

## 106 Years Of History

### Riverside Park Elementary

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It was in 1907 when the San Antonio School Board purchased a building site for the proposed Missionfield School. In 1907, H. L. Page prepared plans for this school and the building was finished in 1908. It was at this time when the name was changed from Missionfield School to Riverside Park School because the city of San Antonio had just completed the fine golf course at the Riverside Park located on Roosevelt Ave. In 1912, the Fowler Brothers who were the developers in this part of the city, offered to sell the remaining portion of the block surrounding Riverside Park for \$3000.00. In 1913, an undeterminable amount of money was set aside in order to purchase the lots. After the purchase of the property, there was now about a square block bounded on the north by School Street, on the east by Naylor, on the south by Hansford, and on the west by the railroad track.

In the school year of 1907-1908, Riverside Park School opened its doors and welcomed their first class of students. The school was a new brick building consisting of four classrooms, which were all equipped with new desks with wrought iron supports, new chairs, and all new supplies. The restrooms were frame buildings located outside of the main building in the yard. There was a large spacious area located in the new building that was used as an office by the first principal, Miss Margaret E. Burke (1908-1923). The main entrance of the building was ornamented with sculptured angels, this was found to be an early original work of Dr. Pompeo Louis Coppini. The center of the sculpture donned a round plaque,

which contained the name of the school and the date of its establishment. Throughout the years, Coppini's work has been preserved and when the old building was torn down, the sculpture was carefully placed above the north door entrance on the present building. The plaque is no longer in the center of the sculpture and it is not known when the plaque was demounted.

In 1930, a new brick building was erected just west of the original structure. The new building consisted of six classrooms, which were equipped with tables and chairs on the lower floor. There was an office, a small clinic and a small bookroom. Names of the board members who were serving at the time were engraved on a bronze plaque and was positioned on a wall at the main entrance of the building. The names are as follows:

- J. H. Hornberger, President
  - Mrs. Stella Steve Walker
  - Dr. J. A. McIntosh
    - Leo Brewer
  - Mrs. C. W. Taylor
  - Mrs. W. H. Quirk
  - Adolph Beckman
  - B. W. Hartley, Superintendent

In 1944-1945, the old type of hand bell that was utilized to call the staff and students was replaced by the school's first electrical school bell system. In 1948, new furniture was purchased in order to replace the old in five of the upper grade classrooms. In 1950, the 1B class was furnished with modern air-plane type tables and chairs.

Due to steadily continuous growth in the community, on September 4, 1957, construction began on a new cafeteria structure. The dedication ceremony of the new cafetorium was celebrated on March 4, 1958. After fifty years of use, the old building was proven to be unsafe and it was torn down in the spring of 1964. The construction of a new wing consisting of twelve classrooms was started and completed by September 1964. The new classrooms were considered very modern, each room had sinks and bubblers for drinks. Each room had cloakrooms with folding doors, and all rooms were equipped with shelves and coat hangers for children's coats. All primary rooms had toilet facilities. New furniture was purchased and each student had their own desk and chair.

In 1966-1967, Riverside Park once again outgrew her building and the plans in the

future, perhaps in 1967-1968, are to construct a library and to establish a kindergarten or Headstart Program aided by the Federal Government. Enrolled at the present time (1967) are 482 children with the guidance of 18 teachers.

As growth in community continued to increase, it was necessary to add to the existing building. It was around 1914 when two additional classrooms were added to the original building. The building was made with safe concrete halls and safe concrete stairs. At this time the building was heated with a hot-air furnace. The two upper rooms of the original building had a folding partition, which could be opened in order to create an auditorium. At the beginning of World War I in 1914, additional classrooms and two classrooms in frame buildings were erected on the south side of the yard in order to accommodate the growing number of students. These new rooms housed the lower grade students and teachers.

One frame building was converted into a cafeteria and auditorium. Then in 1939-1940 the two old frame buildings were torn down and a more serviceable cafetorium was built. -  
*-April 1952... History Compiled by Sarah B. Williamson*

*-- May 1967... History Updated by Belle Henderson*

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Through further research of the school's history and more interesting facts have been discovered and documented.

One of the classrooms built in 1930, which was room (14) and is presently room (224), is still in its original plan on the second floor. The once black board is now a green chalk board and the wall where the cloak closet was once located has been removed, but the coat hooks are still in the same place.

Many black and white pictures are still located in the school and it was discovered that all photographs were taken outdoors because during that particular time-period there was no electricity. There are photographs of students performing in a percussion ensemble, students in costumes, and several student class pictures.

Over the past years, more programs have been implemented in order to better serve the students, such as the gifted and talented program, computer technology classes,

reading interventions, P.A.L.s (Peer Assistance and Leadership), and the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program.

