

WHO WAS W. T. WHITE?



1895-1987

Warren Travis White served as superintendent of Dallas Schools from 1946 to 1968. He led the district through the post World War II Baby Boom years of frenzied school construction. White also led the effort to create the Dallas Independent School District as a separate system with its own budget and tax jurisdiction after 60 years of financial control by the city council. During his tenure, student population grew from 54,000 to 165,000 students. He oversaw construction of 106 new schools, the expansion of 91 and the early years of desegregation, which began in 1961.

His influence on school legislation was beneficial to the entire state. He was a force in the passage of the bill establishing schools for children who were blind, or had physical or mental disabilities. He was also influential in establishing a school for the deaf on a county-wide basis.

The Hamilton Texas native was born on a farm in 1895. He passed the state's certification exam at 17 and began teaching in one-room schools in North Texas. He also worked as an oil-field roughneck. He married Leika Clark in 1917, one day before he left for officer training for World War I. After the war, he graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a physics degree from the University of Texas. As a teacher, principal and superintendent, he worked in schools in Bug Tussle, Bonham and Wichita Falls before coming to Dallas in 1931 to become principal of Sunset High School. That same year he earned his master's degree. Throughout his years in Dallas, White served on civic and church committees, commissions, and health-welfare boards. Baylor and Texas Christian Universities each awarded him honorary doctorates.

The school was named in his honor three years before his retirement. He was 91 when he died in 1987.

Nolan Estes who succeeded White as superintendent remembered him as follows: "When the history of Texas education is written, White will be identified as one of the most able leaders of education. For more than a quarter of a century, he provided hugely able leadership. We were all fortunate to inherit the product of his fine work. Undoubtedly, he was one of the giants in his day. He made the difference between mediocrity and excellence."