United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Edwards High School
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 1427 Fly Street
City or town: Gonzales City or town: Gonzales State: Texas State: Texas County: Gonzales County County: Gonzales County
Not for publication: ☐ Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
(☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my
opinion, the property (☐ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
☐ national ☐ statewide ☐ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official / Title
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

☐ In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

☐ I hereby certify that the property is:
☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, explain: _____________________

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
5. Classification

Ownership of Property

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Category of Property

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Number of Resources within Property

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Education/school

Current Functions: Social/cultural

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements/Craftsman; c. 1945–c.1970/Other: Lamella Roof Gymnasium

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, concrete, stucco, wood, metal

Narrative Description: (see continuation sheets 7 through 12)
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Education, Ethnic Heritage: Black; Architecture (local level of significance)

Period of Significance: 1922–1965

Significant Dates: 1922, 1949, 1952

Significant Person: (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation: (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Kellner, Herbert E., AIA (gymnasium)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 13 through 26)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 27-29)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on (date)
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
___ State historic preservation office (Texas Historical Commission, Austin)
___ Other state agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other -- Specify Repository: Edwards Association African American Museum, Gonzales County Archives and Records

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approx. 4.3 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 29.509981 Longitude: -97.440735

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated boundary is the two legal parcels that encompass the Edwards High School campus. The two parcels are described by Gonzales CAD as: (Property ID# 13571) ALL 10;13-15;22-27 PT 11-12 PECK & FLY (4.0951 acres); and (Property ID# 24521) PT 11-12 PECK & FLY (0.1897 acres). Information accessed March 14, 2023. See MAP 3.

Boundary Justification: The nominated boundary includes all property historically associated with Edwards High School.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Angela Gaudette, Architectural Historian; and Allie Smith, Environmental Planner
Organization: Hicks & Company Environmental/Archaeological Consultants in coordination with the City of Gonzales, the Edwards Association, and the Gonzales County Historical Commission
Street & number: 1504 West 5th Street
City or Town: Austin State: Texas Zip Code: 78703
Email: agaudette@hicksenv.com
Telephone: (512) 517-3492
Date: May 26, 2023

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 30 through 32)
Additional items (see continuation sheets 33 through 46)
Photographs (see continuation sheets 47 through 74)
Photograph Log

Name of Property: Edwards High School
Location: Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas
Photographers: Angela Gaudette and Allie Smith, Hicks & Company. Photos 22–24 provided by David Tucy.
Date of Photographs: 9/12/2022 and 9/29/2022

Photo 1: Main classroom building, looking northwest.

Photo 2: Main classroom building, looking northeast.

Photo 3: Main classroom building, looking southeast.

Photo 4: Main classroom building, looking southwest.

Photo 5: Main classroom building, foyer, looking southeast.

Photo 6: Main classroom building, kitchen (former chemistry classroom), looking west.

Photo 7: Main classroom building, west wing hallway, looking southeast.

Photo 8: Main classroom building, classroom in east wing that houses the Edwards Association African American Museum collection, looking south.

Photo 9: Gymnasium, looking north.

Photo 10: Gymnasium, looking southeast.

Photo 11: Gymnasium, looking southwest.

Photo 12: Gymnasium, looking northwest.

Photo 13: Gymnasium, interior, looking west.

Photo 14: Gymnasium, detail view of lamella roofing.

Photo 15: Gymnasium, view of stage, looking east.

Photo 16: Gymnasium, view of northeast office behind the stage, looking north.

Photo 17: Gymnasium, men’s locker room, looking east.

Photo 18: Vocational building, looking north.

Photo 19: Vocational building, looking northeast.

Photo 20: Vocational building, looking southeast.
Photo 21: Vocational building, looking southwest.

Photo 22: Northwest room of vocational building, looking northwest.

Photo 23: South room of vocational building, looking south.

Photo 24: South room of vocational building, looking southeast.

Photo 25: View of non-contributing basketball court, looking east, main classroom building in background.

Photo 26: Non-contributing playground features located to the north of the main classroom building, looking northeast.

Photo 27: Carport to the west of the vocational building, looking northeast, vocational building in background.

Photo 28: Non-contributing pavilion and picnic area to the east of the main classroom building, looking east.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
Narrative Description

Edwards High School is an early 20th century school campus in Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas built between 1922 and 1952. The nominated boundary is a four-acre flat rectangular block east of downtown in a historically African American neighborhood. Completed in 1922, Edwards High School is an eight classroom U-plan brick building on a concrete foundation with a gable-on-hip standing seam metal roof. It resembles the era’s Rosenwald Schools with exposed rafter tails and groups of tall wood-frame windows. The brick gymnasium, built in 1949, features a Zollinger/lamella wood ceiling structure that supports the curved roof. Originally built c. 1920 as a rural school, the Edwards School vocational building is made of wood frame and stucco and was moved to the campus in 1952. There are three non-contributing resources—carport, pavilion, and basketball court—all built after 1965. At one time during the period of significance (1922-1965) additional frame school buildings existed on the site, but they have since been removed. Despite such loss the core historic district remains and conveys the campus’ essential character. Edwards High School, an outstanding community landmark, retains good integrity to convey its historical and architectural significance.

Setting

The Edwards High School campus is a large, rectangular site in the eastern half of the City of Gonzales. The school is bordered by School Street on the north, Robertson Street on the east, Fly Street on the south, and Kleine Street on the west. The property is primarily flat in elevation and features short grasses and a small number of trees.

The surrounding blocks are primarily residential in character with mid-century Minimal Traditional houses, manufactured homes, multi-family housing, and a few contemporary, non-historic-age residences. The non-historic-age Gonzales Elementary School is located two blocks to the south and St. Andrew Street, one of the city’s main east-west corridors, is located one block south of Edwards High School. There are several historical landmarks located nearby, such as the St. James Catholic Cemetery (located one block to the east), the Gonzales City Cemetery (approximately 0.4 miles to the northwest), the “Kerr’s Settlement–First Site of DeWitt’s Colony” Official Texas Historical Marker (approximately 0.6 miles southeast), and the Gonzales Memorial Museum and Amphitheater National Register Historic District (approximately 0.35 miles southwest, reference # 3001414). The Gonzales Commercial National Register Historic District is also near the Edwards High School campus (approximately 0.7 miles west). The Edwards High School campus received an Official Texas Historical Marker in 1997 entitled “African American Education in Gonzales.” The marker is currently housed in the museum room inside the main classroom building.

The main classroom building, gymnasium, and vocational building retain enough integrity to contribute to a potential historic district. Additional non-contributing structures and objects are located on the site, such as a basketball court, a covered pavilion, a carport, and playscape features. Although these features are not of historic age, they do not diminish the overall integrity of the site.

Grassy lawns border all sides of the Edwards High School buildings, and a few trees also spot the grounds. A basketball court is located near the northwest corner of the grounds and a few playground features are situated north of the main classroom building. A small, metal frame carport is situated to the west of the vocational building, and a non-historic-age pavilion with a metal roof, concrete floor, and picnic tables is situated to the east of the classroom building. Chain link fencing marks the perimeter of the campus and an additional chain link fence surrounds the vocational building. These features are not historic age and are considered non-contributing to the site.

Summary of Resources
Main Classroom Building (1922)

The main classroom building was built in 1922 to educate and serve Gonzales’ Black students. The building is the oldest structure to be constructed on the site and remained the primary educational facility for students until the campus closed in 1965. The building is situated in the center of the Edwards High School campus and faces southeast. The building houses eight classrooms, non-historic-age men’s and women’s restrooms, and an entrance foyer (Figure 1). Its character-defining features include its brick exterior, symmetrical fenestration, four brick interior chimneys, and gable-on-hip roof. The one-story building features a front-facing U-plan footprint and is situated on a concrete foundation.

The main classroom building features long and low massing and is clad in exterior brick in a common bond pattern (stretcher courses with full headers every sixth course). All window openings are framed with a rowlock brick sill, but nearly all window units have been removed and are covered with plywood that has been painted red. Based on remnants of the window units still in place, the main classroom building’s original windows were paired wood frame, double sash windows with 2-over-2 lights in each sash and had transom windows above.

