

Personal note: Two founders of South Park, Jame Sparks, were brothers to my great-great grandmother Julia Sparks Courts.

News Letter

Thank You Mrs. Hebert For A Fine Article

South Park Neighborhood & Schools

This Article Was Written By: Mrs Jane Hebert For The South Park Neighborhood

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE COMMUNITY OF SOUTH PARK AND HOW IT GOT IT NAME? I HAVE LIVED IN SOUTH PARK ALL MY LIF , AND DID DID NOT KNOW. I DECIDED TO DO SOME RESEARCH, AND WHEN I WENT TO THE LIBRARY, I FOUND RAY ASHBURY'S BOOK THE SOUTH PARK STORY. RAY ASHBURY DID A LOT OF OF RESEARCH ON THIS SUBJECT, AND HERE ARE SOME EXCERPTS FROM HIS BOOK.

THE SOUTH PARK COMMUNITY HAD IT' S BEGINNING I ABOUT ABOUT 1890. A FEW FAMILIES HAD SETTLED IN THE AREAS SOUTH OF BEAUMONT, ALONG THE ROAD TO SMITH AND GRIGSBY'S BLUFF (WHICH IS NOW PORT NECHES). N DECEMBER 1889, JAMES AND WORTHY SPARKS (BROTHERS) PURCHASED 34 ACRES OF LAND JUST WEST OF THIS OAD IN IN THE J. W. BULLOCK LEAGUE. ITS SOUTH BOUND Y WAS WHAT IS NOW LAVACA STREET AND EXTENDED NORTH T ADAMS. THIS AREA WAS ABOUT ONE MILE NORTH OF THE AREA CALLED 'SPINDLETOP HILL'.

IN FEBRUARY, 1890, THE SPARKS BOYS MOVED THEIR FAMILIES FAMILIES FROM THEIR HOMESTEAD ON LAKE SABINE O THIS

THIS PROPERTY. ABOUT A YEAR LATER, J. F. AND EMILINE KLINE MOVED FROM GRIGSBY'S BLUFF AND SETTLED NEAR THE SPARK'S BOYS HOME. SOON, THE GEORGE C. REXSES FAMILY, ALONG WITH THE MACK CARTWRIGHT AND GEORGE STOCKHOLM FAMILIES MOVED INTO THIS AREA.

ALL OF THESE FAMILIES HAD SEVERAL CHILDREN, AND SINCE THE CLOSEST SCHOOL WAS ABOUT 3 MILES AWAY IN THE SAWMILL TOWN OF BEAUMONT, AND OUTSIDERS WERE CHARGED TUTION, THESE FAMILIES DECIDED THEY NEEDED TO BUILD THEIR OWN SCHOOL.

GEORGE REXSES OWNED PROPERTY FACING THE PUBLIC ROAD (THE PRESENT PORT ARTHUR ROAD) AND HE AGREED TO FURNISH THE LAND IF A SCHOOL BUILDING COULD BE BUILT. THE MEN OF THE COMMUNITY AGREED TO FURNISH THE LABOR AND SECURED THE LUMBER FROM BEAUMONT LUMBER COMPANIES AND SAWMILLS.

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1891, THE MEN BEGAN CONSTRUCTION OF A SIMPLE ONE ROOM SCHOOL ON THE REXSES PROPERTY. AT THIS TIME, IT WAS NAMELESS, AS WAS THE COMMUNITY AROUND IT. THE DESKS WERE ROUGH AND HAND BUILT, AND A BLACK OIL CLOTH WAS USED AS A BLACKBOARD

J. F. KLINE IS CREDITED WITH NAMING THE SCHOOL 'SOUTH PARK' ONE DAY AS HE RODE UP ON HORSEBACK TO SEE HOW THE WORK WAS PROGRESSING. WHILE IT IS NOT CLEAR WHY MR. KLINE NAMED THE SCHOOL 'SOUTH PARK', THE FOLLOWING IS BELIEVED TO BE THE REASON.

