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Historical Sketch of AOY School

Bertha Archer Schaer

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AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF Aoy SCHOOL

-Bertha Archer Schaer
El Paso Women's Bar Association teams up with Aoy Elementary to encourage youth toward potential careers in the legal system

By Andrew Kreighbaum
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Attorneys from the El Paso Women's Bar Association are working with Aoy Elementary school to encourage fifth grade students to stay in school by pulling them out of class — and sitting them in courtrooms.

A group of students selected by Aoy teachers and principals visit the 205th district court each month to hear about legal or law-enforcement careers from speakers who work in the court system. Jeanne Cezanne “Cezy” Collins, the general counsel at El Paso Independent School District, has helped organize the partnership as a member of the bar association for the past 10 years.

“We wanted to catch them right at that time where they're most impressionable,” she said. “And they really need, the kids really need to start thinking ahead like ‘Hey, if I get in some sort of trouble that's going to be a blemish on my career or I might not be able to do what I want to do,'” she said.

The Women's Bar Association began the program in 2004 at Roof...
This June 23, 1887, El Paso Times article describes the “noble work” being done by Professor Olivas V. Aoy:

For genuine undiluted philanthropy nothing could excel the efforts which are now being put forth by a gentleman who came to the city six or eight weeks ago. This gentleman is Professor O.V. Aoy, who is devoting himself to teaching the English language to Mexican children. Professor Aoy is apparently about sixty years of age. He is a man of rare culture and education, speaking several languages. He taught in New Orleans many years, and afterwards in the college of Christian Brothers at St. Louis. For some time past he has been engaged in translating the Mormon bible into Spanish, having been employed by the Mormon authorities to execute that work. After finishing his task he started for Mexico, but stopped here to await his baggage. Here he accidentally met several Mexicans who attended his school years ago in New Mexico. These former pupils, now married and with children of their own, begged him to open a school here to teach their little ones as he had long ago taught them.

Professor Aoy looked over the field. He found, as he informed a Times reporter, that many, if not most, Mexican children enter the public school knowing little or nothing of English. Many stay away from school altogether because of this difficulty. Those who do go must struggle along for months neither understanding their teachers nor being understood by them. Gradually the pupils master the new tongue, but only after a great amount of drudgery and loss of time, which are calculated to deaden their intellectual faculties more or less and perhaps give them a settled dislike for the speech of their American companions, Professor Aoy says his observation convinces him that by far the most important element in the education of the children of our Mexican citizens is a thorough knowledge of the English language.

“As long as a Mexican can speak only Spanish,” said Professor Aoy, “he continues to be a Mexican. Teach him English and at once he begins to be an American. He takes interest in American ideas and customs. The English language is the great civilizer.”

Professor Aoy saw that there was a chance for him to help along this work of welding the two classes of our population. He saw that he must expect no remuneration other than the gratitude of parents and children and the satisfaction of helping in a good work. He met a gathering of Mexican parents and an association was formed to carry out his idea of establishing a school. He found a touching eagerness among the poorer Mexicans for such a school, but no money to provide for it. Fortunately, he has some property, enough to relieve him from the necessity of earning his daily bread. To help raise the necessary funds a ball was given towards the end of last month, of which the Times made mention. But Professor Aoy was not to be deterred. He hired a room in the Hague building on San Francisco street and paid two months’ rent in advance, amounting to $30, out of his own pocket. Hereafter the rent will be $20 per month. He opened his school June 6. A Times reporter who dropped in yesterday forenoon found a busy group of children ranging from six years to twelve years of age. The room is large and airy, with a long blackboard on one side, a single large table, several benches and a few chairs. Professor Aoy gave his little ones a recess and in his simple, kindly, enthusiastic manner told what he was doing and hoped to do.

“There are now,” he said “about 30 children enrolled and the daily attendance averages about 25. I am having another table made, so that we can accommodate more pupils. There are at least 60 or 70 who want to come, but we have no table room as yet. My sole purpose is to make the English language attractive to these young children and help them to learn it. My work here is not intended to compete with the public school, but merely to prepare young Mexican children to enter the public school. But of course in teaching the language I give a good deal of elementary instruction such as is given in the public school. If the city authorities or private individuals approve our plan and choose to help us bear the expense, their aid will be gratefully received. But we shall not beg for anything.”

Trish Long is the El Paso Times’ archivist and spends her time in the morgue, where the newspaper keeps its old clippings and photos.
Aoy students buy namesake's new $750 tombstone

By Gustavo Reveles Acosta

The words on the weathered white marble tombstone in the far east corner of Evergreen Cemetery could hardly be read after 113 years of erosion wiped out most of them. But thanks to the 75,400 pennies that students at Aoy Elementary School collected over two weeks, the grave marker will again proudly display the name of Olivas Villanueva Aoy — the namesake of the Segundo Barrio school.

"I used to come here and see how the gravestone had fallen in such disrepair. I had wanted to do something about it for years," said Do- lores Anna Chacon, a kindergarten teacher at Aoy for more than 30 years. "For two weeks I asked students to bring pennies so that we could buy a new (tombstone) and we were able to raise the money we needed."

On Friday, students unveiled a new gravestone for Aoy, who founded the first school for Hispanic children in El Paso in 1887. He died in 1895.

The new tombstone, made of gray granite, cost $750 and was placed next to the original marble stone, which will remain in place.

The new tombstone's inscription matches the original.

"I like it a lot now because it's shiny and it's good to read," said Daniel Ceniseros, a second-grader at the school. "Mr. Aoy was a good teacher, and I like that we're honoring him."

Aoy's is not the only grave that has received a makeover at Evergreen. Officials there said similar new gravestones have been laid out for people such as Cristo Rey sculptor Urbici Soler.

Friday's celebration for Aoy also included a parade to commemorate the city's approval to change the name of Eighth Avenue to Aoy Avenue. The school, which officially was first formed in the 1880s, will now be at South Campbell Street and Aoy Avenue.

Gustavo Reveles Acosta may be reached at greveles@elpasotimes.com; 546-6133.

