



#32: The School at the Cemetery

In Humble, there once was a school right next to the old Humble Cemetery. Back then, the cemetery was half the size it is today. A small dirt road goes through the center of the cemetery. The portion of the cemetery that is on the south side of this dirt road (the part closest to St. Mary's church) was the location of the school.

The school was called the West River School, and it was the second school to be built in Humble. It occupied an acre of land (the south portion of today's cemetery), which was donated to County School District No. 28 by Constable William S. Humble, son of our town's namesake, Pleasant Humble. William Humble and his wife gave the land specifically for the location of a new school.

The school was built in the summer of 1888 and opened for the 1888-1889 school year. Humble was a small town back in those days. There were only 41 students enrolled in 1897 (the earliest attendance records we have), attending class in the single, one-room wooden building. The first teacher at the school was B. H. Grimes. Later in the school year, he was replaced by Rose Hamblen. Back then, it was common for teachers to move around often. They would stay at a school for only a year or two.

Once the Humble oil boom began in 1904, student enrollment increased. There were 36 students during the 1903-1904 school year (the beginning of the oil boom), taught by teacher May Harris. Over the course of the oil boom, student enrollment increased to 300 students for the 1908-1909 school year. Since more students required more teachers, there were four teachers for 1908-1909: S. E. Tullis, Eva Harrell, Mabel Bouldin and Myrtle Ward. The school expanded to three buildings by this time. Recorded family histories from that time tell stories of students having to attend some funerals that occurred during the school day...including ones for their deceased classmates.

Student enrollment continued to climb to the point that a larger school building was required. The school district built a new two-story brick schoolhouse on Higgins Street in the summer of 1909, called the Humble School. All of the students were transferred to the new Humble School, and the West River School was closed.

The three buildings of the West River School were sold, and the proceeds used to help pay for the cost of the new brick building. The acre of land that the school sat on was eventually sold to the Humble Cemetery Association, who used it to expand the cemetery to its current configuration. If you walk through the cemetery today, you will find no graves that are marked earlier than 1920 on the south side of the cemetery.