SPINDLETOP HILL WAS AN AREA KNOWN BY SPINDLETOP HILL

HILL WAS AN AREA KNOWN BY MANY, AND TO THE EAST OF THE "HILL" WAS A SPRING WHERE PEOPLE FREQUENTLY STOPPED. THE SPRING WAS LOCATED IN A GROVE OF TREES, TREES, AND ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS, PEOPLE DROVE THEIR WAGONS AND BUGGIES THERE FOR PICNICS. THIS AREA AREA WAS KIND OF A "PARK" AND IT BEING SOUTH OF BEAUMONT, IT IS BELIEVED THAT J. F. KLINE THUS NAMED IT IT SOUTH PARK, WITH THE COMMUNITY TAKING THE SAME NAME.

THE SPINDLETOP SPRINGS AREA WAS A VERY PROMINENT PLACE LONG BEFORE THE SPINDLETOP OIL BOOM DAYS, AND IN AND IN HIS MANUSCRIPT, EVERETTE A. MARTIN DESCRIBES AN AN EXTREMELY TALL CYPRESS TREE THAT TOWERED ABOVE ABOVE THE SURROUNDING TREES, AND COULD BE SEEN FOR FOR MANY MILES, AND SEEMED TO BECKON FOLKS TO THE AREA.

THE NEW SCHOOL OPENED IN 1891-1892, AND A NAME PLATE HAD BEEN MADE AND NAILED TO THE FRONT CORNER OF THE THE BUILDING, MAKING SOUTH PARK THE OFFICIAL NAME OF OF THE SCHOOL.

THE FIRST TEACHER AT SOUTH PARK SCHOOL WAS MISS KATIE KATIE BACON, AND THERE WERE ABOUT 20 PUPILS IN ATTENDANCE. THE GRADES TAUGHT RANGED FROM ONE TO TO EIGHT, AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1915 THAT SOUTH PARK WAS TO HAVE ITS FIRST HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS. IT CLASS. IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1915 THAT SOUTH PARK WAS TO HAVE ITS FIRST HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS.

DURING THE FIRST TEN YEARS, THE LITTLE ONE-ROOM SCHOOL SCHOOL HAD A DIFFERENT TEACHER EACH YEAR. THE FIRST

FIRST PUPILS TO ATTEND THE SCHOOL WERE LUCY SPARKS, MAE, LILLY, FRED, MAJOR AND JARRETT KLINE; MARY AND TEENIE REXSES; HOMER AND LEE CARTWRIGHT; PERRY AND GEORGE BROUSSARD; HENRY STOCKHOLM AND OTHERS. TEACHERS WERE J. I. ELLISON, DIXIE BARTER, ALICE WHITE, JIMMIE ALLEN, LILLIE WHITE, WILL GRAY, W. B. SANDERS, J. W. W. KINNEAR AND VICTOR AUBEY.

THE ONE-ROOM SCHOOL WAS ADEQUATE FOR THE SOUTH PARK PARK PEOPLE UNTIL JANUARY, 1901, WHEN CAPTAIN ANTHONY ANTHONY LUCAS ASTOUNDED THE WORLD WITH THE NOW FAMOUS 'LUCAS GUSHER'. THE LIQUID GOLD WAS TO FURNISH FURNISH THE BUDDING SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH THE REVENUE REVENUE NECESSARY TO OPERATE A MODERN PROGRESSIVE PROGRESSIVE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

A YEAR LATER, ANOTHER ROOM WAS ADDED TO ORIGINAL BUILDING ON THE PORT ARTHUR ROAD, BUT SOON THIS WOULD WOULD NOT HOLD THE PUPILS. TWO TEACHERS HELD CLASSES CLASSES IN GASPARD'S STORE, JUST NORTH OF THE SCHOOLHOUSE (WHERE PIPKIN STREET INTERSECTS THE PORT PORT ARTHUR HIGHWAY). AT SPINDLETOP, A SCHOOL WAS OPENED IN 1902 WHERE TWO TEACHERS HELD CLASSES IN A A STORE BUILDING AND THE BAPTIST- METHODIST CHURCH. CHURCH. DURING 1907-1908 SOME GRADES WERE TAUGHT IN IN THE VACANT STORE AT HIGHLAND AVENUE AND LATONIA LATONIA STREET (NOW KNOWN AS WOODROW STREET). DUE DUE TO THE OVERCROWDING, MANY PEOPLE OPENED THEIR THEIR HOMES TO THE TEACHERS AND PUPILS FOR USE AS CLASSES.

