

# Special Birmingham High School Dedication Section

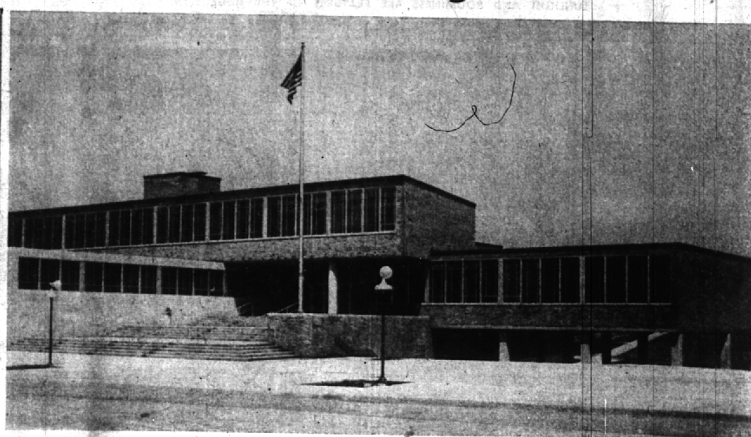
## The Birmingham Eccentric

Special Section

Thursday, June 5, 1952

### Two Views of the Front of Birmingham's New \$2,100,000 High School

People who consecrate their lives to some little or big clean and wholesome cause are among the builders of the better life. Too many of us are dedicated to the satisfaction of the physical senses to acquire those rewards that come from the spirit.



Picture at left shows the tri-level classroom section. At right is the high school's main entrance and administration office wing. (Eccentric staff Photos)

# New High School to Be Dedicated At Brief Program Sunday Afternoon

## Ceremony Starts at 3 O'clock

### Great Use Is Made of Light, Space and Color

# Need for New High School Realized in 1945

The dream began about 1945. In this case it was partly a dream, partly grim reality. Birmingham had, to put it simply, outgrown its schools.

A brief dedicatory program at 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon will climax the two-day open house at the new Birmingham high school. Superintendent Dr. Dwight B. Ireland said more than 200 invitations were being sent out and stressed that the program would be open to the general public.

Many people will view the new Birmingham high school for the first time during the open house celebration Saturday and Sunday, June 7 and 8.

Beginning at 10 a.m. these two days, and continuing through to 3 p.m., thousands of local residents as well as many out-of-town visitors are expected to visit what is described as one of the most modern and most outstanding school buildings in the country.

In spite of its size and the ground area around it, the outer appearance of the building cannot prepare the visitor for what he will see when he has passed through the main entrance.

Perhaps one of the most impressive features of the entire structure is its space. Halls are wide and light and long. They seem to stretch into unlimited distance and it is hard to visualize the building as ever being filled.

When the visitors has "recovered" from this first impression, he begins to notice more clearly the difference between this school and any other he has seen.

Perhaps the sharpest of these is the presence of color. It is all around him. Gone is the drabness too often to be seen in a school building. On either side of him are blond woods for doors and furnishings.

Colors stand out in sharp contrast to their neighbors, yet blend in with the other into an eye-catching and pleasing interior scene.

He is also impressed with the amount of natural light around him. Whole walls, with the exception of necessary structural materials, are of glass. Wherever he looks there is light.

As these visitors are taken through the new building they will see these things and many more. They will learn from their guides the things about it which are hidden from the eye.

They will see about them classrooms devoid of the "anachronistic" furniture but supplied with desks and chairs which can be moved about for the convenience of teacher and pupil.

They will see rooms with closet space for additional supplies and that same wall will have a wide array of green chalkboards on the walls, instead of the traditional blackboards of old.

Classrooms having one wall composed entirely of windowglass will show no eye-straining glare, because experts have incorporated drapes and blinds to correct it.

That same wall will have a wide window ledge where cut flowers, potted plants or displays can be placed as reminders of the drabness from the "institution of higher learning."

Floors in the new high school are not the old fashioned, glary varnish finish, but are covered in soft tile, cutting glare and removing a great deal of the clutter of shifting classes.

