

“The History of Shakopee’s First High School”

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Cmgt 4193

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January 21, 2003

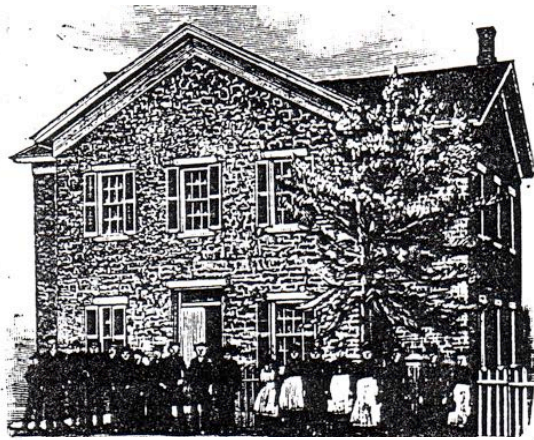
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I. Introduction

This paper will track the history of Shakopee's first High School from initial construction in 1881, through major renovations, up to its current status. Because the basis of the research is limited to paperwork and building plans currently held by the school district and newspaper archives, the scope is limited.

When the public educational system began in Shakopee in 1854, classes were held in various locations, including the Stemmer home and the second story of the old



“Old 41” School Building – 1870’s

post office building. Three schools served Shakopee residents during the 1870's: The District 1 stone building, the District 2 “White” school, and District 41 school building.ⁱ The No. 1 school burned in 1880, the No. 2 building became the residence of Herman Duede, and the No. 41

school house, located on fourth street, served the district until 1918 and was destroyed in 1935 after officials condemned the building as a hazard to life and limb.ⁱⁱ

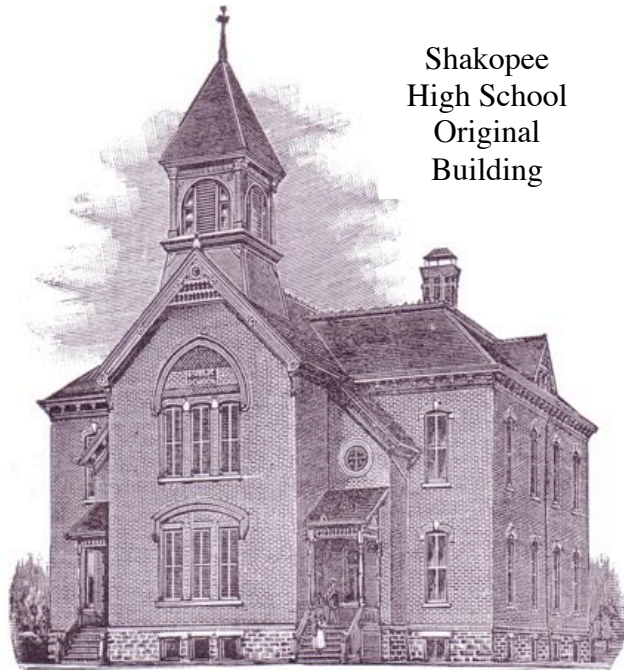
II. 1881 Building

In July of 1881, the County Commissioners consolidated Districts 1 and 2, and construction began on a new building located on a block of land bordered by Fifth and Sixth Avenues to the north and south, and Holmes and Lewis Streets to the west and east, respectively.ⁱⁱⁱ A published article in 1881 reads:

“The present school system of Shakopee is in the process of a change. A new school house is building, the cost of which will be \$10,000 and a well graded school will be inaugurated with the opening of the present building.”^{iv}

On January 10, 1882, the building officially opened for classes with Professor Giles serving as the principal. Ms. Fannie Barnes headed the grammar department and Mrs. Maybelle Patterson and Mrs.

Mary O’Brien taught the primary department. At the time, the building was considered elegant for many reasons, including the use of desks in place of the more typical benches of that time. Amenities such as laboratory space, auditoriums, and gymnasiums would have been considered too luxurious for a public school at that time.



Shakopee
High School
Original
Building

In 1894, the Moore Heating Company of Minneapolis was awarded the contract for installing a “modern steam heating plant” in the school at a price of \$1305. The system claimed to have produced 2,800 feet of direct radiation and was described as a “valuable and long needed improvement”.^v

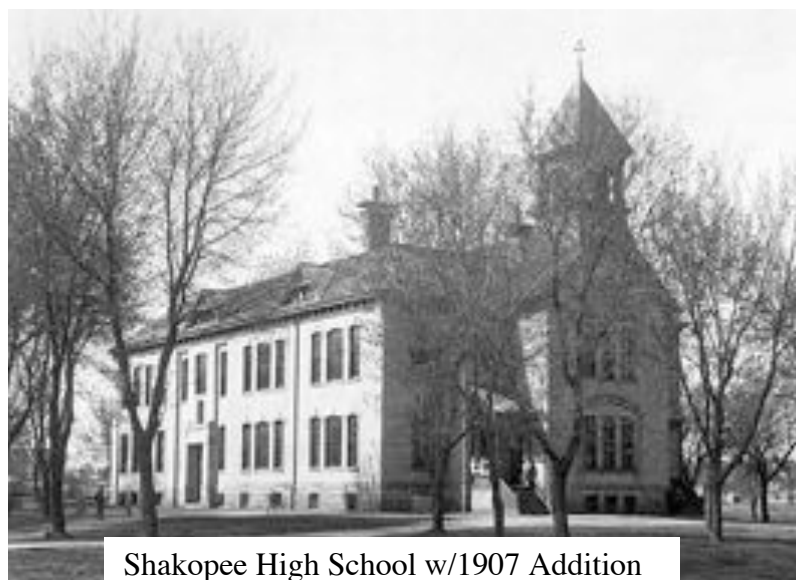
The 1897 academic year began with an enrollment of 55 students. New to the school were some interior modifications. Although the building housed grades 1 through 12, the entire second floor was now designated to the high school. Included in the high

school space were: An assembly room 25 x 61 feet in size, a recitation/laboratory space 25 x 30 feet, and a library 25 x 30 feet.^{vi} Although records do not exactly indicate when the school attained its high school status, the first official graduates, Ms. Ida Busse and Ms. Anna Pope, graduated on June 7, 1898.

III. 1907 Addition

By the time the 1906 graduating class of seven held graduation ceremonies, it was apparent to the community that that the school's quarters were crowded and inadequate. In fact the graduation ceremony included a speech by Governor John A. Johnson, a friend of Julius A. Collier, in which he stressed the importance of high school education and the community's responsibility for making it available. Apparently this speech was very compelling, as a school bond election, held in May of 1907, passed six to one. Although this election was held before women were allowed to vote legally, they were allowed to participate in this particular election; of the 264 votes cast, 123 were cast by women.^{vii}

This bond allowed for renovation of the existing structure and an addition to the south of the original building. The entire project cost \$12,000 and included a full basement for manual training,



