

THE PLAY *ELM THICKET* MAKES ITS THEATRICAL DEBUT JANUARY 2024

Representation matters. It matters in the workplace, in one's family and in the neighborhood in which one grows up. That is why the play "Elm Thicket" by Anyika McMillan-Herod makes huge strides in representing our beloved neighborhood in a fantastic light.

"This is a love letter to the neighborhood I grew up in, the people who called it home, and those who are fighting never to leave," McMillan-Herod said.

McMillan-Herod moved into Elm Thicket/Northpark when she was in second grade and lived in a duplex along Newmore Avenue until she left for college.

Before writing her play, McMillan-Herod drove through Elm Thicket/Northpark to gain some inspiration.

"I have such fond, fond memories of living in Elm Thicket," she said. "It was like going back down memory lane." While no true names were used in the play, McMillan-Herod said there are some composite characters that people will recognize.

"This will be like going down memory lane for those who grew up in Elm Thicket in the 1970s, '80s and '90s," she said.

The play is set in the year 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. The play tells the story about two former Elm Thicket neighbors, a man and a woman, and are reunited after one of them, who had moved away, moves back to Elm Thicket.



Anyika McMillan-Herod, playwright and former ETNP resident

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ETNP News: Message from the Publisher

Hello ETNP Neighbors:

It is hard to believe that we are entering the holiday season. While personally it has been an emotionally difficult year with the loss of a loved one, I know many of my neighbors have also had to say good-bye to beloved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is difficult to say the least.

That is why during this time of looking for things for which to be thankful the Lord has provided us two big things for which we, all Elm Thicket/Northpark neighbors, can be thankful.

The first is from Playwrite Anyika McMillan-Herod. Having grown up in Elm Thicket/Northpark, Anyika has written a play about two neighbors who are doing their best to navigate love and gentrification. When I spoke with Anyika she said over and over how she wanted this to be a love letter to her childhood neighborhood. The play is smart and funny and

brings to light the struggle of gentrification that most of us are facing. Her play will be shown January 11, 2024 - January 20, 2024 at the ATT Performing Arts Center, 2400 Flora Street, Dallas. Tickets are on sale now. We have already bought our tickets. We hope everyone in Elm Thicket/Northpark gets the opportunity to see this wonderful play and support one of our own. To purchase tickets click [here](#).



The other good news for which we can all be thankful is our beloved neighborhood receiving a Texas historical marker commemorating the Elm Thicket/Northpark neighborhood and its history. How we found out about the marker is a story all by itself. We were researching what needed to be done to get a historical marker commemorating the Hilliard Golf Course when we came across a general historical marker that has been approved for our neighborhood. You can read more about it in the story on the next page.

Representation matters and after what seems like a long time of zoning fights and struggling to keep Elm Thicket together, we are finally getting our beloved neighborhood the recognition it deserves. This does not mean that we can let our guard down. The devil never rests and we know there will be at least two zoning cases next year where businesses want to encroach into our neighborhood and change the zoning for more parking. At that time, we have no doubt we will unite, once again, and Save Elm Thicket.

For those who will have an empty chair at your Thanksgiving table this year please know that our prayer is for the Lord to grant you the grace needed to get through the holidays. May the memories of those who have gone home ahead of us bring a smile to your face.

Your neighbor,
Mimi Perez



Texas Historical Marker Coming to Commemorate Elm Thicket/Northpark Neighborhood

While researching the Hilliard Golf Course for a future story and possible historical marker commemorating the golf course, ETNP News came across some exciting information.

A Texas Historical Marker for the Elm Thicket/Northpark Neighborhood has been approved by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and is currently at the foundry being cast. Delivery of the marker is expected to happen before the end of the year.

While we are still trying to get more information as to where the marker will be placed, etc., we hope to write a follow-up story for our December newsletter.

The text for this marker, as shown below, was approved by THC on Feb. 1, 2023:



ELM THICKET / NORTH PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

In 1881, a small agricultural community formed here around a dense thicket of plush elm trees surrounded by cornfields. They named their community “Elm Thicket.” The neighborhood, one of several freedmen’s towns in the Dallas area, evolved into a self-sufficient African American community with numerous churches, an elementary school, restaurants and various family-owned businesses. Residents describe a close-knit community where everyone looked out for each other. In 1917, Love Field School of Aeronautics confronted the neighborhood’s growth with impending land and air quality changes. From 1920 to 1950, Elm Thicket faced racial segregation which led to numerous issues. The city of Dallas annexed Elm Thicket in 1929 but neglected the upkeep of the area, delaying connection to the city’s water system, leaving streets unpaved and not providing access to the city’s public transportation system. The Federal Housing Administration also “redlined” Elm Thicket, which negatively affected area home buying.

