



#39: The Colored School

Back in the day, students across the country attended segregated schools: ones for whites and ones for blacks. This model of separating students by race persisted along a “separate, but equal” doctrine supported by lawmakers across the United States. When the school districts in Harris County were first created in 1884, only about half of them offered an education to African-American children. For the districts that did not offer anything for these students, they either went without an education, or had to travel to a neighboring district for their schooling.

The Humble School District was one of those districts that DID provide an education for these students. We know of 4 schools in Humble that served African American students: (1) Joe Dunman’s Schoolhouse for Colored Students 1886-1888, (2) The Narrow Gauge School 1888-1905, (3) Pleasant Grove School 1905-1909, and (4) The Colored School 1909-1947. Of these, we only know of the location for the Colored School (although we have no pictures of it). These schools had their own Principals and Teachers, many of whom were also African-Americans.

The Colored School opened in 1909 and was located on the west side of the railroad tracks (on present-day J. M. Hester St. where Wayne’s Detailing is currently located). Unfortunately, the school was never actually given a name...it was simply called The Colored School. The school consisted of a set of wooden buildings, along with a teacher’s cottage. L. L. Prater was Principal from 1917-1919, and J. E. Horton was Principal 1925-1929. Teachers at the school included P. M. Hill, Lawson Haynes, Effie Davis, Thelma Lou Prater, Laura Greggs and many, many more. Attendance fluctuated, but there were as few as 26 students at times, and up to 300 at other times.

The Colored School burned down in a fire in 1947. It was suspected as an act of arson. Fearing for the safety of these students, Superintendent Floyd Burton and the Humble ISD School Board arranged for those students to be transferred to an Aldine ISD located in Bordersville. Some of the older students were transferred to the Acres Homes area of Aldine ISD. Starting with that event, African-American students were no longer educated in Humble ISD. The site where the Colored School was located was used as the location of the Humble Fat Stock Show and Rodeo.

It wasn’t until 1954 that the United States Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” was unconstitutional, although desegregation of all schools didn’t occur until many years later. African-American students had not attended school in Humble since the Colored School had burned down in 1947. In 1965, while other districts were battling plans to desegregate their schools through the courts, Humble ISD officially desegregated their schools, allowing African-American students to once again attend school in Humble.

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