Shakopee High School w/1907 Addition

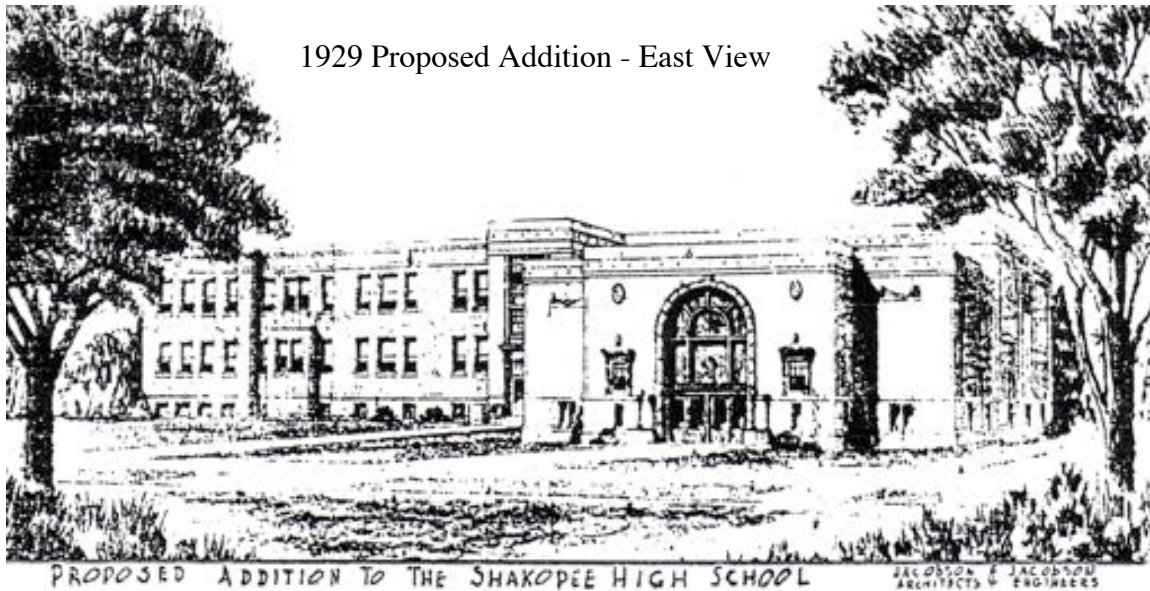
inside sanitary facilities, two large classrooms on the first floor, and a large assembly room for the High School on the second floor.

According to records, the building existed in this form until 1929.^{viii}



IV. 1929 Addition

The school district began considering the idea of remodeling and expanding the Union Building in December of 1928. Plans were drawn up and estimates were given and a \$70,000 bond issue was set for March.^{ix} A February 28, 1929 article in the



Shakopee Argus Tribune highlighted “Nine Good and Sufficient Reasons Why the Bond Issue Should Carry the Contemplated Improvements Made Without Delay”. Some of these reasons included the need for more space to remain on the accredited list, a

reduction in state aid if additional space was not created, the need for an efficient heating system with automatic controls, and the need for the community to show pride in the local institutions.^x



On March 18, 1929, 636 of 672 votes were cast in favor of the bond issue and arrangements were made to get construction work underway at the earliest possible date. This addition, built on to the north face of the existing structure, was to include a library, gymnasium, auditorium, and classrooms for the high school located above the gymnasium. The new structure was designed by Jacobson & Jacobson, Architects and Engineers. Askov Construction Company served as the general contractor and the Frank Tustison Company provided the mechanical requirements. Materials were supplied locally by Schroeder Brick Manufacturing and Henry Simons Lumber Company. An article in the local paper described the construction process, including the finishing of the floors by the application of a modern substance known as Arm-A-Cote.^{xi}

The final cost of the addition and improvements totaled approximately \$90,000. The new building included 14 classrooms, a manual training room, an artistic library, a gymnasium measuring 50 feet x 75 feet, shower baths and dressing rooms “so essential in athletic activities”, and an auditorium with a seating capacity of 700. Large enough for a regulation basketball court, the gymnasium also was designed for use as the stage for the auditorium. The gymnasium and auditorium space served not only as a school space, but also as a community center to various civic organizations. The new classrooms located above the gymnasium included study rooms, an assembly room, and a laboratory for the junior and senior high school students. The original 1881 building was then remodeled to house the home economics, manual training, and commercial departments as well as the grade school students.^{xii}

Although the construction work was completed by the arrival of the fall 1929 academic year, the school wasn’t officially dedicated until spring of 1930, during the graduation ceremony. Before the 26 graduates received diplomas in the ceremony, a dedication program was conducted in which Shakopee residents recognized the great achievement of the community. At this ceremony, superintendent E. J. Sweeney and high school principal Ms. Marguerite Christie were recognized for their roles in the remarkable progress made in the local schools.^{xiii}

“Beauty in design, utility in space, systematic arrangement of rooms, and craftsmanship in construction,” were some of the descriptions used in the school dedication issue of the Shakopee Argus-Tribune (Page 22). The paper went on to praise, “A good school with ample educational facilities, such as the one we now enjoy, is one of the biggest and most important civic assets which any town may have claim to. We now

have in our present a well appointed school structure and its up-to-date equipment an educational institution which is second to none in this section”^{xiv}.

The oldest plans currently held by the school district are dated June 9, 1941 (Page 23). Created by Toltz, King and Day Engineers and Architects, these plans indicate that significant mechanical and electrical upgrades and some minor structural changes were made to the pre-1929 structure around this time. Ventilating units were installed in exterior walls in each classroom most likely to improve the indoor air quality by the introduction of fresh outside air. Other improvements included the replacement of worn out wood girders with steel beams, the improvement of the drainage in the basement locker rooms, the upgrading of the electrical system for kitchen and ventilation equipment, and an overall improvement in the interior finishes. No changes appear to have been made to any portion of the 1929 addition.

V. The 1950 Addition

A set of plans by Long and Thorshov Architects (Page 29) dated November 14, 1946, indicate that the school district began the process of planning for the next major addition in this year, although this project was not fully complete until the fall of 1951. The reason for the delay in construction seems to be a result of the community’s unwillingness to fund this major project.

In February of 1948, a meeting was held in which Hubert Swanson, of Long and Thorshov Architects, presented to the PTA the proposed addition estimated at \$347,000.^{xv} At this point the community had only approved \$294,000 in funds in a February 1947 bond election, the legal limit at that time. The community was aware that an addition

was badly needed due to the “overcrowded conditions, antiquated facilities, and the increases in enrollment”. In fact, it was printed that the school was crowded to the very limit of capacity and that classes were even being held in the lunchroom.^{xvi} The school board decided to give an invitation for formal bids, and when the bids came in high in late April, the plans were shelved for an entire year.^{xvii}

A law established by the State Legislature in 1949 allowed school boards to bond up to 50% (increased from 25%) the value of the district’s real estate and personal property, or \$462,000 in Shakopee’s situation.^{xviii} Because the school district had already approved the \$294,000 and saved additional funds, the board sought to increase the fund by holding a bond election for an additional \$140,000. The district again acquired a new set of bids totaling \$411,000 in June of 1949 and held an election on June 30, 1949. Of the 560 votes cast, 295 “no” votes were counted and the funding was refused. Because only one third of the eligible citizens voted and the margin was so close, the school board called for a second election on July 15. Unfortunately, the second election was downed by 107 votes.^{xix}

In August of 1949, the State of Minnesota released a statement in which the pre-1929 portion of the school was described as a “fire trap”^{xx}, and in September, the Fire Marshall condemned the school calling it “one of the worst in the area”.^{xxi} Most likely out of embarrassment from the state’s comments, a committee of local civic leaders and businessmen was established for the purpose of creating support in the community for the needed school improvements. In December of 1949, the committee released a report to the community outlining the reasons additional bond money was necessary.^{xxii} Another bond election was held in January 1950 in which the \$140,000 in funds was finally

approved by 702 votes to 211, and in late March, work began according to the 1946 building plans.^{xxiii}



The plans created by Long and Thorshov called for the pre-1929 portion of the building to be demolished, and the 1929 addition of the auditorium, gymnasium and library to become the nucleus of the new school. Because school was in session in the old portion of the building, Kratochvil Construction Company, the general contractor, began by constructing the new wing along Lewis Street. This two-story wing would eventually



house grades one through nine, but would be used for temporary instruction of all grades throughout the construction process. The first floor of the Lewis Street wing included six classrooms, one each for grades one through

six. Lavatory space for both boys and girls was provided as well. The second floor included five classrooms primarily for the junior high, bathrooms, and the school office.