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR SOUTH PARK SCHOOL, J. R. CASTON, W. C. SPARKS AND J. C. EISENTRAUT, LAURENCE THE

FOUNDATION FOR AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT WOULD NOT NOT ONLY FIT THE NEEDS OF THAT ERA, BUT WOULD ALSO ALLOW FOR EXPANSION AS THE AREA GREW AND DEVELOPED. DEVELOPED. THEY WOULD PURCHASE A LARGE TRACT OF LAND LAND AND BUILD A CENTRAL SCHOOL. ON FEBRUARY 7, 1907, 1907, SOUTH PARK VOTED ITS FIRST SCHOOLHOUSE BO DS IN IN THE AMOUNT OF \$23,000.00. ON APRIL 2, 190 THE BOARD PURCHASED 6.86 ACRES LOCATED ON LATONIA STREET (WOODROW) AND HIGHLAND AVENUE. ON THIS SITE W ERECTED A TWELVE ROOM RED BRICK BUILDING, WHICH WAS WAS COMPLETED IN 1908, AT WHICH TIME ALL CLASSES WERE WERE CONSOLIDATED IN ONE BUILDING.

THE BIG RED SCHOOLHOUSE SOON BECAME WELL KNOWN, AND AND THE NAME SOUTH PARK SOON BECAME WELL KNOWN TO TO SOUTHEAST TEXANS WHO PASSED THE SCHOOL ON T E WAY TO SPINDLETOP OIL FIELD. THIS PROMINENCE AS CHERISHED BY THE CITIZENS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND A SPIRIT DEVELOPED AMONG THE CITIZENS OF THE COMMUNITY - COMMUNITY - AND THEIR SCHOOL BECAME THEIR PET PROJECT. PROJECT.

IN 1911, SOUTH PARK SCHOOLS ADDED THE SECOND UNIT TO TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL PLANT. THIS WAS THE AGRICULTURE AGRICULTURE BUILDING. IN 1911 SOUTH PARK WAS ILL A COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICT, BUT IN ORDER TO KEEP T E GOVERNING REIGNS IN THE HANDS OF LOCAL COMMUNIT , IT IT MUST BECOME AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT. SOUTH SOUTH PARKERS CHOSE TO GO DIRECTLY TO THE LEGISLATURE LEGISLATURE FOR A SPECIAL ACT, AND ON MARCH 15, 1913, THIS BILL CREATED THE SOUTH PARK INDEPENDENT CHOOOL SCHOOL DISTRICT. EVEN IN 1919 WHEN THE BEAUMONT CITY CITY LIMITS WERE EXTENDED TO INCLUDE SOUTH PARK THE

THE DISTRICT REMAINED INTACT BECAUSE OF THIS LAW.

MANY SOUTH PARK CITIZENS CONSIDERED THEMSELVES AS A COMPLETE COMMUNITY FROM BEAUMONT, AND IN FACT THEY WERE, L. R. PIETZSCH WAS THE FIRST SOUTH PARK SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, AND HE WAS VERY WISE AND QUICK TO REALIZE THAT SOUTH PARK AREA WAS GROWING RAPIDLY.

SUPERINTENDENT PIETZSCH REALIZED THE NEED FOR A SCHOOL FOR "COLORED" PUPILS, AND IN 1914 WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A SCHOOL BEING BUILT, WHICH WAS NAMED AFTER TWO MEN ONE WHITE - ONE BLACK - USAN HEBERT AND LOUIS M. HEBERT. J. L. GILES WAS THE FIRST VOTER LISTED ON THE POLL LIST AT THE BOND ELECTION FOR THIS SCHOOL, AND HE LATER SERVED ON THE SCHOOL BOARD FOR 17 YEARS AND HAD A SCHOOL NAMED AFTER HIM.

