

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

5r1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Edwards High School
Other name/site number: Gonzales Colored School, Edwards School
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 1427 Fly Street
City or town: Gonzales State: Texas County: Gonzales County
Not for publication: [] Vicinity: []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 [] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [] A [] B [] C [] D

[Signature] Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official / Title Date 2/21/24
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

Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

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

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Education/school

Current Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum, sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements/Craftsman; NO STYLE

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, Concrete, Wood, Glass, Stucco, Metal: steel

Narrative Description: (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-11)

Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Education, Ethnic Heritage: Black; Architecture (*local level of significance*)

Period of Significance: 1922–1965

Significant Dates: 1922, 1949, 1952

Significant Person: (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation: (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Kellner, Herbert E., AIA (gymnasium)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-25)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-26 through 9-28)

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: Edwards Association African American Museum, Gonzales County Archives and Records

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approx. 4.3 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 29.509981 Longitude: -97.440735

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated boundary is the two legal parcels that encompass the Edwards High School campus. The two parcels are described by Gonzales CAD as: (Property ID# 13571) ALL 10;13-15;22-27 PT 11-12 PECK & FLY (4.0951 acres); and (Property ID# 24521) PT 11-12 PECK & FLY (0.1897 acres). Information accessed March 14, 2023. See MAP 3.

Boundary Justification: The nominated boundary includes all property historically associated with Edwards High School.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Angela Gaudette, Architectural Historian; and Allie Smith, Environmental Planner
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Date: May 26, 2023

Additional Documentation

- Maps** (see continuation sheets MAP-29 through MAP-32)
- Additional items** (see continuation sheets FIGURE-33 through FIGURE-41)
- Photographs** (see continuation sheets PHOTO-42 through PHOTO-69)

Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Edwards High School

Location: Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photographers: Angela Gaudette and Allie Smith, Hicks & Company. Photos 22–24 provided by David Tucey.

Date of Photographs: 9/12/2022 and 9/29/2022

Photo 1: Main classroom building, looking northwest.

Photo 2: Main classroom building, looking northeast.

Photo 3: Main classroom building, looking southeast.

Photo 4: Main classroom building, looking southwest.

Photo 5: Main classroom building, foyer, looking southeast.

Photo 6: Main classroom building, kitchen (former chemistry classroom), looking west.

Photo 7: Main classroom building, west wing hallway, looking southeast.

Photo 8: Main classroom building, classroom in east wing that houses the Edwards Association African American Museum collection, looking south.

Photo 9: Gymnasium, looking north.

Photo 10: Gymnasium, looking southeast.

Photo 11: Gymnasium, looking southwest.

Photo 12: Gymnasium, looking northwest.

Photo 13: Gymnasium, interior, looking west.

Photo 14: Gymnasium, detail view of lamella roofing.

Photo 15: Gymnasium, view of stage, looking east.

Photo 16: Gymnasium, view of northeast office behind the stage, looking north.

Photo 17: Gymnasium, men's locker room, looking east.

Photo 18: Vocational building, looking north.

Photo 19: Vocational building, looking northeast.

Photo 20: Vocational building, looking southeast.

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Photo 21: Vocational building, looking southwest.

Photo 22: Northwest room of vocational building, looking northwest.

Photo 23: South room of vocational building, looking south.

Photo 24: South room of vocational building, looking southeast.

Photo 25: View of non-contributing basketball court, looking east, main classroom building in background.

Photo 26: Non-contributing playground features located to the north of the main classroom building, looking northeast.

Photo 27: Carport to the west of the vocational building, looking northeast, vocational building in background.

Photo 28: Non-contributing pavilion and picnic area to the east of the main classroom building, looking east.

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

Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Narrative Description

Edwards High School is an early 20th century school campus in Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas built out between 1922 and 1952. The nominated boundary is a flat, four-acre rectangular block east of downtown in a historically African American neighborhood. Completed in 1922, the main building is an eight classroom U-plan brick edifice on a concrete foundation with a gable-on-hip standing seam metal roof and exposed rafter tails. Groups of tall wood-frame windows fenestrate the exterior and are indicative of the importance of natural light and ventilation in early 20th century school design. A brick gymnasium, built in 1949, features a Zollinger/lamella wood ceiling structure that supports the curved roof. Originally built c. 1920 for a rural community school, the vocational building is made of wood frame and stucco and was moved to the campus in 1952. There are three non-contributing resources—carport, pavilion, and basketball court—all built after 1965. At one time during the period of significance (1922-1965) additional frame school buildings existed on the site, but they have since been removed. Despite such loss, the core historic district remains and conveys the campus’s essential character.

Setting

The Edwards High School campus is a large, 4.3-acre rectangular block on the east side of Gonzales, Gonzales County bordered by School Street (north), Robertson Street (east), Fly Street (south), and Kleine Street (west). It is approximately 1.4 miles northeast of the county courthouse. Primarily flat, the nominated property is covered with short grass and a small number of trees. Chain link fencing marks the campus perimeter and an additional chain link fence surrounds the vocational building.

Surrounding blocks are residential in character with a mix of mid-century Minimal Traditional houses and non-historic single and multi-family dwellings. Gonzales Elementary School is two blocks to the south and St. Andrew Street, one of the city’s main east-west corridors, is one block south of Edwards High School. Nearby historical landmarks include the St. James Catholic Cemetery (one block to the east), the Gonzales City Cemetery (0.4 miles northwest), and the Gonzales Memorial Museum and Amphitheater National Register Historic District (0.35 miles southwest, NR #3001414). An Official Texas Historical Marker entitled “African American Education in Gonzales” documents the nominated school’s history and is currently housed inside the main classroom building.

Summary of Resources (see Map 5)

Edwards High School consists of three contributing resources—the main building (1922), gymnasium (1949), and vocational building (c. 1920/1952)—clustered on the south-central side of the block. The U-plan main building is centered on the block and faces Fly Street with the gymnasium and vocational building sited south. Historically, there were five wood-frame instructional buildings on the north side. **(Figure 4)** Today, a basketball court (non-contributing) is near the ground’s northwest corner, a small, metal frame carport (non-contributing) is situated to the west of the vocational building, and a non-historic-age pavilion (non-contributing) with a metal roof, concrete floor, and picnic tables is east of the classroom building.

	Resource	Type	Date of Construction	Contributing Status
1	Main Building	Building	1922	Contributing
2	Vocational Building	Building	c.1920 (moved to property in 1952)	Contributing
3	Gymnasium	Building	1949	Contributing
4	Basketball Court	Structure	c. 2000	Non-contributing
5	Pavilion	Structure	c. 2000	Non-contributing
6	Carport	Structure	c. 1980	Non-contributing

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Main Building (1922)

The masonry classroom building was built in 1922 at the center of the block facing southeast to Fly St. It is one-story with a U-plan on a concrete foundation, symmetrical fenestration, and a gable-on-hip standing seam metal roof. There are eight classrooms, non-historic-age men's and women's restrooms, cross-axial hallways, and an entrance foyer (**Figure 1**). It has a long and low massing and is brick-clad laid in a common bond pattern (stretcher courses with full headers every sixth course). All window openings have a rowlock brick sill and are covered by red-painted plywood. Most windows lack the original glass and framing units, but physical and historical evidence show these were likely paired wood frame, double sash windows with 2-over-2 lights in each sash with transoms. All window openings are set high in the wall plane with transom windows partly shadowed by the overhanging eaves. The building currently has a standing seam metal roof. The building shows some influence of the Craftsman style in the rafter ends and open eaves, grouping of tall, double hung sash windows that are symmetrically placed, and interior brick chimneys.

Southeast (Front) Elevation (Photo 1)

The southeast elevation has the central entrance recessed between two wings. The entrance is a set of non-historic double doors—the left door is accessed via concrete steps with two treads and the right door has a wooden ramp that provides ADA-compliant access. To the left and right of the entrance are two symmetrically placed aluminum-frame sliding windows (one on each side), both with an exterior metal security grate. Further left of the entrance is the southeast elevation of the south wing that features two evenly spaced window openings. The window units have been removed but the transoms are intact. A metal vent is adjacent to the concrete foundation beneath each window opening.

The southeast elevation of the north wing is identical to the southeast elevation of the south wing. Two paired sets of window openings are evenly spaced on the southeast elevation of each wing.

Southwest Elevation (Photo 2)

The southwest (side) elevation has a central opening with paired doors and transom windows above. Concrete steps with six treads provide exterior access. To the left of the entrance is a paired window opening enclosed with plywood and with (uncovered) transom windows above. To the right of the entrance is a larger window opening enclosed with plywood. This window opening is also covered with plywood, but one transom window is left uncovered and a non-historic-age window A/C unit has been installed in this location. The elevation also features three metal brick vents adjacent to the top of the concrete foundation.

Northwest (Rear) Elevation (Photo 3)

The northwest (rear) elevation has four, tripartite window openings evenly spaced across the wall plane with two single doors centered between them. There are nine metal grate brick vents adjacent to the top of the concrete foundation.

Northeast Elevation (Photo 4)

Like the other elevations, the northeast elevation features a centered entrance hung with a slab door. Paired window openings are situated on either side of the entrance, and each window opening is enclosed with plywood.

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Interior (Photos 5-8)

Overall, the interior retains its cross-axial layout of double-loaded corridors. Original wood floors, beadboard ceilings, chair railing, doors, and chalkboards are present, although some areas have non-historic materials. The primary entrance opens to a central foyer with a kitchen (formerly the chemistry classroom) and non-historic restrooms through doors on the north. Double-door openings with transoms (but without the original doors) are on either side of the foyer, marking entrances to the east wing and west wings.

The west wing features a central hallway with access to four classrooms. The two classrooms on the south side of the west wing have been modified to include a partition to allow flexible use of the area. One of the classrooms on the north is used for storage, and the other is the kitchen. The east wing has three classrooms and the men's restroom. The classroom on the south side of the east wing is currently the Edwards High School African American Museum. The other two classrooms serve as storage space.

Gymnasium (1949)

The gymnasium is at the southwest corner of the campus, with its primary elevation facing southwest towards Kleine Street. The one-story building is constructed of blonde brick and glazed clay tile. It has a segmented arch barrel roof supported by a lamella roofing system on the interior (also called Zollinger roofing). The roofing system was popularly used during the interwar years due to its minimal use of metal components.

Southwest Elevation (Photo 9)

The southwest elevation has a small, front-gable wing with two sets of slab double doors with fixed transoms. A small window centered between the doors has a deep concrete sill and possibly served as a ticket booth. This window opening has a wood frame sash, and a non-historic-age A/C unit is currently in place of the bottom window sash. A circular gable vent is in the upper gable roof wall. Each set of doors on the southwest elevation is framed by a stretcher brick course on the sides and a soldier brick course lintel. The remainder of the southwest elevation is unornamented. The walls are blonde brick and wood siding covers the barrel roof end. A rectangular gable vent is situated near the roofline.

Northwest elevation (Photo 10)

The northwest elevation of the gymnasium features seven bays under the barrel roof section and a small hipped roof extension off the northeast side. Each bay is visually divided by an inward sloping engaged concrete column, which likely serves as structural support for the arched roof. Metal frame windows are situated in six of the seven bays. Each window unit consists of a pair of 4-over-1 light windows. The top and bottom light are fixed, but the two middle lights of each unit operate as an awning window. Each window features a concrete sill. The seventh bay under the barrel roof section (furthest east on the elevation) features a singular metal frame awning window next to an arched porch entrance. The entrance is accessed via a wooden ramp and hung with a single slab door. The northwest elevation of the hipped-roof section features a centered paired window unit similar to the awning windows on the other elevations.