Once school was out for summer vacation, a portion of the old building was demolished to make room for the new high school addition located immediately south of the gymnasium and auditorium. This three-story structure provided locker room and shower space for both males and females on the first floor as well as access to the boiler room. Also new to the first floor was a

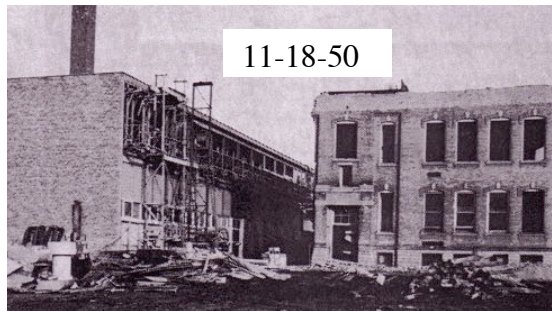


dining/activity room that was included into an addition built on to what was previously the exterior entrance to the auditorium. Directly above the dining room, on the second floor, was space for the new library and visual aids department. The second floor would house classroom space for metal and wood shop, and art and drafting instruction. The

old library would
and band room.
referred to as
home economics
located on the third
included faculty

The five classrooms
were to be used, as
instruction of general
such as mathematics

The
new addition caused
academic year to be
September to



become the music
Business, then
“commercial”, and
departments were
floor. This area also
offices and bathrooms.
above the gymnasium
they had been, for
high school subjects,
and science.

construction of the
the start of the 1950
moved from
October.

Construction continued throughout the fall and winter months and concluded in the spring with completion of the industrial arts and home economics areas, the remodeling of the old library, and the final razing of the 1881 and 1907 structure. Architects made the final checks in early July of 1951, and the school officially opened in a new and modern structure for the 1951 academic year.^{xxiv}

VI. The 1960 Addition

By the end of the 1950's, the High School again became crowded and the voters approved the purchase of 17 acres in April of 1958 for \$27,000.^{xxv} Although the land was not purchased with a definite plan in mind, the school board knew the high school property allowed for very limited possibilities for future expansion. This parcel of land, referred to as the Ploumen property, is located south of Tenth Avenue, east of Fuller Street, and west of Spencer Street, and is now the present High School property. Although a piece of land was secured, conditions expected at the school required immediate attention for the next academic year. In July the school board made a deal to rent out classroom space from the First Presbyterian Church and the offices of Dr. Paul Nevin.^{xxvi}

The school board initially intended to build a 12-room elementary school on the new property, but voters rejected a proposed \$425,000 for this very purpose on November 17, 1958 (584-220). A bond issue for same amount to build the elementary school was again placed in the hands of the voters on January 15, 1959, and was once again rejected (548-293). The bond issue, lowered to \$400,000, was rejected a third time on July 9 (593-386).^{xxvii}

Frustration prompted the formation of a 40 person advisory committee to determine what type of school improvements the community would be willing to vote in favor of. The committee determined that citizens showed interest in the building a new high school instead of an elementary school on the new 17-acre property.^{xxviii} A new plan was drawn up in which a new high school would be constructed for \$1,100,000 and the old high school would receive \$200,000 in funds to construct an addition on to the

elementary wing. The old high school space would become the Junior High and the elementary wing would continue to be used for the instruction of grades 1 through 6.^{xxix} On August 6, 1959, citizens voted on the \$1.3 million bond issue, and chose to reject the funds (569-146).^{xxx}

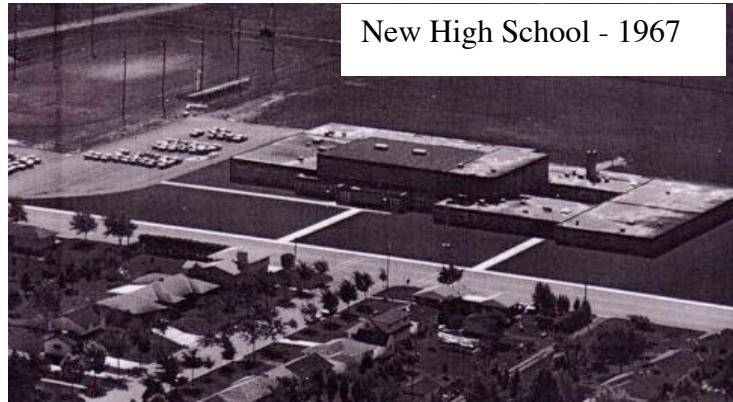
Recognizing the decision as the last of options, the school board choose to set an election for \$200,000 to add the badly needed addition onto the elementary wing of the school. The board discussed the limitations of the current building even with the added space and also pointed out that the school would be filled to capacity within a year of completing the addition, but with all other options exhausted, the election was set for September 17.^{xxxi} Voters finally approved the bond money (280-108), and school officials began the planning for the addition with Armstrong and Schlicting Architects. The addition was designed to replicate the glass block theme of the 1950 addition and included three classrooms and lavatory space on each of the two floors.^{xxxii} Construction was to be completed for the start of the 1960 academic year.



VII. Post 1960 Addition

Although the 1960 addition was the last major structural change to the High School, the building would experience many changes in the upcoming years. Eventually voters did approve the

construction of the new high school, and the original school produced its last graduating class in 1965. In fall of 1965, the school would become the



Junior High with the completion of the new High School. The old school would still serve an important role in the community as the only public school with an auditorium, and much of the High School's programs were still held in the 1929 auditorium.

Even with construction of Sweeney Elementary School in the late 1960's, the school board determined that the 1968 district enrollment of 1,776 students was expected to increase to 2,850 students by 1972, and additional space would be needed.^{xxxiii} With that future problem in mind, a bond election for \$2.1 million was set for February 11, 1969. Of the \$2.1 million, \$160,000 would be used to remodel the old school, the other funds would be used to construct what is now Pearson Elementary and to provide a significant addition to the High School, including a second floor of classrooms, added industrial arts facilities, and a 600 seat auditorium.^{xxxiv}

With the approval of the \$2.1 million in funding, the school board began planning for the improvements to the old High School, now the Junior High School. The improvements included the renovation of the auditorium space into an expanded



Auditorium before its removal in 1969

gymnasium space, the remodeling of the science and home economics areas, and the replacement of the old lighting system with modern fixtures throughout the building.^{xxxv} As soon as school was out in June of 1969, the remodeling was immediately underway with the project to be completed before school was again in session that fall.

The energy crisis of the mid 1970's brought about some changes to the school in various ways. Probably the

most unfortunate change was the boarding up of the large windows in the gymnasium to prevent excessive heat loss, a change to the aesthetics of the building that would last almost 30 years. With the energy improvements, electrical and mechanical systems received updates to increase efficiency. At this time the school district was again experiencing a shortage of space which caused the Junior High to be move to the new High School building and the schedule to be changed to a split shift, in which the high school students would attend class in the morning and the junior high in the afternoon. During this time, the old high school building became Central Elementary School and eventually the crowded quarters were relieved with the opening of the current Junior High School in 1976.

The Central Elementary building has likely received smaller improvements throughout the 1980's and 1990's, such as the installation of an elevator in the mid 1990's, and various technological updates, but nothing structurally significant. During the summer of 2002 the building received a \$1,000,000 facelift. Included in this project were the installation of insulation and stuccowork over the deteriorating glass block exterior walls of the 1950 and 1960 additions. Many windows were replaced in the structure including all windows in the 1929 addition. Plywood and fiberglass insulation was removed from the gymnasium windows, and the old windows were replaced with high quality aluminum windows, exposing new generations to the aesthetic beauty of the 1929 addition. The classrooms located above the gymnasium were updated with new mechanical and electrical systems, as well as finishes such as false ceilings and carpet.

