



Cox Springs School students circa 1949 (from the collection of Preston Carlton).

COX SPRINGS SCHOOL HOUSE

A tiny school with a rich history

A weathered white wooden structure sits on Old Burnet Road, near the city line between Jonestown and Lago Vista. Leaning with the wind and primarily held erect by the brick fireplace, this small building was recently saved from total collapse by a group of concerned local citizens.

This structure, which dates back to the late 1880s, was once a one-room schoolhouse for the children of local ranchers and farmers and has a rich and storied history.

The first school was located in the Anderson Bend area, but moved in early 1900 to be near Cox Springs for a freshwater source and to be more central to the students living in the Lago Vista/Jonestown area. It was rebuilt in 1908 on a five-acre lot deeded from the Simpson farm on the east corner of Lohmans Crossing Road and Ledge Acres Road. There it officially became the Cox Springs School.

The 1908 schoolhouse was constructed of timbers from local live oak, cedar, and wood salvaged from the previous building used as a school. The school was also used as a place to vote and for outdoor plays, barbecues and neighborhood get-togethers. In 1917, the schoolhouse burned and was rebuilt. It burned again in 1927 and was last rebuilt in 1928 after fundraising by the local American Legion, Lions Club, Boy Scouts and residents. That's the building today.

In early 1941, the new Mansfield Dam on the Colorado River created Lake Travis, flooding the fertile river bottom lands in the Anderson Bend and Cox Springs area. This destroyed or separated the local farm and ranch communities. Folks sold their properties to the Lower Colorado River Authority, dismantled their homes, cleared their barns and fences and moved away. The Cox Springs School lost most of its students.

Mr. Carlton and Mr. Pearson, both local ranchers, joined together and spent \$100 to have the structure cut in half, loaded onto flatbed trucks and moved it to its new high and dry location on Old Burnet Road. For the next 20 years, the Cox Springs School on Old Burnet Road provided a one-room/one-teacher education to the local students. Rural schools were chartered for grades 1-7, officially adding grade 8 in 1951 – although some students over the years also completed grades 9-11 there. Twelfth graders left Cox Springs to finish high school in Leander or other larger schools.

The last group of students left Cox Springs in 1960 to transfer to the new Lago Vista schools, ending over seven decades of providing education to the community. Since then, the building was used as a storage warehouse for the Lago Vista Common School District, by the Jonestown Church of Christ, and as

an occasional hunting lodge. For the last 25 years, the schoolhouse has sat vacant and deteriorating.

The Cox Springs Schoolhouse Restoration Society was formed in 2020 to preserve this great piece of local, Texas and American history. As an official 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the group is applying for historical status. Plans are to restore the schoolhouse to historic status for educational purposes and for use as a meeting place to be enjoyed



TOP: Cox Springs Schoolhouse as seen recently from Old Burnet Road. BOTTOM: Cox Springs School students in the 1920's (from the collection of Claretta Pearson England).



by the community. Their three-phase plan is to 1) Stabilize the building structurally, 2) Refurbish the exterior to preserve the historic character of the school, and 3) Restore the interior and furnish with period items. Thanks to generous contributions and volunteer efforts, the Stabilization phase was completed in 2021 with the intallation of a new foundation.

Contact the Cox Springs School to volunteer or be involved in this project. Your help is greatly appreciated by the community and the descendants of those who attended school in this historic building. ^{NS}

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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