the Rockport School campus on the outskirts of Rockport. The seventh and eighth grades at Rockport School then moved to the army barracks and Rockport School became Rockport Elementary School with grades one through six.⁸⁴ In 1957, two four-room Postwar Modern-style buildings were added behind Rockport School and connected to the 1935 building via a covered walkway.⁸⁵ The frame annex building appears to have been removed from the property at the same time.⁸⁶ Also in the same year, a new Aransas County Junior High School was built next to the high school on the northeast side of town.⁸⁷ The two-story former army building on the Rockport School campus was demolished in the late 1950s and a new cafeteria was constructed in its place between Rockport School and the 1940 high school.⁸⁸ In 1962, officials with the Texas Education Agency reported deficiencies with ACISD schools as part of an accreditation study. A lack of storage space, the small library, and overcrowded classrooms were key failings of Rockport School.⁸⁹ A year later, ACISD addressed the overcrowded conditions by building a new junior high school that replaced the ca. 1940 Rockport High School in the northeast corner of the Rockport School campus complex.⁹⁰ The construction of Rockport's second elementary school, Live Oak Elementary, in 1967 further alleviated capacity issues.⁹¹

Rockport School remained in use until 2005, when ACISD closed it and began using the building for administrative space and a community center. In 2017, Rockport School sustained exterior and interior water damage during Hurricane Harvey and the district's administrative building was lost to the storm.⁹² ACISD officials made the decision to repair Rockport School and rehabilitate the interior for administrative offices using the NPS' Hurricane Harvey Emergency Supplemental

⁸⁰ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "12-Grade System Goes into Effect in Rockport Public School," May 22, 1941, 9B (Newspapers.com).

⁸¹ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1943.

⁸² *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "3-School District Annexation Vote To Be Held Today," May 28, 1949, 10A (Newspapers.com); Travis Moorman, "Some Cities in Area Losing Battle To Get Adequate School Facilities," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* (Newspapers.com), October 25, 1953.

⁸³ Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past*.

⁸⁴ Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past*.

⁸⁵ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Aransas County Is Opening Two New Schools-Junior High and Elementary."

⁸⁶ Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County, 1956; Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Aransas County, 1972.

⁸⁷ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Aransas County Is Opening Two New Schools-Junior High and Elementary."

⁸⁸ Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past*.

⁸⁹ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Building Program To Cure Rockport School Failings," June 22, 1962, 1B (Newspapers.com).

⁹⁰ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "School Bond Election Set For May 28."; *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Aransas Board Okays Suit for School Tract."

⁹¹ *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "Aransas Notes Packed Schools," September 16, 1966, 16C (Newspapers.com); *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, "School Budget Set in Aransas," August 16, 1967, 20C (Newspapers.com); Aransas County-Rockport Centennial, *A Glimpse at Our Past*.

⁹² Friends of the [Aransas County] History Center, "Did You Know? Rockport School," (YouTube: August 13, 2020); *Houston Chronicle*, *Hurricane Harvey* (Pediment Publishing, 2017).

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Historic Preservation Fund Grant coordinated by the Texas Historical Commission.⁹³ The building is currently under construction for these repairs and renovations to support its future use.⁹⁴

Segregation and Integration

White, Mexican American, and Black children historically attended separate schools in Aransas County, but RISD appears to have integrated, at least partially, prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1955 and well before many other schools in the state. By the end of the nineteenth century, Rockport had separate school buildings for white and Mexican American children.⁹⁵ By the 1910s, Black children attended a separate school from Mexican American and white children. It had one classroom and covered elementary grades only.⁹⁶ The schools for Black and Mexican American children did not offer high school courses, while Rockport's school for White children did. Mexican American students, few of whom pursued a secondary education at the time, were permitted to attend high school classes with White children but had to sit separately.⁹⁷ Black students transferred to Corpus Christi for high school.⁹⁸ By 1931, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church operated a religious school for Mexican American children; it is unknown if a public school for children of Mexican descent also existed at this time.⁹⁹ Located at the northeast corner of Cornwall and Pearl Streets, the Catholic school was one story, and its L-shape plan suggests it likely had two classrooms.¹⁰⁰ Later, likely around the time the 1935 Rockport School was built, a public school for children of Mexican descent was added near Rockport School.¹⁰¹ It was a small wood-frame building with one classroom. Children were not allowed to speak in Spanish and had a separate playground from White children. They attended class for a few years or less in this schoolhouse before transferring to Rockport School for the remainder of their education.¹⁰² A 1946 Rockport School yearbook shows segregated "Latin-American" and White first and second grade classes (Figure 11 and Figure 12).¹⁰³ By 1952, Black, Mexican American, and white first- and second grade students are depicted together in yearbook class photos, suggesting that classrooms may have been integrated at this point (Figure 13).¹⁰⁴ Pictures depict older students of mixed races participating in school activities together, such as student government groups.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

The 1935 Rockport School by Hamon & Griffith is associated with twentieth century national, state, and local educational trends. In replacing a small, imposing, and poorly equipped late nineteenth century school, it reflects Progressive-Era educational reform and school modernization efforts and a response to the 1925 Eby and Sutton report on the condition of Texas schools. Its spread-out plan for improved lighting and ventilation, fireproof construction, multiple exits, interior

⁹³ Victoria H. Kennedy, Narrative of Rockport School, Aransas County Independent School District, 2006.

⁹⁴ History Programs Division Texas Historical Commission, Hurricane Harvey Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund Grant Program: Rockport School, Texas Historical Commission, 2020.

⁹⁵ Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson, "Historic Resources Survey of Aransas, Refugio, and Calhoun Counties: Aransas County Survey Report."

⁹⁶ Walter Dickey, "Interview #16," interviewed by Kathryn Winkelman and Nina Garrett, Rockport, October 22, 1988, Aransas County Historical Society.

⁹⁷ Dickey, "Interview #16."

⁹⁸ Dickey, "Interview #16."

⁹⁹ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1931.

¹⁰⁰ Sanborn Map Company, *Rockport*, 1931.

¹⁰¹ Avelina Piña, "Interview with Avelina Piña," interviewed by Kathryn Winkelman, Rockport, December 7, 1988, Aransas County Historical Society; Hillis Dominguez, "Interview with Hillis Dominguez," interviewed by Kathryn Winkelman, Rockport, December 7, 1988, Aransas County Historical Society.

¹⁰² Piña, "Interview with Avelina Piña."; Dominguez, "Interview with Hillis Dominguez."

¹⁰³ Rockport School, *The Pirate: 1946* (Rockport, 1946), Aransas County Historical Society, Rockport, Yearbook.