New Windows in 1929 Addition – Winter 2003

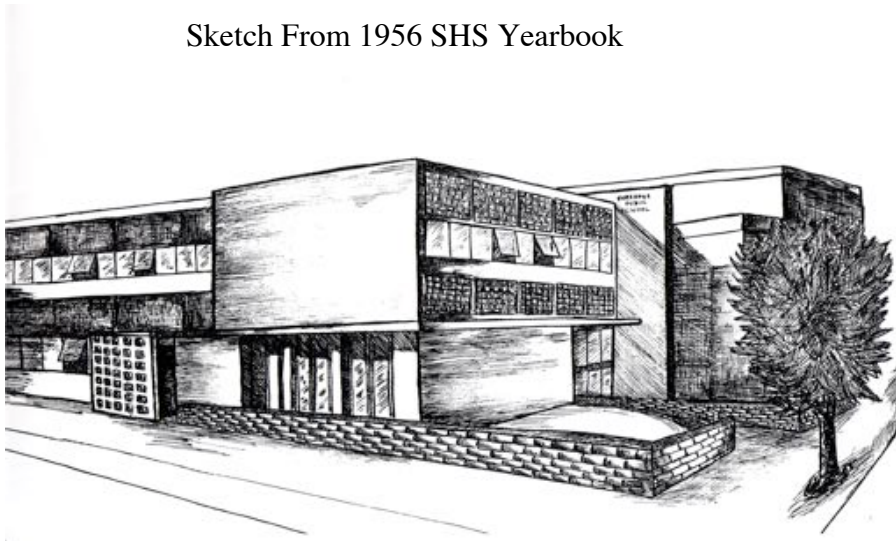


The school is currently home to the school district offices and the community education programs. Early childhood programs are held in classrooms in the old elementary wing. Although the building is not currently used for K-12 instruction, the structure serves as a valuable asset to the district in the event of future classroom shortage, which is a real possibility in the quickly growing community of Shakopee.

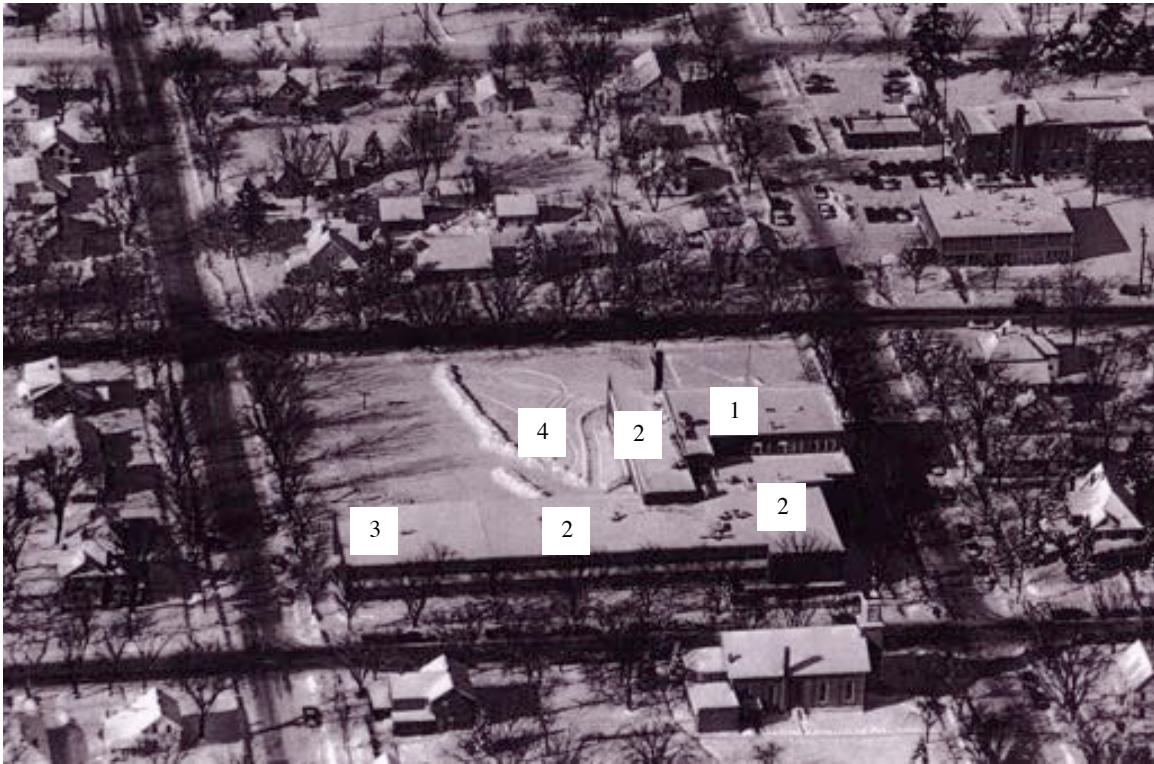
VIII. Conclusion

Throughout the research of this project, I have gained a great respect for Shakopee's original High School. I believe it is fair to say that this building has likely affected more people than any other building in the history of the community. The original focus of this paper was to research the major structural changes the building has experienced since 1881, but I quickly realized these structural changes are only a small part of a much larger picture, which involves the struggles of a community to acquire the funds necessary to provide adequate educational facilities. I have also realized, that the school board is often put in the position of making reactive decisions as opposed to proactive decisions due to inadequate funding. The school has provided educational services since 1881 and continues to be the location where all important school district decisions are made that eventually are implemented in the many various modern school buildings in the city of Shakopee. I hope this document will provide future generations with a brief history and appreciation for the Shakopee Public School system.

