

Texas Historical Commission staff (BB), 2/20/2012, rev 5/22/12
Official Texas Historical Medallion and 16" x 12" plaque WITHOUT post, attach to BRICK
Fort Bend County (Job #11FB02) Subject (Atlas) UTM
Location: Simonton, 34935 FM 1093

SIMONTON SCHOOL

IN 1893, SIMONTON COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10 FORMED. J. B. JAMISON AND J. W. MULLINS DEEDED LAND AT THIS SITE FOR A NEW FRAME SCHOOL IN 1911. IN 1925, NOTED HOUSTON ARCHITECT LOUIS GLOVER DESIGNED THIS TWO-STORY SCHOOL FOR NINE GRADES. THE ART DECO-STYLE BUILDING HAS A STUCCOED BRICK SYMMETRICAL FAÇADE WITH PORTICOES, GROUPED WINDOWS AND ORNAMENTATION TILES. CLASSROOMS WERE ON THE FIRST FLOOR, WITH AN AUDITORIUM, STAGE, DRESSING ROOMS AND KITCHEN ABOVE. THE FACILITY ALSO HOSTED COMMUNITY DANCES, SUPPERS, ELECTIONS, CHURCH SERVICES, AND HOME CANNING DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION. LAMAR CONSOLIDATED ISD ANNEXED SIMONTON IN 1950.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2011
MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

**RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS:
2011 Official Texas Historical Marker
Sponsorship Application Form**

Valid September 1, 2010 to November 15, 2010 only

This form constitutes a public request for the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to consider approval of an Official Texas Historical Marker for the topic noted in this application. The THC will review the request and make its determination based on rules and procedures of the program. Filing of the application for sponsorship is for the purpose of providing basic information to be used in the evaluation process. The final determination of eligibility and therefore approval for a state marker will be made by the THC. This form is to be used for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (building marker) requests only. Please see separate forms for either Historic Texas Cemeteries or subject markers.

Proposed marker topic (official title will be determined by the THC): Simonton School

County: Fort Bend

Town (nearest county town on current state highway map): Simonton

Street address of marker site or directions from town noted above: 34935 FM 1093

Marker Coordinates:

If you know the location coordinates of the proposed marker site, enter them in one of the formats below:

UTM Zone Easting Northing
Lat: Long: (deg, min, sec or decimal degrees)

Otherwise, give a precise verbal description here (e.g. northwest corner of 3rd and Elm, or FM 1411, 2.6 miles east of McWhorter Creek): Small city of Simonton, the north front of the school faces the railroad tract at Hwy 1093

NOTE: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers must be placed at the structure being marked.

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers definition: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) markers are awarded to structures deemed worthy of preservation for their historical associations and architectural significance. RTHL is a legal designation and comes with a measure of protection; it is the highest honor the state can bestow on a historic structure, and the designation is required for this type of marker. The RTHL designation becomes effective upon approval by the THC. Official Texas Historical Markers signify the RTHL designation, which comes only through application to and approval by the THC and must include public display of an Official Texas Historical Marker. Owners of RTHL-designated structures must give the THC 60 days written notice before any alterations are made to the exterior of the structure. RTHL status is a permanent designation and is not to be removed from the property in the event of a transfer of ownership. Only the THC can remove the designation or recall the marker. The marker must remain with the structure and may not be removed or displayed elsewhere until or unless the THC gives express approval in writing for such action. Once designated as RTHL, properties are subject to provisions of Texas Government Code, Section 442.006(f).

Criteria:

1. **Age:** Structures eligible for the RTHL designation and marker must be at least 50 years old.
2. **Historical significance:** Architectural significance alone is not enough to qualify a structure for the RTHL designation. It must have an equally significant historical association, and that association can come from an event that occurred at the site; through individuals who owned or lived on the property; or, in the case of bridges, industrial plants, schoolhouses and other non-residential properties, through documented significance to the larger community.
3. **Architectural significance:** Structures deemed architecturally significant are outstanding examples of architectural history through design, materials, structural type or construction methods. In all cases, eligible architectural properties must display integrity; that is, the structure should be in a good state of repair, maintain its appearance from its period of significance and be considered an exemplary model of preservation. Architectural significance is often best determined by the relevance of the property to broader contexts, including geography. Any changes over the years should be compatible with original design and reflect compliance with accepted preservation practices, e.g., the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.
4. **Good state of repair:** Structures not considered by the THC to be in a good state of repair are ineligible for RTHL designation. The THC reserves the sole right to make that determination relative to eligibility for RTHL markers.

Special National Register considerations for RTHL marker applications: If a structure has been individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under either Criterion A or B **and** Criterion C (Architecture), the historical text compiled as part of the National Register nomination process may be submitted as part of the marker process, provided it includes the required reference notes and other documentation. Acceptance of the National Register information for the purposes of the marker process will be up to the sole determination of the THC. Listing in the NRHP does not guarantee approval for an RTHL marker. See the THC web site at <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madnrcrit.html> for National Register criteria.