Northeast Elevation (Photo 11)

A small hipped-roof section protrudes from the northeast elevation. It has two entrances, each a single door covered by a flat overhang with metal supports. Original transoms are under plywood. Two pairs of metal-frame awning windows are centered between the two entrances, each with a metal security grate.

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The building's primary wall plane has horizontal wood siding and three non-historic-age metal fans near the upper gable.

Southeast Elevation (Photo 12)

The southeast elevation is identical to the northwest elevation.

Interior (Photos 13-17)

A concrete floor spans the majority of the building's footprint, with exception of the stage, two offices, and two locker rooms located at the east end, and a small foyer and concession room at the west end (**Figure 2**). The interior walls of the gymnasium are composed of glazed clay tile, and the interior side arches of the barrel roof are made of wood panels on both sides. The most distinctive feature of the gymnasium is the lamella roof which spans the entire length of the barrel roof section of the building. The primary material of the lamella roof is wood planks fastened on their narrow sides and hinged together to create a rhomboid pattern.

The stage at the eastern end of the gymnasium is one of the character-defining features of the gymnasium. The wooden stage is elevated nearly four feet above the main concrete floor of the gymnasium. Two offices are located behind the stage to the right and left (at the northeast and southeast corners of the building) and the men's and women's locker rooms are situated in between and directly behind the stage. Each locker room consists of a changing area with a louvered wall for privacy, a bathroom with three stalls, and a shower area.

Vocational Building (originally built c. 1920, but moved to nominated property in 1952)

The vocational building is towards the northeast corner of the school campus, adjacent to Fly Street. Research shows it was originally constructed c. 1920 as a rural school and moved to the nominated property in 1952. As a building repurposed for vocational studies, this resource reflects a common segregation-era practice whereby school districts provided substandard educational resources for African American public schools.¹

It is of wood frame construction with stucco cladding and a gable-on-hip roof with composition shingles, exposed rafters, and wood frame windows placed high on the wall plane. Although most of the window units are still in place, many glass panels are loose, missing, or broken. All windows appear to be wood frame, double hung windows with 2-over-3 lights in each sash, unless otherwise described. Each window also features an exterior wood frame screen attached via two metal hinges near the lintel. The mesh screen is torn or missing on a few windows, but the wood frames are mostly intact.

Southeast Elevation (Photo 18)

The southeast elevation (façade) features a slab door entrance with a transom that has been covered with plywood. To the east of the entrance is a group of three wood-frame windows, each with a transom beneath by the overhanging eaves. To the west of the entrance is a single wood frame window, followed by a non-historic-age overhead door, and another single wood frame window.

¹ Susan Cianci Salvatore, et al, *Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States*, Theme Study for the National Park Service, August 2000, 35–36, 56, www.nps.gov.

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Southwest Elevation (Photo 19)

The southwest elevation has five evenly spaced single window openings.

Northwest Elevation (Photo 20)

The northwest elevation has four window openings and an entrance. Moving left to right on the elevation, there is a pair of wood frame windows with fixed transoms, followed by two single windows, followed by an entrance hung with a presumably original five-panel wood door, and a three-light transom above. One more single wood frame window is right of the door.

Northeast Elevation (Photo 21)

The northeast elevation has six window openings and an entrance hung with a slab door with a small shed roof overhang with brackets and a metal roof. The entrance is situated off-center near the northern end of the elevation. Five singular window openings are evenly spaced to the left of the entrance, and one paired window opening is to the right of the entrance.

Interior (Photos 22-24)

The vocational building is divided into three rooms. It has concrete floors, walls with wainscoting detail, and non-historic-age dropped ceilings. Many ceiling tiles are missing and reveal the wood grid added to the ceiling joists to install the system. Some original features are still extant in the northwest room, such as built-in wall shelving and a pendant light fixture with an opaque glass shade that was commonly used in schoolhouses prior to World War II.

Integrity

Edwards High School, which operated from 1922 to 1965, is at its original location on a large block in Gonzales's historically-African American neighborhood. Despite the loss of other school-related buildings, the historic district retains the 1922 main building, vocational building, and gymnasium that collectively convey the campus's essential character. Exterior alterations to the three resources are minimal, but deferred maintenance has led to the loss of some historic window units. The two instructional buildings reflect early 20th century school design with efficient floorplans, large grouped windows high on the wall plane, and low-pitched roofs. The 1949 Edwards High School gymnasium retains excellent integrity of design, materials, and workmanship in its character-defining Zollinger/lamella roof, a diamond-grid timber structural system. Non-contributing structures do not significantly intrude on the setting, and the nominated district retains good integrity of feeling and association of an early 20th century African American public school campus.

Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Statement of Significance

Edwards High School, built out between 1922 and 1952, served the Black students of Gonzales, Gonzales County until 1965. Public education for African Americans began in Gonzales in the 1870s. Originally called the Gonzales Colored School, parents renamed the institution following the resignation of its principal George Edwards, Jr. in the mid-1930s. From the 1920s until its closure in 1965, it served elementary through high school grade levels. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black. Reflecting the segregation policies in place during the early 20th century, the school was a significant focal point for the educational and social development of the city's Black youth. Edwards School is also nominated at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Although modest examples of school design, the campus buildings represented the Gonzales Black community's significant efforts to provide safe and practical educational resources for local children. The period of significance is 1922–1965, the end date marking when the institution closed as a result of school desegregation in Gonzales.

Public Education in Gonzales, Texas

In the 1820s, the Mexican government issued an empresario grant to Green DeWitt and James Kerr to establish an Anglo-American colony east of San Antonio. Settlement to the area that became Gonzales County was impeded, however, by its relative remoteness and territorial conflicts with Native American peoples. Eventually, a town named Gonzales was laid out near the Guadalupe River. The small city is notable in state history as the site of the first skirmish of the Texas Revolution. On October 2, 1835, Anglo settlers challenged Mexican dragoons to “Come and Take It,” the town cannon. Subsequently, the Mexican Army burned the town with citizens fleeing in what was called, “the Runaway Scrape.” In 1837, the Republic of Texas incorporated Gonzales as the county seat of Gonzales County. The city council held its first meeting in March of 1839 and started rebuilding. Fertile soil and abundant water enticed new residents in the mid-19th century. By 1850 there were 300 enumerated in Gonzales, and ten years later the census recorded that Gonzales County had a population of more than 8,000, over 3,000 of whom were enslaved Texans.²

Gonzales steadily grew as the county's civic and commercial center. By 1885, two rail lines serviced Gonzales and it became a market for the rural agricultural and livestock industry. Growing prosperity was reflected in the built landscape and amenities provided to the city of 2,900 inhabitants. It had six churches, daily mail service, four schools, banks, an opera house, gas and waterworks, fraternal lodges, and a library.³ In 1896, locals celebrated the completion of the new courthouse, a fine Richardsonian Revival building designed by noted architect James Reily Gordon. The population doubled to 4,297 citizens in 1900. Demographically, the citizenry was comprised of whites from the Southern U.S., ethnic Germans, African Americans, and ethnic Mexicans.

According to Dr. Deborah Morowski⁴, whose 2008 doctoral thesis documented segregated education in Gonzales:

Residents of Gonzales valued education for their youth. As early as 1851, Gonzales boasted the establishment of Gonzales College, the first institution in Texas to grant bachelor's degrees to women. In 1853, a letter published in the *Gonzales Inquirer* called for a “good system of public schools” to be established in Texas. Although the Constitution of 1845 provided for a common school system in Texas, not until November, 1853, did the legislature consider a resolution to establish a system of free, common schools throughout the state.⁵

² Hardin, “Gonzales, TX.”

³ Ibid.

⁴ The authors obtained Dr. Morowski's permission to quote and reference her work in this National Register application.

⁵ Morowski, 21.

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Public education in Gonzales was limited to white children until after the Civil War. The establishment of the first school for African Americans in Gonzales corresponded with the passage of the Texas Constitution of 1869 that created a highly centralized public free school system for children between 6 and 18 years regardless of race.⁶ Subsequent policy changes in the Texas Constitution of 1876 and the School Law of 1884 advanced schooling for the state's African American and Hispanic students. However, Morowski found:

The Texas Legislature appeared to provide separate but equal education to white and black students by apportioning funding to counties on a pro rata basis regardless of the race of the students. However, the lawmakers handed control of those funds to white superintendents and schools boards which doled out money as they chose. In most cases, this meant that the majority of funds went to the schools for white students.⁷

In 1889, Gonzales schools inaugurated the graded system of education. Elementary instruction was provided to all students regardless of race, but secondary (high school) levels were provided to white children. Instructional facilities Gonzales built at this time were the most visible symbols of educational inequality. Completed in 1890, the Gonzales School (for whites) was a large, two-story Romanesque Revival stone building designed by courthouse architect James Reily Gordon. The Mexican (c.1910) and Colored Schools (1878) were small, wood-frame structures on the northwest and east sides of Gonzales.⁸ "Although," Morowski observed, students of color "received the same *kind* of education as did white students, it was inferior in both quantity and quality."⁹ This pattern of inequitable school services persisted throughout the 20th century.

Gonzales' scholastic population increased in the early 20th century with higher rates of daily attendance and more children matriculating at higher grade levels. Local statistics reflected the city's overall growth to nearly 4,000 residents in 1900, a number that dropped to 3,100 by 1910. That year, 299 Black pupils and 632 white students were enumerated in a district that was 40-square miles in size.¹⁰ School terms were extended to nine months and the district began offering secondary grade levels at the Colored and Mexican schools. These expanded offerings started a pattern whereby students from rural Black communities—like Lone Oak, Hoods Point, and Pilgrim Hill—started to attend school in Gonzales.¹¹

Although the district hired more teachers at segregated schools, it invested little in improving facilities or providing supplies. In 1916 and 1919, for example, the school board denied repeated requests by parents representing the Colored School for a new building. It did, however, approve local bonds to construct a new two-story brick high school for white students (now Gonzales Junior High) in 1917.

⁶ Morowski, 21.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ According to local historian Wray C. Hood, Myrtle Moses Mathis operated classes out of her home at 1123 St. Andrew Street. Dora Moor Manor, a graduate of Prairie View A&M University and Mathis's relative, was the school's first teacher and principal. It is unclear, however, whether Mathis's school operated as a public school, thus benefitting from state funding. Wray C. Hood, *Edwards High School History*, Edwards Association African American Museum.

The 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Gonzales shows the Mexican School (also called Water Street School) at 202 St. Andrew on the far northwest side of Gonzales next to the Southern Pacific Railway tracks. Sanborn Map Company, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas, (May 1912): 3. <https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/g-i/txu-sanborn-gonzales-1912-3.jpg>.

⁹ Morowski, 30.

¹⁰ "History of Gonzales," *Gonzales ISD Student Handbook*, 4.

¹¹ Morowski, 124.