All window openings are set high in the wall plane with transom windows partly shadowed by the overhanging eaves. The building currently has a standing seam metal roof. The building shows some influence of the Craftsman style in the rafter ends and open eaves, grouping of tall, double hung sash windows that are symmetrically placed, and interior brick chimneys.

Southeast elevation (Photo 1)

The southeast elevation (façade) features a central entrance located in the recessed section of the U-shaped footprint. The entrance features a set of double doors—the left door is accessed via concrete steps with two treads and the right door has a wooden ramp that provides ADA-compliant access. To the left and right of the entrance are two symmetrically placed aluminum-frame sliding windows (one on each side), both with an exterior metal security grate. Further left of the entrance is the southeast elevation of the south wing that features two evenly spaced window openings. The window units have been removed but the transom windows remain intact. A metal brick vent is situated adjacent to the concrete foundation beneath each window opening.

The southeast elevation of the north wing is identical to the southeast elevation of the south wing. Two paired sets of window openings are evenly spaced on the southeast elevation of each wing. All of these window units are also removed in addition to the transom windows. All window openings are enclosed with red painted plywood.

Southwest elevation (Photo 2)
The southwest elevation of the main classroom features a central opening with paired doors and transom windows above. Concrete steps with six treads provide exterior access. To the left of the entrance is a paired window opening enclosed with plywood and with (uncovered) transom windows above. To the right of the entrance is a larger window opening enclosed with plywood. This window opening is also covered with plywood, but one transom window is left uncovered and a non-historic-age window A/C unit has been installed in this location. The elevation also features three metal brick vents adjacent to the top of the concrete foundation.

Northwest elevation (Photo 3)

The northwest elevation is considered the rear of the building. The center of the elevation features two slab doors accessed by a small concrete pad. Unlike the other elevations, these two doors are not situated side by side but are separated by a few feet, and only the left door appears to be operable. There are four window openings, two on either side of the doors. The three window openings furthest east are boarded with plywood. The fourth window opening, near the southwest corner of the building, is partially enclosed with plywood. The northwest elevation features nine metal grate brick vents adjacent to the top of the concrete foundation.

Northeast elevation (Photo 4)

Like the other elevations, the northeast elevation features a centered entrance hung with a slab door. Paired window openings are situated on either side of the entrance, and each window opening is enclosed with plywood.

Interior (Photos 5, 6, 7, and 8)

The interior of the main classroom building has been slightly altered (date unknown) but still retains evidence of the original floor plan and some original finishes. The central foyer is accessed via the double doors on the southeast elevation. The foyer features a concrete floor and open layout. The kitchen (formerly the chemistry classroom) is adjacent to the north of the foyer, as are the women’s restrooms. Former double doorways are located at either side of the foyer, marking entrance to the east wing and west wing classrooms. These doorways no longer feature their original doors, but the original transoms are still intact.

The west wing features a central hallway with access to four classrooms. The two classrooms on the south side of the west wing have been modified to include a partition to allow flexible use of the area. One of the classrooms on the north is used for storage, and the other is the kitchen. The east wing features three classrooms and the men’s restroom. The classroom on the south side of the east wing is currently used to house the collection of the Edwards High School African American Museum. The other two classrooms serve as storage space. Original wood floors extend throughout the entirety of the main building. In the furthest northeast classroom, there are remnants of one wood frame double sash window. Original chalkboards are still intact on most of the classroom walls and are believed to be the original slate blackboards that were later painted green.

Gymnasium (1949)

The gymnasium is situated at the southwest corner of the Edwards High School campus, with its primary elevation facing southwest towards Kleine Street. The gymnasium was constructed in 1949 and designed by San Antonio-based architect Herbert E. Kellner. The one-story building is constructed of blonde brick exterior walls and glazed clay tile interior walls. It has a segmented arch barrel roof supported by a lamella roofing system on the interior (also called Zollinger roofing). The roofing system was popularly used during the interwar years due to its minimal use of metal components. The gymnasium expresses elements of early modernism through features such as minimal ornamentation, symmetrical metal windows, and glazed clay tile that adds visual interest at a low material cost.
Southwest elevation (Photo 9)

The southwest elevation features a small, protruding, gable-roof form with two sets of slab double doors with fixed transom windows. A small window opening is centered on the wall of the gable roof section and possibly served as a former ticket booth window, suggested by the deep width of the concrete sill. This window opening is hung with a wood frame sash window, and a non-historic-age A/C unit is currently in place of the bottom window sash. A circular gable vent is situated in the upper gable roof wall. Each set of doors on the southwest elevation is framed by a stretcher brick course on the sides and a soldier brick course lintel. The remainder of the southwest elevation is unornamented. The walls are blonde brick and the upper side arch area features horizontal wood siding. A rectangular gable vent is situated near the roofline.

Northwest elevation (Photo 10)

The northwest elevation of the gymnasium features seven bays under the barrel roof section and a small hipped roof extension off the northeast side. Each bay is visually divided by an inward sloping engaged concrete column, which likely serves as structural support for the arched roof. Metal frame windows are situated in six of the seven bays. Each window unit consists of a pair of 4-over-1 light windows. The top and bottom light are fixed, but the two middle lights of each unit operate as an awning window. Each window features a concrete sill. The seventh bay under the barrel roof section (furthest east on the elevation) features a singular metal frame awning window next to an arched porch entrance. The entrance is accessed via a wooden ramp and hung with a single slab door. The northwest elevation of the hipped-roof section features a centered paired window unit similar to the awning windows on the other elevations.

Northeast elevation (Photo 11)

The northeast elevation features a small hipped-roof section that protrudes from the side elevation of the barrel roof section. This hipped roof section features two separate entrances, each hung with a single slab door. Each entrance has a small, flat roof overhang with metal supports. Each entrance originally featured a transom window, but both transom windows are currently covered with plywood painted white. Two pairs of metal-frame awning windows are centered between the two entrances, each with a metal security grate. The side of the barrel roof section features horizontal wood siding, and three non-historic-age metal fans have been installed near the upper gable to add interior ventilation.

Southeast elevation (Photo 12)

The southeast elevation is identical to the northwest elevation. There are seven bays under the barrel roof section, each divided by an inward sloping engaged column. Pairs of metal frame awning windows are situated in each bay, except for the furthest east bay that also features an arched porch entry. The southeast elevation of the hipped roof section features a window opening, but the bottom ¼-section of the window is covered in unpainted plywood.

Interior (Photos 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17)

A concrete floor spans the majority of the building’s footprint, with exception of the stage, two offices, and two locker rooms located at the east end, and a small foyer and concession room at the west end (Figure 2). The interior walls of the gymnasium are composed of glazed clay tile, and the interior side arches of the barrel roof are made of wood panels on both sides. The most distinctive feature of the gymnasium is the lamella roof which spans the entire length of the barrel roof section of the building. The primary material of the lamella roof is wood planks fastened on their narrow sides and hinged together to create a rhomboid pattern.
The stage at the eastern end of the gymnasium is one of the character-defining features of the gymnasium. The wooden stage is elevated nearly four feet above the main concrete floor of the gymnasium. Two offices are located behind the stage to the right and left (at the northeast and southeast corners of the building) and the men’s and women’s locker rooms are situated in between and directly behind the stage. Each locker room consists of a changing area with a louvered wall for privacy, a bathroom with three stalls, and a shower area.

**Vocational Building (originally built c. 1920, but moved to nominated property in 1952)**

The vocational building is situated towards the northeast corner of the school campus, adjacent to Fly Street. The building has an estimated construction date of c. 1920 and was moved to the property in 1952. The vocational building is owned by the City of Gonzales and has been utilized as storage space since the early 2000s. The building is of wood frame construction with a stucco exterior. The building has a gable-on-hip roof with composition shingles, exposed rafters, and wood frame windows placed high on the wall plane. Although most of the window units are still in place, many glass panels are loose, missing, or broken. All windows appear to be wood frame, double hung windows with 2-over-3 lights in each sash, unless otherwise described. Each window also features an exterior wood frame screen attached via two metal hinges near the lintel. The mesh screen is torn or missing on a few windows, but the wood frames are mostly intact. Although the building has been moved, it is still considered contributing to the site due to its representation of the inequitable educational facilities provided by the Gonzales School District for its Black pupils during the 20th century.

