

History in Our Neighborhood

Did you know that Wooten is home to a special piece of Austin African American history? Tucked along the train tracks in the southern corner of Woodstone Dr is the final resting place for dozens of Freedmen in a tiny cemetery dating from turn of the century.

After emancipation, many formerly enslaved Central Texans banded together to form their own free communities scattered around Travis County. Duval, a former community located north of Wooten near Mopac and Parmer Ln was home to several families including the Hancocks. Rubin and Elizabeth Hancock, along with their family members, had been enslaved by local Judge, state legislator and US Congressman, John Hancock (part of his estate along with a historical marker can be found at 4811 Sinclair Ave, Austin TX 78701). After the Civil War, Rubin Hancock and his brothers purchased land at a time when few Freedmen were able to do so.

In the 1870s, Duval community members established the White Walnut Creek Church located somewhere north of Ohlen between Burnet and HWY183 a short distance from its cemetery. While the church building is no longer there, many graves and their markers still exist. Most date from the 1890s-1910s. We know the Hancock family attended White Walnut Creek Church and Rubin Hancock likely served there as a deacon.

Rubin and several members of his family are buried in the cemetery as well as Hattie Doxey (and possibly others Doxeyes), who was married to a farmer who owned land in Crestview along the train tracks.

It is possible some of the men buried at the Wooten cemetery helped build the Texas State Capitol in downtown Austin. Granite quarried north-west of the city traveled to the construction site by rail along the same tracks that run through our neighborhood today. (Fun fact, if you drive along Waters Park Rd between Mopac and Parmer you can see a few huge granite blocks which fell from the train on route to downtown way back in the



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- Suad Krebber
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1880s. The blocks are so large, everyone decided it wasn't worth trying to move them. There is also a historical marker near 12224 Waters Park Rd.)

White Walnut Creek Church eventually became St. Paul Baptist Church and relocated in 1951. The church still owns and maintains the cemetery grounds.

While you can peep through the fence to see some grave stones from a distance **PLEASE DO NOT TRESPASS** or a attempt to trespass. The land is private property, the gravestones are very old and the ground surrounding them is fragile. **Please protect this treasure of Wooten history by maintaining a respectful distance!!!** You can send donations for upkeep to St. Paul Baptist Church at 501 Blackson Ave, Austin, TX, 78752.

-Dixie Davis, WootenNews Editor

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD. Join Wooten Neighborhood Association. Bring \$5 to the meeting, use the PayPal link on wootenna.com or mail to: **WNA / Box 10171 / Austin TX 78766.**

Name: _____ e-mail: _____

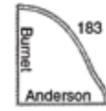
Wooten address: _____ phone: _____

Neighborhood interests and concerns: _____

Annual membership period is Oct 1 - Sept 30.

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What do you want from your newsletter? Volunteer, offer suggestions or send news items: newsletter@wootenna.com



Wooten News

Serving the Wooten community

February 2019

Wooten Neighborhood Association • Box 10171 • Austin, Texas 78766 • website: wootenna.com

Next WNA meeting Monday, March 11, 7:00pm Redeemer Lutheran School Commons

We're back at Redeemer! Future Wooten NA bimonthly meetings will be held on March 11, May 13, July 8, September 9, and November 11, at the Redeemer Lutheran School, 1500 W. Anderson Ln, in the Commons area. Park on the Lazy Lane side and enter under the Welcome sign. Doors open at 6:30 pm, meeting starts at 7:00 pm.

Membership runs from October 1 through September 30. Dues are \$5/person. You don't have to be a member to attend meetings but membership allows you to vote in officer elections.

Meeting agenda

- Meet your neighbors
- Safety and crime
- Wooten Park Updates
- District 7 & city updates

WNA Board of Directors

President – Dave Bouchard
Vice President – open seat
Secretary – Brian Mater
Treasurer – Marilyn Rogers

Wooten Park Pavilion Ribbon Cutting

On the cold and rainy morning of December 8, 2018 at 11 a.m. Wooten Park neighborhood came together to celebrate its Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the picnic pavilion. This was the culmination of a project that began in 2015.

The Wooten Neighborhood Park Committee received a grant from the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) Community Grant, part of the ACL Music Festival Grants Program, in the amount of \$70,000. The neighborhood provided \$5,000 in cash contribution, with \$1,000 of that coming from Redeemer Lutheran Church. Another \$8,000 came from Parkland Dedication Fees which were used by PARD to purchase the picnic tables, trash receptacles and other equipment for the project. PARD Planning managed the project and PARD maintenance staff provided labor in removing the existing rubber surface and assembling and installing the site furniture.

Speakers for the event included: City Council Member for District 7, Leslie Pool; Kimberly A. McNeeley, Parks and Recreation Acting Director; Colin Wallis, Austin Parks Foundation, CEO; and Wooten Neighborhood Association Representative, Adam Turner.

Wooten Elementary School provided special performances by: the Wooten Choir led by Ms. Holly Kofod, the Wooten Cheer Troupe led by Ms. Emily Placette, and Dance Another World dance group led by Ms. Terie Wilson.

