

Greek Theater, Sam Houston Campus

Episode 26: Nov. 14, 2007

Adapted, by permission of the Walker County Historical Commission, from: Greek Theater, Sam Houston Campus. (1986). In Walker County Historical Commission (Ed.), *Walker County, Texas: A History* (pp. 913-914). Dallas: Curtis Media.

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The Greek Theatre, or the amphitheater, was the scene for May festivals as early as 1915. The site chosen was a sloping, grassy hill known as the McKinney tract, located just south of the Estill Library.

The graduating class of 1916 gave funds, which were supplemented by other gifts and state appropriations, for the construction of the Greek Theatre.

It was the custom of the senior class to present in alternate years an original drama based on events of Sam Houston's life. These were presented at an open-air theatre. It had a stage of grass-covered sod. The back walls of ivy-covered brick formed a perfect background. The magnificent trees furnished shade and a nice breeze. The students seated themselves on the slope, and could easily observe all the happenings below. Plays such as "As You Like It," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and others were presented from this stage. The years a play was not given, the Music Department presented elaborate concerts.

In 1926, appropriations were requested for a cement floor. Chairs or benches were installed. The East Texas weather apparently took a toll on the wood over time. Many of the top slats had to be replaced, and painting was included in each year's appropriations. The color of paint used was battleship gray.

Electricity to the stage was strung from giant oak trees, and gallon cans were cut to form reflectors, to shade the audience.

In 1929, the dedication of the Estill Library was held in the Greek Theatre.

Around 1937, permanent cypress chairs were installed. With these seats and the grassy slope, this theatre was capable of seating over 3,000 persons.

Baccalaureate Services and Graduation Exercises were held in the summer, weather permitting, and it was a beautiful sight to receive a diploma under the stars, in front of a large audience. The local high school also used these facilities.

In the late 1950's, the Greek Theatre was razed to make way for a parking lot. The cypress seats that had been installed, were refurbished and placed in the Holleman Baseball Field. Thousands of students and guests enjoyed the concerts, plays, and graduation exercises held from this theater, and activities from this stage will long be remembered.