

Whether our people came to North Side from Kentucky and Tennessee looking for free land in 1850's or from the Southern States escaping the aftermath of the Civil War in the late 1860's and 70's, or as capitalists to develop land and the cattle and meat packing industries brought here from the East between the 1880's and mid 1900's, or as immigrants from Europe looking for freedom and jobs between 1900 and around 1915, or from Mexico around the same time getting out of the way of Pancho Villa, or married a North Sider met during World War II in the 1940's, or came here anytime since then for reasons that I don't know, we have all been influenced by Marine Schoolhouse and the people who built it and went to school, taught, worshiped, voted or lived in it. Marine Schoolhouse was the first public building on the North Side and it pulled the people together to form a viable community.

Why built
M. G. Ellis, whose name is familiar to you, bought a lot of land north of 20th Street in 1879. It was about 640 acres - a square mile. Ellis knew that if he wanted to develop this land he must make it attractive to buyers and one of the biggest attractions to someone wanting to buy land is a convenient schoolhouse. He offered to donate a piece of this land and build a schoolhouse on it if the farmers would pay a teacher and send their children to the school.

When + how school
So, about 1879 the schoolhouse was built in the thick oak forest that ran south from Marine Creek all the way across the cemetery to the river. It was small (20 x 20) and simple (two windows on each side). It had a fireplace on the back wall and the door was set squarely in the middle of the front. It had a steeped hipped shingle roof. It was about a quarter of a mile south of the Rock Spring where the women of the area came to do their wash. Mrs. John Mitchell had taught school under a big tree there while the mothers washed. Sadie Hagan was one of those children. The Hagan farm was on the prairie where North Side High School is now. Lars Harum owned about three hundred acres southwest of the school. He had fenced it all in and built a ranch house made of cypress logs. The house was quite nice and had a fireplace at each end. There were four school age girls in the family. Ellis had bought most of his property from the heirs of Isaac Thomas. All of the Widow Thomas' children were grown, but there were grand-children still living there.

Indians
Just three years before the schoolhouse was built Indians showed up and killed several of Mrs. Thomas' horses. This happened in our neighborhood - about Gould between NW 24th and 25th Streets. In the Springtime, on a Sunday morning the same year the school was built a band of Indians came to Marine Creek and killed an old man. Records do not tell us who he was, but the Indians escaped into the dense wood of the West Fork. This was the last time there were marauding Indians in the area.

County Road
There is no written history of the schoolhouse from that time until 1883 when Stephen Terry and John Peter Smith sold a 3 acre triangle of land just to the south of the little schoolhouse to M. G. Ellis and other trustees for \$5.00. The trustees in turn granted the land to R. E. Beckham, County Judge and his successors in office in trust for public schools. You know this 3 acres of land as being where M. G. Ellis School stood on the rise of land, and Greines Field below it on N. Main Street. The little schoolhouse stood right next to it what would be the middle of 20th Street at Commerce.

Roads
There were no roads until 1885 when the county built what they called a first class road. It was graveled and about 15 feet wide. It was called the Fort Worth-Gainsville Road and it ran west of the Ellis Schoolhouse. We call it N. Commerce. To get to the north side from Fort Worth you could ford the river just past the confluence of the Clear Fork and the West Fork and then follow the gravel road past Oakwood Cemetery, called the New Cemetery. Or you could go out Samuels ~~XXX~~ Avenue and cross the river over what was Mitchell's Bridge

a follow a lane to the Fort Worth Gainsville-Road and go south to the schoolhouse. If you were coming from the Northwest you crossed the grass covered prairie. From the Northeast you traveled through the woods.

*Becomes
Common
School*

In 1885 the court ordered an election to be held in the schoolhouse to elect trustees. It was about this time that the schoolhouse was moved up onto the knoll that would later be the red brick school that you knew as M. G. Ellis School. A room was added across the back, and there were 20 pupils. It was not a subscription school anymore. It was a public school, or common school, supported by the county. The big farms were being broken up and smaller farms (5 to 10 acres) were being made from them. The population was growing and the Marine School District included Diamond^{hill} and reached to the Saginaw city limits on the north and the White Settlement limits on the west. It reached the Fort Worth City Limits on the south.

