



**DALWORTH RECREATION CENTER
GRAND PRAIRIE SIGNIFICANT LANDMARK
Site Medallion No. 64**

The Dalworth Park community was established in 1910 as a utopian development with graveled streets, natural gas, sidewalks, a 100-acre park, artesian water and its own sewer works. It incorporated in April 1914. The area just south of the railroad and interurban tracks, which was referred to as South Dalworth Park, was populated by citizens, primarily African Americans, who worked for the residents to the north (Goolsby, 2013, p.92). Dalworth Park was originally an incorporated town but on September 16, 1942 residents voted to dissolve the town and Grand Prairie city council voted to annex the area on Sept. 24, 1942 (Goolsby, 2008, p. 46; Dallas County Commission Minutes).

In March 1954, following plans to build Tyre Park in Dalworth, the City of Grand Prairie revealed a plan to build a new library in the South Dalworth area at a site donated by the Grand Prairie Independent School District. Funds for the library/community center project were approved in May 1954, and a contract was selected at a cost of \$15,000. Books for the library were provided by both the city of Grand Prairie and the Dallas County Library system. Mrs. Creola Oliver was hired as the first librarian for the Dalworth Library on January 6, 1955. The library was dedicated on January 16, 1955 with a grand opening ceremony planned for January 30, 1955. Original library board members were “David Daniel, school principal; Mrs. Creola Oliver, librarian; Mrs. Lillie Mae Joe, Mrs. Allene Jones, Will Shelton, Sam Brown, Mose Jordan, John Perry and Mrs. Iola Smith” (Dallas Morning News, 1955).

In 1958 voters approved urban renewal funds for the South Dalworth area, including recreational facilities. At that time, the South Dalworth community still had dirt roads and no utilities. In 1959 urban renewal director E.W. Hill earmarked \$97,000 for the recreation center at SW 20th and Spikes Street, with the city paying one-third of the cost and the Federal Housing Administration paying the remaining amount. The city formally approved plans for the recreation center in October 1961, which included a gym, recreation room, changing rooms, and staff office. The Masterson Company in Dallas won the \$81,390 contract in November 1961 and construction began soon after. The total cost of construction was \$85,000.

The official dedication ceremony took place on May 6, 1962. Mayor C.P. Waggoner took part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony with other notables such as city recreation director Lloyd Rigby, park board chairman Hal Hawes, and Chamber of Commerce president Dr. Larry Kimsey. The Dalworth Recreation Building, 2012 Spikes St., officially opened for business on May 7, 1962. The first director was Minniola Johnson.

During the first years of operation, an advisory committee worked with staff on programming at the center. The advisory committee included Sallye Moore, David Daniels, Sam Brown, Johnnie Stanton and Creola Oliver. They worked closely with recreation center employees Addie Turner and Minniola Johnson.

In 1964 Grand Prairie resident Joe Davidson was awarded the contract to build a paved parking lot for the recreation center as part of the urban renewal project.

Many changes were made to the whole South Dalworth community and by 1968 180 buildings had been torn down and 153 rebuilt, and the area gained “pavement, curbs, gutters, storm drains, water lines, a recreation center, park improvement and expansion of the school” (Goolsby, 2013, p.94).

The center served as an emergency shelter for evacuees during Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The Recreation Center was enlarged and remodeled in 2014. The center grew from 8,356 square feet to 18,878 square feet, with construction in 2013 and 2014. It reopened in December 2014. The original structure was preserved in the expansion, with the exception of the home making room. Rooms were converted thusly:

- Lobby converted to Dance/Aerobics Room
- Game room converted to Fitness
- Existing Restrooms converted to Mechanical/Electrical/Storage
- Homemaking Room converted to expanded Gym

New Addition:

- Entrance on east side of building for easy access by the students at David Daniels Elementary
- New lobby
- New game room
- New and separated computer/study room
- New restrooms
- New family restroom
- New offices
- New dividable meeting room
- New service kitchen
- Outdoor playground
- Expanded parking

The building was awarded a historic marker on May 6, 2018.

References

Goolsby, K.A. (2008). *Historic Grand Prairie*. San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network.

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(1962, May 9). Director and Assistant. *The Daily News Texan*, pp8.

Additional historical information gathered from the Dallas Morning News, 1951-1971