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In the 1920s, Gonzales ISD finally approved funds to build new facilities for its segregated schools. Six years after parents first requested it, the nominated building was completed and opened as the Gonzales Colored School for elementary and high school level students in 1923. Dedicated as Riverside School, a new building for Hispanic students was built at 110 St. Lawrence in 1922. Although, according to a newspaper, the interior walls were never completed, and other necessary work went undone as well.¹² Improvements were made piecemeal with the district adding gas heaters to Riverside School in 1928. A few years later, to help with overcrowding, the school board approved the addition of two more classrooms and a separate interior restroom for the girls.¹³

During the Great Depression, Gonzales ISD cut programs, salaries, and funding for materials across the district. A disproportionate percentage of fiscal cuts, however, were seen at segregated schools. Federal work relief programs, however, helped expand educational facilities and provided needed community services at campuses across Gonzales. Smaller projects included modern restrooms facilities at Edwards School and domestic training courses for adults. Labor and funding from the Works Progress Administration and National Youth Administration greatly benefited Gonzales High School. In 1940-1941, these programs resulted in the completion of a new gymnasium-auditorium and vocational agricultural building.

Demographically, Gonzales's African Americans population was increasing at mid-century but at a rate much slower than whites. In Gonzales, Black Texans accounted for less than 20% of the city's total population which had grown to 5,659 people in 1950. They continued, however, to average 24% of the enrolled student population between 1940-1960.¹⁴

Overcrowding and deferred maintenance became key issues for Gonzales ISD in the 1940s. These problems were compounded following the consolidation and annexation of rural schools, enlarging the Gonzales district to 528 square miles from 40. The school board's solution to its resource problems often meant repurposing buildings, construction materials, and educational supplies from white school for use at its African American and Hispanic schools. Lumber from demolished rural schools was used to construct new classroom buildings on the Edwards School campus (Figure 5). Rural school buildings, originally built in the 1910s and 1920s, deemed in sufficient condition were moved to the nominated campus in 1952 and to Riverside School. Additionally, the superintendent bought former military buildings from Camp Swift that became classrooms.¹⁵ Used desks, textbooks, scientific apparatus, sports equipment, and uniforms from the white public schools were also given to students of Edwards and Riverside schools.

Desegregation in Gonzales public schools started following the 1948 *Hernandez v. Driscoll CISD* decision, which held that public schools could not racially discriminate against Hispanic children. Subsequently, Riverside School integrated with Gonzales Junior High, and the former Mexican School became a junior high for the city's Black students from 1948-1965. According to Morowski:

The Gilmer-Aiken laws passed by the Texas Legislature in 1949 addressed inequities in the educational system and attempted to equalize the education received by white and African American students. Despite the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling in 1954, very few school districts in Texas desegregated their schools... In Gonzales, Black students continued to

¹² Gaetan Carpentier, Kimberly Diedrich, and Joanna Kaiser, "A History of the Water Street or Riverside School," Texas State Historical Marker Application, 2014, 4. On file at the Texas Historical Commission; Sharon Mica, "Riverside School: A School for the Minorities," *Gonzales Inquirer* (Gonzales, TX), January 14, 1981, 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Morowski, 90.

¹⁵ Riverside School Historical Marker File, 5.

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attend Edwards High. When the school board broached the subject of desegregation, most discussions centered on ways to avoid complying with the Supreme Court's decision.¹⁶

For example, the Edwards School football and basketball teams (the Gophers) had limited access to the district sports facilities, like Apache Field and the Gonzales High School gym. Rather than integrate, the district sought ways to improve the Black school campus by repairing its 1922 main building and constructing a gymnasium in 1948. This tactic, however, would not be fiscally sustainable.

By 1963, Gonzales ISD recognized it lacked the budget to improve Edwards School enough to maintain segregated campuses. Voluntary integration was enacted for the 1963-1964 school years, but no Edwards High School seniors chose to change schools, and mandatory integration was implemented in 1965-1966.

Edwards High School¹⁷

The earliest known record of the Gonzales Colored School, which became Edwards High School, dates to 1878 when the *Gonzales Inquirer* reported on the construction of a new school building after the original schoolhouse burned down. The frame 20x30-foot school was built at a cost of \$380.55, which came from the public-school fund and contributions from white and Black citizens.¹⁸ Educator J.W.M. Abernathy and a solicitation committee of parents organized a community supper raise donations for needed supplies and a teacherage:

The school building for the colored youth of Gonzales is almost completed. The young people and their friends... are busily engaged in getting up a grand festival and concert at their schoolhouse next Friday evening at 5:30 o'clock sharp... the proceeds are to be used for supplying necessary school property. Accommodation for our white friends, both ladies and gentlemen, will be made so that all who wish may attend the supper. Later in the evening the concert will be given, to consist of exercises by the colored Literary club. If any of our white friends feel disposed to attend, we will be thankful for their encouragement, and endeavor to make them comfortable.¹⁹

One week later, the *Gonzales Inquirer* updated readers that the building was nearly "finished with the exception of whitewashing the walls and painting the doors."²⁰

The school was on King (later Church) Street between the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and the Henson M.E. Chapel and across from the Knights of Peter Clever Hall in East Gonzales. According to local sources, the Black community named it "Norwood School" for Miss Lillian Norwood, who operated a neighborhood grocery.²¹ A 1912 Sanborn map shows it was a two-story wood frame building situated on stone posts. The building lacked lighting but had heat stoves.²²

¹⁶ Morowski, 18.

¹⁷ For an in-depth history, see Dr. Deborah L. Morowski's 2008 dissertation "Prevailing Over Prejudice: A Story of Race, Inequity, and Education in Gonzales, Texas," which thoroughly documented Edwards High School's formation, student life, educators, and curriculum. Deborah Lynn Morowski, 2008, "Prevailing Over Prejudice: A Story of Race, Inequity, and Education in Gonzales, Texas," PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁸ *Gonzales Inquirer* (1853–current). "Colored People's Festival," September 7, 1878, Mary Tinsley Texas History Center, Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library.

¹⁹ *Gonzales Inquirer* (1853–current). "Editors Gonzales Inquirer," August 24, 1878. Mary Tinsley Texas History Center, Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library.

²⁰ *Gonzales Inquirer* (1853–current). "Colored People's Festival."

²¹ Wray C. Hood, *Edwards High School History*.

²² Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Gonzales, Texas 1912, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08548_006/.

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Initial enrollment records are lacking, but later documents from 1889-1891 show attendance varied between 26 and 120 students. Gonzales Colored School provided elementary-level learning through the 5th grade while the white school offered grades one through ten. There were three teachers and the school term lasted eight months.²³

By the end of the nineteenth century:

The Gonzales Colored School enrolled 206 students, a 31% increase since 1889...Although black youth constituted 30% of Gonzales' total scholastic population, the total value of school property in the black school was just one tenth of that found in the white schools. The State Superintendent's biennial report for 1900-1901 listed the property of the Gonzales' white school to be valued at \$30,000 compared to only a valuation of only \$3,000 for the "colored" school. Additionally, the school for blacks had no library, whereas the value of the library at the white school was placed at \$2,000.²⁴

Gonzales Colored School quickly outgrew its facilities as higher grade levels were added, and more students stayed enrolled longer. In 1913, the local school board hired two additional teachers and rented space in the neighboring Knights of Claver Hall for extra classroom space to accommodate the growing student body. In 1916, the Gonzales ISD school board approved a motion to build a new school but failed to take further action. Three years later, parents called a special school board meeting where they again requested a new building and even offered to donate \$1,100 to help fund it. Ultimately:

Gonzales ISD took no...action on the new school building...until the board approved building plans for the new facility in June of 1922. The board limited the cost of the structure to \$13,500. Unfortunately, the superintendent rejected the building plans, further delaying construction of the new facility. At the subsequent school board meeting on December 12, 1922, the full board accepted a bid from Neumann Brothers to build a new school for African American students based on the plans of E.R. Nagel. Six years lapsed between the initial school board's vote to build a new school for African American students until the acceptance of the bid to construct the building.²⁵

Gonzales ISD purchased a rectangular property out of the Peck and Fly Addition less than a half-mile east of the original school site on King Street for the new facility. In 1922-1923, Neumann Brothers constructed the one-story U-plan school of local brick with eight classrooms.²⁶ The east wing served elementary-level students while older students matriculated in the west wing.²⁷ The administrative office was formerly located in the center of the building adjacent to the foyer.²⁸

Originally hired by the school board in 1919, a 24-year-old **George W. Edwards, Jr.** (1895-1975) became the first principal at the newly built school. He was born on March 9, 1895 to George Sr. and Mary Frances "Fannie." Raised in Gonzales, Edwards graduated from Gonzales Colored School in 1911 before attending Prairie View State Normal and

²³ Morowski, 69.

²⁴ Morowski, 70.

²⁵ Morowski, 84.

²⁶ *Gonzales Inquirer* (1853–current). "Work On New Negro School Building Progressing Well." March 6, 1923, Mary Tinsley Texas History Center, Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library.

²⁷ Helen Lampkin Barnes, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.

²⁸ Joeann Tucey Lewis, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.

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Industrial College, earning his first diploma in 1913 and a Bachelor of Science in 1930. Guadalupe College also awarded Edwards a Bachelor of Arts in 1930. His teaching career spanned four decades across several small Texas towns. Well respected in his field, Edwards belonged to the State Teachers Association and South Texas Teachers Association, the latter of which he served as president from 1929–1931.²⁹ He was also a devout Baptist and became a fulltime minister by the time of his death in 1975.³⁰

Edwards was also highly regarded in Gonzales's Black community, described by one alum as "a man of profound knowledge and... uncanny sense of humor coupled with an unusual gift for teaching [that] made him one of the most effective teachers and administrators."³¹ After 12 years of service, however, the all-white school board requested Edwards's resignation. An active member of the Gonzales County NAACP, it is possible Edwards involvement with that group motivated the school board's decision.³² According to Morowski, the school board and the NAACP had a contentious relationship and "warned Black teachers against taking part in NAACP activities."³³ Upon his departure, the faculty and community re-named the institution Edwards High School in his honor.³⁴ The all-white Gonzales school board and local newspapers, however, continued to refer to the school as "the colored school" for years to come.

A wide disparity between the salaries for Gonzales's white teachers and African American teachers ensued for decades. District officials claimed that a teacher's salary was based on their experience and educational achievement, but this was no doubt overshadowed by a more powerful determining factor rampant in the south: race and gender discrimination. In 1926, district records show that Black male teachers earned an average of \$765 annually and Black female teachers earned \$443. Comparatively, white male teachers in Gonzales received \$2,116, and white female teachers received \$907.³⁵ This pay disparity was prevalent throughout the south, but the pay gap between white and Black Gonzales teachers was even wider than the state average. Adding to the disparity was the fluctuation of teachers' salaries through the years. When the school district needed to make cost saving measures, Black schoolteachers faced the brunt of the financial cuts. In 1927, Gonzales school teachers earned on average \$55 a month. By 1931, this was reduced to \$45. In 1932, the economic downturn of the Great Depression triggered an additional 10 percent cut to teacher's salaries.³⁶ Nonetheless, Edwards High School's early teachers were wholeheartedly devoted to the education of their pupils. Edwards High School teachers were often former Gonzales graduates that returned to Edwards High School to teach, forming a tight-knit community. Starting in 1937, adult classes in hygiene and household employment were held in the evenings at Edwards High School, making the campus a vital resource for all ages of the Gonzales' Black community.³⁷

²⁹ *Who's who in Colored America. United States: Who's Who in Colored America Corporation, 1942, 174.*

³⁰ Morowski, 178.

³¹ Dorothy Tomas Ahart. "Edwards Reunion: Putting the Pieces Together." 1984. Edwards Association African American Museum.