Sketch From 1956 SHS Yearbook

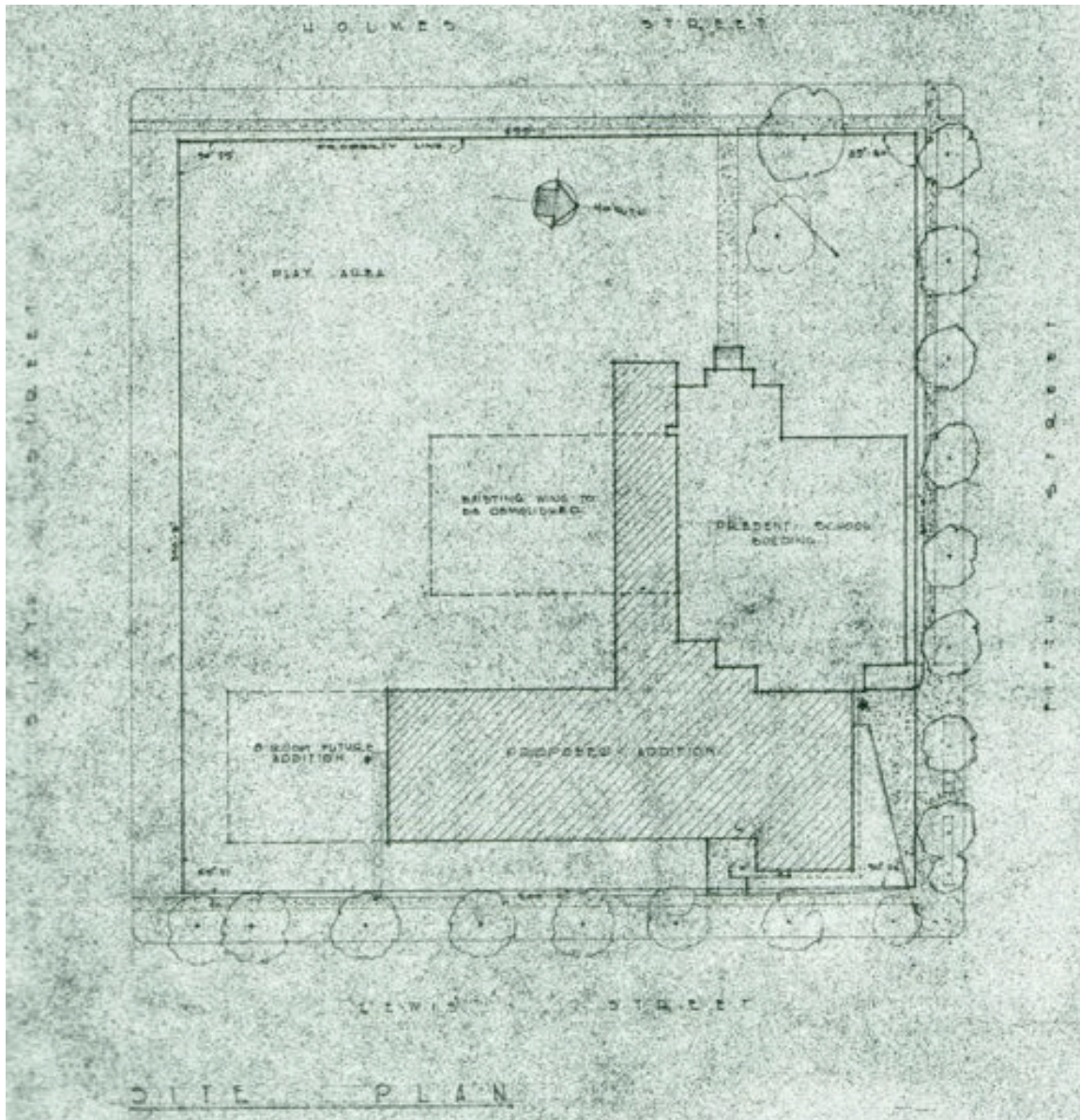


Aerial Photo From 1965 SHS Yearbook



1. The 1929 addition of the auditorium, gymnasium, library, and classrooms above the gymnasium.
2. The 1950 addition of the commercial, industrial arts, home economics, junior high and elementary classrooms. This addition also included a dining hall, a library, locker rooms, and showers.
3. The 1960 addition of lavatory space and 6 additional classrooms to the elementary wing.
4. Approximately the location of the pre-1929 structure, which was demolished during the construction of the 1950 structure.

1946 Proposed Addition Plans by Long and Thorshov Architects



This drawing appeared in a set of preliminary drawings dated November 14, 1946. The proposed addition eventually became reality in 1950 with the procurement of the necessary funds.

Pictures of the First Shakopee High School Auditorium 1929-1969



1956



1956



1964



1965

Then and Now Pictures



Cafeteria - 1955



Cafeteria - Present



2nd Floor Hallway - 1957



2nd Floor Hallway - Present



Library - 1965



Library - Present

SHAKOPEE ARGUS-TRIBUNE

Published April 1, 1918 SHAKOPEE, SCOTT COUNTY, MINNESOTA, THURSDAY, MAY 16, 1918 VOL. 48, NO. 3

SHAKOPEE DEDICATES NEW HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING



E. A. EWENS
Superintendent of Schools

Construction of School Outlined

Engineers, Manufacturers, Builders, Doctors, Merit Credit for Beauty.

Superintendent of Schools E. A. Ewens, in a recent address to the citizens of Shakopee, outlined the construction of the new high school building. He stated that the building would be a credit to the community and a source of pride for the citizens. The building would be a credit to the community and a source of pride for the citizens.

Large Class of Graduates Receives Diplomas at Event

Dedication Ceremonies Occupies Portion of an Unusually Interesting Program. Was Gala Occasion, Large Auditorium Crowded to Capacity.

The first class of graduates from the new high school received their diplomas at a gala event held in the new building. The ceremony was held in the new building and was a gala occasion. The auditorium was crowded to capacity.

St. Mark's School Program Sunday

Class of 15 Graduates to Receive Diplomas; 16 to Get Writing Awards

St. Mark's School held a program on Sunday. A class of 15 graduates will receive their diplomas and 16 students will receive writing awards. The program was held in the new building.

Class of 1910

Reunited from left to right: A. E. Erikson, Carl O. Olson, Harold J. Erickson, Myrtle S. Grew, Orla A. Peterson, Ernest H. Burns, John A. Thiel, Harold A. French, Ruth B. Stevens, Ethel D. Chapman, Margaret A. Coulter, Marion E. Egan, seated from left to right, Marion S. Waring, Frances C. Schneider, Carl J. Kuestner, Kathryn E. Kelly, Edna C. Gessner, D. Elizabeth M. Jones, Dolores O. Egert, Margaret E. Knapp, Agnes E. Weyman, Sylvia, Schickler E. McKean, Leander J. Fincher, Clifford W. Kull. Graduates also not appearing in the above group are: Marion K. Peterson and Julia S. Lynch.

History Marks Progress of Shakopee's Public Schools

Now Thoroughly Up-to-date Educational Institution Wholly Adequate for Needs of Community. Has Especially Capable Staff of Teachers.

Photographs in this issue furnish a tangible proof of the advancement in education here and reveal the definite steps in the progress of the school system. The new building is a credit to the community and a source of pride for the citizens.



DONALD CRISP
President of the School Board

Anna Mergens To Travel Abroad This Summer

Planning on June 27, Miss Anna Mergens will make a tour of Europe as part of a large travel party organized by the Travel Bureau of the State of Minnesota. She will be accompanied by her husband, Mr. Mergens, and other members of the party.

Joe J. Moriarty To Be Heard in Radio Talks

Joe J. Moriarty, Independent candidate for Governor in the 1918 election, will be heard in radio talks. He will discuss his views on the state and national affairs. The talks will be held in the new building.

Class of 1910

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History Marks Progress of Shakopee's Public Schools