IN 1915 SOUTH PARK WAS ACCREDITED AS A HIGH SCHOOL, AND THERE WERE 7 GRADUATES IN 1915 - THE FIRST GROUP TO COMPLETE 11 YEARS.

IN 1916, THE NORTH AND SOUTH WINGS WERE CONSTRUCTED TO THE SCHOOL (NOW KNOWN AS PIETZSCH PIETZSCH ELEMENTARY). IN APRIL, 1919, PROFESSOR PIETZSCH ASKED THE SCHOOL BOARD TO CONSTRUCT THE TRADES SCHOOL, AND IN SEPTEMBER 1920, THE FIRST CLASSES WERE HELD IN FOUNDRY PRACTICE, WOODWORKING, WOODWORKING, PATTERN-MAKING AND DRAWING.

THE BOND ISSUE OF 1918 NOT ONLY PROVIDED A TRADES SCHOOL BUILDING, IT ALSO PROVIDED REST ROOMS WITH

MODERN PLUMBING AND DRINKING FOUNTAINS, AS WELL AS A AS A CENTRAL HEATING SYSTEM. THE PASSING OF THE OLD OLD FASHIONED WATER BARREL, WHEN EVERY PUPIL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPLYING HIS OWN DRINKING CUP, WAS A A GREAT BLESSING.

IN 1921, PROFESSOR PEITZSCH ASKED FOR A BOND I TO CONSTRUCT A NEW HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING, AND ON THE 3RD 3RD OF DECEMBER, 1921, THE BOND ISSUE PASSED - 106 TO 10. 10. IN JANUARY, 1923, CONSTRUCTION ON THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL BEGAN - A THREE STORY BUILDING WITH A HOME EC EC BUILDING, A GYM, AUDITORIUM, EXCELLENT LABORATORIES. LABORATORIES.

PROFESSOR PIETCSCH WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR CONVINCING CONVINCING THE TRUSTEES OF SOUTH PARK TO BEGIN SOUTH SOUTH PARK COLLEGE, WHICH LATER WAS TO BECOME AMAR LAMAR TECH, THEN LAMAR UNIVERSITY.

APRIL 16, 1924, THE CITY OF BEAUMONT COUNCIL N ED LOUIS LOUIS R. PIETZSCH AS THEIR NEW CITY MANAGER, AND THUS L. THUS L. R. PIETZSCH LEFT SOUTH PARK SCHOOLS. BUT HE ACCOMPLISHED MUCH AT SOUTH PARK SCHOOLS, AND STANDS TAIL IN THE MEMORIES OF MANY.

CARL W. BINGMAN (THE SKIPPER) WOULD BE THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT, AS WELL AS COLLEGE PRESIDENT. HE HAD HAD BEEN PRINCIPAL OF THE HIGH SCHOOL SINCE 1919, AS WELL AS DEAN OF THE COLLEGE, AND RAN A TIGHT SHIP, AND AND WAS KNOWN BY EVERYONE AS 'THE SKIPPER'.

SKIPPER BINGMAN APPOINTED ZACK A.WILLIAMSON AS PRINCIPAL OF THE HIGH SCHOOL. ZACK WILLIAMSON BELIEVED

BELIEVED IN HIGH STANDARDS, BOTH ACADEMICALLY AND MORALLY, AND NOT ONLY DID HE MAKE HIS LEADERSHIP FELT IN SOUTH PARK, BUT BEAUMONT AS WELL.

THE SKIPPER ALSO EMPLOYED JOHN E. GRAY, AN 18 YEAR OLD OLD STUDENT WHO HAD ATTENDED SOUTH PARK SCHOOLS, SCHOOLS, AND WAS ATTENDING COLLEGE, TO TEACH HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS IN THE TRADE SCHOOL. JOHN E. GRAY WOULD WOULD LATER BECOME PRESIDENT OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY ONE ONE YEAR LATER, JOHN GRAY WAS APPOINTED TO COACH ALL ALL SPORTS AND TEACH ALL BOYS' PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT SOUTH PARK HIGH SCHOOL.