Left, school-children reached to touch a new marker that was placed over the grave of Olivas Aoy, the namesake of their South Side school, Friday at Evergreen Cemetery.

View a photo gallery of the parade at www.elpasotimes.com.
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CHAPTER I

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AOY SCHOOL DURING
THE YEARS OF 1887 TO 1903

Sometime during the year of 1887 one of the unique institutions in El Paso, Texas was begun by a kindly old man known as Mr. Aoy. This institution, known today as Aoy School, was given the name of its founder, Olivas Villanueva Aoy, because of the great part he played in establishing the school and educating the poor Mexican youth in the poor section of the city.¹

¹ G. W. Hare, "Life and Character of Olivas Villanueva Aoy," Quien Sabe, May, 1900.

Mr. Aoy was born in Valencia, Spain, in 1833 of noble parents. He followed the teachings of a Franciscan priest who had become interested in his unusual mind, and in 1850, he entered a Franciscan Monastery.²

²El Paso Herald-Post, April 29, 1933, p. 3:4, 5, 6.
At this time he was seventeen years of age. In 1854 he was ordained and assigned to a charge in Havana, Cuba.\(^3\) History follows him through a maze of conflicting beliefs due to his reading and study and, when he was about thirty years old, he forsook the church. From then on the only kind of work he could find was that of the lowest type of manual labor at the docks of Havana, as man's hand had turned against him for leaving the Catholic Church. So, for several years, Mr. Aoy, a learned man of noble birth, an ex-member of a great Hierarchy, delicate in physique but with a heart large enough to include all mankind, worked as a stevedore on the Havana docks.\(^4\)

The next thing known about Mr. Aoy is that he had joined the Mayas in Yucatan and lived with them for three years.\(^5\) He

\(^4\)G. W. Hare, "Life and Character of Olivas Villanueva Aoy," \textit{Quien Sabe}, May, 1900.  
was especially happy with them as he was a great lover of nature and liked the outdoor living. He learned to speak their language. His only reason for leaving the Mayas was the distress they caused him because of their warlike spirit.  

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6 Hare, op. cit.

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By 1873 records show that Mr. Aoy had joined the Mormons in Utah. He lived with them for fifteen years as he liked their simple life, fraternal spirit and adherence to certain simple forms he had learned to venerate. During this period of his life, Mr. Aoy translated the Book of Mormon into classical Spanish. He considered this work a labor of love for the Mormons and presented it to the Apostles of the Church. He never thought of having the work copy-righted and this oversight was the direct cause of his leaving the Mormons. Due to the translation of the book, there was gossip that a new revelation had been received by an apostle and Mr. Aoy tried to expose the fraud by saying the revelation was nothing more than the Book of Mormon translated into Spanish. Ill feeling was aroused and Mr. Aoy left the group he had lived with for so long.  

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7 Ibid.
Mr. S. W. Jarvis of El Paso has stated that Mr. Aoy had nothing to do with the Spanish translation of the Book of Mormon. He says:

Aoy was the translator of the book called by the Mormons, The Bible of the American Continent. A Spaniard by the name of Trijo translated the Book of Mormon. He was helped by a man named Stewart. 8


On the other hand, Mr. T. Pauly, elder in El Paso's Mormon Church, the Church of Latter Day Saints, verifies that Mr. Aoy was the translator of the Book of Mormon. He says,

Aoy was collaborator with Milton J. Trejo. The two men translated the Book of Mormon into Spanish at Salt Lake City in 1886. The five hundred sixty-eight page Book of Mormon, the Bible of the American Continent, is called the record of the aborigines of America. It is the record of the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent as the Old Testament of the Bible is the record of the Jews. 9

9 Ibid., October 15, 1938.

Mr. Aoy, when he left the Mormons, went to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Here he was despised because he was believed to be a Mormon and an apostate. Leaving Santa Fe, he went to Silver City, New Mexico, where he established a small
Spanish newspaper. He only stayed in Silver City for a few months and is next heard of in El Paso the year 1887. Henceforth, in El Paso, Mr. Aoy's life became a constant round of unparalleled usefulness and benevolence.10

10 Hare, op. cit.

An old building back of Reckhart's Assay office on San Francisco Street was rented by Mr. Aoy from the Mundy brothers at five dollars a month. In this building, where the Chamber of Commerce is today, was begun what in later years was to grow into Aoy School, the 'Mother School' of the southside Mexican schools in El Paso, Texas. He furnished the rooms with seats and blackboards, and bought books for his future students. The money he used for this expense was probably taken from his savings of five or six thousand dollars that he had accumulated during his stay with the Mormons. Mr. Aoy began gathering all the poor Mexican children around his neighborhood and started teaching them English. Often he bought them food, clothing and medicine when they were ill. This means of educating the children continued until his money ran out. Needing to supplement his income, Mr. Aoy began a night school in the building for the benefit of American adults who wished to learn Spanish. Money received from his night school work was used by Mr. Aoy to pay his
rent and buy supplies for his day school pupils.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}

Three years after Mr. Aoy had started his preparatory school for Mexican youths, on December 24, 1890, he fell while cleaning a window of his room, and broke his leg. A Dr. Baird was summoned to care for him and soon learned of the type of work Mr. Aoy was doing and of the extreme conditions of poverty under which he worked. Dr. Baird wanted Mr. Aoy to be taken to a hospital but he refused to be moved from his room, in which there was a small stove but no wood, a bench for a bed and a coat for a pillow. No extra change of clothes and very little food were in evidence. Dr. Baird and a Dr. March, who was engaged in work similar to that of Mr. Aoy, continued to see Mr. Aoy and soon became his intimate friends.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}

Through the interest of Dr. Baird and Dr. March, the matter of Mr. Aoy's work with the Mexican children was brought before the School Board of the El Paso Public Schools. This body of men, when they saw how the neighbors loved Mr. Aoy
and were trying to help him in their humble way with food and fuel, decided to take over at least the responsibility of paying for the rent of the building. This rent was already in arrears for three months.  

