

**Dallas Landmark Commission
Landmark Nomination Form**

1. Name

Historic: Oak Cliff High School
and/or common: W. H. Adamson High School
Date: 1915

2. Location

Address: 201 E. Ninth Street
Location/neighborhood: Oak Cliff, Dallas, 75203
Block and lot: 136/3131, lot 1A **land survey:** n/a **tract size:** 5.386 AC

3. Current Zoning

current zoning: Mixed Use District 1

4. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	_____museum
_____district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	_____agricultural	_____park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	_____private	_____unoccupied	_____commercial	_____residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	_____both	_____work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	_____religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public	Accessibility	_____entertainment	_____scientific
_____object	Acquisition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	_____government	_____transportation
	_____in progress	_____yes: unrestricted	_____industrial	_____other, specify
	_____being consider'd	_____no	_____military	_____

5. Ownership

Current Owner: Dallas Independent School District
Contact: Dr. Michael Hinojosa, Superintendent Phone: 972/925-3700
Address: 3700 Ross Avenue City: Dallas State: TX Zip: 75208

4. Form Preparation

Date: September 15, 2009, revised October 22, 2010
Name & Title: Bob Johnston and Glenn Straus
Organization: Adamson High School Alumni Association
Contact: Glenn Straus; phone: 972/524-2439

7. Representation on Existing Surveys

Alexander Survey (citywide): local state national
National Register no
H.P.L. Survey (CBD) A B C D Recorded TX Historic Ldmk
Oak Cliff TX Archaeological Ldmk
Victorian Survey
Dallas Historic Resources Survey, Phase _____ high _____ medium _____ low

For Office Use Only

Date Rec'd: _____ **Survey Verified:** Y N **by:** _____ **Field Check by:** _____ **Petitions Needed:** Y N
Nomination: Archaeological Site Structure(s) Structure & Site District

8. Historic Ownership

Original owner: City of Dallas Public Schools (now known as Dallas Independent School District)

Significant later owner(s): none

9. Construction Dates

Original: 1915

Alterations/additions: 1919, 1938, 1955, 1980 & 2005

10. Architect

Original construction: William B. Ittner (1915)

Alterations/additions:

1919	William B. Ittner, St. Louis, Missouri
1938	Roscoe DeWitt, Dallas
1955	Mark Lemmon, Dallas, consulting architect; Gordon, Hefley & Hall, associated architects
1980	Renovations; Dahl, Braden, Chapman, Dallas.
2005	James Harwick + Partners, Dallas with Ross Barney Jankowski, Chicago.

11. Site Features

The site is located at the top of a hill which looks to the north to downtown Dallas; it retains its original topography which slopes slightly in all directions. A large front lawn faces Ninth Street is covered in grass with large trees in front of the school; these were planted after the building was constructed.

12. Physical Description

Condition, check one:

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

unaltered
 altered

Check one:

original site
 Moved (date _____)

Known as 'Oak Cliff High School' when originally built in 1915 by the Dallas School district, Adamson High School sits on an entire block in Oak Cliff bounded by North Beckley Avenue on the west, East Eighth Street on the north, North Crawford on the east and East Ninth Street on the south; the school is located near the southwest corner of the site with its main entry at East Ninth Street. The entire site is relatively flat although small concrete retaining walls exist at the Beckley Avenue sidewalk to accommodate the vertical difference in height between the original grade at the site and the street due to road improvements that have changed the elevation of the street since 1915. The surrounding neighborhood was originally residential and remains so although buildings on Beckley Avenue are now commercial. Additionally, the residential buildings in the two blocks in front of the school have been razed and asphalt parking lots for faculty and student parking take their place.

This three-story concrete frame building with masonry walls was designed in the American Classical Revival architectural style by architect William B. Ittner of Saint Louis, Missouri. The Classical Revival style is based on primarily the Greek and to a lesser degree, the Roman architectural orders

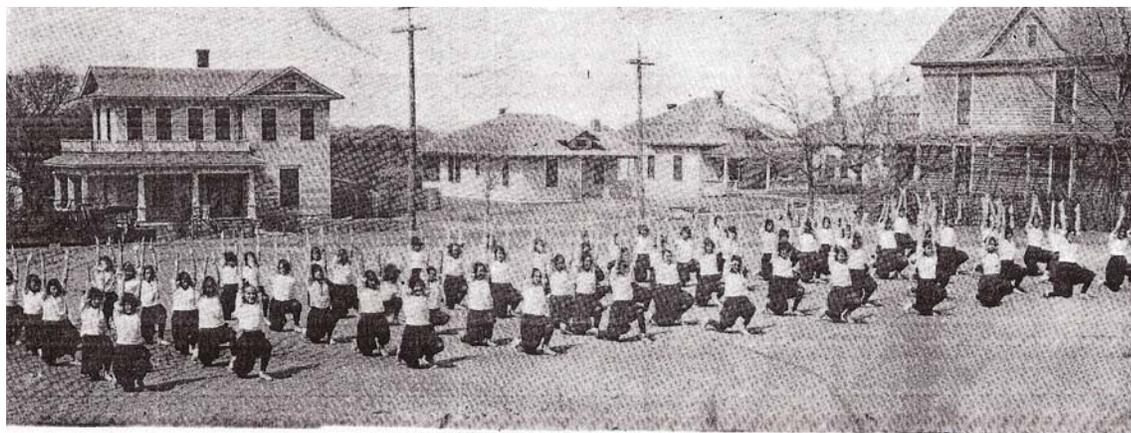
with a symmetrical balanced building form, windows and doors, and the buildings are of monumental proportions. This architectural style became popular for government and institutional buildings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was the dominant style used at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair exhibition buildings - which further popularized the style.

Common features of this style that are found at Adamson High School include the broken pediment and surround at the entrance, monumental steps leading to the entrance at the second floor, balustrade at the parapet in the center of the building, large rectangular window openings with awning windows with double-hung sashes above (sashes have since been replaced with fixed aluminum windows) and planar wall surfaces.



Rendering of the historic school

From: *Education in Dallas, 1874-1966* by Dr. Walter J.E. Schiebel, published by DISD, 1966.



