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Center for Texas Public History
Department of History
Texas State University

Spring, 2020
## INTERSECT:
PERSPECTIVES IN TEXAS PUBLIC HISTORY

Spring 2020

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Introduction

When work began on this journal in January 2020, it seemed like an ordinary semester. The central objective that drove the early planning in January and February was to compile scholarly site-based articles about Jim Crow racial policies in Central Texas. What are the vestiges of the policies that remain visible well into the twenty-first century? As the discussions moved forward, the parameters of the journal changed considerably, although the focus remained on the local era of segregation.

Then, as the project entered its research phase, word began to spread about a new strain of virus confounding containment efforts in Asia, Europe, and beyond. Seemingly within a matter of days, word came that our state and our nation would soon be engulfed in a deadly pandemic related to a coronavirus, COVID-19. As spring break neared, rumors of significant societal change were common, yet students, staff, and faculty left the campus to travel, rest, and reorganize, unaware the world would never quite be the same as it was just days before.

Despite the greater change, scholarship moved ever forward, and planning for this journal shifted from classroom 204 in Taylor-Murphy Hall to a relatively new online platform called Zoom. As the semester nears its close and work winds down on this journal, which will live online, the research is coming together in unique ways. We have made it, and we have successfully addressed the founding objective. We might have made it to the finish line in different ways under different circumstances, but that is not the reality of the history we shared. It was not, after all, an ordinary semester.

We wish to acknowledge the remarkable institutional support of Dr. Nancy K. Berlage, director of the Center for Texas Public History, and Dr. Angela Murphy, chair of the Department of History. We greatly value their encouragement of innovative ways to investigate the past. They have set high standards for the Public History Program at Texas State University, and we trust this journal reflects their programmatic ideals. Our recognition of the Department of History would be incomplete without acknowledgement of Adam Clark, the IT guru, for his kind assistance in getting this journal online so others can appreciate the stories we have told herein.
A City Upon A Hill Country:
The Story of the Antioch Colony

By: Amber Leigh Hullum

You are driving through Hays County, down the backroads of Buda, Texas. You cross the bridge over Onion Creek and begin your way down Old Black Colony Road. Just as you ponder why the city would come up with such a name for a road, you pass an unassuming cemetery and drive away from what was once the thriving African American community of the Antioch Colony. The physical remains of Antioch have disappeared over the years, and its memory has virtually faded from the local vernacular. Yet Antioch was once rich with culture, family, and faith, with a community full of hardworking and independent African Americans freed from the bonds of slavery. In the wake of Jim Crow, the colony once boasted a school, two churches, a cemetery, a molasses mill, and several black-owned businesses. One hundred and fifty years after its birth, all that remains of Antioch are the cemetery and a solitary church. Even in the face of being forgotten, these sites do not serve as warnings of fading memory, rather, they serve as beacons of hope, a symbolic promise to community members and historians alike that the legacy of Antioch lives on.

The story of Antioch began in 1859, just two years before the Civil War, when a white business owner by the name of Joseph F. Rowley purchased 490 acres of land in Hays County near Cole Springs.1 The land, originally one and a half miles in diameter, can be found today near Country Roads 146 and 148. Rowley bought the land for $2.50 an acre, then later sold it exclusively to black families. While the exact motive behind Rowley’s actions are unknown, historian Michelle M. Mears asserts that because post-Civil War Reconstruction (1863-1867) proved to be financially difficult for black and white Southerners alike, “economic necessity preempted social relations as white landowners sold their land to former slaves.”2 Following their emancipation, newly freed African Americans faced unique challenges as white Southerners sought to retain as much of their former lifestyle and racial supremacy as possible. Southern politicians enacted “Black Codes,” which severely restricted African American freedoms. Vagrant laws, for example, were passed with stipulations such as: “all able-bodied Negroes who [had] abandoned the service of their former masters or employers, for the

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purpose of idleness, or who [were] found loitering or rambling about, or idly wandering about the streets or other public thoroughfares" were subject to arrest, whipping, fines, and possibly returned to their former owners.\(^3\) Despite emancipation, with laws like this in place, white Southerners retained a degree of control over African American bodies and labor.

Other Black Codes restricted housing opportunities for African Americans, often forcing them onto undesirable land prone to flooding. Indeed, the promise of 160 acres of land for settlers in the Texas Homestead Act of 1866 included a provision specifically excluding blacks.\(^4\) These obstacles often forced freedmen to work as sharecroppers for their former enslavers, a job that rarely turned profitable and essentially mimicked slavery. Despite the many challenges African Americans faced in the post-Civil War era, Southern black landownership rose from 1.8 percent in 1870 to 26 percent just thirty years later.\(^5\) These formerly enslaved people were often poor, illiterate, and with few resources, yet they held such power in their transformation from legally being property to owning property themselves.

Whether he knew it at the time or not, by selling Hays County land specifically to African Americans, Joseph F. Rowley actively participated in establishing a “freedom colony” in Antioch. Settlements established by landowning freedmen following emancipation, freedom colonies were not uncommon in the South, yet many Americans remain unaware of their existence. According to historians Thad Sitton and James H. Conrad, it is not surprising that freedom colonies are widely unknown, because “historians have overlooked such places as they have overlooked most of the folk-ideational reality... scholars failed to note freemen’s settlements because they failed to note any settlements.”\(^6\) As historians, we must rupture this cycle of violent disregard and erasure of marginalized people, and exploration of the Antioch colony is a good way to start.

The 1870 Agricultural Schedule suggests the settlement of Antioch predates official record and was most likely established by formerly enslaved people of nearby slaveowners such as the Bunton brothers, Hickerson Burnham, the Rectors, or John Hughes.\(^7\) After emancipation, most black families in the area took the last name of their previous enslavers: Smith, Beard, Kavanaugh, Champ, and Bunton. These families became the first unofficial settlers of Antioch. It should be noted that at the time the settlement was referred to simply as the Black Colony, and it is unclear when the name changed to Antioch. The first official settlers arrived between 1870 and 1880

\(^3\) *The Weekly Southern Intelligencer*, Friday, July 7, 1865, Vol 1. No. 1, Ed. 1.
\(^6\) Ibid, 4.
\(^7\) Report on Archival Research for Williams Farmstead Project, Official Texas Historical Marker file, “Antioch Colony,” Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
after purchasing land from Rowley at $2.50 an acre, and by 1880, around 100 people lived in and around Antioch. For example, Dansy Harper and his wife, Ella Harper (pictured below) moved to Antioch around this time.

