

**Figure 1. SH 135 Impact Evaluation Project Area, Segment I.**

16" x 12" Official Texas Historical Building  
Medallion Plate  
Gregg County

676

ROCK SPRINGS SCHOOLHOUSE.\*

BUILT 1849, WITH DONATED LABOR  
AND LUMBER. ONE-TEACHER SCHOOL  
WAS TAUGHT HERE UNTIL 1930'S.

FIRST TEACHER WAS J.C. VERNON.

FIRST TRUSTEES: THOMAS G. CHISUM,  
JAMES "SQUIRE" DILLINGHAM, JOEL  
SMITH. (SMITH DONATED THE SITE.)

BUILDING WAS ALSO USED FOR  
CHURCH, GRANGE, SOCIALS, FRATERNAL  
MEETINGS, AND POLITICAL RALLIES.

COMMUNITY NAMED FOR NEARBY  
SPRINGS. SETTLED BY PIONEERS  
FROM TENNESSEE.\*\*

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK, 1966.\*\*\*

\*1/2" condensed lettering

\*\*3/8" lettering

\*\*\*1/4" lettering

COUNTY Gregg

TOWN Gladewater

NAME OF MEDALLION STRUCTURE Rock Springs School House

MEDALLION PLATE SIZE 14 " x 9 "

5300

OUR SUGGESTED INSCRIPTION FOR PLATE:

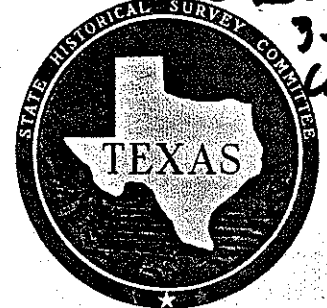
(please type or print)

Rock Springs School House Organized 1849 in Prec. 4, Rusk County (now Gregg Co.) near bubbling Rock Spring.

Building was used for School, Church, Social, Political and Cultural Center.

Community first settled by Tennessee Pioneers.

First Trustees: Thomas Gibbons Chisum, James "Squire" Dillingham and Joel Smith with James Carrol Vernon the first Teacher,



TEXAS STATE CAPITOL  
NATION'S LARGEST STATE  
CAPITOL BUILDING FINANCED BY  
EXCHANGE OF 3,000,000 ACRES  
OF PANHANDLE LAND. BUILT OF  
TEXAS PINK GRANITE 1882-88

*History says  
built in 1847.  
676  
letter 2  
3-18-66  
Loggin  
1849*

CHISUM

(Copy must meet State requirements; the Texas State Historical Survey Committee reserves the right to change suggested inscription)

DO YOU DESIRE TO BE CONTACTED RE FINAL INSCRIPTION? yes YES NO NO

AUTHORITY FOR THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE INSCRIPTION:

Mrs Joel Smith and R A Herbst

WHO PREPARED THE INSCRIPTION?

(name) Committee (address) RT 1 Box 9 Gladewater Texas

THE PLATE WILL BE AFFIXED TO To Building

PLEASE SHIP PLATE TO R A Herbst Pres.

Rt 1 Box 9  
Gladewater Texas

DATE Oct 1965

I hereby certify the above application has been approved by the \_\_\_\_\_  
County Historical Survey Committee:

(name)

(address)

R 50000 U  
AUG 22 1962

APPLICATION

THE TEXAS HISTORICAL BUILDING MEDALLION TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMITTEE

County Gregg Town Gladewater Date of Application: 8/10/62

Address: (If the Building is not in town indicate number of miles and direction from center of town and number or name of highway or road.)

4-1/2 miles S.E. Gladewater on Old Kilgore

Highway: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Owner: Rocksprings Cemetery Association

General Designation: Originally school - now used as non-denominational Chapel & Community Building.

Date Built: 1847

Present Condition: Good

Interest:

Architectural Has Bell Tower

Historical Oldest in Gregg Co.

Organization or Individual Assuming Responsibility of Building: \_\_\_\_\_

Rock Springs Cemetery Association.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS BOX

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Approved, Rejected: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Ruling: \_\_\_\_\_

Area Representatives: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members: \_\_\_\_\_

No. Assigned 0268

Date Mailed \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Remarks: See Attached



## HISTORY OF ROCK SPRINGS SCHOOL HOUSE.

The first settlers in the community were from Arkansas. And the community was called Little Arkansas. It included the area between the Smith County line, Sabine River, and Prairie Creek. Later the name was changed to Rock Springs, supposedly from a spring that came out of a rocky ledge near the school.

By the best information available the building was constructed in year of 1847. It was built out of undressed virgin pine lumber cut by a local saw mill. The building is 24' by 36', 12' walls, roof cut 6/12. Boards 1 1/2" x 12", sills 6" x 8" and larger. Framing 2x6" and 2x8" un sized. The roof was made out of pine boards split from near by pine trees. Later on it was sealed and weather boarded. A bell tower on the front of the roof and a large cast iron bell was installed. It was and is now heated by a large wood stove and a brick flue that was built up through the roof. The building was constructed by local people with donated labor and material. Among the families responsible for it was the Smiths, Willinghams, Ingles, Breasers, Gregstons, and Vernons. A one-teacher school was held in it from the time of construction until 1930's. Most pupils attending at one time were 30.

It has and is used for community meeting, religious services. Many denominations have held Church, Sunday School, and Revival Meetings there. It was used by the Grange Farm Organization, and for a short time by The Woodmen of The World. Just after the Civil War the Night Riders ( now Klu Klux Klan ) would meet there. They dressed in white robes and rode white horses. They were active up to the 1890's.

The land was deeded to the school in 1880's. by Joel Smith. Now the it belongs to the Rock Springs Cemetery Association. Deeded to them by his Heirs in# or about 1956. It is located 4 miles southwest of Gladewater, Tx in a pine grove on an acre of ground. Some of the pines are as much as 24" in diameter.

The building was repaired in 1960. It is in good condition. None of the original feature have been changed. It is considered the oldest building now standing in this part of the country.