GIRLS' SEVENTH PERIOD GYMNASIUM CLASS

Photograph of the Girls Gymnasium class from 1922 *'The Oak'* yearbook – showing homes on North Crawford Street (at left) and East Ninth Street (at right).

The building's structure is reinforced concrete frame with exterior infill walls of structural clay tile with brick veneer; the brick at the lower floor is brown while that of the upper two floors is red. The front façade is composed of a three-bay center portion that protrudes slightly from the adjacent side

wings of this façade. The focus of the façade is this center portion where a monumental stair leads to the main entry at the second floor; the top of the façade features a slightly higher parapet with carved stone ornament in the center, flanking balustrades and a stone parapet cap. A stone cornice with dentils, brick frieze and stone medallions is below the parapet in this center portion. Windows in this center portion were originally in groups of three with wood triple-hung six-over-six wood sashes. The entrance surround at the main floor (second floor) is ornate carved stone, in a broken pediment design that originally had a pair of 10-light wood doors with sidelight at each side and a large 24-light wood transom above. Above the door opening is a newer (c. 1935) sign that notes 'W. H. Adamson High School,' which was placed above the original carved letters in the stone that read 'Oak Cliff High School'. To the right of this entrance is the building cornerstone that notes 'Erected 1915' and has William Ittners' signature etched into the stone, followed by the word 'Architect;' this signature in the cornerstone is typical for buildings designed by Ittner.

A prominent horizontal stone water course separates the brown brick at the first floor from the red brick at the upper floors at the second floor line; a smaller stone band is at the second floor line above.



Adamson High School, 2008

The center portion and side wings have large quoins, made of brick, at the exterior corners. The identical side wings of the building are four bays wide that originally had four double-hung wood windows per opening, with a transom above. The stone courses from the center portion extend into the bays but the parapet is unadorned at this façade.

Also visible at the front façade are the side façades of the two historic rear wings which sit back approximately 25' from the front façade; the materials of these facades are identical to the front and side facades. Secondary entrances to the first floor are located in these facades; these side entrances are quite ornate with a decorative stone entrance surround that originally had 15-light French doors with transom above and provide access to the first floor which consists of classrooms and the cafeteria.

The side facades of the historic 1915 building had materials similar to the front façade – brown and red brick, horizontal stone courses at the floor levels and large window openings, typically with four wood windows. The rear façade also utilized the same materials but the window and door openings were more utilitarian and located in a less orderly manner.

The front façade of the W. H. Adamson High School building retains its historic appearance with the exception of the historic wood windows (originally painted white) that have been replaced by dark anodized aluminum windows with tinted non-operable glass and modifications have been made to the entry stair. These original windows were unique with the lower sash as an awning (opening out and hinged at the top) while the upper sashes were nine-over-nine double-hung although the center sash could also function as an awning sash. These unique windows are shown in photos below.



From Kathleen Lowery's *'Happy School Days,'* unpublished personal memoir, c. 1920.

The three-story structure consists of three floors; the first floor contains classrooms and the lunchroom. Offices, classrooms, and the auditorium are located at the main (second) floor with the library, an exhibit space in the front hallway, classrooms and balcony entrances to the auditorium located at the third floor. A partial basement and crawl space extends under the historic building.

Interior finishes

The interior finishes of the school were typical for the era – plaster on load bearing masonry walls, wood, terrazzo or concrete floors and plaster finishes at ceilings. Many of the interior door openings contained solid wood doors with glass lights, wood door frames and operable transom windows, allowing teachers to control ventilation and air temperature within the room. The water fountains located in the public corridors had ceramic tile surrounds (see photo that follows). These ceramic tiles showing nautical scenes are similar to those made by Grueby Pottery Company of Boston, Massachusetts; however, the manufacturer of these tiles has not been determined.

When a central air-conditioning system was installed in the building, the ductwork was installed in the main corridors and a 2' x 4' lay-in acoustic ceiling was suspended below. This lower acoustic tile ceiling typically is located below the transoms at interior doors so hides these transom windows as well as the upper portions of the door and window frames.



Adamson High School and surrounding neighborhood.
Sanborn Map 1922 – 1950, courtesy of Dallas Public Library.

Changes to the school building since 1915

Although there have been several additions and renovations at the school since its original construction in 1915, the exterior appearance of most work has been fairly complementary with the original exterior material used (red brick) and the buildings scale. Each of these later additions is addressed in Section 13 – Historical Significance.

There are two non-historic metal buildings located at the east side of the site, with playing fields occupying the north-west area of the site.

Historic interior features within building

There are many typical and unique historic interior features remaining in the school, making Adamson one of most intact historic schools' in the City of Dallas. Photographs of some of these historic features follow:



Original ceramic tile surround at water fountain.



Original wood cabinetry in science labs



Typical original wood French doors, sidelights and transoms throughout building.



Third floor hallway with skylights above.



Original double-hung chalkboards in lecture room, still operable.



Original double-hung chalkboards (with new white marker board) in Science Lecture room, still operable.

10. Architect – William B. Ittner

The architect of the Oak Cliff High School, now known as W. H. Adamson High School, was William Butts Ittner of St. Louis, Missouri. William B. Ittner is considered the single most important figure in the revolution that transformed public school architecture in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Born to Anthony and Mary Ittner in St. Louis in 1864, he attended public schools in St. Louis – in the very schools he would later revolutionize. Anthony Ittner was a self-made mason who co-owned a brick and construction company (Ittner Brothers Brick Company) in South St. Louis; he served on the St. Louis City Council in 1867, and was elected to the United States Congress in 1877. Throughout his political career, Anthony Ittner worked to establish trade schools for young men.

William Ittner attended Washington University's Manual Training School in St. Louis, graduating in 1884. He then attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, where he earned an architecture degree in 1887. Following graduation he traveled Europe before returning to St. Louis to marry Lottie Crain Allen. Ittner then worked for Eames and Young Architects until 1889, when he practiced architecture as a sole practitioner for two years. In 1891 he began a partnership with William Foster, and later with Link and Rosenheim. During these years he appears to have designed primarily single and multi-family residential buildings.



Commissioner of School Buildings for St. Louis Board of Education, 1897 – 1910.

