



A Brief History of the La Vernia Schools

By the La Vernia Historical Association

August 2019

The LVHA operates the LV Heritage Museum, opened on the first and third Sunday of each month, from Noon to 3pm and by appointment. Groups (*especially school groups*) are always WELCOME. Call 210-392-3281 to arrange tours. More info at LaVerniaHistory.com

In 1853, our community was originally named Post Oak. In 1859, the U.S. Post Office discovered that a town already had that name so it was changed to Lavernia. The spelling is traditionally accepted as Lavernia, LaVernia or La Vernia. In 1860, Wilson County was established.



Brahan Masonic Lodge, La Vernia school class, 1909. Photo from LHVA Archives.

The early settlers of La Vernia were very well educated. According to local historians, Allen and Regina Kosub, a school referred to as the Cibolo School existed near La Vernia in the 1850s. Also in the 1850s, the original Concrete School was built, but it was not in La Vernia. It was two miles north of La Vernia on FM 775 in the area of Concrete Cemetery across from what is now the Ross and Mary Scull Circle N Dairy. The area was referred to first as Bethesda and later, Concrete. In 1858, an old concrete building on the site was used as a school and meeting hall for the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, as stated in the Deed Records of Guadalupe County. Around 1867 the original Concrete School building burned down. It was rebuilt sometime later in a nearby location and was in use until the 1950s according to Bobby Brietzke who attended the school.

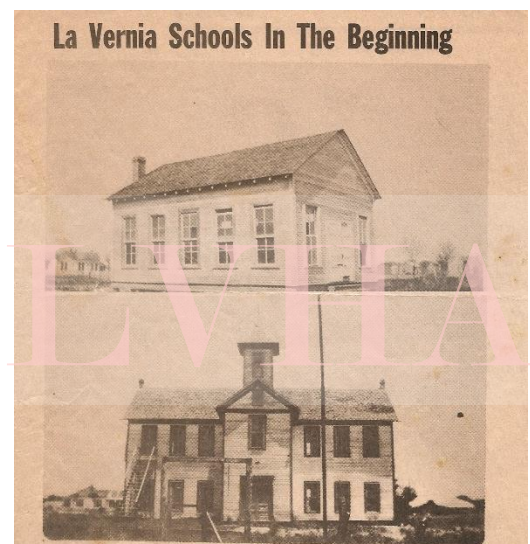
In 1870, a “Lavernia Male and Female Academy” was mentioned in the *San Antonio Herald* and probably referred to the Brahan Masonic Lodge in La Vernia, where classes were often held on the first floor.

In later years, there were several small schools in the La Vernia area such as New Hope, Elm Creek, Pleasant Hill, Sutherland Springs, and Wannamacker. As these small schools closed, many of their students then attended school in La Vernia.

In the 1920’s there were two wooden school buildings located on River Street in La Vernia. One was a single story building for grades 1 and 2. The other was a two story building for grades 3 thru 11.

The story of the La Vernia Schools continued as the Great Depression was beginning in 1929:

The late E. O. Junior Koeppe, in a conversation with Susan Duelm Richter, spoke of how his father, E. O. Koeppe Sr., strongly urged the La Vernia community to hold a bond election and build a new school. The Great Depression had just begun. This bond issue was in the amount of \$30,000 and split the community dramatically. Business owners reportedly lost income when customers disagreed with their support of the new school plans. Nevertheless, the bond issue for \$30,000 passed, and in **1930 the first brick building for the La Vernia Public School was built.** The school was described in a *San Antonio*



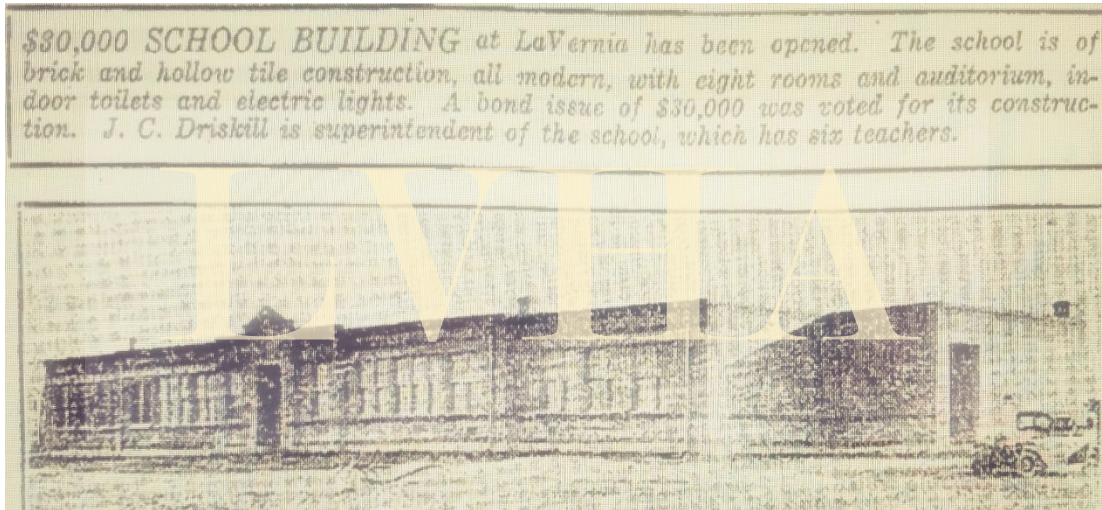
*LV Schools on River Street, 1927.
Photo from LVHA Archives.*

Express Morning Edition article of January 25, 1931, as a “brick and hollow tile construction, all modern, with eight rooms and auditorium, indoor toilets and electric lights. J. C. Driskill is the superintendent of the school, which has six teachers.”

Junior Koepp further stated that the architect for the La Vernia School building was the same one who had designed both the Stockdale School and the Koepp Chevrolet building that was located at that time on Chihuahua Street in La Vernia.

In a 1937 booklet published in Wilson County titled *The Combine Directory of Wilson County, Texas*, pages 19 – 23, it states that the “Lavernia School is a nice brick building. The faculty numbers 10 teachers.”

La Vernia’s very own *Local Legend*, Elsie Witte Ferry, the popular cashier at Witte’s Restaurant, was among the first students to attend the brand new La Vernia school when it was completed in 1931. She graduated in 1942. An enlarged photo of the building from that first year with all the students standing in front of it, including Elsie Witte Ferry as a young student, is on display at the La Vernia Heritage Museum, along with much more information about the schools.



Today, this brick and tile school building, constructed in 1930, is still in use by the La Vernia ISD. It is located on the La Vernia Junior High campus across from the historic Brahan Masonic Lodge on D. L. Vest Street. The school is one of the few remaining historical structures in La Vernia today.

Clipping from the San Antonio Express, Morning Edition, Jan. 25, 1931.



The first class of the La Vernia School, 1931. This building is now known as the “100 Building.” It is one of La Vernia’s few historical buildings in La Vernia today. Photo from the LVHA Archives.

Prepared by Susan Duelm Richter (LVHA Graduate, Class of 1972) and Elaine Mazurek Stephens for the La Vernia Historical Association, August 5, 2019. Richter and Stephens continue to research La Vernia School history.

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