13 El Paso Public School Records, School Board Minutes, September, 1891-April, 1902.

When Mr. Aoy was again well enough to continue his classes the School Board, on June 6, 1892, elected him as principal of what was named, "The Mexican Preparatory School." His salary was to be thirty-five dollars a month for the school year. Whatever money he was given for supplies he spent carefully and wisely. He taught his pupils music, callisthenics, politeness, patriotism, and reverence to God. He helped them get positions after they left school and listened when they went to him with their troubles.  

14 El Paso Herald, editorial, April 29, 1895, p. 5.

Mr. Aoy's salary had been raised to seventy-five dollars a month and he had two assistants, Miss F. Escontrias and Miss V. Abalos at fifteen dollars a month each.  

15 El Paso Public School Records, School Board Minutes, September 1902-April 1907.
Mr. G. P. Putman, who was Superintendent of the El Paso Public Schools at the time, gave the following account concerning the funeral services that were to be held for Mr. Aoy:

Funeral services for Professor O. V. Aoy, principal of the Mexican Preparatory School, will take place in the undertaking rooms of the Star Stable Building at four o'clock in the afternoon. Children and patrons of the Mexican school are requested to be present at the funeral services and follow the remains to their last resting place in Evergreen Cemetery.

It is hoped that the Mexican parents will see that conveyances are provided so that the entire school may go to the cemetery. All friends of the truly great man are invited to be present and form a procession. It is desired that every child in El Paso whom he has taught and lifted up will contribute a flower to the coffin or the grave of the teacher who has labored so earnestly for the Mexican children of this city. Hard work and constant worry doubtless brought the old man to his grave earlier than otherwise he would have approached it. May his labors be remembered with due appreciation and may his upright, honest, active life be an example to every child in this city.  

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El Paso lost a useful citizen and the Mexican youth lost a friend that cannot be replaced. This man taught the Mexicans to revere the memory of American and Mexican patriots and a day should be set aside to commemorate his memory.  

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21 El Paso Herald, Editorial, April 29, 1895.
Dr. Howard Thompson, School Board member, was with Mr. Aoy when he died and was appointed administrator of his estate. It was found that the School Board owed him four hundred dollars and this was used to pay his hospital and funeral expenses. The sixty-three dollars that were left were used to buy a plain white stone marker. This marker is carved and lettered as the fashion of a generation ago. It states simply:

O. V. Aoy
El Maestro de la Escuela
Nacio en la Espana A. D. 1822
y murio en El Paso, Texas
edad - 73 anos.

"Y respondienda el Rey los dira
De cierto os digo que en cuanto
los hicisteis a uno de estos mis
hermanos pequenistos a mi lo
hicisteis."

San Mateo XXV-40

The above in simple translation reads:

A. V. Aoy
The School Teacher
Born in Spain, A. D. 1822
Died in El Paso, Texas,
April 27, 1895, A. D.

"And the King shall answer
and say unto them,
Verily I say unto you
Inasmuch as ye have done it
unto the least of these,
My brethren, ye have done it unto me."
When Mr. Aoy was buried many little barefooted children followed the hearse from the funeral parlor to his grave out in the extreme northeast corner of Evergreen Cemetery. No one was ever more sincerely mourned than this kind old man.

Since his death there have been many stories told of Mr. Aoy's appearance, friends and origin of his name. Mr. G. P. Putman said about his personal appearance:

He was about five feet six inches tall. He weighed around one hundred eighty pounds. He had a broad brow and high forehead. He had an intellectual face, was a scholar and impressed people with his goodness.

Among his friends were listed the Silverberg brothers who later became well known El Paso jewelers and Mrs. Mills of the family connected with the Mills Building in El Paso.
Mrs. Mills was very fond of Mr. Aoy and often he would visit her in her large home near his school.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{26}C. Gorbutt, Excerpt from a letter sent to Aoy School, January 12, 1948.

As to his name some believed it to be an assumed name, and others believed it was his real name. One popular version is that AOY are the initials of his parents' names,\textsuperscript{27} while another version states that Aoy was his real surname. One of the persons who believes Aoy is the surname is Mr. Maury Kemp, whose father was a School Board member during Mr. Aoy's principalship. He doesn't believe Mr. Aoy ever assumed his name.\textsuperscript{28} Another version is that it never was a secret that Aoy was an assumed name that the kindly old man used after he forsook the Catholic Church and joined the Mormons. No one ever learned his real name but no one ever imagined he had any dishonorable motive in concealing it.\textsuperscript{29} Notwith-

\textsuperscript{27}El Paso Herald Post, Sept. 2, 1938, p. 3:3.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., Sept. 2, 1938, p. 3:3.

\textsuperscript{29}Hare, \textit{op. cit.}
standing these different versions as to the man's name, all who have written about Mr. Aoy agree that Aoy School, built in 1899 and named in his honor, is a tribute to the man who first recognized the need to educate the children in the Mexican part of the City of El Paso.  

After April 27, 1895, Supt. G. P. Putman recommended that the Mexican Preparatory School be continued under the guidance of Mr. and Mrs. Escontrias. On June 3, 1895, a man by the name of W. H. T. Lopez was made principal of the school at a salary of seven hundred fifty dollars annually.

Mr. Lopez carried on the work of Mr. Aoy in the old United States Custom House Building at Oregon and Third Streets until 1899. He had two assistants, Mrs. Lily Howard and Mrs. Early Barlow. By August, 1896, the school had enough pupils to have double sessions during the day and Superintendent Putman arranged that this be done. In June, 1897, the Mexican Preparatory School, often called Aoy School had two hundred pupils, three teachers and a janitor. By October, 1897, another teacher, Miss Lily Smith, was added to the faculty.
On January 6, 1899, the External Committee of the School Board recommended that a six thousand dollar brick building consisting of six rooms to accommodate three hundred pupils, be built. This building was to care for the Mexican pupils being prepared to enter the regular public schools in the fourth grade. There was to be no separate public school system for children after this grade. The bid of Edward Knezell of six thousand five hundred dollars to build the new school was accepted. By September 4, 1899, the school building was completed, inspected by the School Board, and the following faculty named:

Principal, W. H. T. Lopez; $900.00 annually.