Mother and daughter. Ella Harper and her daughter, Aldina Bunkey, pose for a photo c. 1880-1900. Courtesy of Buda Public Library Archives

Life in the post-Civil War South was certainly not easy, but freedom colonies offered a degree of relief from Jim Crow and other unprovoked violence found in larger towns and cities. Given the racial politics of Reconstruction, it is not surprising that a branch of the Ku Klux Klan formed in Hays County. While this specific chapter had no known murders, there were reports of brutal violence and attacks against African Americans. Living on the outskirts of town in colonies like Antioch, African Americans could better avoid the violence of the KKK and Jim Crow. The particular location of Antioch allowed a type of self-segregation that yielded two benefits: protection from urban areas via isolation and a sense of community and togetherness for residents. Mears asserts that rural freedom colonies such as Antioch provided communities “the opportunity to experience independence and strengthen their family ties in

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relative isolation from the white world...rural freedmen created new lives for themselves and their families, through their own hard work, ingenuity, and thrift.” It would be appropriate to infer that freedom colonies did not just mean freedom from slavery, but also freedom from the anxieties, violence, and racism of the Jim Crow South.

The hardworking members of rural Antioch harvested nearly all the food they consumed. Given their former work on plantations, the freedmen were likely skilled farmers with experience raising livestock and harvesting crops. Indeed, Antioch families owned large farms where they raised livestock such as pigs, turkeys, chickens, and cattle, and grew crops, including grain, cotton, and sugar cane. In addition, small-game hunting and fishing along Onion Creek provided food and sport for the farming families. One history of Buda recounts that while the men farmed, “the women and children picked grapes, dewberries and other berries. Sometimes there were enough to sell. In the spring when the ‘poke salad’ was fresh, it was delicious. Poke salad is a type of green similar to spinach...a little salt and bacon rind was added to give it an especially nice flavor.” In addition to farming, Antioch had many black-owned businesses such as a café, a barbershop, a grocery store, and a cleaning shop. Archival research reveals residents were largely self-sufficient, and by the early 1900s, Berry Burnham sold water, Oliver Kavanaugh had a mule-powered mill for bran and corn, and John Taylor had a molasses mill and business.

While business and agriculture kept the freedom colony of Antioch running, family and togetherness formed the heart of the community. A series of oral histories conducted with early members of the Antioch community reveal that “one enduring facet of the colony was seen in the relationship between young and old. During the day the elderly would care for the babies, and young able-bodied men and women would work until the light of day was exhausted. The time the children spent with the elderly fostered a natural affection and respect for the seniors.” While the adults certainly worked hard, they also dedicated time throughout the year for celebrations and festivals. For example, one of the biggest events held was the annual Juneteenth parade and festival that commemorated the emancipation of Southern blacks in Texas on June 19, 1865. Residents often celebrated with pageants, picnics, concerts, and dances. Community organizations additionally served as outlets for

10 Ibid, 66.
12 The Antioch Colony, African American Collection, San Marcos Hays County Collection, San Marcos Public Library.
14 “Pioneers of Community,” Antioch Colony Collection, Buda Public Library Archives, Buda, Texas.
community projects and social gatherings. Antioch also had active chapters in the Freemasons Lodge and the Order of the Eastern Star.\textsuperscript{15}

While the essence of the colony was a sense of community, sustainability would have been nearly impossible without the establishment of the Antioch school building. On July 15, 1874, Elias and Claracy “Clarissa” Bunton donated land for the construction of a schoolhouse and a church.\textsuperscript{16} Influential African American leaders and groups such as W.E.B Du Bois and the Freedman’s Bureau highly encouraged the uplifting of African Americans through education and religion, so it makes sense that the building in Antioch would serve the dual function.\textsuperscript{17} In 1880, African Americans in Texas had a literacy rate of 24 percent, yet within twenty years, nearly 62 percent of African Americans were literate.\textsuperscript{18} Religion and education served as powerful tools for bringing the community together and facing the drastic inequalities of the Jim Crow South.

Just south of the cemetery, men from the community constructed a two-story frame building on the donated land. It opened as “Antioch School District 5” with its first trustees: George Kavanaugh, Elias Bunton, and local white farmer and preacher Cyprus M Carpenter. At one time the school served 57 students, up to seventh grade, and by 1880 nearly every child between the ages of 7-18 could read and write.\textsuperscript{19} In 1938, Milton Kavanaugh sold the school to Buda Independent School District. The school relocated and reopened in 1940, and it served black students until integration in 1961.\textsuperscript{20} In addition to educating the youth of Antioch, the building functioned as the core of community social interaction. It transformed into a church every Sunday for religious services, and the second floor functioned as a meeting place for community organizations and clubs.

\textsuperscript{15} Mears, \textit{And Grace Will Lead Them Home}, 133.; Report on Archival Research for Williams Farmstead Project, Texas Historical Commission.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 24.
\textsuperscript{17} Mears, \textit{And Grace Will Lead Them Home}, 156.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 113.
\textsuperscript{19} Report on Archival Research for Williams Farmstead Project, Texas Historical Commission.
\textsuperscript{20} Antioch Colony Official Marker, Official Texas Historical Marker file, “Antioch Colony,” Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
Religion and faith functioned as some of the first outlets for African American expression and freedom, and they continue to prove their significance in the black community. For this reason, during slavery, enslavers forbade African Americans from practicing religion. However, by the early nineteenth century, Baptist and Methodist spiritual revivalists encouraged mass conversions to Christianity through lengthy revival meetings and camps. These revivalist ministers “made no distinction between classes or colors of people; everyone had a soul, and they were intent upon saving it.”\(^{21}\) Such inclusiveness appealed to enslaved people, and consequently, many freedmen who later attended religious services identified as Baptist or Methodist. For Antioch, church served as the “social, religious, and communal epicenter.”\(^{22}\) Oral histories with residents attest to the importance of religion and faith to their family. Decades later, community members still hold pride in their faith they feel is an integral part of their heritage.\(^ {23}\)

By 1881, the community held organized religious services at Antioch School District 5 for seven years but decided to erect a physical church building to serve as a meeting place and a physical symbol of their faith. Elias

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\(^{23}\) “Center Union Baptist Church,” The Antioch Colony, African American Collection, San Marcos Hays County Collection, San Marcos Public Library.
and Clarisa Bunton sold Antioch a quarter of an acre for $10 to be used for an African Methodist church. This investment served as further proof of the colony’s commitment to community. First named New Bethel Antioch Methodist Episcopal, the church eventually moved to Manchaca, close to Austin. Even near the decline of Antioch Colony in the 1940s, sixty to seventy members regularly attended the church. Today, their descendants still meet at Antioch Community Church. In 1894, residents constructed another church, named Center Union Baptist Church, on the west side of Onion Creek. It later moved to Goforth Road around 1927. Stories of parishioners wading through Cole Springs to attend church attest to the importance of religious fellowship and the determination of the Antioch community.24

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Antioch Colony began to decline. Droughts in 1925 and again in the 1930s, as well as insect infestations, led to poor harvests that led many farmers to mortgage their land.25 Other community members moved away for better work and economic prospects, and most of the men went to fight in World Wars I and II. The dwindling population indicated the decline of the community, and so too did the lack of telephone and electricity lines. While the town of Buda had telephone lines and electricity installed in 1905 and 1927 (respectively), the Antioch Colony did not receive these amenities until the 1950s.26 Eventually, white people from surrounding communities began to buy the land from the colony, reducing not only the size of Antioch but also the previous sense of community and identity.27 Though a handful of community members stayed behind, Antioch Colony was virtually abandoned by 1955.

