

NAZARETH, TEXAS

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The town of Nazareth was established through the efforts of a Catholic priest, Fr. Joseph Reisdorff, who moved to the site at the request of the McCormick families who had homesteaded in the area. They hoped Fr. Reisdorff could attract additional Catholic families as he had done in the settlements of Windthorst and Rhineland. When Fr. Reisdorff arrived on August, 21, 1902 he began placing advertisements in German Catholic newspapers which were printed and circulated in the Midwestern states. Because he wanted a biblical name, Fr Reisdorff selected the name "Nazareth" and placed the new settlement under the special protection of the Holy Family. The advertisements had the desired effect and new settlers and land seekers began to arrive. After determining the best location for the new town, Fr. Reisdorff swapped part of his own claim for an equal amount of land that would place the new community on the high ground. The first church building was constructed in 1903 on the highest point of point in town. In 1904 Nazareth counted 71 residents and the town was platted later that year. The cemetery was consecrated in 1906, and became the only Catholic cemetery for miles around. Currently, it is estimated that 323 people are living in Nazareth. Six generations have passed and Holy Family Church remains a focal part of the community and its activities.

Education of the children was a priority from the beginning of the community. The 1903 church doubled as the first school. With a curtain drawn across the sanctuary, the remainder of the building served as a classroom in 1904 and 1905 until a school could be built. Several different school buildings were used before the 1939 building was constructed. Education took a quantum leap at this point since this facility was a brick building with six classrooms, an office, and a combination auditorium and gymnasium. Nazareth was classified as a fully accredited public school having 12 grades. The Benedictine Sisters of Saint Scholastica Convent located in Fort Smith, Arkansas taught in the Nazareth school starting in 1915 and continued to teach in the public school system until 1990 when their diminishing numbers no longer allowed them to continue their ministry. In 1994 the school honored the sisters with a special celebration and ceremony. To commemorate their 75 years of service the school commissioned a printing that highlighted their dedicated work as teachers in the Nazareth Independent School District. A large group of Sisters made the trip from Fort Smith and got to spend the weekend visiting their former students and touring the ever changing school

campus. Even though they were no longer in the classroom, the sisters assured everyone that the town and school were part of their daily prayers.

Nazareth Independent School District is a public school district located in Nazareth, Texas. Located in east central Castro County, the district has one school that serves approximately 240 students in grades kindergarten through twelve. The school mascot is the swift, short for swift fox, which is native to the area. The story goes that early in the forties a student from the Stork family brought a swift fox to school that he had trapped on the family farm to be viewed by his science class. The movement for this animal to become the school mascot took off from there and the animal was reportedly preserved and mounted by the teacher and displayed in the trophy case for a number of years. Nazareth has the state's most dominant girls' basketball program, having won the most overall state championships (18--1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2005, and 2007), and the most consecutive (6, from 1977 through 1982) of any school in any classification. In 2010, the school district was rated "recognized" by the Texas Education Agency.



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