

History of Hallsburg

written by Superintendent James McKamie
in approximately 1976

There was a time when the area we now call Hallsburg was part of a vast pristine land stretching as far as the eye could see. There were no fences, no roads, only Indian trails here and there leading to a Brazos Indian settlement. Fish, wild game, and great herds of American buffalo roamed the area. It was a rich land, teeming with life. Perhaps one would have been reminded of Genesis 2:8, "and the Lord God planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning, wherein he placed man whom He had formed."

Change is the dynamic of life. Indeed Hallsburg wasn't always as we know it today. All of the area east of the Brazos river was the location of an Indian tribe of 200 persons known as the 'Tawakoni.' This primitive settlement remained until 1859, when all Indians were removed from McLennan County. The Tawakoni Indian tribe, as such, is now extinct.

There are some interesting tales about those early days. For years officials of the Republic of Texas met with Indian groups on what is now called Trading House Creek in Eastern McLennan County. When these councils convened, whole Indian tribes often attended. White traders were there to take advantage of the opportunity; "Trading Goods," such as guns, ammunition, and whiskey were much in evidence.

Even before the Indians left this land it was already claimed and surveyed. One of the original surveys was the Jose Antonio Manchaca Three-League Grant, a Spanish Land Grant. This grant was eventually divided and sold. Among the original purchasers was Dr. William E. Hall. His warranty deed, dated September 1, 1884, was filed on July 20, 1885 in McLennan County Deed Records, Volume 49, Page 526. This land, purchased from S. K. McLahenny, consisted of nine and a half eighty-acre blocks, a total of 760 acres.

The lure of this land was strong. Other pioneers came into the area. buying, settling, and building. Log cabins soon dotted the area. Soon there was a community of farmers and ranchers, bound together with the common will to survive and succeed.

The background of some of these early pioneers is interesting. Mr. Hall, for example, had a dream of becoming a country doctor. This dream prompted his medical training in Chicago's Hahnemann School of Medicine. He completed that work on March 1, 1883. May 31 of that same year marked the beginning of his practice in Washington Avenue in Waco. He saw this as a necessary step to his dream. The very next year, 1844, he purchased the land, built a log cabin on the site where later a two-story house would stand. The house still stands, occupied by his grandson, Jess Wilbanks.

Dr. Hall was a person of vision. Various projects were initiated that would benefit the area; one was a plan for adequate water. The people gathered, and with primitive instruments such as mule-drawn slips and fresnos - and with a tremendous amount of hard labor - completed a 35 acre lake.

Dr. Hall also saw the need for a railroad through the area. He donated the land to the Clavert, Waco, and Brazos Valley Railroad Company. This action brought in the International Great Northern Railroad. As the rail developed, so did the town of Hallsburg. Many businesses began to develop along the tracks; early citizens recall in particular the cotton gin, the depot, the stockyards, the section houses, and the general store.



Hallsburg's first school, a one room building, was built in 1906. The land was given by Dr. Hall and Mrs. Pearl Busby. Mrs. Busby, better known as Miss Lena, taught in the first school. Her daughter, Miss Beryl Busby, taught in Hallsburg's second school building. Dr. Hall and Mr. Busby, along with other interested individuals, always encouraged the educational community, and around 1918, a new school was built. It had six classrooms and an auditorium on the second floor.



The school progressed steadily with little change until around 1927. With the improvement of transportation, Vernal, Battle, Elm Lake, and Lone Oak were grouped with Hallsburg for high school purposes. Hallsburg had a high school in 1927! It was during this period that Hallsburg had its first two men principals, Mr. W.W. Griffin and Mr. R. R. Bowen.

The following year, the Rural High School District #4 was made up of Hallsburg, Elk. Lone Oak, and Bethlehem schools. The area was 50.44 square miles. There were 521 pupils, almost equally divided, half white and half black.



Trustees that year were D. T. Stodghill, A. Bordovsky, Jim Pavelka, Mrs. W.E.. Hall, Guy McNamara, Ross Busby, and Joe Korenek. The tax rate was from 20

cents to 75 cents per \$100.00 valuation. The total valuation in 1927 was 1 million, 28 thousand, 700 dollars.

Hallsburg School remained classified as a seven grade, two year high school until 1931. In 1938, work began on Hallsburg's third new school building.

The school was built by W.P.A. Trustees were Ross Busby, M.G. Nichols, Homer Campbell, Henry Campbell, Werner Matthys, Tom Tyler, and V. J. Pavelka. 1938 also marked the beginning of the Hallsburg PTA.

Miss Faye Shaw began her teaching career at Hallsburg in 1940. She taught at Hallsburg for almost 30 years. That same year, Edgar C. Thompson began serving as a trustee of Hallsburg School where he continued to serve for 44 years; 42 of those years were served as president of the board.

The following years were uneventful as far as major changes were concerned. In 1964, Harrison School began sending their students to classes at Hallsburg. The communities achieved a close working relationship.

The Hallsburg and Harrison Water System was put into service in 1964. Many miles of water lines now interweave throughout the community. This was a tremendous service, especially to the school.

In 1967, a separate cafeteria building was built to accommodate growing needs.

In 1970, voters passed a \$200,00 bond issue and Hallsburg's fourth new school was built. This is the building now being used for the main part of the school.

Hallsburg was selected as the site of Texas Power and Light's new 3,000 acre lake and generating plant. The community was indeed grateful to Mr. Ed Little and his staff for their cooperation in assisting with the new school.

Hallsburg's new school had 8 classrooms, carpeted office and library, a nurse's station, and an auditorium with seating capacity of around 300. It was air-conditioned and centrally heated. The old school building continues to be useful as a gymnasium.

Trustees at the time the school was built were Edgar Thompson, Theodore Bordovsky, Calvin Adamek, Arthur Steig, Jess Wilbanks, Fred Kubitz, and E. L. Thompson.

The staff in 1971 was as follows: Principal: Mr. James W. McKamie - Teachers: Mrs. Evelyn Melton, Mrs. Dottie Vannatta, Mrs. Helen Young, Mrs. Glenda Dorn, Mrs. Cheryl Robinson, and Mrs. Kay Neugebauer. Mrs. J.C. Fox was administrative assistant. Mrs. Helen Uptmor and Mrs. Selma Steig were in the

cafeteria. Mrs. Linda Pavelka, Mr. Viewens, and Mr. Clarence McMillan were bus drivers.

In December 1981, the school was severely damaged by fire, but was soon rebuilt. A year later a new section was added which houses the library, administrative offices, a speech room, nurse's station, resource room, and two conference rooms.

These seventy years of Hallsburg history have fostered a viable, pioneering spirit that lives until this day. Through the years that spirit will no doubt continue to manifest itself in things both new and wonderful.

Updated history:

After Mr. McKamie retired from the position of principal/superintendent of Hallsburg ISD, Mr. Garland Byrd was hired in 1988. During his tenure, a new cafetorium was built and the old cafeteria was turned into the existing music room. Mr. Byrd stayed at Hallsburg until his retirement in 1998 when the current principal/superintendent, Mrs. Jan Hungate, was given the position. The administrative offices were given a face-lift with new carpet and wallpaper after water damage due to a septic overflow in 1998. In 1999-2000, the old auditorium was renovated to become a new distance learning lab, a new computer lab, a new resource classroom, and a new conference/ speech therapy room. In 2002, both the front and back parking lots were resurfaced and expanded to accommodate more parking for employees and visitors and the school entrance was made ADA compliant for easier access to the facility.