The story of the historic Antioch Colony seemingly ends here, with this once thriving community nearly erased from public memory. Aside from some nineteenth-century gravestones and an obscured plot of land with ruins of an old farmhouse, a quick trip down Old Black Colony Road offers little to no remnants of what existed more than a century ago. It is difficult to believe that the area once housed 150 to 200 residents. Against all odds, however, a rebirth of Antioch has unfolded. In 1978, former resident Winnie Martha Harper Moyer left her home in Arizona and returned to her childhood home. Within a few years, she convinced much of her family to return as well, including her twin sister, Minnie Mary Harper Nelson, her parents, six siblings, one great-granddaughter, and four great-nieces and nephews.28 Over the years, other former residents slowly returned to their childhood homes.

In September 1999, LeeDell Bunton, a returning resident who had not lived in Antioch since he was nine years old, organized the first Antioch Colony

24 Stovall, Clear Springs and Limestone Ledges, 353.
26 “Coming Home Again,” African American Collection, San Marcos Hays County Collection, San Marcos Public Library.
27 Sitton, Freedom Colonies, 187.
28 Ibid, 188.
reunion. Nearly 300 people attended, marking the reestablishment of the colony and Antioch’s miraculous rise from the dead.\textsuperscript{29} Bunton believed that recording and remembering the culture and heritage of Antioch ought to be the primary priority of the community. “This is where our beginnings were after slavery,” Bunton proclaimed, “I think that means something. It should mean something to everybody.”\textsuperscript{30} He later played a role in raising enough interest in Antioch’s history that the colony received a Texas Historical Commission marker in 2009. According to records, twenty African Americans reside in Antioch today, “all members of three families that trace their lineages to early community settlers.”\textsuperscript{31} Antioch is one of few surviving freedom colonies in America.

The Antioch Community Church serves as the most impressive legacy of the colony. In 1997, a group of members met to discuss reviving the old Methodist church and moving it from Manchaca back to the Antioch Colony. Former resident Ida Brown donated six acres along Old Black Colony Road, and others pledged to donate an additional nine acres for a new church.\textsuperscript{32} The passionate group soon recruited Rev. Greg Stitt, an assistant minister of Center Union Baptist Church. “At first I told them ‘No,’” Stitt later confessed, but “then I began to see what I felt would be a real tragedy if the church wasn’t rebuilt in the community.”\textsuperscript{33} As they raised funds for the new building, the group spent their first few years holding services at various community centers and local schools. In 2007, construction for the new Antioch Community Church began on the site of the old schoolhouse. All seemed quiet from the church for nearly a decade, until March 13, 2020 when the Antioch Community Church announced on its Facebook page that they have signed a contract with Netflix to be featured in a documentary special.

The miraculous story of Antioch Community Church embodies the faith and togetherness on which the Antioch Colony was founded. It seems fitting that the community was named “Antioch,” after the biblical city in Turkey where followers of Jesus first called themselves Christians. In the same way, the historic Antioch Colony serves as a symbol of endurance, hope, and solidarity.

\textsuperscript{29} Sitton, \textit{Freedom Colonies}, 188.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 189.
\textsuperscript{31} Antioch Colony: A Living History; Coming Home Again; Descendants of Austin American-Statesman, Sept. 30, 2000, Official Texas Historical Marker file, “Antioch Colony,” Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Antioch Community Church. Built on the site of the old schoolhouse on Old Black Colony Road, the Antioch Community Church is a phoenix arising from the ashes of forgottenness. Courtesy of Amber Leigh Hullum, author.
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“Something That Can Identify Us”:
A History of the San Marcos Dunbar School and Community Center

By Katherine Bansemer

The Dunbar Historic District in San Marcos, Texas celebrates the history and culture of the town’s African American residents. Within this neighborhood, Dunbar Park and Dunbar Community Center stand as testaments to the strength of the local community. As indicated by an official Texas Historical Commission marker, the previously segregated school for black children once stood in this location. African American children in San Marcos attended the Dunbar School until integration in the 1960s. The history of the school and integration reveal that, compared to many Southern schools, the San Marcos district had a unique and fairly progressive attitude towards desegregation. This is not to say integration was entirely peaceful. Indeed, the school faced chronic underfunding and teachers had to fight for better facilities for their students, but this process was far more peaceful than in many Southern towns.

Few records exist about the education of African American children in San Marcos prior to 1876. In 1850 County Judge J.C Watkins appointed members of the San Marcos Board of Examiners to organize the first school for African American children in San Marcos. Records suggest informal education of African American children may have begun as early as 1847, when Melissa Charlot, the wife of Presbyterian minister Nathan Charlot, and Mary Sublet taught a handful of black students. The education of African Americans was often closely tied to churches, even after formal school organization. It was not until the Free Public School Law of 1876 that an official “Negro School District” was established and opened on January 13, 1877, with fifty pupils and a preacher as instructor. John H. Saunders was appointed as the superintendent and organized training for the teachers, which included their attendance of the County Teacher’s Institute. Even though forty-eight percent of school attendees in San Marcos were African American, between 1876-78, Hays County organized thirty-one school districts, yet only one for black children.¹

In 1890, one of the schools for white children received $8,000 to build new facilities on land that is now St. Mark’s Church. The African American school did not receive funding and was moved the same year next to the

African Methodist Church. A preacher was again employed as an instructor and made roughly $37 a month. Furniture was sparse, consisting mainly of homemade wooden benches and a teacher’s desk. In 1918, under the direction of principal J.M. Brown and contractor John Avery, the building once again moved. The school now sits in its present location in Dunbar Park. Black students and teachers had to use outdated textbooks while white school districts received funding for new books and materials. According to interviews however, this did not deter the teachers who worked hard to account for this discrepancy. In fact, many graduates from the school pursued higher education and some returned to teach at the school. One example of such a student, Boston P. Grant, graduated from the school in 1931 and earned degrees from Sam Houston College and Greely College. He returned to Dunbar and served as principal during World War II. Katherine Street Hardeman, another student turned teacher, was a community advocate for racial equality and became president of the San Marcos chapter of the NAACP. She was also the first African American teacher at San Marcos High School following integration.2

