

HISTORY & FOLKLORE



This photo is from around 1924 in the front yard looking east at then-Liberty High School with (l-r) Charles Patrick “Uncle Pat” Pickett (1917-1991), Mary Arlene Pickett (1912-1986), cousin/neighbor and future TVE Queen Laura Nan Ellis (1918-2005) and Ernest William “Bill” Pickett, Jr. (1914-1987).



Sam Houston Elementary School, 1952
Above: East playground and building
Below: West entrance of annex



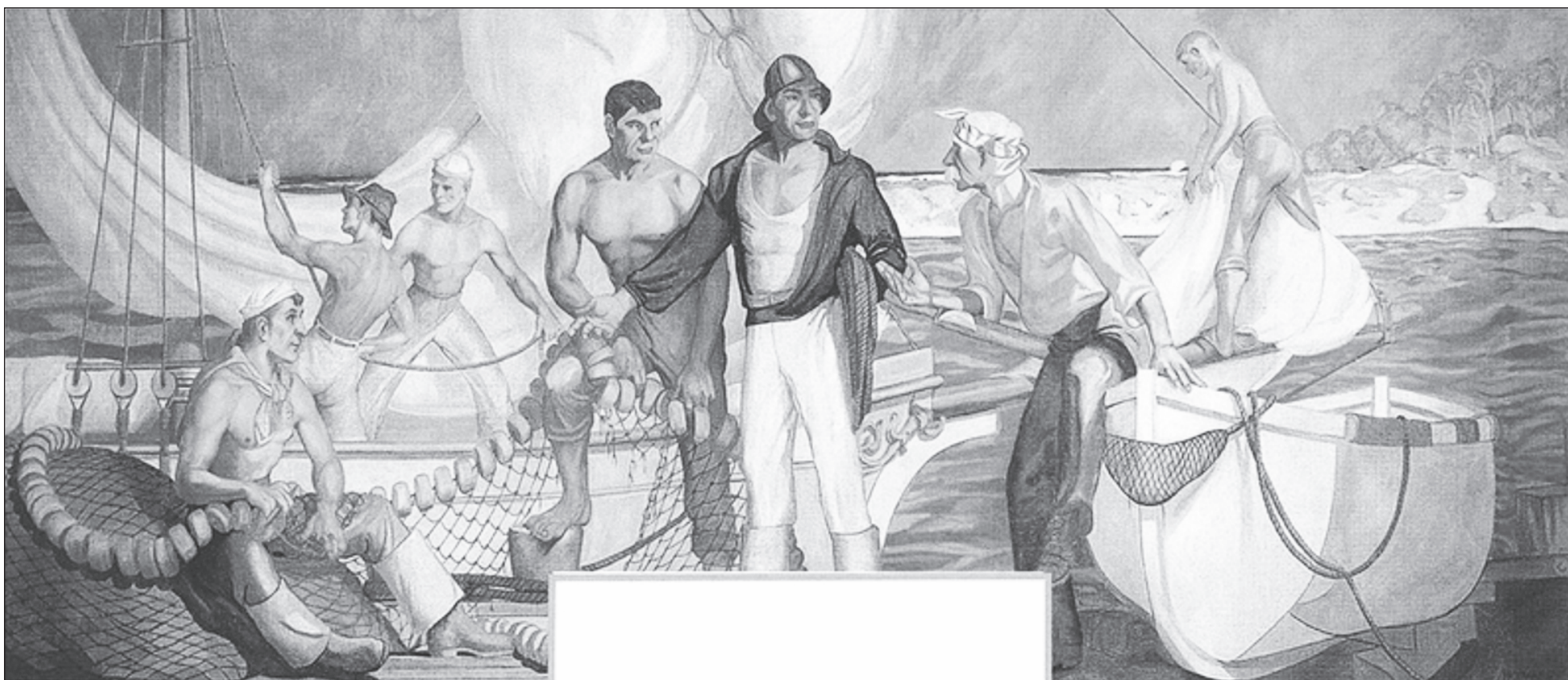
From the Liberty County Historical Commission’s Walking Tour – Liberty Post Office Property & Its History, 1515 Sam Houston

When the City of Liberty was first laid out by city founder Jose Francisco Madero in 1831, this city block, bordered by Sinsinato, Hidalgo, Allende and Azteca was to be reserved for a Market House. In 1860, after the railroad came to town, a Market House was constructed here allowing local merchants a spot to buy and sell livestock, produce and provisions in a protected area. Later the streets were renamed Bowie, Trinity, Crockett and Liberty to honor the heroes of the Alamo. Liberty Avenue was renamed Sam Houston Street to honor the hero of the Battle for Texas Independence and an early practicing lawyer here.

In about 1910 this block became the site of Jefferson Davis High School, which later became Liberty High School and the site of the addition of Sam Houston Elementary School. Many current residents remember attending school in these buildings and the three wonderfully slick and dangerous fire escape slides from the second story. Jefferson Davis High School was plastered over and eventually torn down after high school students started attending a new facility off Grand Avenue. Over the years all grades, at one time or another, were housed here. When Liberty Elementary School was completed in 1986, classes were transferred there and the elementary school was torn down. Asbestos was an often-used building product that prevented the saving of these schools. This block was again open for use.

In 1988, a new Liberty Post Office was built on this block and stands today. In 1939, the Section of Fine Arts under the FDR Administration’s New Deal Program included Baytown to get one of the murals painted in their new post office to boost the country’s morale. These paintings were a way to help suffering Americans gain inspiration to help rebuild their lives and the country’s economy. Post offices were chosen throughout the country to hang these murals as this was the place that most Americans used regularly and could freely benefit from seeing these murals. This was President Roosevelt’s attempt to employ some of the Americans that were suffering with the lack of any income. Howard Fisher, a San Antonio native, was the artist that won the commission for the Baytown mural, but due to a federal accounting error, Liberty got the chance to get one of Fisher’s paintings. To portray the early fishing industry on the Gulf Coast, Fisher chose the subject of fishermen sharing stories of their adventures and named it “The Story of the Big Fish.” The three bare-chested sailors mending their nets on the wharf seem captivated by one old salt’s yarn. It hung in the newly built Liberty Post Office on Main Street. Post Office employees referred to it as “the one that got away.” When the next Liberty Post Office was built here in 1988, the depression-age mural was taken down and carefully transported to the site. Forty-seven of these murals currently hang in post offices. The mural hanging here now is a poignant symbol of the New Deal and its impact on East Texas.

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This mural in the current Liberty Post Office was left intact and moved from its original location at the old post office on Main Street. The painting was created by Howard Fisher of San Antonio in 1939. Little is known of the artist, other than he painted the mural on canvas and then came to Liberty and put it up. Post office employees call the painting, “The One That Got Away,” because the central figure seems to be telling about a big fish that broke through his net.



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