

Brownsville School History



**Brownsville School
2908 South Woodlawn Blvd
Denison**

Complimentary Information provided by:

Rose Brown Pleasant
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Class of 1961

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BROWNSVILLE SCHOOL

(2908 South Woodlawn/Denison, Texas)



Brownsville School located in the 2900 block South Woodlawn built with lumber removed from the Cotton Mill School during the summer/1922, and opened in September that same year. Brownsville served African Americans over 4 decades. It was actually located right next south of what is now: Kent's Tex-Mex Restaurant. Ruth Bates was teacher the first day in 1922, and was still its teacher 43 years later when its doors closed in 1965.

I met and visited Ms. Bates numerous times, and she was one gracious lady, and to this day I treasure her kindness toward me.

Brownsville might have been tiny, but it is monumental to all who attended.

It left another deep void when the wrecking crew came rolling and swept it away during the late seventies

The lot where it stood, has continued to be vacant ever since.

(Billy Holcomb)



**Brownsville School
2908 South Woodlawn Blvd
Denison
1930s - 1960s**

The school building was built with the lumber from the old Cotton Mill School; It stood right next door to the south side of what is now Kent's Tex-Mex Restaurant. ~ Courtesy of Billy Holcomb

The Brownsville School was opened for the school year of 1922, and Aaron Robertson told me in 1950 that the Brownsville School was built with the lumber from the old Golden Rule School. He attended the new Golden Rule School with his brother Buck, Ty Fitzgerald, Carl Ray Shields, and many other youngsters of 1922.

The Brownsville School teacher was Ruth Bates. She was at the school from the beginning until the end, when it was closed in 1965. The little one-room schoolhouse was closed in 1965 and torn down in the early 1980s.

One-room schools lost, but not forgotten



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2908 South Woodlawn Blvd
Denison



Ruth Hill Bates

**By Miranda Wilcox
Herald Democrat**

The U.S. Supreme Court made one of its most pivotal decisions 60 years ago Saturday, influencing the course of American history.

This decision was none other than *Brown v. Board of Education*, a case that can be simply described as a family of a little girl suing for her rights to attend an all-white school in her neighborhood. The case took place in Topeka, Kan., a city with four schools for African Americans students and 18 for white children.

Others remember this piece of history, from smaller, rural areas of Texas. While these were the primary form of education for many years, the culture and history of receiving an education from one of these establishments have all but vanished

Denison resident Rose Brown Pleasant remembers attending Brownsville Elementary School, a segregated, one-room schoolhouse in the 1950s. Today, it's difficult to find any current evidence for one-room schoolhouses still standing. The [One-Room Schoolhouse Center](#) only had 17 one-room schoolhouses listed on its site, and that is for the entire state

Pleasant is determined to make sure that while schools like these are gone, they are not forgotten.

Pleasant said her ultimate goal was to receive more information from a variety of people over the one-room elementary schools. She said it was an important part of her education, and she likes to talk about it.

"Our curriculum was not limited to the three Rs," Pleasant said. "We were taught good manners, hard work, ethics, personal hygiene, and God and country, and we participated in spelling, speech, theatrics, fashion, field trips, PTA, recreational activities. We would interact with (Van Alstyne Elementary School) and enter scholastic leagues. ... We did everything."

Brownsville Elementary School taught students in south Denison from first to seventh grade. During the 1900s, the school consisted of a few classes taught at Iron Ore Church. August H. Terrell was the first teacher for what was then known as Iron Ore School, Pleasant said. Once the school had its own building in 1922, it officially became the Brownsville Elementary School.

Following Terrell came Lucy Brown Moore, who moved to Denison in 1916 and taught in rural schools, such as Brownsville Elementary School. After her, Gertrude Bruce, who was born in Denison, taught in the Brownsville schoolhouse until 1931, when she moved to Odessa, Texas, and eventually became the first black librarian there, Pleasant said.

The last teacher in this schoolhouse was Ruth Hill Bates, teaching at Brownsville from 1931-1963, eventually becoming Pleasant's educator in 1948.

"I'm 71," Pleasant said with a laugh. "I lived this information. I didn't read it or hear about it. I lived it."

Pleasant stressed that to her, this period of time meant more than an education: this was the community she grew up in.

While teaching a variety of ages presents a challenge to many educators, Pleasant said one-room schoolhouse teachers were able to meet this challenge by deliberately paying attention to the student's needs. Pleasant's teacher, Bate, sectioned the students off by grade, with about five or six students in each grade.

"We were in the same room, but there was enough distance, there was no interference with the other students," Pleasant said.

She said her education might seem different when compared with today's curriculum, but nothing was missing.

"We were just like any just like any other elementary school," Pleasant said. "When we had field trips, we didn't just stay in the classroom. It was mostly just country then, ... and on the field trips, first we would look through magazines, or books, and we would identify different birds or insects ... and then

we would go on the field trip and locate that and point that out, and then we'd have a write up. We'd come back and she'd have us write an essay ... about our experience."

The Brownsville Elementary School closed in 1963 after integration. While schools like these faded during the '60s, Pleasant said everything she learned at Brownsville Elementary helped her for the future.

"(Mrs. Bates) had a chart, and she would check us off for good grooming," she said. "She'd see if we'd watched our hands properly, our nails, grooming the hair, all our clothes and needlework, and some would get a high mark and some would get a low mark. It was meaning to teach us to do better, and be much more attune. It was to help us."

Pleasant aspires to gather even more information about the history of this period, using obituaries and newspaper clippings her father collected.

"When I do this I want to put the school and the picture of all these people (with it)," Pleasant said. "I think this is very important. We have just forgotten these people."