Despite these challenges, residents remained strong. From 1928 to 1949, students attended the local York School on Victoria Avenue, which was renamed in 1949 in honor of Kossuth B. Polk. In 1950, Hilliard Golf Course was opened as one of the first golf courses for use by African Americans in the south. However, it closed just four years later when Love Field announced expansion and took a significant portion of Elm Thicket, containing more than 300 black-owned houses and businesses along with the golf course. During the 1970s, residents began referring to the area west of Roper St. as “Elm Thicket” and the area east of Roper St. as “Northpark,” and they were eventually combined. The Elm Thicket / Northpark neighborhood remains a testament to the resilience of generations of families.

(2022)

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

ETNP History: York School Served Community Nearly a Century Ago

For the majority Elm Thicket/Northpark neighbors, K. B. Polk Elementary school, 6911 Victoria Ave., is our neighborhood school. We thought we would look into the school that existed prior to K. B. Polk Vanguard Elementary. Our older legacy residents who grew up here, would have attended the York School which was located at 3735 Thedford Ave.

In what seems like an attempt to catalog the schools in Dallas in 1924, the Dallas School Board Administration took a photo of a classic wood-frame school used by the community which was identified as the York School. Not much else is known about this building, but clearly the Elm Thicket community was thriving enough to ensure the children received an education.

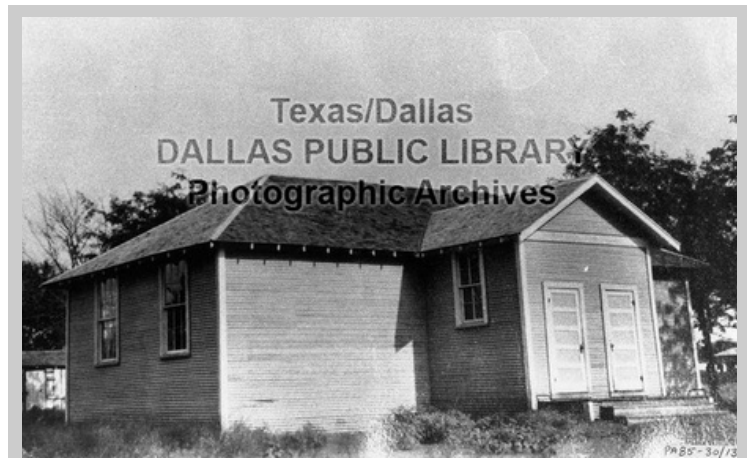
While the Dallas School Board labeled this building York School in the 1924 photograph, it is doubtful this structure was named that at the time the picture was taken. Our best guess is that this building served two purposes.

One of the purposes for the building was that it was used as a place of worship. Many Methodist churches at the time had two separate front doors in the front which was common in the 19th century. This required the men to enter by a separate door and sit on one side while the women and children were on the other side.

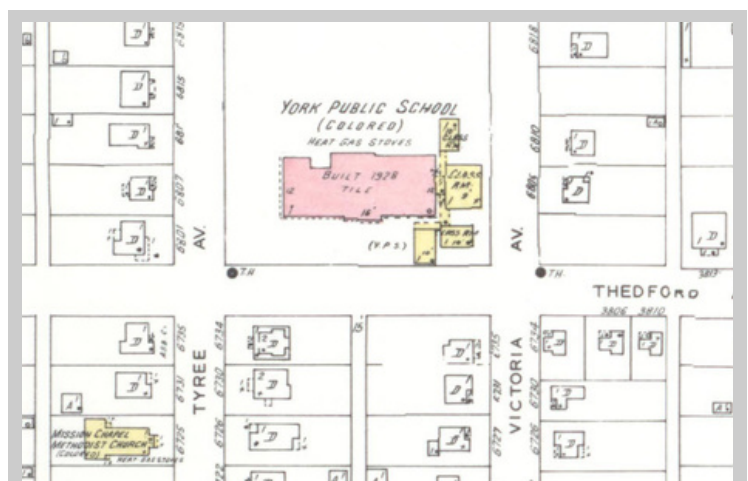
The second purpose for the building was that it served as a school which is why it was pictured and cataloged as the York School by the Dallas School Board.

In early January 1928, the Dallas School Board administration approved the construction of a new school after the purchase of five acres of land on Dec. 23, 1927, for the price of \$15,000. This sale indicates it was private property that was sold to the Dallas School Board.

Construction bids were approved in December 1928 with construction probably finishing in 1929 – with no record of



Possible picture of early school building in Elm Thicket in 1924 identified as the York School. Photo from Dallas School Board archives.



Location of the York School shown on Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1952). By 1949, the school name had been changed to K. B. Polk Elementary.