*family John Ben Hoffards  
1/2 mile from this old  
site - and our community  
wants this marker because  
our ancestors settled here and  
deserve to be recognized.*



TEXAS STATE  
HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMITTEE

TRUETT LATIMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
112 EAST 18TH STREET  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

MAILING ADDRESS:  
P. O. BOX 12276  
CAPITOL STATION

February 17, 1966

RECEIVED  
MAR 21 1966

TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL SURVEY  
COMMITTEE

Mrs. Joel Smith  
Route 2, Box 288  
Gladewater, Texas

Dear Mrs. Smith:

The Research Department, in writing the inscription for the Rocksprings Schoolhouse, has requested the following be brought to your attention:

1. There are two dates of building -- 1847 and 1849. Would you please tell us which is the right one, and what source you used in arriving at the correct date?
2. Because of the size of the plate, it will not be possible to list the first trustees.

We look forward to obtaining the correct building date from you, and we will continue the writing of this inscription as soon as we do.

*Mar 18-66*

Sincerely yours,

*Truett Latimer*  
Truett Latimer  
Executive Director

Dear Sir:-

*Extreme illness has prevented  
an answer to this letter. I am terribly  
sorry for the conflicting dates which  
was an error. The date of formation  
of the Rock Springs Schoolhouse was 1849 and the source  
was from tradition and some documents. we still prefer  
to have the name of the Trustees on the plate. It will  
mean much to thousands who tramp this area wondering  
from where they came. The writing can be smaller.  
we still would like this erected by June 1-66 -*

THE STATE AGENCY FOR HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

*Sincerely  
Mrs. Joel Smith*

# Ask Historical Medallion For Rock Springs School

The Rock Springs School House, which serves as the Rock Springs Community Building, may become the first building in Gregg County to receive the Texas Historical Building Medallion if the work of several Gladeites comes to fruition. Mrs. Coma B. Timmons and her brother, B. P. Walker, along with other interested persons, have completed application for the Medallion.

The awarding of the Texas Historical Building Medallion is an important part of the program of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee in preserving the historical heritage of Texas. The presence of the Medallion designates the structure as worthy of recognition by the State of Texas as an authentic house or building of historical and cultural significance to the State and community in which it exists, therefore meriting preservation.

The Medallion is 14 inches in diameter and is made of cast aluminum with Swedish steel effect. It bears a map of the State of Texas, a red, white and blue star and the inscription "State Historical Survey

Committee." It is attached to and becomes a part of the building. Each Medallion has a separate number which is recorded and kept with the complete history of the building in the official state records.

The Rock Springs School House, believed to be the oldest existing building in this area, was the first school house in Gregg County. According to the best available information, the building was constructed in 1847 and classes were held there until the 1930's. A one-teacher school, the most students enrolled at one time was 30.

The building was constructed of undressed virgin pine cut by a local sawmill with a roof of pine boards split from nearby pine trees. The 24 by 36 foot building has 10 foot walls and at a later date from its construction was sealed and weather boarded; a bell tower was built on the front of the roof and a large cast iron bell was installed. It was, and is, heated by a large wood stove with a brick flue built through the roof. The school was constructed by local people with

(See ROCK, page three)

## ★ ROCK

(Continued from Page One)

donated labor and material. Among the families responsible for its building were the Smiths, Willinghams, Ingles, Breasers, Gregstons and Vernons.

The building is now used for community meetings and religious services. Many denominations have held church and revival services in it. At one time it was used by the Grange Farm Organization and for a short time by the Woodmen of the World. Just after the Civil War the night riders (later the Klux Klan) met there dressed in white robes and riding white horses.

The land was deeded to the school in the 1880's by Joel Smith. It now belongs to the Rock Springs Cemetery Association and came into their possession when it was deeded by Smith heirs in 1956.

The school is located four miles southwest of Gladewater in a pine grove on an acre of ground. As a building of both historical and cultural significance it is worthy of recognition and deserving of the Medallion as an award of merit.

Final decision as to the presentation of the Medallion rests with the State Historical Survey Committee. If the work of local citizens is recognized in this effort the Medallion will be awarded in the not-too-distant future. Those buildings chosen will be listed in the new Official State Historical Tourist Map.



**PRESS ASSOCIATION**  
 1716 SAN ANTONIO ST. — AUSTIN TEX. 78701  
 Greenwood 7-6755

Daily News Herald  
 Kilgore, Texas

OCT 19 1966

## Rock Springs School House Gets Historic Designation

The historic Rock Springs School House in Gladewater has been designated a "Recorded Texas Historic Landmark," John Ben Shepperd of Odessa, president of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee, has announced.

This interpretive plate made of cast aluminum with Swedish steel effect will be placed by Official Texas Historical Medallion which was awarded structure several years ago.

It is sponsored by Mrs. Nadine Herbst of Gladewater and the Rock Springs Cemetery Assn. Awarding of this plate is a part of the statewide program which includes recordation, appreciation, marking, preservation and survey of historical structures. There may be sponsored by private donors or organizations and by cities and counties in cooperation with the County Historical Survey Committee, according to Mrs. Amelia Belding of Longview, county chairman of Gregg County. All such markers and inscriptions for such markers are approved by the Texas State Historical Survey Committee.

This type of marker is designed to recognize and interpret historical, cultural, architectural and religious significance of buildings and other structures as worthy of preservation.

**PRESS CLIPS**  
**TEXAS**  
**PRESS ASSOCIATION**  
 1716 SAN ANTONIO ST. — AUSTIN TEX. 78701  
 Greenwood 7-6755

Daily News  
 Longview, Texas  
 OCT 20 1966

## Gregg School Ceremony Set

SABINE — The historic Rock Springs School House has been designated a "Recorded Texas Historic Landmark," John Ben Shepperd of Odessa, president of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee, announced today.

This interpretive plate made of cast aluminum with Swedish steel effect will be placed by the Official Texas Historical Medallion which was awarded this structure several years ago. It is sponsored by Mrs. Nadine

Herbst of Gladewater and the Rock Springs Cemetery Assn.

Awarding of this plate is a part of the statewide program which includes recordation, appreciation, marking, preservation and survey of historical structures. These may be sponsored by private donors or organizations and by cities and counties in cooperation with the County Historical Survey Committee, according to Mrs. Amelia Belding of Longview, county chairman of Gregg County.

ty. All such markers and inscriptions for such markers are approved by the Texas State Historical Survey Committee.

This type of marker is designed to recognize and interpret historical, cultural, architectural and religious significance of buildings and other structures as worthy of preservation.

