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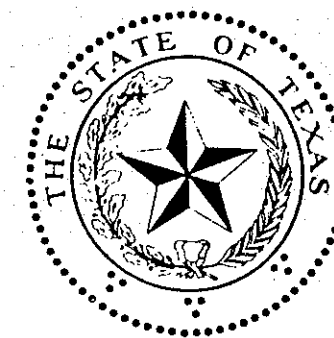
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*Junior Historians - 50 years in Texas*



DEDICATION

OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

SITE OF KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

1913 - 1988

KILGORE, TEXAS

SPONSORED BY

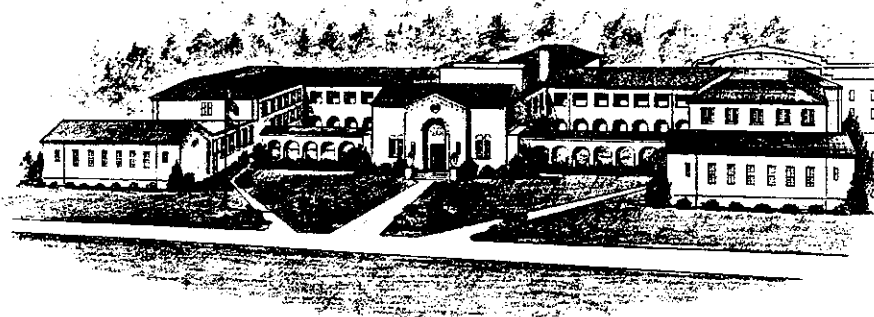
GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

AND

JUNIOR HISTORIANS 1985 - 1988,  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES,  
KILGORE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Friday, September 2, 1988  
9:00 a.m.

711 N. Longview Street  
Kilgore, Texas



## KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

Public education in Kilgore traces its history to classes held in private homes and the establishment of private institutions, most notably the Alexander Institute. Operated by Isaac Alexander, the school moved to Kilgore in 1873. It continued to serve the children of the town until 1894, when it was relocated to Jacksonville. It was later renamed Lon Morris College.

The building which housed the Alexander Institute was converted into a public school. The Kilgore Independent School District, established in 1906, continued to use the facility until 1913, when a new two-story red brick school building was erected at this site on Longview Street.

Following the discovery of oil in Kilgore in 1930 and the resulting oil boom, the 1913 school was soon inadequate to house the student population of the city. The red brick school was razed in 1932, and a new combination high school, junior high, and auditorium was erected on the site in 1933. An elementary school was later added to the property.

This facility has continued to serve as an educational institution for the city of Kilgore, and stands as an integral part of the life of the city.

**Sponsored by Junior Historians 1985-1988, K.H.S.  
and Board of Trustees, K.I.S.D.**

## PROGRAM

Master of Ceremonies	The Honorable Bob Barbee Mayor, City of Kilgore
Invocation	The Reverend Dan Goodwin Pastor, First Presbyterian Church Kilgore, Texas
Pledge of Allegiance	Brad Crump President, Junior Historians
Welcome	W.W. Roberts President, Board of Trustees Kilgore Public Schools
Introductions	Bob Barbee
Acknowledgments	Mrs. Marita Chanler Ater Sponsor, Junior Historians
Address	The Honorable Ralph Hall, U.S. Representative, District IV
"This is My Country"	Al Jacobs Kilgore High School Band - Mike Geddie, Director
Unveiling of Marker	E.C. Elder, Former Superintendent and Eddie J. Little, Superintendent
Dedicatory Remarks	Mrs. Virginia Long Vice-Chairman, Texas Historical Commission
Presentation	Norman Black, Chairman, Gregg County Historical Commission
Benediction	The Reverend O.D. Oliver Pastor, First Baptist Church Kilgore, Texas
School Song	Devereux-Bagwell Kilgore High School Band

Programs distributed by members of Junior Historians of Kilgore High School

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EVANGELINE L. WHORTON,  
GALVESTON ISLAND

# TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512)463-6100

January 11, 1988

Dr. Norman Black  
417 Mobberley  
Longview, Texas 75602

RE: KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL  
27 x 42 subject marker with post (Job #22987)

Dear Dr. Black:

This letter is to notify you that the State Marker Committee has reviewed and approved the above-referenced topic for an Official Texas Historical Marker.

At this time, payment for the marker is due. A check, in the amount of \$702.00 (\$650.00 if paid for by a tax-exempt organization), should be made payable to the Texas Historical Commission and sent to the letterhead address at your earliest convenience.

Once payment is received, the application will be placed in line to have the marker inscription written. The inscription will not be written until after funds have been received. When the text is prepared, a copy will be sent to you and any parties listed below for review and approval.

The Texas Historical Commission wishes to congratulate you for your efforts to record and preserve Texas history.

Sincerely,

*Frances Rickard*  
Frances Rickard, Director  
State Marker Program

cc: Junior Historians, Kilgore High School

P.S. An additional \$52.50 is due for the requested line of incising (70 characters @ \$0.75). The line you suggested is too long for the base, but may go on the back of the marker.

*The State Agency for Historic Preservation*

**KILGORE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

711 NORTH LONGVIEW STREET

KILGORE, TEXAS 75662

**Dr. Eddle J. Little**  
Superintendent  
**James E. Elms**  
Assistant Superintendent  
**Verner W. Laird**  
Director, Business Services

January 28, 1988

Mrs. Frances Rickard, Director  
State Marker Program  
Texas Historical Commission  
P. O. Box 12276  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Mrs. Rickard:

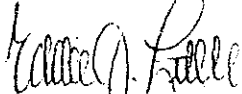
RE KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL  
27 X 42 Subject Marker with Post  
(Job #22987)

Enclosed are two (2) checks, each for \$351.25, covering the \$702.50 required for the above-referenced marker. (\$650 for a tax exempt organization + \$52.50 for the incising.)

We are both pleased and excited over the approval of this site marker for our Kilgore High School. This truly will help preserve the history so important to our school district.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance.

Very truly yours,



Eddie J. Little  
Superintendent

Enc. Tax Exemption Certificate  
Two checks

✓ c: Dr. Norman Black  
417 Mobberly Avenue  
Longview, TX 75602

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post  
Gregg County (Job #22987)

Location: 711 N. Longview Street, Kilgore

KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL\*

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN KILGORE TRACES ITS HISTORY TO CLASSES HELD IN PRIVATE HOMES AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS, MOST NOTABLY THE ALEXANDER INSTITUTE, OPERATED BY ISAAC ALEXANDER, THE SCHOOL MOVED TO KILGORE IN 1873, IT CONTINUED TO SERVE THE CHILDREN OF THE TOWN UNTIL 1894, WHEN IT WAS RE-LOCATED TO JACKSONVILLE, IT WAS LATER RENAMED LON MORRIS COLLEGE.

THE BUILDING WHICH HOUSED THE ALEXANDER INSTITUTE WAS CONVERTED INTO A PUBLIC SCHOOL, THE KILGORE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT, ESTABLISHED IN 1906, CONTINUED TO USE THE FACILITY UNTIL 1913, WHEN A NEW TWO-STORY RED BRICK SCHOOL BUILDING WAS ERECTED AT THIS SITE ON LONGVIEW STREET.

FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF OIL IN KILGORE IN 1930 AND THE RESULTING OIL BOOM, THE 1913 SCHOOL WAS SOON INADEQUATE TO HOUSE THE STUDENT POPULATION OF THE CITY, THE RED BRICK SCHOOL WAS RAZED IN 1932, AND A NEW COMBINATION HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR HIGH, AND AUDITORIUM WAS ERECTED ON THE SITE IN 1933, AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WAS LATER ADDED TO THE PROPERTY.

THIS FACILITY HAS CONTINUED TO SERVE AS AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION FOR THE CITY OF KILGORE, AND STANDS AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LIFE OF THE CITY.\*\*

TEXAS SESQUICENTENNIAL 1836-1986\*\*\*

- \*3/4 inch lettering
- \*\*1/2 inch lettering
- \*\*\*1/4 inch lettering

INCISE ON REVERSE:

Sponsored by Junior Historians 1985-1988, K.H.S.  
and Board of Trustees, K.I.S.D.