¹⁰⁴ Rockport School, *The Pirate: 1952* (Rockport, 1952), Aransas County Historical Society, Rockport.

¹⁰⁵ Rockport School, *The Pirate: 1952*.

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restrooms, “sanitary” materials like tile and concrete, setback from the street, and large lot near playgrounds and athletic fields reflect the progressive movement’s considerations for health, safety, and recreation. The school’s low-scale, less monumental appearance, and specialty rooms, and the enhanced high school curriculum the building afforded are also characteristic of the movement. Built with PWA funds, Rockport School additionally illustrates the critical role the PWA played in improving the country’s educational facilities during the Great Depression and the agency’s impact on the design of the schools they funded. Rockport School is the only known PWA project in Aransas County. Its classically inspired but modern appearance, practical spaces, affordable materials, and siting with consideration for future expansion reflect the PWA’s preferred architectural treatments and standards for schools it funded. The initial separation of students by race, and imposed language and cultural assimilation of Spanish-speaking students are also characteristic of educational trends of the region and era. Rockport School is the only resource of its type and era in Rockport and Aransas County that illustrates these educational trends. Other extant school buildings in Rockport were built after World War II and instead represent trends in postwar community development, modernism, and educational philosophies.

The school and grounds were designed to be flexible and support future use, but the scope of this nomination limited to the 1935 school building only. Rockport School changed from a primary and secondary school to just one for primary students and a multi-building campus, and the campus supported the education of students for 70 years, until 2005. Rockport School’s period of significance is 1935-1974, the year in which it opened through the current 50-year point.

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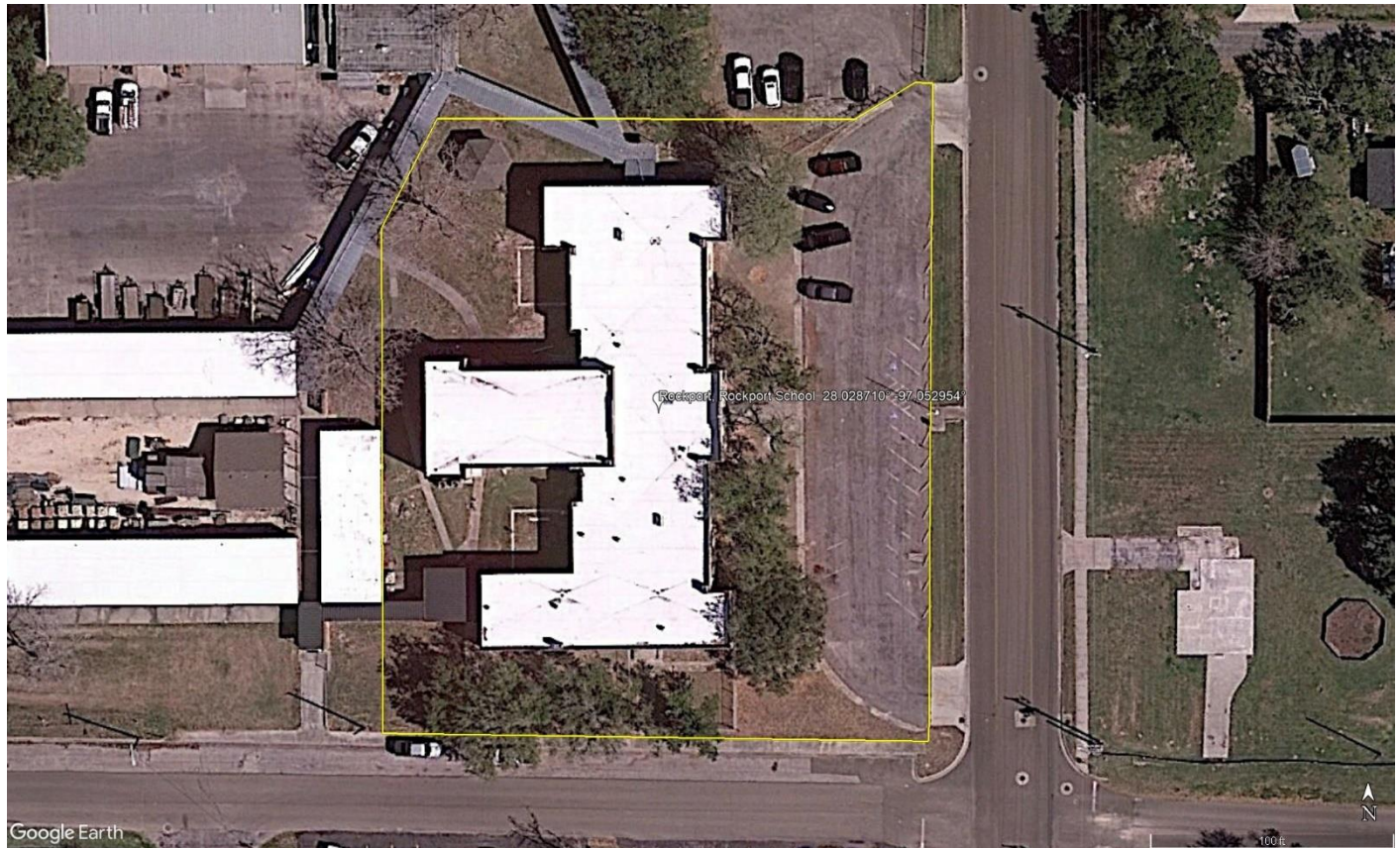
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Section 10: Geographical Data

Boundary Map (Google Earth, accessed August 25, 2023)



Coordinates: Lat: 28.028710° Lon: -97.052954°

Boundary Description: The boundary is an irregularly shaped area in the southeast corner of Aransas County Appraisal District (CAD) parcel #32612 encompassing the original school building and its immediate surroundings, delineated on the scale map above.

Boundary Justification: The property boundary includes the original school building and circle drive, and the grounds immediately surrounding the building that were part of the historical setting. It excludes the mid-twentieth century buildings and their associated parking lots and other later improvements on the campus on Aransas CAD parcels 32612 and 32667, per the determination of eligibility provided by the NPS which established the scope of this nomination.