**Southeast elevation (Photo 18)**

The southeast elevation (façade) features a slab door entrance with a transom window that has been covered with plywood. To the east of the entrance is a group of three wood-frame windows, each with a transom window that is nearly completely shaded by the overhanging eaves. To the west of the entrance is a single wood frame window, followed by a non-historic-age overhead door, and another single wood frame window.

**Southwest elevation (Photo 19)**

The southwest elevation features five evenly spaced window openings. The window furthest to the south on the elevation is boarded with plywood, but portions of the original wood frame are visible from the exterior, suggesting the window may still be intact underneath.

**Northwest elevation (Photo 20)**

The northwest elevation features four window openings and an entrance. Moving left to right on the elevation, there is a pair of wood frame windows with fixed transom windows, followed by two singular wood frame windows, followed by an entrance hung with a presumably original five-panel wood door, and a three-light transom window above. One more single wood frame window is situated to the right of the entrance.

**Northeast elevation (Photo 21)**

The northeast elevation features six window openings and an entrance hung with a slab door with a small shed roof overhang with brackets and a metal roof. The entrance is situated off-center near the northern end of the elevation. Five singular window openings are evenly spaced to the left of the entrance, and one paired window opening is to the right of the entrance. All windows are boarded with white plywood panels, but the limited visibility of the windows suggests that the original wood frame, double hung windows are still intact underneath.
Interior (Photos 22, 23, and 24)

Interior access was not gained during the site visit to the property, but Mr. David Tucy (President of the Edwards Association) provided photographs of the interior. According to Mr. Tucy, the interior of the vocational building is divided into three rooms. The interior of the building has a concrete floor, walls with wainscoting detail, and non-historic-age dropped ceilings. The dropped ceilings do not obscure the transom windows. Many ceiling tiles are missing and reveal the wood grid added to the ceiling joists to install the system. Some original features are still extant in the northwest room, such as built-in wall shelving and a pendant light fixture with an opaque glass shade that was commonly used in schoolhouses prior to World War II (WWII).

Integrity

Despite some alterations, Edwards High School retains a good degree of integrity. The main classroom building and vocational building are both good examples of early 20th century educational buildings. The gymnasium is an excellent example of school architecture with its distinctive and unique lamella roofing. The gymnasium retains a high degree of integrity through the retention of many character-defining features, such as the segmented arch barrel roof with lamella vaulting, aluminum frame awning windows, wooden stage, and locker rooms. The gymnasium was rehabilitated by volunteers in the late 1980s and 1990s in order to keep the building usable for the community. Records of the renovation work indicate the original wood floor was replaced by a concrete floor sometime after the school was closed, and glass panes in the awning windows were replaced. At one time during the period of significance additional frame school buildings existed on the site, but they have since been removed. Despite such loss the core historic district remain and convey the campus’ essential character.

Many of the doors and windows on the classroom and vocational building have been replaced, and some window openings have been covered with plywood panels. The intact, replacement windows post-date the period of architectural significance for both buildings. However, the locations of the original window and door openings remain visible, and as a result, all three buildings retain integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, design, feeling, and association. The date of the alterations to the main classroom building and the vocational buildings is not known, but they likely post-date the period of significance. Alterations to the main classroom building likely took place during the 1980s and 1990s when the campus was being revitalized, and changes to the vocational building likely took place during the city’s ownership (c. 1970–current) to prepare for its use as a storage facility.
Statement of Significance

Edwards School, built out between 1922 and 1952, served the Black students of Gonzales, Gonzales County until 1965. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black. Reflecting the segregation policies in place during the early 20th century, the school was a significant focal point for the educational and social development of the city’s Black youth. Edwards School is also nominated at the local of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Modest examples of school design, the campus buildings nevertheless represented the Gonzales Black community’s significant efforts to provide safe and practical educational resources for local children. The period of significance is 1922–1965, the end date marking when the institution closed as a result of school desegregation in Gonzales.

Historic Context

Anglo settlement in present-day Gonzales dates to the 1820s, when the DeWitt Colony received an empresario grant to attract settlers into Texas when it was part of Mexico. The area was considered suitable for farming, but permanent settlement was impeded by the area’s lack of established trails and hostile relations with American Indians. Gonzales is most remembered for its considerable role played in the Texas Revolution when, on October 2, 1835, Anglo Americans led a resistance against Mexican dragoons that were attempting to commandeer the town cannon. The Texans challenged the Mexican army with their memorable “come and take it” flag, thereby inciting the first battle of the Texas Revolution—a skirmish now known as the Battle of Gonzales. In 1837, the Republic of Texas incorporated Gonzales and established Gonzales County. The city council held its first meeting in March of 1839 and started rebuilding the town center along the Guadalupe River. By 1850, the population of the town numbered 300, and in 1851, its first permanent school building was constructed: Gonzales College, the first college in Texas to award diplomas to women. In 1853, the local newspaper, the *Gonzales Inquirer*, was established and is among the oldest still operating in the state. Gonzales’ agricultural industry and population steadily inclined in the following decades, and by 1860, it was reported that Gonzales County had a population of more than 8,000, over 3,000 of whom were enslaved people.

Education during Reconstruction-Era

On June 19, 1865, enslaved people in Texas were officially freed when federal troops shared news of the outcome of the Civil War upon landing in Galveston, now a federally recognized holiday known as Juneteenth. Slaveholders and landowners gradually released hold of their enslaved people and the government generally encouraged that freed persons remain where they were prior to emancipation and work for wages. However, depending on personal circumstances, many chose to leave the place of their enslavement, either joining formerly enslaved people’s communities or finding employment in more urban areas. Violence toward Black people was a continuous problem after the Civil War, and White public opinion in the Southern states generally condoned these acts. The presence of Union soldiers in Texas was not enough to halt these brutalities. As a result, in 1865, the Texas Freedmen’s Bureau was established with the goal of assisting Black people in their transition to freedom. The program advocated, advised, and promoted the welfare, labor rights, and civic freedoms of Black persons. Many obstacles impeded the program’s effectiveness, such as political instability and violent attitudes that permeated the South. However, the program jumpstarted some of the early efforts for the Black community to define their independence and develop goals for advancement, such as access to education. These goals depended on supportive Anglo American political leaders, due to the overwhelming White majorities of the state legislature and congress. No formal legislation prevented Black

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2 Hardin, “Gonzales, TX.”
persons from pursuing educational opportunities, but many obstacles were put in the way of their educational advancement. The resources and workforce for the Texas Freedmen’s Bureau was limited and its regime brief, but its enduring legacy included making the first organized attempt at an educational system for Black persons.

Only five percent of Black persons in Texas could read and write during the beginning of the Reconstruction era, but a strong desire for education helped them overcome this disadvantaged situation. Despite the violent attacks to prevent Black men from voting, in 1868, a Republican majority with nine Black delegates helped stimulate change. This included C.W. Bryant, a delegate from Harris County, who promoted the establishment of Black educational institutions and fraternities. Religious organizations played a significant role in establishing early educational opportunities for Black children. In the late 1860s, church groups spearheaded many efforts, often with the backing of the Texas Freedmen’s Bureau, by recruiting and paying teachers as well as providing materials such as books. These early efforts to provide educational opportunities for Black Texans led to the establishment of almost 100 schools between 1866 and 1870. The teachers would accommodate children’s education in the daytime, host night classes for adults, and teach Bible studies on Sundays. The lack of dedicated funding forced many Black individuals in Texas during the late 19th century to meet in churches or small buildings, separate from White public high schools.