THE THIRD "LANDMARK" APPOINTMENT THAT THE SKIPPER MADE WOULD BE IN 1925 WITH THE EMPLOYMENT OF JOSEPH J. JOSEPH J. VINCENT - JOE. THIS COMPLETING WHAT WAS TO BE TO BE CALLED THE "FOUR HORSEMEN OF SOUTH PARK".

JOE VINCENT WAS DESCRIBED AS "FLAMBOYANT", AND ANY OTHER DESCRIPTION WOULD DO HIM AN INJUSTICE. HE LIKED LIKED EVERYONE. HE WALKED THE STREETS OF SOUTH PARK PARK AS THO HE OWNED THEM, AND THOUGHT EVERY SOUTH SOUTH PARKER SHOULD DO THE SAME. HE WAS A BIG MAN, MAN, AND AFTER HIS RETURN FROM WORLD WAR II, WAS FONDLY CALLED THE "COLONEL". TO JOE, A MEETING IN FRONT OF "THE DRUG STORE" WITH THREE STUDENTS WAS WAS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS ONE IN AUSTIN. HE WAS KNOWLEDGEABLE ON ALL TOPICS - SPORTS, POLITICS, EDUCATION, WARS, ARMY, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, OR JUST PLAIN GOSSIP. HE WAS COMPLETELY AT EASE WITH ANY GROUP; HE HE RELATED WITH ALL PEOPLE - RICH OR POOR, EDUCATED EDUCATED OR UNEDUCATED, YOUNG OR OLD. AND JOE VINCENT WOULD LATER BECOME SUPERINTENDENT OF SOUTH

SOUTH PARK SCHOOLS.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN TEAMED TOGETHER IN DEVELOPING THE DEVELOPING THE YOUNG AND GROWING HIGH SCHOOL IN O AS INTO AS FINE AN INSTITUTION OF ITS KIND AS Y IN THE STATE. IN A BOOK WRITTEN BY RUTH WIESS SERGE T ENTITLED 'THE STORY OF BEAUMONT', SHE DESCRIBE SOUTH SOUTH PARK SCHOOL SYSTEM AS ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE SCHOOL SYSTEMS, AND ONE OF THE RIC EST RICHEST INDEPENDENT DISTRICTS IN THE WORLD. E WAS WAS NOT REFERRING TO THE PEOPLE OF THE SOUTH ARK MAKING IT THE RICHEST, SHE WAS REFERRING TO TS FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

ALMOST UNQUESTIONABLY, SOUTH PARK HAS BEEN BLESSED BLESSED WITH STRONG LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS MEN F CHARACTER AND VISION: AND, ALSO, THESE MEN HAD THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE DEDICATED TEACHERS.

THE GROWTH OF THE SOUTH PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE THE MANY SCHOOLS THAT SPRUNG UP AROUND BEAUMONT AS AS A PART OF THIS SYSTEM IS REMARKABLE - AND IT IS WITH WITH SADNESS THAT I THINK ABOUT THE DEMISE O THE SOUTH PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT.

THERE IS SO MUCH TRADITION IN SOUTH PARK'S HISTORY - - AND SO MANY MEN AND WOMEN WHO HELPED MAKE IT AN AN OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SYSTEM. WE OWE THEM O MUCH! MUCH!

THIS IS ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE HISTORY OF SOUTH PARK. RAY ASBURY DID A GREAT JOB IN HIS RESEARCH IN

**ORDER TO WRITE AND PUBLISH THE SOUTH PARK STOR - AND
AND I THINK EVERYONE WOULD FIND IT INTERESTIN TO
READ.**

**I FEEL VERY PROUD TO HAVE ATTENDED SOUTH PARK
ELEMENTARY (NOW PIETZSCH) AND SOUTH PARK HIGH SCHOOL -
SCHOOL - AND TO HAVE KNOWN SOME OF THE MEN WHO
MADE IT ALL POSSIBLE - JOE VINCENT, C. W. BINGMAN, ZACK
ZACK WILLIAMSON, JOHN GRAY AND RAY ASBURY.**