Figure 1. Location of Rockport School

619 N Live Oak St, Rockport, TX 78382

Basemap Source: Esri (2022)

0 2,000 Feet
0 600 Meters

Date: 1/12/2023

Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

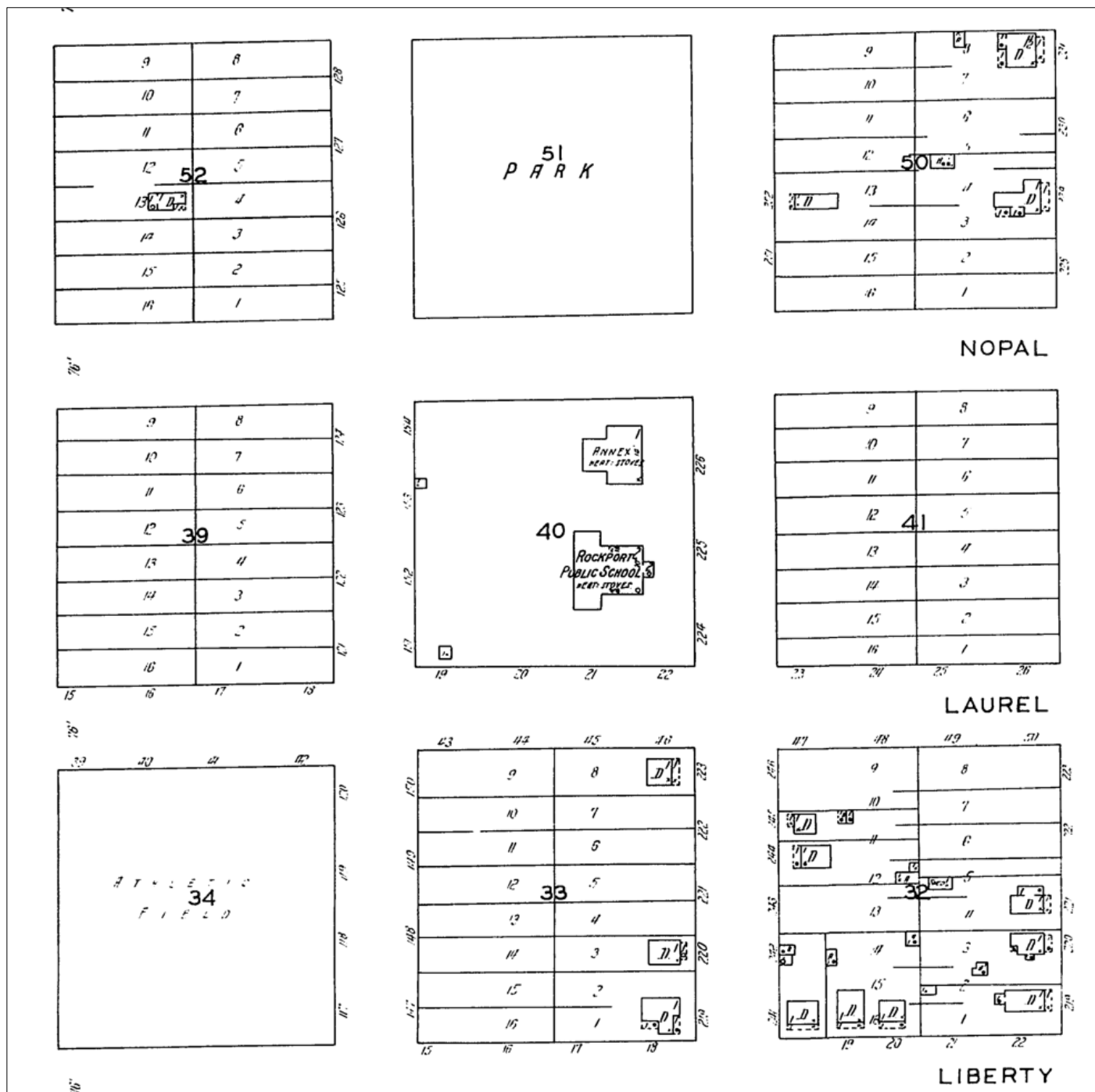
Map 2. Map of Rockport School NRHP Boundary. Stantec, 2023.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