**Education of Black Students in Gonzales, Texas**

According to a history written by Wray C. Hood, the first Black school in Gonzales was assembled in 1870 in the home of Mrs. Myrtle Moses Mathis, located at 1123 St. Andrew Street. Mrs. Dora Moor Manor, a graduate of Prairie View A&M University and relative of Mrs. Mathis, was the school’s first teacher and principal. According to the *Gonzales Inquirer*, Gonzales’ third school building dedicated to the education of the local Black population was completed in August of 1878 (the two earlier buildings both burned).

“The school building for the colored youth of Gonzales is almost completed. The young people and their friends… are busily engaged in getting up a grand festival and concert at their schoolhouse next Friday evening at 5:30 o’clock sharp… the proceeds are to be used for supplying necessary school property. Accommodation for our white friends, both ladies and gentlemen, will be made so that all who wish may attend the supper. Later in the evening the concert will be given, to consist of exercises by the colored Literary club. If any of our white friends feel disposed to attend, we will be thankful for their encouragement, and endeavor to make them comfortable.”

The location of the 1878 school is unmentioned. The *Gonzales Inquirer* published a follow-up article about one week later, in which the schoolhouse was described as “finished with the exception of white washing the walls and painting the doors.” Gonzales School District records reported that there were 679 pupils in the county for the 1879–1880 school year. There were an additional 388 children noted in district records that same year that were not attending

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5 Barr, *The African Texans*, 32.
6 Barr, 33–34.
7 Barr, 53.
8 Barr, 54.
12 Gonzales Inquirer (1853–current). “Colored People’s Festival.”
school.\textsuperscript{13} Gonzales’ school for Black students only went to the fourth grade, whereas the school for White students went to the tenth grade. This situation was no different from many other segregated schools in the American south at this time.\textsuperscript{14} Despite the limited educational offerings, Black education in Texas was proving successful as the Black community had a nearly 50 percent literacy rate by 1890.\textsuperscript{15}

As support for educating Black children increased in the 1870s and 1880s, the district’s few Black schoolhouses became too crowded to comfortably accommodate those eager to learn. Community buildings in Gonzales, such as churches, started hosting classes for needed classroom and meeting space. In 1896, records indicate that there were 130 students in the Gonzales school district.\textsuperscript{16} In 1899, the “Gonzales colored school” had an enrollment of 206 students and held a commencement ceremony for nine graduates in May of that year.\textsuperscript{17} The Gonzales School District employed twelve Black teachers with an average salary of $25–32 per month for the 1899 school year.\textsuperscript{18} Records from the late 1800s and early 1900s do not detail how many Black schoolhouses existed in the Gonzales School District, but this number was likely in flux anyways due to the growing county population and the state’s slow-moving school district consolidation program that forced the closure of many rural county schools.

By 1912, the “Gonzales School for Colored Youth” was located at present-day 322 Church Street (formerly known as King Street in the early 1900s) and offered three elementary and four high school grades. The location was along the east side of Church Street just south of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and about 0.3-miles to the west of the current Edwards High School campus. This school building is referred to by some sources as the “Norwood School” in reference to Miss Lillian Norwood, who operated a neighborhood grocery in the building.\textsuperscript{19} The Norwood School was depicted in the 1912 Sanborn map as a two-story wood frame building situated on stone posts. The building had no lights but featured heat stoves.\textsuperscript{20} Wray C. Hood’s writing of the Edwards High School history claims that the Norwood School property was lost in a fire, at which point the school pupils moved to the Knights of Peter Claver Hall across the street.

\textbf{Formation of the Edwards High School}

Either concurrently or shortly after the loss of the Norwood School, white landowners Josephine Peck and W.M. Fly deeded land to the Gonzales School District to be used for the purposes of an educational facility for Black youth. This parcel of land, within the limits of the Peck and Fly addition to the town of Gonzales, encompasses the current-day limits of the Edwards High School campus. The exact date that Peck and Fly deeded the land is unknown. Estimated to be in the early 1900s, deed records verifying this claim of author Wray C. Hood were not located.\textsuperscript{21} Records suggest that the Peck and Fly addition probably remained undeveloped for some years after it was deeded to the school district, since classroom space was still being rented from the Knights of Peter Claver Hall for the 1919–1920 school year.\textsuperscript{22} In the minutes of a school board meeting from February 1914, the following was stated: “The matter of building an addition to the negro school building came on to be considered and it was decided to erect a one room addition to said

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Gonzales County Historical Commission. History of Gonzales County, Texas, Volume I, Curtis Media Corporation, 1986, 18.}
\footnote{Deborah Lynn Morowski. Prevailing over prejudice: a story of race, inequity, and education in Gonzales, Texas. The University of Texas at Austin, 2008, 68.}
\footnote{Barr, 90.}
\footnote{Wray C. Hood, Edwards High School History.}
\footnote{Gonzales County Historical Commission, History of Gonzales County, 121.}
\footnote{Gonzales County Historical Commission, 18.}
\footnote{Wray C. Hood, Edwards High School History.}
\footnote{Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Gonzales, Texas 1912, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08548_006//.}
\footnote{Wray C. Hood, Edwards High School History.}
\footnote{Morowski, Prevailing over prejudice, 75.}
\end{footnotes}
building, and the matter was placed in the hands of R.C. Botts and W.H. Korcurrol with full power to act.”23 Two years later, the Gonzales school board passed a motion to build an entirely new school building for the district’s Black pupils. Even with a formal motion from the board, improvements to Gonzales’ educational facilities were slow to materialize: Six more years passed until the school district finally set aside a $13,500 budget and accepted a bid for the new school’s construction. A bid from the Neumann brothers was accepted in 1922 based on building plans developed by local contractor, Ernest Rudolph Nagel.24 Ernest Nagel was born in 1858 in Guadalupe County and came to Gonzales County in the 1880s where he took up farming on 363 acres, three miles east of Gonzales. In 1920, when Nagel was 62 years old, he sold his farm, moved into town, and took up the trade as building contractor.25 In addition to developing the plans for Gonzales’ new school building, research revealed that Nagel was hired as the contractor for the local Methodist church’s new parsonage in 1922; however, little else was discovered about Nagel’s work.26

The 1930 Sanborn map shows the earliest footprint of the main classroom building at Edwards High School, which has a similar footprint to today (Figure 3). The 1930 Sanborn map recorded the construction date as 1922. The only visible alteration is the main entrance on the southeast elevation. The current central foyer on the southeast elevation is fully enclosed now but was originally a wood frame porch open to the southeast side. The main classroom building had either a slate or tin roof originally. The 1922 construction date for the main classroom dated by the Sanborn map and corroborated by school district records is debated in an article in the Gonzales Inquirer. It suggests that the completion of the building did not occur until the following year. It was reported in March of 1923 that “the brickwork on the new negro school building has been completed and the framework for the roof is now being added. The building is to be one-story…”27 The main classroom building hosted several different grades and elective courses. The west wing classrooms offered classes including Spanish, typing, chemistry, and history.28 The east wing of the main building hosted first, second, and third grade elementary classes. The administrative office was formerly located in the center of the building adjacent to the foyer.29

George W. Edwards (1895-1975)

The first principal to serve in the nominated building was its future namesake: George W. Edwards, Jr. (Figure 7). Although born near Houston, Texas on March 9, 1895, Edwards grew up in Gonzales and graduated as class valedictorian from Gonzales Colored School. He matriculated at Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College, earning his first diploma in 1913 and a Bachelor of Science in 1930. Guadalupe College also awarded Edwards a Bachelor of Arts in 1930. His teaching career spanned four decades, working in several small Texas towns. Well respected in his field, Edwards belonged to the State Teachers Association and South Texas Teachers Association, the latter of which he served as president from 1929–1931.30 He was also a devout Baptist and became a fulltime minister by the time of his death in 1975.31

In 1919, the Gonzalez School Board hired Edwards as a schoolteacher and promoted him to principal in 1922 for the then-newly built Gonzales Colored School. The community highly regarded their new principal, describing that he was

24 Morowski, 84.
28 Helen Lampkin Barnes, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.
29 Joeann Tucy Lewis, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.
31 Morowski, 178.
“a man of profound knowledge and… uncanny sense of humor coupled with an unusual gift for teaching [that] made him one of the most effective teachers and administrators.” After 12 years, however, the school board directed the superintendent to request his resignation. An active leader in the Gonzales County NAACP, it is possible Edwards involvement with that group motivated the school board’s decision. Upon his departure, the faculty and community re-named the institution Edwards High School. The all-white Gonzales school board and local newspapers, however, continued to refer to the school as “the colored school” for years to come.