STATE MARKER PROGRAM  
Texas Historical Commission  
P.O. Box 12276  
Austin, Texas 78711  
512/463-6100

June 7, 1988

Mr. Bill Southwell  
The Southwell Company  
P.O. Box 299  
San Antonio, TX 78291

RE: Job No. 22987

County GREGG

Title KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Mr. Southwell:

The Texas Historical Commission wishes to place an order with you for the following items:

- 16" x 12" Grave Marker
- 27" x 42" Subject Marker with Post
- 27" x 42" Subject Marker without Post for attachment to \_\_\_\_\_
- 18" x 28" Subject Marker with Post
- 18" x 28" Subject Marker without Post for attachment to \_\_\_\_\_
- Medallion No. \_\_\_\_\_ and 16" x 12" Plate with Post
- Medallion No. \_\_\_\_\_ and 16" x 12" Plate without Post for attachment to \_\_\_\_\_
- Aluminum National Register Plaque for attachment to \_\_\_\_\_
- Plastic Paperweight Replica of Job No. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County
- Medallion Paperweight
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide us with a rubbing of the inscription as appropriate.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this order.

Sincerely,

*Cynthia G. Beeman*

State Marker Program

SHIPPING INFORMATION

Mr. Verner Laird  
Kilgore I.S.D.  
711 N. Longview Street  
Kilgore, TX 75662

INCISING INFORMATION

(  
(  
( Sponsored by Junior Historians 1985-1988, K.H.S.  
( and Board of Trustees, K.I.S.D.  
(  
(  
(

**APPLICATION FORM FOR OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER**

Texas Historical Commission  
History Division  
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, Texas 78711

22987

Title of Marker (subject to revision by THC staff)     ▶     Kilgore High School	County ▶     Gregg
Marker Location (from nearest town on state map)     ▶     711 N. Longview St., Kilgore, Texas	
Distance and direction of subject from marker site     ▶     Same	If not on post, type of surface to which marker     ▶ will be attached (wood, stone, etc.)
Owner of Marker Site     ▶     Kilgore Independent School District	Address     City, Zip 711 N. Longview St.,     Kilgore, Texas 75662
Sponsor of Marker     ▶     Junior Historians, Kilgore High School and Board of Trustees, Kilgore Independent School District	Address     City, Zip 711 N. Longview St.,     Kilgore, Texas 75662
Signature of County Chairman     ▶  <i>Amelia B. Belding</i>	Address     City, Zip <i>4 Palisades     Longview, TX</i> <i>(McCann Rd.)     75601</i>
Person to whom marker is to be shipped*     ▶     Mr. Verner Laird Kilgore Independent School District	Address     City, Zip 711 N. Longview St.     Kilgore, TX 75662

*\*NOTE: Freight companies cannot ship to route or box numbers. If street address is unavailable, please provide a phone number. If marker is to be placed on highway right-of-way, it will be shipped to your district highway engineer.*

Please consult the back of this page for specifications of the markers available. Check the items desired below. Approval of the application and narrative *must* be obtained from the county historical commission, as indicated by the county chairman's signature on this form, before forwarding the material to the Texas Historical Commission. Please *do not* send payment if ordering subject or building markers; funds will be requested once the application has been approved by the State Marker Committee. Sales tax of 6 1/4% must be added to the price, except if purchased by a tax-exempt organization. Applicants may order a marker with a socket to attach to their own post; however, the cost is the same as a marker furnished with a foundry post.

**SUBJECT MARKERS**

- |  |       |          |          |
|--|-------|----------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16" x 12" grave marker (comes with mounting bar) . . .  | \$225 | With tax | \$238.78 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 27" x 42" subject marker with post . . . . . | \$650 |          | \$689.81 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27" x 42" subject marker without post . . . . .         | \$600 |          | \$636.75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18" x 28" subject marker with post . . . . .            | \$375 |          | \$397.97 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18" x 28" subject marker without post . . . . .         | \$300 |          | \$318.38 |
- I(We) request that RTHL designation be considered for this marker.

**BUILDING MARKERS**

- |   |       |          |          |
|---|-------|----------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16" x 12" building marker with post . . . . .    | \$350 | With tax | \$371.45 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16" x 12" building marker without post . . . . . | \$300 |          | \$318.38 |
- Applications for building markers will automatically be considered for the RTHL designation. Please read carefully Texas Marker Policies 13 through 18, and indicate that you have done so by signing below.

Signature of owner \_\_\_\_\_

**PAPERWEIGHTS**

Please indicate quantity desired.

- |   |      |          |         |
|---|------|----------|---------|
| _____ 3" x 4" plastic paperweight<br>mounted with replica of marker . . . . .     | \$90 | With tax | \$95.51 |
| <i>Allow two months from completion of marker<br/>for receipt of paperweight.</i> |      |          |         |
| _____ Medallion paperweight . . . . .   | \$40 |          | \$42.45 |
| <i>Allows four lines of engraving; please indicate desired wording.</i>           |      |          |         |

**DIRECTIONAL SIGNS**

Please indicate quantity desired and give location(s) on form above:

- |   |      |          |         |
|---|------|----------|---------|
| 24" x 24" Historical Markers In City sign . . . . .   | \$80 | With tax | \$84.90 |
| <i>These will be shipped to and placed on your town's city<br/>limits signs by the District Highway Engineer.</i> |      |          |         |
| _____ Black and White (for farm-to-market roads, state and U.S. highways)   |      |          |         |
| _____ Green and White (for interstate highways)   |      |          |         |
| 18" x 22" Historical Marker directional sign . . . . .  | \$80 |          | \$84.90 |
| <i>In black and white only. For city and county roads.</i>  |      |          |         |
| <i>Applicant must supply post and be responsible for placement.</i>   |      |          |         |
| _____ With arrow pointing straight ahead  |      |          |         |
| _____ With arrow pointing left  |      |          |         |
| _____ With arrow pointing right   |      |          |         |

**OTHER**

- |   |       |          |          |
|---|-------|----------|----------|
| □ National Register plaque . . . . .                                    | \$ 50 | With tax | \$ 53.06 |
| □ 12" x 6" supplemental plate . . . . .                                 | \$110 |          | \$116.74 |
| □ 16" x 12" building marker plate only<br>(see policy #15) . . . . .    | \$190 |          | \$201.64 |
| □ Replacement medallion (see policy #15) . . . . .                      | \$110 |          | \$116.74 |
| □ Bronze stars (for replacement on 1936<br>granite markers) . . . . .   | \$ 25 |          | \$ 27.14 |
| □ Bronze wreaths (for replacement on<br>1936 granite markers) . . . . . | \$ 25 |          | \$ 27.14 |
| □ Bronze seals (for replacement on<br>1936 granite markers) . . . . .   | \$ 65 |          | \$ 68.98 |
| □ Bronze plates (for replacement on<br>1936 granite markers) . . . . .  | \$185 |          | \$196.33 |
| □ Certificates of commendation . . . . .                                |       |          | 50c each |

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post  
Gregg County (Job #22987)

Location: 711 N. Longview Street, Kilgore

KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL\*

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN KILGORE TRACES ITS HISTORY TO  
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THIS FACILITY HAS CONTINUED TO SERVE AN AN EDUCATIONAL  
INSTITUTION FOR THE CITY OF KILGORE AND STANDS AS AN  
INTEGRAL PART OF THE LIFE OF THE CITY,\*\*

TEXAS SESQUICENTENNIAL 1836-1986\*\*\*

- \*3/4 inch lettering
- \*\*1/2 inch lettering
- \*\*\*1/4 inch lettering

INCISE ON REVERSE:  
Sponsored by Junior Historians 1985-1987, K.H.S. 1988  
and Board of Trustees, K.I.S.D.

RECEIVED

MAY 31 1988

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION



KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

By: Helen McHaney Griffin  
2600 Brookview  
Kilgore, TX 75662

22987

Before the establishment of public education in Texas, education was provided in the home and by private institutions made possible by the settlers of the community. A look into the formative years of the area will give a better understanding of the strength given by the pioneers and early-day leaders of the Kilgore schools in the laying of the foundation of education from the mid-Nineteenth century to the present time.