Check this box if the property is individually listed in the NRHP.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Any individual, group or county historical commission (CHC) may apply to the THC to request an Official Texas Historical Marker for what it deems a worthy topic. Only complete marker applications that contain all the required elements and are submitted online as required can be accepted or processed by the THC (for RTHL markers, the required elements are: sponsorship application form; narrative history; documentation; legal description of the property; site plan; floorplan; historic photograph; and current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure—please resize photographs to 1-2 MB, or approximately 1024 x 768 pixels).

- Completed applications must be duly reviewed, verified and approved by the county historical commission (CHC) in the county in which the marker will be placed.
- The sponsorship application form, narrative history and documentation must be submitted as Microsoft Word or Word-compatible documents and sent via email attachments to the THC by no later than November 15, 2010.
- Required font style and type size are a Times variant and 12-point.
- Narrative histories must be typed in a double-spaced (or 1.5-spaced) format and include separate sections on context, overview, significance and documentation.
- The narrative history must include documentation in the form of reference notes, which can be either footnotes or endnotes. Documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary.

- Upon notification of the successful preliminary review of required elements by the THC, a non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required. The fee shall be submitted to the THC within ten working days of application receipt notification.

APPROVAL BY COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The duly appointed marker representative (chair or marker chair) noted below for the county historical commission will be the sole contact with the THC for this marker application. To ensure accuracy, consistency and efficiency, all information from and to the THC relative to the application—and throughout the review and production processes—will be via direct communication with the CHC representative. All other inquiries (calls, emails, letters) to the THC will be referred to the CHC representative for response. By filling out the information below and filing the application with the THC, the CHC representative is providing the THC with notice that the application and documentation have been reviewed and verified by the CHC and that the material meets all current requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker program.

As chair or duly appointed marker chair, I certify the following:

- Representatives of the CHC have met or talked with the potential marker sponsor and discussed the marker program policies as outlined on the THC web site. CHC members have reviewed the history and documentation for accuracy and made corrections or notes as necessary. It is the determination of the CHC that the topic, history and documentation meet criteria for eligibility.

CHC comments or concerns about this application, if any:

Name of CHC contact (chair or marker chair): Bettye Anhauser

Mailing address: 164 N. Hall Dr **City, Zip:** Sugar Land, TX 77478

Daytime phone (with area code): 281-494-2046 **Email address** (required): lanhauser@aol.com

PERMISSION OF PROPERTY OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT

Property owner: Paula Reeder and Ken Osborne

Address: 34935 FM 1093/ P.O. Box 546 **City, state, zip:** Simonton, TX 77476

Phone: 832-274-6414 **Email address:** pbkneads@gmail.com

Legal Description of the property (metes and bounds, lot and block, etc.): 1.3015 acre (56,694 square feet) tract out of a 2.08 acre tract, being the remainder of the Simonton Common School District #10 tracts, being in the Thomas Westall Lague, A-92, Fort Bend County, Texas

Upon receipt of the application, the THC will provide the owner with a letter that outlines the legal responsibility of ownership under the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark statute. The letter must be signed by the owner and returned to the THC before the evaluation can be completed.

NOTE: The property owner will not receive any additional copies of correspondence from the THC. All other correspondence—notice of receipt, request for additional information, payment notice, inscription, shipping notice, etc.—will be sent via email to the CHC representative, who is encouraged to share the information with all interested parties as necessary. Given the large volume of applications processed annually and the need for centralized communication, all

inquiries about applications in process will be referred to the CHC for response. The CHC is the sole liaison to the THC on all marker application matters.

SPONSORSHIP PAYMENT INFORMATION

Prospective sponsors please note the following:

- Payment must be received in full within 45 days of the official approval notice and must be accompanied by the THC payment form. The THC is unable to process partial payments or to delay payment due to processing procedures of the sponsor. Applications not paid in the time frame required may, at the sole discretion of the THC, be cancelled or postponed.
- Payment does not constitute ownership of a marker; Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers and other Official Texas Historical Markers are the property of the State of Texas.
- If, at any time during the marker process, sponsorship is withdrawn, a refund can be processed, but the THC will retain the application fee of \$100.
- The Official Texas Historical Marker Program provides no means of recognizing sponsors or property owners through marker text, incising or supplemental plaques.

Marker sponsor (may be individual or organization): Paula Reeder and Ken Osborne

Contact person (if applicable): Paula Reeder

Mailing address:34935 FM 1093 **City, zip:** Simonton, TX 77476

Email address (required):pbkneads@gmail.com **Phone: 832-274-6414**

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

In order to facilitate delivery of the marker, residence addresses, post office box numbers and rural route numbers are not permitted. To avoid additional shipping charges or delays, use a business street address (open 8 a.m.—5 p.m., Monday through Friday).

