

Construction Saw Few Sidewalk Engineers

Sidewalk engineers had a field day. The site of the new Birmingham high school was far enough removed from crowded areas that the customary "peek-proof" barricades were not needed. It was just wide, open spaces from the time the big shovels scooped out the first earth until the day, Jan. 28, 1952, when classes began.

Like all buildings, it was a pretty dismal looking sight when construction first started. Piles of lumber, heaps of dirt, a big hole in the ground and the little field office building of Cunningham-Limp, contractors, certainly gave no hint of the final splendor which was to come.

LATER, as the steel framework reached toward the sky, the vast size of the building became apparent. Many in town made a weekly trip past the sight to watch the progress of the building. They saw the steel framework take shape, the roof slowly creep across it and the bricks march up the sides.

Actually, because of the planning of Swanson Associates, the work progressed rapidly. Only the size of the structure made it seem like a slow process.

Workers received materials which had been planned and designed for the spot they were to occupy. Most of the structural material was prefabricated and

delivered on the job ready for installation. This was one of the "rough" construction as well as the final and finer materials used inside the building.

THERE WERE remarkably few upsets during the actual construction. The start was slowed when the Korean war's outbreak held up the delivery and at one time it was feared that a shortage of cement might prove a drawback.

Both were minor interferences, however, and work regained full speed within a short time.

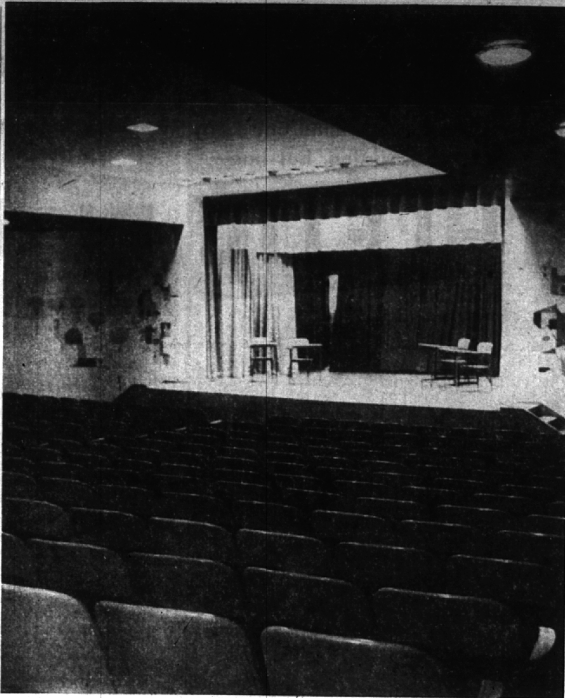
Labor shortages slowed construction spasmodically as day laborers took time out for hunting, fishing and other personal pursuits. For the most part, weather conditions were favorable, and not a great deal of time was lost for this reason.

HARRY DENYES, a member of the Swanson firm, pointed out that many labor saving devices were used besides the prefabrication of parts. One of these was the gun process of applying concrete, whereby the material is sprayed on under terrific pressure, much like the spraying of paint.

Denyes said the process had been used widely in industrial buildings and was applicable to the high school due to large unbroken wall areas.

The entire structural program was one of expert timing, expert planning and expert handling of men and materials. Today the building stands completed and occupied, occupied just 20 months after the groundbreaking ceremony in May, 1950.

It stands as a monument to the educational planning and far-sightedness of the Birmingham people, one of the finest high schools in the nation.



THE HIGH SCHOOL'S "LITTLE THEATER" Radio, stage "hopefuls" can display talents in modern theater (Eccentric Staff Photo)

High School's 'Little Theater' Is a Dual-Purpose Convenience

The little theater, designed specifically for the speech arts classes at the high school, will serve many other purposes. The 294-seat auditorium, constructed to give radio and dramatic students the "feel" of actual on-stage experience, is a small scale replica of the most modern

of today's theaters. School officials are quick to point out that its one main purpose is for the use of the speech arts classes because of the limited seating capacity. "However, it can be used for class meetings, and other organizational meetings that can be seated," Principal Ross Wagner stated.

Muralled walls and modern lighting give the auditorium a plush look. The sloping floor offers an excellent view of the stage from any seat in the house. "No plans for use of the theater after school hours have been discussed," Wagner explained. "There is a possibility that the theater could be used for adult programs, but this is a decision for the school board," he added.

Muralled walls and modern lighting give the auditorium a plush look. The sloping floor offers an excellent view of the stage from any seat in the house.

"THE ONE FEATURE of the Versatile Gymnasium About the Same Size As Two Building Lots

There's a good-sized lot out at the corner of Lincoln and Cranbrook—but it's all housed in. It's the gymnasium of the new high school, 90 by 120 feet. Its space is double the size of many of our city lots and as big as most of them.

Aluminum doors can be lowered from the ceiling, dividing the huge room into two standard sized gyms, permitting boys and girls to hold separate classes at the same time.

As one room, it provides adequate space for several activities at the same time such as boxing, wrestling and other "confined area" sports.

The gym is also equipped with movable bleachers which fold into the wall, giving the entire floor space over to activities during the regular school day.

"Surplus commodities" last year provided 56 cases of tomatoes, 2 cases green beans, 27 of peaches, 19 of orange juice, 15 of cherries, 43 of cranberry sauce, and 14 of grapefruit juice for school cafeterias. In addition the school system received 2,030 pounds of butter, 2,827 pounds of cheese, 706 pounds of dried milk, 300 pounds of dried eggs, 305 pounds of turkey, 640 pounds of peanut butter, 550 pounds dried beans, 300 pounds smoked pork, 88 bags of potatoes and 24 bushels of apples.

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4,000 Books Catalogued At High School Library—Room for 26,000 More

There are spaces in the new high school library for about 26,000 more books.

Mrs. Marion Murphy, librarian, said about 4,000 books were already listed.

Mrs. Murphy said additional books were had in particularly factual writings of World Wars I and II.

"We are unable to get many of these books because they are already out of print," she said. "Families who have them and no longer use them would be doing the school a great service by contributing them to the library."

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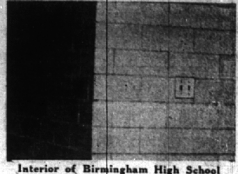
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Future school needs for Birmingham are pretty well indicated by figures covering the past five years. In 1946 there were 999 children under five years registered by census takers; 1952 in 1947; 1457 in 1948; 1948 in 1949; 2350 in 1950 and 2931 in 1951. Of the 181 students (98 boys and 83 girls) who were graduated from the Birmingham high school last June, 11.6 per cent graduated cum laude. In addition, 27 members of the class were members of the National Honor society.

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