

SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 1929.

SAN LEON, WITH LOW TAX AND NO BONDS, IS IN POSITION TO MAKE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

(Note—This is the fifth of a series of articles dealing with conditions in schools over the mainland. Another article will appear in The News next Sunday.)

BY LEE WOODS JR.,

News Mainland Reporter.

Staff Special to The News.

San Leon, Tex., March 23.—The standard of teaching in the San Leon school is above the average for a rural district, but current conditions are such that it would be advisable to make certain changes and enlargements. Such a movement should embrace added instruction space, improved equipment, and either the addition of one teacher or alteration of methods to permit better separation of classes.

It is a seven-grade school, with a present enrollment of fifty-two students. These are under the supervision of two teachers, both of whom have been in the district for some time.

Trustees on the board are C. J. Blume, president; W. H. Campbell and W. J. Scarborough. Mr. Blume has been on the board about twelve years, Mr. Campbell two terms but not in succession, and Mr. Scarborough is the new member. The terms of Mr. Blume and Mr. Campbell expire next month.

The school building is a one-story brick structure, for which bonds were voted in 1914. It contains three rooms, two of which are separated by a partition, which, when opened, forms one large room, used as an auditorium. Two of the classrooms are now being used.

Badly Situated.

The structure at the time of its erection was located in about the center of the community. Since that time San Leon's expansion has moved away from the building so that it is now situated two miles from the main residence section and four miles and a half from the railroad station, around which many of the pupils live. Alleviated somewhat by use of a bus to convey students to and from school, this is a situation which can hardly be altogether remedied until such time as a new building might be erected in a more convenient site.

The building is in a fair state of repair, although the steps and one or two other features are in need of improvement. New single seats and desks were placed in one of the rooms this year, and board members say it is contemplated to replace the double seats in the other room with single ones next year. The third room, separated by the partition, has no stationary seats and is seldom used except when entertainments are given. A stage has been built at one end of it, and a piano is in the room.

Sanitary drinking fountains, supplied from either a concrete-covered well or an overhead tank, have been installed in the basement. No provision has been made for fire protection, however, and this should be looked after. Nor has the building electric lights, as a power line has not yet been run to San Leon. Better lighting at night, now done by oil or gas lanterns, will therefore have to await coming of such a line to the building.

Elementary School.

Playground equipment is average, including swings, see-saws and other apparatus. The grounds consist of about two acres, which permit of ample room for additional such equipment.

Teachers are Mrs. M. Stone, principal, who has been at San Leon four or five years, and Miss Mabel Kate Simonton, whose period of teaching here has been for two years.

The enrollment of fifty-two students is pretty uniformly divided among the seven grades of the school. This being the case and with but two teachers, it creates a situation wherein at least one other teacher is needed so far as grades are concerned, but not made absolutely necessary by the number of students.

On the other hand, with two teachers conducting seven grades, it tends to overwork them. The principal has twenty-three classes each day and the other teacher nearly as many. This is too many by far and an instructor, to give her pupils the most benefit of her learning, should be allowed some time between classes as rest or study hall periods. No complaints have been made by the instructors, but such is the situation.

Again, at San Leon is found the condition which prevails in a number of county schools, namely, the teaching of one class while other classes are in the same room, supposed to study. Utilization of the extra room and employment of another teacher so that all classes not in session may be together and those in session separated, should better this condition here.

Home economics is not taught at San Leon, although the girls are given practice lessons in cooking, particularly for entertainments.

Classes take up about 9 o'clock and let out at 4, with an hour at noon and two fifteen-minute recesses.

It is to San Leon's credit that for the past three years it has had a nine months' session and salaries of the teachers have been raised, whereas previously there were only eight months of instruction and teachers were rather poorly paid.

San Leon students of high school rank attend Dickinson high school, being taken there and back each day in a bus purchased by the school board. This bus also takes the local pupils to and from school. This arrangement with Dickinson was started seven years ago and has proved fairly satisfactory, San Leon paying the necessary tuition for their instruction.

District Is Debt Free.

Mr. Blume deserves recognition in that during the first year he furnished his own car to transport the students to Dickinson.

Aside from the Help Each Other Club here, San Leon has no women's or parents' organization to foster better relations between the school and the parents, although this feeling in a small community like San Leon usually needs no specific organization. Entertainments at the school are popularly attended.

The San Leon district is out of debt, according to Mr. Blume.