During the past one hundred years, seventeen principals, hundreds of faculty members, and thousands of parents have had a profound impact on the school's history.

One extraordinary fact that was discovered was that Mrs. Sarah B. Williamson was one of the first teachers hired in 1908. Incredibly, Mrs. Williamson served 30 years as a first grade teacher, 2 years as an assistant principal, and 16 years as a principal. Mrs. Williamson compiled the first documented history of the Riverside Park School in April 1952. Mrs. Williamson exemplified the commitment to the students and community of Riverside Park.

When Riverside Park School was first established, many of the student enrolled, consisted largely of students from German decent. Former neighborhood residents recall that the people in the community often spoke German.

From 1979 to 1995, Riverside Park began a new chapter in the history of the school. Mrs. Marvene Brown Elliott was appointed as the first African-American principal and the second principal to service the school and community for sixteen. Many improvements, changes, and plans were initiated during Mrs. Elliott's

administration.

Due to overcrowding issues in the school, the neighborhood was surveyed and new boundaries were established. Many of the existing students of Riverside Park were sent to neighboring schools. Within a few months, enrollment began to increase and once again, more portable buildings were added to the campus. There were a total of (22) classrooms outside of the main building. Realizing the need to add to the existing building, S.A.I.S.D., along with the campus improvement committee moved forward and formulated plans for the construction of a new wing.

The groundbreaking of the new wing began on November 25, 1995 and the new wing was completed in the fall of 1996. On December 10, 1996, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held in order to officially open the new addition to Riverside Park Elementary School.

The first floor housed (1) Pre-Kinder classroom, (5) Kinder classrooms, (4) First grade classrooms, (1) DSP classroom, and restrooms for the boys and girls. The second floor housed (5) Third grade classrooms, (3) Fourth grade classrooms, the library, a resource room, girls and boys restrooms and much needed storage

closets. There were also some renovations made in the old building as well, such as a new counselor's office, a

clinic, an elevator and a resource room.

Improvements continued when the S.A.I.S.D. 1997 bond aided in renovating a fine arts room, a speech room, upgraded the fire alarm system, technological and infrastructure upgrades, and the ability to become in compliance with the A.D.A. (American Disability Act) facilities. The construction of a new gymnasium began in December 1998 and was completed with a covered walkway to the main building in August 1999.

The Early Childhood program began in 2001 and serviced English and Spanish speaking 3 and 4 year old students. A 2001 Bond Election financed an Early Childhood Facility (ECF) and construction began in February 2002. In 2001-2002 Riverside Park Elementary became a TEA Recognized campus under the leadership of Jo Nell Foley.

In 2003, Ms. Sandra Martinez, principal (2003-06), was determined to take Riverside Park Elementary into the 21st Century and initiated plans to pursue a TEA Charter School Grant. The students, staff, community and Board members voted to accept the TEA Charter School Grant and on May 15, 2004, Riverside Park Elementary was officially renamed Riverside Park Academy. Riverside Park Academy became the first Elementary Technology Campus in the San Antonio Independent School District. Under the leadership of Ms. Martinez, the school also garnered a United Way Grant and a Project Youth Connection After School program grant, which are still in existence today.

On May 9, 2008, Riverside Park Academy celebrated its One-hundredth Anniversary of educating children and servicing the community. As part of the ceremony, the honor choir of Riverside Park was featured singing our 100th anniversary song entitled Oh, Riverside Park, words written by Baldemar Rodriguez a 4th grade teacher and music composed by Frank Villarreal. This was a monumental occasion attended by Dr. Robert

Duron, Superintendent; the SAISD board members James Howard, president; Carlos Villarreal, vice-president; Thomas C. Lopez, secretary; Doug Sellars, assistant secretary; Liz Melson, Area II Executive Director; Beatrice Aleman, principal (2006-2008); past and present faculty, staff, students and members of the community.

Kristin Willmann (2008-2009), joined the Riverside Park family as the principal and made many positive academic changes.

In May 2013 the SAISD voted to change our school name from "Academy" back to "Elementary". Presently (2009-2014), Riverside Park Elementary, under the leadership of

Homer Rivera, services 482 students with the counselor, (1) Assistant Principal,

guidance of (1)

(1) nurse, (30) teachers, (10) paraprofessionals,

(4) office

staff members, (4) custodial staff members, and (4) cafeteria staff members. It is the goal and commitment of

Riverside Park Elementary to help foster model students who are educationally nurtured, technologically skilled,

physically and emotionally robust, and creatively inspired in order to become successful productive citizens who

are apt to triumph over any future endeavors.

*-- December 1996 History Updated by Jo Nell Foley*

*-- January 2008 History Updated and Compiled by  
Rose M. Richardson, Retired Teacher*

*--February 2010- July 2014 History Updated, Compiled, and Published by  
Mary P. Villarreal, Teacher*