



#19: Before Bordersville

Bordersville. The story of Bordersville is complicated. Many people only know of the recent history of Bordersville -- from the time it was annexed by the City of Houston. What do we know of Bordersville's early history? Not much. Here's what most know of Bordersville: The Bender Sawmill in Humble employed many African-Americans. When the sawmill closed down in 1927, Edgar Borders hired them to work at his sawmill, located on the Humble-Westfield Road (now called FM 1960). He let many of them live on his land. Over time, he let them buy the land they lived on. The City of Houston annexed Bordersville in 1965, but didn't provide them with expected city services (such as plumbing and running water). Bordersville became known as one of the poorest communities in Houston.

Questions: A lot of people accept that simple history without asking enough questions. Questions that immediately come to mind are: (1) If they moved to Edgar Borders property in 1927...where were they living before then? (2) Why did Humble School District build a colored school on the west side of the railroad tracks in 1909, when Bordersville is actually located in the Aldine School District? Well, it's about time to find the answers and have a fresh look at the history of Bordersville.

Location of the Colored School: In the early 1900s, the town of Humble was considered to be on the east side of the railroad tracks, where historic downtown Humble is today. To go west over the railroad tracks, you took the Humble-Westfield Road and headed towards the Westfield area. There were white and black people living along the Humble-Westfield road all the way down to Spring. The boundary between School District 28 (Humble) and School District 29 (Aldine) was the railroad tracks. But in 1909, one of the Humble School District Board members was J. W. Hall, who also served as a county commissioner. He put forth a proposal, that was approved by the County Commissioners court, to take land on the west side of the tracks, all the way up to the area where McKay Drive is today, away from the Aldine School District and give it to the Humble School District. **Why would they do this?** Because there was a large African-American community in that area, and many of their children were attending one of the segregated schools in Humble. Once the Commissioners Court approved that boundary change, Humble built a new colored school in that area (where the AVS Muffler shop is now on J. M. Hester Drive). So, this boundary change allowed Humble to build a school for colored children near the African-American community, and move them out of Humble proper.

White Humble: The next story we have is from the history of St. Luke's Missionary Baptist Church. Their history tells of a meeting that the white townsfolk held to ask the black townsfolk to move out of Humble. The result is that the church moved from the east side of the tracks (Humble) out to Bordersville. **Did this really happen?** Land deeds from the Harris County Clerk's office prove the story is true. In 1929, the Bender Brothers made offers to five African-American churches and to a black chapter of the Safe Council Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons. The Bender Brothers gave these six organizations land near the Humble colored school (on the west side of the tracks...in the center of this African-American community) if they relinquished any claims to land on the east side of the tracks. The churches approved the offer in April 1929, and the Benders provided the land in August 1929. The five black churches were (1) St. Luke's Missionary Baptist Church, (2) St. Mark's Missionary Baptist Church, (3) Mount Correnth Church, (4) St. Paul Free Mission Baptist Church, and (5) Church of God in Christ - Sanctified. They, along with the black masonic lodge, moved to the African-American community west of Humble that was directly between the tracks and edge of Edgar Borders land (around McKay Drive). But, this wasn't

Bordersville. Edgar Borders land didn't begin until you got to where McKay drive is today. In fact, that is still the basic dividing line between Humble ISD and Alsine ISD. So, the St. Luke's story is true...but they didn't moved to Bordersville at that time. The move to Bordersville came later. This wasn't one of the proudest moments in Humble's history. But, it fits in with the segregated history of the United States and Texas at the time.

What happened to that African-American-Community? Well, what happened next was the work of the Texas Highway Department. State Highway 35 used to run on the east side of downtown Humble. What we know today as Old Humble Road ran from Houston all the way through Humble, to the San Jacinto River, across a bridge and continued north. This was State Highway 35. In 1930, Texas moved State Highway 35 to the west side of Humble (it's now called US-59/I-69). Construction of the highway took it right through the center of the African-American community. State construction records show that three churches and many homes had to be removed from the path for the highway. It would seem that this event (construction of the highway) is what caused the community to move further west into land owned by Edgar Borders (Bordersville).

So, now we know there was an African-American community on the west side of Humble...between the railroad tracks and present-day Bordersville. It's a history that has been forgotten and ignored for too long, and demands further research.

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