Ittner was elected to the new office of Commissioner of School Buildings for the St. Louis Board of Education in 1897. This position provided him the opportunities to practice and perfect his strong philosophies in the benefits of good design – particularly for educational facilities. Ittner's early educational experiences were regarded by him as distinctly unpleasant. The headline of his obituary in the Post-Dispatch reads, "W. B. Ittner, Noted Architect and Designer of Schools, Dies," while the subhead declared "As Boy He Resented Prisonlike Buildings, as Man He Changed the Style Throughout the Country."

Ittner was of a generation and a class that understood that the buildings in which we live, study, work, worship and play affect all of us, for good or for ill. As commissioner of school buildings in Saint Louis, Ittner took this opportunity to improve on what he considered poor environments for the education of students. He researched and experimented with the design of St. Louis's schools, making natural light and air an important consideration in the design of new schools; he eventually settled on the E-shaped floor plan as the ideal school layout as this provided light and air to all classrooms and hallways. Concurrently, schools designed by Ittner became horizontal rather than vertical - an adaptation to the Midwestern landscape rather than an imitation of traditional public school building design found in the Eastern United States. In addition to incorporating light into all classrooms and public spaces, he moved the toilets to the same floors as the classrooms (instead of the dark basements) and he brought the scale of students into what had previously been treated as utilitarian, institutional buildings. Ittner also used a variety of historicist architectural styles for building exteriors - Jacobethan Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival and Georgian - allowing school buildings to reflect the individuality of the community.

Ittner was active in both community and professional affairs. He served as President of the St. Louis chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1893 to 1895, was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1891, served as President of the American League of Architects from 1903 to 1904, lectured at New York University on School Planning in 1922 and was appointed by the National Education Association to the Committee on Administration of Secondary Education. Ittner was invited by President Herbert Hoover to a White House Conference in 1926, the same year that he was elected Vice President of the St. Louis Plaza Commission. At the time of his death he was a Thirty-Second degree Mason.

While Commissioner of St. Louis Public Schools he designed 48 schools; Wyman Elementary became the first to use natural light from large windows and multiple, large classrooms. The monumental West Clark School (1907) provided classrooms with natural lighting, cross ventilation, consideration of student traffic patterns and overall function that were as thoughtfully designed as the exterior appearance of the building. His Soldan High School (1908) exemplified Ittner's innovative approach to school design combined with an impressive Jacobethan Revival exterior design. This school was considered a masterpiece of educational design in the early decades of the twentieth century and served as a model for school design across the country.

Of the 48 public schools he designed for St. Louis' Board of Education, 19 are listed in the National Register of Historic Places – eight as part of the *St. Louis, Missouri Public Schools of William B. Ittner's National Register Multiple Property Nomination* and eleven are individually listed. This national recognition for Ittner's schools reflects St. Louis's appreciation for these remarkable school buildings and recognizes the place they hold for the community and the school district.

William B. Ittner, Architect 1910 – 1936

Following his resignation from the St. Louis School Board in 1910, Ittner established his own firm in 1910 but continued as "consulting architect" to the Board until October, 1914. Ittner's architectural practice focused primarily on educational facilities and he designed hundreds of schools in other Missouri cities as well as in at least 25 states, including several in Dallas - Oak Cliff High School (now Adamson High School), Forest Avenue (now James Madison High School), 1916 and North Dallas high school in 1922. Forest Avenue and North Dallas high schools are City of Dallas Landmarks and Forest Avenue is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other schools outside of Missouri designed by Ittner include Central High School and Boys Vocational School (St. Joseph County, Indiana, NR), Ralph Waldo Emerson School (1902, Lake County, Indiana, NR), Shelbyville High School (Shelby County, Indiana, NR), Fairmont Senior High (Fairmont, West Virginia, NR), Sixteenth Street School (Muscogee County, Georgia, NR), Central High School (Minneapolis, Minnesota), Decatur County Courthouse (Decatur County, Georgia, NR), Central High School (Pinellas County, Florida), Central School (Franklin County, Ohio), Hume-Fogg High School (Davidson County, Tennessee), Park City Junior High School (Know County, Tennessee), Robert Alexander Long High School (Cowlitz County, Washington), Francis L. Cardozo Senior High School (District of Columbia), Ball High School (Galveston, Texas). Those noted with 'NR' are listed in the National Register of Historic Properties.

In addition to schools, Ittner designed a variety of other building types including the well crafted Italian revival Missouri Athletic Club (1914, by Ittner and George Brueggeman), St. Louis Scottish Rite Cathedral (1924) and the remarkable 22-story Gothic skyscraper Continental Building with Art Deco details in Midtown St. Louis (1928). Due to the remarkable design and functionality of Ittner's buildings, many of these are still in use. Non-educational buildings designed by Ittner's firm that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places include Iredell County Courthouse (Iredell County, North Carolina), the St. Louis Colored Orphans Home (Missouri), Missouri State Teachers Association (Boone County, Missouri), Odd Fellows Home District (Clay County, Missouri) and the Principia Page-Park YMCA Gymnasium (St. Louis, Missouri).

Ittner regarded his buildings as 'greenhouses for the intellectual and physical well-being of their constituents.' Of his school buildings, he declared: "the complete school environment should be a model for health. To accomplish this desired goal, sanitation, cleanliness, perfect lighting, airiness and cheerfulness must, of necessity, constitute the eternal, unwritten laws of successful school planning." William B. Ittner died in 1936 but his name lives on in architecture through the firms of William B. Ittner, Inc. and Ittner & Bowersox, Inc. in St. Louis, Missouri.

In addition to his prodigious career in school design, Ittner also mentored architects across the country. In Texas, he worked with Mark Lemmon and Roscoe DeWitt, with Ittner as architect and DeWitt and Lemon as consulting architect, on three schools in Galveston - Goliad Junior High School, Elementary School, and Central High School.

Mark Lemmon would later become a noted school architect, and between 1925 and 1962, completed 20 schools for DISD including Sunset High School, Woodrow Wilson High School, Boude Story Junior High School, Alex Spence Junior High School, Dallas; San Jacinto Elementary School, W. W. Samuell High School and an addition to Adamson in 1955.