A wide disparity between the salaries for Gonzales’ White teachers and Black teachers ensued for decades. District officials claimed that a teacher’s salary was based on their experience and educational achievement, but this was no doubt overshadowed by a more powerful determining factor rampant in the south: race and gender discrimination. In 1926, district records show that Black male teachers earned an average of $765 annually and Black female teachers earned $443. Comparatively, White male teachers in Gonzales received $2,116, and White female teachers received $907. This pay disparity was prevalent throughout the south, but the pay gap between White and Black Gonzales teachers was even wider than the state average. Adding to the disparity was the fluctuation of teachers’ salaries through the years. When the school district needed to make cost saving measures, Black schoolteachers faced the brunt of the financial cuts. In 1927, Gonzales school teachers earned on average $55 a month. By 1931, this was reduced to $45. In 1932, the economic downturn of the Great Depression triggered an additional 10 percent cut to teacher’s salaries. Nonetheless, Edwards High School’s early teachers were wholeheartedly devoted to the education of their pupils. Edwards High School teachers were often former Gonzales graduates that returned to Edwards High School to teach, forming a tight-knit community. Starting in 1937, adult classes in hygiene and household employment were held in the evenings at Edwards High School, making the campus a vital resource for all ages of the Gonzales’ Black community.

The prolific faculty of Edwards High School is still held in high regard by previous students. Educators at Edwards High School not only taught their designated curriculum but also important life skills. Based on an oral history interview with former student Helen Lampkin Barnes, her first-grade teacher, Miss Winnie Mae Elias, had students deposit money at the bank, retrieve glasses of ice water from a building across the street, and take time to rest after learning in the afternoon. Miss Elias even pulled student’s teeth when they had a loose tooth. Other students fondly remembered chemistry teacher Jesse Smith, who taught at Edwards High School in the 1950s and 1960s (Figure 8).

Former student Helen Lampkin Barnes recalled that Jesse Smith “would always tell us that we could be anything we wanted to be, we’d just have to work at it. He was a very polite person. He didn’t believe in fussing or bickering.” When the school district integrated, Jesse Smith was one of the teachers to transfer to Gonzales High School. Jesse

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33 According to the University of Washington’s Mapping American Social Movements, the Gonzales Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) first organized in 1918, along with numerous other Texas chapters, to advocate for a state anti-lynching law. Although the chapter may have discontinued in 1925, it was re-organized in 1934. Josue Estrada and James Gregory, “NAACP Branch Activities 1912-1923 and Database of Branches 1912-1964,” Mapping American Social Movements Through the 20th Century, retrieved July 7, 2023 from https://depts.washington.edu/moves/NAACP_map-early.shtml.
34 Morowski, 78.
35 Morowski, 169.
36 Morowski, 170.
37 Morowski, 183.
38 Helen Lampkin Barnes, in-person interview.
39 Ibid.
Smith’s wife, Roy Evelyn Smith (Figure 9), was also an Edwards High School educator, the coach for the women’s basketball and track teams, and simultaneously taught the pep squad and the cheerleading teams.

Little information exists on the early curriculum in the 1920s at Edwards High School, but classes likely included the fundamental courses for the time, such as reading, arithmetic, geography, homemaking, and music classes. When Edwards High School first opened, it offered classes from the first grade to the tenth grade, which was a considerable gain from what was offered just a decade earlier. In 1933, Edwards High School expanded its curriculum to offer eleventh grade classes, and in 1942 the twelfth grade was introduced to the institution (The twelfth grade had already been added to the other White schools in the district a few years prior, demonstrating the district’s differential treatment towards Edwards High School.) District records from the 1936–1937 school year detail the following secondary-level courses offered by grade at Edwards High School:

- **8th grade**: English, math, ancient history, and science.
- **9th grade**: English, math, modern history, science, music, literature, and physical education.
- **10th grade**: English, math, history, physical education, Spanish, and civics.
- **11th grade**: English, math, history, music, vocational agriculture, and home economics (female students only).

Daily life as a student at Edwards High School consisted of arriving for classes around 8 o’clock in the morning. Classes lasted from 45–60 minutes, and each student had their own desk and was provided with general materials such as textbooks (The school district rarely allocated any funds for the school to buy textbooks. Instead, these were handed down from Gonzales High School). The school received little funds to put toward buying materials and resources for students, so parents and teachers were forced to supplement and furnish other supplies, such as pen and paper. The Edwards Parent Teacher Association (PTA) would raise money to purchase school resources for those who couldn’t afford it, but parental involvement in day-to-day school operations did not extend much further. Sometimes, parents would assist in advocating to the school board for various changes, but most parents of Edwards High School students had full-time jobs that kept them occupied during the day.

Despite the hurdles in classroom resources, records from the 1930s onward show that most of Edwards High School students that enrolled in high school graduated four years later. Enrollment and graduation rates declined during WWII, most likely because some students were drafted into service and other students left to join the workforce. Records show that in 1937, the Edwards High School graduated 12 students, but in 1944, there were only two graduates. Postwar enrollment increased and, in 1949, Edwards High School graduated at least twelve students.

Improvements to the school’s curriculum and equipment gradually occurred over time, but it took much advocacy from teachers and parents. Even with updated state standards for curriculum and facilities, the Gonzales School District lagged in adherence and continued to show preferential treatment towards the white schools. Like the cast-off textbooks, much of the desks and equipment at Edwards High School came from small rural schools that had been closed after being consolidated into the Gonzales School District. The school district was reluctant to provide funding for new equipment even though most of the used equipment was outdated and sometimes broken. However, some headway was made in the 1940s. In 1941, the school district provided $30 for homemaking course supplies, and in 1943, money was allocated for window shades, roof repairs, and repainting of the school. After deferring the decision for a few years, the school district finally purchased four sewing machines in 1947 for the school to allow for a clothes

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40 Morowski, 198.
41 Doris Webber, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.
42 Helen Lampkin Barnes.
43 Morowski, 126 and 127.
44 Morowski, 129.
making course, and the addition of a cooking class was promised for the following year.\textsuperscript{45} In 1948, a vocational agriculture course was added to Edwards High School's curriculum and the school’s first vocational agriculture teacher was hired.\textsuperscript{46} In the 1950s and 1960s, Edwards High School, whose mascot was a gopher, expanded its extracurricular activities to include basketball (\textbf{Figure 10}), football (\textbf{Figure 11}), track, majorettes (\textbf{Figure 12}), twirling (\textbf{Figure 13}), baseball, and cheerleading.\textsuperscript{47,48} Former students recalled that the women’s and men’s teams practiced at separate times, and girls could only play half-court basketball, as opposed to the men’s full court games.\textsuperscript{49} Oftentimes, physical education was a favorite class due to the well-liked coaches such as Evelyn Smith and Harry Neil.

Once added, vocational agriculture became the focal point of the school’s curriculum. Support from the Gonzales School District for improvements at Edwards High School was not easily received, but when it was, it was frequently put towards the vocational department. The school district’s support of vocational studies at Edwards High School was likely rooted in the Jim Crow-era view that Black persons’ place in society should be limited to that of tradesmen, farmers, and servants. The school district even leased a small plot of land in town for students to use as a garden as part of their vocational studies. Support for other enrichment courses and extracurricular activities at the school faced far more hurdles. As the vocational courses gained momentum and support, the school district approved $1,500 in 1952 to be spent on a new building to house the growing vocational department. Despite the allocation of funds for new classroom space, the school district demonstrated a lack of commitment to Edward High School’s advancement and, instead of a new building, moved part of a c. 1920s school building from Canoe Creek, a former rural county school that had been consolidated into the Gonzales School District. Worsening the already-inequal situation between the segregated schools, the school district lagged for years on its promise to install heating units into the transported building. Today, this building is the vocational building, one of the contributing buildings to the Edwards High School National Register Historic District.