"An Act was passed by the Fifth Legislature of Texas, approved January 25, 1854, 4 Gammels Laws of Texas, pages 27-29, incorporating the "New Danville Masonic Female Academy". This academy, located four miles east of Kilgore, continued as a school until after the War Between the States in 1865, and until the establishment of the townsite of Kilgore in 1872."<sup>1</sup>

"Professor Isaac Alexander, who had been a teacher in the famed Looney School at Gilmer, became associated with the New Danville Masonic Female Academy. In 1873, he was persuaded to move the academy to Kilgore after its founding in 1872 with the coming of the International Railroad, and thereafter the school was commonly known as the Alexander Institute, open alike to male and female students."<sup>2</sup>

"In 1875, the school was transferred to the East Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Opened with primary, grammar, and junior college departments, the school developed into a finishing school for girls and a preparatory school for boys. The only Methodist school in the bounds of the Conference, the Institute, by 1885, had property valued at \$8,000, employed four teachers, and enrolled 150 pupils."<sup>3</sup>

1. Richard B. Levy, History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas, Pg. 9
2. Helen McHaney Griffin, Alexander Institute: Forerunner of Modern Schools, Pg. 1
3. Dorman H. Winfrey, A History of Rusk County, Texas, Pg. 55

"Dr. Alexander served as president of the institution until about 1894 when it was moved to Jacksonville in northeastern Rusk County near Kilgore and later was given the name Lon Morris College."<sup>4</sup> "At the time the Alexander Institute was moved to Jacksonville, Miss Stella Goforth of Overton, later Mrs. John E. Bagwell of Kilgore, was one of the teachers in the old two-story building. The building was converted into a public school, housing Kilgore Public Schools until 1913."<sup>5</sup>

"On January 6, 1894, the Trustees of the Alexander Institute executed a deed to the school property to the Methodist Episcopal Church of Kilgore. This property was used as a community school for Kilgore students. On November 23, 1904 a Trustee of the Alexander Institute representing the Methodist Conference, executed a deed to the aforementioned property to J. S. King, et al, Trustees of the community school of Kilgore. According to the Gregg County Commissioner's Court records, an election of the people of Kilgore on August 27, 1906, as canvassed by Gregg County Judge Edwin Lacy, established the Kilgore Independent School District, an area of 25 miles, having 125 pupils, and with a tax rate set at .20¢. On April 19, 1913, the Board of Trustees of the Kilgore Independent School District: J. F. Culp, President, L. P. Griffin, P. E. Barton, R. W. Wynn, John S. King, and Steve Dunn, a negro, executed a deed disposing of the aforementioned school property for a consideration of \$1,150. The building was dismantled at the time the property was sold and a new school building was erected on Longview Street."<sup>6</sup>

The need for a new location for a school brought about acquisition of an 8.35 acre site, an unplatted part of the Mary Van Winkle survey, Abstract #208 of the city of Kilgore located at 711 N. Longview Street. According to the deed

4. Homer S. Thrall, A Brief History of Methodism in Texas, Pg. 276
5. Stella G. Bagwell et al, Places, Names and Narratives of Kilgore, Texas, Pg. 9
6. Helen McHaney Griffin, op. cit., Pg. 4, 5

records of Gregg County, Texas, a deed was executed by J. S. King and wife, L. V. King, on August 26, 1912 and filed for record May 11, 1925 to the Trustees of the Kilgore Independent School District to sell, grant, and convey the site, to be used for school purposes, for and in consideration of \$835.00 as recorded in Volume 50, Pg. 447-450. A two-story red brick building was erected on this new site in 1913 to house students in grades one through 10. Classes for Kilgore scholastics continued in this building from 1913 until 1932.

In December 1930, oil was discovered in the townsite of Kilgore marking the beginning of the East Texas Oil Field. The population grew from 500 to some 3,000 people in a matter of weeks.

"The boom caught Kilgore schools ill-prepared for the great influx of new students. E. C. Elder, who was <sup>still alive</sup> superindendent at the time, recalled that Kilgore had two buildings, an old red brick and a wooden annex. Before school was out in May of 1931, there was not room for all the students and Kilgore couldn't take care of them. "Shotgun" houses were built in the summer of 1931 to put the extra children in." <sup>7</sup> To take care of the extra load, students in the upper grade levels alternated classes and recess every hour the first year. The following year one half of the students went a half day; another group followed for the remainder of the day.

"Kilgore, like other districts, had money problems at this time. S. S. Laird, a school trustee and benefactor, came to the rescue and advanced \$10,000 to the district to meet the emergency." <sup>8</sup>

The old red-brick building would no longer meet the needs of the mushrooming student population. In 1932, a \$210,000 bond issue was passed, the brick high school was torn down, and a new high school, junior high, and auditorium

7. Kilgore News Herald, Oil Brought School Changes, an interview, E. C. Elder, July 1973, Centennial Edition, Pg. 4J

8. Ibid, Pg. 4J

with administrative offices was built comprising one unit. Later, an elementary school, Campus Ward, was built at the back of the auditorium. Immediately preceding the oil boom, Kilgore schools employed seven white and five negro teachers. At the present time, certified personnel number 245 and teach scholastics numbering 3,445 of which 950 are enrolled in grades nine through twelve at the high school site. The Kilgore Independent School District covers 107.6 square miles, part of which is in Rusk county. The assessed valuation stands at \$532,620,119.

Completed in 1933, the new building of traditional Spanish Revival style of architecture, popular in the 1930's, was framed by oil derricks dotted over the area directly behind the high school campus. One lone derrick stood as a sentinel over the area that is now used as the Principal's parking lot. Large, decorative Spanish urns were placed beneath filigreed-cement screens at either side of the steps leading to the main entrance of the building. Arched and beamed corridors were used by the architects to form breezeways connecting the multi-structured building. A replica of the "Lone Star" of Texas, in mosaic design and inlaid with brass, enhanced the terrazo floors of the north and south wings of the lower floor of the main building.

"In taking a look at the heritage of Kilgore, a city founded by God-fearing pioneer East Texans, it is established that these citizens determined to build a community supported by the soil, yet prospered by transportation. These pioneers, including Dr. Isaac Alexander, not content with just an agrarian community, provided this area with an educational facility, the Alexander Institute, that drew young students from all the surrounding communities."<sup>9</sup> Thus, the stage was set for the work of many other erstwhile, zealous leaders as the decades unfolded in this history of education.

9. Helen M. Griffin, Why I Am Proud of My Home Town, Kilgore News Herald, July 3, 1977, Pg. 1B

At this site, Kilgore High School, a red two-story brick building served the needs of the school community from 1913 to 1932, followed by the building of a multi-structured building of traditional Spanish Revival design, completed in 1933, to meet the surge in the student population brought about by the discovery of the East Texas Oil Field. Today, the educational process continues in the renovated, comfort-controlled building of Spanish Revival style, augmented by gymnasiums and ancillary structures. The edifice, with its original terra cotta-colored tile roof, has stood, lending character to this site for over 50 years, as a monument to education for thousands of former students as well as for those of today. It represents sound educational principles and is an integral part of the educational foundation of the students of Kilgore, Texas.

Truly, commemoration of this site is important because of the highly significant role education has played in the unique history of the Kilgore area and the tremendous impact the public schools have had and will continue to have in the future on the lives of those directly affected by its positive and constructive influence.

## Footnotes

1. Richard B. Levy, History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas, unpublished, Pg. 9.
2. Helen McHaney Griffin, Alexander Institute: Forerunner of Modern Schools, Texas Historical Commission files, Pg. 1.
3. Dorman H. Winfrey, A History of Rusk County, Texas, Texian Press, 1961, Pg. 55.
4. Homer S. Thrall, A Brief History of Methodism in Texas, Pg. 276.
5. Stella G. Bagwell et al, Places, Names and Narratives of Kilgore, Texas, unpublished
6. Helen McHaney Griffin, op. cit., Pg. 4, 5.
7. Kilgore News Herald, Oil Brought School Changes, an interview, E. C. Elder, July 1973, Centennial Edition, Pg. 4J.
8. Ibid, Pg. 4J.
9. Helen M. Griffin, Why I Am Proud of My Home Town, Kilgore News Herald, July 3, 1977, Pg. 1B.

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- Griffin, Helen M., Why I Am Proud of My Home Town, Kilgore News Herald, July 3, 1977
- Griffin, Helen McHaney, Alexander Institute: Forerunner of Modern Schools, Texas Historical Commission files.
- Kilgore News Herald, Oil Brought School Changes, an interview, E. C. Elder, Centennial Edition, July 1973.
- Levy, Richard B., History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas, unpublished
- Thrall, Homer S., A Brief History of Methodism in Texas
- Winfrey, Dorman H., A History of Rusk County, Texas, Texian Press 1961

GREGG

COUNTY

I approve the inscription for KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

as sent to me on 5/10/88

Marita C. Oter

signature

Sponsor, K. HS. Jr. Historians

organization

May 23, 1988

date

Have you checked with other parties involved to make sure all the necessary cards are mailed in?