13. Historical Significance

Oak Cliff Schools

In 1891 the newly-incorporated town of Oak Cliff decided to provide public education facilities for its population, and shortly thereafter voted to seek bids on a new school building. The newspaper reported: “Resolved by the city council of Oak Cliff that the mayor be instructed to advertise for plans for a modern three-story brick school building with brick cross walls [*sic*] to be erected at Oak Cliff, Texas, to contain twelve rooms for school purposes and the cost of said building, complete, not to exceed the sum of \$22,000.” The corner stone for the school was laid at the corner of Patton (then St. George) and Tenth Streets in September 1892 under the auspices of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Texas.¹ This school building was known as the Oak Cliff Central High School and served grades 1 through 11; the 12th grade would be added in the future.

In 1901 William Harden Adamson was named Superintendent of the Oak Cliff Central School; it is thought that in this smaller school system, the Superintendent’s responsibilities included also serving as principal of the school. In May 1902 Adamson presided over his first graduation of students from Oak Cliff, awarding some 18 diplomas at a ceremony held at Oak Cliff Methodist Church. In 1903 Adamson was unanimously re-elected as Superintendent at a salary of \$1,300 per year.

Room assignments for 1903 listed 15 teachers at the Central Building – 2 in the high school and 13 in grades 1-8, including Mrs. W. H. Adamson who taught second grade. In December 1903 Mr. Adamson submitted enrollment figures to the school board with a total enrollment of 819 with 386 boys, 433 girls and an additional 105 enrolled in the ‘colored school’ – 43 boys and 62 girls.

Dallas Public School System

In 1903 the town of Oak Cliff was annexed by the City of Dallas and by 1904, the Oak Cliff schools became part of the Dallas Public School system, which at that time was operated by the City of Dallas municipal government (Dallas’ public school system was founded in 1884). Dallas Superintendent J. L. Long originally retained Adamson as Principal of the Oak Cliff Central School, which had 13 teachers in grades 1 - 11. However, this was changed shortly thereafter as Oak Cliff high school students attended the new High School at Bryan Street (now known as Crozier Tech High School) which was Dallas’ only high school for white students. Elementary school students in Oak Cliff remained at the Oak Cliff Central School.

By 1906 the Dallas school system had grown to 10,000 students with 1,000 of these students in Oak Cliff. There were 14 schools city wide and 200 teachers that year. In 1908 J. L. Long resigned as Superintendent and W. H. Adamson was one of 25 applicants for the position, losing the post to Arthur LeFevre.

Oak Cliff had continued to grow and by 1912 Mr. Adamson said that classrooms in the basement of Oak Cliff Central School were soon to be removed due to the opening of a new elementary school - J. S. Hogg School. The Oak Cliff community requested a new high school serving Oak Cliff be built; the Oak Cliff Educational Alliance was subsequently formed with “the immediate object of which is

¹ “Corner Stone of the Oak Cliff Public School Building Laid To-Morrow,” September 12, 1892, *Dallas Daily Times Herald*, p. 4, col. 1.

to secure a modern high school with up-to-date equipment” in Oak Cliff. In 1913 Professor Adamson made a speech to the Oak Cliff Improvement Society entitled “Our Central High School When Completed.”

After recovering from the depression of the last decade of the nineteenth century, Oak Cliff and Dallas’ population growth strained the school system’s facilities. School officials began to project their future needs for the decades to come and in 1914, it was estimated that the school population would increase from 2,801 in the 1915-16 school year to 8,902 by 1925.

Suburban growth patterns prompted the Dallas School Board to recommend that sites in Oak Cliff and South Dallas be secured for ‘high school buildings of the standard capacity (to) be forthwith constructed, furnished and installed...’² By 1915 two sites had been selected and nationally known architect William B. Ittner from St. Louis, Missouri, had been hired to design both high schools – Oak Cliff High School and Forest Avenue High School in South Dallas (now known as Madison High School). This venerable architect, nationally known for transforming American public school architecture by designing schools with light in all classrooms, introduced ventilation into the classrooms and provided modern plumbing and bath facilities by moving the student bathrooms (previously delegated to basements) to the same floor as the classrooms and introducing natural ventilation in halls and classrooms; these improvements and others resulted in a generation of schools were much more humane than those of the previous century.

With the completion of these new high schools, Dallas now had three high schools, each serving a distinct area of the city: north, south and south-west (Oak Cliff). The school board also looked at purchasing additional land in all three areas for additional elementary and middle schools.

Oak Cliff High School (now known as Adamson High School, constructed in 1915

The site selected for the new Oak Cliff high school was located at the corner of Ninth and Beckley streets (201 East Ninth Street). Located at the top of a hill in what was a thriving, middle class residential community, this site was near the original terminus of the Oak Cliff Street car line, providing easy access for the growing population of Oak Cliff. Ittners’ plans were approved by the school board on July 24, 1915 with the contractual requirement that the school cost a maximum of \$125,000.

Built at a cost of approximately \$128,000 by the Holmboe Company of Oklahoma City³ and opening after some controversy, the new Oak Cliff High School was a state-of-the-art school facility. Controversy arose over the differences between the two new schools as Forest Avenue High School was built with four stories on the front of the building, with the fourth floor housing art rooms and an art gallery. Oak Cliff residents complained loudly to the school board that they too should have such art facilities—to no avail.

This new Oak Cliff High School was U-shaped with classrooms on both sides of a central hall; the front hallways with classrooms and offices faced Ninth Street to residences while the two side wings, with two rooms on each side also looked out to residences. A central heating system was operated by coal boilers in the basement, with a giant blower system designed to circulate the air into the

² ‘Historic and Architectural Resources of East and South Dallas’ National Register nomination, 1995

³ “Contracts Awarded Totaling \$204,127,” October 10, 1915, *Dallas Morning News*, Section Part Four, p. 4

classrooms. Later the basement coal bins were converted to athletic dressing rooms.

Following construction of the new Oak Cliff High School, the previous wood-frame Central Oak Cliff School high school building continued to function as an elementary school until 1926 when it was torn down and the students assigned to John H. Reagan and James Bowie elementary schools and later to the new Ruthmeade Elementary School (now known as John F. Peeler) also.

