

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GROESBECK ISD

Compiled by William F. Reagan

Schools for both black and white students in Groesbeck were established shortly after the town was founded on February 20, 1871, but it was on May 10, 1890 that fifty-three people petitioned the county judge to incorporate Groesbeck for school purposes in order to create an independent school district. The election was held on May 24 with a 43 to 24 vote in favor of incorporation. In their meeting on May 26, 1890, the Limestone County Commissioners canvassed the election returns, and after it was determined that a majority of the votes were in favor of incorporation, Limestone County Judge L. B. Cobb declared the Groesbeck Independent School District established.

Shortly after the Groesbeck Independent School District came into existence, two school buildings were constructed, one for white students and one for black students. The school for white students was constructed on city block 274. This is the current site of Groesbeck Alternative School. The site of the first black school building cannot be determined at this time, but in 1900 the trustees of the Groesbeck School District purchased lot number one located in section 74 of the town of Groesbeck, on which the second school building for black students was constructed. This school was located on South Leon Street.

In 1896, a new building was constructed for white students. It was a wooden building with a heating system. However, it was destroyed by fire on February 3, 1910, and a new three-story, brick building to replace it was soon completed at a cost of \$32,000. By October 1922 a new three-story, twelve-room addition to this building was constructed on the north side to ease overcrowded conditions. A new five-room, brick school building for black students was also constructed in 1922. It was located on North Grayson Street and was named Blackshear School. Even though black students were segregated, it should be pointed out that Hispanic students of the Groesbeck district attended school with white students.

Over the years, Groesbeck ISD has constructed several other buildings. A new high school building was constructed in 1936 at a cost of \$70,000 and was used by the district until 1973. The old school building continued to serve the lower grades until it was condemned in 1939. This led to the construction of a new grammar school, which was completed in 1941 at a cost of \$55,000. This building, however, had foundation problems and was replaced by a new elementary school that was completed in 1959 at a cost of \$145,000. Today, this building continues to serve the district as an alternative school. At a cost of \$122,000, the Washington School was completed in January 1957 for black students of the district. After integration, this building became Groesbeck Junior High and is currently named Enge-Washington Intermediate School serving fourth and fifth grade students. Construction of a new high school building started in November 1971 and was completed in time for the 1973/74 school year. Today, this building is named Groesbeck Middle School and serves students in grades sixth through eighth.

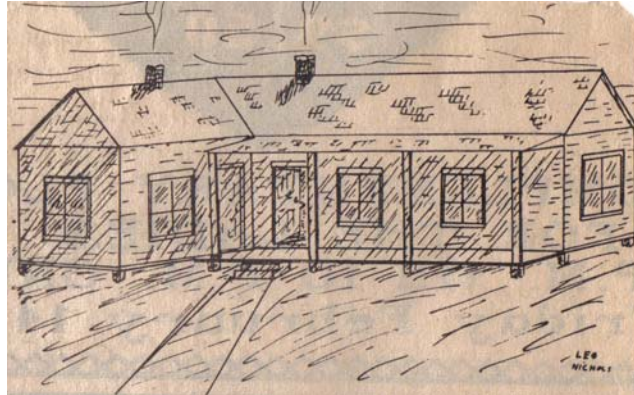
The original size of Groesbeck ISD included the town of Groesbeck and two small, adjacent tracts of land. From 1926 to 1965, however, several school districts consolidated with Groesbeck increasing the size of the district to its current area of 528 square miles. The first school district to consolidate with Groesbeck was Frost Creek Common School District on August 23, 1926. This consolidation led to the creation of the first bus route for the district. From 1949 to 1951, several "dormant" school districts, whose students had already been transferred to Groesbeck, were consolidated with Groesbeck ISD to comply with the Gilmer-Aiken legislation, which was passed by

the 51st Texas Legislature in 1949. These consolidations with Groesbeck were Beulah Common School District and Big Hill Common School District on July 1, 1949; Horn Hill Rural High School District, LaSalle Common School District, Prairie Point Common School District and Fort Parker Common School District on July 6, 1949; Locust Grove Common School District on August 10, 1949; Mesquite Common School District on March 8, 1950; and Box Church Common School District on July 12, 1950. Because of decreasing student enrollments, other schools in the county eventually had to also consolidate with Groesbeck. These districts were Frosa Common School District in September 1952; Oletha Consolidated School District on July 2, 1962; Fairbairns Rural High School District on August 22, 1964; Kosse Common School District on August 24, 1964; and Thornton Common School District on August 19, 1965.

Integration was slow to come to Groesbeck ISD. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, Groesbeck ISD created a "Freedom of Choice" policy. Under this policy complete freedom of transfer was supposed to be allowed any time within the district prior to the opening day of the school year. In 1966, a six-member team from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare visited Groesbeck and determined that Groesbeck ISD was not in compliance with the Civil Rights Act. This conclusion was based on the team's findings, which included discrepancies in carrying out the "Freedom of Choice" policy. As a result of this report, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare demanded that Groesbeck ISD comply with the Civil Rights Act. The board of trustees refused to change the district's policy, and as a result, Title I funds were cut drastically. Finally, in October 1966, the school board submitted a new plan for the transfer of students from one school to another within the district. This plan was acceptable and the Title I funds were restored. Within a week's time, 22 black students transferred from the Washington School to the other two schools. In 1968, in order to comply with federal guidelines, the school board adopted a plan for total integration that began with the 1969-1970 school year.