GREGG

COUNTY

I approve the inscription for KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

as sent to me on 5/10/88

Norman W. Mack, D.D.S., Chairman

signature

Gregg County Historical Commission

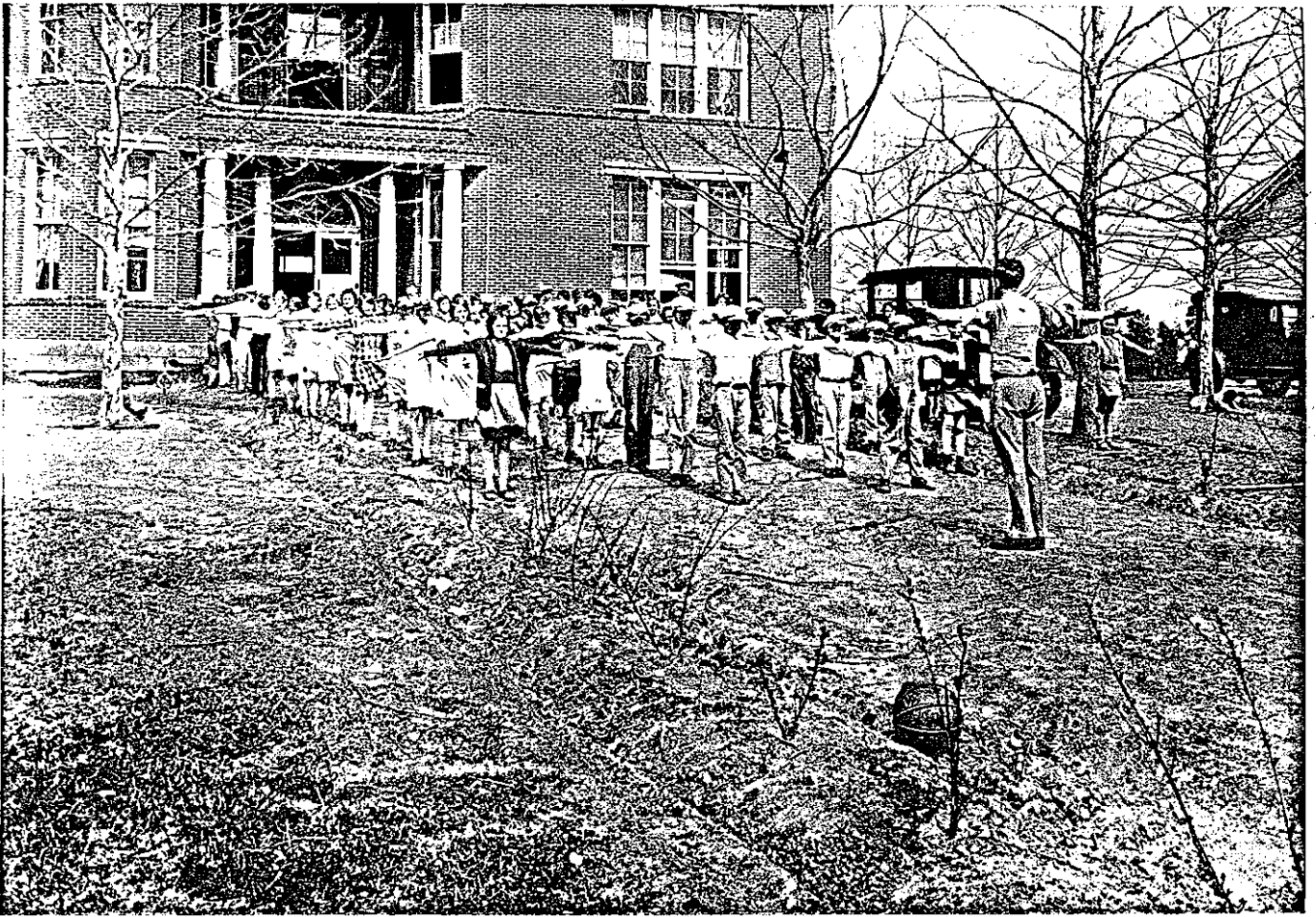
organization

May 26, 1988

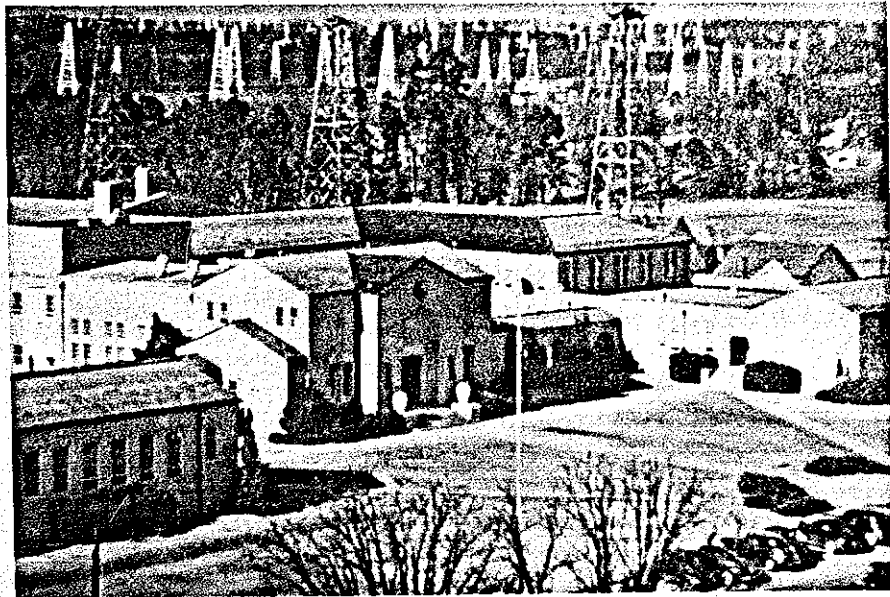
date

Have you checked with other parties involved to make sure all the necessary cards are mailed in?

Yes, card is enclosed.