1919 Addition

In 1919 the first of several additions to the school was completed, and included a 1200-seat Auditorium, a permanent lunchroom (below the Auditorium, in the basement), a gymnasium and 15 additional classrooms on the ends of the north wings.⁴ The addition had been planned with the original school but due to costs was deferred; this addition opened in the fall of 1919 and cost \$250,000⁵

Of interest is that in 1922, Adamson opened evening classes for 111 students due to overcrowding at the school; classes included bookkeeping, shorthand, typing, penmanship and spelling and gym classes. Classes were held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings.

Oak Cliff High School renamed Adamson High School in 1935

Principal W. H. Adamson became seriously ill in January 1935 and remained at home until his death in May 1935; four days later the Dallas School Board voted to re-name Oak Cliff High School in his honor. At the time of his death, Adamson had served as principal for 31 years and was fondly referred to as “the Grand Old Man of Oak Cliff.” He had served the Oak Cliff community as both Superintendent of Schools and high school Principal for the town of Oak Cliff and as High School Principal for the Dallas School system for a combined 34 years. A new plaque stating ‘W. H. Adamson High School’ was placed on top of the carved stone ‘Oak Cliff High School’ name above the doors at the front entry; this new plaque remains in place to this day.

Changes and Addition to the School, 1934 – 1938

In 1934 the Public Works of Art Project, a federal art program which was a part of the New Deal during the Great Depression of the 1930s, aimed at giving meaningful work to unemployed artists. PWA authorized the painting of two “symbolic murals” on the second floor of the school outside the library. The artist was Harry Carnahan and other works by other artists were placed as part of the program in all “white high schools of Dallas.”⁶ Unfortunately, these murals have been painted over or no longer exist.

Another New Deal program, the Public Works Administration’s School Building-Aid Program (PWA), provided funds for a much-needed addition to the school in 1938. This project extended the wings at the east and west ends of the original building, providing a long-awaited art room, chemistry lab and choir suite at the west end of the first floor. On the east end were a biology lab, physics lab, woodshop, basement facilities for the ROTC, football locker room (relocated from the remodeled coal bin in the basement). A new ROTC armory, shooting range, and band room were also included in the basement; this is the only shooting range in any DISD school. Roscoe DeWitt

⁴“Agree On Plans for Oak Cliff High School Annex,” February 8, 1919, *Dallas Morning News*, p. 16.

⁵“Million –Dollar Program For Schools Underway,” May 31, 1919, *Dallas Morning News*, p. 19

⁶ “Included in New Public Works of Art Projects Announced for Dallas,” January 5, 1934, *Dallas Morning News*, Section II, p.1

served as architect and J. J. Fritch was the contractor for this addition; its cost was \$138,436.⁷

At public meetings held in the summer of 2009, DISD noted that repair work had been completed at the south-east corner of the front façade to repair cracks in the brick veneer due to settlement in this area of the foundation. Additional repair would be necessary at this location in 2005 – almost seventy years later.

Auditorium Repairs, 1944

The auditorium was remodeled following a \$15,000 back-stage fire in May, 1944 which started in the stage curtains.

1955 Addition

A large addition to the school designed by Mark Lemmon, consulting architect, and Gordon, Hefley and Hall, associate architect, was completed in 1955. This addition included additional classrooms, a boys gym (named for Howard A. Allen, the principal), and shop facilities. The front stair balustrades were removed and rebuilt and a small storage room constructed below. Of interest is that architect Mark Lemmon had worked with William B. Ittner as associate architect in the design of three schools in Galveston in the mid-1920s. Lemmon had learned much about the design of modern schools from Ittner during these projects, and would subsequently specialize in educational facilities for much of his career – designing 24 schools for DISD and dozens of other public schools for Galveston, Port Arthur, Dennison and many other North Texas school districts.

Site Expansion of the 1970s and 1980s

In the 1970s, metal buildings on Adamson Field for auto shops and early childhood classes were constructed to house vocational and other classrooms. Parking lots at Crawford, Eighth and Patton streets were acquired in 1958⁸. Private homes were later acquired and then demolished at Seventh and Patton for a new athletic field.

1980 Renovation

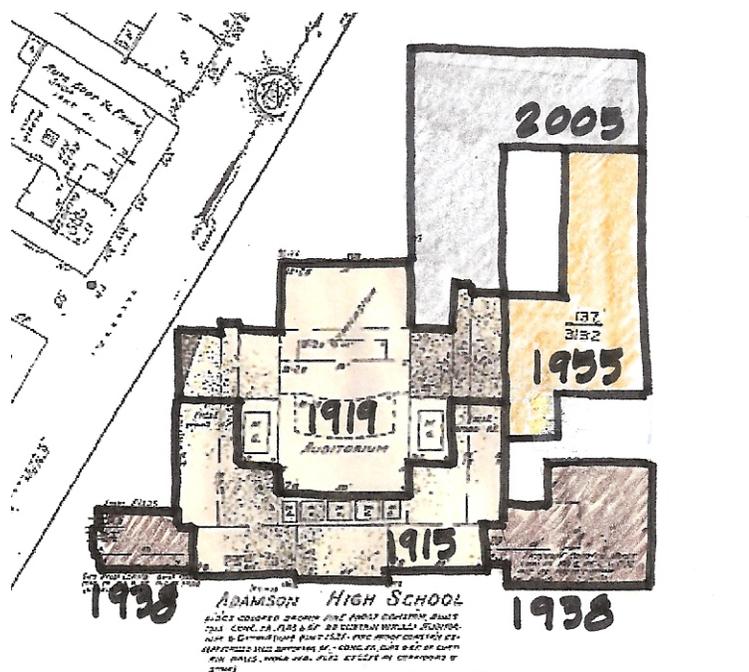
Work planned at the school included an addition containing a gymnasium, updates to the mechanical system, various interior updates and renovation work including removal of original wood windows and replacement with non-operable aluminum windows. However, due to budget constraints, the gymnasium was not constructed although the interior updates and renovation work was completed. The architect was Dahl, Braden, Chapman of Dallas.