History of this marker will be placed in the State Archives and will be listed in the next edition of the Guide to Official Texas Historical Markers and on maps to help stimulate tourist trade in the area, provide high point on historical tours and acquaint local citizens of Gregg County with their own unique historical heritage, County Chairman Mrs. Belding, stated.

The marker reads: "Rock Springs Schoolhouse, built 1849 with donated labor and lumber. One-teacher school was taught here until 1930's. First teacher was J. C. Vernon. First trustees, Thomas G. Chisum, James (Squire) Dillingham, Joel Smith. (Smith donated the site.) Building was also used for church, grange, socials, fraternal meetings, and political rallies. Community named for nearby springs. Settled by pioneers from Tennessee."

Daily Mirror  
Gladewater, Texas  
AUG 23 1962

# Rock Springs School To Receive Medallion

Rock Springs School, located four and a half miles from Gladewater on the old Kilgore highway has been awarded the Texas Historical Building Medallion, the first building to re-

ceive the award, in Gregg County. The 115-year-old building is the oldest in the county, Lee Lawrence of Tyler, member of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee, said today.

Gladewater Chamber of Commerce President Taylor Jobe said today that plans have been completed for a formal ceremony to mark the presentation of the Medallion.

Representative Byron Tunnell of Tyler will represent the state at the ceremony and Lawrence, Tyler attorney, will present the Medallion. Jobe will serve as master of ceremonies.

The presentation ceremony will be held Monday afternoon, Aug. 27 at 5 p.m. at the school building. The public is cordial-

ly invited to attend. Medallions are awarded by the State of Texas for structures of historical, cultural or architectural significance to the area in which they exist. The Medallion signifies the structure worthy of preservation for the history of Texas.

"We are pleased to have this historic structure marked," Mr. Lawrence said. "It is a typical one-room, East Texas school house, highly significant to the period in history and the area it represents."

Constructed in 1847 of undressed virgin pine, the school has stood through the years as sturdy as the day of its building. Descendants of the original builders maintain the building through the Rock Springs Cemetery Association and two years ago an intensive restoration program brought the school into top shape.

Much of the credit for receiving the Medallion goes to Mrs. Coma Timmons and her brother, B. P. Walker, both of whom are active in the Rock Springs Cemetery Association. They were responsible for gathering together all the necessary information on the school building and for completing the application submitted to the Historical Survey Committee.



Daily Mirror  
Gladewater, Texas

**AUG 26 1962**

It will be a historic occasion Monday afternoon when the Rock Springs school house is awarded its Historical Medallion. The Medallion is the first given in Gregg County.



Dallas Morning News  
Dallas, Texas

**AUG 30 1962**

### Old Etex School Given Medallion

LONGVIEW, Texas (Sp.)—The 115-year-old Rock Springs school building south of Gladewater this week was presented a medallion by the Texas State Historical Survey Committee.

It was the first building in Gregg County to receive the honor.

B. F. Walker, leader in the Rock Springs Community Association, accepted the medallion from State Rep. Byron Tunnell of Tyler at a ceremony at the old school. Others participating in the ceremony were Taylor Jobe of Gladewater and Lee Lawrence of Tyler.

The building, still in good repairs, is four miles south of Gladewater on the old Gladewater-Kilgore highway.



Henderson Daily News  
Henderson, Texas

**AUG 26 1962**

### Old Gregg County School Listed For State Medallion

The 115 year old Rock Springs School House in Gregg County will be honored with Medallion-placing ceremonies Monday, August 27. The ceremonies will be held at 5 p.m. in the afternoon at the school, 4 1-2 miles from Gladewater on the old Kilgore Highway.

State Representative Byron Tunnel will give the dedicatory address and make the presentation. Also on the program will be F. Lee Lawrence of Tyler, member of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee speaking on the Living History program of the Historical Survey Committee and Taylor Jobe, president of the Chamber of Commerce. Mrs. Cora Timmons, who led the work in preserving the structure, will give the history of the Schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse was built in 1847 and was used for community meetings, religious services and as a school. It is the oldest building now standing in the part of the county.

Historical Building Medallions are awarded structures that are architecturally, historically or culturally significant to the State of Texas and the area in which they exist. Since the beginning of the Medallion program in March of this year, over 275 Medallions have been awarded over the State.

Other structures awarded Medallions in the North and East Texas area have been the Sam Rayburn home, Eisenhower birthplace, Monte Verdi Plantation and Goodman-LeGrande home.



Longview News-Journal  
Longview, Texas

**AUG 26 1962**

### Rock Springs School Ceremony Slated Monday

The 115-year-old Rock Springs school house in Gregg County will be honored with medallion-placing ceremonies Monday, at 5:00 p.m. at the school, 4 1/2 miles from Gladewater on the old Kilgore Highway.

State Representative Byron Tunnel will give the dedicatory address and make the presentation.

Also on the program will be F. Lee Lawrence of Tyler, member of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee speaking on the "Living History" program of the Historical Survey Committee, and Taylor Jobe, president of the Chamber of Commerce. Mrs. Cora Timmons who led the work in preserving the structure will give the history of the schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse was built in 1847 and was used for community meetings, religious services and as a school. It is the oldest building now standing in that part of the county.

Historical building medallions are awarded structures that are architecturally, historically or culturally significant to the state of Texas and the area in which they exist. Since the beginning of the medallion program in March of this year, more than 275 medallions have been awarded over the state.

Other structures awarded medallions have been the Sam Rayburn home, Eisenhower birthplace, Monte Verdi, and Goodman-LeGrande home.



Kilgore News Herald  
Kilgore, Texas

**AUG 13 1962**

GLADEWATER residents are striving to have the Rock Springs School House awarded the Texas Historical Building Medallion. It would be the first building in Gregg County to receive the award from the State Historical Survey Committee. It was the first school house in the county, built in 1847 and used for that purpose until the 1930's. It presently serves as the Rock Springs Community Building.



## Gregg County Historical Commission

NORMAN W. BLACK  
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue  
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone  
214-757-2261

October 20, 1987

Cynthia J. Beeman, Historian,  
State Marker Program  
Texas Historical Commission  
P. O. Box 12276  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Ms. Beeman:

Please excuse the delay of the application. I finally located a representative of the Rock Springs Cemetery Association, Mrs. Louise Madden, the secretary. The medallion has been missing for several years but the descriptive plate is properly affixed to the front of the building. The association is still active according to Mrs. Madden and the grounds of both the cemetery and the school yard are well kept by her brother. The building is kept locked when not in use.