In 1930, Dunbar received an additional building, the Home Economics Building, that still stands in its original location behind the main school building. This building is the oldest surviving education building in San Marcos and serves as a visual reminder of the history of segregated schools. The Home Economics Building was originally built in 1916 as the West End School for white children but moved when the West End School District received funding for an additional building. Without any sign or indication of what the building once was, the Home Economics Building now stands dilapidated and boarded up between the Dunbar Community Center and Dunbar Park. In the 1980s, a group of community members, led by Frances Stovall, wrote the Texas Historical Commission asking

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for a marker to be placed outside the building, but had their request was denied.³

Dunbar acquired a final building in 1947. The previous year, Hays County purchased several old army barracks from Camp Swift, in Bastrop County, to aid in school renovation. Once again, the white school districts received money for renovations while the city government continued to ignore the needs of black students. The Black Voters Club petitioned the County School Board for funding to install indoor plumbing at the school. The school board gave Dunbar one of the army barracks to add to the campus. John Avery was again tasked with the construction of the final wing, which was bought and assembled in pieces. Some members of the white community disagreed with this decision, believing the project too expensive, and complained it would have been cheaper to build the new wing from scratch. Construction of the final wing ended in 1947 and included indoor restrooms, the principal’s office, and a school auditorium. The building later moved, but in 1995, under the supervision of contractor Jeff Kester, was returned to the Dunbar neighborhood. Today the building is the Mitchell Community Center.⁴

The Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. Board of Education mandated the desegregation of public schools nationwide. The process of school integration is often thought to be marked with violence and backlash, and while this was the case in many Southern cities, the process remained relatively peaceful in San Marcos. The San Marcos School Board voted 4-3 to integrate the high school in 1955, making San Marcos High School one of the first schools in the state of Texas to integrate. According to Yancy Yarbrough, the principal of San Marcos High School at the time, the school board faced financial difficulty, so it simply made sense to integrate. He said that most of the problems and backlash from desegregation came from parents, not students.⁵

In an oral history interview conducted by Emmie Craddock, Yarbrough stated

San Marcos was the only school in the state to abandon the Negro High School. We had the highest percentage of Negroes of any school in the state. Most schools had one or two as tokens. I even got a call from Life Magazine, they wanted to do an article about us. I told them no, I had enough problems without fooling with a magazine. We didn’t need the publicity.⁶

⁵ Yancy Yarbrough, interviewed by Emmie Craddock, February 22, 1978, Transcript, University Archives Oral History Collection, Texas State University.
⁶ Yarbrough, interview.
He later stated integration of athletic teams posed the biggest problem the school encountered. Athletes and band members had to continue to play at their old segregated school. Schools from surrounding towns refused to compete with San Marcos African American athletes. In 1956, one gifted athlete, Lucius Jackson, transferred to an out of state high school to play basketball. That same year, the San Marcos High School basketball team made it to the state championship game but lost. Yarbrough said he believed if Jackson would have remained on the team, they would have won. Jackson went on to play for the Philadelphia 76ers and later won an Olympic gold medal for basketball in 1976.\(^7\)

By 1957, the school board reversed its position to keep segregated athletic teams, and integrated both sports and band. Katherine Hardeman remembered the newly integrated band traveled to San Antonio for a competition, but the black students were not allowed to stay at the same hotel as the white students and instead slept at the YMCA.

School dances also caused tension in the high school. Many African American parents forbade their daughters to attend the dances, and young African American boys who did attend were not permitted to dance with white girls. In response, Hardeman hosted dances at her house where whites, blacks, and Hispanics could attend and dance together. Students admired Hardeman and even asked if she would build them a pool because they were not allowed to swim in the river at the city park. She told them, “If the whites won’t stamp your hands and let you swim, then just leap in that water and start swimming around.” The students followed her advice, which led to the desegregation of San Marcos City Park. Augustine Lucio Jr, a San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District trustee since 1964, said he attributed the smooth integration process to liberal attitudes held by the city’s university professors.

San Marcos residents were never polarized when it came to the issue of integration; in fact, World War II veterans had already met in integrated groups for decades. \(^8\)

Though San Marcos High School was integrated quite early, it took until 1965 for the elementary school to be fully integrated. In 1963, Celestino Mendez Jr., the first Hispanic man elected to the school board, wrote the policy officially requiring all of San Marcos schools to be fully integrated. Some school administrators were anxious about the transition and feared the black children would be academically behind their white peers. However, thanks to the dedication of teachers like Katherine Hardeman, this fear held no substance. Students like Vicki Holmes, a first grader at the time of desegregation, remembered “going into the newly desegregated school was a pleasant

\(^7\) Tull, “History of Desegregation in San Marcos,” San Marcos Hays County Collection.; Yarbrough, interview.

\(^8\) Tull, “History of Desegregation,” San Marcos Hays County Collection.
Unfortunately, the former faculty lost their jobs and were denied employment at San Marcos High School. Teachers including Hardeman took the case to the school board and won the right to teach at the integrated school. Even though integration in San Marcos was comparatively peaceful to other towns in the South, it was not without its hardships. Though their efforts were largely successful, teachers, parents, and students still had to fight institutionalized racism in the education system.10

In 1961, the name of the African American school officially changed to Dunbar, in honor of the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. Dunbar was born in 1872 in Dayton, Ohio to previously enslaved parents. He started writing at an early age and eventually gained national recognition for his work. In 1993, he attended the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he met W.E.B. du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells, and other influential members of the African American community. Like these activists, Dunbar’s work continues to influence the African American community. The entire Dunbar neighborhood has evolved into a historic district that highlights the history of the African American community in San Marcos.11

Only a few years after the name of the school changed to Dunbar, it closed. It became a community center that residents could rent to hold events, though it mostly functioned as a space to store city landscaping equipment. The San Marcos African American community felt more should be done to transform the old school into a community center. Some wanted to repurpose the surrounding field into a soccer field, while others suggested the building be used for elderly members of the community to socialize. In November 1968, a group called Bridgebuilders held a meeting to discuss transforming the field into a playground. The group, led by Hardeman, worked to promote better relationships between racial groups in San Marcos. It was not until 1976, when C. and F. Marshall bought the property and donated it to the community with the stipulation that the building be transformed into an active community center, that the Dunbar Community Center became a reality.12

On April 25, 1976, the Texas Historical Commission erected an official marker dedicated to the Dunbar School. Tula Townsend Wyatt, the head of the

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10 Ibid.
Hays County Historical Commission, who worked with the THC to acquire a marker, delivered a history of the school at the dedication ceremony. The Marshalls also attended the ceremony, as well as former principal Boston P. Grant, who read the inscription.  