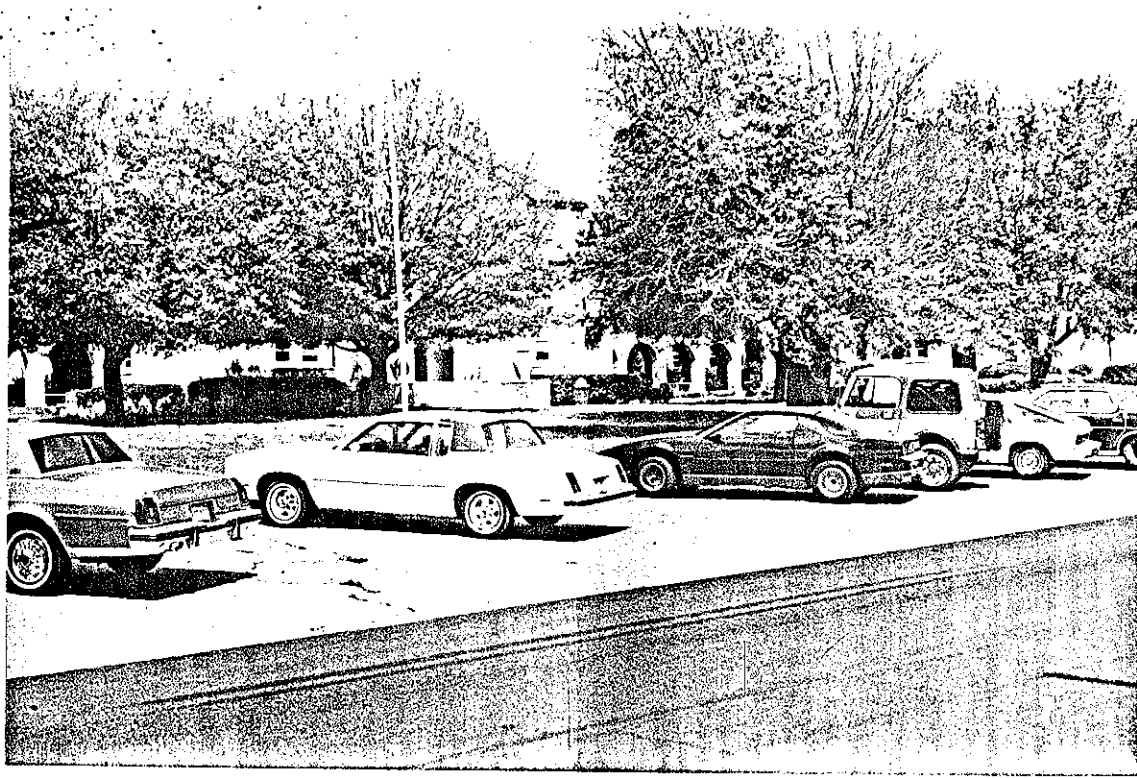
Kilgore High School  
1913 - 1932



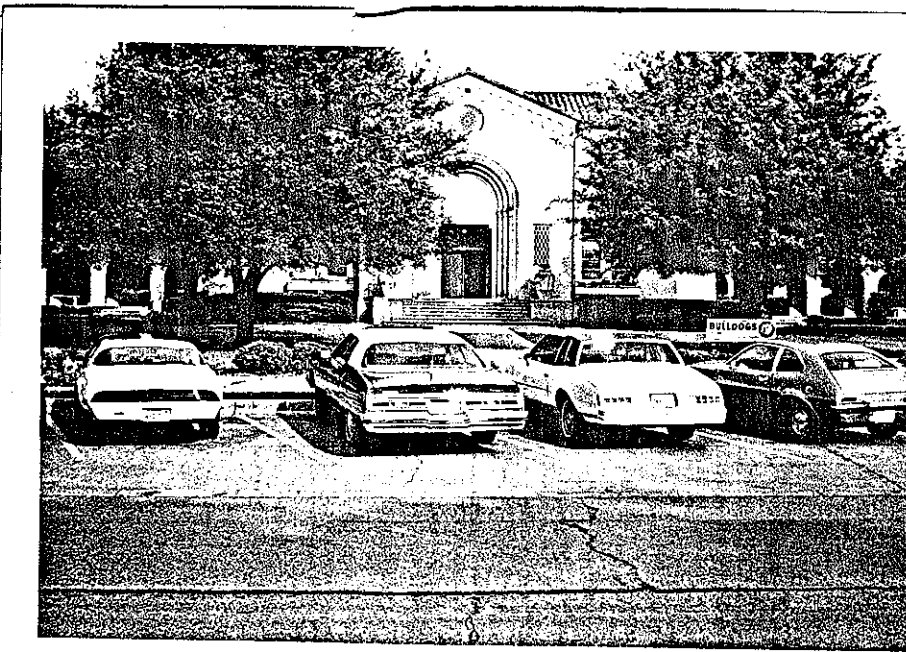
Kilgore High School  
1935



Kilgore High School  
1986



Kilgore High School  
1986



Kilgore High School  
1986  
Auditorium entrance

T.R. FEHRENBACH, SAN ANTONIO  
CHAIRMAN  
MRS. H.L. LONG, KILGORE  
VICE-CHAIRMAN  
DR. DAN A. WILLIS, FORT WORTH  
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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 12276  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711  
(512)463-6100

January 11, 1988

Dr. Norman Black  
417 Mobberley  
Longview, Texas 75602

RE: KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL  
27 x 42 subject marker with post (Job #22987)

Dear Dr. Black:

This letter is to notify you that the State Marker Committee has reviewed and approved the above-referenced topic for an Official Texas Historical Marker.

At this time, payment for the marker is due. A check, in the amount of \$702.00 (\$650.00 if paid for by a tax-exempt organization), should be made payable to the Texas Historical Commission and sent to the letterhead address at your earliest convenience.

Once payment is received, the application will be placed in line to have the marker inscription written. The inscription will not be written until after funds have been received. When the text is prepared, a copy will be sent to you and any parties listed below for review and approval.

The Texas Historical Commission wishes to congratulate you for your efforts to record and preserve Texas history.

Sincerely,

*Frances Rickard*  
Frances Rickard, Director  
State Marker Program

cc: Junior Historians, Kilgore High School

P.S. An additional \$52.50 is due for the requested line of incising (70 characters @ \$0.75). The line you suggested is too long for the base, but may go on the back of the marker.

*The State Agency for Historic Preservation*

*You are cordially invited to attend  
the dedication of the  
Texas Historical Marker  
for  
Kilgore High School  
711 N. Longview St.  
Kilgore, Texas*

*9:00 a.m.  
Friday, September 2, 1988*

*Sponsored By:  
Kilgore Junior Historians  
and Board of Trustees,  
Kilgore Independent School District*

# School to receive marker

By DOUG BRUCE  
Staff Writer

KILGORE — Kilgore High School is getting a historical marker, thanks to the efforts of the school's Junior Historians.

Dedication of the marker is set for 9 a.m. Friday in front of the high school at 711 N. Longview St.

At the dedication ceremony, the Kilgore High School band will play and Mayor Bob Barbee will serve as master of ceremonies. Guest speaker will be U.S. Rep. Ralph Hall, D-Rockwall.

Attending the dedication will be Virginia Long, vice president of the Texas Historical Commission, and Dr. Norman Black, president of the Gregg County Historical Commission.

Sponsor Mrs. Stan (Marita) Ater said the Kilgore Junior Historians were established in 1982 and started the "Adopt a Building" program in 1985 as part of the Texas Sesquicentennial celebration.

The local project included four stages and produced a sight and sound presentation on the high school. The information was then used to get the historical marker, she said. "So we really have been working on it over three years."

Ater taught at Longview High School before moving to Kilgore, and in 1976, Addijo Williams, the LHS social studies coordinator, decided to start a Junior Historian chapter as part of her U.S. Bicentennial project. When Ater moved to Kilgore, she used information compiled by Williams to form the Kilgore chapter.

Five other chapters have now been formed from the original chapter, Ater said.

The Kilgore Independent School District Board of Trustees agreed to pay half the price of the marker so that Junior Historian members could fund their annual trip to Austin.

Students sold candy to raise funds for the trip, Ater said.

More than 600 Junior Historians have been involved in the project, Ater said. "They are a group that is just a cut above everybody else," she said.

Ater said the group tries to visit all the sites in Gregg County that have historical markers. The group was honored this year with a plaque from the Gregg County Historical Commission.

The history of the school dates back to 1872, according to a study by Kilgore resident Helen Griffin.

The New Danville Academy, four miles east of Kilgore, had existed since 1854. In 1873, Professor Isaac Alexander was convinced to move the academy to the new city of Kilgore and became known as the Alexander Institute for male and female students.

The school was later transferred to the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and later the academy moved to Jacksonville where it eventually became known as Lon Morris College. Land owned by the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kilgore was deeded to the city in 1894 for use as a public school, Griffin said.

An election was held Aug. 27, 1906, establishing the Kilgore Independent School District, with an area of 25 miles and 125 students.

The building was sold in 1913 and dismantled. A new building was then constructed on Longview Street, Griffin said.

A two-story, red brick building was built in 1913 on 8.35 acres of land sold to the district for \$835 by Mr. and Mrs. J.S. King. The school held classes for grades 1-10 and classes were held until 1932.

In December 1930, oil was discovered in Kilgore, and the city grew from a population of 500 to more than 3,000 in a matter of weeks.

The rush of new residents and their children to the area caught the small school district unprepared. Shotgun houses were built during the summer of 1931 to hold the extra children. Students in the upper grades alternated classes and recesses every hour for the first year, Griffin said.

The next year, half of the students attended school during the morning and the other half during the afternoon, Griffin said.

Former school trustee S.S. Laird loaned the district \$10,000 to meet the financial crunch caused by the exploding school population. In 1932, a \$210,000 bond issue passed, the old red brick school was torn down and a new high school, junior high, auditorium and administrative offices were built. Later an elementary school was added at the back of the auditorium, Griffin said.

The building was completed in 1933 with Spanish revival style architecture. Oil derricks dotted the area and one stood in the area now used as a principal's parking lot.

The school, with its original terra cotta tile roof, has stood for more than 50 years as a monument to education for thousands of present and former students.

# KHS receives marker

By MARY MEADOR

An official Texas historical marker was unveiled at ceremonies this morning at Kilgore High School. The building, still in use, was completed in 1933.