Wolves

Ernest and Louise Haywood bought 5 acres of Ellis' land just north of the school in 1886. Their son Roy was eight years old and said in his memoirs, "I will never forget the first night I spent in North Fort Worth. The way those wolves howled and the owls hooted made an impression on me that lasts to this day."

*12
homes*

There were only 12 homes on the North Side then, mostly clustered around the school. But, M. G. Ellis lived up on NW 23rd and N. Main. These houses were scattered from N. W. 24th to the Cemetery and From Decatur Road to Harrington, but there, still no roads, just lanes where neighbors had made a path to their neighbors house or to the schoolhouse. The Prairie was still waist high in grass and the woods were still thick and had wolves in them.

*Water
from
Rock
Spring
Marine
School
Church*

Miss Carrie Campbell was the first teacher whose name we have. She lived with her parents just east of the Haywoods and north of the schoolhouse. The boys had to carry water from the Rock Spring about a quarter of a mile away. The population was growing. A small packing house had been built on NE 22nd. The little schoolhouse couldn't hold anymore students so a new one was built. It was two story and had three rooms, one large downstairs that could be divided by a wall that rolled up into the ceiling like a roll-top desk. A well was dug and the boys no longer had to carry water. Out houses were built - one for boys and one for girls. The little schoolhouse beside it became a community church. Church and Sunday School were held the first Sunday of the month and itinerate preachers of anydenomination held the services. By 1890 the little building could no longer hold all the community and so the Baptist Church broke away and formed. A little later the Methodists built their own church at Boulevard and 15th and then the Christian Church was built on Boulevard & 14th. The little school remained in its place.

*Incorporated
School District
Packer's
Houses
Jents
and for
school
H.S.*

In 1902 the City of North Fort Worth was incorporated, but did not take over the school. Marine School was still a county school, but in a bigger building. In 1905 the new school burned to the ground and the little old building was again pressed into service, as were other buildings in the area. North Fort Worth decided they were paying most of the taxes that was supporting the school and the people in the surrounding areas were paying very little. The packing houses were being built. European immigrants were flooding the area. There was not adequate housing and people were living in tents from Ross Street at Park Street all the way to the Stockyards. North Fort Worth incorporated again, but for school purposes and took over the schools in their own city limits. Plans were made immediately for a new beautiful building that would include high school. Until then only eight grades had been taught in Marine School. M. H. Moore was the principal and he started the new high school in the old Marine Schoolhouse. When the big new school building was finished it was named North Fort Worth Public School and the high school was North Fort Worth High School.

*school
and*

The little old Marine Schoolhouse was sold to Mr. Mulholland who moved it to his lot at 1309 N. Commerce and it was home to many North Siders until 1988 when it was boarded up and condemned.

If a reason is needed to save Marine Schoolhouse it is because we need to remember that our ancestors didn't start out in a five-room house with hot running water at their finger-tips and toilets that flushed, and their children didn't go to school in big brick buildings with gymnasiums and football teams. In their school they learned to read and write and do simple arithmetic. It was a privilege to have a roof over their heads and a teacher.

Working to save Marine Schoolhouse can be one of the important things that will bring the North Side back together as a good, living, breathing neighborhood,

proud of what they have accomplished

Save Our Heritage

Friends of Marine Schoolhouse, Inc.

P. O. Box 4026
Fort Worth, Texas 76164
(817) 624-8002

The purpose of Friends of Marine Schoolhouse, Inc. is to promote interest and obtain funds so that Marine Schoolhouse may be moved, restored to its original and authentic state and maintained on public property. The objectives are to use Marine Schoolhouse as an educational and historical facility to inspire future generations to preserve their cultural heritage.



October 7th 1pm Longhorn Room
North Fort Worth Bank

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
YOUR MEMBERSHIP WILL SUPPORT OUR EFFORT TO KEEP OUR EARLY HERITAGE

NAME-----

ADDRESS-----zip-----

PHONE-----

ANNUAL DUES: ADULT \$10.00 STUDENT \$5.00