2005 Addition and Renovation

A 24,000 square foot, 16-classroom and band facility addition, contained space for computer labs, science classrooms and labs and band and music facilities. This work also included major upgrades to the mechanical and electrical systems, fire alarm and life safety systems, lighting, and finishes refurbishment, roof repairs and computer/science lab renovations. Minor slab leveling and repairs along limited portions of the east façade were conducted to correct minor movement that had previously occurred at this location. Architect for this work was James Harwick + Partners (JH+P), Dallas with Ross Barney Jankowski, Chicago, associate architect.

⁷“School Contrasts Awarded, May 21, 1938, *Dallas Morning News*, Section 1, p. 4

⁸“School Entering Parking Business, August 14, 1958, *Dallas Morning News*, Section 1, p. 1



Graphic showing additions to Adamson High School

2008 Bond Program and planned changes to the building

In the 2008 DISD Bond Program, \$48 million was allocated for improvements to Adamson High School, to bring it up to twentieth-century educational standards.

The Adamson Alumni Association has expressed concern about the potential loss of this historic school. In summer 2008, a meeting was held with DISD at which the alumni expressed their concern, urged DISD to rehabilitate the historic building and offered assistance with a structural evaluation of the building. In mid 2009, DISD released their proposal for the school, which showed the demolition of Adamson High School and replacement with a new building that imitated the historic school building. The alumni group, individual alumni and members of the Oak Cliff community have objected to this approach and continue to recommend the historic portion of the school be retained while the non-historic portions of the school be modified or demolished.

Frank Reaugh and Adamson High School

A well-known neighbor of Oak Cliff High School was artist Frank Reaugh (1860-1945) who was a seminal figure in the North Texas art scene for many years and is celebrated as one of the earliest regionalists of Dallas; his work was exhibited at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and the St. Louis World's Fair in 1903. His paintings specialized in nostalgic visions of the old west, particularly longhorn cattle. Reaugh had established his first studio – "The Ironshed Studio" adjacent to his parent's home which faced Eighth Street in the same block as the high school,^{9, 10} and he and Adamson developed a friendship that continued until Adamson's death.

⁹ "Campus to be Enlarged," November 23, 1927, *Dallas Morning News*, Section 2, p. 15

¹⁰ "Cliff Athletic Field to be Enlarged with New Lot Bought," June 27, 1927, *Dallas Morning News*, Section 2, p. 5

In February 1925, Adamson students began raising funds for the purchase of a canvas mural by Reaugh which was to be located at the upper floor of the school, in the hall outside the Auditorium. This 60' long canvas mural was to cost \$8,000 and several articles in the *Dallas Morning News* make references to fund-raising activities for this mural. It is not known if this mural was ever installed, and if so, what happened to it.

In June and November 1927 the houses next door to the school on the east were acquired, including Reaugh's parents' house and his studio, and were demolished. An athletic field was constructed at this cleared site comprising the entire block to the east side of the school; this field was named 'Adamson Field' in honor of Principal Adamson. The June class of 1931 erected an archway sign at the corner of Crawford and Ninth streets noting "Adamson Field;" this sign remains at this location. Reaugh then built a new studio – El Sybil - at the south side of Lake Cliff Park (Crawford and Fifth Streets).

In 1959 a *Dallas Morning News* reporter visited the Adamson Principal's Office and observed a painting by Frank Reaugh on the wall depicting "a rolling country dotted with cowboys urging the Longhorns across the prairie". It is thought this painting dated from the days of Reaugh's and Adamson's friendship and had been given to the school during that time; it is featured in many Adamson yearbooks as a backdrop for the principal's photograph. This *Dallas Morning News* article noted the value of the painting at \$2,800 (in 1959 dollars).¹¹ Due to its value, the painting was removed to DISD headquarters at a later date; it is not known where in the headquarters facility this remarkable piece of Adamson's history is located.

Adamson High School Activities

Like other schools in DISD, Adamson has a number of activities for its students: athletics, school organizations, theatre, music and ROTC.

Adamson's ROTC and military traditions are strong – as early as 1922 the school had a large ROTC program with affiliated Bugle Corps, Girls Rifle Club and Rifle competitions. The 1938 addition to the building included a firing range which is still active; Adamson students have competed in regional and national rifle competitions for decades.

¹¹ Steve Jones, "Painting in Adamson Office Reflects Era of Old Texas," *The Dallas Morning News*, 17 January 1959.



Oak Cliff High School Girls' Rifle Club from 'The Oak' – Adamson High School yearbook, 1922.

Adamson Scholarship Foundation and Adamson Alumni Association

Alumni of Adamson High School have long supported graduates of the high school by providing college scholarships. The W. H. Adamson High School Scholarship Foundation received its first monies in the late 1940's and provided its first scholarship in 1949. The Foundation incorporated as a non-profit foundation in 1950 with its purpose to raise and distribute funds for scholarships for Adamson graduates. It is thought this foundation is the oldest such foundation that supports a public high school in the DISD system – having donated scholarships to graduates for over 60 years. Since its inception approximately 1,137 students have attended college or university with the help of the Adamson Scholarship Foundation; some \$1,165,425 in awards have been made.

Scholarship requirements include being an Adamson graduate, and candidates are evaluated in class ranking, grades, SAT scores, extra curricular activities and leadership abilities. Candidates are required to write a 2-page essay and are then interviewed by a Foundation committee. Twelve to fifteen scholarships are given each year with 2 scholarships provided for a 4-years duration, and the remainder renewable for 1-year, on a year-to-year basis. Scholarships are given to deserving students regardless of citizenship. Currently the Foundation has over \$1,300,000 in assets and provided \$68,000 in scholarships in 2010.

Adamson students have been the primary beneficiaries of these scholarships over the years. However, from 1978 – 1993 the awards were expanded to other Oak Cliff schools; since 1994, the awards have again been limited to Adamson graduates. Due to recent substantial donation by alumni, the foundation's corpus is expected to increase significantly in the near future, providing additional funds for scholarships.

The Adamson Alumni Association was formed in 1998 and currently has over 1,200 members. This group supports the high school in many ways including providing funding for site improvements in the front yard (landscaping, retaining walls, etc), installation of a sprinkler system and the purchase of new tables in the lunch room.