I made these pictures last Saturday not knowing I might need them.

Sincerely,

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.

enc. 3

NWB/lm

p.s. the officers of the Rock Springs School Association:  
President: Jake Norfleet Rt. 1 Gladewater, TX 75647  
Secretary: Louise Madden Rt. 1 Box 282 Gladewater, TX  
Treasurer: Doris (Mrs. Jake) Norfleet Rt. 1 Gladewater, TX



## Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.  
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue  
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone  
903-757-2261

January 10, 1994

Mr. David McBride, Commissioner  
Precinct 3, Gregg County  
Rt. 4, Box 648  
Longview, Texas 75604

Dear Commissioner McBride:

The Rock Springs Cemetery Association, owners of the historic Rock Springs Schoolhouse, has the bell for the schoolhouse stored for safe keeping. It is now felt safe to re-install the bell in the cupola of the schoolhouse but they do not have the equipment needed to raise the bell to its proper position.

If it is possible for you to help them in this matter they, and the historical commission, would certainly appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.

# Gregg Court tables jail matter

By SANDY WARREN

LONGVIEW — The possibility of Gregg County Commissioners' joining the recently formed Coalition of Counties with Overcrowded Jails, to hopefully get some relief from state mandates, was tabled until after Gregg County Sheriff Bobby Weaver can review the coalition guidelines.

In a related matter, commissioners awarded a bid for selective demolition of phase two of the county's new jail annex to Coastal Demolition Inc. of Bridge City for \$39,400, as recommended by Project Architect Armand Fisher of Adams, Richardson & Fisher Inc.

Coastal was lowest bidder of three vendors, the other two being Oak Hill Construction, \$62,900, and West Field Services, \$91,800, both of Longview.

Commissioner David McBride, Precinct 3, asked Purchasing Agent Mike Bedwell why there was such a big difference in bid prices from vendors. Bedwell said that he didn't know, but that huge gaps in bids were common.

Also pertaining to crime, commissioners amended the budget in the amount of \$1,800 to purchase two computer multiplexers for the County Organized Drug Enforcement Unit (C.O.D.E.). The equipment will enable C.O.D.E. to interface with TLETS in Austin. C.O.D.E. has also agreed to pay half the cost of a \$4,470 visual presenter.

Commissioners also approved the following from Commissioner McBride: Helping Kilgore repair Danville and Southport Roads,

Liberty City Water Supply place a 3/4-inch water service line within the right of way of Susan Street and Warren City patch, pull ditches for drainage and boom axe overhanging limbs.

Ace King Road on Precinct 3's road list will be reduced in mileage. Originally to be changed from 1.20 miles to 1.1 miles on a previously approved road list, County Engineer Mike Bills had the court today change the figures .73 miles on Ace King Road and .33 miles on Ace King South.

The county will help Rock Springs Cemetery Association re-install a bell in the cupola of the historic Rock Springs schoolhouse in Precinct 3. According to Dr. Norman Black, president of the Gregg County Historical Society, the schoolhouse is 135 years old and has a state historical marker.

"It is the oldest documented structure we know of in Gregg County," Dr. Black said. "It was used as a one-room school house from 1849 until the 1930s. It's a very worthwhile project. They're working hard to maintain and keep that building in good order."

The RSCA is a private organization, Black said, noting that the building was available for community meetings and other public functions.

The schoolhouse bell was stolen many years ago and the RSCA wants it installed in the cupola where it will be safe, he also said, but the RSCA doesn't have the equipment with which to install it.

Commissioners agreed to help

Gladewater, Precinct 3, remove cement and debris in Gusher Park if the city and the park have a "verifiable workable arrangement," in McBride's words.

Precinct 3 equipment will not be used to help Pine Tree ISD repair a bus turn-around on Bluebonnet Street at this time. Part of the turnaround may be on private property, McBride said in asking that the item be deleted from today's agenda.

Commissioners also approved:

— Tax abatement for Trinity Industries of Longview.

— County's new financial responsibility rules regarding underground storage tanks, at the recommendation of Don Gray with Risk Management Group Inc., the county's insurance consultant.

"There are some new EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) guidelines which require the county to demonstrate financial responsibility in the event of leakage from one of our tanks," Bedwell said. "As long as we have underground storage tanks, we will have to demonstrate financial responsibility."

He also said there were several methods which the county could use to comply with the guidelines.

"It looks to us like the most economical way is to file this bond letter," Bedwell said. "Otherwise, we would have to secure some sort of insurance."

Commissioners also voted to advertise for bids for an above-ground storage tank for Gregg County Airport, to be opened 2 p.m. March 10.



CURTIS TUNNELL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2276

(TELEPHONE) 512-463-6100

(FAX) 512-463-6095

(RELAY TX) 1-800-735-2989 (TDD)

February 23, 1994

Dr. Norman Black  
417 Mobberly Avenue  
Longview, Texas 75602

Re: *Rock Springs Schoolhouse, Gladewater, Gregg County, Texas (RTHL)*

Dear Dr. Black:

We were pleased to receive a copy of an article from the February 14, 1994, *Kilgore News Herald*, concerning the plans for installation of a new bell in the Rock Springs Schoolhouse. Senator Haley, chairman of the Shelby County Historical Commission, spotted the article and sent it along.

It is nice to hear this bit of good news. Please let the Rock Springs Cemetery Association folks know that we would be happy to be of assistance in their preservation efforts whenever we can. They can contact me at 512/463-6094.

I hope that there is some positive action on the Longview depot. Has anyone you spoke with put together a plan to use the building, or have you heard the railroad's schedule for demolition?

Yours truly,

Linda Roark  
Division of Architecture

c: Shelby County Historical Commission

# School bell will return to historic Rock Springs site

## From 9A

But others report that the settlers were actually from Tennessee, including James "Squire" Dillingham, one of the school's first trustees, who later became Precinct 4 Justice of the Peace in Gregg County. Later, the name of the community was changed to Rock Springs for the spring that came out of a rocky ledge near the school.

The one-teacher school house served as such until the 1930s. It was also used as a meeting place for The Grange, an association founded in 1867 to protect farmers against railroad monopolies.

Members of the community met at the school for church, socials, fraternal meetings and political rallies.

The first trustees of the

school, Thomas G. Chisum, Dillingham and Joel Smith, were all honored by the Texas Historical Commission in 1966, when the school was declared a historic landmark.