Space at Edwards High School was in short supply due to multiple rural schools being consolidated into the Gonzales School District and the Edwards High School student body increasing after each consolidation. A visit from an agent of the State Department of Education in 1948 resulted in a report sent to the school board listing recommendations for Edwards High School’s improvement. First on the list of required improvements was that “additional rooms be provided as soon as possible.” The school district eventually complied with this recommendation and, by the late 1950s, a few additional buildings had been added to the campus in addition to the vocational building. The updated 1959 Sanborn map of the property showed that the campus was composed of nine buildings (\textbf{Figure 4}). Four wood frame buildings were situated to the north of the classroom building, and a fifth was situated to the east. These five buildings were all one-story wood frame buildings that served as extra classroom space (\textbf{Figure 5}). Some, if not all, of the wood frame buildings were likely moved to the site from rural districts that were consolidated in years prior. School district records in 1949 mentioned the relocation of a rural school district building to be used as a machine shop at Edwards High School.\textsuperscript{50} When the rural school buildings were in too poor of condition to be moved intact, the school district dismantled the building, and the lumber and other salvageable materials were reused to construct a “new” classroom building at the Edwards High School campus.

In the 1950s, the Gonzales School District attempted to address and fix the disparities of the district’s school grounds for its Black and Hispanic students. Prior to integration, Hispanic children in Gonzales attended the Water Street School, which was later renamed the Riverside School in the 1920s. Originally, Riverside School was a small building

\textsuperscript{45} Morowski, 104.  
\textsuperscript{46} Morowski, 106.  
\textsuperscript{47} Helen Lampkin Barnes.  
\textsuperscript{48} Elizabeth Steemer, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette, July 2, 2022.  
\textsuperscript{49} Rosemary Lee Bookman, in-person interview with Angela Gaudette. July 2, 2022.  
\textsuperscript{50} Morowski, 104.
with only four rooms that offered classes for grades 1–3. In 1948, the Gonzales School District purchased and moved three school buildings from Camp Swift near Bastrop to the Riverside campus to address overcrowding at the campus. That same year, the Gonzales School District also rezoned the city to allow all White and Hispanic students to attend school together in their respective zone. This “rezoning” left Riverside School with no students for the coming year, as its former students would be attending either the Central Ward or North Avenue schools with White children. Finding themselves with an extra unused school campus, the Gonzales School District decided to bus some of the Edwards High School students to Riverside School in order to relieve the overcrowding that was occurring there.\(^{51}\) Riverside School accommodated grades 4–6 for Black children up until integration in 1965. The Riverside students were bussed back to the Edwards High School campus for lunch “so that they would have the opportunity to go home if so desired.”\(^{52}\) Black students that attended Riverside school for their intermediary years returned to Edwards High School full time for high school grades.

In 1949, the *Victoria Advocate* reported that a $325,000 bond issue was to be proposed for school campus improvements in Gonzales. The bond issue would be used for improvements to multiple schools in the district, including a new gymnasium and auditorium for Edwards High School.\(^{53}\) However, only a meager $75,000 of the bond issue was allocated for the Edwards High School gymnasium despite the school board previously estimating that $130,000 would be required to construct a gymnasium.\(^{54}\) Since the Edwards High School campus didn’t have a building to effectively accommodate their basketball team, the school district permitted the team’s use of the Gonzales High School gymnasium. Games were held on Saturdays when no White faculty or students would be on the Gonzales High School campus. The school district may have viewed the shared use of the White student’s gymnasium as unsustainable long-term, thus authorizing a gymnasium to be constructed on the Edwards High School campus. After the bond issue passed, a bid from Bill Barton for $59,000 was accepted, but construction was delayed nearly a full year after bids were initially submitted to the school district. “Bill Barton” or “Billie J Barton” was a building contractor based in Dallas in the 1950s, but there was little additional information found about Barton and his career.

**Architect Herbert E. Kellner**

The design for the gymnasium was developed by Herbert E. Kellner, a San Antonio-based architect. Kellner is credited for his design on the bronze plaque hanging in the west foyer of the gymnasium. Kellner was born in Greenville, Mississippi in 1905 and he graduated from Texas A&M College in 1927. In the early 1930s, he worked as an architect-engineer with Swift and Company in Chicago, a large meat-packing company.\(^{55}\) Kellner and his family moved to San Antonio after he served as a commander in the navy during WWII.\(^{56}\) The 1948 San Antonio city directory lists Kellner as an employee for local contractor C.L. Browning, then by the early 1950s Kellner is listed as an independent architect.\(^{57}\) Detailed documentation of Kellner’s architectural projects are limited, but his name is mentioned in various Texas newspapers throughout the 1940s to 1960s that reveal his architectural pursuits were primarily focused on school design, particularly in small, rural towns of Texas. Local newspapers mentioned a handful of Kellner’s works, such as Boerne Grammar School (1948), Mathis Elementary School (1951), Shiner Elementary School (1955), and Hallettsville Elementary School (1956).\(^{58}\) A few more of Kellner’s principal works are listed in the 1962 American...

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51 Sharon Mice. “A school for the minorities.” No Date. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.
52 Mice. “A school for the minorities.”
54 Morowski, 107.
Architects Directory: New Braunfels High School (1950), North East Elementary School in San Antonio (1954), and Refugio High School (1955). Kellner was also hired by the Flatonia School Board in 1948 to design a gymnasium and classroom building for a segregated school in Flatonia, Texas, and Kellner also designed an eight-classroom school building for a segregated school in Smithville, Texas, in 1952. The Smithville school was constructed of hollow tile and featured louvered windows, acoustical tile ceilings, and built-in shelves and was built at a cost of $76,000. The 1952 Smithville school potentially shares design similarities with the 1949 Edwards High School gymnasium, but it is unknown whether the Smithville buildings are still extant.

The source of Kellner’s knowledge and expertise of lamella roofing remains unclear, but while working as an architect for Chicago-based Swift and Company in the 1930s, Kellner managed the design and construction of multiple stockyards in the Midwest. The stockyards Kellner designed were generally hundreds of feet long and wide, were roofed, had cement floors, and required excellent ventilation. Covered stockyard buildings were, theoretically, a perfect opportunity for Kellner to employ lamella style roofing. Alternatively, Kellner might have been familiar with Gustel Kiewitt’s 1929 Arena in St. Louis, Missouri that used a lamella dome and was one of the earliest applications of the roofing system in the United States. No matter the source, Kellner’s choice to use lamella style roofing for the 1949 Edwards High School gymnasium reveals his acute understanding of the school’s needs at the time for a large, clear-span gymnasium that was rooted in utility and flexibility.

Integration

In 1954, the Supreme Court’s Brown v. Board of Education decision declared that the segregation of schools by race was unconstitutional. Up until then, most states in the South still had legally segregated schools. Some local school districts began to consider a plan for integration, but with little urgency. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act gave the federal government the ability to cut off financial aid for segregated schools, which became the real impetus for most school districts to integrate students, Gonzales included. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which provided additional financial aid for low-income students, added further advantages to integrate.

The Gonzales School District board complied with mandatory regulations to desegregate all schools in the district by September 1, 1965. All of the Edwards High School students permanently moved to Gonzales High School starting in the 1965–1966 school year. Several faculty members from Edwards High School received positions to continue teaching at Gonzales High School, but many Black teachers lost their jobs. School board minutes state that the early plans for Edwards High School, post-1965, were to remodel and repurpose it as an elementary school for integrated students. Repairs to the school were estimated at $5,175. However, the likelihood of these repairs having taken place is slim, since no research indicated that the Edwards High School was ever reopened as an integrated elementary school. Instead, the campus was permanently closed, and the school district sold the property to the City of Gonzales for $12,000 a few years later.