Principal speaker for the occasion was U.S. Rep. Ralph Hall of Rockwall, who remarked that many occasions are marred by ugliness these days, but such occurrences are offset by such events as the one here, where people are proud of their future and grateful for the leaders of the past.

Hall mentioned the presence of Kilgore High School head coach James Cameron, whom Hall has known all of Cameron's life. "You have the best football coach in the world, maybe even the best man in the world, who teaches his players something other than how to win or lose."

He told the large crowd gathered in the street in front of the school, "The more I learn about Kilgore, the more I am intrigued by it." He said the town works together with "no divisiveness or backbiting; it has known moments of glory and of pain; it has produced millionaires, beauty queens, a national champion girls' basketball team, and its people helped to fill the Big Inch pipeline that helped win the war against Hitler."

He also mentioned the East Texas Oil Museum, "one of the finest in the world," adding that he frequently brings congressional colleagues here to see "what we are really like." Instead of viewing all Texans like the rich people depicted on "Dallas," they are shown the good with the bad, such as stacked rigs and privation.

Hall recalled the history of Kilgore High School since the district's  
See MARKER, Page 8A



**MARKER UNVEILED** — Superintendent Eddie Little, left, and former Superintendent E. C. Elder unveiled official Texas historical marker in front of Kilgore High School in

ceremonies this morning. A large number of many descendants of early-day education trustees and other civic leaders, attend event.

## ★ MARKER

(Continued from Page 1A)

establishment in 1906. Citing such civic leaders as the Griffins, Crims, Bartons, Kings, Lairds, Wynns and Dunns, Hall commented, "This morning we feel the presence of those people who made all of this possible."

The plain people also were important, he said, remarking how the voters, in the early days of the Great Depression, passed a \$210,000 bond issue to build the current school, because they believed in their children and their future. "That's like \$210 million today."

Virginia Long of Kilgore, vice chairman of the Texas Historical Commission, made comments concerning the marker, saying that she thought there was special significance in the fact that it was a group of students (Junior Historians) who were allowed to spearhead the project.

The marker dedication was co-sponsored by that group and the board of trustees of the school district.

She concluded by saying that as a graduate of the institution, it gave her special pleasure to designate Kilgore High School as a landmark of Texas in presenting the marker.

Norman Black of Longview, chairman of the Gregg County Historical Commission, also made comments concerning the marker and presented a certificate of appreciation to Helen McHaney Griffin, who researched the project to get the marker.

Marita Ater, sponsor of Junior Historians, made acknowledgements and thanked the public for buying candy bars which club members sold to help pay for the marker.

Mayor Bob Barbee was master of ceremonies. He introduced descendants of 1933 school board members and school administrators, as well as descendants of J. S. King, former trustee from whom the school

district acquired the land on which the school was later built. Myrtle King Carter of Nacogdoches is the only first generation descendant of King still living. She was accompanied by her daughter and granddaughter, Nancy Carter Speck and Virginia Speck, also of Nacogdoches.

Other members of the King family present were Tom King and Lottie Lipscomb Guttry. Representing trustee John T. Crim Sr., vice president of the school board in 1933, was Billy Bob Crim. Other descendants of trustees present were Shack Cashen, representing his grandfather, S. S. Laird; Winter Elder, representing her father, Kelly Dickson, along with her daughter and granddaughter, Susie and Tara Merritt. Nelwyn Colum represented her father, former Superintendent W. L. Dodson. Unable to be present because of illness was Martha Barton, daughter of P. E. Barton, who was president of the 1933 school board.

The high school band, directed by Mike Geddie, played "This Is My Country," then the marker was unveiled by E. C. Elder, superintendent during the early boom; and Eddie J. Little, current superintendent. The Rev. Dan Goodwin gave the invocation and the Rev. O. D. Oliver pronounced the benediction. Brad Crump, president of Junior Historians, led the pledge of allegiance.



## Gregg County Historical Commission

NORMAN W. BLACK  
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue  
Longview, Texas 75602

September 2, 1988

Phone  
214-757-2261

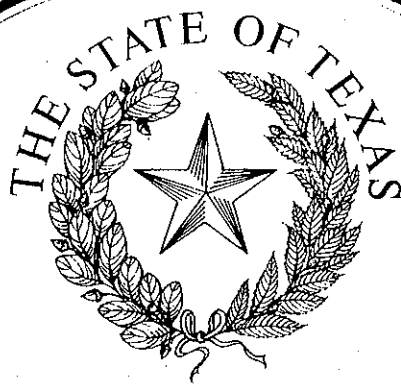
DEDICATION OF AN OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER TO KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

Remarks by the Chairman of the Gregg County Historical Commission on the occasion of the presentation of a Certificate of Appreciation to Helen McHaney Griffin.

The research required for an Official Texas Historical Marker can be quite involved, demanding a great amount of time and effort. Of the, now, 65 historical markers in Gregg County, I can think of no other landmark having the wealth of historical background as does Kilgore High School.

Kilgore, Gregg County, and Texas are indebted to Helen McHaney Griffin for her tireless efforts in researching this subject, in particular, and for her continuing work in preserving our historical heritage.

And I, jointly with Mr. Curtis Tunnell, Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission (who regrets he cannot attend this dedication) am proud to present this Certificate of Appreciation to Helen McHaney Griffin.



# Certificate of Appreciation

presented to

**Helen McHaney Griffin**

for contributions that led  
to the placement of the

**Kilgore High School**

Texas Historical Marker

*Curtis J. Powell*

Executive Director,  
Texas Historical Commission

*Norman W. Noel, P.D.H.*

Chairman, County Historical Commission

*September 2, 1988*

Date



# Kilgore dedicates marker

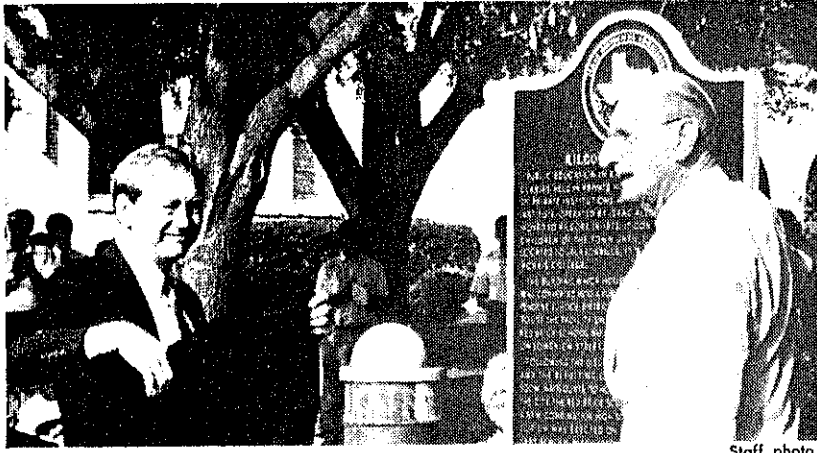
By DOUG BRUCE  
Staff Writer

KILGORE — A Texas Historical Marker was unveiled Friday honoring Kilgore High School.

The marker was a project of the school's Junior Historians.

Sponsor Marita Ater said the Kilgore Junior Historians were established in 1982 and started the "Adopt A Building" program in 1985 as part of the Sesquicentennial celebration.

The information uncovered in that project was used to get the historical marker, she said. "So we really have been working on it over three years."



Staff photo

Dr. Eddie J. Little, left, Kilgore school superintendent, and former superintendent Gene Little unveil a Texas Historical Marker Friday at Kilgore High School.

The Kilgore Independent School District Board of Trustees agreed to pay half the price of the marker so junior historian members could fund their annual trip to Austin.

Students sold candy to raise

funds for the trip, Ater said.

More than 600 junior historians have been involved in the project, Ater said. "They are a group that is just a cut above everybody else," she said.



**AT MARKER UNVEILING** — Shown at unveiling of historical marker at Kilgore High School are several program principals. From left to right are Myrtle King Carter, first generation descendant of J. S. King, from whom land for the school was acquired in 1906; U. S. Rep. Ralph Hall, speaker; Dr. Eddie Little, superintendent; Virginia Long, vice chairman of the Texas Historical Com-

mission; E. C. Elder, superintendent of schools at the time of the boom; Helen McHaney Griffin, who did research for the marker; Mayor Bob Barbee, who was master of ceremonies; and Marita Chanler Ater, sponsor of Junior Historians, who spearheaded efforts to get the marker. (Photo by Mary Meador)

# Kilgore High awarded historical marker

By Doug Bruce  
Staff Writer

KILGORE — A major achievement for Kilgore during 1988 was the placing of a Texas Historical Marker in front of Kilgore High School.