The community center offered myriad classes, including guitar, karate, tumbling, and crafting. Residents also had the opportunity to join sports teams regardless of age, gender, or race. Around sixty children visited the school every day after school, and roughly one hundred people attended daily classes that cost only one dollar for registration. The local community still felt the building could be improved, and renovations began in the early 1980s. Efforts stopped, however, when a fire destroyed the entire building in 1986.  

The City of San Marcos collaborated with residents in public hearings on the reconstruction of the building. Jeff Kester and John Stokes led the construction of the new building, ensuring the appearance emulated the old building. In fact, during reconstruction of the plaza, stones from the original building were discovered and placed at the base of the flagpole. Brick from the original building can also be found in the entrance. Construction ended in June 1988 with the new building complete and rededicated to the community. In an oral history interview about the Dunbar school, resident Ollie Giles remarked, “Dunbar is something special, it’s something that can identify us.” Indeed, the school holds an important place to residents both as a site of history and community.  

The Dunbar Community Center now stands in the Dunbar Historic District of San Marcos. In between the rebuilt center and the playground sits the old Home Economics Building. Boarded up and dilapidated, this building appears out of place in the park. The awkward building serves as a discrete, yet


15 National Registrar of Historic Places, Nomination Form, San Marcos Hays County Collection

uncomfortable, reminder to the community of the history of segregation in San Marcos.
Divided Audiences:  
The Story and Legacy of San Marcos’s Segregated Cinema

*Katherine Bansemer, Amber Leigh Hullum, Charlotte Nickles*

The Marc Theater of San Marcos, Texas shares a long and intriguing history with its small-town home. The theater serves as a visual reminder of the rich history of the community; however, its history also includes a past in segregation and white supremacy. Indeed, the Marc Theater was constructed around the ideals of “separate but equal.” This mindset no longer holds sway, yet the remnants of Jim Crow can still be seen in the old building.

Frank W. Zimmerman owned the theater from the early twentieth century through the Civil Rights Movement. An influential businessman and a supporter of Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson, Zimmerman arrived in San Marcos in 1922 with plans to open a theater. He purchased the abandoned Palace Opera House in 1924. After the building’s reconstruction, he opened the Holiday Theater, which became a lucrative business and important part of the San Marcos community. For his success in the local entertainment business, he earned the nickname “Mister Theater” and at one point served as mayor of San Marcos. A plaque outside the theater memorializes Zimmerman as one of the greatest patrons of San Marcos.¹

Erected in 1878 on East San Antonio Street, the original theater building served various functions before developing into a performing arts and movie theater. In other periods of its life, the building functioned as a grocery store, a drugstore, a barbershop, a gentleman’s attire shop, and even a café. The physical building underwent a great deal of construction to become the Palace Opera House in 1917. This theater operated only a few years before being abandoned. It was not until Zimmerman’s arrival to San Marcos that the theater enjoyed commercial success. The Plaza Theater officially opened in 1941 and was renamed the Holiday Theater in 1958. It

welcomed a diverse audience; however, that audience was forced to enter the building and sit in different locations because of the laws of segregation set forth by Jim Crow policies. By the end of 1984, the building became run down and remained desolate for several decades. Today, it serves as a simple theater and club on the San Marcos square, often visited by college students from Texas State University. If they look for it, the students and other visitors to San Marcos can still see the eerie alleyway entrance that African Americans were forced to use during segregation.²

In attempts to enforce white supremacy, Jim Crow laws required public buildings to separate patrons according to race, which subsequently affected the architecture of public places. Those in charge of the renovations of the Holiday, made deliberate architectural choices to separate their audience and enforce white supremacy. Only white patrons were permitted to sit on the ground floor inside the theater. African Americans sat in separate balconies above them. In addition, people of color were not permitted to enter the main doors of the building. Instead, they were forced to use an outdoor staircase built on the side of the theater. Following the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation, the outdoor staircase was removed from the side of the building, but the upstairs entrance remains visible and serves as a reminder of the history of segregation in San Marcos.³

In the alley of the Marc Theater today,² “Opening of New Palace Brings Memories of Great Stage Shows and Movies of the Past,” San Marcos Hays County Collection.

the balcony of the Jim Crow staircase used by people of color during segregation is still visible.

Public audiences were generally unaware of the architecture and design behind the enforcement of Jim Crow. The segregated entrance and seating of the Holiday was essentially hidden from white patrons. The presentation and advertisement of the theater naturally masked the segregated structure of the building, and the separate entrance and seating areas were never featured in newspaper articles or advertisements. The Holiday Theater demonstrates the insidious nature of Jim Crow. Business owners, unconsciously or otherwise, made decisions regarding construction and advertisement that upheld white supremacy and rendered their black patrons essentially invisible from the white public.  

Today, few San Marcos residents can recall the Marc Theater’s not-so-long-past history. This fact begs the question: Why is that? As decades passed following the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the topic of segregation and racial violence became more sensitive. For many people in the twenty-first century, segregation is a taboo subject that many people would rather leave in the past, forgotten. The Marc Theater is no exception to this, as can be seen with the contemporary mural painted on its side. As shown in the photo below, this colorful painting depicts a line of customers waiting to enter the cinema, an art piece that pays homage to the building’s history as a movie theatre. The silhouetted figures seem to be waiting in the same line, together; however, there is no hint of segregation, a staircase, or a separate entrance for people of color.

Another reason why the building’s history of segregation is not well known is because Zimmerman made efforts to ensure its reputation and image were well received by audiences during the time of Jim Crow. For example, all newspaper articles and photographs from the time show the stately front profile of the building with happy, white audiences—effectively eliminating any archival evidence of its black visitors or their separate entrance in the alley. The cinema relied on its outward image in


order to maintain its success, but in doing so it silenced the face and voice of its black audiences. With these methods of black erasure, the history and struggles of African Americans are consequently forgotten.

To combat black erasure in history and better confront our dark past of segregation, many Americans have begun measures of preservation and education. By preserving Jim Crow architecture (such as separate entrances), physical examples of history can be used to teach others about segregation and civil rights. The Marc Theater’s alley staircase acts as a visual example of history; it can allow people to learn more about segregation, white supremacy, and the racist methods and ideals that influenced the theater’s construction. The belief that preserving vestiges of Jim Crow can be used for education, however, is controversial. While many people hold that preservation is necessary for teaching important history lessons with physical examples, others hold that the best way to overcome the legacy of Jim Crow is to forget it entirely.

The disagreement on preserving Jim Crow architecture and monuments has led to intense debates on whether symbols of segregation should remain or be destroyed. Historian Jay Reeves explains “the issue has become particularly acute in the South, where millions still remember living through segregation.” It is therefore understandable why promoting the preservation of buildings that were influenced by the ideals of white supremacy is difficult for many who see these structures as a painful reminder of segregation, violence, and inequality. The Marc Theater is a standing example of architecture developed around the process of segregation, yet simultaneously, it also serves as a symbol of integration, proof that inequality can in fact be overcome.