³² According to the University of Washington's Mapping American Social Movements, the Gonzales Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) first organized in 1918, along with numerous other Texas chapters, to advocate for a state anti-lynching law. Although the chapter may have discontinued in 1925, it was re-organized in 1934. Josue Estrada and James Gregory, "NAACP Branch Activities 1912-1923 and Database of Branches 1912-1964," *Mapping American Social Movements Through the 20th Century*, retrieved July 7, 2023 from https://depts.washington.edu/moves/NAACP_map-early.shtml.

³³ Morowski, 100.

³⁴ Morowski, 78.

³⁵ Morowski, 169.

³⁶ Morowski, 170.

³⁷ Morowski, 183.

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The prolific faculty of Edwards High School is still held in high regard by previous students. Educators at Edwards High School not only taught their designated curriculum but also important life skills. Based on an oral history interview with former student Helen Lampkin Barnes, her first-grade teacher, Miss Winnie Mae Elias, had students deposit money at the bank, retrieve glasses of ice water from a building across the street, and take time to rest after learning in the afternoon. Miss Elias even pulled student's teeth when they had a loose tooth.³⁸ Other students fondly remembered chemistry teacher Jesse Smith, who taught at Edwards High School in the 1950s and 1960s. Former student Helen Lampkin Barnes recalled that Jesse Smith "would always tell us that we could be anything we wanted to be, we'd just have to work at it. He was a very polite person. He didn't believe in fussing or bickering."³⁹ When the school district integrated, Jesse Smith was one of the teachers to transfer to Gonzales High School. Jesse Smith's wife, Roy Evelyn Smith, was also an Edwards High School educator, the coach for the women's basketball and track teams, and simultaneously taught the pep squad and the cheerleading teams.

Little information exists on the early curriculum in the 1920s at Edwards School, but classes likely included the fundamental courses for the time, such as reading, arithmetic, geography, homemaking, and music. When Edwards High School first opened, it offered classes from the first grade to the tenth grade, which was a considerable gain from what was offered just a decade earlier. In 1933, Edwards High School expanded its curriculum to offer eleventh grade classes, and in 1942 the twelfth grade was introduced to the institution. It was during this era that the school was often referred to as Edwards High School, a name that recognized its advanced classification. District records from the 1936–1937 school year detail the following secondary-level courses offered by grade at Edwards High School:

8th grade: English, math, ancient history, and science.

9th grade: English, math, modern history, science, music, literature, and physical education.

10th grade: English, math, history, physical education, Spanish, and civics.

11th grade: English, math, history, music, vocational agriculture, and home economics (female students only).⁴⁰

Daily life as a student at Edwards High School consisted of arriving for classes around 8 o'clock in the morning. Classes lasted from 45–60 minutes, and each student had their own desk and was provided with general materials such as textbooks (The school district rarely allocated any funds for the school to buy textbooks. Instead, these were handed down from Gonzales High School).⁴¹ The school received little funds to put toward buying materials and resources for students, so parents and teachers were forced to supplement and furnish other supplies, such as pen and paper.⁴² The Edwards Parent Teacher Association (PTA) would raise money to purchase school resources for those who couldn't afford it, but parental involvement in day-to-day school operations did not extend much further. Sometimes, parents would assist in advocating to the school board for various changes, but most parents of Edwards High School students had full-time jobs that kept them occupied during the day.

Despite the hurdles to get classroom resources, records from the 1930s onward show that most of Edwards High School students that enrolled in high school graduated four years later. Enrollment and graduation rates declined during WWII, most likely because some students were drafted into service and other students left to join the workforce. Records show that in 1937, the Edwards High School graduated 12 students, but in 1944, there were only two graduates.⁴³ Postwar enrollment increased and, in 1949, Edwards High School graduated at least twelve students.⁴⁴

³⁸ Helen Lampkin Barnes, in-person interview.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Morowski, 198.

⁴¹ Doris Webber, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.

⁴² Helen Lampkin Barnes.

⁴³ Morowski, 126 and 127.

⁴⁴ Morowski, 129.

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Improvements to the school's curriculum and equipment gradually occurred over time, but it took much advocacy from teachers and parents. Even with updated state standards for curriculum and facilities, Gonzales ISD lagged in adherence and continued to show preferential treatment towards the white schools. Like the cast-off textbooks, much of the desks and equipment at Edwards High School came from small rural schools that had been closed after being consolidated. The school district was reluctant to provide funding for new equipment even though most of the used equipment was outdated and sometimes broken. However, some headway was made in the 1940s. In 1941, the school district provided \$30 for homemaking course supplies, and in 1943, money was allocated for window shades, roof repairs, and repainting of the school. After deferring the decision for a few years, the school district finally purchased four sewing machines in 1947 for the school to allow for a clothes making course, and the addition of a cooking class was promised for the following year.⁴⁵ In 1948, a vocational agriculture course was added to Edwards High School's curriculum and the school's first vocational agriculture teacher was hired.⁴⁶ In the 1950s and 1960s, Edwards High School, whose mascot was a gopher, expanded its extracurricular activities to include basketball (**Figure 10**), football (**Figure 11**), track, majorettes (**Figure 12**), twirling (**Figure 13**), baseball, and cheerleading.^{47,48} Former students recalled that the women's and men's teams practiced at separate times, and girls could only play half-court basketball, as opposed to the men's full court games.⁴⁹ Oftentimes, physical education was a favorite class due to the well-liked coaches such as Evelyn Smith and Harry Neil.

Once added, vocational agriculture became the focal point of the school's curriculum. Support from the Gonzales School District for improvements at Edwards High School was not easily received, but when it was, it was frequently put towards the vocational department. The school district's support of vocational studies at Edwards High School was likely rooted in the Jim Crow-era view that Black persons' place in society should be limited to that of tradesmen, farmers, and servants. The school district even leased a small plot of land in town for students to use as a garden as part of their vocational studies. Support for other enrichment courses and extracurricular activities at the school faced far more hurdles. As the vocational courses gained momentum and support, the school district approved \$1,500 in 1952 to be spent on a new building to house the growing vocational department. Despite the allocation of funds for new classroom space, the school district demonstrated a lack of commitment to Edward High School's advancement and, instead of a new building, moved part of a c. 1920s school building from Canoe Creek, a former rural county school that had been consolidated into the Gonzales School District. Worsening the already unequal situation between the segregated schools, the school district lagged for years on its promise to install heating units into the transported building.

Space at Edwards High School was in short supply due to multiple rural schools being consolidated into the Gonzales School District. A visit from an agent of the State Department of Education in 1948 resulted in a report sent to the school board listing recommendations for Edwards High School's improvement. First on the list of required improvements was that "additional rooms be provided as soon as possible." The school district eventually complied with this recommendation and, by the late 1950s, a few additional buildings had been added to the campus in addition to the vocational building. The updated 1959 Sanborn map of the property showed that the campus was composed of nine buildings (**Figure 4**). Four wood frame buildings were situated to the north of the classroom building, and a fifth was situated to the east. These five buildings were all one-story wood frame buildings that served as extra classroom space (**Figure 5**). Some, if not all, of the wood frame buildings were likely moved to the site from rural districts that were consolidated in years prior. School district records in 1949 mentioned the relocation of a rural school district

⁴⁵ Morowski, 104.

⁴⁶ Morowski, 106.

⁴⁷ Helen Lampkin Barnes.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Steemer, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.

⁴⁹ Rosemary Lee Bookman, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette. July 2, 2022.

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building to be used as a machine shop at Edwards High School.⁵⁰ When the rural school buildings were in too poor of condition to be moved intact, the school district dismantled the building, and the lumber and other salvageable materials were reused to construct a “new” classroom building at the Edwards High School campus.

In the 1950s, the Gonzales School District attempted to address and fix the disparities of the district’s school grounds for its Black and Hispanic students. Prior to integration, Hispanic children in Gonzales attended the Water Street School, which was later renamed the Riverside School in the 1920s. Originally, Riverside School was a small building with only four rooms that offered classes for grades 1–3. In 1948, the Gonzales School District purchased and moved three school buildings from Camp Swift near Bastrop to the Riverside campus to address overcrowding at the campus. That same year, the Gonzales School District also rezoned the city to allow all white and Hispanic students to attend school together in their respective zone. This “rezoning” left Riverside School with no students for the coming year, as its former students would be attending either the Central Ward or North Avenue schools with white children. Finding themselves with an extra unused school campus, the Gonzales School District decided to bus some of the Edwards High School students to Riverside School in order to relieve the overcrowding that was occurring there.⁵¹ Riverside School accommodated grades 4–6 for Black children up until integration in 1965. The Riverside students were bussed back to the Edwards High School campus for lunch “so that they would have the opportunity to go home if so desired.”⁵² Black students that attended Riverside school for their intermediary years returned to Edwards High School full time for high school grades.

In 1949, the *Victoria Advocate* reported that a \$325,000 bond issue was to be proposed for school campus improvements in Gonzales. The bond issue would be used for improvements to multiple schools in the district, including a new gymnasium and auditorium for Edwards High School.⁵³ However, only a meager \$75,000 of the bond issue was allocated for the Edwards High School gymnasium despite the school board previously estimating that \$130,000 would be required to construct a gymnasium.⁵⁴ Since the Edwards High School campus didn’t have a building to effectively accommodate their basketball team, the school district permitted the team’s use of the Gonzales High School gymnasium. Games were held on Saturdays when no white faculty or students would be on the Gonzales High School campus. The school district may have viewed the shared use of the white student’s gymnasium as unsustainable long-term, thus authorizing a gymnasium to be constructed on the Edwards High School campus. After the bond issue passed, a bid from Bill Barton for \$59,000 was accepted, but construction was delayed nearly a full year after bids were initially submitted to the school district. “Bill Barton” or “Billie J Barton” was a building contractor based in Dallas in the 1950s, but there was little additional information found about Barton and his career.

Integration

In 1954, the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declared that the segregation of schools by race was unconstitutional. Up until then, most states in the South still had legally segregated schools. Some local school districts began to consider a plan for integration, but with little urgency. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act gave the federal government the ability to cut off financial aid for segregated schools, which became the real impetus for most school districts to integrate students, Gonzales included.⁵⁵ The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which provided additional financial aid for low-income students, added further advantages to integrate.

⁵⁰ Morowski, 104.

⁵¹ Sharon Mice. “A school for the minorities.” No Date. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.

⁵² Mice. “A school for the minorities.”

⁵³ *Victoria Advocate* (1861–current). “Bond Issue to Be Proposed,” March 1, 1949, Newspapers.com.

⁵⁴ Morowski, 107.

⁵⁵ Graham 2005, 133.