Front Entry of Adamson High School, 2009

Adamson High School Notable Alumni:

Adamson High School/Oak Cliff High School has graduated a number of well-known graduates, including the following notable alumni:

Sports:

- 1938 J.E. Avrea
Baseball
- 1943 Tom Chandler
Baseball Coach, Adamson High School and Texas A&M University
- 1941 J. E. Davis
Tennis
- 1941 M. Danny Green
Swimming
- 1935 Charles Sprague
Football
- 1933 John Sprague
Football
- 1929 Howard Sprague
Football
- 1942 Nick Lanza
Football
- 1920 E. King Gill
Original "12th Man" at Texas A & M that began the tradition

Miscellaneous

- 1917 Ben E. Cabell, Jr.
Dairy & chain store owner, served as Mayor Pro-Tem of Dallas, 1939-43
- 1941 Doris Boland Geisert
1961 Pillsbury Bake Off Prizewinner with Black Bottom Cups
- 1923 William Crenshaw "Dub" Miller
Bolanz and Miller, a Dallas real estate firm founded in 1874, board member of three public schools and one college, Dallas City Council Member who led building of Love Field Airport Terminal
- 1922 Virginia Phillips McFarland
Mother of "Our Gang" star, George "Spanky" McFarland
- 1936 George Sebastian
Primary builder of Wynnewood Hills
- 1941 Robert Benjamin Skelton
Vice President Comptroller Sears Catalog Order
- 1943 Frank M. Whittlesey
Developed middle school concept

- 1948 Rowland B. Wilson
Creator of Wry Cartoons
- 1967 Patricia Ann Lester Peterson
Founder of American Indian Arts Council
- 1919 Virginia Shaw
Adamson faculty member who made large bequest to Adamson Scholarship Foundation
- 1943 Madeleine Duncan Brown
Mistress of Lyndon B. Johnson who gave him a son, also Adamson graduate
- 1925 Maurice Acers
Former F.B.I. agent and executive assistant to Gov. Allan Shivers of Texas in the 1950s, Mr. Acers had a wide range of business interests throughout the state, long list of community and government service; with spouse, Ebby Halliday, started one of the largest realty firms in Dallas.
- 1944 Van Calvin Ellis
Successful businessman turned philanthropist
- 1957 Donald L. Holmquist
U. S. Astronaut, 1967
- 1946 Elaine Hardison Greer
Started as a Neiman Marcus model and became the owner of four businesses.
- 1925 Sam Dealey, Commander, USN
Noted WW II submarine captain and tactical innovator, posthumous recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Silver Star, and Navy Cross.
- 1988 Malcolm Harris
Noted comic book writer
- 1922 Frank W. Mayborn
Texas newspaper publisher and philanthropist

Medical:

- 1935 Dr. Charles C. Sprague
Chairman Emeritus, UT Southwestern Medical School
- 1927 Dr. Frank H. Kidd Jr.
One of four founders of Presbyterian Hospital, Dallas

Political:

- 1939 James C. (Jim) Wright
Texas Legislator, U. S. Congressman, Speaker of U. S. House of Representatives
- 1940 Warren G. Harding
Texas State Treasurer
- 1937 Gladys Childress Shook
First female Dallas County Justice of the Peace, served 31 years
- 1932 William B. Shaw
Dallas County District Clerk

- 1929 Joe R. Pool
Texas Legislator and U. S. Congressman for whom Joe Pool Lake is named
- 1926 Doyle Henry Willis
Second longest serving Texas Legislator
- 1951 Jerry C. Gilmore
Dallas City Council, Dallas County Community College District Board
- 1953 Richard S. Geiger
Texas House of Representatives, 1973-75

Religious:

- 1941 John G. O'Rourke
Catholic Priest
- 1941 Dean H. Wessels
Board of Pensions, Church of the Nazarene
- 1942 B. G. Eades
Catholic Priest & Artist

Inventors:

- 1941 Virgil L. Archer
Inventor of automation for cookie industry
- 1941 Walter Carl Avrea
Inventor of Anchor Loc Safety Brake

Entertainment:

- 1938 Lucas Giarraputo a/k/a Jonathan Lucas
Broadway, Hollywood, TV dancer & choreographer
- 1963 Michael Martin Murphy
Singer-songwriter
- 1965 Ray Wiley Hubbard
Band leader, songwriter and music historian
- 1941 Jule Dean McClain
Radio personality, brought R&B to DFW
- 1938 Evelyn Honeycutt Davidson
One of "top ten female vocalists" in 1940s
- 1942 Earl K. Humphress
Dallas entertainer on various TV programs
- 1942 Otis H. "Karl" King Jr.
Radio newsman
- 1967 B. W. (Buckwheat) Stevenson
Singer-songwriter

1959 Brenda Brodnax Hayward,
First Miss Teenage America

Professor W. H. Adamson

“I had rather live in Oak Cliff than in any other spot on the globe...and I had rather be principal of the Oak Cliff High School than the Governor of Texas.” So said Professor William Harden Adamson at the formal opening of Sunset High School in November 1925. He, along with several other school officials, spoke shortly after the opening of Sunset (the second public high school in Oak Cliff) at a reception introducing Mr. J. A. Wilson, the new principal.¹² These words reflected the attitude of the long-time school principal in Oak Cliff who began his career there in 1901 as the Superintendent of Schools for the town of Oak Cliff, Texas. The system then enrolled 700 pupils in all grades in the Central building at Tenth and St. George (now Patton streets). After the town’s annexation to Dallas in 1903, Adamson became the Principal of Oak Cliff Central School, later named Oak Cliff High School when the grades were divided into elementary and high school buildings by the Dallas School Board. In 1935 Oak Cliff High School was renamed for W. H. Adamson, long-time principal of the school. Adamson was called “An Institution in Himself.”