These classroom floors will, through the use of a color strip, blend themselves into the color of the corridors, removing the abrupt change from room to hallway.

The visitor will see the little theater where classes in dramatics, radio, public speaking and the like will be able to gain the experience of working from a stage-

feet away shivers and shakes with the cold.

Acoustics have been carefully considered for every room with special ceilings and walls installed as control measures. Sound is evenly distributed with unpleasant noises cut to a minimum.

The library has been located to be the focal point of all classrooms. It's physical arrangements permit several groups to use it for different purposes at the same time without interference.

They will see a slanting floor and tiered seats, giving every student in the room an unobstructed view of all stage action.

THE THINGS the visitor cannot see are many. One is the heating system, a combination of hot water heat, which will maintain the base level, the other of forced air, which can be used to quickly raise temperatures in cases of extreme cold.

The heating system is arranged so no one will be seated in a "hot spot" while his neighbor a few

feet away as well as the many documents important to the school system itself.

The home economics department is equipped with modern of household furnishings—stoves, refrigerators and other appliances. High school girls are given an opportunity to become familiar with all phases of modern homemaking in these courses.

SHOPS FOR mechanical courses are being equipped to offer the same expert training and experience.

In the gymnasium, metal curtains can be used to divide the huge room, allowing boys' and girls' classes to be held at the same time. As one unit it will provide the largest floor space of any "auditorium" in the city.

Supt. of Schools, Dwight B. Ireland describes the cafeteria as one of the most interesting spots in the entire building.

Unable to procure the type of

chair wanted for this section, Swanson and Associates, architects on the entire project, designed one. Called the "Birmingham chair," it can be easily stacked to permit cleaning the room or to give more space for special events.

This one item is perhaps true of the entire building. No one part of it has been built which is not flexible. Classrooms, library, corridors—all can be considered as flexible units.

The overall building is constructed with the same viewpoint. It can be enlarged whenever need demands, with no upheaval necessary to the present structure.

Landscaping also is arranged with this in mind.

The building's principal function, of course, is educational, its physical characteristic is "functional."

Its one-word description, repeated over and over by student members when they moved into it last January, is "Wonderful!"

While they worked on expansion plans for these buildings they also kept new buildings in their line of vision.

A couple of years later their basic idea of school needs was confirmed by a survey directed by Dr. Thomas C. Holy. That was the start of the active planning.

By the fall of 1949 the board of education members were ready to go. They planned their estimates to include a new high school, a new elementary school (Torrey) and expansion for Franklin and Walnut Lake schools.

The program was expected to cost about \$3,100,000 and board members launched a public relations campaign to acquaint everyone in the school district with it before the November election when it would be presented for a vote.

AS CERTAIN AREAS became more thickly populated school officials saw the need of more schools equally as pressing as the need of more room in existing buildings.

BOARD MEMBERS spoke before every PTA group in the district. They prepared a series of articles for publication in "The Birmingham Eccentric." They invited those persons who felt the program was not necessary at this time to present their objections in public and to hear the complete story behind the board's action.

An architectural model was prepared of the new high school to show district residents what present plans were and what future expansion could be.

Board members pointed out that only "basic" buildings would be erected first. They stressed that these structures would be planned to be functional units, easily added to without interference with the original building and, most important of all, that they would relieve the conditions which were detrimental to the boys and girls of the district because of the lack of physical facilities.

PARENTS LEARNED that in 1949 the high school was already handling 98 more than its peak load should be and could accept nearly 200 more enrolled students by the fall of 1951.

As the date for the annual election drew near, board of education members began to see evidence that their intensive program had borne fruit.

Citywide throughout the district were talking favorably of it. The League of Women Voters had placed itself squarely behind the board.

THROUGH CONTINUED publicity by speakers and newspapers, the whole tax program had been laid out. Voters knew that the bond issue would be spread over 17 years. They knew that for the first five years the rate would be 6.5 mills per \$1,000; for the next four years and 3.1 for the final year.

