

## **History of Nelson Elementary School Namesake History – Mrs. Pauline Nelson**

Mrs. Pauline Nelson, for whom Nelson Elementary School was named, was born in Mocksville, North Carolina. After her marriage to a Methodist minister in 1854, she lived and taught school in Cairo, Illinois. In 1857, the Nelsons moved to Seguin, Texas, where Mrs. Nelson was a teacher during the Civil War years. The Nelsons moved to Arkansas in 1883, but returned to Texas in 1885.

After settling in San Antonio in 1885, Mrs. Nelson substituted in the public schools and in the German English School. She also conducted a training school and issued certificates to teachers.

When the West End School opened in San Antonio, Mrs. Nelson helped in many ways. Her daughter, Mollie Nelson, was one of the first teachers. Mrs. Nelson was responsible for organizing the Mothers' Club, and continued to be active in school affairs until her death in May 1913.

This brief history was received from Pauline Nelson's Granddaughter, Mrs. Janie Ripley Shepard and has been recorded.

### **Nelson Elementary School (1899 to Present)**

The school has previously been known as:

1899 – West End School

1900 – Francisco Ruiz School

1926 – Pauline Nelson School

In 1899, after a two-year study under the leadership of Superintendent J. E. Smith, the San Antonio Public Schools were separated from school control and placed under a board of school trustees. At the first meeting of the new board on May 17, 1899, a 250 pupil capacity building on the Dowdell property (now 1000 Cincinnati Avenue, and occupied by the Lebo Glass Company) was rented. The rent was \$15.00 (fifteen dollars) per month without janitorial services, or \$30.00 (thirty dollars) per month with janitorial services. In this building, school opened on September 6, 1899, under the name of the West End School. The first faculty consisted of Marshall Johnston, principal, Miss McDonald, and Miss Mollie Nelson.

On the same day that school opened, Mr. Beckman, Board Member, authorized the drawing of plans for a four-room brick building. On June 4, 1900, a site, donated by the West End Town Company, was tested and found to have a satisfactory foundation for the building. On July 16, 1900, the land was surveyed, and James Wahrenburger, architect, of the firm Jones, Wahrenburger and Company, drew plans. Conrad Flagg, contractor, completed the building on November 1, 1900. The property consisted of lots 18 through 26, of block 10, and was valued at \$6131. The eastern boundary was called Bandera Street, which was later changed to North Elmendorf Street. The original four-room brick building was given the name of Francisco Ruiz School, in honor of an early Texas patriot and signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence.

In 1803, the Ruiz home on Military Plaza (now removed to Witte Memorial Museum) had been designated as the first public school in San Antonio with Jose Francisco Ruiz as the first schoolmaster.

On November 21, 1916, a contract was let for laying the foundation of an annex, a two room brick building. There was also a two room wooden building erected prior to 1922, which made a total of eight classrooms, all facing North Elmendorf Street.

In October 1926, at the request of the Parent Teacher Association, the name of the school was changed from Francisco Ruiz to Pauline Nelson School, in honor of the mother of Miss Mollie Nelson. Miss Mollie Nelson served the school first as classroom teacher, then as principal, until her death in November 1936.

In September 1930, the present eight-room brick building facing north on Waverly Avenue was

erected at the cost of \$59,937. The site was given a valuation of \$5441. The two former brick buildings were removed. The two-room wooden building was remodeled and used for several years as a cafeteria, then removed.

Increased enrollment during the years from 1934 to 1948 necessitated the addition of three portable two-room buildings. One of these was converted into a cafeteria, which was in use until 1956.

On February 8, 1956, there was an explosion of gas, which had accumulated under one of the two-room temporary buildings, destroying the building and damaging the wooden buildings adjacent to it. This explosion occurred shortly before 8:00 A.M. Two children who had arrived too early, the custodian, and the maid were slightly injured. School was dismissed until further notice. Parents were notified to return the children to school on Monday, February 20. Public school buses took the children each day to other schools until Pauline Nelson School was considered safe for occupancy.

Each morning at eight o'clock, one bus left for Travis School; two went to Beacon Hill School; and three went to Agnes Cotton School. This arrangement continued until March 5. By that time another temporary building had arrived; gas mains had been repaired; and children returned in safety to their own campus.

Construction was started on an addition consisting of four classrooms and a cafeteria. This addition was ready for occupancy by December 1956. All but one of the temporary buildings was removed. In 1964, the remaining temporary building was remodeled to make an additional (15th) classroom.

In the spring of 1966, a two-room, federal, portable building was placed at the east end of the schoolyard. Two Head Start (preschool) classes of twenty children each were started; one class met in the morning and the other class in the afternoon. The first multilevel class was inaugurated at that time. In September 1966, a two-room, portable, temporary building was added to the west side of the schoolyard, to be used as multilevel classrooms.

When the federal program (preschool) was started, a teachers' aide was added to the staff. The preschool teacher, three multilevel teachers, and the teachers' aide were carried on the

federal payroll.

In September 1966, the faculty of Pauline Nelson School consisted of nineteen teachers, a principal, a secretary, and a teachers' aide. At that time, there were 466 grade school children and 50 preschool children.

(School history from 1967 to 1996 is unavailable.)

In late spring of 1998, the San Antonio Independent School Board proposed a citywide bond issue in order to obtain a guaranty of \$450,000,000.00 (four hundred fifty million dollars) to build new school facilities and refurbish many other existing school facilities within the school district. In fall of 1998, voters, within the San Antonio Independent School District overwhelmingly approved the bond issue and plans for the badly needed upgrades were made and scheduled for implementation within two to three years. The existing main building of the school will be renovated, since the Texas Historic Preservation Society protects it, with additional new facilities being added to the exterior structure and exterior grounds. In the Spring of 2003 the new addition to Nelson elementary was completed. The addition and the renovations cost \$6,358,844. With the additions, the campus received a new 3600 square foot library, a new gym, a fine arts room, a speech classroom, an elevator, and 20 new classrooms. In 2001 a second bond was pass by voters. This bond consisted of renovations to 2 classrooms through the early childhood facility renovations. The updates started in June of 2005 and finished in august of 2005. The renovations to rooms 116 and 118 cost \$50,000.