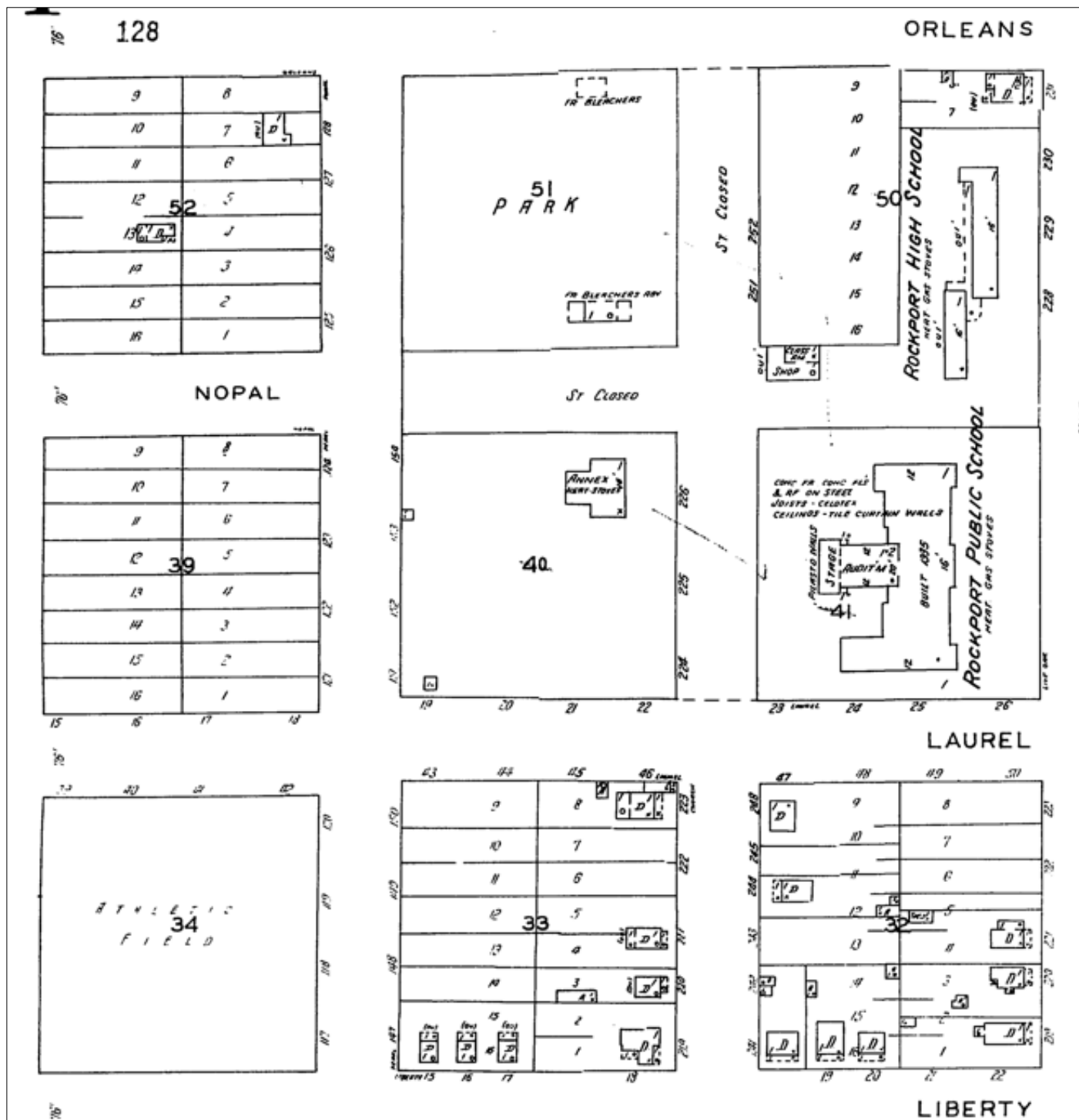
Figures

Figure 1. 1931 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the 1892 Rockport School and annex, sited next to a park and athletic fields. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Figure 2. 1943 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing Rockport's expanded educational complex. Four blocks were closed to traffic to create the campus that included the 1935 Rockport School, ca. 1940 Rockport High School, ancillary buildings, recreational facilities, and space for expansion and new construction. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company.



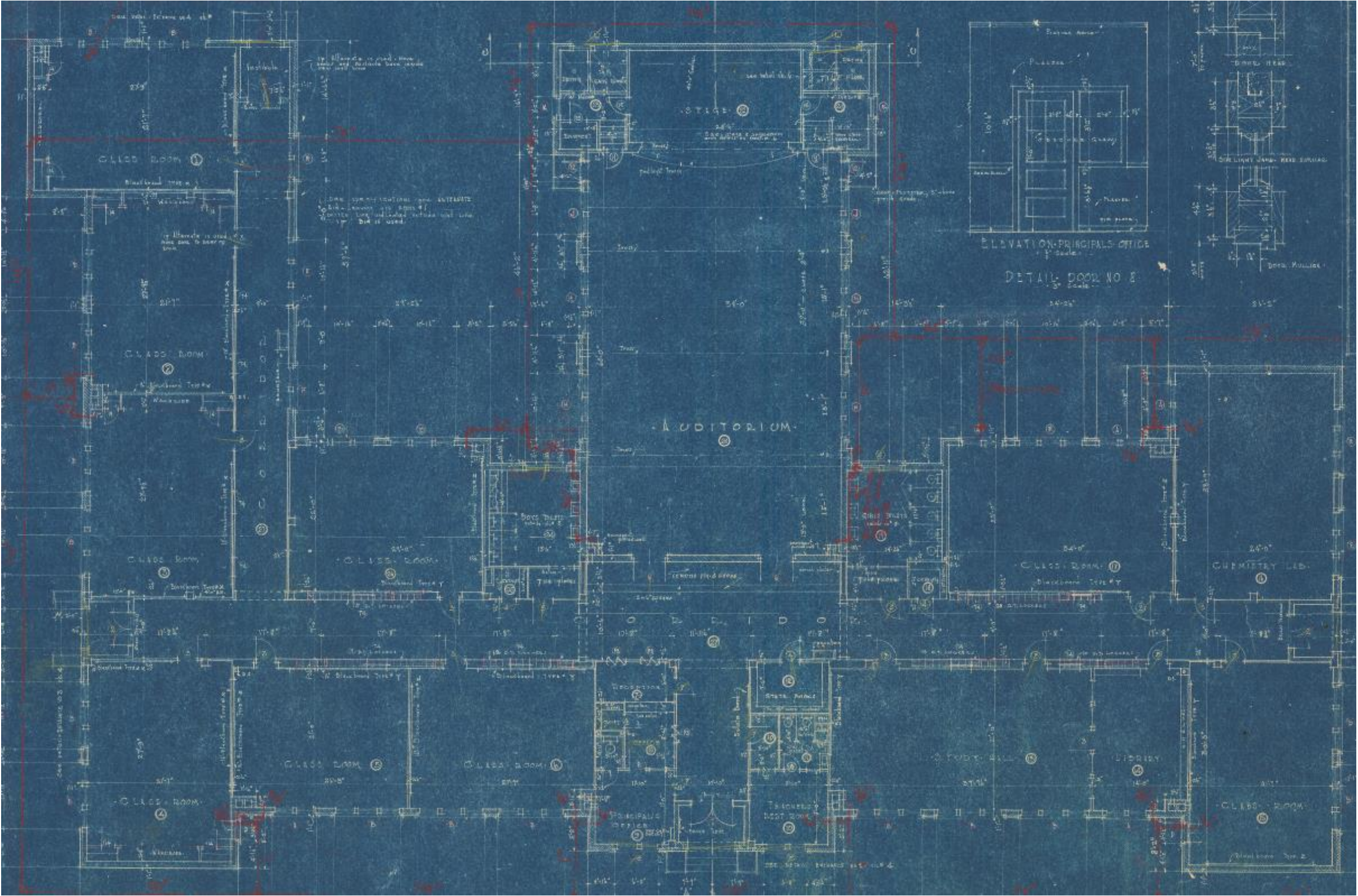
Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Figure 3. 1892 schoolhouse. Aransas County Historical Society, pre-1919.