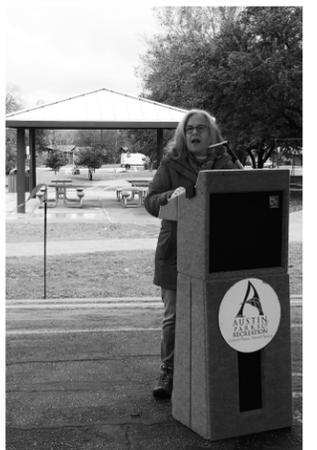
The Wooten Park Committee would like to give a great big thanks to Kevin Westergren and Redeemer Lutheran Church; Leslie Pool, District 7 City of Austin Council Member; Ann Teich, District 3 Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees; Mr. San Segundo, Wooten Elementary Principal; Mr. Martinez, Wooten Elementary Parent Coordinator; Ladye Anne Wofford, APF Chief Mission Officer; John Rooney, APF Programs Coordinator, and the Austin Parks Foundation; Brian Block and Charles Mabry from PARD; Samsie Syed, owner of La Tiendita and park supporter, Wooten NA and all neighbors who have donated towards the park pavilion.



Wooten Elementary School Choir performs



Bryce Kyzburg and sons



Council Member Leslie Pool

And special thanks to Annette Martinez, the Senior Event Coordinator from the City of Austin, Parks and Recreation Department, Office of Special Events who coordinated all the entities to provide a successful event. Most grateful for Hannah Frankel who submitted the grant and for Joanne Garrett who led the community fund-raising efforts.

- Laura Tomlinson, Wooten Park Committee

Volunteer Opportunities

On March 27th Burnet Middle School will hold a Beautification Day on campus and we are inviting all our Wooten neighbors to join us! We will start at 4:00 and end by 6:00. Refreshments will be provided. This is an exciting opportunity for our teachers and staff to connect with the Wooten community and work side by side with our neighbors. Please consider joining us!

Some of the work to be done includes: new plantings, turning gardening beds, campus trash collection, painting new trash receptacles, and other garden/beautification opportunities.

To give a little background, we've been adding special elements to our campus for years. We have a working farm on the north side of the building with goats, chickens and vegetable beds. Eggs will soon be available for purchase (\$5 suggested donation). There is a Wildlife Habitat that was brought in with the support of the National Wildlife Federation. Other areas of the school have various flowering plants, trees and shrubs. These also include several memorial plantings for teachers and students who passed away while they were active members in our community. More recently we added a Monarch Butterfly Waystation Habitat to support them as they travel over our school during their amazing annual 2-3 thousand mile migration.

The management of much of the green spaces on campus is thanks to the thriving agriculture program supported by our school as well as the district and our teacher, Mr. Hector Hernandez, and the students in his agriculture class. He is organizing our Beautification Day and needs your help!



Above: working farm, below: Wildlife Habitat



If you have questions and would like to register to help us on March 27th, please visit this link: <https://bit.ly/2BBdZWG> or use the QR code on the right. We look forward to seeing you and thank you for all your support!



Public Schools and Your Property Taxes

You probably got your property tax bill from Travis County this January and you may have noticed 1) taxes are expensive! And 2) Austin Independent School District's portion makes up about *half* of your bill.

You may have also heard that nearly half of your AISD dollars don't stay in Austin. They go to the state. Now AISD is facing budget shortfalls and may have to close as many as 50 schools. *But why?*

Public school finance in Texas is complicated, but maybe we can clear up some confusion!

How are schools funded in Texas? Last year, local property taxes accounted for more than half of all school funding. The state government contributed ~38% and federal dollars accounted for ~10% overall (federal funds pay for special programs like free and reduced lunch).

But these proportions are different for every school district. Poorer districts get more money from the state, while Austin is considered "property wealthy" so your local taxes pay for the vast majority of AISD's budget.

Where do my school property tax dollars go? Your AISD tax bill consists of two tax rates:

1. Maintenance and Operations (M&O), which is \$1.079 per \$100 of property valuation.
2. Interest and Sinking (I&S), which is \$0.113 per \$100 of property valuation.

But AISD must send nearly half of the revenue from M&O to the state in the form of "recapture". Last year that total was over \$600 million.

Of the remaining M&O money, the majority pays teacher and staff salaries. Other costs include building operations, supplies, and transportation. I&S property taxes pay off bond debt.

What are bonds? Bonds are money ISDs borrow and pay back over time. They're used for big projects like building and renovating facilities or major technology upgrades in schools. Bonds must be approved by voters. Bond money cannot be "recaptured" so it all stays in the district.

What is recapture? Some districts can collect more taxes than others because its property values are higher. But some districts with low property values can be woefully underfunded. Recapture (sometimes called "Robin Hood") is a policy meant to provide equitable education to all students across the state.

Texas uses math formulas to determine the minimum cost to educate a student in a given district. If the district cannot collect that amount, the state makes up the difference. Sometimes, if a district collects more than the minimum amount in taxes, it is "recaptured by the state" and distributed to other, poorer districts.



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How does the state decide how much \$\$\$ AISD can keep? Several details factor into the cost formulas including average daily district attendance, student demographics, number of students with special needs, district size, property wealth, and the tax rate.

Unfortunately, these formulas have not been updated in about 30 years. This means the base amount the state says it *should* cost to educate an AISD student is much lower than reality. And because AISD is specifically used in the formulas recapture, AISD pays the highest amount to the state of any ISD in Texas.

What can I do? This system is unfair and burdensome to both schools and taxpayers, but only state lawmakers can make real long-term fixes. Luckily, there is momentum at the Capitol this legislative session to increase school funding.

Tell your legislators, Rep. Gina Hinojosa (gina@ginaforaustin.com) and Sen. Kirk Watson (kirk.watson@senate.state.tx.us), that you support school finance reform. They may be able to notify you when important bills are up for a vote in committees. As Austinites, we have the opportunity to attend committee hearings and testify on bills that could decide the future of school finance.

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Ready for a change? I'm happy to help!



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