Smith, donated the land to the school in the 1880s, and later his descendants deeded the property to the Rock Springs Cemetery Association in 1956.

"My wife's great-grandparents donated the old school and property to the Gladewater School District ... and the school later gave it back to their heirs," Norfleet said of his wife Doris Marie (Smith) Norfleet's family.

"(Doris') daddy deeded the school grounds to the cemetery association."

Allen Smith of Diana is the

great-great grandson of Dillingham's daughter, Charlotte Ann Smith, who was born in Rock Springs about the same time the school house was built.

His wife, Helen, said "Smiths have been living on that land over there for a hundred years."

The Smiths and the other families whose relatives are buried in the Rock Springs Cemetery will hopefully be happily surprised when they return there for their annual reunion the first Sunday in June.

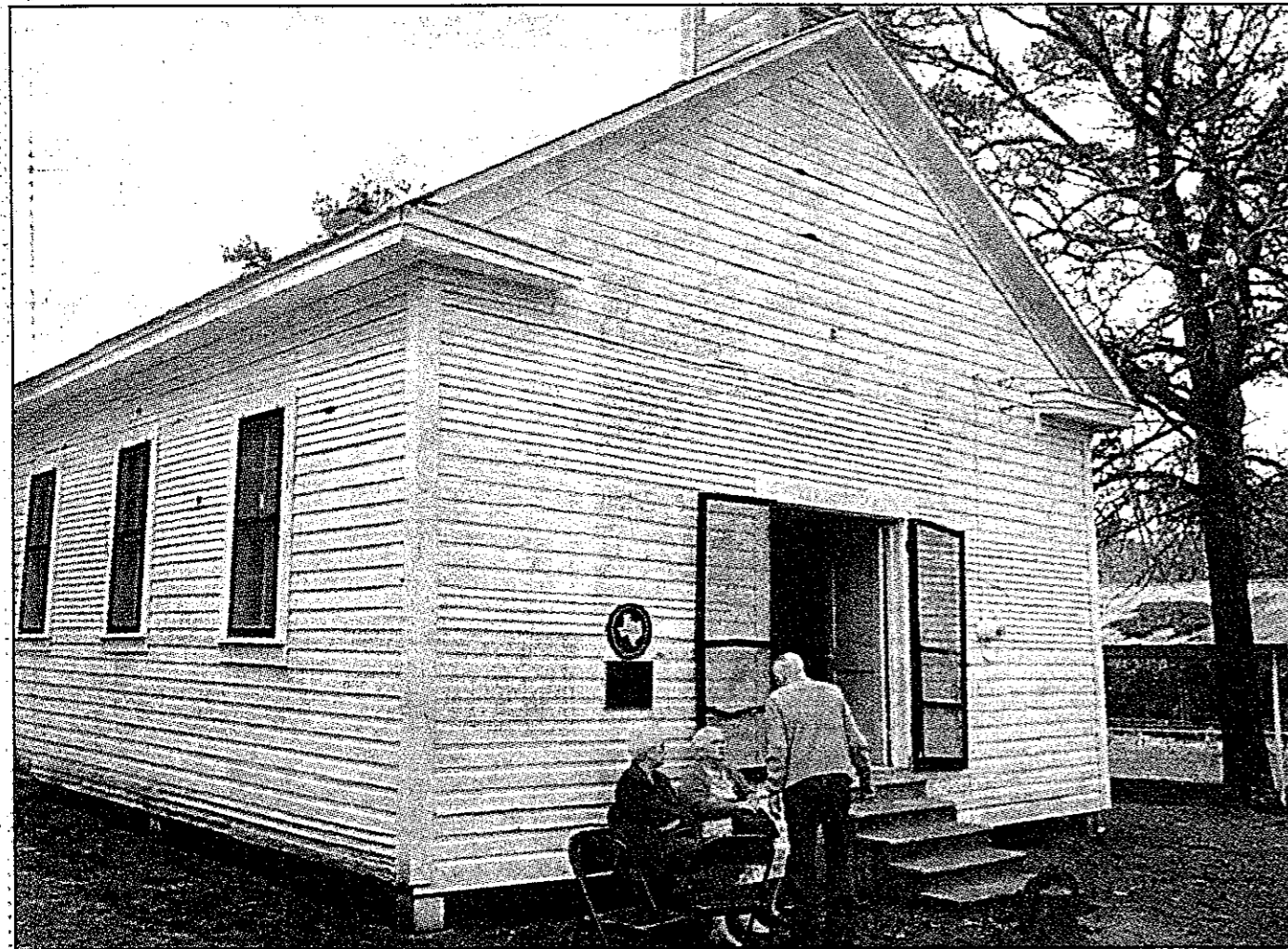
"The old-timers have missed the bell. We rang it every year," Norfleet said. "They have been wanting to know when we were going to put the bell back up."



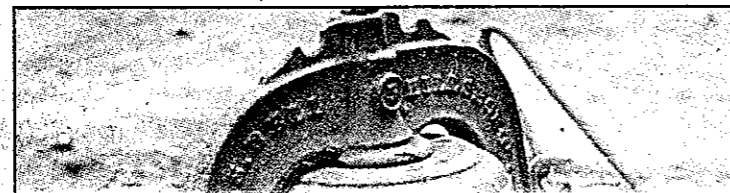
**Inside:**  
Opinion Page 10A  
Letters 11A  
Annual Report 15-16A

# East Texas

Longview News-Journal  
Sunday, February 27, 1994  
Page 9A



Above: The Rock Springs School building,



## Restoration efforts set

### Group working to bring back historical school house bell

By Angela Martin  
Staff Writer

GLADEWATER — A reverberation from the past will soon be heard in the Rock Springs Community, some two miles southwest of here.