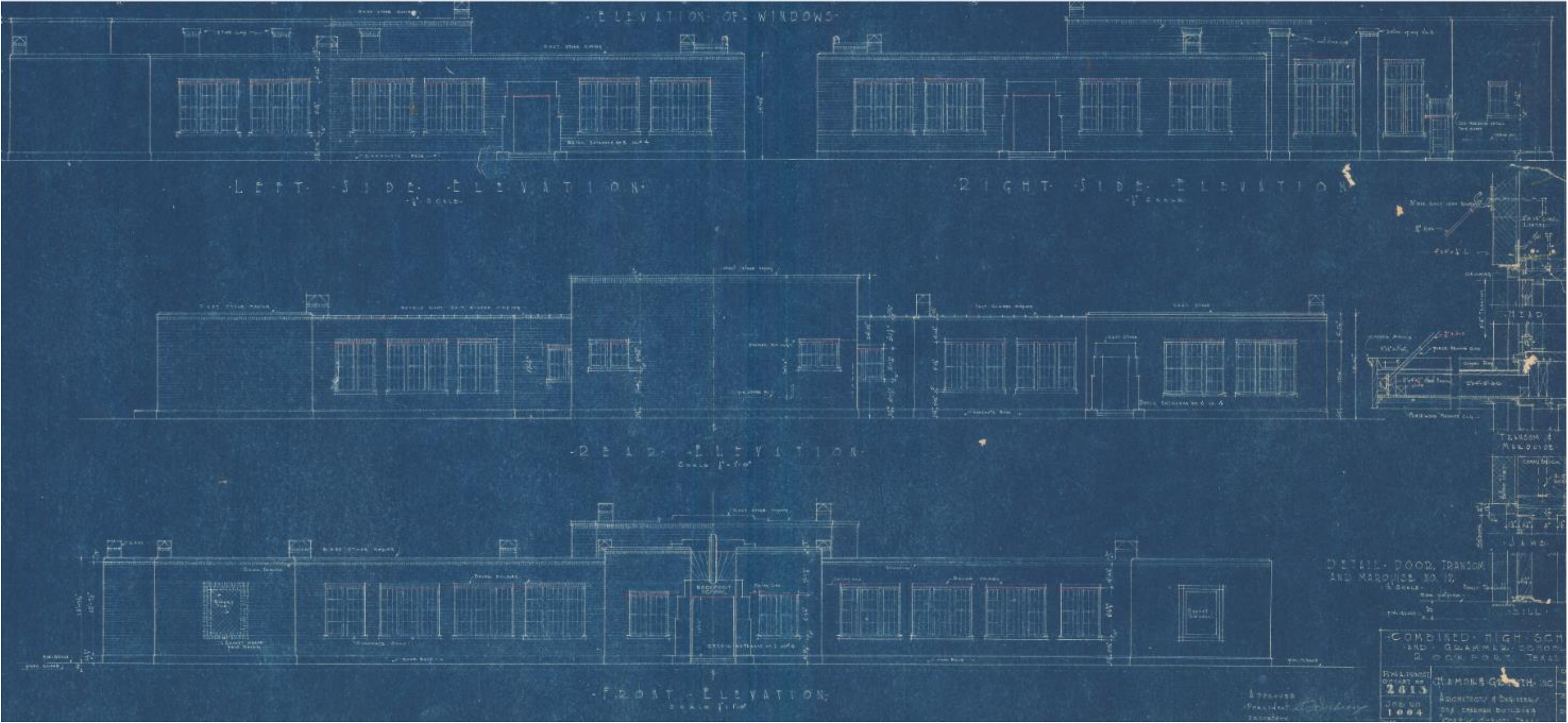
Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Figure 4. Floor Plan. Hamon & Griffith, Inc. 1934.



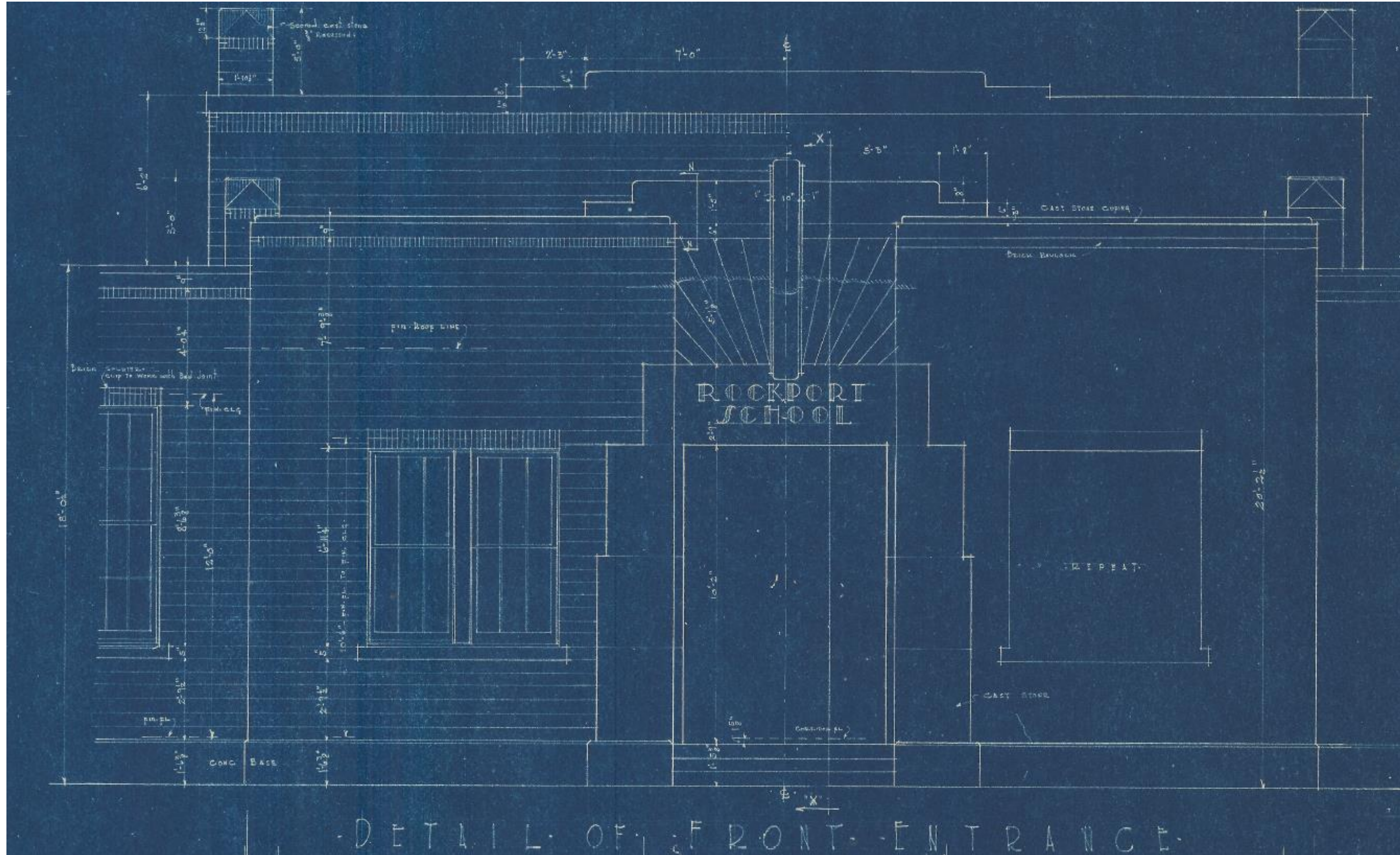
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Figure 5. Elevations. Hamon & Griffith, Inc. 1934.