Name: Paula Reeder

Street address:34935 FM 1093 **City, zip:** Simonton, TX 77476

Daytime phone (required): 832-274-6414 **Email** (required): pbkneads@gmail.com

TYPE AND SIZE OF RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS

As part of its review process, the THC will determine the appropriate size marker and provide options, if any, for the approved topic based on its own review criteria, including, but not exclusive of, historical significance, replication of information in other THC markers, relevance to the Statewide Preservation Plan and the amount of available documented information provided in the application narrative. In making its determination, however, the THC will also take into account the preference of the CHC, as noted below.

The sponsor/CHC prefers the following size marker:

- 27" x 42" RTHL marker with post (\$1500)
- 27" X 42" RTHL marker without post* (\$1500)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker with post (\$1000)

- 18" x 28" RTHL marker without post* (\$1000)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque with post (\$750)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque without post* (\$750)

*For an RTHL marker without post, indicate to what surface material it will be mounted:

- wood
- masonry
- metal
- other (specify) stucco over masonry bricks

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION (via email required)

When the CHC has determined the application is complete, the history has been verified and the topic meets the requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the materials should be forwarded to the THC via email at the following address:
markerapplication@thc.state.tx.us.

- The CHC or marker chair should send an email containing the following attachments (see attachment function under file menu or toolbox on your computer):
 - This application form
 - The narrative history (including documentation)
 - Legal description of the property
 - Detailed floor plan for each floor of the structure
 - Detailed site plan of the property
 - At least one historic photograph
 - Current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure

RECORDS RETENTION BY CHC: The CHC must retain hard copies of the application as well as an online version, at least for the duration of the marker process. The THC is not responsible for lost applications, for incomplete applications or for applications not properly filed according to the program requirements. For additional information about any aspect of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, see the Markers page on the THC web site (<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madmark.html>)



Simonton School

By: Clint Drake, Fort Bend County Historical Commission
Research assistance provided Paula Reeder and Ken Osborne

Driving along FM1093, the traveler notices an aesthetically impressive, thirty-nine foot tall, schoolhouse-red painted building with “1926” inscribed at the top. Passers-by often slow, and even stop, to view this magnificent building which stands out prominently in juxtaposition of the bucolic setting of Simonton, Texas.

The namesake for the town of Simonton, although located in the league granted to Thomas Westall as one of Austin’s Old 300, can be traced to the “opulent” Simonton brothers, who established a thriving plantation in the area. James and Theophilus Simonton, of Iredell County, North Carolina, arrived in Fort Bend County in the late 1840s and by 1860 they held in partnership one of the largest plantations in Texas with 105 slaves, 975 improved acres, \$200,000 in real property, and \$155,000 in personal property.¹

The Simontons and other early planters of Upper Fort Bend typically transacted business and/or lived in the town of Pittsville, and had plantations elsewhere. Living in the Brazos River Bottoms, where many of the plantations were located out of necessity for river transportation, was not desirable due to flooding and disease. The children of these planters likely attended school at Pittsville before a population increase following the Civil War necessitated facilitating the creation of Common School Districts to serve smaller areas.²

The coming of the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway through the northern part of the county brought new communities and prosperity. Towns such as Fulshear and Simonton developed near the rail lines, and the town of Pittsville was abandoned as landowners refused right-of-way. Churchill Fulshear, Jr., granted right-of-way through his property in 1888, and on March 22, 1889, Dr. R. L. Harris of Pittsville reported that residents were “jubilant over the near completion of the Aransas Pass railway.” As the railroad progressed, the heirs of the original

¹ Clarence R. Wharton, *History of Fort Bend County* (Naylor: San Antonio, 1939), 145.; Fort Bend County Deed Records (hereinafter cited as FBCDR), Vol. B, p. 418, Joseph J. Scull to Theophilus & James Simonton, 21 Jan 1849, filed 24 Mar 1849; Stephen L. Hardin, "SIMONTON BROTHERS", *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fsi36>), accessed October 28, 2010

² Alice Nesbitt, “Pittsville, in Ft. Bend County,” undated manuscript. Vertical File: Pittsville, Texas. George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas; Minnie S. Bains, “DOWN MEMORY LANE (PITTSVILLE),” undated manuscript. Vertical File: Pittsville, Texas. George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.

Simonton brothers deeded land to the railway in 1889 to build a depot with the agreement that the “San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad Co their heirs and assigns obligate themselves to build maintain and forever keep up a switch or spur and platform at a point designated by the said J. & T. Simonton.” Based upon compliance of this agreement, the brothers granted “a strip of land 100 feet in width and 7275 feet more or less in length over and across a subdivision of the Thos Westall league said strip of land to embrace and include 50 feet on each side of the center of track of the S. A. & A. P. Railway as the same is now staked out across said subdivision...”³

With the advent of the railroad, the town flourished, and passenger trains attracted residents and businesses, and by 1893, Simonton Common School District Number Ten was created.