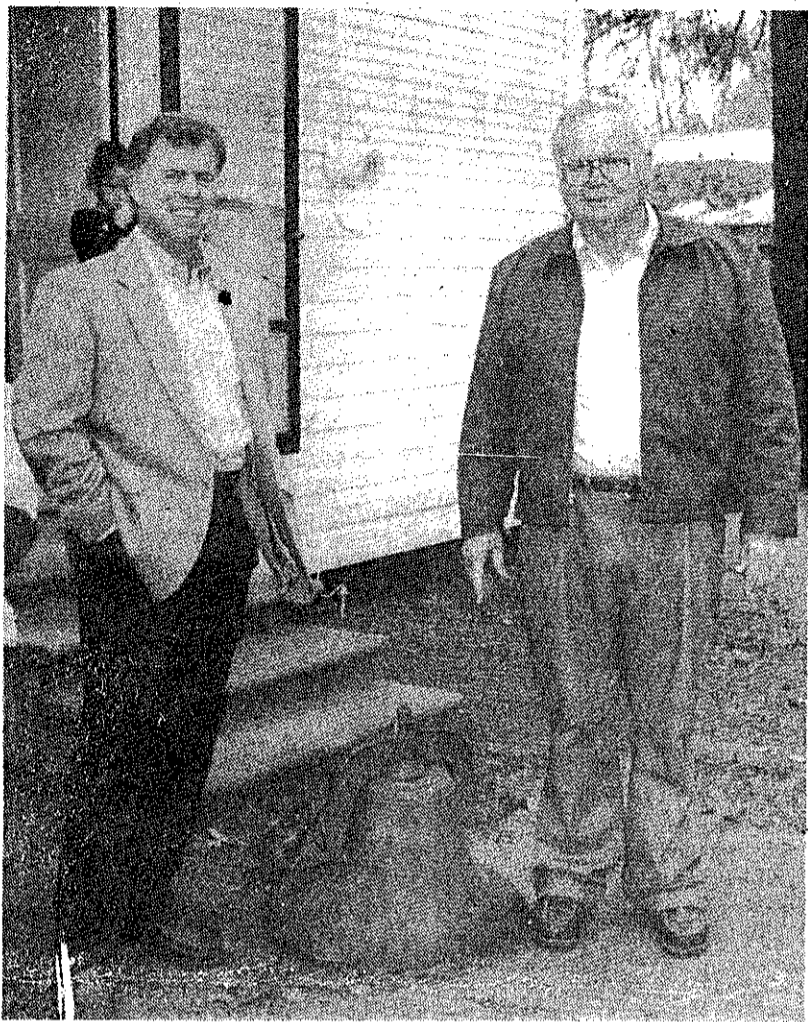
Commissioner David McBride is assisting the Gregg County Historical Commission in replacing a bell, stolen several years ago from a small dome atop the oldest documented building in the county — the Rock Springs school house.

Members of the Rock Springs Cemetery Association had recovered the bell, but did not have the means to replace it. They asked Historical Commission Chairman Dr. Norman Black to help find a way to lift the bell back into its cupola.

Black and McBride formally requested and won permission to assist the group during a Gregg County Commissioners Court meeting earlier this month.

"This is great, because it has been a while since the bell was in place,"





### 'Friends of Bell'

Gregg County Commissioner David McBride and Precinct 3 foreman Gene Van Meter were among the persons responsible for getting the Rock Springs Schoolhouse bell painted and put into its proper perch. (This picture was taken before the bell was painted black.)



# Old bell returned to Rock Springs Schoolhouse

By BRENDA BEDGOOD

Ask not for whom the bells tolls - in Rock Springs it rings for all who love the old schoolhouse there.

The antique school bell at Rock Springs School, located about 3 miles south of Gladewater on Old Hwy. 135, was stolen from its roost about eight years ago.

Though it was returned shortly thereafter - thanks to a \$1,000 Crimestoppers reward - the cast iron bell was not returned to its housing atop the schoolhouse until last Thursday, when it was placed in a newly remodeled bell tower, one that should keep it safe for another century.

For Gene Van Meter of Kilgore, the return of the bell to its rightful place is a dream come true. Van Meter is the person who reported it missing in the first place.

"After we got the news out about the \$1,000 reward, we got it back in a hurry," Van Meter said with a laugh. "They brought it back and dumped it in the front yard (of the school property)."

Van Meter, a foreman for the Gregg County Precinct 3 road and bridge department, has been trying ever since to get the bell back in place atop the schoolhouse.

In January the Gregg County Historical Commission joined his crusade - and the crusade of the Rock Springs Cemetery Association - when GCHC Chairman Dr. Norman Black petitioned county commissioners for equipment to finish the job. In February commissioners agreed to help.

Last Friday, Commissioner David McBride's crews replaced the rotten boards and, with donated plywood, sheet metal and angle iron, built a brace for the bell, replaced the floor beneath it, painted the cupola and placed the bell inside.

Though McBride had originally planned to do the work within "the next 30 days," a break in the weather and a shared enthusiasm spurred the workers to get the job done quickly.

It isn't known exactly how old

the bell is, but those who remember the bell in the old days say only that it has always been there.

McBride, who had the bell painted black, said it is inscribed: "C.S. Bell, Hillsboro, Ohio." The bell weighs about 125 pounds, he added.

The Rock Springs Schoolhouse received the first historical marker in Gregg County. Ironically, when the school was built in 1849 it was in Rusk County - Gregg County wasn't formed until 1873 (Gladewater was established in 1872). According to area newspaper accounts from August 1966, B.F. Walker accepted the medalion from State Rep. Myron Tunnell of Tyler.

A 1966 account in the Dallas Morning News states the first settlers to the Rock Springs area came from Arkansas and the settlement was called Little Arkansas. Located between the Smith County line, the Sabine River and Prairie Creek, the name was later changed to Rock Springs, supposedly for the spring that came out of a rocky ledge near the school.

The school was constructed of undressed virgin pine lumber provided by a local saw mill. The building, which is basically unchanged, is 24x36 feet with 10-foot-high walls of sturdy construction. The bell tower on the front of the roof became home for a large cast iron bell - perhaps the same bell that was re-installed on Feb. 25.

Among the families responsible for its construction were the Smiths, Willinghams, Ingles, Breasers, Greggstons and Vernons. A one-teacher school was held in it from the beginning until the 1930s. About 30 students tops attended at one time.

Historical accounts say the building was also used by Grange farm organization and, for a short time, by Woodmen of the World. Just after the Civil War the Night Riders, now known as the Ku Klux Klan, met there and were active up

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Rock Springs Schoolhouse in 1994

## Rock Springs: Old-timers remember good times

until the 1890s.

The land was deeded to the school in the 1880s by Joel Smith, but now belongs to the Rock Springs Cemetery Association thanks to another deed from Smith's heirs in 1956.

The building was repaired in 1960, but none of the original features were changed, according to accounts kept by the Gregg County Historical Commission.