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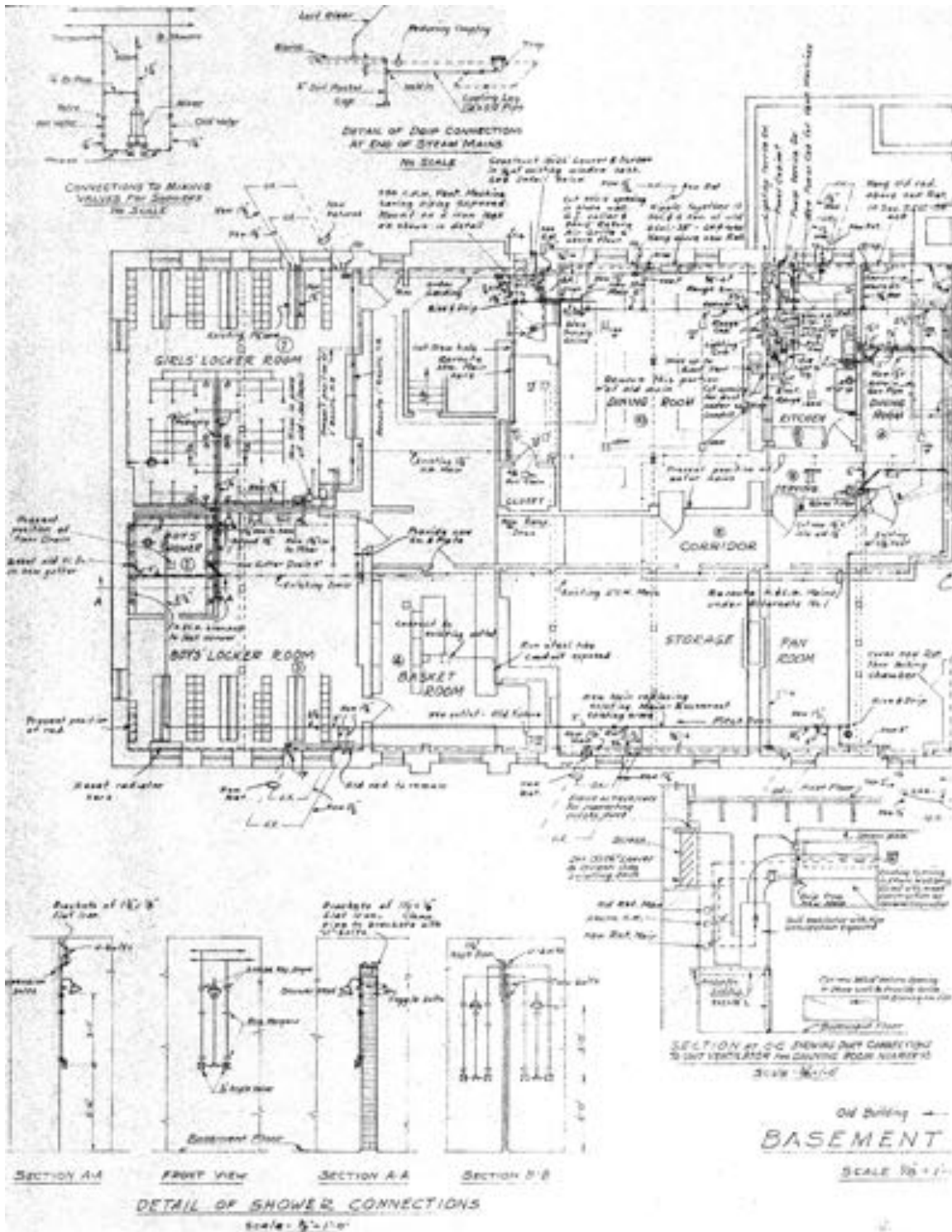
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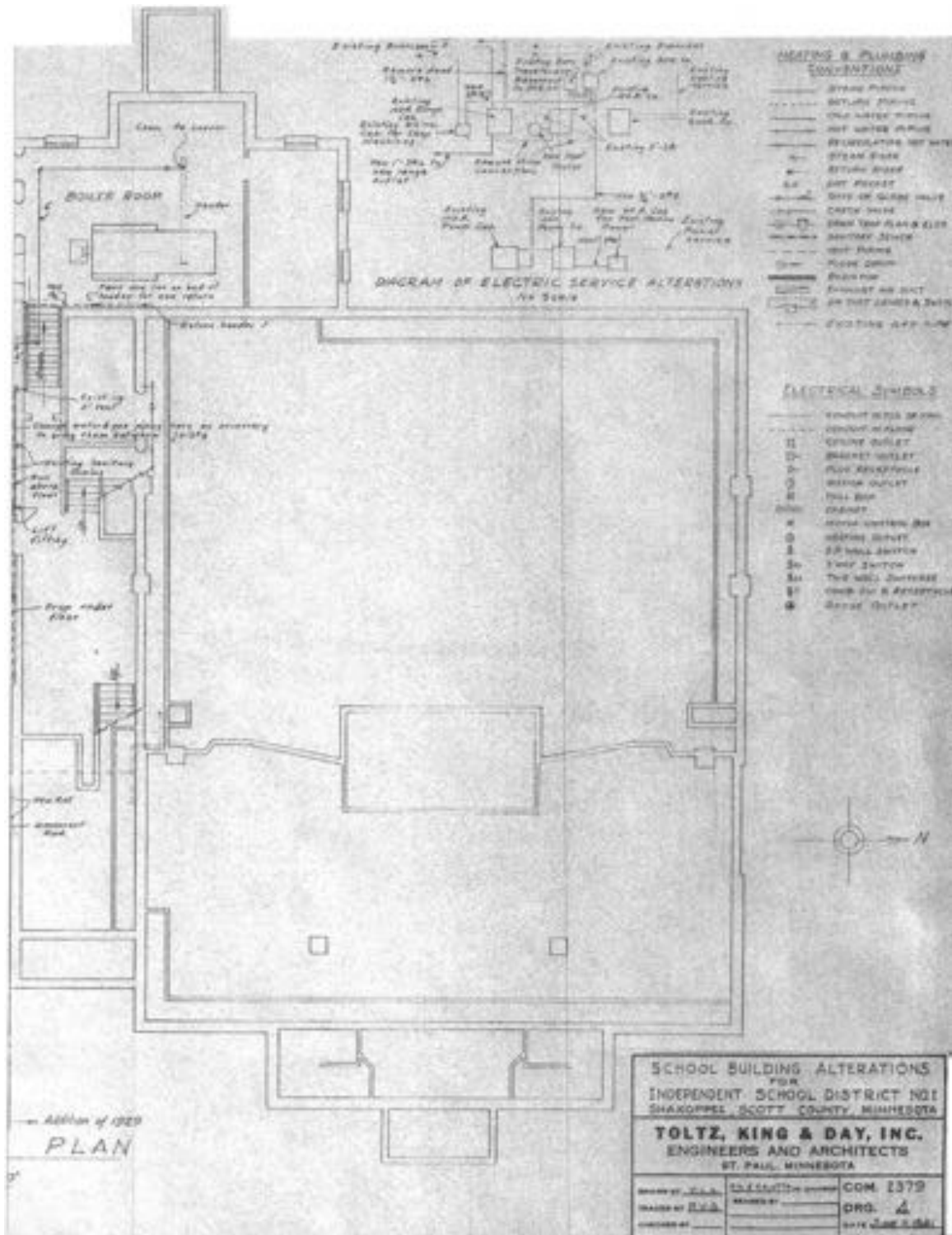
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1941 Building Alteration Plans By Toltz, King, & Day Engineers and Architects



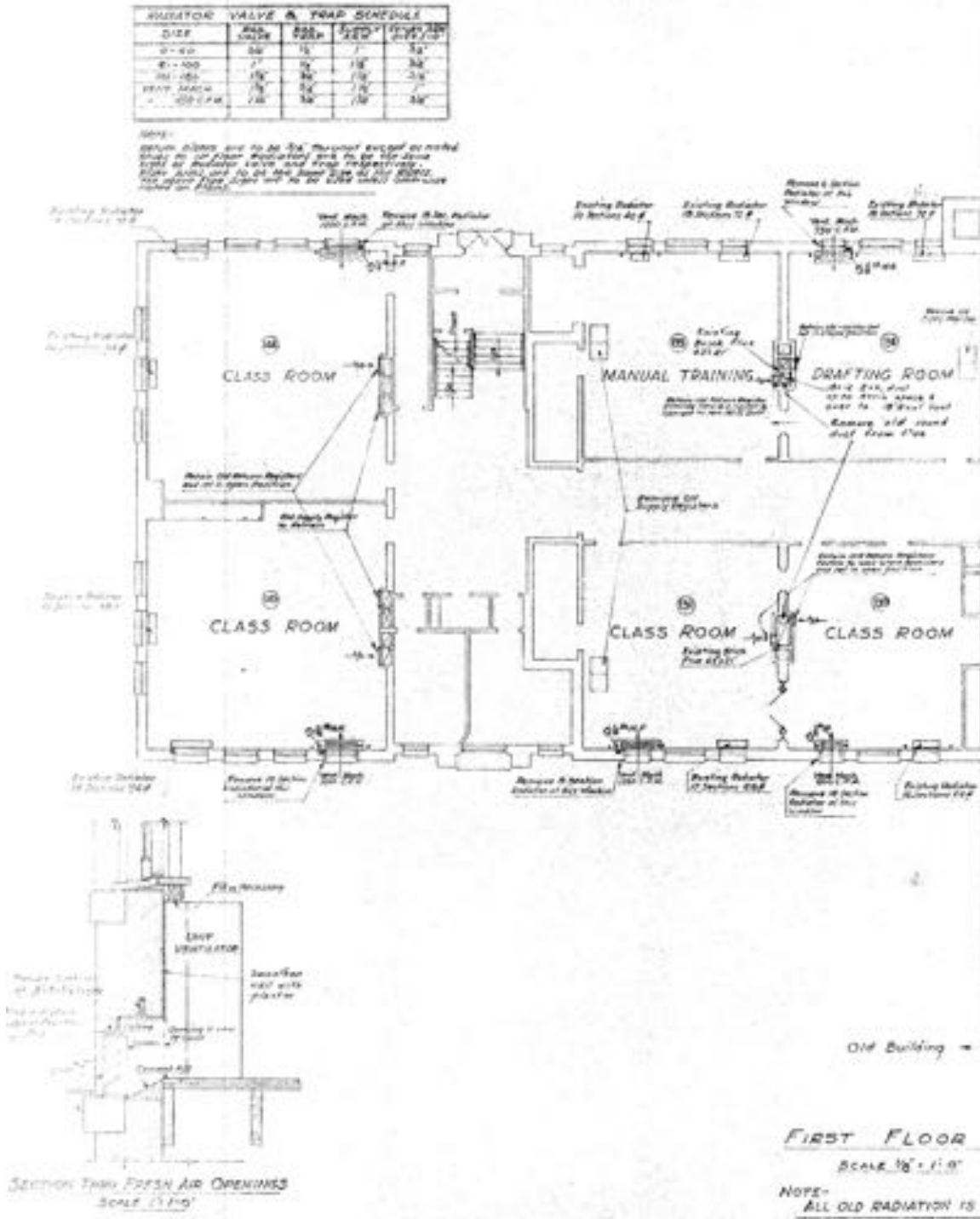
Basement Alterations – Pre-1929 Building