Simonton was granted a post office in 1894, with Alonzo Williams serving as first postmaster. The Spencer and Mullins families moved to Simonton from Kansas shortly after the turn of the century and created the firm of Spencer & Mullins Brothers of Fort Bend County. In 1910, the firm granted 2.29 acres of land to the S. A. & A. P. R. R. to establish a siding from which to ship potatoes throughout the United States. Following an experience with Southern Blight in the 1920s, which caused potatoes to decay in transit, crops were expanded to include: alfalfa, soy beans, cow peas, beans, cucumbers, spinach, beets, cotton, and pecans were planted and irrigated with artesian water to supplement natural rainfall. Between 1914 and 1925, the population and number of businesses nearly doubled. In 1914, the community had two general stores, a cotton gin, and 50 residents, and by 1925, had a cotton gin, three general stores, five other businesses and 100 residents. Also by 1925, the school district served 181 white and 322 black students. The Simonton Common School District had six schools, more than any other district in the county except Kendleton, who had the same number. There were ten teachers to serve the six schools, with four teachers assigned to the Simonton School. The Simonton School served white students, the Simonton Mexican School served Mexican students, and New Bayou, Randon Bottom, River Bend, and St. Paul schools served black students. By 1925, considering the

³ FBCDR, Book U, p. 177, Churchill Fulshear to San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railway Company, filed 22 June 1888; *The Galveston Daily News*, 22 Mar 1889; FBCDR, Book V, p. 442-43, Simontons to S. A. & A. P. Railroad Co, 18 May 1889, filed 21 Oct 1889.

substantial growth of the community, it seems as though the original school built for white students was no longer meeting the needs of the district's school population.⁴

According to John J. Lane, in the *History of Education in Texas*, published in 1903:

Counties are divided into school districts subject to control of county school boards and county school superintendents, and these are subdivided for the convenience of community schools upon proper petition to the county authorities. Changes from one system to another are effected by local option or exemptions authorized by the legislature. Cities and towns are allowed to incorporate as independent school districts with separate school boards and superintendants, and to establish graded and high schools of their own, in addition to their primary and grammar schools, and to share in the benefits of the State school apportionment. Local taxation is allowed to cover expenditures for longer school terms and desired improvements, for which counties and districts, as well as cities, towns, and villages, may also provide in the same manner.⁵

On August 28, 1911, J. B. Jamison and J. W. Mullins conveyed a "certain lot or parcel of land consisting of one acre in the form of a square adjoining the south side of the public road leading east from Simonton...to be used as a schoolhouse site or public school purposes."⁶ A wooden schoolhouse probably existed on the site before the magnificent structure that stands today was erected in 1926. The erection of the state-of-the art building has a few potential explanations. According to Lane, local taxation was allowed to supplement monies apportioned by the state. Local taxation would allow the construction of a nicer school than state funds alone, and considering that the students of the school were the children of those being taxed, it seems likely that farmers supported additional taxation to provide a better education experience for their children. Furthermore, the school building was also used for community functions as well,

⁴ Fort Bend County School Records, George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas; Mark Odintz, "SIMONTON, TX", *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hls50>), accessed October 27, 2010; FBCDR, Vol. 50, pp. 628-30, Spencer & Mullins Brothers to S. A. & A. P. R. R., 17 Mar 1910, filed 21 Mar 1910; S. A. McMillan, *The Book of Fort Bend County, 1926* (n.p.: n.p., 1926) 178 – 181, 9; State of Texas, *Texas Teacher's Daily Register for Public Schools*, District No. 10, Texas State Library, Regional Historical Resource Depository (RHRD), George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.

⁵ John J. Lane, *History of Education in Texas* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903) 36-37..:

⁶ FBCDR, Vol. 59, pp. 201-202, J. B. Jamison & J. W. Mullins to County School Trustees of Fort Bend County, 28 Aug 1911, filed 11 Sept 1911.

which may have been considered during planning. The architect of the school building, L. A. Glover, designed many public buildings in the Houston area, but examples of his work are limited in smaller counties. Around the same time that the Simonton School was built, Glover was an associate architect of the John H. Reagan High School in Houston Heights. The uncle of Mrs. G. W. Spencer, Simonton resident and school board member, was one-time mayor of Houston Heights. The social network between Simonton and Houston Heights might have influenced the commission of L. A. Glover to design the new school in Simonton.⁷

The construction of such a magnificent school seems to have gone largely unnoticed in public records. Newspapers from both Brookshire (8 miles north of Simonton) and Richmond (10 miles southeast of Simonton) failed to report on the construction of the school. The same is true for the minutes of the Fort Bend County School Board. The only source from the time that mentions the school is *The Book of Fort Bend County*, published in 1926, which states: “the community has recently built a modern brick school building and hard surfaced the road from the Brazos river bridge to town. Both of these enterprises are indications of the progressiveness of the community.”⁸ This statement corroborates the supposition that the community itself was largely responsible for building such a grand structure, and perhaps explains why planning for building the school escaped the minutes of the County School Board.