**ALTA MOHON SMITH** said she has pleasant memories of her days at the old school. Among the most memorable was her first day.

Mrs. Smith, now 86 years old, was a bit shy and quite frightened by her new surroundings, so when she began crying an older student pulled her over to his desk and let her use his colors.

The tears stopped, and the generous boy, John Smith, six years her senior, became her husband in 1924. John Smith, by the way, was the descendant of Joel Smith who



One-time Rock Springs School students Nadine Brewer Herbst, left, and Alta Mohon Smith were among those on hand for an impromptu reunion celebrating the installation of the old bell in the school's bell tower.

deeded the land for the school all those years ago. (New Fire Chief Wayne "Snuffy" Smith is John Smith's grandson.)

Former student Bruce Wood recalled his friends and his girlfriend – not his wife Lucille – and his first teacher, who was his double first cousin, Mrs. Clyde Wood Moore, mother of Judge David Moore.

Wood said he loved his teachers, but that didn't mean he got away with anything. Among his most vivid memories is the time teacher Susie Horton "put it on me" when he was caught fighting with a classmate in the road in front of the school.

"She gave me a good whippin'!" Wood said.

Wood was 7 years old when he first joined the school in 1911. Later he had to quit school and went to work hauling logs, working in a sawmill and farming.

"I carried many a bucket of water from the spring in those days," he said of nearby Rock Springs, for which the school is named.

Nadine Brewer Herbst also remembered drawing drinking water from the spring during her days at Rock Springs Schoolhouse.

"I guess I was mean," she said with a laugh. "I remember taking Munger Barlow's syrup from his lunch. He was younger and littler than me."

Mrs. Herbst and Mrs. Smith recalled some of their classmates: The Wimberleys, J.P., Mary, Abner and Doc; the Jacksons, J.R. and Glen; The Barlows, Munger, Lula Mae and Ruby; the Perrys, Leona and Howard, called "Bud" by his friends; and Mrs. Herbst's brother and sister, Doyle and Cecile Olean.

"I used to ring that bell," Mrs. Herbst recalled. "It's just not home without that bell."

When Rock Springs Cemetery Association members meet the first Sunday in June, they, no doubt, will once again feel at home now that the old bell has been returned to its roost.

## Rock Springs Cemetery Association hosts reunion

Rock Springs Cemetery Association's homecoming will be held Sunday, June 5, on the schoolhouse grounds.

Participants are asked to bring a sack lunch and drinks will be furnished. Everyone is encouraged to enjoy the fellowship of family and friends. Eating will begin at 1 p.m.

Association members are especially pleased that the old schoolhouse has had a face lift. A new

roof has been installed and other repairs made. The old school bell is back in its place in the steeple and two new screen doors have been installed. The building has also been painted.

A special thanks goes to Elizabeth Osteen, who, due to concern and caring for the old schoolhouse, obtained a \$500 check from the Gladewater Heritage Society for the schoolhouse.

# Bell to toll for historic school house

## Oldest Gregg County building site of reunion

By Angela Martin  
Staff Writer

GLADEWATER — For whom will the bell toll?

At 1 p.m. on Sunday, it will ring once again for the Rock Springs Cemetery Association members and alumni gathered for its annual reunion at the oldest building in Gregg County.

The one-teacher school house, built in 1849 by the little community of Rock Springs (about two miles southwest of Gladewater), has had a face lift. And the bell, stolen several years ago from a small dome atop the building, has finally been replaced.

Cemetery Association President Brenda Word said when members of the group found out the building needed a new roof and other repairs, donations of time, money and labor poured in, much the same as when the founders of the school built it on donated land with donated labor and materials.

The Gladewater Heritage Society, thanks to the efforts of Elizabeth Osteen, donated \$500 towards the school's new roof, which was damaged



By Allen Hensley/Chief Photographer

Bill Smith nails the new sign above the door of the Rock Springs School building Thursday. Smith is the caretaker for the grounds around the school and adjacent cemetery.

when thieves attempted to steal the school bell several years ago, dropping it on the building before abandoning it on a rural road nearby.

Precinct 3 employees helped put the bell back in its original cupola in March. Since then, the school's roof and screen doors were replaced, and the building was given a good scraping and a new coat of paint, Word said.

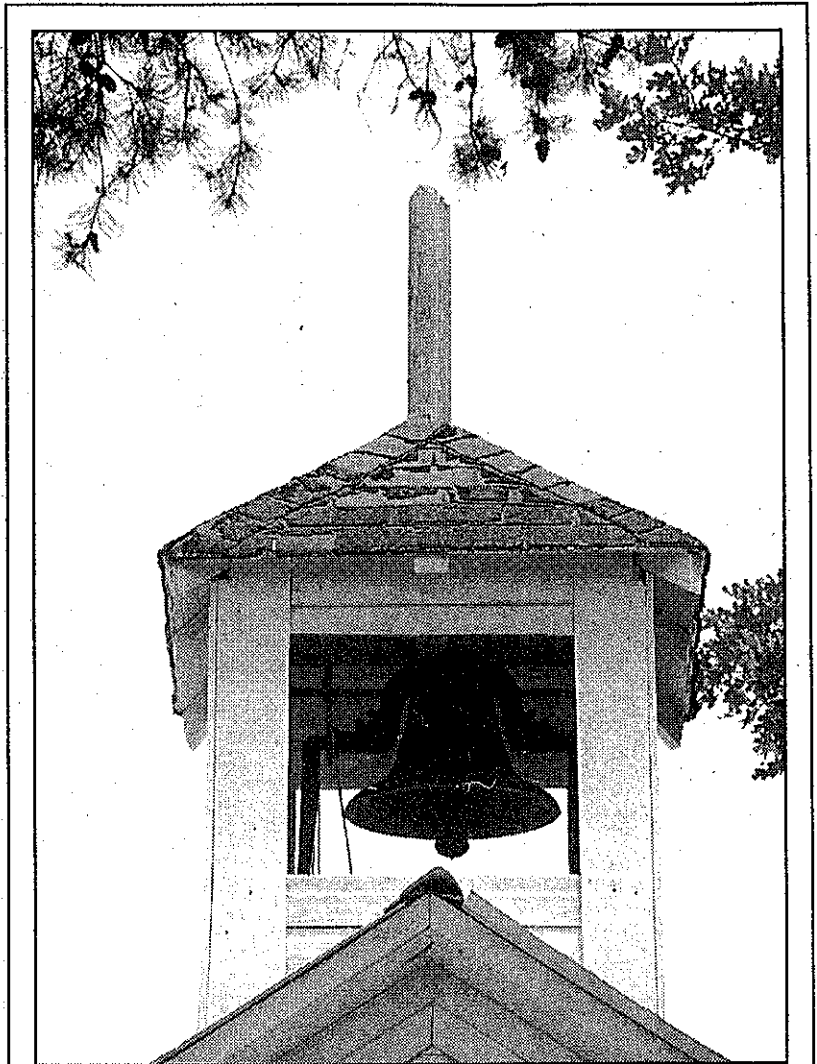
The association started in the 1930s and reorganized in 1955. Word said the earliest marked grave (1865) in the cemetery next door belongs to the infant daughter of Arabella and Joel Smith, the first