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The Gonzales School District board complied with mandatory regulations to desegregate all schools in the district by September 1, 1965.⁵⁶ All of the Edwards High School students permanently moved to Gonzales High School starting in the 1965–1966 school year. Several faculty members from Edwards High School received positions to continue teaching at Gonzales High School, but many Black teachers lost their jobs. School board minutes state that the early plans for Edwards High School, post-1965, were to remodel and repurpose it as an elementary school for integrated students. Repairs to the school were estimated at \$5,175.⁵⁷ However, the likelihood of these repairs having taken place is slim, since no research indicated that the Edwards High School was ever reopened as an integrated elementary school. Instead, the campus was permanently closed, and the school district sold the property to the City of Gonzales for \$12,000 a few years later.⁵⁸

Architectural Significance

Edwards High School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C for Architecture as modest examples of school design. The 1922 Main Building and c. 1920 Vocational Building resemble the architectural schemes for Rosenwald-funded schools with simple floorplans and expanses of large windows set underneath the roofline. Originally a rural school, the Gonzales ISD's decision to move and repurpose the vocational building in 1952 illustrates segregation-era inequities faced by African American public schools. Built in 1948, the Edwards School Gynasium's barrel-vaulted roof is supported by a lamella/Zollinger structural system. The rhomboid grid, made of short wood planks, is an excellent and rare example of its type. As a district, the campus represents the Gonzales Black community's significant efforts to provide safe and practical educational resources for their children.

Rosenwald Influence

The Rosenwald School Program, 1913-1937, was established by a northern philanthropist Julius Rosenwald who dedicated his fortune building more than 5,000 schools for African American youth across the U.S. South. In Texas, his philanthropy resulted in 464 schoolhouses and 32 vocational shops.⁵⁹ Most Rosenwald schools were built following plans produced by architects at Tuskegee University. These architectural schemes reflected national trends in community school design shaped by progressive educators, social reformers, architects, state legislatures, and federal education agencies since the late 19th century.⁶⁰

Rosenwald plans prioritized economy of materials and design, maximum light and ventilation, and flexible classroom arrangements that informed school design outside the confines of the program. A booklet of the architectural standards were made available to any community, regardless of participation, and there are instances where even white schools utilized the Rosenwald plans.⁶¹ Most of the schemes were simple structures with some Craftsman-style influences, such as side-gable and hipped roofs, exposed rafters tails, and tall, grouped windows. They were often wood-frame

⁵⁶ Mice.

⁵⁷ Mice.

⁵⁸ Gonzales Inquirer (1853–current). "Association seeks to own former school." August 1, 2006. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.

⁵⁹ Karen D. Riles. "Historic and Architectural Resources Associated with the Rosenwald School Building Program." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. October 1998.

https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/national_register/final/Rosenwald%20MPS%20-%20TX.pdf, F 97.

⁶⁰ Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, *An Honor and Ornament: Public School Buildings of Michigan*, September 2023. MPS Multiple Property Document Forms: *Historic Educational Resources of Pennsylvania* and *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*; National Register of Historic Places, Baker School, Austin, Travis County, National Register #100009490.

⁶¹ Riles. F 98.

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buildings with wood siding, even though the program encouraged the use of more “permanent” building materials, like brick or stone.

Edwards High School’s 1922 Main Building resembles the Rosenwald Six-Teacher Community School plan (**Figure 12**) in the U-shaped footprint and central porch (not extant). Large windows dominate the exterior northwest and southeast elevations because light and ventilation were critical to student performance. Classrooms line the double-loaded central corridor that terminates to exterior doors for circulation and fire safety. Edwards School was very modest compared to Gonzales High School for white students. Built c. 1915, Gonzales High School (now Gonzales Junior High) was a three-story brick edifice featuring an arched entrance and heavy cornice supported by decorative brackets with an articulated parapet. Its form and style are similar to public schools in other Central Texas urban settings while Edwards School’s design resembled rural schools, despite its urban setting.

Historical records suggest, but do not confirm, the vocational building was originally constructed under the Rosenwald program and moved to the nominated campus in 1952. According to the multiple property form, “Historic and Architectural Resources Associated with the Rosenwald School Building Program in Texas,” the program funded the Canoe Creek/Slayden School in Gonzales County. District minutes show the vocational building was moved to Edwards High School campus in 1952 from Canoe Creek but does not say if it was the former school for African American or white students of that community.⁶² Like the Main Building, the Vocational Building has architectural features similar to a Rosenwald plan (**Figure 13**). It has a rectangular plan with groups of windows or single windows on each elevation and a hipped roof. A garage door with a pent roof indicates it was historically a “shop” building used for vocational instruction. The district’s decision to repurpose, what was then, a nearly 30-year-old building instead of constructing a new building is illustrative of a pattern not uncommon for African American public schools. Between 1922 and 1965, Gonzales ISD’s all-white school board repeatedly deferred improvements and provided sub-standard facilities to its Black and Hispanic schools.

1949 Gymnasium

Progress and growth of Edwards High School was effectively conveyed on a grander scale through the 1949 construction of the gymnasium, which is undoubtedly the architectural gem of the campus. From the exterior, the gym’s segmented arch barrel roof gives the building an easily recognizable shape. The gymnasium was the campus’ most contemporary and versatile building. The gymnasium’s design was a substantial shift from the campus’ earlier, small buildings, and reflected the Gonzales School District’s increased interest in modernizing a campus that had otherwise seen few facility improvements since its inception.

The lamella roof of the gymnasium is the most character-defining architectural element of the campus. Also referred to as a “Zollinger roof,” the roofing style consists of short wood planks bolted together into a rhomboid pattern. The Edwards High School gymnasium uses a common joint system that consists of a bolt passing through three wood planks, creating a compression connection.⁶³ The roofing system was patented by Friedrich Zollinger in Germany in 1921.⁶⁴ The roofing style became popular during the interwar years due to its minimal use of metal, which was in short supply at the time. The bolting system allowed a range of flexibility in the span and angle of the curved roof. Roof planking on the outside of the roof provided the required rigidity to form a stable and long-lasting roof. Early uses of lamella roofing commonly formed gothic-style arches that were applied to residences, churches, or schools, but the

⁶² Karen D. Riles. “Historic and Architectural Resources Associated with the Rosenwald School Building Program,” E 19.

⁶³ Glenn Frazee. “Design and Analysis of Timber Lamella Segmental Arches.” May 2011.

https://milwaukee.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/default/index.assetbox.assetactionicon.view/1083?rm=MASTER+OF+SCIE2%7C%7C%7C1%7C%7C%7C0%7C%7C%7Ctrue 25.

⁶⁴ Frazee. Design and Analysis of Timber Lamella Segmental Arches.

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roofing system was later applied to both segmented and circular arched roofs. In the 1950s and 1960s, the roofing system was utilized on a few well-known buildings, such as the 1964 Houston Astrodome and the 1973 New Orleans Superdome.

The gym's large interior space allowed flexible use for the students, including for sports, performances, and commencement ceremonies (**Figure 1**). Former attendees of the school continue to refer to the gymnasium with nostalgia and admiration. Joeann Tacy Lewis, who attended the school during the late 1950s, recalled that "we had the best gym in the district."⁶⁵ Former student Rosemary Lee Bookman (class of 1960) recalled that "we always had something in the gym with maroon and white," indicating that the gym was a constant symbol of school spirit and a source of pride for the students.⁶⁶

Architect Herbert E. Kellner

The design for the gymnasium was developed by Herbert E. Kellner, a San Antonio-based architect. Kellner is credited for his design on the bronze plaque hanging in the west foyer of the gymnasium. Kellner was born in Greenville, Mississippi in 1905 and he graduated from Texas A&M College in 1927. In the early 1930s, he worked as an architect-engineer with Swift and Company in Chicago, a large meat-packing company.⁶⁷ Kellner and his family moved to San Antonio after he served as a commander in the navy during WWII.⁶⁸ The 1948 San Antonio city directory lists Kellner as an employee for local contractor C.L. Browning, then by the early 1950s Kellner is listed as an independent architect.⁶⁹ Detailed documentation of Kellner's architectural projects are limited, but his name is mentioned in various Texas newspapers throughout the 1940s to 1960s that reveal his architectural pursuits were primarily focused on school design, particularly in small, rural towns of Texas. Local newspapers mentioned a handful of Kellner's works, such as Boerne Grammar School (1948), Mathis Elementary School (1951), Shiner Elementary School (1955), and Hallettsville Elementary School (1956).⁷⁰ A few more of Kellner's principal works are listed in the 1962 American Architects Directory: New Braunfels High School (1950), North East Elementary School in San Antonio (1954), and Refugio High School (1955).⁷¹ Kellner was also hired by the Flatonia School Board in 1948 to design a gymnasium and classroom building for a segregated school in Flatonia, Texas, and Kellner also designed an eight-classroom school building for a segregated school in Smithville, Texas, in 1952.⁷² The Smithville school was constructed of hollow tile and featured louvered windows, acoustical tile ceilings, and built-in shelves and was built at a cost of \$76,000. The 1952 Smithville school potentially shares design similarities with the 1949 Edwards High School gymnasium, but it is unknown whether the Smithville buildings are still extant.

⁶⁵ Joeann Tacy Lewis.

⁶⁶ Rosemary Lee Bookman.

⁶⁷ The Eagle (1883–current). "Ed Emmel Enjoys Vacation Trip to Middle West States." September 3, 1931. Newspapers.com.

⁶⁸ Enterprise-Journal (1931–current), "Herbert E. Kellner Given Promotion to Navy Comdr. Rank," December 20, 1945. Newspapers.com.

⁶⁹ San Antonio, Texas, City Directory, 1948 and 1954. Ancestry.com via the Austin Public Library.

⁷⁰ The Boerne Star. "Ground Broken for New Grammer School." November 25, 1948. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History; crediting Patrick Heath Public Library. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth856233/>. Corpus Christi Times (1910–current). "Mathis Bond Issue Passes." Aug 12, 1951. Newspapers.com. The Shiner Gazette (1893–current). "Dedication...." March 17, 1955. Newspapers.com. San Antonio Express and News (1865 -current). "Hallettsville School Job to Cost \$546,870." October 28, 1956. Newspapers.com.

⁷¹ "Kellner, Herbert Ernest." American Architects Directory, 1962. https://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Bowker_1962_K.pdf.

⁷² The Austin American Statesman (1871–current). "Smithville Negro School to Be Dedicated." March 27, 1952. Newspapers.com.

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The source of Kellner's knowledge and expertise of lamella roofing remains unclear, but while working as an architect for Chicago-based Swift and Company in the 1930s, Kellner managed the design and construction of multiple stockyards in the Midwest.⁷³ The stockyards Kellner designed were generally hundreds of feet long and wide, were roofed, had cement floors, and required excellent ventilation. Covered stockyard buildings were, theoretically, a perfect opportunity for Kellner to employ lamella style roofing. Alternatively, Kellner might have been familiar with Gustel Kiewitt's 1929 Arena in St. Louis, Missouri that used a lamella dome and was one of the earliest applications of the roofing system in the United States. No matter the source, Kellner's choice to use lamella style roofing for the 1949 Edwards High School gymnasium reveals his acute understanding of the school's needs at the time for a large, clear-span gymnasium that was rooted in utility and flexibility.

Edwards High School, 1965-Present

Grassroots efforts to ensure the empty campus' upkeep and potential reuse resulted in the formation of the Edwards Association in the early 1980s, shortly before the first school alumni reunion that was held in 1982.⁷⁴ By this time, many of the original wood frame campus buildings that were situated to the north of the main classroom building had been sold and relocated or demolished.