The *Texas Teacher’s Daily Register for Public Schools* provided information for teachers, a place to record curriculums, students, grades, and personal reports. The registers for the Simonton School for the 1925 – 1926 school year illuminate life at Simonton School for teachers and students at the time the new school was constructed. Goldia Mae McDonald was the teacher for the primer class through second grade. Students in this grade range studied arithmetic, drawing, phonics, language, nature, health, reading, spelling, and writing. McDonald reported that improvements from the previous year included a primary reading chart, sand table, and library books. Thelma Nell Stewart taught third through fifth grades, instructing students in arithmetic, descriptive geography, beginner’s history, language, physiology and hygiene, reading, spelling, and writing. She reported that improvement from the previous year included a **new building**, library books, and a dictionary. Eva Nelson Stapleton taught sixth, seventh, and

⁷ Jacquelyn Spencer Leaman, interview by Clinton Drake & Bettegene Coyle, 21 October 2010, Richmond, TX.

⁸ S. A. McMillan, *The Book of Fort Bend County, 1926* (n. p.: n.p., 1926), 181.

ninth grades, and instructed students in arithmetic, drawing, geography, grammar, Texas history, United States history, language, nature, physiology and hygiene, reading, phonics, spelling, writing, algebra, ancient & medieval history, and composition. She reported receiving a set of six Denoyer-Geppert maps valued at \$40 since the previous school year.⁹ The reports of these teachers indicate the willingness of the Simonton Consolidated School District to provide for the students at Simonton School.

The two-sided cornerstone reads on the front:

SIMONTON SCHOOL
FORT BEND CO. SCHOOL DIST. NO. 10
JESSE F. WARD-CO. SCHOOL SUPT.
E. C. CORNELIUS—PRES.
C. E. JOHNSON—SEC.
T. A. CRAIG
TRUSTEES
L. A. GLOVER – ARCHITECT
IRVING SHAPELY-CONTRACTOR

The side of the cornerstone has the Masonic emblem with this below it: THIS CORNERSTONE LAID & LEVELED BY WALLIS LODGE, NO. 817, A.E.&A.M., A. D. 1925, A.D.5925.

The cornerstone of the building indicates that the building was designed by L. A. Glover (Louis A. Glover). Research shows that Glover was an architect based out of Houston who worked with other renowned architects to design some of the most enduring, celebrated structures in the Houston area. Louis A. Glover & William Ward Watkin, who is best known for his role in designing the Rice Institute (Rice University), operated the firm of Watkin & Glover, located in the Scanlan Building in Houston. Watkin & Glover's most prominent commission was the Houston Public Library's Julia Ideson Building (1926), which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. Additional commissions, as either lead or associate architect,

⁹ State of Texas, *Texas Teacher's Daily Register for Public Schools: Simonton School No. 1, County of Fort Bend, State of Texas, District No. 10, For the Year 1925-1926*, Texas State Library, RHRD, George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.

include: the Mykawa School in Houston (1923), the John H. Reagan High School (1926) in Houston Heights, the Brazoria County Courthouse Expansion (1927) in Angleton, the Mirabeau B. Lamar Senior High School in Houston (1937), the Nena E. Stanaker Branch of the Houston Public Library (ca. 1947), as well as private residences.¹⁰

According to the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance (GHPA):

modernistic architecture, which encompasses Art Deco and Art Moderne design, flourished between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II...Modernistic architecture's growing popularity [as the predominant architectural style] coincided with a conscious effort by Houston's business and civic leaders to tie the city's image to the American West and de-emphasize its Southern heritage. For many Houstonians, modernistic buildings represented the city's future.

According to the criteria listed by the GHPA for categorizing the Art Deco style in the Houston area, it is obvious that the Simonton School was designed in this particular style. The Art Deco characteristics of the Simonton School include a stuccoed, symmetrical façade (stucco applied over brick, which was common in Houston Art Deco structures), a flat roof, projections above the roofline to enhance vertical orientation, and angular geometric forms used for ornamentation (tiles used on porticoes and parapet).¹¹ The brick façade remained unstuccoed for a short while after it was built and was stuccoed by 1931. With the exception of Mirabeau B. Lamar Senior High School in Houston, the Simonton School is the only known example by Glover in the Art Deco style.

The grades taught at the school vary from year to year. In 1915, at a meeting of the County Board of Education, the Simonton School was classified as Third Class High School, with nine grades being indicated. During the 1920 – 1921 school year, eight grades were taught; 1925 – 1926, nine grades; 1927 – 1928, nine grades; and 1928 – 1929, ten grades. According to Vernon Sayles' *Annotated Civil Statutes of the State of Texas*, published in 1914, "a high school of the third class shall be a high school which maintains at least two years or grades of work above the

¹⁰ Patrick J. Nicholson, *William Ward Watkin and the Rice Institute* (Gulf: Houston, 1991), 191, 195, 282, 339.