As the building remains a part of modern society, it offers an opportunity to teach and learn from our history of segregation. Reeves states that the architecture of buildings can serve “as a living history lesson, a symbol of how the Deep South has changed since the courts ended discriminatory Jim Crow laws.” Confronting our racial history is indeed a difficult challenge, yet if we are to learn and grow from our past, we as Americans and Southerners must be willing to face and question it. Segregation is an undeniable and painful fact of American history, but the Marc Theater acts as a literal and figurative symbol of integration, change, and hope for a more equal future.

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San Marc Theater Through the Ages

Top Left: The Palace Theater opened in 1917 but was abandoned within a few years. 
Courtesy of San Marcos Public Library Archives

Top Right: The Plaza Theater officially opened in 1941 and was renamed The Holiday Theater in 1958. 
Courtesy of San Marcos Public Library Archives

Bottom Left: The Marc building today, in 2020. 
Courtesy of Charlotte Nickles, co-author
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Erasing Community Identity:
The Dark History of East Austin’s Forgotten School

By Eric Robertson-Gordon

Austin, Texas has seen a great amount of change in the past century, transitioning from a sleepy college town at the dawn of the twentieth century to one of the largest cities in the country by the early twenty-first century. The gentrification of Austin during this transition has pushed many of the city’s inhabitants, in search of affordable housing, to the city’s periphery. This process has largely affected the city’s east side. Once known for its diversity and eclectic culture, this part of the city has recently given way to the construction of expensive living areas with mostly white property owners. These recent developments have resulted in skyrocketing costs of living for the local community who consider the gentrification a development the local government has allowed run rampant for years. In the midst of this, the city has another story that affects its history: desegregation of the school system in the 1950s. Austin had only one African American high school in the Jim Crow era: L.C. Anderson High School. The building, however, was more than just an education center for East Austin’s younger African American population; it was a cultural center and place of community.

The History of L.C. Anderson High School:

Austin is often considered a progressive city; however, it holds a surprising history of deep racial tensions. This tension can be seen physically in the city’s official layout plan that demonstrates visible segregation of black populations from their white counterparts. The city planning board overtly expressed this desire for separation in its Master Plan of 1928, which effectively reorganized Austin’s demographic zones. Author and historian Claire McInerny points out that the Master Plan addressed the “main themes of...getting communities of color out of downtown – off land white residents wanted for themselves.”¹ In essence, Austin city officials used Interstate Highway 35 (I-35) as the dividing line between the two populations of the city, thus creating a segregated city, with an impact that is visible today. This divide reveals the significance of L.C. Anderson High School. The origins of the first African-American high school in Austin can be traced as far back as 1889, with the establishment of a small school located in Robertson Hill, a neighborhood in

the city’s “Negro District,” today known as East Austin. During its early years, the school was known as Robertson Hill School, after the surrounding neighborhood. Subsequent overcrowding at the school caused the Austin School System to open three different locations for the Robertson Hill School before 1913, when a new, more centralized high school was built on the city’s east side. The school was in the heart of the East Austin community at the corners of Pennsylvania Avenue and Comal Street.

In 1909, the school operated out of several different buildings but was collectively called E.H. Anderson High School. The school was named after the former president of the African American college, Prairie View Normal School in Prairie View Texas, northwest of Houston. Prairie View Normal School, founded in 1878, was a prominent college for training African American teachers in Texas and operates today as Prairie View A&M University. The most notable principal of E.H. Anderson High School during this time was Laurine Cecil (L. C.) Anderson, E.H.’s younger brother and a previous president of Prairie View

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2 L.C. Anderson High School and the Integration of Austin’s Public Schools, Compiled by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2.
3 “Old Anderson High School, Kealing Junior High School — Travis County” - Historic Marker, Texas Historical Commission.
4 Today this location houses Kealing Middle School, which first opened in 1930 as a prominent African American secondary school.
Normal School after E.H. served in the same position. The younger Anderson came to Austin in 1896 and served as the principal of the high school until 1929. In addition to serving as high school principal, L.C. taught Latin until his retirement in 1933. L.C. Anderson died on January 8, 1938. Two days later, the Austin School Board decided to rename the school in his honor. Today, L.C. Anderson is buried in Austin’s Oakwood Cemetery near highway I-35 in East Austin.

**Desegregation: 1953 to 1971**


6 “Laurine Cecil Anderson” Historical Marker, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.
In 1953, the school moved into a new location. This new building was erected at 900 Thompson Street for the growing population of young African Americans in East Austin. Throughout its existence, Anderson High School was a hub of activity for the African American population in East Austin where a tight connection developed between the school’s faculty and the public who all attended the same local church services and rooted for the school’s sports teams, the Yellow Jackets. Even though several faculty remember L.C. Anderson High School as “lacking in a whole lot” because of institutional racism in the education system, residents of Austin’s East Side formed a sense of community and pride around the high school.

In 1954, the landmark Supreme Court case Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka officially desegregated schools at the federal level throughout the country. The process of desegregation throughout the United States was slow and arduous, resulting in many years passing without government enforcement of this significant decision. As a result, many Southern school districts prolonged implementing the federal statute across the area. This was also the case for the Austin school district, where school boards slowly began integrating white schools in small numbers. It took many years for Austin to fully integrate their school systems. As this occurred, Austin School System attempted to integrate the schools by rezoning the city or forcing many of the students to attend different schools in the late 1960s. After a short period of time, an overwhelming majority of African American students returned and re-enrolled in L.C. Anderson High School.

In 1970, sixteen years after the Brown vs. Board of Education case, the U.S. Department of Education introduced a lawsuit against the Austin School System where they argued the city had not appropriately integrated the schools. As a result of this lawsuit and the city’s failure to integrate, United States District Judge Jack Roberts made the decision in 1971 to close Anderson High School, along with Kealing Middle School. Students from these schools were bussed to other predominantly white schools (Austin, Crockett, McCallum, Reagan, and Travis High Schools) throughout the city.

The local community reacted to Judge Roberts’s decision with outrage, and, in the summer and fall of 1971, both students and community members held protests in East Austin. The protests ultimately did not change the ruling. When the school year commenced in the fall of 1971, many students continued to protest the decision by standing on the steps of their old high school. After

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7 L.C. Anderson High School and the Integration of Austin’s Public School, Compiled by Rebekah Dobrasko, 9.
weeks of protesting with no results, the children finally relented and entered the new schools.\(^{11}\)

\[\text{Image: L.C. Anderson High School Closure Protests-C. 1971.}\
\[\text{East Austin citizens protested the closure of L.C. Anderson High School.}\
\[\text{Courtesy of Portal of Texas History- UNT.}\
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The Legacy and Effects of the School’s Closure

The closure of L.C. Anderson High School left a void within East Austin as many residents considered the school the glue that held the community together. The school’s closure signaled the decline of the African American community in East Austin—a decline still seen today. At the time of the school’s closure, Ambres Kearney, an alumns of L.C. Anderson High School said he “noticed businesses begin to close along the once bustling 10th, 11th and 12th streets. Many of the buildings remained vacant, taxes went up and people stopped building.”\(^{12}\) The closing of L.C. Anderson High School began a ripple effect felt throughout East Austin. Over the next forty years, many landmarks representing East Austin’s once-thriving culture have either been destroyed, left to decay, or been bulldozed over.