The first Edwards High School reunion was held in July of 1982 with an attendance of 200.⁷⁵ The successful event was held at the First National Bank in Gonzales and included an outdoor picnic under the pavilion at Independence Park. The reunion was held again two years later, with over 350 former students and teachers and their families gathered at the local Hermann Sons Hall in Gonzales to enjoy barbecued chicken and live music by the Ellis Thompson band. Mayor Carroll Wiley attended the event and joined the group during the picnic.⁷⁶

In 1989, the Edwards Association, along with many local community members, began to rehabilitate the school buildings with the help of donations and some financial support from the city.⁷⁷ In October 1989, 125 people contributed efforts to cleaning up the campus. Tasks included stripping away vine cover off the buildings, removing broken glass panes, and removing the deteriorated wood flooring of the gymnasium and replacing it with a concrete floor.⁷⁸ Renovations to the gymnasium occurred over the span of a few years and by the early 1990s, repairs to the doors, windows, plumbing, and electrical systems had been addressed. Afterwards, the renovated gymnasium was opened three days a week in the evenings to host events, receptions, games, meetings, and fundraisers. The association looked towards making renovations to the main classroom building next.⁷⁹

The Edwards Association was initially granted a 40-year lease of the city-owned property for development of the Edwards Community Center gymnasium. In 2006, the association and its supporters requested that the Gonzales City Council convey the title of the property to the association. The Edwards Association argued that conveyance of ownership would pave the way for the group to complete substantial renovations to the buildings. Ultimately, the goal of the group as stated in 2006, envisioned a flexible use of the Edwards High School campus:

The goal of the Edwards Association is to develop a state-of-the-art multipurpose community center that will provide services to all residents of Gonzales and the surrounding counties. These services will include

⁷³ Sioux City Journal (1864–current). "\$40,000 Stock Yard to Be BUILT in Spencer." September 28, 1929. Newspapers.com.

⁷⁴ Ahart.

⁷⁵ Joyce A McCullen. "Edwards High School Reunion Held." July 14, 1982. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.

⁷⁶ Edwards High School Reunion. August 22, 1984. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.

⁷⁷ Morgan, Leslie. "A Piece of History." Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.

⁷⁸ Gonzales Inquirer (1853–current). "Edwards School cleanup termed a success." October 1989. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.

⁷⁹ Morgan, "A Piece of History."

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developing meeting space, banquet space, lease space for other nonprofits and services, programs that focus on mentoring, tutoring, parental classes, education, workforce development, job training, life skills, sports programs, Senior Citizens Day and evening programs, childcare, youth services, creating jobs and serving as a catalyst for those seeking help in order to become self-sufficient.⁸⁰

The Edwards Association was given the deeded title to the classroom building and gymnasium, but the City of Gonzales retained ownership of the vocational building. Edwards Alumni reunions continue to be held at the property every two years, with the most recent event occurring on campus during the July Fourth weekend in 2022.

Conclusion

Edwards School, built out between 1922 and 1952, served the Black students of Gonzales, Gonzales County until 1965. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black. Reflecting the segregation policies in place during the early 20th century, the school was a significant focal point for the educational and social development of the city's Black youth. Edwards High School is also nominated at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Modest examples of school design, the campus buildings represented the Gonzales Black community's significant efforts to provide safe and practical educational resources for local children. The period of significance is 1922–1965, the end date marking when the institution closed as a result of school desegregation in Gonzales.

⁸⁰ Gonzales Inquirer (1853–current). "Association seeks to own former school." August 1, 2006. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.

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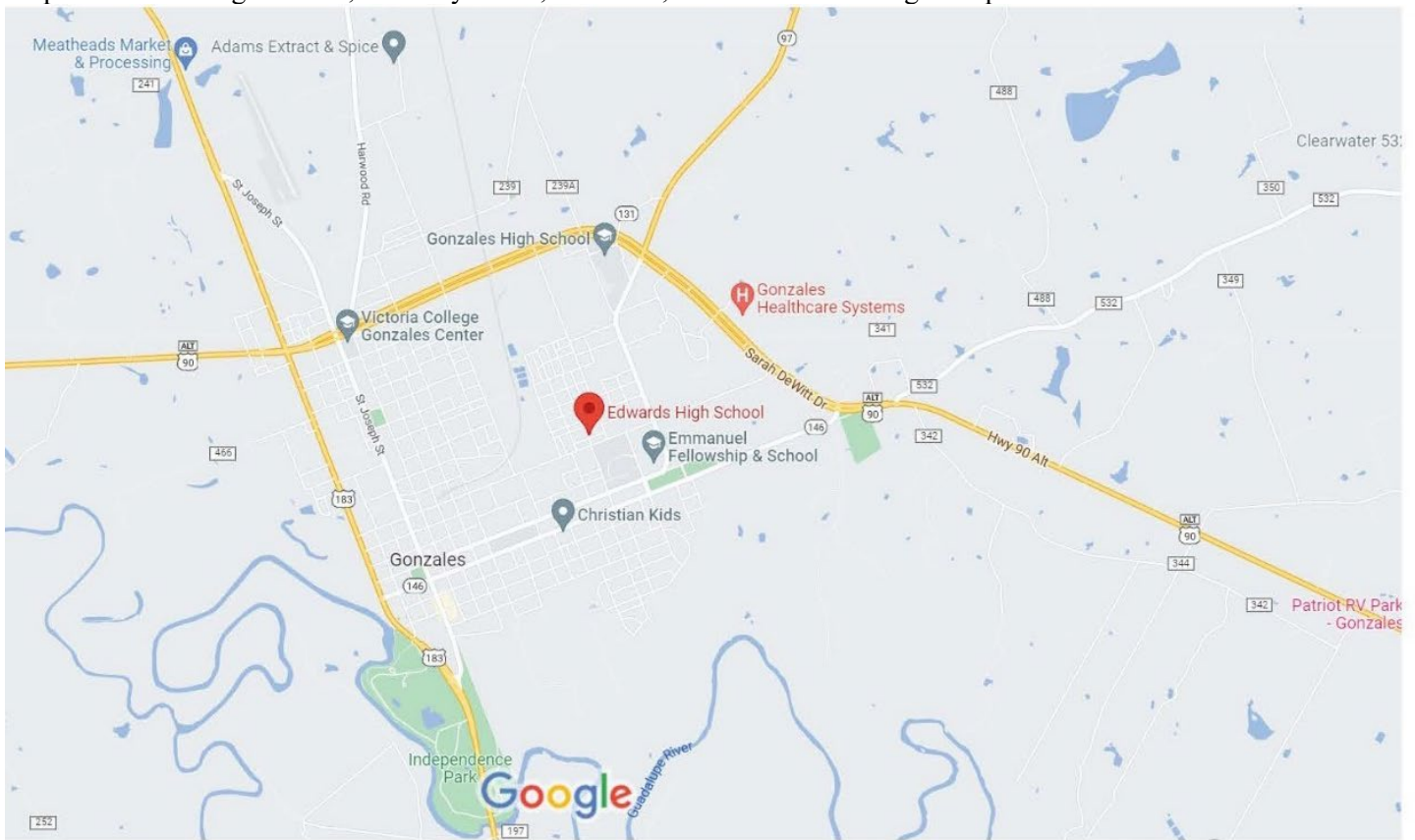
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Maps

Map 1: Gonzales County, Texas



Map 2: Edwards High School, 1427 Fly Street, Gonzales, Texas. Source: Google Maps 10/6/22.

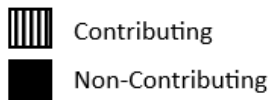
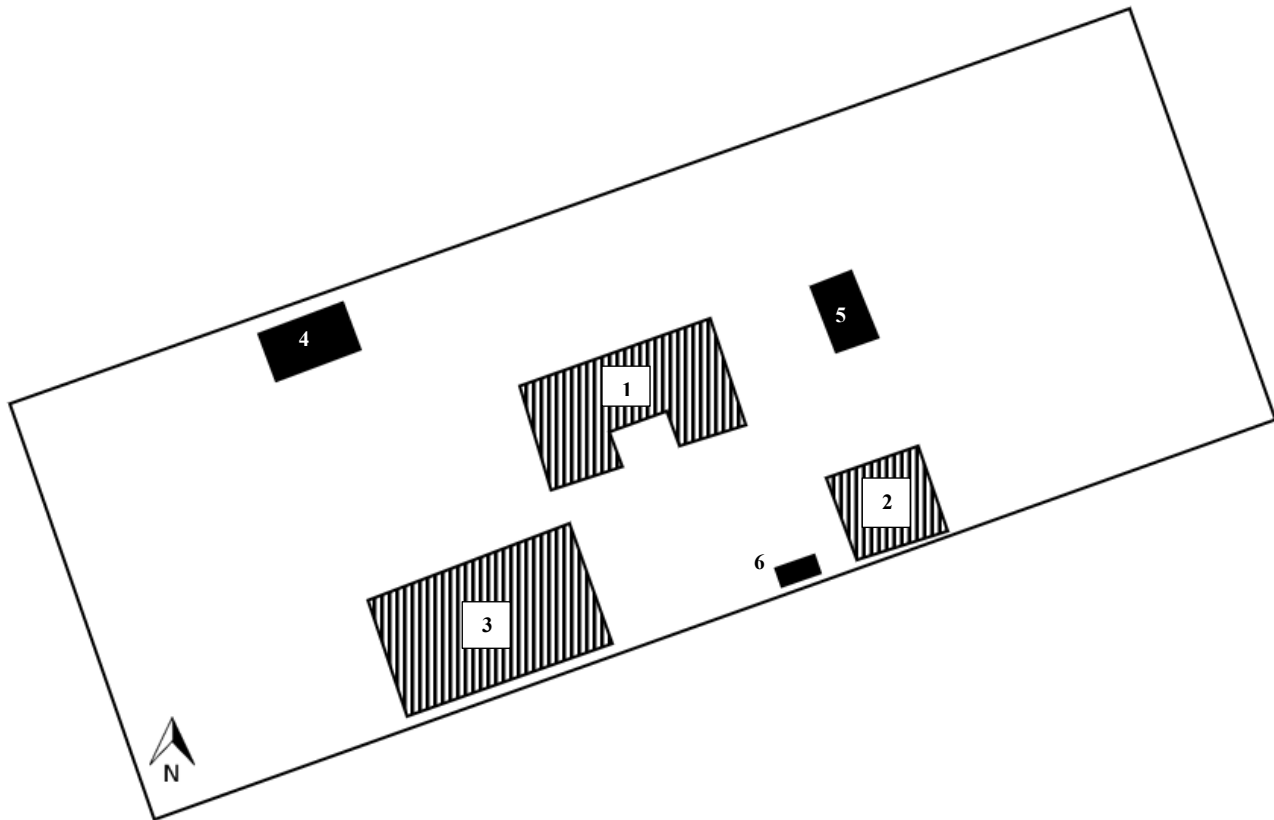