In 1979, Houston Lighting and Power announced the proposed construction of a \$1.6 billion power plant in the southeastern part of the Groesbeck Independent School District. With the construction of this power plant and the mining operations associated with it, hundreds of new jobs were created. As a result, the population of the school district increased, thus increasing student enrollment. Groesbeck ISD built two new schools to accommodate this increase in student population. Without having to call any bond elections, both of these buildings were constructed through lend/lease agreements with payments being made from taxes generated from the new power plant. In 1985, H. O. Whitehurst Middle School was built at a cost of \$4.5 million. Serving grades four and five, this building was named in honor of Mr. H. O. Whitehurst who had served the district as superintendent from 1931 to 1967. This building was later renamed the H. O. Whitehurst Elementary School in 1993, when the 2nd and 3rd grades were moved there. In 1999 an addition to the building was completed, and currently this school serves grades pre-k through 3rd. In 1987, construction began on a new high school complex at a cost of \$13.5 million. In 1989 it was opened for service to the high school students of the district.

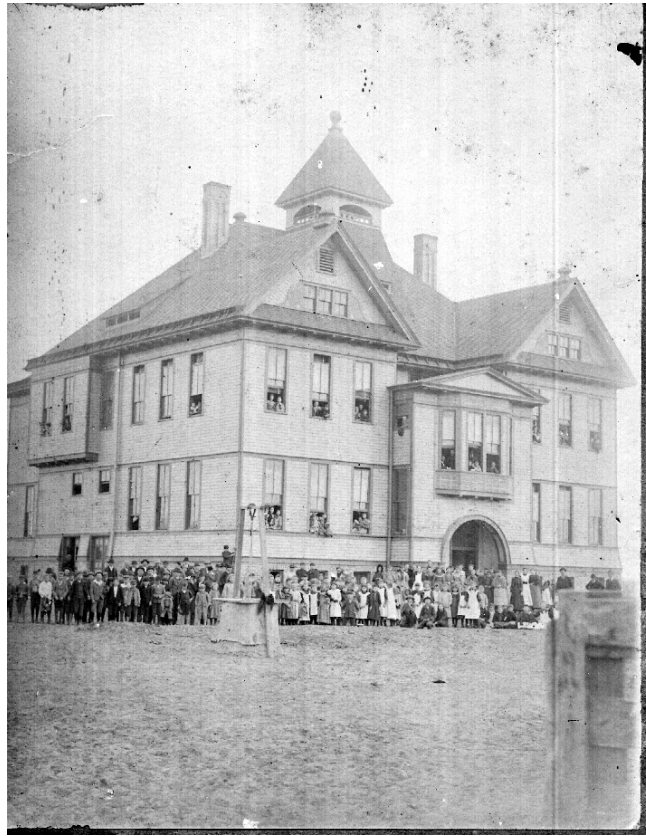
The prosperity that Groesbeck ISD experienced following the construction of the power plant was short lived. In 1993, the Texas Legislature passed recapture legislation known as Robin Hood. This law requires "property-rich" school districts to send portions of their local tax dollars to the state for redistribution to less wealthy school districts. Unfortunately, under the Robin Hood legislation, Groesbeck ISD was classified as a "property-rich" school district and over the last several years, has had to send millions of dollars to the state. The district still strives to maintain its high educational standards, but Robin Hood has made that much more difficult to do.



**First Groesbeck School
1890 - 1896**



**Groesbeck School
1894**



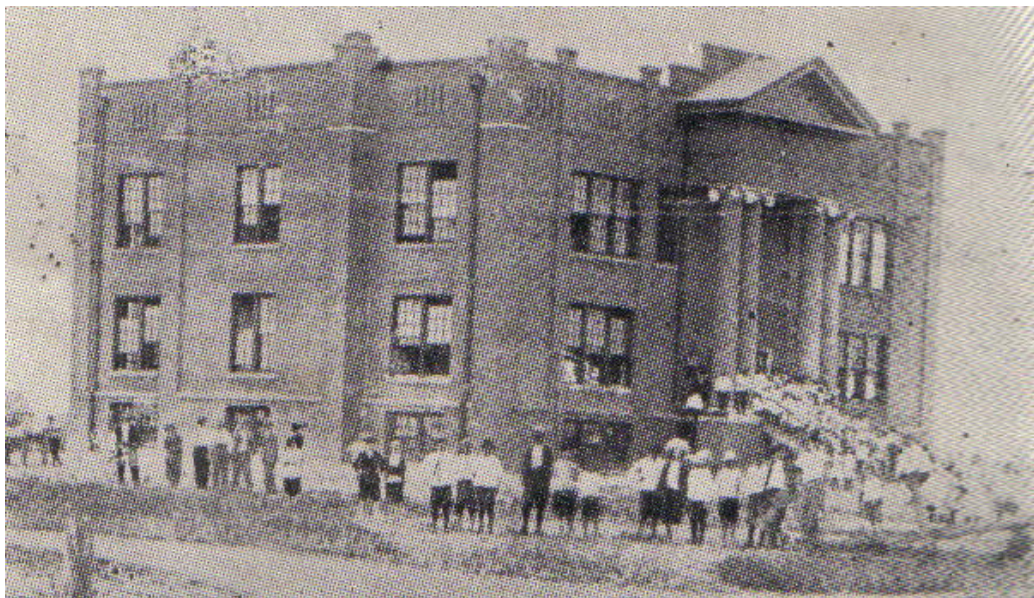
**Second Groesbeck School
1896 - 1910**



GHS Graduating Class of 1895



Groesbeck's First Football Team
Lost no games from 1900 to 1902



Third Groesbeck School
1910 - 1939
Photo taken in 1916



Third Groesbeck School
The addition was built in 1922.



Blackshear School
1922 - 1957



**Blackshear School Students
1920s**



**Groesbeck High School
1936 - 1973**