¹¹ Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, "About Houston Deco," *Houston Deco: Modernistic Architecture of the Texas Coast*, 2010, www.houstondeco.org (31 October 2010); Jacquelyn Spencer Leaman, interview by Clinton Drake & Bettegene Coyle, October 21, 2010, Richmond, Texas

sixth grade or year, may include in its curriculum the first six years of grades or work, shall employ at least one teacher to teach high school subjects...”¹² By 1931, the school provided an education through the sixth grade, after which students would transfer to high school in the neighboring towns of Richmond and Rosenberg. At first, students transferred to Richmond High School, but students later transferred to Rosenberg High School. The variation in grades taught could either indicate that there were no students enrolled in certain grades, or the classification of the school changed from “high school” to “intermediate” after the school was built. During 1931-1937 all of the classes were on the first level, and schoolchildren never utilized the upstairs – which consisted of an auditorium, stage, dressing rooms, and kitchen – during the regular school day. Students would either bring their lunch or their mothers would pick them up to eat home – the kitchen was not used to prepare food for students. There were matching stucco buildings behind the school which housed the boys and girls restrooms – complete with flush toilets. There was a concrete walk with a flagpole leading to the building with see-saws, a swing set and merry-go-round located in the schoolyard. There was also a teacherage located on the school property. The original burned, was rebuilt, and was moved offsite to the Pool Hill Community where it stands today.¹³

In addition to the educational function of the school, the building also served the community in a variety of ways. When schoolchildren reached high school, there was no place for them to congregate, and Friday night dances were held in the auditorium of the school. Teenagers throughout the county would attend dances at the Simonton School. School plays were held upstairs, which was outfitted with a stage and dressing rooms on either side. The stage curtain was complete with advertising and is currently in a private collection. The school also had a rhythm band of sticks, triangles, and tambourines that would perform in the auditorium. Several Simonton residents were Christian Scientists, and would hold services at the school. In the summer, a visiting missionary would come and bible studies were held at the school. The upstairs kitchen was used for community covered dish suppers and for community canning during the Great Depression. There was also a cannery downtown – which could be used by appointment – but the school kitchen provided the extra space and facilities needed during these

¹² Vernon Sayles, *Annotated Civil Statutes of the State of Texas*, vol. 2 (Vernon Law Book Co.: Kansas City, MO, 1914), 2020.

¹³ Jacquelyn Spencer Leaman, interview by Clinton Drake & Bettegene Coyle, October 21, 2010, Richmond, Texas.

difficult times. In addition, the school also served as a polling place during elections with polls set up in the right hallway of the first floor. Considering that schoolchildren did not regularly utilize the upstairs in conjunction with their curriculum – aside from school plays and rhythm band performances – and the kitchen was not included to prepare food for the children, it seems plausible that the school was designed to serve both as a school and a community center. Furthermore, there was no other designated community space within the town of Simonton at the time the school was built.¹⁴

In an election held on or about December 28, 1946, the Rosenberg Independent School District and the Richmond Independent School District were consolidated into Lamar Consolidated Independent School District. Simonton Common School District No. 10 was the last to be annexed and was added on September 5, 1950, by the Fort Bend County School Board.¹⁵ Recent visitors claim that sometime after annexation, the school population changed from white to black students before desegregation. Local reports also state that local residents sought shelter from Hurricane Carla, which struck the Texas coast as a Category 4 hurricane in 1961. The structure was used as a plant store and nursery during the 1980s and is currently utilized as a residence, portrait studio, and gallery. The façade of the school and much of the interior appear exactly as they did in the 1920s. The inside drinking fountain is still just inside the front door, and the original slide from the second story is still there as a fire escape. Two changes are apparent: (1) A former owner replaced three windows downstairs at the back to install French doors to lead out to a patio; (2) A former owner, or possibly the school added an attached shed that was bathrooms at one point; then added another attached area next to the first shed.

Other features still in the building include the wide staircase with nine stairs, a landing, and remaining fourteen stairs to the second floor; the scars from what was a railing to divide from “up” and “down” for the students as they moved about during the day are still seen on these stairs. The stairwell leads to a still existing doorway, with a transom on top, that would have been the entrance to the auditorium. Continuing into what is now a large room upstairs, one can see where a repaired long-leaf pine plank now covers the scars of a former wall that would have created a hallway outside of the auditorium. While the majority of the upstairs flooring is long-

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Lamar Consolidation of 13 Districts,” *The Herald Coaster* [Fort Bend Herald], June 1, 1972.

leaf pine, the far east end has about ten feet of plywood flooring that was the flooring underneath the stage.

The 1926 Simonton School was sophisticated and progressive for its time and met the various needs of the community and the school district. It reflects the progressive attitude of a small community, who during the 1920s utilized its prosperity and resources to duplicate the architectural styles and educational standards typical of a larger city. The structure was designed in the Art Deco style and is one of the few examples remaining in the county, except for the façade of the Cole Theatre in Rosenberg, which was modified from an earlier building. Also, the school represents the architectural talents of one of Houston's leading architects of the time, Louis A. Glover, and is one of few examples of his work in the Art Deco style.