Map data ©2022 2000 ft 

Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Map 5: Map of Resources

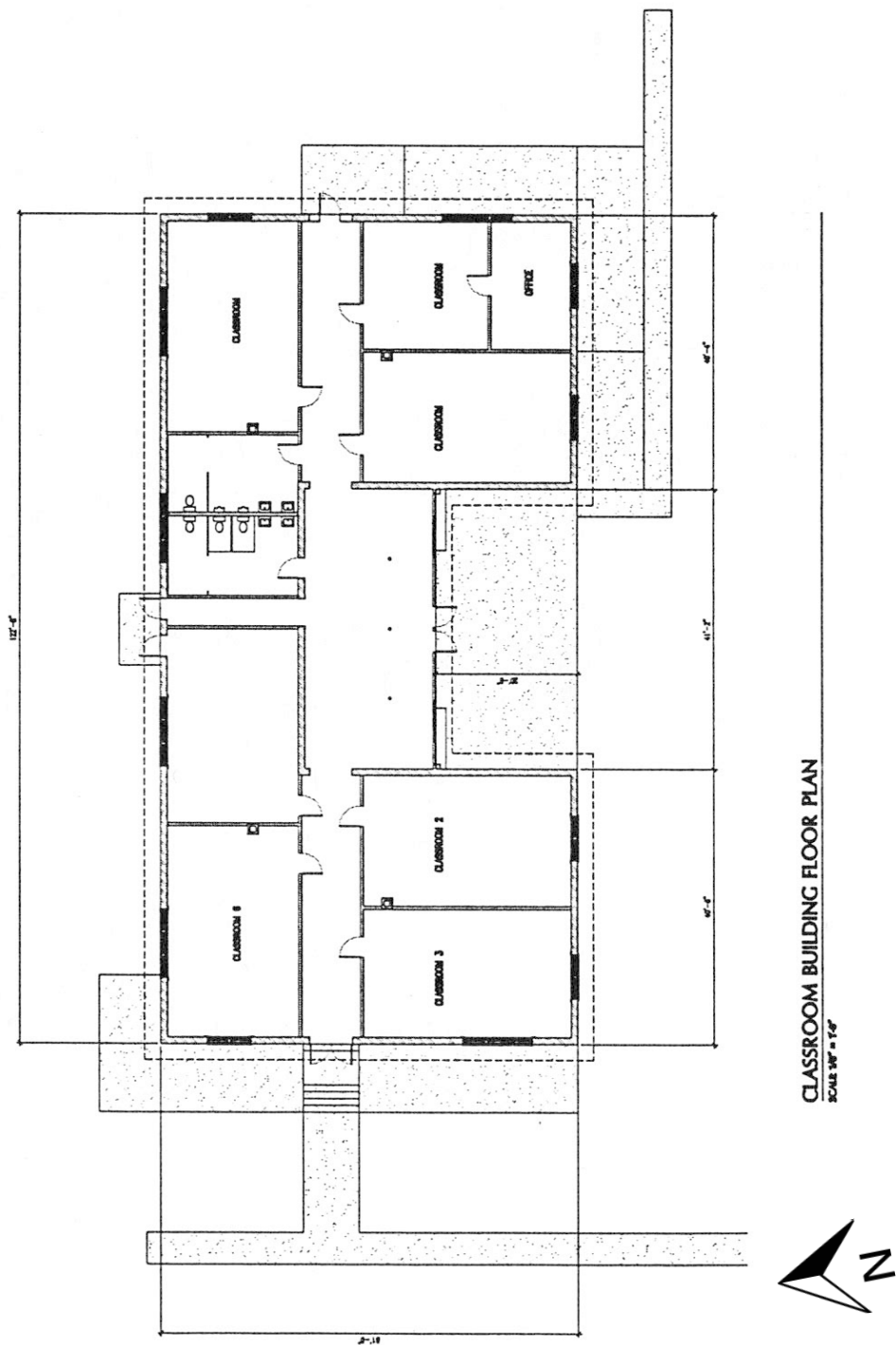
1. Main Building (1922)
2. Vocational Building (c. 1920/1952)
3. Gymnasium (1949)
4. Basketball court
5. Pavilion
6. Carport



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

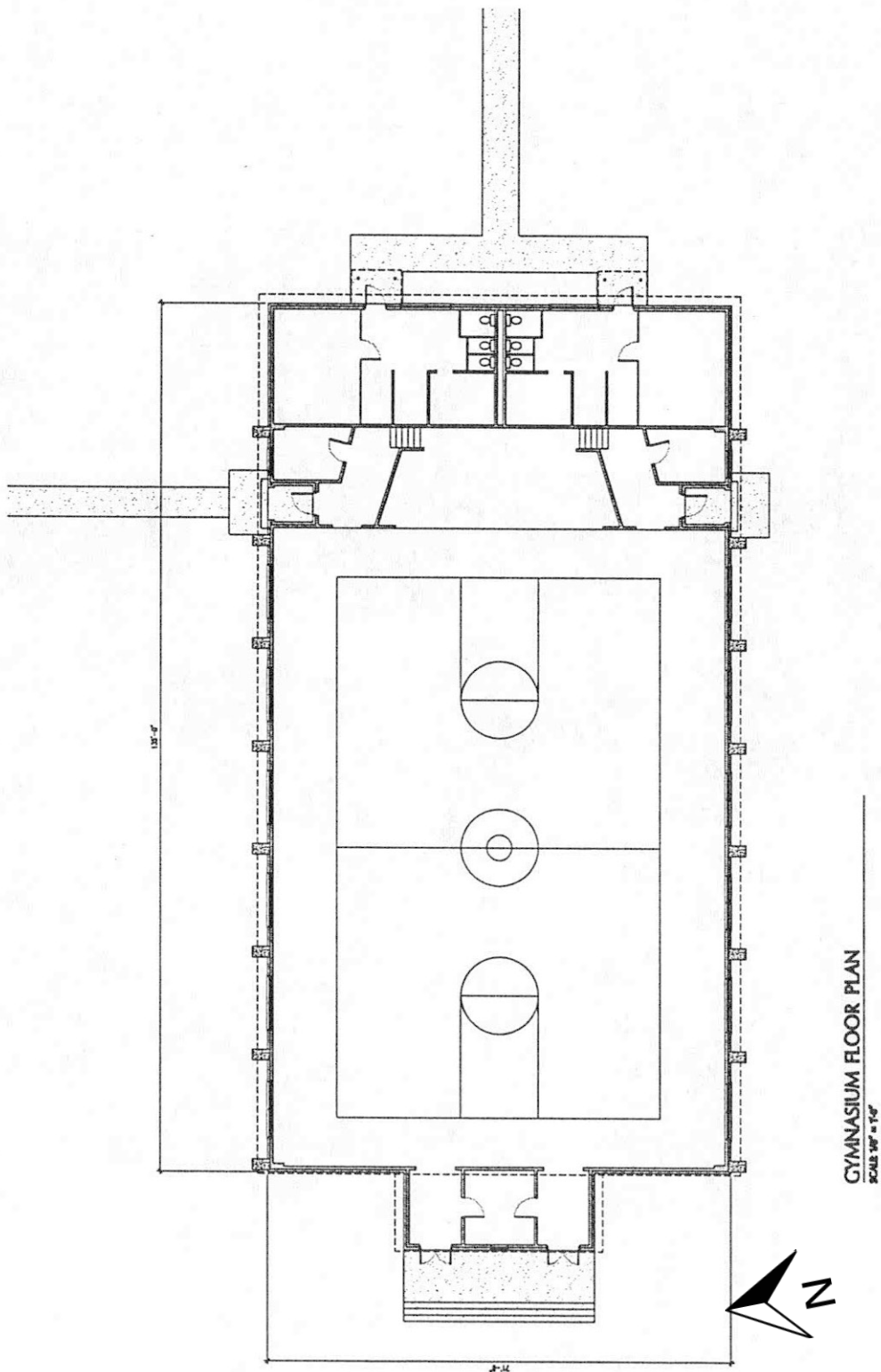
Figures

Figure 1: Edwards High School current floor plan (2005). Source: Ibid.



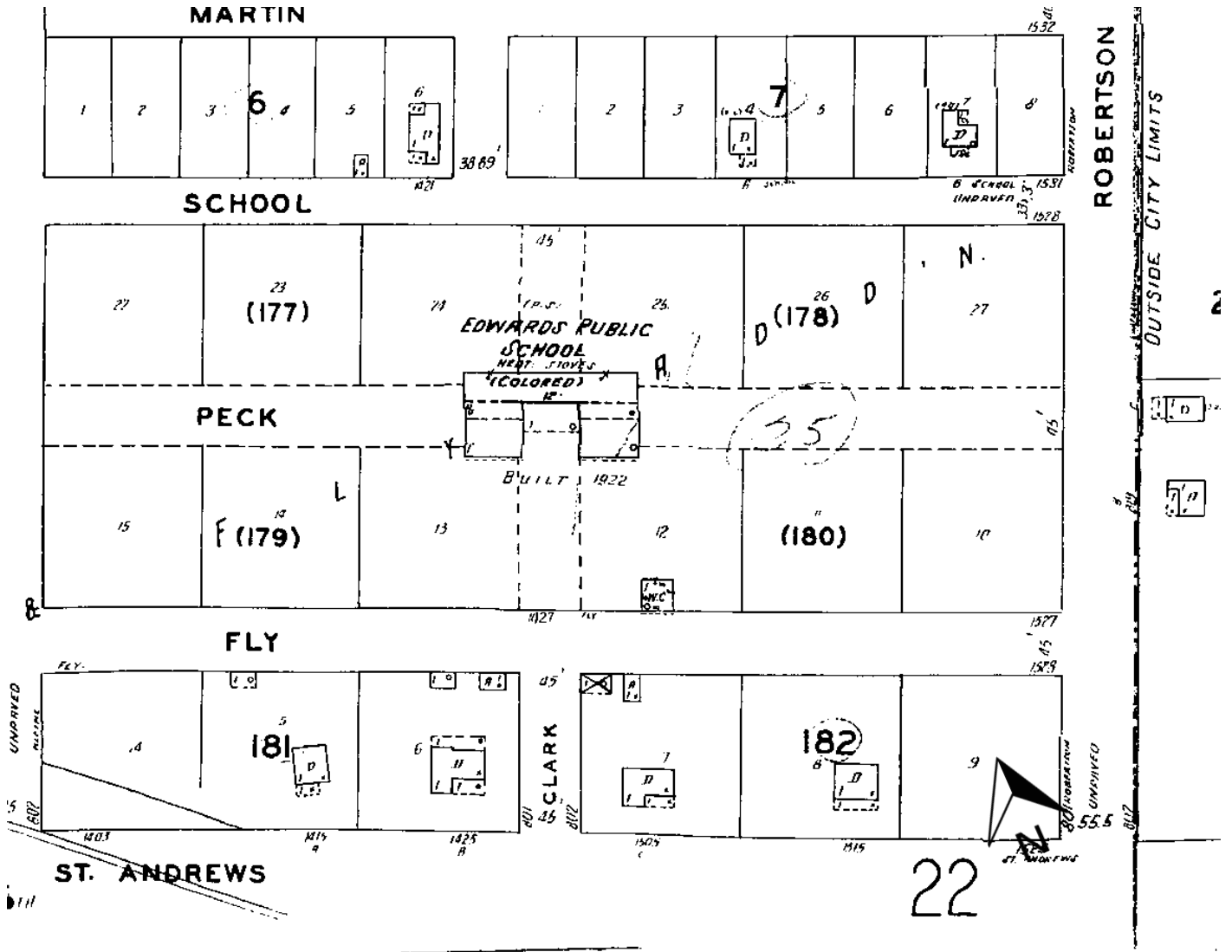
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Figure 2: Gymnasium Floor Plan (2005) Source: Ibid.