The program paid off on November 7, 1949, when Birmingham school district voters approved the bond issue and school expansion 1687 to 407—almost 4 to 1. When the votes were counted it was found that 2,162 had voted, of which 168 persons failed to either approve or reject the issue.

In spite of this, and in spite of the ever-so-small vote cast, the bond issue had been accepted—the school expansion program had become a reality. It was time to go to work.

Unable to procure a speaker because of other commitments, board members will make brief talks about the planning and construction of the building and on the future horizons it faces.

It will be "presented" to the young people of Birmingham as a challenge, charging them that the importance of it rests in their hands.

Speaking for present and future students of the high school, Marc Joelyn, student council president, will accept the challenge.

Richard C. Hewitt will make the presentation of a picture of the late Melvin C. Hart, former principal and prominent figure in Michigan's educational field.

OTHERS IN THE dedicatory program will be the Rev. Emil Kuntz of the First Baptist church, the Rev. Harold Towne of St. James church and members of the high school choir and band.

Invited guests will include Sen. George Higgins, Rep. Howard Estes, city officials, educational leaders from state groups and schools in nearby communities, all former members of the Birmingham board of education, and local clergy.

Officials of the several companies, including the architects, who took part in the school's construction will also be guests at the program.

OTHERS WILL BE the secretaries of the Birmingham YMCA and chamber of commerce, officials of the Eastern Michigan and South Oakland County leagues, heads of the various Cranbrook schools and deans of the colleges with which Birmingham high school is closely associated.

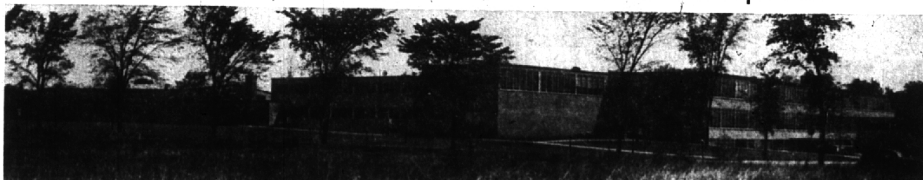
Presidents of Birmingham's seven Parent-Teacher groups as well as those of the PTA Council and the many clubs and service organizations of the city will also be invited.

Saturday and Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., students will be at the school to conduct visitors through the building and explain the many new features incorporated in it. It is expected that several thousand persons will visit the building, described by many as "one of the most modern educational buildings in the country."

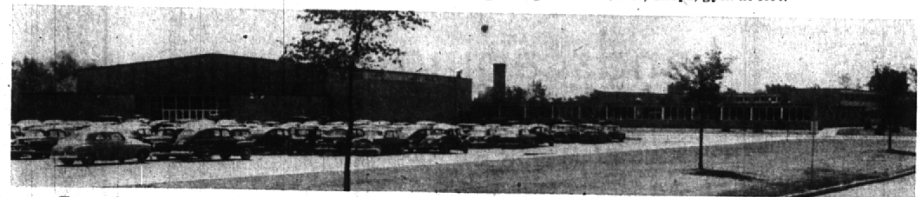
The annual report of the Birmingham board of education shows that only 1.48 per cent of the children taking second semester examinations received below-passing marks.

# Great Use Is Made of Light, Space and Color

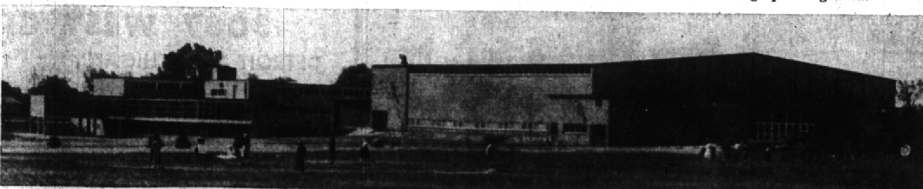
## New High School from Three Other Viewpoints



From the southwest: at right, front of building along Lincoln Ave.; shops, gym at left.



From the northwest: classroom section right, shops center foreground, gym left. Note huge parking area.



From the northeast: Gym at right; in background classrooms, cafeteria, library. (Eccentric Staff Photos)