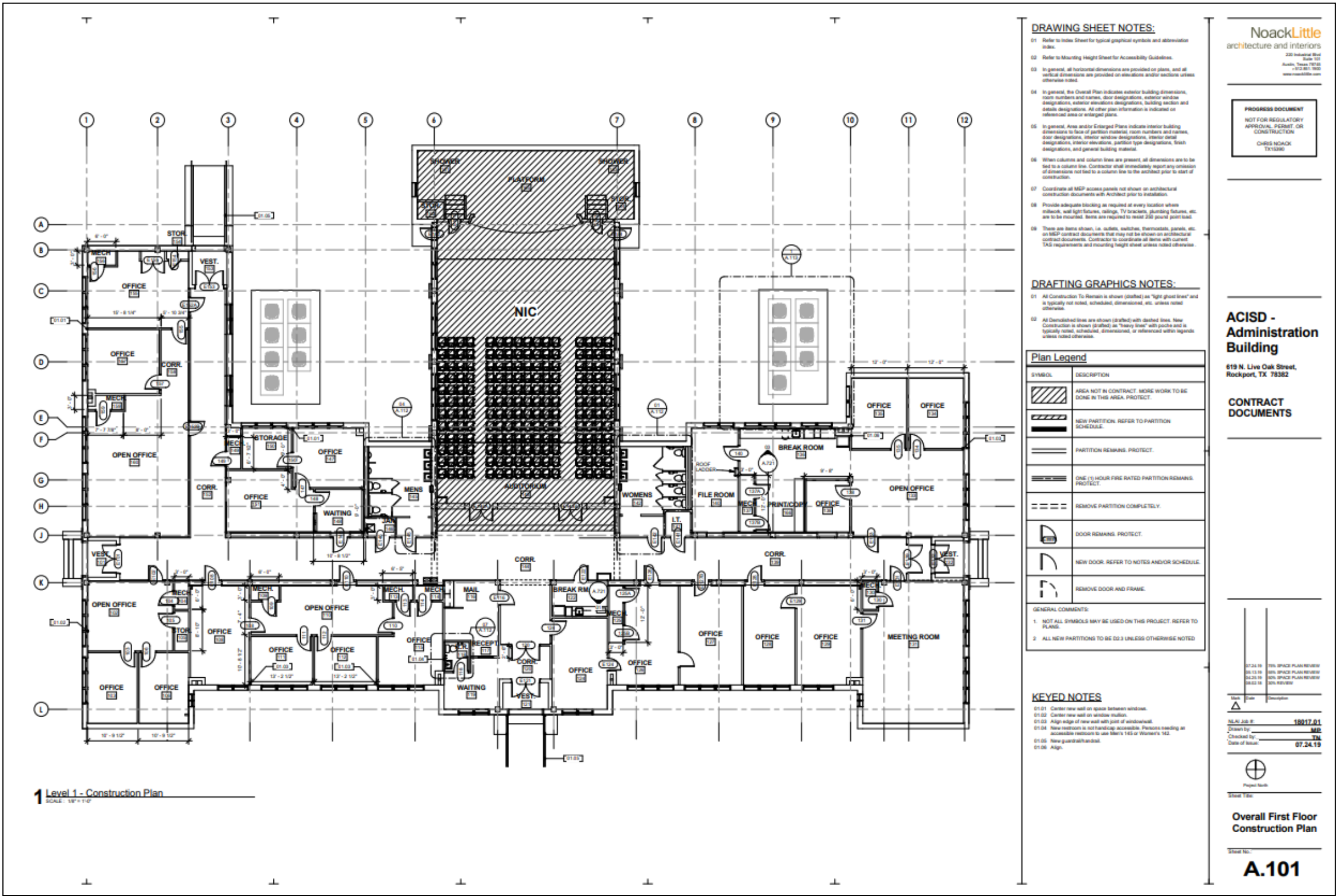
Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Figure 6. Detail of Front Entrance. Hamon & Griffith, Inc. 1934.



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Figure 7. Current Floor Plan, Noack Little, 2019.



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Figure 8. East (front) façade and circle drive, likely shortly after construction. ACISD Collections.