62 Graham 2005, 133.
63 Mice.
64 Mice.
65 Gonzales Inquirer (1853–current). “Association seeks to own former school.” August 1, 2006. Gonzales County Archives &
The Edwards High School Campus Post-1965

Grassroots efforts to ensure the empty campus’ upkeep and potential reuse resulted in the formation of the Edwards Association in the early 1980s, shortly before the first school alumni reunion that was held in 1982.\textsuperscript{66} By this time, many of the original wood frame campus buildings that were situated to the north of the main classroom building had been sold and relocated or demolished.

The first Edwards High School reunion was held in July of 1982 with an attendance of 200.\textsuperscript{67} The successful event was held at the First National Bank in Gonzales and included an outdoor picnic under the pavilion at Independence Park. The reunion was held again two years later, with over 350 former students and teachers and their families gathered at the local Hermann Sons Hall in Gonzales to enjoy barbecued chicken and live music by the Ellis Thompson band. Mayor Carroll Wiley attended the event and joined the group during the picnic.\textsuperscript{68}

In 1989, the Edwards Association, along with many local community members, began to rehabilitate the school buildings with the help of donations and some financial support from the city.\textsuperscript{69} In October 1989, 125 people contributed efforts to cleaning up the campus. Tasks included stripping away vine cover off the buildings, removing broken glass panes, and removing the deteriorated wood flooring of the gymnasium and replacing it with a concrete floor.\textsuperscript{70} Renovations to the gymnasium occurred over the span of a few years and by the early 1990s, repairs to the doors, windows, plumbing, and electrical systems had been addressed. Afterwards, the renovated gymnasium was opened three days a week in the evenings to host events, receptions, games, meetings, and fundraisers. The association looked towards making renovations to the main classroom building next.\textsuperscript{71}

The Edwards Association was initially granted a 40-year lease of the city-owned property for development of the Edwards Community Center gymnasium. In 2006, the association and its supporters requested that the Gonzales City Council convey the title of the property to the association. The Edwards Association argued that conveyance of ownership would pave the way for the group to complete substantial renovations to the buildings. Ultimately, the goal of the group as stated in 2006, envisioned a flexible use of the Edwards High School campus:

The goal of the Edwards Association is to develop a state-of-the-art multipurpose community center that will provide services to all residents of Gonzales and the surrounding counties. These services will include developing meeting space, banquet space, lease space for other nonprofits and services, programs that focus on mentoring, tutoring, parental classes, education, workforce development, job training, life skills, sports programs, Senior Citizens Day and evening programs, child care, youth services, creating jobs and serving as a catalyst for those seeking help in order to become self-sufficient.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{66} Ahart.
\textsuperscript{68} Edwards High School Reunion. August 22, 1984. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.
\textsuperscript{69} Morgan, Leslie. “A Piece of History.” Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.
\textsuperscript{71} Morgan, “A Piece of History.”
\textsuperscript{72} Gonzales Inquirer (1853–current). “Association seeks to own former school.” August 1, 2006. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.
The Edwards Association was given the deeded title to the classroom building and gymnasium, but the City of Gonzales retained ownership of the vocational building. Edwards Alumni reunions continue to be held at the property every two years, with the most recent event occurring on campus during the July Fourth weekend in 2022.

**Significance under Criterion A: Education and Ethnic Heritage/African American**

The Edwards High School campus is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A for Education and Ethnic Heritage/African American, because of its 47-year use as a public school for Black children in Gonzales. The period of significance is from 1922, when construction began on the main classroom building, to 1965, when the school campus was closed permanently.

The Edwards High School campus served the Black community primarily during the interwar years. During this period in Gonzales, Black education suffered disproportionately and received far less funding and support than their White counterparts, particularly regarding equipment, teaching supplies, and faculty salaries. In 1925, student enrollment in the Gonzales School District recorded 389 Black students (compared to 1,095 White students).73 The Great Depression of the 1930s caused school enrollment to slightly decline, meaning the school district further reduced its services in the district in order to ease financial strain. Despite these hurdles, Edwards High School reflects the perseverance of Gonzales’ Black community to strive to accommodate the educational needs of its children. The 1930s and 1940s saw some of the biggest advancements in the schools’ offerings and growing curriculum.

Interviews with past students offer a glimpse of daily education at Edwards High School, and by all accounts, its pupils endeavored for perfect attendance, took pride in submitting high-quality work, and participated in as many extracurriculars as allowed. Interviews also provide an understanding of the faculty’s devotion to educating their students. Many teachers are fondly remembered for the valuable lessons, generosity, and warmth shown towards students, particularly at a time when the surrounding White community was less supportive. The Edwards High School campus continues to reflect a crucial piece of context in understanding primary and secondary education for Black children in Gonzales prior to desegregation.

**Significance under Criterion C: Architecture**

Edwards High School is also eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C for Architecture, as an excellent example of an early 20th century vernacular style school campus. Although some buildings on the campus have been removed, the campus overall remains a cohesive reflection of the educational experience for Black students. On the exterior, these buildings were modest in design and were constructed with affordable materials, but nonetheless served as visible testaments to the improvement of educational opportunities for the Black community. Students greatly benefited from the school’s contemporary construction that offered well-lit classrooms, workshops, sanitary privies, and recreational areas. The main classroom building, and vocational building are both good local examples of early 20th century schoolhouse design. Tall windows and a general east/west orientation maximized interior lighting, and brick walls and interior heat stoves insulated the building, enabling comfortable classrooms throughout the different seasons.

The construction of the main classroom building (1922) and the vocational building (c. 1920) both occurred during the height of the Julius Rosenwald School Fund program. Northern philanthropist Julius Rosenwald dedicated much of his fortune to the construction of schoolhouses in southern states for Black children. Rosenwald schools were built from 1913–1937 and funded over 5,000 buildings in fifteen different states. In Texas, the program funded the construction

73 Morowski. 78.
of 464 schoolhouses and 32 vocational shops. Most of the Rosenwald schools were built using standardized plans that can be identified by the number of classrooms. The vocational building is the only building on the Edwards High School campus that may have links to the program. The vocational building was constructed c. 1920 and was moved to the Edwards High School campus in 1952 from Canoe Creek, a rural school district in Gonzales County prior to its consolidation into the Gonzales School District. An inventory of Rosenwald-funded schools in Texas lists only one school in Gonzales County: a two-teacher type plan schoolhouse built in 1926–1927 in Canoe Creek (Multiple Property Form “Historic and Architectural Resources Associated with the Rosenwald School Building Program,” 1998). The vocational building on the Edwards High School campus features some similarities to the two-teacher type plan (also called “Community School Plan #20”), but it is not an exact match. Similarities include the use of grouped windows and exposed rafters, but the vocational building has a rectangular footprint with a singular entrance on three of the four elevations and a gable-on-hip roof, whereas the two-teacher type plan features two entrances on the façade and a cross-gable roof. It must also be considered that school district records indicate that only a portion of the Canoe Creek school was moved to the Edwards High School campus, and the building possibly underwent modifications after it was moved. Even if the vocational building is truly a Rosenwald-funded school, significant modifications have rendered it too altered, diminishing its association with the program. Regardless of the potential link to the Rosenwald School Fund, the vocational building is a good local example of an early 20th century school building, and it reflects the popularity of industrial courses in the school curriculum after the turn of the century. Furthermore, the vocational building’s status as a moved building does not diminish the significance of the structure, because it represents the inequitable facility conditions that many Black students were faced with. The vocational building was nearly 30 years old by the time it was relocated to the Edwards High School campus and was outmoded with mid-century school design that called for buildings with plentiful windows, large rooms with flexible partitions, and a home-like environment to make learning easy and comfortable. Although it originated in Canoe Creek approximately ten miles northwest of Gonzales, the vocational building is most importantly associated with Edwards High School and was moved to the site during Edwards High School’s period of significance.

