

# Town Of Phillips Began As Company Camp

By ELBA VASSAR

The town of Phillips began as a company camp built to house employees of the Phillips Petroleum Company when they started construction of the first plant in 1927; it was then known as Whittenburg community.

As Phillips Petroleum began to develop other plants, the boom town shanties and overcrowded rooming houses disappeared, and homes, churches, and schools took their places.

The first term for Phillips Independent School ended in May, 1927. Seventh grade graduates presented a three-act play, "A Little Clodhopper," to end the year; and the graduation address was given by Rev. Foote, Methodist minister of White Deer, Texas.

Members of the first graduation class of Phillips Independent School District who received their diplomas that evening were: Harold Adams, George Cooper, Jack Brooks, Joe Harrington, Morris McMahan, Vester Roberts, Irene Foster, Stella McMahan, Johnnie Yeager, Preston Shinn, Herman Slinkard, Stanly Troth, Finis Warren, Alton West, Lorene Paulson, Lula Rhodes, and Gladys Woolfer.

The first teachers taught in a red-brick school house with an annex of white wood housing the four first grades. Teachers had adequate supplies and a salary which ran about \$25 a month higher than most schools paid. Not all the teachers had college degrees in the first years, but most of them

returned to school to earn degrees.

Approximately fourteen teachers lived in the teacherage across the street from the school. They hired a housekeeper and cook, but each teacher took turns making out menus and buying groceries for a week. Expenses were shared equally at the end of the month.

Due to the increase in population, Phillips School could not accommodate all school-age students. Many high school students were moving into the Whittenburg camp, and had to travel to Stinnett High School by bus for the first part of the 1928-29 school year, but were transferred to Plemons School for the last semester.

In 1929, fifty Phillips students enrolled in the Borger High School for the first time.

Work on a new school was completed by September 10, 1935. The building was constructed so that there was no wasted space. Sixty men were hired to build the \$77,000 project.

Plans for the football and band programs were underway. Forty-five football outfits and 30 band uniforms were selected by Mike Hale, football coach, and Robert Newton, band director, and were ordered.

Strict moral standards were expected from all school personnel. Teachers were not allowed to be married that first year, but two of the teachers were secretly married during the year. And the next year the rule was relaxed, and married

teachers have been welcome since then.

One amusing story is that one of the male teachers had some friends at his home one evening when one of the board members drove by his house and saw them playing cards. The teacher was reprimanded severely for his lax moral standards.

Fritch students came to Phillips schools in 1935, increasing the school enrollment. By 1938, the settlement of Whittenburg camp could then be called a town. The people voted to name the town Phillips.

Phillips High School was admitted membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1940.

Due to the growing enrollment, a new elementary school had to be built, located just east of the High School building. It was ready for occupation in January, 1941. During the sixteen-day Christmas vacation, the equipment from the old school was to be moved to the new school, but fire destroyed all of the equipment in the old building.

Changes in administrative offices included Mildred McGee becoming elementary school principal in 1943 and J.I. Kimmins becoming high school principal in 1945.

The school cafeteria, which began operation in the early 1940s, operated under the direct management of the Board of Education.

In May, 1946, A.O. Pickins, chairman of the school board announced that Lee Johnson, who had been superintendent of schools at Wink, Texas, had been named superintendent of Phillips schools.

Johnson stepped into a beehive of activity. Phillips Petroleum and Frank Phillips Foundations Incorporated had contributed thousands of dollars to funds providing additional scholarship awards to the children of Phillips employees and the employees. To the 64 scholarships already being awarded, twelve extra awards were added.

Teacher housing was one of the problems the Phillips

School District had to face. Expansion of Phillips Petroleum Company plants necessitated a new location for the teacherage, which was built in 1948 just north of the high school building. It provided housing for single women teachers on a tenure basis.

Provisions were made for married men to include eight apartments, a house for the coach, the principal, and the superintendent. Homes owned and operated by the school district were assigned by the Board of Education. With the exception of the teacherage, which was torn down three years ago, the units are still being used by school personnel.

On March 19, 1950, fire completely razed the newly decorated Phillips High School and destroyed a half-million dollars worth of school building and equipment. The only things saved were several desks and chairs, some filing cabinets, a hatrack, and the contents from the principal's safe.

While the building was still smoldering from the Sunday-afternoon fire, the faculty and administration met in the woodshop; they decided that school could be held in the Methodist and Baptist churches. According to J.I. Kimmins, the principal, not one class was missed due to the fire.

The new \$1,200,000 modern, functional structure with a total of 70,955 square feet of floor space furnished with the latest in educational equipment was ready for occupancy in May 1952.

The school district reorganized the grades into elementary, junior high, and high school in 1955. Doug Adkins was elementary principal; Joe Hayes, junior high principal; and J. I. Kimmins, high school principal.

Cody Fondren, who had served as business manager since 1947, was appointed school superintendent after the death of Johnson in 1960. W.W. Roe was appointed as business manager for the schools.

More changes in the administration came about during 1975. Fondren retired, and Don Blankenship, superintendent at Healdton, Oklahoma, was hired

as superintendent. In March, 1976 Joe Hayes was moved to business manager when Roe retired and Doug Adkins became principal of grades 1

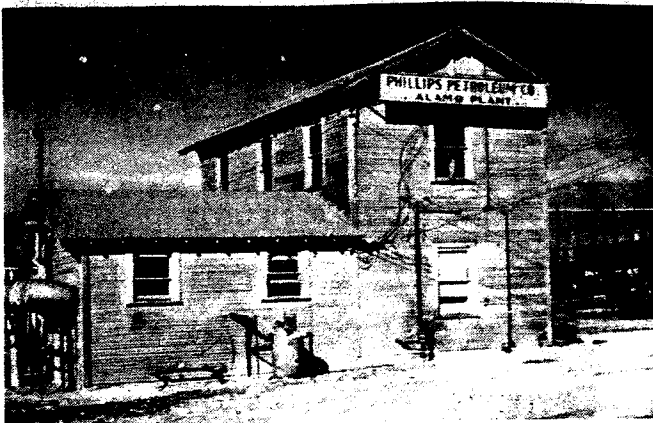
through 8.

At the end of 1977-78 school term, J.I. Kimmins retired; and Joel Lynch, social studies teacher and coach, became the

new high school principal.

Other changes in the school have been the new Activity Building, providing Phillips community with one of the

finest gymnasiums in the area, dedicated November 23, 1975. The superintendent's offices have been remodeled to provide more working space.



AND A TOWN grew up around it—the first Alamo Refinery office of Phillips Pet. Co. did not even resemble the spacious modern offices of today, but were perhaps just as busy. The picture above was taken in 1927.