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ETNP History: York School (From Page 4)

construction completion found for this article. In the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, published in 1952, the school is shown clearly in the block between Tyree St. and Victoria Ave. While the building was labeled with an incorrect built date of 1928, it was still labeled as the York Public School despite the name being changed in 1949 to K. B. Polk Elementary.

It is clear that the York School quickly became an important community hub for the Elm Thicket neighborhood and was also used as a polling location. The community legacy of the York School continued even though the school building was demolished and replaced by the new K. B. Polk Vanguard Elementary School that opened its doors in 1968.

The York School may be gone, but the history of what it meant to the community will continue to live on.

Editor's Note: If anyone has any additional information or pictures to share of the York School or the pre-1968 K. B. Polk Elementary School, please contact Gus Perez at 214-930-7712.

References:

BC Workshop, Elm Thicket Neighborhood Stories (2017)

Dallas Morning News Archive, Accessed via Dallas Public Library:

- Ground Purchased for Proposed York School, December 24, 1927
- School Board Planning Buildings for Negroes, January 3, 1928
- York School Construction Bids Opened, December 5, 1928
- City Founder and 2 Educators Honored in Names of New Schools, June 16, 1949



Children celebrating at the May Pole at the York School (1947). Photo from BC Workshops "Elm Thicket Neighborhood Stories."



Picture from the 1950s of K. B. Polk Elementary (previously named the York School) before the surrounding roads were paved. Photo, provided by an ETNP resident, published in BC Workshops "Elm Thicket Neighborhood Stories."

If it's October then it's time for the State Fair, National Night Out and Trunk or Treat

ENTP neighbors got to meet our neighborhood patrol officers at National Night Out at the beginning of October. Then a ton of neighborhood children and their families attended Trunk or Treat on Oct. 20. And saving the best for last, the K. B. Polk Seniors attended the State Fair of Texas. A good time was had by all.

National Night Out



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National Night Out



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Trunk or Treat



© Mimi Perez

Trunk or Treat



© Mimi Perez

State Fair of Texas



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Let's Light Up ETNP With Working Street Lights

Let's light up Elm Thicket/Northpark by making sure all of our street lights are working and reporting street lights that do not turn on at dusk.

A 2022 University of Chicago study found that neighborhoods that had increased lighting experienced crime rates that were significantly lower than those neighborhoods without lighting.

Oncor has made it really easy to get our street lights working. We just need everyone to check the street lights near their homes and in their alleys and report the ones that are not turning on at dusk.

To report street lights that need repair click this [link](#). It will take you to the Oncor website where you can enter the closest address to the street light that is not working. You will click on the light and then follow the prompts to get the nonfunctioning street lights reported.

You can also call 311 to report the outage but so they know exactly where the street light is, you will need to provide them with the logistics code that each light pole has.

If we all work together we can make sure that our crime rate stays low and that our streets are safe day and night.



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Elm Thicket Play Makes Debut in January (From Page 1)

The one neighbor realizes the neighborhood is no longer the same due to gentrification and other societal pressures.

“It is about how we navigate change,” McMillan-Herod said. “How do we protect the people and the neighborhood we love?”

“The play is funny,” she said. “These are real grown people, a man and a woman navigating love, sex, and gentrification.”

It all comes back to representation.

“We don’t see enough of black men and women on stage anymore,” Herod-McMillan said. “We have to control our story in all its color.”

Elm Thicket will run January 11, 2024, through January 20, 2024, at the ATT Performing Arts Center. To purchase tickets please click [here](#).



DART Extends West Dallas On-Demand Shuttle Pilot Program

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Board of Directors has extended the West Dallas On-Demand Shuttle pilot program for an additional year through **December 31, 2024**

The West Dallas On-Demand Shuttle is made up of a fleet of six electric vehicles that currently operate **Monday- Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.**

To learn more about the West Dallas On-Demand Shuttle, please visit ridecircuit.com/westdallas.



New Construction Permits Issued for Aug./Sept.

3 new construction permits were issued for Aug. & Sept.:

- 4723 MARCH AVE
- 7718 ROPER ST
- 6631 TYREE ST

New construction should conform to the zoning standards approved last year. If you think construction is in violation, please contact 311 or email etnpnews@gmail.com.

DART Amplía el Programa Piloto de Transporte Público en West Dallas

El Consejo de Administración de Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) ha ampliado el programa piloto West Dallas On-Demand Shuttle un año más, hasta el **31 de diciembre de 2024**.

El servicio West Dallas On-Demand Shuttle está formado por una flota de seis vehículos eléctricos que actualmente operan de lunes a viernes entre las 7:00 a.m. y las 7:00 p.m.

Para obtener más información sobre el servicio West Dallas On-Demand Shuttle, visite ridecircuit.com/westdallas.