Teachers:

Lilly Smith, Ida Patterson, Margaret O'Keefe, Lola Mayfield and Maury Kemp as an Assistant. All were to receive $580 annually except Lola Mayfield who received $540 annually. The first janitor of the school, Jose Alba, was to get $25.00 a month.

On September 1, 1901, Mr. Lopez appeared before the School Board and requested that the course of study used by the schools be revised in such a manner as to include the teachings of his students. He also asked that the City Council grade and sprinkle the streets around the school as the dust was sometimes unbearable. In December he asked that the school be furnished with electric lights. On
January 6, 1902, Mr. Lopez was given permission by the School Board to use one room in the building for his personal needs and use the building at night for a private school as long as no expense was encountered by the School Board.\(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\text{Ibid., 1895-1902.}\)

The Mexican Preparatory School, widely known now as Aoy School, continued under Mr. Lopez until December, 1902, when he accepted a position as interpreter for the United States Government in the Phillipines.\(^{33}\) His place was taken for the rest of the school year by a Mr. Berryesa. By this time the original six room building had a second story of six rooms and a school district composed of "All Spanish speaking pupils below the sixth grade."\(^{34}\)

\(^{33}\text{El Paso Herald, Nov. 28, 1902, p. 3:1.}\)

\(^{34}\text{F. Faust, "Early History of El Paso Schools," Record Department, 1936, p. 14.}\)

Thus is seen the beginning and expansion of what today is known as Aoy School on Seventh and Kansas Streets in El Paso, Texas. No other name than Aoy could take such a place
or stand as such a monument to the teacher, scholar, or world traveller. 35

35 C. Gorbutt, Excerpt from a letter sent to Aoy School, May, 1948.
CHAPTER II

AOY SCHOOL UNDER THE PRINCIPALSHIP OF

MISS CATHERINEGORBUTT, 1903-1941

Miss Catherine Gorbutt, a vivacious, versatile and energetic young lady was teaching at Alamo School the year AoY School was being built. She became principal of AoY School the scholastic year of 1903-1904 and continued in this position until her retirement on August 31, 1941.1

1El Paso Public Schools Records, "Personal File of Miss C. Gorbutt.

During this span of thirty-eight years her guidance, wisdom, foresight and human kindness toward all the AoY patrons and students resulted in the continuous growth of the school and in making it one of the best known schools of the city. The continuous growth is evident by the increasing of the teacher staff from thirteen teachers in 19052 to sixty teachers in 1938.3 Although the writer cannot attempt

2El Paso Public School Records, School Board Minutes, 1904-1905.

3El Paso Herald Post, April 21, 1938, p. 6:1.
to cover all the important events and changes that took place at Aoy School during Miss Gorbutt's principalship, she shall try to point out some of the outstanding factors that have made the school what it is today.

Mr. G. P. Putman wrote of Aoy School in his annual report:

Aoy School, on Seventh and Kansas Streets and in the heart of the Mexican district of El Paso, is a twelve-room brick building, heated with steam-heat, furnished with the best new single desks, has toilet facilities, is kept scrupulously clean and, all in all, is one of the most conveniently arranged buildings we have. Yearly over six hundred students attend this school. They come from the humblest homes where in years past a knowledge of English and habits of cleanliness and refinement were unknown. To these students the school building is a veritable palace, being possibly the most comfortable house, outside of Church, they have ever entered. Among the first lessons instilled by the teachers into the children is cleanliness. The children have good, kind teachers that love them and they, in turn, look upon the teachers as beings a little more than human. Looking back over a period of ten years, it is astonishing to see what has been accomplished. Former pupils have become so Americanized that the influence they exert for good upon this city in point of sanitation and morals can scarcely be estimated.

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Aoy early began to take part in parent-teacher and parent-student entertainments. Students would give programs that the parents would attend and enjoy, while, at the same time, they had an opportunity to come in contact with the teachers.
Perhaps this was the unofficial beginning of what today is a large Parent-Teacher Association at Aoy School. The students were always happy to have visitors at the school and tried to perform at their best. During a fire alarm inspection tour by school officials, Aoy distinguished itself by a record of seven hundred children getting out and away from the building in sixty seconds.

In 1913 Aoy got two portable frame structures to accommodate her overflowing classes. These structures, intended for northside schools but prohibited from being used there due to city ordinances regarding fire limit regulations, furnished accommodations for eighty pupils and two teachers.

In 1914, still needing more room for crowded students, a one-room brick building was erected on the east side of the Aoy grounds at a cost of eight hundred four dollars and twelve cents. This building was to be used as a domestic
science room to teach the girls needed knowledge of domestic science in order that they, in turn would carry this knowledge into their homes. The building, when finished, was of cheap brick construction with the interior of unplastered walls and a cement floor. Nevertheless, it was equipped for the work to be done and served the purpose for its existence. A year later two more two-room units were erected on the same side of the lot. These five rooms increased the capacity of the school by two hundred students. Aoy during this period, had an enrollment of one thousand four hundred children and the teaching, to provide room for all, was under the Gary Plan of organization.8


Aoy School, from earliest times, took great interest and excelled in athletic performances. In 1913 a teacher by the name of Miss M. Konnon, under Miss Gorbett's supervision and enthusiasm, introduced Folk Dancing at Aoy. The children liked this activity very much9 and to this day take pride in their dancing exercises.

9El Paso Herald, October 9, 1913, p. 3:2,3.
The annual Maypole Dance held at Aoy was of special interest the year of 1915. The following account of the celebration was given by the El Paso Herald:

Under the cottonwood trees that line the canal banks, Aoy children held their May Day celebration on the school grounds, blending English customs with quaint Mexican music. Three hundred children took part. The music for the drills and marches was composed by the father of Rafael Concha, a student. Mr. Concha, the janitor for the school, also organized a six piece orchestra to play for the May Festival. He played the kettle-drums.

The girls, dressed in white, danced around six May poles and made a very pleasing picture with the green trees as a background. Visitors sat along the canal banks. Nuns from a nearby parochial school, wives of army officers stationed at Camp Cotton, teachers from other schools, club women and businessmen all attended the celebration. Neighbors' roofs, boughs of trees and adobe walls were lined with proud relatives of the performers.