W. H. Adamson, Principal of Oak Cliff High School for 31 years; in 1935 Oak Cliff High School was renamed in his honor.

The tall, slender Adamson was born a mile-and-a-half from Collinsville, Grayson County, Texas on April 26, 1864. When he was 9 the family moved to Collinsville “with a team of sixteen horses, the lumber for their home having been brought from Jefferson with a team of Oxen.” He received his education in grade and high school at Collinsville with further training at Sam Houston Normal at Huntsville and Collinsville Academy. Adamson began his teaching career at a little country schoolhouse in Cooke County. He later taught in Alvord and Decatur, where he served as Superintendent for seven years.¹³ One of the first mentions of Adamson is a newspaper article in 1887 when he was appointed to the State Summer Normal Board of Examiners and examined and

¹² “Sunset High Head Honored” November 14, 1925, *Dallas Morning News*, Section Part 2, p. 13

¹³ “Principal Adamson of Oak Cliff High School to Have 69TH Birthday” April 22, 1933, *Dallas Morning News*, Section 1, page 5

graded papers along with J. T. Hand, who was soon to become Dallas Superintendent. The Normal schools examined persons who desired to teach in the schools of the day prior to degrees being required.

In March 1901 Adamson was at Decatur, but by June 27 was listed as W. H. Adamson of Oak Cliff, Texas. In May 1902 he presided over his first graduation of students from Oak Cliff, awarding some 18 diplomas and in 1903 was unanimously re-elected as Superintendent of the Oak Cliff school system. The *Dallas Morning News* noted that in 1902 Professor Adamson and his wife had acquired a lot in front of the high school building and were contemplating building a home “at an early date.” However, in 1903 when his brother J. C. Adamson visited, they still resided at 199 Jefferson Street; it appears they did not build as planned. They later moved to 127 North Montclair (in Winnetka Heights historic district in Oak Cliff) where they lived until Adamson’s death.

“His pupils of those early days...remembered the superintendent as a tall man in a frock-tail coat, high silk hat, having a long red beard and driving a sulky.” A sulky for horses is a lightweight two-wheeled, single-seat racing cart, although in later years he described it as a surrey.

Professor Adamson also took time to be involved in professional endeavors. In 1903 he was elected as a member of the Texas Historical Association in its meeting in Waco. Mr. Adamson apparently kept cows as well as serving as principal, since in 1910 a city petition was referred from J. C. Evans of Oak Cliff, “for the abating of nuisance of bawling of cows of W. H. Adamson.”

Following the move to the new high school building in 1915, Mr. Adamson remained the chief figure in the traditions that grew up around the school. Over the years he became known, according to The *Dallas Morning News*, as “The Grand Old Man of the Dallas public school system.” According to the newspaper, “When classes were over and the student body moved to the football field, the beloved principal was in the midst of the rooting section.” He was often in the huddle during the half, meting out praise or suggestions to the team.

Flower Day derived from a tradition centered around his birthday which found his office filled with flowers, and the school giving the appearance of a setting for a floral exhibit. The bouquets, which he prized, came from the homes of his pupils and ex-pupils. His stories of those flowers—of who sent them, of the places to which he distributed them after the day’s work was done—were many.

In 1925 Mr. Adamson was elected to the Board of the Jefferson Bank & Trust at 111 W. Jefferson. He was one of the original members of the bank board when the institution was formed. That same year he and Mrs. Adamson toured Europe for several weeks. According to the *Dallas Morning News* article of June 30, 1925 they returned to their home on North Montclair after touring eleven European countries.

It was said that Mr. Adamson “was idolized by the hundreds of boys and girls who have attended the Oak Cliff schools, with which he was connected for thirty-four years.” The Dad’s Club of Oak Cliff named Adamson Field for him on the occasion of his 30th anniversary with the school and his birthday. The arch erected at the southeast corner of the expanded campus read, “Adamson Field, 1930. William Harden Adamson, an Institution in Himself.”

Adamson was also known to be a stern disciplinarian. The story was often told of his long index finger which all students dreaded to be pointed in their direction. One former student related how he jumped on the back of another boy going down the stairs, fell, and when he looked up that long digit was pointed in his face. He knew bad things were to come—and soon!

Professor Adamson fell ill in late 1934 and was on a leave of absence from December until his death at home on Sunday, May 26, 1935. At the Commencement Ceremony for Oak Cliff High School the following Friday in the school auditorium, Dr. David W. Carter, Jr., school board president, announced the re-naming of the school in honor of Mr. Adamson noting he was “a good friend and a wise counselor” for hundreds of pupils and acquaintances.

The *Dallas Morning News*, in an editorial stated: “A man may grow into his job without fossilizing in it. That was what W. H. Adamson did.... The youngsters were the hobby of the tall man with the tremendous energy who wanted to know intimately every Oak Cliff boy and girl who came under his charge.... Every heart skipped a beat...when death called W. H. Adamson home.”

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15. Attachments

<i>District or Site Map</i>	<i>Additional descriptive material</i>
<i>Site Plan</i>	<i>Footnotes</i>
<i>Photos (historic & current)</i>	<i>Other: _____</i>

16. Designation Criteria

X **History, heritage and culture:** Represents the historical development, ethnic heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or country.

____ **Historic event:** Location of or association with the site of a significant historic event.

X **Significant persons:** Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, state, or country.

X **Architecture:** Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, landscape design, method of construction, exceptional craftsmanship, architectural innovation, or contains details which represent folk or ethnic art.

X **Architect or master builder:** Represents the work of an architect, designer or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or country.

X **Historic context:** Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites, or areas which are eligible for preservation based on historic, cultural, or architectural characteristics.

location of singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city that is a source of pride or cultural significance.

____ **Archeological:** Archeological or paleontological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.

X **National and state recognition:** Eligible of or designated as a National Historic Landmark, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, American Civil Engineering Landmark, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

X **Historic education:** Represents as era of architectural, social, or economic history that allows an understanding of how the place or area was used by past generations.

X **Unique visual feature:** Unique

<i>Recommendation</i>

The Designation Committee requests the Landmark Commission to deem this nominated landmark meritorious of designation as outlined in Chapter 51 and Chapter 51A, Dallas Development Code.

Further, the Designation Committee endorses the Preservation Criteria, policy recommendations and landmark boundary as presented by the Department of Development Services.

Date:

***Daron Tapscott - Chair
Designation Committee***

***Mark Doty
Historic Preservation Planner***