The marker was dedicated in August in ceremonies that included Kilgore Mayor Bob Barbee and U.S. Rep. Ralph Hall, D-Rockwall. Attending the marker dedication were Virginia Long, vice president of the Texas Historical Commission and Dr. Norman Black, presi-

dent of the Gregg County Historical Commission.

Research for the marker was conducted by the Kilgore Junior Historians which was established in 1982. The group began an "Adopt a Building" program in 1985 as a Texas Sesquicentennial project.

The project included four stages including a sight and sound presentation on the high school.

The Kilgore ISD Board of Trustees agreed to fund half the marker price. More than 600

junior historians had a part in the project.

The school's history dates back to 1872, according to research by the students.

In early May, the Kilgore Heights Elementary School Cafeteria was destroyed by fire resulting in an estimated loss of \$250,000.

In late May, the school board made plans to renovate an existing playroom and convert it into a cafeteria and kitchen.

Kilgore schools were also among others in the state re-

ceiving much higher scores on the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills test.

Chandler Elementary School showed a 24.7 point increase while overall the district scored 10.2 points higher.

School Superintendent Dr. Eddie J. Little said the increase was due to hard work on the part of teachers. "We really like to think it is the teachers' attention to detail and emphasis on the essential elements they are required to teach," Little said.

# Kilgore schools have seen great progress

(Editor's note: The following is a history of Kilgore High School, by Helen McHaney Griffin. The history was published in the News Herald on Aug. 28, 1988 when the high school was getting ready to receive an official Texas Historical Marker.)

Before the establishment of public education in Texas, education was provided in the home and by private institutions made possible by the settlers of the community.

A look into the formative years of the area will give a better understanding of the strength given by the pioneers and early-day leaders of the Kilgore school in the laying of the foundation of education from the mid-19th century to the present time.

"An act was passed by the Fifth Legislature of Texas, approved Jan. 25, 1854, 4 Gammels Laws of Texas, pages 27-29, incorporating the 'New Danville Masonic Female Academy.' This academy, located four miles east of Kilgore, continued as a school until after the War Between the States in 1865, and until the establishment of the townsite of Kilgore in 1872." (Richard B. Levy, History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas.)

"Professor Isaac Alexander, who had been a teacher in the famed Looney School at Gilmer, became associated with the New Danville Masonic Female Academy. In 1873, he was persuaded to move the academy to Kilgore after its founding in 1872 with the coming of the International Railroad, and thereafter the school was commonly known as the Alexander Institute, open alike to male and female students." (Helen McHaney Griffin, Alexander Institute: Forerunner of Modern Schools.)

"In 1875, the school was transferred to the East Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Opened with primary, grammar and junior college departments, the school developed into a finishing school for girls and a preparatory school for boys. The only Methodist school in the bounds of the conference, the institute by 1885 had property valued at \$8,000, employed four teachers and enrolled 150 pupils." (Dorman H. Winfrey, A History of Rusk County, Texas.)

"Dr. Alexander served as president of the institution until about 1894 when it was moved to Jacksonville in northeastern Rusk County near Kilgore and renamed

Lon Morris College." (Homer S. Thrall, A Brief History of Methodism in Texas.)

"At the time the Alexander Institute was moved to Jacksonville, Miss Stella Goforth of Overton, later Mrs. John E. Bagwell of Kilgore, was one of the teachers in the old two-story building. The building was converted into a public school, housing Kilgore Public Schools until 1913." (Stella G. Bagwell et al. Places, Names and Narratives of Kilgore, Texas.)

"On Jan. 5, 1894, the trustees of the Alexander Institute executed a deed to the school property to the Methodist Episcopal Church of Kilgore. This property was used as a community school for Kilgore students. On Nov. 23, 1904, a trustee of the Alexander Institute representing the Methodist Conference, executed a deed to the aforementioned trustees of the community school of Kilgore. According to the Gregg County Commissioners Court records, an election of the people of Kilgore on Aug. 27, 1906, as canvassed by Gregg County Judge Edwin Lacy, established the Kilgore Independent School District, an area of 25 miles, having 125 pupils, and with a tax rate set at 20 cents.

"On April 19, 1913, the board of trustees of the Kilgore Independent School District: J.F. Culp, president, L.P. Griffin, P.E. Barton, R.W. Wynn and John S. King, and Steve Dunn, a Negro, executed a deed disposing of the aforementioned school property for a consideration of \$1,150. The building was dismantled at the time the property was sold and a new school building was erected on Longview Street." (Helen McHaney Griffin, op. cit.)

The need for a new location for a school brought about acquisition of an 8.35 acre site, an unplatted part of the Mary Van Winkle survey, Abstract No. 208 of the city of Kilgore located at 711 N. Longview St. According to the deed records of Gregg County, Texas, a deed was executed by J.S. King and wife, Lois King, on Aug. 26, 1912, and filed for record May 11, 1925, to the trustees of the Kilgore Independent School District to sell, grant and convey the site, to be used for school purposes, for and in consideration of \$835 as recorded in Volume 50, Pages 447-450. A two-story red brick building was erected on this new site in 1913 to house students in grade one through 10,



MARKER — This historical marker, in front of Kilgore High School, was presented to the school in the fall of 1988. This Spanish-style architecture school has housed students since 1933.

Classes for Kilgore scholastics continued in this building from 1913 until 1932.

In December 1930, oil was discovered in the townsite of Kilgore marking the beginning of the East Texas Oil Field. The population grew from 500 to 3,000 people in a matter of weeks.

"The boom caught Kilgore schools ill-prepared for the great influx of new students. E.C. Elder, who was superintendent at the time, recalled that Kilgore had two buildings, an old red brick and a wooden annex. Before school was out in May of 1931, there was not room for all the students and Kilgore couldn't take care of them. 'Shotgun'

houses were built in the summer of 1931 to put the extra children in." (Kilgore News Herald, Oil Brought About Changes, an interview with E.C. Elder, July 1973, Centennial Edition). To take care of the extra load, students in the upper grade levels alternated classes and recess every hour the first year. The following year, one-half of the students went a half day; another group followed for the remainder of the day.

"Kilgore, like other districts, had money problems at this time. S.S. Laird, a school trustee and benefactor, came to the rescue and advanced \$10,000 to the district to meet the emergency." (Ibid).

The old red brick building would

no longer meet the needs of the mushrooming student population. In 1932, a \$210,000 bond issue was passed, the brick high school was torn down, and a new high school, junior high and auditorium with administrative offices was built comprising one unit. Later, an elementary school, Campus Ward, was built at the back of the auditorium.

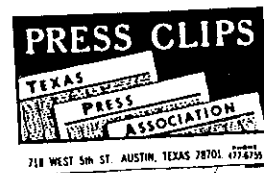
Immediately preceding the oil boom, Kilgore schools employed seven white and five Negro teachers. At the present time, certified personnel number nearly 250 and teach scholastics numbering almost 3,450, of which nearly 950 are enrolled in grades nine through 12 at the high school site. The Kilgore Independent School District covers

107.6 square miles, part of which is in Rusk County. The assessed valuation at the time this story was printed in 1988 stood at \$532,620,119.

Completed in 1933, the new building of traditional Spanish Revival style of architecture, popular in the 1930s, was framed by oil derricks dotted over the area directly behind the high school campus. One lone derrick stood as a sentinel over the area that is now used as the principal's parking lot.

Large, decorative Spanish urns were placed beneath filigreed-cement screens at either side of the steps leading to the main entrance of the building. Arched and beamed corridors were used by the architects to form breezeways connecting the multi-structured building. A replica of the "Lone Star" of Texas, in mosaic design and inlaid with brass, enhanced the terrazo floors of the north and south wings of the lower floor of the main building.

"In taking a look at the heritage of Kilgore, a city founded by God-fearing pioneer East Texans, it is established that these citizens determined to build a community supported by the soil, yet prospered by transportation. These pioneers, including Dr. Isaac Alexander, not content with just an agrarian community, provided this area with an educational facility, the Alexander Institute, that drew young students from all the surrounding communities." (Helen M. Griffin, Why I Am Proud of My Home Town, Kilgore News Herald, July 3, 1977). Thus, the stage was set for work of many other erstwhile, zealous leaders as the decades unfolded in this history of education.