owners of the land. Arabella was buried there in 1865, she said.

"We do have records of earlier burials, but the graves are not marked," said Word, who plans to be buried there herself one day. The association is in the process of setting up a perpetual fund for cemetery's future care.

About 100-150 people come to the school's annual reunion, Word said.

The Rock Springs School is on old Highway 135 between Gladewater and Liberty City. Those planning to attend need to bring lunch. Drinks will be furnished.



By Allen Hensley/Chief Photographer

### **Bell back home**

The Rock Springs School bell has recently been replaced atop the historic Gregg County building. It was stolen and later returned.



## Rock Springs School stepping into the past recalling a big part of our county's history



Students of Rock Springs one-room school posed for a class picture, sometime around 1914. Back row, left to right, Miss Bradshaw, teacher, & Hopkins, Marquerite Seay, Nadine Brewer (Herbst), Norna Perry, Alta Mahon (Smith), Amanda Wimberly (Vernon), Mary Wimberly and Brad. Standing in the middle, Lawson Wimberly and Doyle Brewer. Front row, Jackson ?, Cecil Brewer, ? Barlow, unknown, Lorene Gray, J.P. Win unknown, and unknown. Kneeling, unknown, Munger Barlow, unknown and unknown. (Married names in parentheses). Alta Smith, fourth from back, remembers fondly her days at the one room school.



By Barbara Henderson  
Feature Editor

Not far from downtown Gladewater, on old Highway 135, is a place that transports visitors back into the glorious history of Gregg County.

Rock Springs, first settled in the early 1800s, by pioneers from Arkansas, was originally called "Little Arkansas." Later, settlers from Tennessee, built the Rock Springs School house in 1949, next to an existing cemetery. The area was then named "Rock Springs" for the spring that comes out of a rocky ledge near the school. (This spring provided the drinking water for the school.)

The Rock Springs School house is the oldest documented building in Gregg County and seeps with local history. The school house was built on land donated by Joel Smith, one of the school's first trustees.

Built of virgin pine lumber, donated by a local saw mill, the 1x36 foot building with 10 foot-high walls was built totally with donated labor.

High atop the school house sits the bell tower, housing what is be-

lieved to be oldest school bell in Gregg County. Heard for more than two miles The pull rope bell was used to call the children to school.

The one room school house served 15 - 20 students at a time and taught first through seventh grade. The first teacher was J.C. Vernon.

Along with Smith, Thomas G. Chisum and James "Squire" Dillingham, served as the schools trustees.

Alta Mahon Smith, attended the Rock Springs School from 1908 until 1916.

"I used to walk about four miles to school each day. We studied reading, writing and arithmetic," said Smith. "We didn't have all that junk they teach in schools today.

"We carried our drinking water from across the road at the spring," remembered Smith. "In the winter there was a big wood stove and the boys had to cut the wood for the fire."

Remembering her first day at school, Smith said she was a little scared at her new surroundings and began to cry, an older boy pulled her to his desk and let her use his colors, ending her tears. The boy, John Smith, six years her senior, later became her husband.

"After 1916 I went to Gladewater High School by bus," Smith said. "But they still had school here (Rock Springs), though."

Rock Springs School was consolidated with Gladewater in the 1930s, ending classes at the building. However the building remained in use.

The school was always much more than just a one-room educational facility, it also served as church, Grange hall and housed many political rallies and meetings of fraternal orders.

The Rock Springs School is actually even older than Gregg County. When the school was built it was in Rusk County. When a new County was formed in 1873, Rock Springs was in the newly designated Gregg County. (Gladewater was established in 1872.)

For 150 years the Rock Springs

School house has been a fixture in the community, seeing both good and bad times.

For example, the school bell, which is inscribed, "C.S. Bell, Hillsboro, Ohio," has quite a history of its own.

In 1984 thieves broke into the school house and stole the 300 pound cast-iron bell. The 12 inch bell was removed from the bell tower and fell 25 feet on to the ce-

The crew replaced the historic bell and its ring can again be heard 1 miles around.

The bell was not the only thing stolen from the school. Earlier, wood burning stove and a bronze plaque were stolen in separate incidents; they were never recovered.

The Rock Springs School house was declared a historical marker in 1966 by the Texas Historical Commission, making it Gregg County's first historical marker.

Next to the school house is the historical cemetery which has long and varied history.

No one knows the date of the first burial in the cemetery, but legend has it that a black housekeeper for the Brasher family was the first person buried on the land. The burial and probably many others occurred many years before the Civil War.

Over the years the Rock Springs Cemetery has been the final resting place for black and white, rich and poor alike.

The oldest marked grave is that of an infant daughter of Arabel and Joel Smith, dated 1865. The second was Arabella, in 1866.

The cemetery and school house are now preserved by the Rock Springs Cemetery association. The group holds their annual reunion at the school the first Sunday in June each year. Donations may be made to the association by contacting Doris Norfleet at 845-3329.



Alta Smith poses beside the Rock Springs Historical Marker, the first marker in Gregg County.

ment steps below, crushing the steps. It was then removed from the property.

After the bell was stolen citizens of the area rallied together and offered a reward for the return of the bell.

Several weeks later the bell was found dumped in front of the school house's gate, undamaged. Since no arrest was made the group was saved the expense of a reward.

Following its return, the bell was kept at the home of a trustee. Several years later Gregg County Commissioner David McBride received approval for county crews to make the necessary repair to the roof and build a tower for the bell.