1941 Building Alteration Plans By Toltz, King, & Day Engineers and Architects



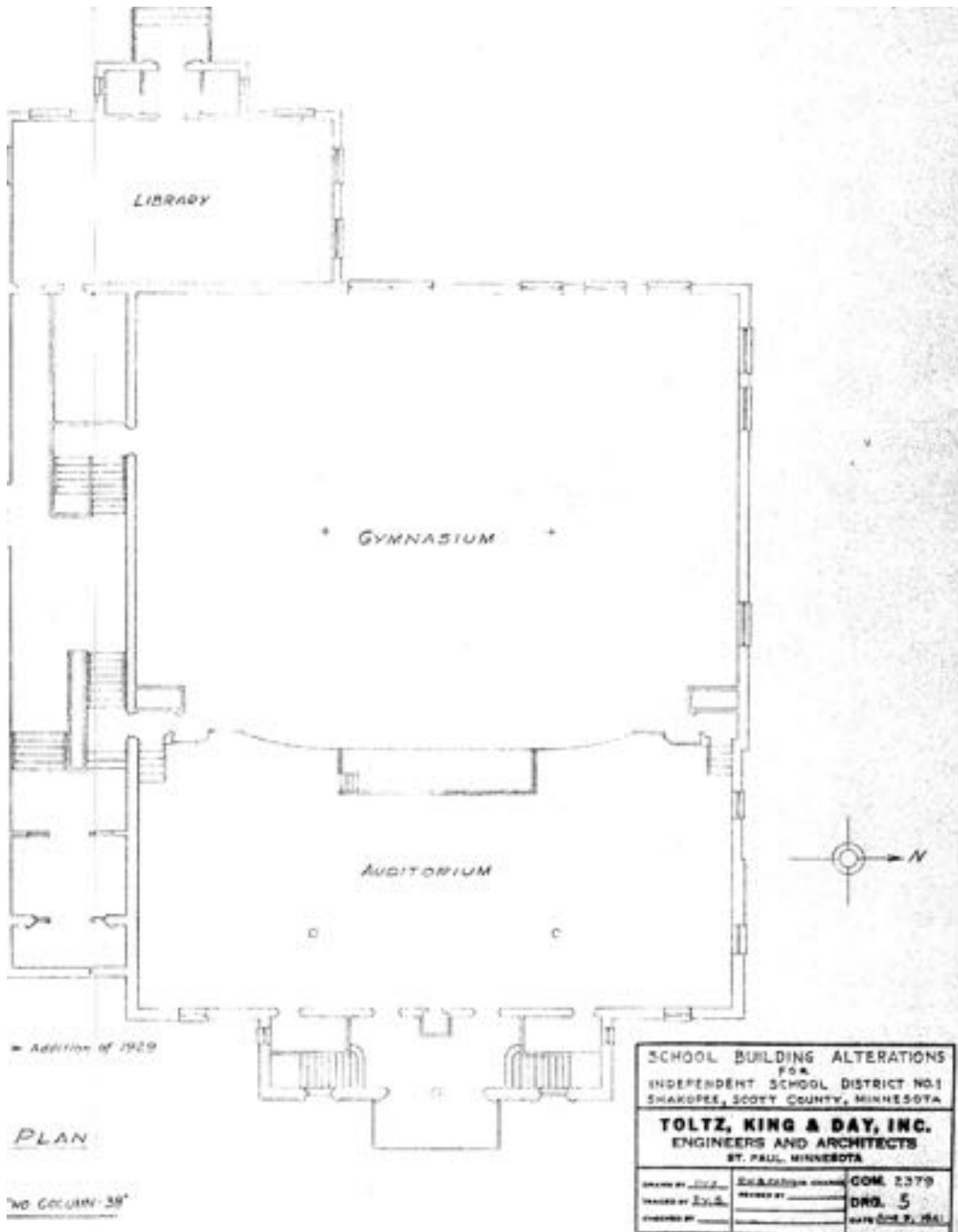
Basement Alterations – 1929 Addition

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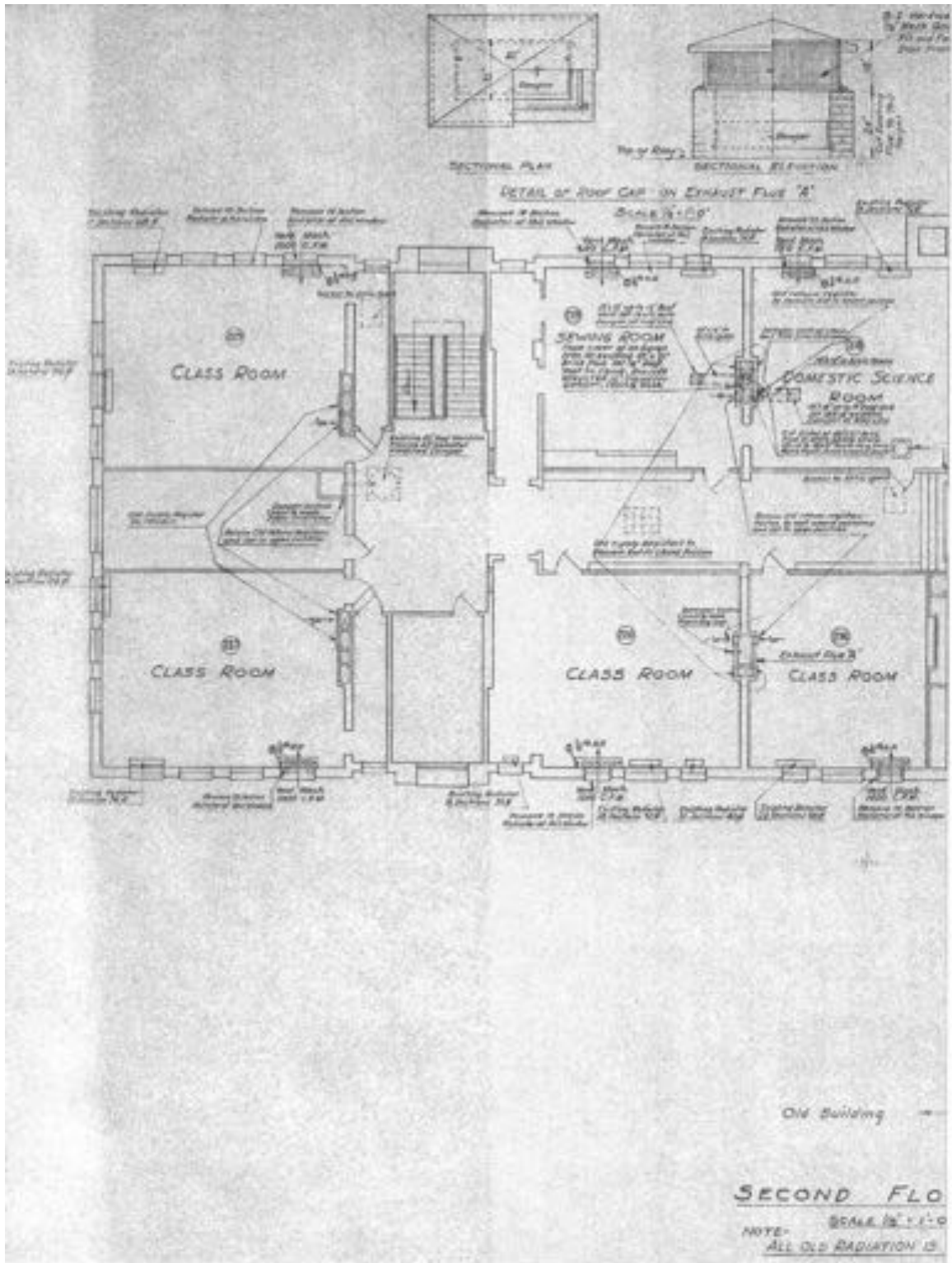
First Floor Alterations – Pre-1929 Building