Marches, games, singing games, folk dancing and gymnastic exercises that were put on were all part of the daily playground work, which is extensive at Aoy under the Gary System. There are five playground teachers on constant duty and each class has two playground periods a day.

The Maypole Dance was very picturesque. The six poles were of red, yellow, orange, blue, green or purple color, with the streamers of white and the pole's color. The first grade children did a maze dance and each group spelled the letters A O Y. The festival was supervised by the school principal, Miss Gorbett, and her assistant, Miss Higgins.10


Aoy School took her share of community responsibility. During the first World War, when the influenza epidemic was
at its worse, Aoy served as a hospital for stricken persons of the neighborhood. Work was done under Red Cross supervision and Aoy teachers served as nurses and cooks for several weeks.11.


For several years the southside teachers have labored at special work to plan worthwhile rules and standards to guide the work of teaching the non-English speaking child. Aoy has been a test school in experimenting with various systems of teaching devised since Miss Garbutt became principal. There was always the problem of too many children, too little room and inadequate facilities to contend with, besides the language handicap. All of these problems, one by one, Miss Garbutt overcame by her untiring work and the love she had for those she served. Once she said:

In years past there was the problem of getting children to school on time. Few homes had clocks and the excuse for lateness on a cloudy day would be, 'No hay sol, y el sol es mi reloj,' so one can imagine how many would be tardy during dark mornings.

Her love for the Mexican child is shown in her belief of his ability and her understanding of his character. She has often said:

There are many things in which a Mexican excels, in his painstaking capacity for little things, in his
ability to make the best of a bad bargain, and in his philosophy that is 'why worry about what cannot be helped.' The Mexicans are particularly gifted in art work and music. They make good athletes because they like to play. Aoy School has won many trophies in sports.12


So, in working to help her students advance as much as possible, Miss Garbutt never let a new idea, teaching devise or opportunity to enlarge the school pass without giving it a fair trial. In 1921 a machine to further the teaching of geography was bought for the school. This baloptician machine, which would project slides and reflect postcards, maps and drawings, was a big help in increasing the English vocabulary of the pupil.13 In 1922, much to her delight,

13El Paso Herald, March 15, 1921, p. 4:5.

the School Board purchased some ground for an Aoy playground. The School Board, with the general approval of the Mayor and a large group of citizens, paid twenty-five thousand dollars for a block of ground almost adjoining the Aoy School premises. This block would serve as a playground for two thousand children.
who attended school and did not have sufficient playground facilities.\textsuperscript{14} Miss Gorbutt's school report for the year


1922-1923, gives the following outstanding statements:

The building, which has been added to from time to time, now has thirty-five rooms, including seven one-story structures scattered over the grounds. The enrollment for the year was two thousand two hundred eight students. There was a graduating class of fifty-five pupils. The teaching force of fifty-seven endeavors to teach the pupils English and at the same time helps them to keep the best they bring from Mexico. Aoy is a triple school, having fifty-one day classes, thirty-seven on part time, and a night school for adults. It is a school wholly Mexican in a City or center that has the reputation of being one of the greatest centers for Americanization work in the United States. Rayo Reyes organized an orchestra for social entertainments. The first school clinic at Aoy was established under nurse Mrs. Lois Huffoker. A 'Little Mother's Club' of girls was organized in the High Sixth Grade. Thirty-three members were granted certificates and it became the first junior club to become federated with the women's city federations. The Operetta, "Let's go Travelling" was a success. One hundred fifty students took part. First place was taken in Track Meet. Eight hundred three Palmer awards were given. One hundred eight perfect attendance certificates were given at the end of the term.\textsuperscript{15}


The health of her students was always uppermost in Miss Gorbutt's mind. She kept a small fund to buy clothing, food
or medicine for specially needy cases. Northside children donated food and clothes to southside schools during Thanksgiving week and Aoy teachers were careful to give them to worthy pupils. In 1923 there were fifty undernourished children being fed hot soup and bread at two cents a bowl.  


Today the Aoy cafeteria continues the practice of giving free meals to undernourished children who cannot pay. In 1929, a teacher, Mrs. M. Akridge, had an Aoy Health Club. Members had individual daily health cards to check on various phases of cleanliness and grooming. A perfect card won the student a small tube of dental cream at the end of every month. The English vocabulary was increased by the use of posters, making magazine scrapbooks and giving plays. The health lessons were correlated with geography and arithmetic work.  


The newspaper was another Aoy activity that was, and still is for that matter, very popular. The official paper, Aoy Banner was probably first started around 1924, and in 1929, a teacher, Miss Wilma Patton, writes of the newspaper:
Every year the paper improves. The work done by the student reporters shows what help the newspaper is in increasing their English vocabulary, in construction of sentences and in the interest taken in all activities in connection with school life.18


Mrs. Emily Daughtery, an Aoy teacher, with Miss Gorbutt's cooperation did much to stimulate the interest of her pupils in outside reading for the purpose of increasing their knowledge of English and of the modes and customs of the American people. She believed the students needed an incentive to progress towards this goal and devised various interesting means whereby the students took an active part in their reading expansion program. Reading charts for individuals, lists of desirable books, free reading periods, extra library books in the classroom, oral reports and honor rolls were some of the methods used. Through this work the children established what was believed to be perhaps a love and permanent interest in reading.19

In connection with the reading program there was a library program. Mrs. E. Huitron, another Aoy teacher, had charge of the school library. She formed the Aoy Library Training Club for the school. Members were selected from each record class and were taught to conduct club meetings, keep minutes of club activities and take part in library training work. Qualifications for membership were those of being a good citizen by honesty, politeness, kindness, exercising self-control and being able to cooperate with a group. The children who were selected to belong to the club were very proud of the honor. Through this means of the Aoy Library Training Club work, it was felt that the students were getting the foundation necessary towards good citizenship training. 20

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In her annual report on Aoy School, Miss Gorbutt considered the following statements the outstanding work done for the year 1929-1930:

Aoy had thirty six classrooms in use from eight o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon. Many rooms were used at night for the night school teaching of English and citizenship to adults. Enrollment was two thousand and ten students and the average belonging was one thousand seven hundred and twenty-five. The faculty was
fifty nine teachers and one principal. Domestic science and manual training teachers gave two-thirds of their time to classes at Aoy. Two physical training teachers gave one half of their time and one regular teacher gave half of her time for physical education work. Library work was stressed for the year. All classes above the second grade had one library period a week. Aoy was the first Mexican school to call for reading certificates. Visual education was advanced by adopting the "Cooperative Group Plan" in the fourth grade. Fire prevention, mental arithmetic, current events and nature study showed advancement in study by the interest shown on the part of the students for these subjects. Aoy was given a radio by the R. C. A. Company, and upper grade pupils were given an opportunity to listen to programs given by our local talent. The spring unit of work was to beautify and clean up the school and the homes. Art students entered the soap sculpture contest. The annual opera, "Fans and Lanterns" was a success from both the educational and financial standpoint.21


Thus, Aoy School, under Miss Gorbutt's leadership, continued to grow and take her place among the Public Schools of the City of El Paso. Miss Gorbutt gives credit to the school officials for giving the southside schools every material advantage that was given to the schools on the northside. She says:

In furniture, materials, musical instruments, radios and visual-aid machines the southside schools have been well taken care of, but the drawback of lack of buildings and oversize classes still exists. The day is approaching when there will be many English speaking parents in the southside part of our city.
Our aim is to make these parents part of the city life with interests in their city, schools and neighbors. They will become good citizens by taking part in all civic activities first as followers and with time, as leaders.22


In February of 1939 the old part of the Aoy building was torn down as it was no longer considered safe for use as classrooms. Miss Gorbutt watched this monument to pioneer teachers being demolished and an old negro maid, Mildred Brock, who was standing by her side, said: "They are tearing down my playhouse after fourteen years." The building to Miss Gorbutt, was no playhouse but, instead, a monument to the sacrifices of the poor Mexican people who had toiled to keep their children in school. It was to her the struggle of the children themselves to obtain an education while, at the same time, working after school as bootblacks, newspaper boys and bowling alley helpers, and such jobs as they could get to help support their families. 23 Miss Gorbutt did not waste time thinking about the past or worrying over what could not be helped, but, instead, knew there was much work to be done for the
future. The five hundred pupils from the twelve rooms that were being demolished had to be taken care of by some means and to this problem the energetic principal of Aoy School set her thoughts. 24


On August 31, 1941, Miss Garbutt retired from the El Paso Public School System. 25 She had served a long, successful leadership in one of El Paso's oldest and largest schools. Often she had been called the "unofficial mayor of South El Paso," but she always contended that, had she really had this position, there would have been many improvements that she would have made. Her alert, bluish grey eyes reflected the energy she had to have in order to run the largest school for Spanish speaking students in the United States. Seeing that the children grew into patriotic Americans and that her teachers were happy was always her chief aim. Before she retired she estimated that ninety-five percent of the Aoy student body was American born, while the reverse had been true when she began her principalship in 1903. She believed

25 El Paso Public School Records, Personal File of Miss C. Garbutt.
that the children are more intelligent today than when she first began teaching and pointed with pride to the fact that so many now speak a little English when they enter school. During her stay at Aoy it is probable that forty thousand children attended school there under her principalship. She ran two plants during her term at Aoy School.

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26 El Paso Herald Post, April 21, 1938, p. 6:1.

The physical plant which included supervision of classrooms, light, heating and plumbing systems, textbook and supply problems and all other material problems that come up in running a school, and the intangible plant of young mind-forming students. She stirred for a period of thirty-eight years a melting pot of Americanism while she held her place as a leader among her students, her faculty and her patrons.

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Miss Catherine Gorbutt reflected the belief she had in her teachers and the goal that she set forth for them and herself in the statement she made a few years back: "The spirit of the missionary must be that of the teacher who undertakes the work in the southside schools. She must also possess a nimble mind to meet the needs of the special teaching techniques required."
A teacher, Mrs. Lillian O'Bryand Reid, effectively summoned up the character of Miss Gorbutt in this simple statement:

I learned the secret of her success. Her competency, coupled with her sincerity and tact, tended to bring out the best there was in her teachers and students.29


29El Paso Schools Standard, Nov. 1927, p. 3.
CHAPTER III

AOY SCHOOL FROM 1941 TO MAY, 1949

Since Miss Gorbutt's retirement in 1941, there have been four principals at Aoy School. Mr. J. L. Bridges, 1941-1942; Mr. C. W. Webb, 1942-1943; Mr. Lamar Taylor, 1943-1947; and Mr. Guy McNeil from 1947 to the present time.¹ All of these men have followed in general outline the plan of organization that had been set up and tested successfully for Aoy School.

Mr. Bridges organized the first official Parent-Teacher Association of the School in 1941. This organization, with the help of its untiring sponsor, Mrs. Estella Ibarra and the help and encouragement of the school principals, has done much to aid the school, its students and its teachers. It has given dances, luncheons, bazaars and carnivals in order to raise funds for different projects. Teachers lounge rooms have been furnished, dishes have been bought for the cafeteria, money has been donated to feed the undernourished children and members have taken part in Red Cross and March of Dimes drives in order to make them a

¹El Paso Public School Records, Personal files.
success. In 1946 the organization started the movement of having the Finnigan Hide House removed from next to the school and saw the matter through to a successful finish in the courts. In 1948, it asked the School Board for a fence around the school and the asphalting of the school grounds. Both of these requests were granted. When the new Roosevelt School was opened, the Aoy Parent-Teacher Association was co-host with Alamo and Bowie Parent-Teacher Associations for the reception given to honor the new school.²


Although Aoy School, under Miss Gorbutt's principal-ship, always managed to feed some of the needy children, the actual cafeteria now in existence was started by Mr. Bridges in the room that was first used as a domestic science room and later as a kindergarten. He started this project with voluntary donations from various people and organizations in the city. He wanted it to be a community program to help the adults, over-age school girl, and out of school youth. This start of the cafeteria by Mr. Bridges was continued by the next three principals and today under the guidance of Mr. McNiel, the Aoy Cafeteria is a very important part of Aoy school life. Government help in feeding undernourished children, parents paying for well
balanced lunches of their children, teachers having a clean and convenient place to eat their meals, party and entertainment refreshments being prepared at school, all show the need and pride of the school in having such a part of a school organization in daily function.³


Aoy School did its part during the time that ration books were issued by the schools. The principal and the faculty helped in this needed work. In November, 1942, Aoy issued one thousand Book A gas ration books, and in 1943, it issued twelve thousand, eight hundred and forty sugar ration books.⁴

⁴ El Paso Public School Records, Rationing files.