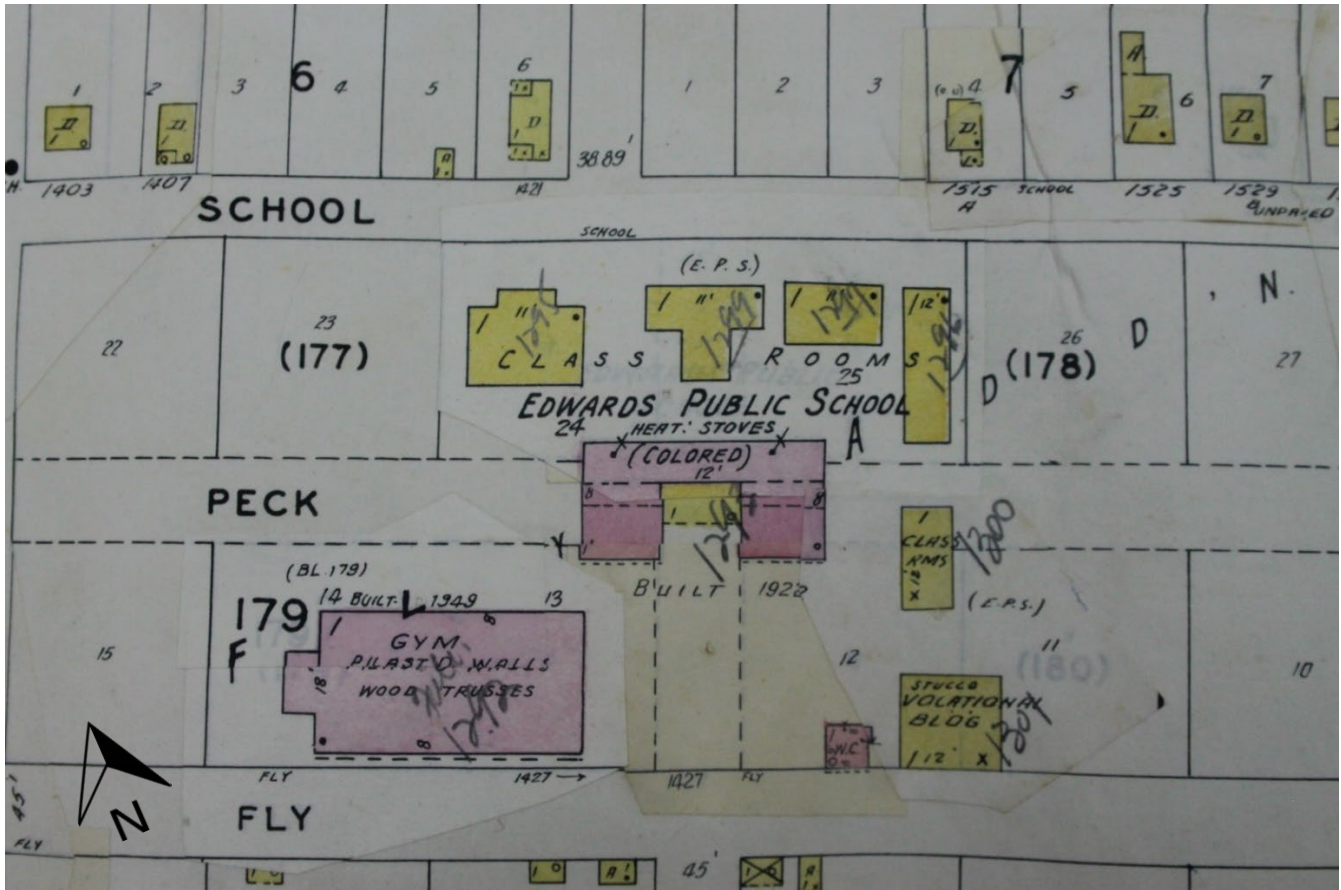
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Figure 3: The nominated district was originally a single building (Resource 1) and outdoor restroom. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1930 (updated to 1944), Gonzales, Texas, p. 20. Courtesy of Edwards Association African American Museum.



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Figure 4: By 1959, the campus grew to include 6 frame instructional buildings, the vocational building, and a gymnasium. Source: Sanborn Map, Gonzales County, updated to 1959 courtesy of Gonzales Archives & Record Center.



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Figure 5: 1962 aerial showing contributing resources. Source: EarthExplorer.usgs.gov.

1. Main Building (1922)
2. Vocational Building (c. 1920/1952)
3. Gymnasium (1949)

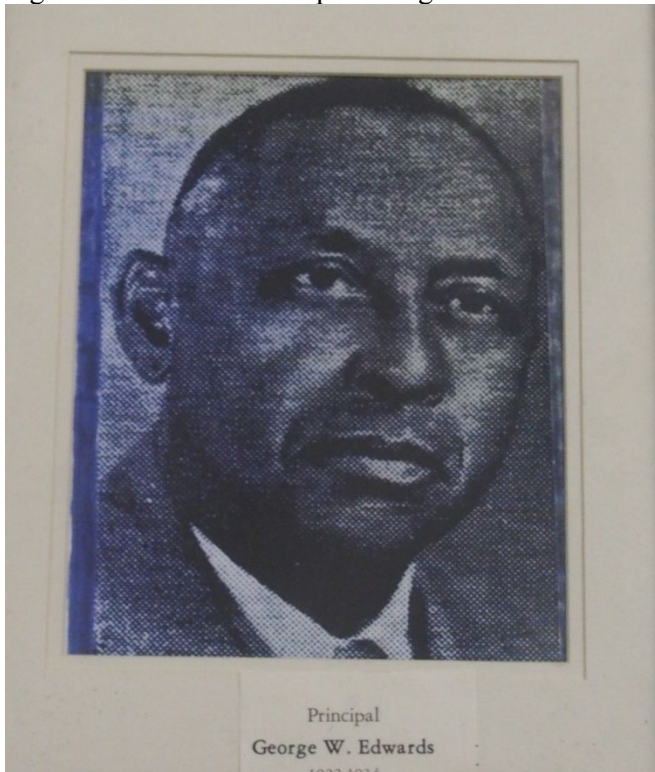


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Figure 6: View of a classroom at Edwards High School. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.



Figure 7: Portrait of Principal George W. Edwards. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.



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Figure 8: Students playing basketball in the gymnasium, no date. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.



Figure 9: Edwards High School football team in the 1950s. Source: Ibid.



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Figure 10: Student Mildred Hood as a majorette or cheerleader, 1957. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.



Figure 11: The last graduating class from Edwards High School in 1965. Source: Ibid.

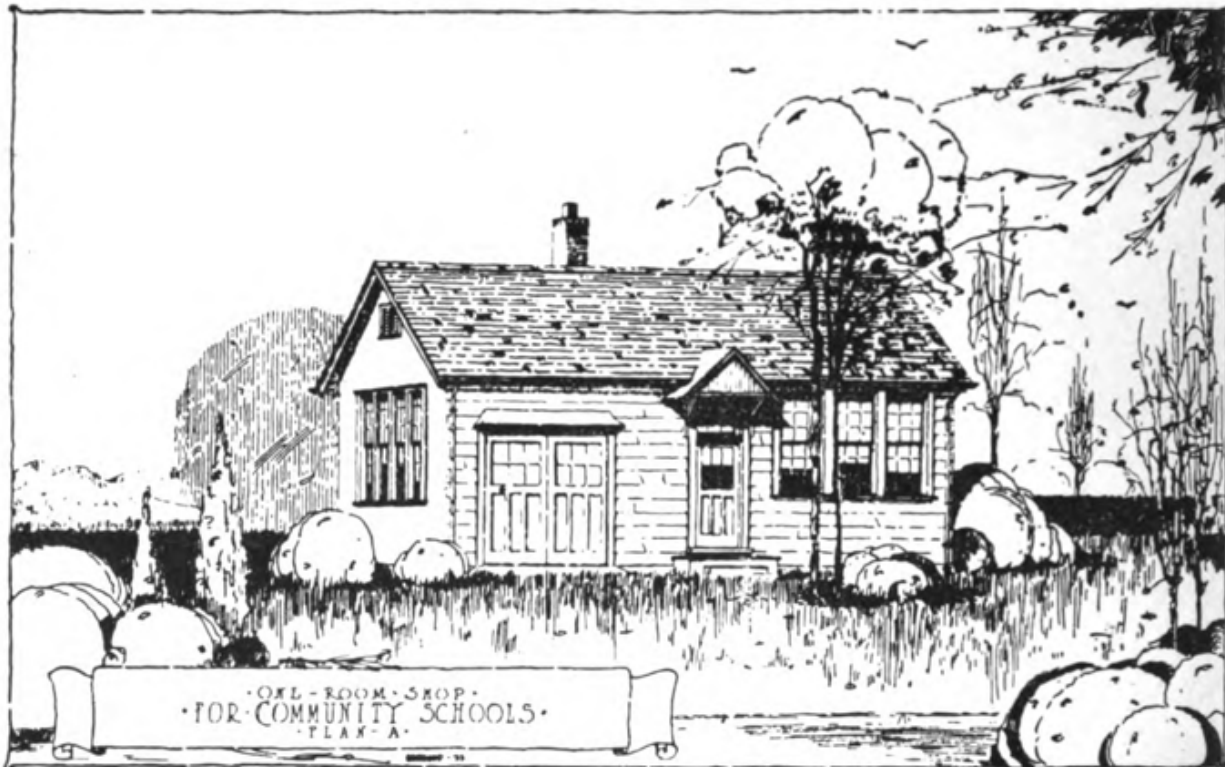


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Figure 12: The 1922 Main Building resembles one of the Rosenwald Fund designs. Source: Julius Rosenwald Fund. *Community School Plans*. (Nashville, Julius Rosenwald Fund: 1931): 20.



Figure 13: The c. 1920 Vocational Building has a garage door with shed roof and similar fenestration as the Rosenwald Fund's Shop Plan A. Source: *Ibid*, 30.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photographs

Name of Property: Edwards High School Campus

Location: Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photographers: Angela Gaudette and Allie Smith, Hicks & Company

Date of Photographs: 9/12/2022

Photo 1: Main classroom building, looking northwest.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 2: Main classroom building, looking northeast.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 3: Main classroom building, looking southeast.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 4: Main classroom building, looking southwest.



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Photo 5: Main classroom building, foyer, looking southeast.



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Photo 6: Kitchen (former chemistry classroom), looking west.



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Photo 7: Main classroom building, west wing hallway, looking southeast.



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Photo 8: Main classroom building, classroom in east wing that houses the Edwards Association African American Museum collection, looking south.



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Photo 9: Gymnasium, looking north.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 10: Gymnasium, looking southeast.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 11: Gymnasium, looking southwest.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 12: Gymnasium, looking northwest.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 13: Gymnasium, interior, looking west.



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Photo 14: Gymnasium, detail view of lamella roofing.



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Photo 15: Gymnasium, view of stage, looking east.



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Photo 16: Gymnasium, view of northeast office behind the stage, looking north.



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Photo 17: Gymnasium, men's locker room, looking east.



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Photo 18: Vocational building, looking north.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 19: Vocational building, looking northeast.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 20: Vocational building, looking southeast.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 21: Vocational building, looking southwest.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 22: Northwest room of vocational building, looking northwest. Photo courtesy of David Tucey.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 23: South room of vocational building, looking south. Photo courtesy of David Tucey.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 24: South room of vocational building, looking southeast. Photo courtesy of David Tucey.



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Photo 25: View of non-contributing basketball court, looking east, classroom building in background.



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Photo 26: Non-contributing playground features located to the north of the classroom building, looking northeast.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 27: Non-contributing carport to the west of the vocational building, looking northeast, vocational building in background.



Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 28: Non-contributing pavilion and picnic area to the east of the classroom building, looking east.



~end~