As a result of the school’s closure in 1971 and its students going to the other parts the city for their education, the community felt a sense of loss. Two


years later, in 1973, the Austin School District established a new L.C. Anderson High School, located not on the east side, but in Northwest Hills, in Austin’s northwest corner. This new L.C. Anderson High School is located about seven and a half miles away from the original high school location in East Austin, and, aside from its name, has little to do with the original institution. Even the school’s mascot switched from the Yellow Jackets to the Fighting Trojans.

Many in the community still remember what the old high school brought to the area. It became more than a school for the area’s children to attend between the hours of eight a.m. and three p.m. The school developed into a cultural landmark for all of the area’s inhabitants. Because of the efforts of the Austin School District, the historic L.C. Anderson High School has been essentially erased from the map, both literally and figuratively. Despite efforts made by the school district, the scars left after the school’s closure are still visible and will continue to be felt by many inhabitants of East Austin who remember what happened to L.C. Anderson High School. These individuals alone will be unable to sustain the memory of the former school for future generations. With issues like gentrification continuing to plague areas like East Austin, those in power need to establish programs to protect cultural landmarks like L.C. Anderson High School. Without concern for the future of these landmarks, the history of areas like East Austin could be lost forever.
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“Sports Breaks Down All Barriers”:
High School Sports Integration in San Marcos, Texas

By David Charles Robinson

The landmark 1954 United States Supreme Court decision *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* ruled the segregation of public schools illegal. Just two years later, in Hays County, Texas, San Marcos High School was among the first schools to integrate African Americans into the previously all-white institution. Athletics, however, did not integrate as quickly. San Marcos acquiesced to pressure from nearby schools and kept athletic teams segregated for the first two years of school integration. San Marcos High School athletic teams, known as the Rattlers, underwent the slow process of integration from 1959 through 1963. The slow pace of the process held consequences for the Rattlers, even making one of the greatest San Marcos-native athletes unable to participate in the local high school athletics program.

This is the story of integrating the San Marcos High School Rattlers sports teams following the *Brown* decision. The process lasted through the graduating class of 1963, when the San Marcos High School athletic teams transitioned from all-white to fully integrated. The class of 1963, although not the first African American student-athletes to participate in varsity sports for the Rattlers, was the first class to live through the transition from segregated sports teams to the integrated sports programs.

In 1956, upon the integration of San Marcos High School, a singular athlete stood to make the San Marcos Rattlers one of the top basketball teams in the state. Lucious “Luke” Jackson, a domineering six-foot-nine player, became the focal point of a San Marcos School Board meeting regarding the integration of high school athletics. Jackson previously played basketball with both whites and blacks at the city park and was admired not only for his height and leaping ability, but also his tenaciousness and toughness. While San Marcos coaches and athletes desperately wanted

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1 By using the term “fully-integrated” I am not referring to any specific percentage of the student population as a whole comparably relating to the percentage of student-athletes, nor the African American population in San Marcos at large. “Fully integrated” as used here is meant to convey that any and all African American student-athletes who wished to participate in athletics were free and welcome to do so and could compete in varsity athletics with no participation restrictions.
Jackson to play for the Rattlers, nearby schools threatened not to play a single game against an integrated team. Jackson attended San Marcos High School for his freshman and sophomore years but could only play with the basketball team in the home gym. Bill Pennington, in the same class of 1960 as Jackson, recalls having to guard Luke in pick-up games and practices. He laughed at the memory and said, “Luke was bigger than me, he was quicker than me, and he was just flat better than me. We couldn’t wait to have him on the team.”

With Jackson’s extraordinary skills clearly wasted by not being allowed to play for the Rattlers, the school board reluctantly advised Jackson to transfer out of state.

While integration raised social issues throughout the South, many people shared Pennington’s forward-thinking attitude and saw high school sports a unifying force during integration. Many white coaches knew their programs stood to improve with this influx of talent and ambition. Prior to integration, white high schools participated in competitions sanctioned by the University Interscholastic League (UIL), while African American schools fell under the Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL). The 1910 charter of the UIL specified membership for “white public schools,” but the organization became one of the first state institutions forced to reconsider the stance.

The El Paso Independent School District voted to desegregate immediately following Brown v. Board and is credited as the first Texas school to comply with the Supreme Court ruling. Other schools in San Antonio, Corpus Christi, San Angelo, Crystal City, Carrizo Springs, La Ferria, Mission, and Brownsville also adopted full integration—including athletics—for the 1955-56 school year. Close behind those schools (yet only at the high school level), the San Marcos School Board voted to integrate schools in 1955.

More than forty African American students, eleven of whom were seniors, enrolled in the first integrated class at San Marcos High School. While integration of the school was relatively peaceful, in a 1978 interview, former San Marcos Superintendent Yancy Yarborough called the integration of athletics “…our worst problem. Lockhart and Taylor wouldn’t play against Negro students so for the first two years, we didn’t have Negroes on varsity teams.”

In 1956, despite the lack of integrated varsity sports in San Marcos High School, baseball, played at the local city park, became the first integrated sport in San Marcos. Blacks and whites played regularly and considered each other friends, so when integration later came to the high school, white athletes were not only familiar, but friends with their new black teammates. The San Marcos

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5 Yancy Yarborough, interviewed by Dr. Emmie Craddock, February 16, 1978.
Hornets, an all-black Pony League team organized and coached by Alonzo Hardge, Jr., played in the 1950s and 60s against neighboring towns such as Seguin and Lockhart. The team was poorly equipped and often rode to games in the beds of pickup trucks. George “Big Daddy” Kyle recalls that the coaches from the high school would come out to the baseball fields and basketball courts at city park to watch the African American athletes play.

The 1959-60 edition of the San Marcos High School yearbook, *The Rattler*, features the first athletics team photo in school history that includes African American players. Alvin Byas and Corwin Millett, both seniors at the time, made the team led by Head Coach Owen Goodnight.