The Rosenwald School Fund program was a huge initiative for the improvement of education of Black persons and had a wide impact on schoolhouse design, particularly for rural areas and small communities. The Rosenwald program set standards for schoolhouse design and published a booklet of various floor plans and building specifications that were available to any community, whether they were partaking from the fund. In some cases, even White schools utilized the program’s school design booklets. The schoolhouse plans were an integral part of the Rosenwald Fund’s mission to create better educational opportunities for Black students. Many of the schoolhouse plans were simple structures with some Craftsman-style influences, such as side-gable and hipped roofs, exposed rafters, and tall, grouped windows. They were often wood-frame buildings with wood siding, even though the program encouraged the use of more “permanent” building materials, like brick or stone. Out of the 464 Rosenwald schools in Texas, the two-teacher subtype was the most commonly used plan: a small rectangular footprint that contained two classrooms, a cloak closet, and an industrial room. In comparison, the main classroom building on the Edwards High School campus is a brick-clad, eight-classroom building (in its original configuration). As indicated by the Rosenwald inventory, large school buildings were uncommon in the small, rural communities of Texas for education of Black students. Only five eight-classroom schools were built in Texas under the Rosenwald Fund. The materials and sizeable footprint of the main classroom building on the Edwards High School campus suggests that it may have been built with more investment and expenditure than other Black schools in similar-sized communities; however, the building is still quite diminutive when compared to the former Gonzales High School, the school for White students. Built in 1913, Gonzales High

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School was a three-story brick building situated on a large plot of open land in the center of town. The school featured architectural characteristics like decorative brackets underneath a large cornice and a mission-style parapet. Next door was the former Central Ward School, which was the previous location of Gonzales High School. Built in 1889, this two-story masonry building was of similar grandeur and featured multiple chimneys, cresting along the roofline, and an Italianate cupola. There was an obvious contrast between Edwards High School and Gonzales High School. Black students in Gonzales did not receive an educational facility equal to that of their White counterparts.

Progress and growth of Edwards High School was effectively conveyed on a grander scale through the 1949 construction of the gymnasium, which is undoubtedly the architectural gem of the campus. From the exterior, the gym’s segmented arch barrel roof gives the building an easily recognizable shape. The gymnasium was the campus’ most contemporary and versatile building. The gymnasium’s design was a substantial shift from the campus’ earlier, small buildings, and reflected the Gonzales School District’s increased interest in modernizing a campus that had otherwise seen few facility improvements since its inception.

The lamella roof of the gymnasium is the most character-defining architectural element of the campus. Also referred to as a “Zollinger roof,” the roofing style consists of short wood planks bolted together into a rhomboid pattern. The Edwards High School gymnasium uses a common joint system that consists of a bolt passing through three wood planks, creating a compression connection. The roofing system was patented by Friedrich Zollinger in Germany in 1921. The roofing style became popular during the interwar years due to its minimal use of metal, which was in short supply at the time. The bolting system allowed a range of flexibility in the span and angle of the curved roof. Roof planking on the outside of the roof provided the required rigidity to form a stable and long-lasting roof. Early uses of lamella roofing commonly formed gothic-style arches that were applied to residences, churches, or schools, but the roofing system was later applied to both segmented and circular arched roofs. In the 1950s and 1960s, the roofing system was utilized on a few well-known buildings, such as the 1964 Houston Astrodome and the 1973 New Orleans Superdome.

The gym’s large interior space allowed flexible use for the students, including for sports, performances, and commencement ceremonies (Figure 1). Former attendees of the school continue to refer to the gymnasium with nostalgia and admiration. Joeann Tucy Lewis, who attended the school during the late 1950s, recalled that “we had the best gym in the district.” Former student Rosemary Lee Bookman (class of 1960) recalled that “we always had something in the gym with maroon and white,” indicating that the gym was a constant symbol of school spirit and a source of pride for the students.

Conclusion

Edwards School, built out between 1922 and 1952, served the Black students of Gonzales, Gonzales County until 1965. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black. Reflecting the segregation policies in place during the early 20th century, the school was a significant focal point for the educational and social development of the city’s Black youth. Edwards School is also nominated at the local of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Modest examples of school design, the campus buildings nevertheless represented the Gonzales Black community’s significant
efforts to provide safe and practical educational resources for local children. The period of significance is 1922–1965, the end date marking when the institution closed as a result of school desegregation in Gonzales.
Bibliography


Gonzales Inquirer (1853–current). “Association seeks to own former school.” August 1, 2006. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.


Mice, Sharon. “A school for the minorities.” No Date. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.


Maps

Map 1: Gonzales County, Texas

Map 3: The nominated boundary is two combined parcels that include all current and historic property associated with Edwards High School. Source: Gonzales CAD, accessed March 14, 2023.

Map 5: Current map of resources.

1. 1922 main classroom building
2. c. 1940 vocational building
3. 1949 gymnasium
Map 6: Site Plan (2005). Source: St. Philips College, Department of Architectural Drafting
Figures

Figure 1: Edwards High School current floor plan (2005). Source: Ibid.
Figure 2: Gymnasium Floor Plan (2005) Source: Ibid.
Figure 3: Edwards High School (detail) 1930 Sanborn Map updated to 1944, Gonzales, Texas, p. 20. Source: Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 4: Detail view of page 22 from the 1930 (updated 1959) Sanborn Map. Gonzales County Archives & Record Center.
Figure 5: 1955 aerial showing contributing resources. Source: HistoricAerials.com

4. 1922 main classroom building
5. c. 1940 vocational building
6. 1949 gymnasium
Figure 6: View of a classroom at Edwards High School. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 7: Portrait of Principal George W. Edwards. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 8: Photo of chemistry teacher Jesse Smith. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 9: Photo of P.E. teacher and coach Roy Evelyn Smith. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 10: Students playing basketball in the gymnasium, no date. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 11: The Edwards High School football team in the 1950s. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 12: Student Mildred Hood as a majorette or cheerleader, 1957. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 13: Three twirlers, no date. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Figure 14: The class of 1963 gathered together on the gymnasium stage. Courtesy of the Edwards Association African American Museum.
Photographs

Name of Property: Edwards High School Campus
Location: Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas
Photographers: Angela Gaudette and Allie Smith, Hicks & Company
Date of Photographs: 9/12/2022

Photo 1: Main classroom building, looking northwest.
Photo 2: Main classroom building, looking northeast.
Photo 3: Main classroom building, looking southeast.
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 4: Main classroom building, looking southwest.
Photo 5: Main classroom building, foyer, looking southeast.
Photo 6: Kitchen (former chemistry classroom), looking west.
Photo 7: Main classroom building, west wing hallway, looking southeast.
Photo 8: Main classroom building, classroom in east wing that houses the Edwards Association African American Museum collection, looking south.
Photo 9: Gymnasium, looking north.
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 10: Gymnasium, looking southeast.
Photo 11: Gymnasium, looking southwest.
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 12: Gymnasium, looking northwest.
Photo 13: Gymnasium, interior, looking west.
Photo 14: Gymnasium, detail view of lamella roofing.
Photo 15: Gymnasium, view of stage, looking east.
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 16: Gymnasium, view of northeast office behind the stage, looking north.
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 17: Gymnasium, men’s locker room, looking east.
Photo 18: Vocational building, looking north.
Photo 19: Vocational building, looking northeast.
Photo 20: Vocational building, looking southeast.
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 21: Vocational building, looking southwest.
Edwards High School, Gonzales, Gonzales County, Texas

Photo 22: Northwest room of vocational building, looking northwest. Photo courtesy of David Tucy.
Photo 23: South room of vocational building, looking south. Photo courtesy of David Tucy.
Photo 24: South room of vocational building, looking southeast. Photo courtesy of David Tucy.
Photo 25: View of non-contributing basketball court, looking east, classroom building in background.
Photo 26: Non-contributing playground features located to the north of the classroom building, looking northeast.
Photo 27: Non-contributing carport to the west of the vocational building, looking northeast, vocational building in background.
Photo 28: Non-contributing pavilion and picnic area to the east of the classroom building, looking east.