Other activities in which the school has continued to grow are the Aoy School Patrol, Aoy Junior Red Cross, Aoy Color Day and various such organizations common to all the Public Schools of El Paso, Texas.

Today Aoy is no longer a part separated from the school system as it was during its "Mexican Preparatory School" period. It no longer has classes on part-time, as the additions to southside schools and new schools make
this unnecessary. It no longer has summer sessions as all children are now taken care of on a nine month school year basis. It has modern educational aids, school equipment and school activities that rank as good, if not better, as any other school in the system. Thus, Aoy grew from a room in a building on San Francisco Street to thirty-six rooms on an entire block at Kansas and Seventh streets, plus another block for its playground. The "Mother School" of El Paso's southside schools has really watched over and guided her students and patrons in all their trials, worries, and joys. Her aim of making the south El Paso residents good American citizens and leaders in community and school affairs has been realized through the untiring efforts and help of her fine and worthy principals, understanding and untiring teachers, loyal patrons and the continuous help of far-seeing personnel on the school boards, and city councils, and in the worthy men who have been the Superintendents of the El Paso Public Schools.

The founder of the school, Mr. Aoy, is yearly honored by a visit to his grave on April twenty-seventh by students and teachers. His memory is kept alive in the minds of the student body and it is hoped that his spirit of goodness and unselfishness is kept alive in their hearts. 

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5 B. Schaer, Personal Observation.
CHAPTER IV

NOTATIONS OF INTEREST

Aoy Principals:

O. V. Aoy - June 6, 1892 to April 27, 1895.
W. H. T. Lopez - June 3, 1895 - December, 1902.
Mr. Berryesa - 1902 - finished school year.
Miss Catherine Gorbett - 1903 to August 31, 1941.
Mr. J. L. Bridges - 1941 - 1942.
Mr. Webb - 1942 - 1943.
Mr. Lamar Taylor - 1943 - 1947.
Mr. Guy McNiel - 1947 to present date.

Through additions to the buildings, Aoy has had seven different kinds of architectural patchwork.

Aoy was the first public school, a whole block of ground was bought for by the School Board.

In 1899, the Mexican Consul, Mr. Mallen, presented Aoy School with two pictures, General Washington and General Hidalgo.

Aoy School building is used as a night school to teach adults to read and write English and to give classes in citizenship.

Aoy colors are green and white.

Aoy day is the day of Mr. Aoy's death. As his birthday could never be found, Miss Gorbett set Aoy Day for her school as April 27.

Aoy was the last school to give up the "Gary System" of school organization.

1941 - First Aoy Parent-Teacher Association. Officers:
President - Mrs. C. Gutierrez
Treasurer - Mrs. J. A. Harrison
Secretary - Mrs. R. E. Arrellano
School Principal - Mr. J. L. Bridges.
Aoy Song:

May all the children of Aoy
Love, honor and keep it right,
That their ambition they fulfill
In the school that they enjoy.

For green and white, my dear
For green and white
Let's give a rousing cheer of Aoy
For colors green and white.

Pupils of Aoy School donated 8996 pennies to start
a fund to buy the Finnegan hide house property and remove
the odor nuisance from the school. (El Paso Times, Oct.
25, 1945.).

The largest foreign school of its kind in the United
States is Aoy.

Mrs. Estella Ibarra, a former pupil, has been on the
Aoy faculty for several years.

At the end of May, 1949, Aoy's enrollment was 1,411.
There were seven grades taught by a teaching of 34 teachers.

Note:

The notations of interest were obtained by the writer
through reading, conversation and personal knowledge.
CHAPTER V

INTERVIEWS

Interview with Mr. Modesto Gomez. Mr. Gomez says the following about his early recollections of Aoy School:

I attended Aoy School the years of 1901, 1902, 1903. At that time the school was officially called Aoy, but it was known to most as 'La Escuela Lopez.' Miss Gorbutt was principal my last year there. The person most feared by the students was the janitor, Isidro Lopez, and called 'El Viejo.' He was supposed to punish the delinquents, but to my knowledge, never did really give anyone any punishment. Teachers I remember are Miss Gertrude Higgins, nicknamed 'La Panda,' Miss Lily Howard, Miss O'Keefe and Miss Thompson. My favorite was Miss Thompson. Once Miss Higgins slapped me for being sassy and from that day I liked her very much. Of my fellow school mates the one outstanding in my memory was a boy named Transito and nicknamed 'La Changa.' He was my ideal as a real tough guy. The last I heard, he had died in the Colorado State Penitentiary.

Many of my school mates who now reside in El Paso have grandchildren now attending Aoy School.1

1 Modesto Gomez, Interview, June 20, 1949.

Mr. Gomez is at present an outstanding and prosperous wholesale and retail grocery merchant. His business, on Seventh and Stanton Streets, is just one block from the school. He has been very helpful in aiding Aoy School with either money or groceries in time of need. He
contributes much of his time to community affairs, especially whenever some improvement project is in the offering. He has been an active participant in any matter concerning the betterment of Aoy School, cooperating with principal and teacher and a good friend to the student body. Daily he watches the children pass his business house on their way to school to get an education at the same place where he started. Aoy is proud to have such a former student as Mr. Gomez listed as one of its early pupils.²

² B. Schaer, Personal Knowledge and Observation.