The 1959 San Marcos Rattler Varsity Football team. Head Coach Owen Goodnight is pictured top row, second from left. Alvin Byas (#25) and Corwin Millett (#46) are also in the top row. (San Marcos Rattler Yearbook, 1960)

The Rattlers football team dominated opponents and finished the regular season with a perfect 10-0 record. They outscored opponents with a combined score of 386-28. Byas and Millett, while allowed to suit up for games, did not participate in the team’s first five games because the opposing team refused to play against African Americans. It was not until the team made it to district

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level that they could take part. Even still, they were limited to a handful of plays per game as they were only permitted to be part of the kickoff team.

Kyle, a freshman that season, recalls that even though Byas and Millett were not given a fair chance they still saw playing football as an opportunity “to break through.” The 1959 season ended with a disastrous 8-6 playoff loss to Falfurrias in a game that linebacker Bill Pennington recalled as so foggy “[he] could barely see the running back!” Despite the weather conditions, the Rattlers scored three touchdowns, though they were later nullified because of penalties.

The 1959 varsity football team may have included only two black players whose participation was limited, but the success of that season’s freshman team foreshadows the future of integrated San Marcos High School sports teams. George “Big Daddy” Kyle, Sammy Lee Washington, Joe Sattiewhite, and Wallace Cheatham successfully contributed to the sub-varsity football program, and that season’s freshman basketball team included Kyle, Cheatham and Fred White. Even though no African Americans played on the varsity team, athletics integration saw slow progression through the freshman squads.

Kyle recalls that prior to his freshman year, an assistant football coach, Bill Krueger, conditioned the black players by having them run long distances on the roads and highways east of San Marcos. Within weeks, they were running five miles, something none of them had done before. Kyle, Washington, Sattiewhite, and Cheatham had never played organized football, nor participated in such a strenuous fitness program. “I was in shape because I worked,” Kyle recalls, “but that running, man, that got me in the best shape of my life!”

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white teammates had already played middle school football that incorporated the same offensive and defensive schemes as the varsity high school teams.

Two seasons after Alvin Byas and Corwin Millett became the first black players to appear in uniform for the Rattlers, African Americans first cracked the starting lineup. Robert “Night Train” Jackson became a defensive starter in the 1961 season, and Kyle, who played varsity as a backup in his sophomore and junior seasons, became the starting fullback for his senior season of 1962. The Rattlers had a successful regular season, finishing second in district, but ultimately lost their first playoff game to Austin Johnston.

Kyle primarily served as a 175-pound blocking back for future Southwest Texas State University and Cleveland Browns star Reese Morrison and was frequently called upon to run the ball on plays in which a critical first down was needed to sustain a possession. Near the goal line, the play calls usually featured Morrison. It is difficult not to draw the conclusion that although Kyle was a key member of the team’s offense, the glory of scoring touchdowns was reserved for Morrison, who led the conference in scoring by a wide margin.

By the early 1960s, across the state of Texas, it became evident that sports, particularly football, could ease the tension of integration. Small towns and communities were frequently centered around the “Friday Night Lights” of high school football, and as African American athletes integrated programs around the state, football provided “a means of identity that evoked community pride.”

With several African American players in key positions on the Rattlers team, San Marcos reached a point where integration met acceptance without reservations.

Despite the acceptance of most of his classmates and the San Marcos community at large, Kyle and his black teammates did not receive unbiased treatment everywhere. Road district football games included trips to San Antonio, where the team would frequently eat at Christie’s, a seafood restaurant on Broadway Avenue. Kyle remembered one incident in which the assistant coaches came onto the team bus and informed Kyle and his four black teammates that the restaurant would not serve them. The coaches left it up to the players what to do next, and they all decided to eat on the bus as a team. The coaches returned with food for the team and sat with them while they all ate their meals together.

Another less-peaceful incident took place in Kerrville. After defeating Tivy High School, the Rattlers’ team bus was pelted with rocks, with players subject to verbal threats and name-calling due to the protestors’ objection to the San Marcos integrated cheerleading squad. The team bus was safely escorted out

of town by a state highway patrol officer who often accompanied the team on road games.

High school football generally serves as the focal point of Texas sports, but the integration of varsity baseball teams was just as remarkable and an important part of integration. Nearly one third of the 1963 San Marcos Rattlers varsity baseball team was African American. Along with Kyle, Sattiewhite, and Cheatham, John Odoms, Kenneth Styles, and Fred White were key players on the team. The best Hispanic, black, and white players combined to form the varsity Rattlers squad and won a district 14-AAA championship. Kyle recalled that the varsity baseball games drew huge and enthusiastic crowds of spectators.

The mostly tolerant and accepting community of San Marcos reflects a wider atmosphere throughout Texas in the earliest days of high school sports integration. Small town communities, where African American populations were viewed as non-threatening, mostly accepted integration without serious incident. Some of the most notorious problems with high school sports integration, specifically football, occurred in larger cities in North and East Texas. While it would be inaccurate to assert racial issues no longer persist in high school sports, student-athletes today are mainly judged by their academic and athletic performance, not their race.

George Kyle and his 1963 African American classmates were the first class to attend San Marcos High School for all four years. Kyle was one of the key trailblazers in the integration of San Marcos High School. Not only was he an accomplished multi-sport athlete, but also an award-winning choir member and senior class secretary. Two of his white football teammates received scholarships to play at Southwest Texas State, but he never received such an offer. Kyle compiled a file of newspaper clippings touting his football accomplishments from the San Marcos Record, which he sent to a variety of black colleges. The first African American in San Marcos to receive a college

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11 Cashion, 237-247 and passim.
athletic scholarship, he played football at Texas Southern University in Houston. After college, he served in the United States Army, then worked at the Gary Job Corps Center in San Marcos and then with the U.S. Post Office. Kyle is now retired and lives in Houston.

San Marcos native Lucious Jackson finished his high school career at Morehouse High School in 1960 in Bastrop, Louisiana. He later played one season at Texas Southern before transferring to Pan American College. At Pan American, he led his team to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Championship in 1963. Defeating Southwest Texas State, the Broncs reached the championship tourney, and Jackson was named Most Valuable Player of the tournament. He was the sixth overall selection in the 1964 NBA draft, selected by the Philadelphia 76ers. He also played for the United States Olympic team and during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, became the first person from San Marcos to win a gold medal. After an eight-year career in the NBA (which included an All-Star game appearance in 1965 and championship in 1967), Jackson retired and settled in Beaumont, Texas, where he directed the city’s Parks and Recreation Program.

In 2017, the Calaboose Museum in San Marcos erected an exhibit in his honor entitled “Breaking Barriers and Backboards” that featured memorabilia from Jackson’s highly decorated career. Despite the fact that Jackson was not allowed to play high school basketball in his hometown, he remarked during the opening of the exhibit that he still considers San Marcos his home. When asked about the barriers that kept him from playing for his hometown high school, Jackson said, “Sports breaks down all barriers.”

12 Now known as the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.
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