Sketch of floorplan of Simonton School

Adapted from a pencil sketch by Jacquelyn Spencer Leaman, former student 1931 - 1937

Original drawing made on October 21, 2010



Second Floor



First Floor

Simonton School
2010

FRONT PORCH
ENTRY

FRONT PORCH
ENTRY

Large Train Room

ATTACHED
SHED
(BATHROOMS
@ ONE POINT)

FOYER

Foyer

BATHROOM

E

HALLWAY

BATH.

Dining Room.

Room

Room.

KITCHEN

LARGE TABLE SEATS

TUBULAR STAIR
FIRE
ESCAPE

BACK PORCH - 2010

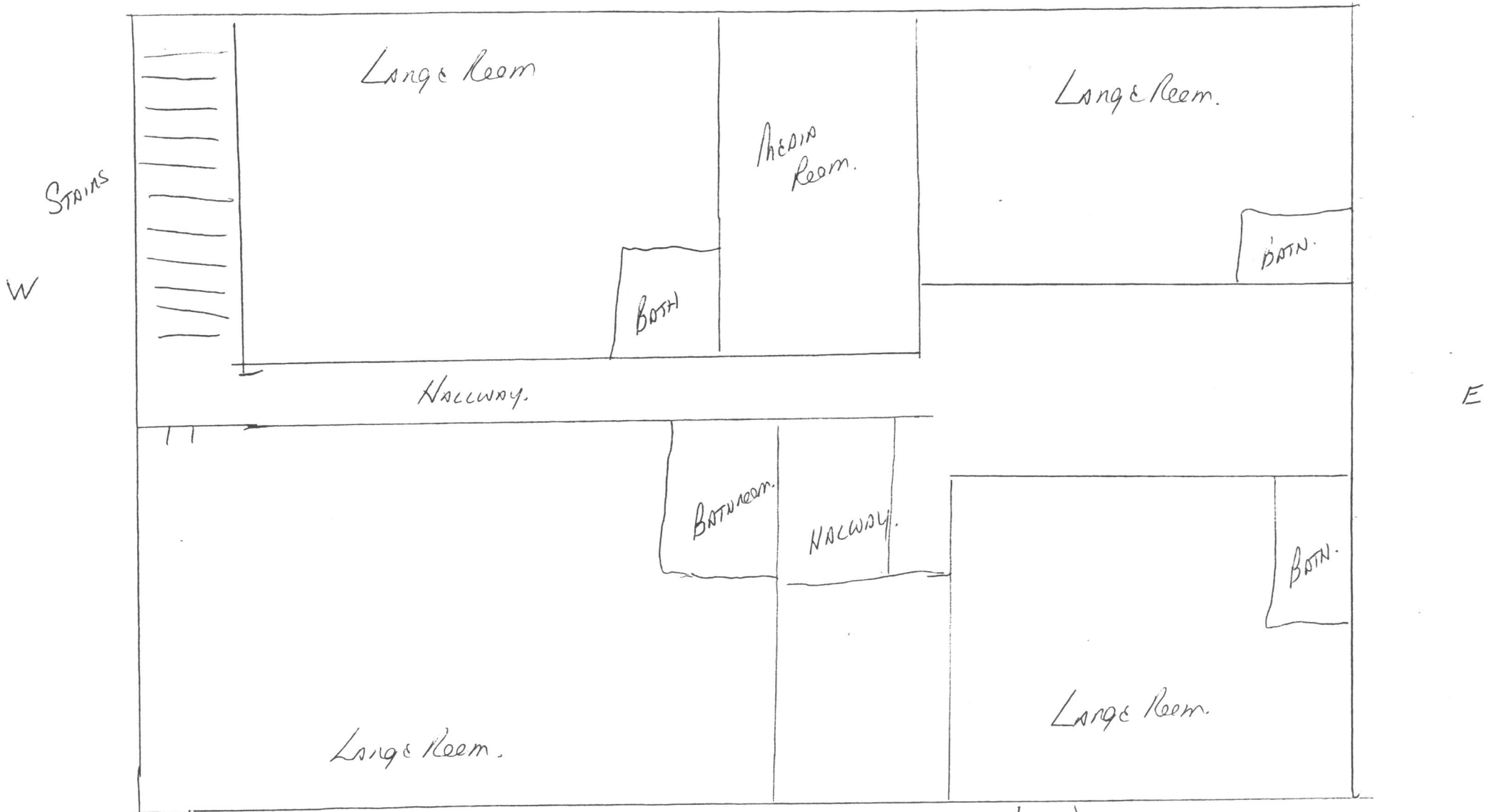
S

2ND FLOOR

2010

N

Simonton School
2010



Original
TUBULAR SCISS
Fire Escape.

HWY F.M. 1093
(100' PUBLIC R.O.W.)