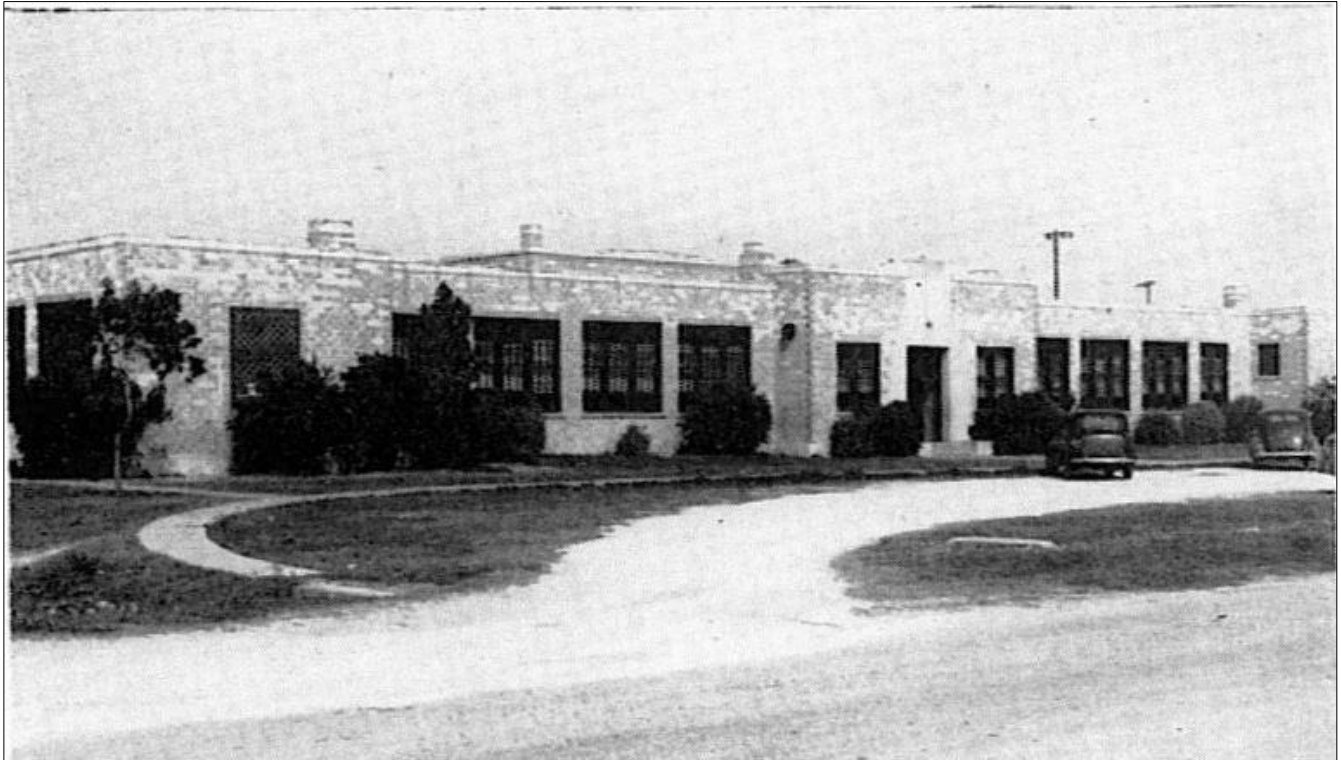
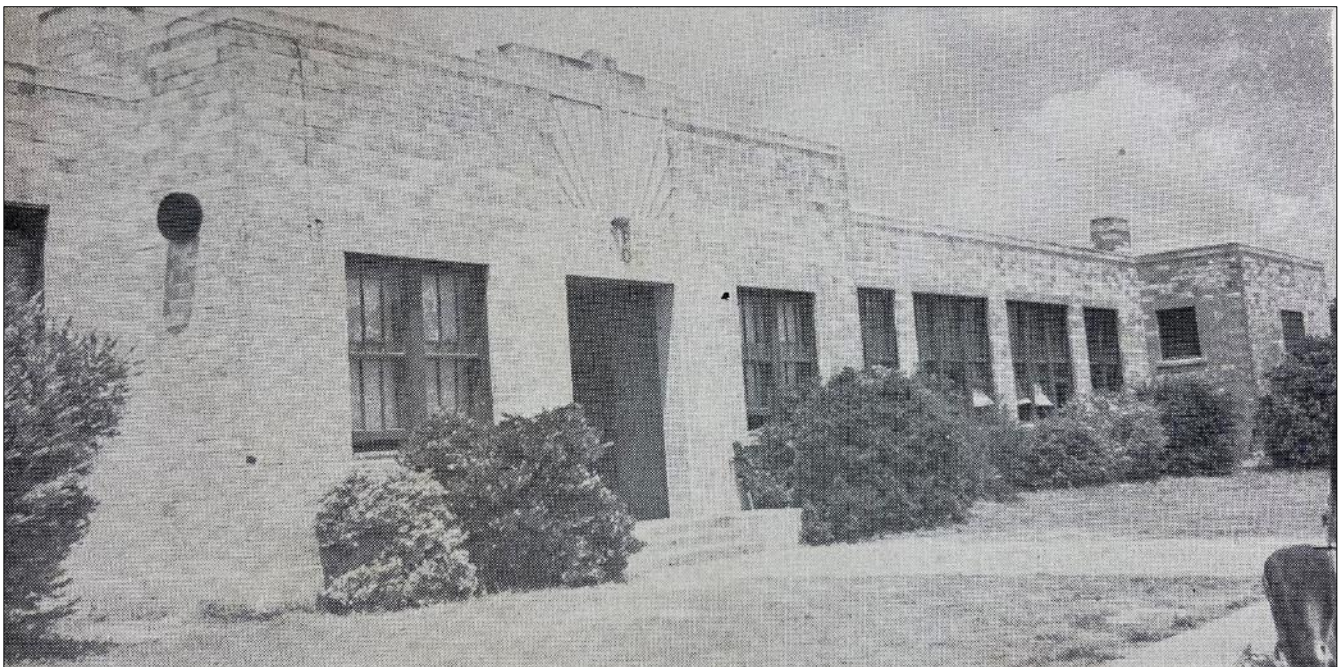


Figure 9. East (front) façade in ca. 1946. *The Pirate*, 1946.



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Figure 10. Students assembled on the stage for the 1945 Hallowe'en Carnival Queen Coronation. *The Pirate*, 1946.



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Figure 11. A segregated first-grade class for Mexican American children with teacher Mrs. Ruth Saenz in 1946. *The Pirate*, 1946.