Interview with Mrs. Lily Howard. Mrs. Lily Howard remembers Mr. Aoy as her Spanish teacher. She relates the following as some of her early memories concerning Aoy School and its founder, Mr. Aoy:

Mr. Aoy was a tireless man. He would work all day with the Mexican children and then give Spanish classes to the Americans at night. My family lived near his school and I was one of his pupils. He was always kind and patient with us. I remember when he fell and broke his leg. It was a very cold day but the neighbors soon heard of the accident and were crowding around his door trying to do something for him.

Mr. Lopez was a Spaniard who came from California. He was very well-liked by the people of the community and the school was often called 'Escuela Lopez.' I began my teaching career under Mr. Lopez. He was a well-educated man and always had the betterment of the school on his mind. We were all sorry to see him leave the neighborhood.
Mr. Berryesa was also a Spaniard from California. He was overly educated and not the type of person to run the Aoy School.

While I was a teacher under Miss Garbutt, one of the things that stand out in my mind was the lack of room and the large number of children. For a while I had no special room for my class but had to give them lessons in the halls or on the stair steps. Supplies were always short and the people were very poor.3

3Lily Howard, Interview, June 22, 1949.

Mrs. Howard is now retired. She spent many years in the El Paso Public School System and was principal of Lincoln School from 1925 to 1940. At present she is enjoying the leisure time of a retired school teacher doing things there never was time for in the past years. She is a gracious person and glad to talk over the "good old days at Aoy" and show one photographs and pictures of the school and its personnel that she has kept for many years.4

4B. Schaer, Personal Knowledge and Observation.

Interview with Miss Gertrude Higgins. Miss Higgins has fond memories of the past years when she was a teacher at Aoy School during the early days of its growth and development. She says:
I remember Mr. W. H. T. Lopez, Principal of Aoy School. He was a fine man, good principal and true friend to the people of his community. Mr. Berryesa was too highly educated for the people with whom he had to work. With Miss Gorbutt I worked very happily and in 1909 she asked that I be made her assistant. I continued as assistant principal until 1920 when I left Aoy.

The "portable houses" that were put at Aoy served the purpose of relieving its overcrowded condition. The "Gary System" seemed to work better at Aoy than at the other schools, but even there it caused much confusion and noise. Part-time classes and summer sessions have all been tried at the school to give relief to the over-size classes.

The reason there was never an active Parent-Teacher Association set up at Aoy was that the mothers of the students had to take care of northside students while their mothers attended meetings. Most women from that section of town used to work as domestic servants.

Aoy did not have a regular cafetera, but Mildred Brock, the negro maid, used to feed many of the children. Miss Gorbutt provided the food from a fund she had for this purpose.

I have always respected Miss Gorbutt for all the work she did and the responsibility she would take on her shoulders. She was the type of person who could become a member of any group in which she was thrown into contact. She held a very high place in the respect of the city personages, although all her work was with the southside. She was always personally interested in community affairs. Her contacts with the families of her students were very numerous and close. She was always energetic, charitable and far-seeing. She kept alive the spirit of the school.5

5Gertrude Higgins, Interview, June 24, 1949.

Miss Higgins, who retired last year, was the principal of Alamo School for over twenty years. She, like Miss
Gorbutt, has a deep love for the people of the southern part of the city. She often meets many of her former students, some old and some young, who are greatly honored when she stops to talk to them. Alamo School was fortunate in having her as its principal for such a length of time.  

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Mr. W. P. Casarez speaks at Aoy School. Mr. Casarez was a student of Aoy School in 1900. He says, in talking about his early school days:

I remember Arbor Day. We planted cottonwood trees around the school yard. Today, I noticed that one of the trees I planted is still living. It is the tree next to the drinking fountain in the back of the building.

I used to be drummer boy and was always proud to stand at attention and beat my drums. My greatest moment of pride was when I headed the student body in the parade march to meet President McKinley when he passed through El Paso in 1901.

We worked hard in the early days to receive an education. Materials and books were not as easy to have as they are now that the schools provide them. All the students should take the opportunity offered them by the Aoy School and its teachers to learn and work to the best of their ability. Aoy has a fine history behind it and all the boys and girls should do their best to honor and uphold it. I am proud that I went to Aoy School and honored to be asked to come and say a few words to you on Aoy's Day.

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Speech given in Aoy Auditorium by W. P. Casarez, and listened to by the writer, B. Schaer, April 28, 1949.
Mr. Casarez is a worthy citizen of El Paso, Texas. He is active in community affairs, and takes great interest in all activities that tend to help his city.\footnote{B. Schaer, Personal Knowledge and Observation.}
ILLUSTRATIONS
Aoy School (1899, 1901, 1912, 1920), kindergarten through sixth. Older type of elementary schools, in southernmost section of city, capacity about 1200, historic school for Mexican pupils and for evening school work, usually badly overcrowded.

Aoy School picture presented to writer by Miss Mable Keeney, June, 1949.
AOY SCHOOL yesterday celebrated the 54th anniversary of the death of its founder, Ov Aoy. Former principals, teachers and students were honored. In the front row, left to right: Enrique Rivera, youngest Aoy boy pupil; Mrs. C. G. Gutierrez, first president of the Aoy P-TA; Miss Annie Grady, former principal of Franklin School; Mrs. Lily Howard, former principal of Lincoln School; Miss Gertrude Higgins, former principal of Alamo School; and Graciela Rivas, youngest Aoy girl student. Standing, rear, left to right: Guy McNiel, present principal of Aoy; Mrs. Rosaura Dominguez, present president of the Aoy P-TA; and W. P. Casarez, former student of Aoy in 1901. The former principal was taught at Aoy.
HONOR STUDENTS OF BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL's spring graduates are, girls, left to right: Gloria Gonzales, Concepcion Torres, Rosa Renteria, Margaret Lozano, Victoria Garcia and Elisa Contreras. Boys, left to right: Moises Hernandez, Manuel Padilla, Jose Galarza and Oscar Jacquez.

No. 1, 2, and 3 are ex-Aoy Graduates. They appeared on Aoy Day Program at Aoy School on April 27, 1949.

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*(Some bound as a volume and some just paper-back covers.)

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