Simonton School
Simonton, Texas
Fort Bend County

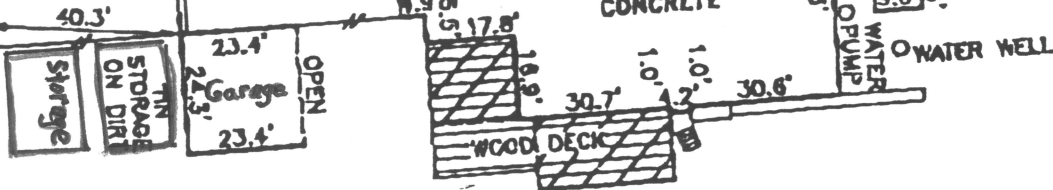
0.780 ACRE TRACT
FBCCF NO. 8814727

N 00°05'00" E 184.14'

FND. 5/8" I.R.
N12°45'W 0.8'

N 83°38'50" E

308.71'



1.3015 ACRES
(56,694 SQ. FT.)

FND. 1" I.P.

S 83°32'12" W

311.78'

-9.314 ACRE TRACT
FBCCF NO. 1999087307

FND. 1" I.P.
S87°16'E 2.6

THOMAS WESTALL LEAGUE, A-92

S 00°51'02" E 183.40'

NOEL ROBERTS LEAGUE, A-79

SUBJECT TO APPLICABLE RESTRICTIVE COVENANT LISTED IN ITEM NO. 3, SCHEDULE "B" OF
TITLE COMMITMENT ISSUED BY FIRST AMERICAN TITLE COMPANY UNDER GF NO. TX04-419022-HC95.

1.3015 ACRE (56,694 SQUARE FEET) TRACT OUT
OF A 2.08 ACRE TRACT, BEING THE REMAINDER
OF THE SIMONTON COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICT # 10
TRACTS, BEING IN THE THOMAS WESTALL LEAGUE,
A-92, FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS.



SUBJECT PROPERTY IS NOT
LOCATED IN A FEDERAL INSURANCE

ABSTRACTING BY TITLE C
SEARCHES BASED ON RE

PURCHASER: PAULA RE

ADDRESS: 34935 F.M.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

FEB 28 2011

Authorization for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Designation

8081100

Date of RTHL designation: January 28, 2011

Property Name: SIMONTON SCHOOL

Physical Address: 32935 FM 1093

City: SIMONTON County: FT. BEND Zip: 77476

Property reference number (Appraisal District/Tax Office property number, etc.): R 383562, R 40143

Legal Description (Lot and block, metes and bounds, etc.): 1.3015 ACRES (56,894 SQ FT) TRACT OUT OF A 2.08 ACRES

TRACT, BEING THE REMAINDER OF THE SIMONTON COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICT #10 TRACTS, BEING IN THE THOMAS WINSTALL LEASE, A-92, FT BEND CITY, TX

Additional description ("property encompassing the bridge and abutments," "the 1936 portion of the County Consolidated High School building," "the historic homestead, including the main house, barn, windmill, smokehouse and water well," etc.):

The Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation is awarded to historic structures deemed worthy of preservation for their architectural integrity and historical associations. Authorized by the Texas Legislature under Texas Government Code, Chapter 442, RTHL is the highest honor the state can bestow on historic structures in Texas. Designated properties are afforded a measure of legal protection and become part of the recorded history of the state's built environment.

Benefits of the RTHL designation:

- Recognition that a property is of local, regional or state significance.
Protection for up to 90 days from exterior alterations, including demolition or relocation.
Ad valorem tax exemptions, where granted by local taxing authorities.
Inclusion in the Texas Historic Sites Atlas.
Technical preservation assistance through the THC.

Responsibility of the property owner under the RTHL provision, as noted in Texas Government Code, Chapter 442.006 (f):

A person may not damage the historical or architectural integrity of a structure the commission has designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark without notifying the commission at least 60 days before the date on which the action causing the damage is to begin. After receiving the notice, the commission may waive the waiting period or, if the commission determines that a longer period will enhance the chance for preservation, it may require an additional waiting period of not longer than 30 days. On the expiration of the time limits imposed by this section, the person may proceed, but must proceed not later than the 180th day after the date on which notice was given or the notice is considered to have expired.

Additionally:

- The designation requires the public display of the RTHL marker. The marker is the property of the State of Texas and may not be removed or relocated without the prior permission of the Texas Historical Commission.
RTHL status is a permanent designation which is retained with the property even upon transfer of ownership. Only the Texas Historical Commission may remove the designation.
Structures designated as RTHLs do not have to be open to the public, but the marker must be accessible to the public.
RTHL designation does not imply eligibility for federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.

I, the property owner or legal administrator of the property noted herein, signify below that I have read the information regarding Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and that I voluntarily seek the designation for the property. I further promise to comply with the provision noted in the Texas Government Code.

Name (print): PAULA REEDER

Mailing address: 34935 FM 1093

City, state, zip: SIMONTON TX 77476

Signature: Paula Reeder

Phone: 832-274-6414 Date: 2/20/11



PO. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TX 78711-2276
PHONE 512.463.6100 • FAX 512.475.4872
www.thc.state.tx.us

Handwritten notes: CH# 6468, \$750.00, CR



1926









1928