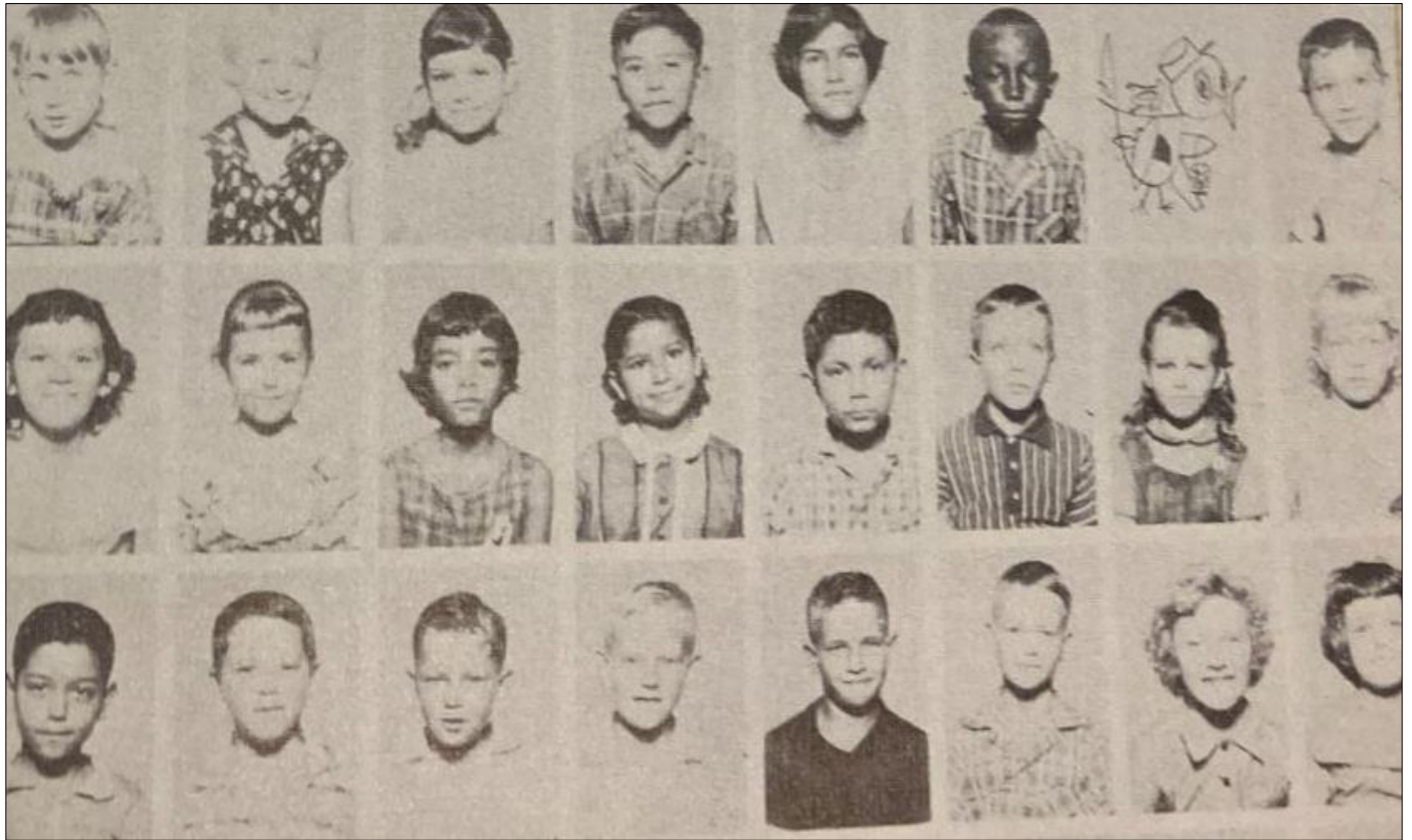


Figure 12. A segregated first-grade class for White children with teacher Mrs. Charlyne Hunt in 1946. *The Pirate*, 1946.



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Figure 13. A mixed-race second-grade classroom in 1952. *The Pirate*, 1952.



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Photos

Photo 1. Front (east) façade; view facing west.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 2. Side (south) façade; view facing north.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 3. Side (north) façade; view facing southwest.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 4. Side (north) and rear (west) façades with noncontributing gazebo and covered walkway in foreground; view facing southeast.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 5. West (rear) façade showing the auditorium volume at center; view facing southeast.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 6. Side (south) and rear façades; view facing northeast.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 7. Primary entrance; view facing west.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 8. Art Moderne-style sunburst and name plate over the front entrance; view facing west.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 9. Secondary (south) entrance; view facing north.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 10. Decorative tile and brick panel; view facing southwest.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 11. Art Moderne-style chimney crown; view facing northeast.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 12. Entry vestibule; view facing west.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 13. Stepped hallway surround (foreground), coved vaulted opening in front of the auditorium (center), and north-south hallway (background); view facing northwest.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 14. Auditorium entrances; view facing northwest.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 15. Auditorium door hardware; view facing northeast.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 16. North-south hallway; view facing north.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 17. Auditorium; view facing southwest.



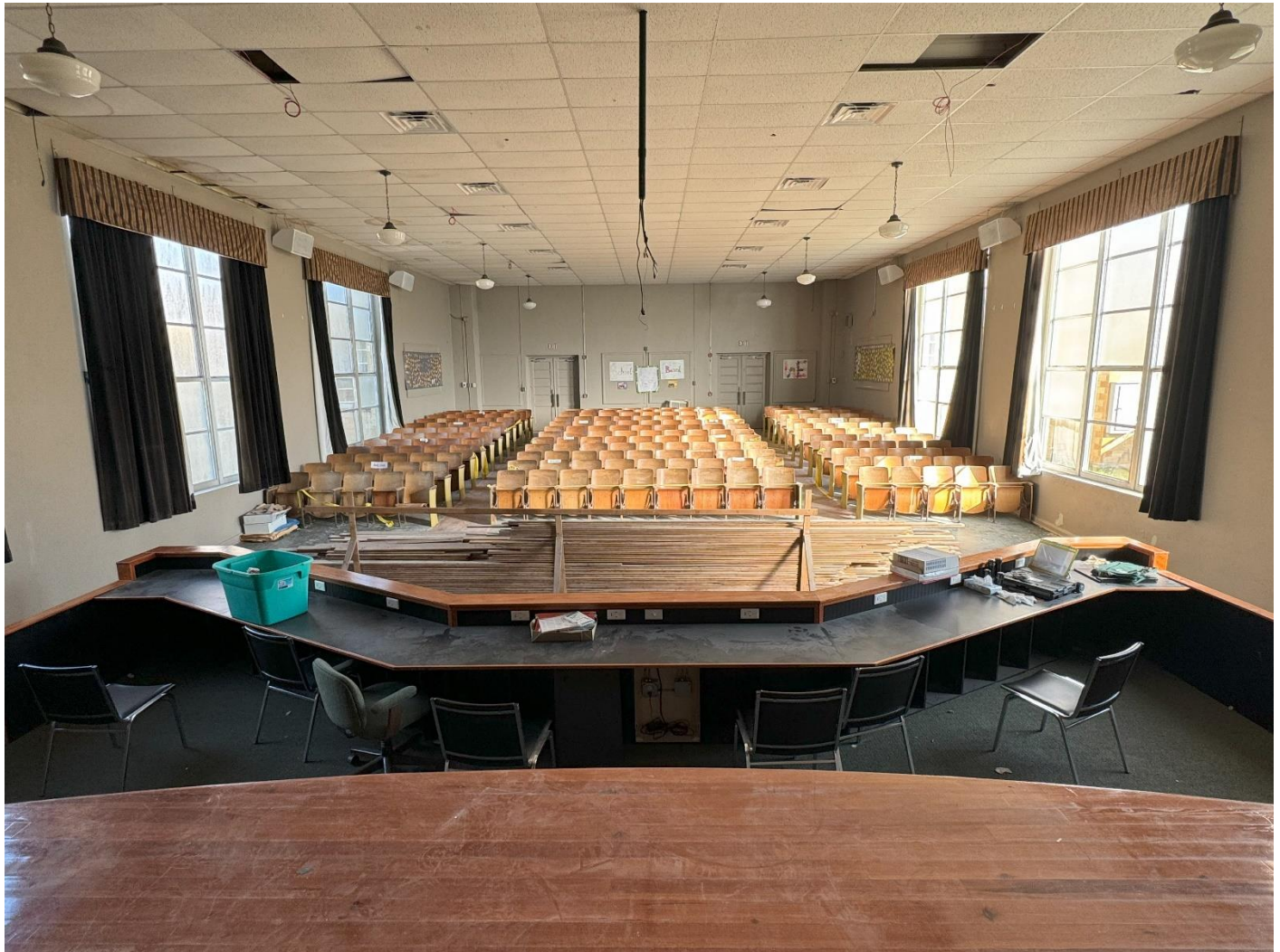
Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 18. Auditorium stage; view facing southwest.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 19. Auditorium; view facing east.



Rockport School, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas

Photo 20. Former classroom, future meeting room; view facing east.



- end -