News Herald  
Kilgore, Texas

JUN 24 1990

PHOTO: (Y) N

MARKER WORKSHEET

JOB NO. 22987

TITLE KILGORE HIGH SCHOOL

SUBJECT ED

ADDRESS 711 N. Longview St.

DATE 86

TOWN Kilgore

RTHL ----

COUNTY Gregg

SIZE L, with post

ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION:

HISTORICAL EVALUATION: School for the children of Kilgore was first provided by private organizations and institutions, most notably the Alexander Institute, which left Kilgore in 1894 and later became Lon Morris College. The building which housed Alexander Institute was then converted to a public school building, and the Kilgore I.S.D. was established in 1906. A schoolhouse built in 1913 proved much too small to accommodate the influx of students during the East Texas oil boom of the 1930s, so a new building (which now serves as the high school) was constructed in 1933. The applicants do not wish to apply for the RTHL designation; however, photographs are enclosed to give you an idea of the campus on which the marker will be placed. (This marker is sponsored, by the way, by the Kilgore Junior Historians.)

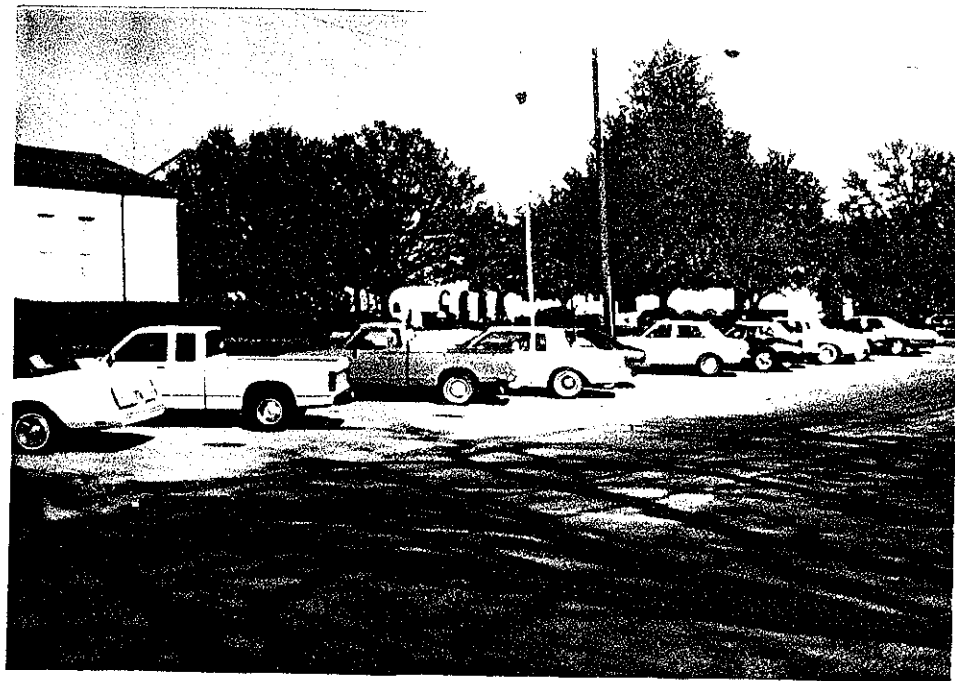
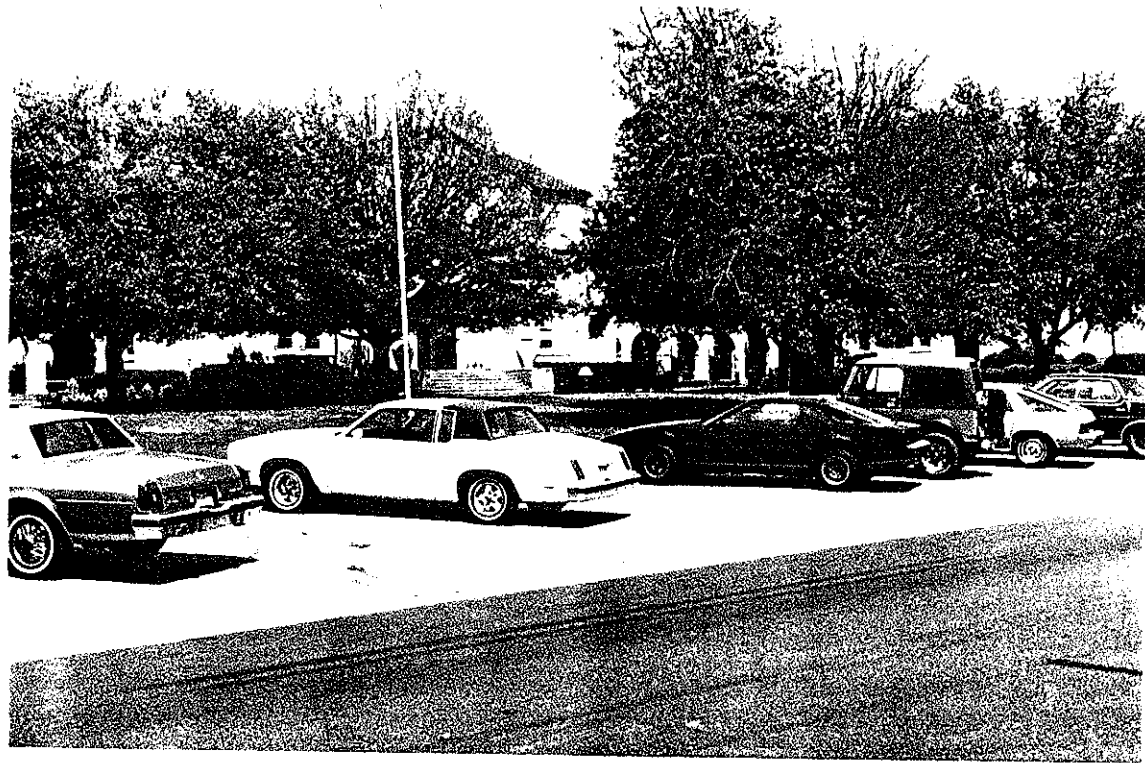
RECOMMENDATION: subject marker EVALUATED BY Frances Rickard

RECOMMENDATION OF SMC MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

MARKER GUIDE INFO: \_\_\_\_\_

Kilgore High School  
1986



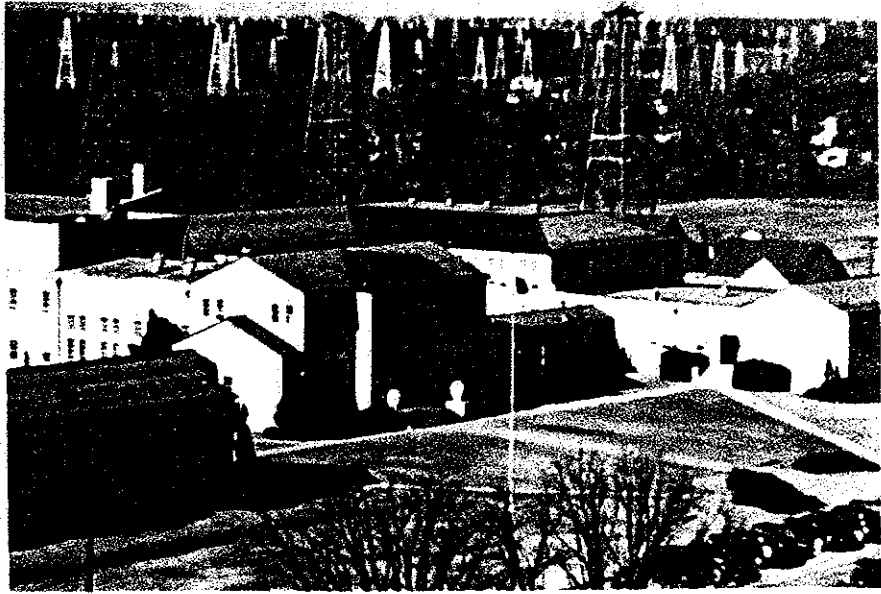
Kilgore High School  
1986



Kilgore High School  
1986  
Auditorium entrance



Kilgore High School  
1913 - 1932



Kilgore High School  
1935