1941 Building Alteration Plans By Toltz, King, & Day Engineers and Architects



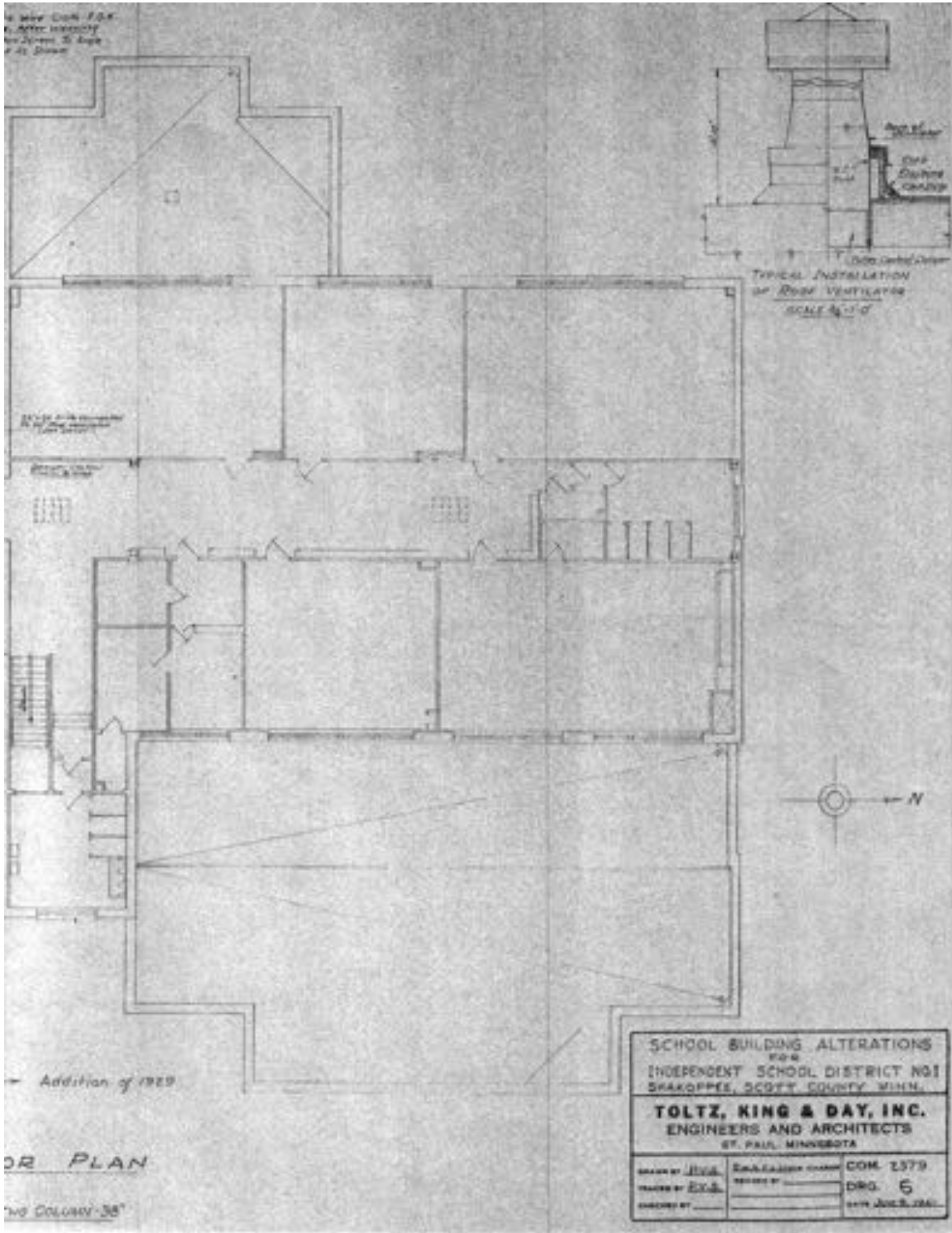
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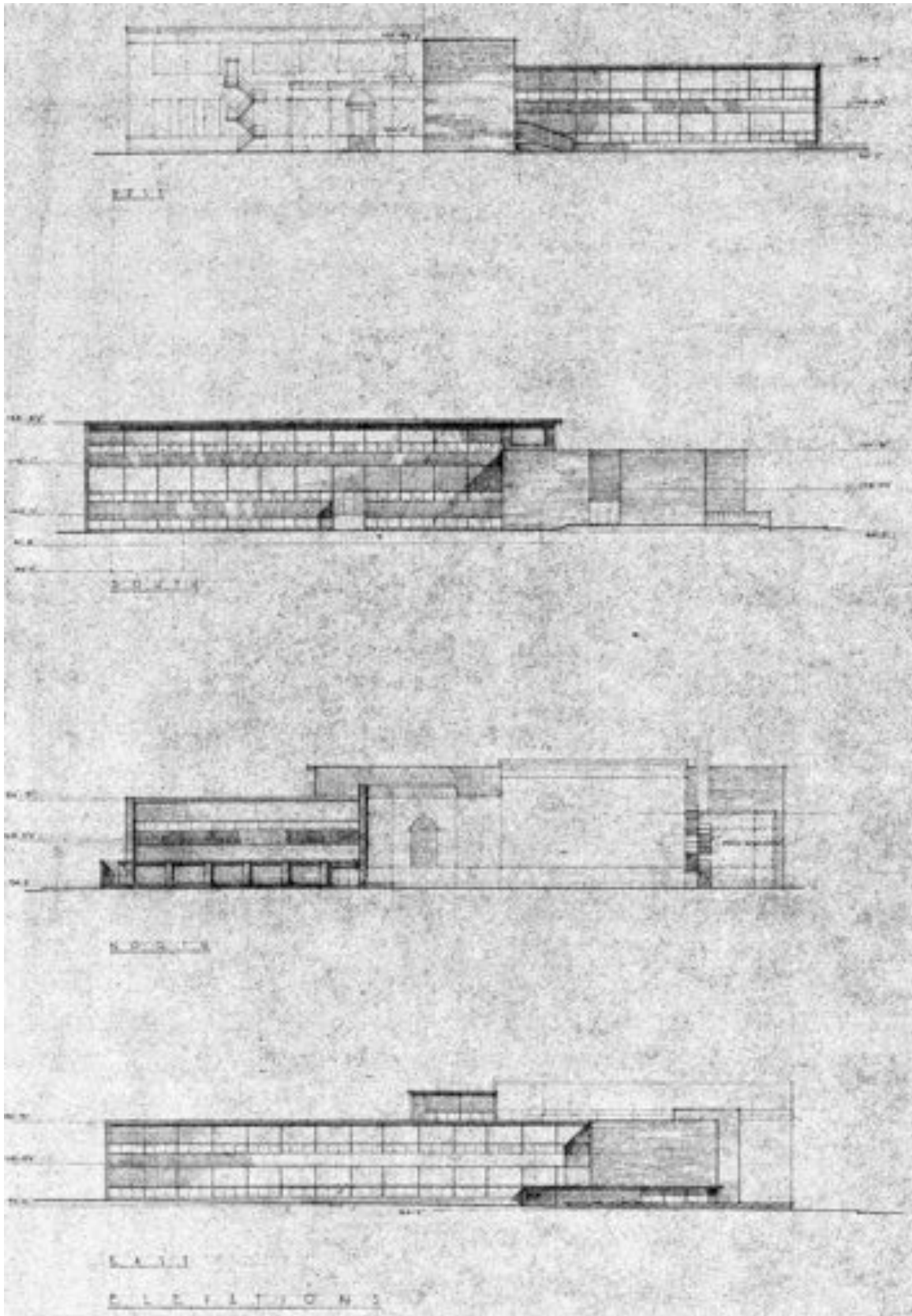
Second Floor Alterations – Pre-1929 Building

1941 Building Alteration Plans By Toltz, King, & Day Engineers and Architects

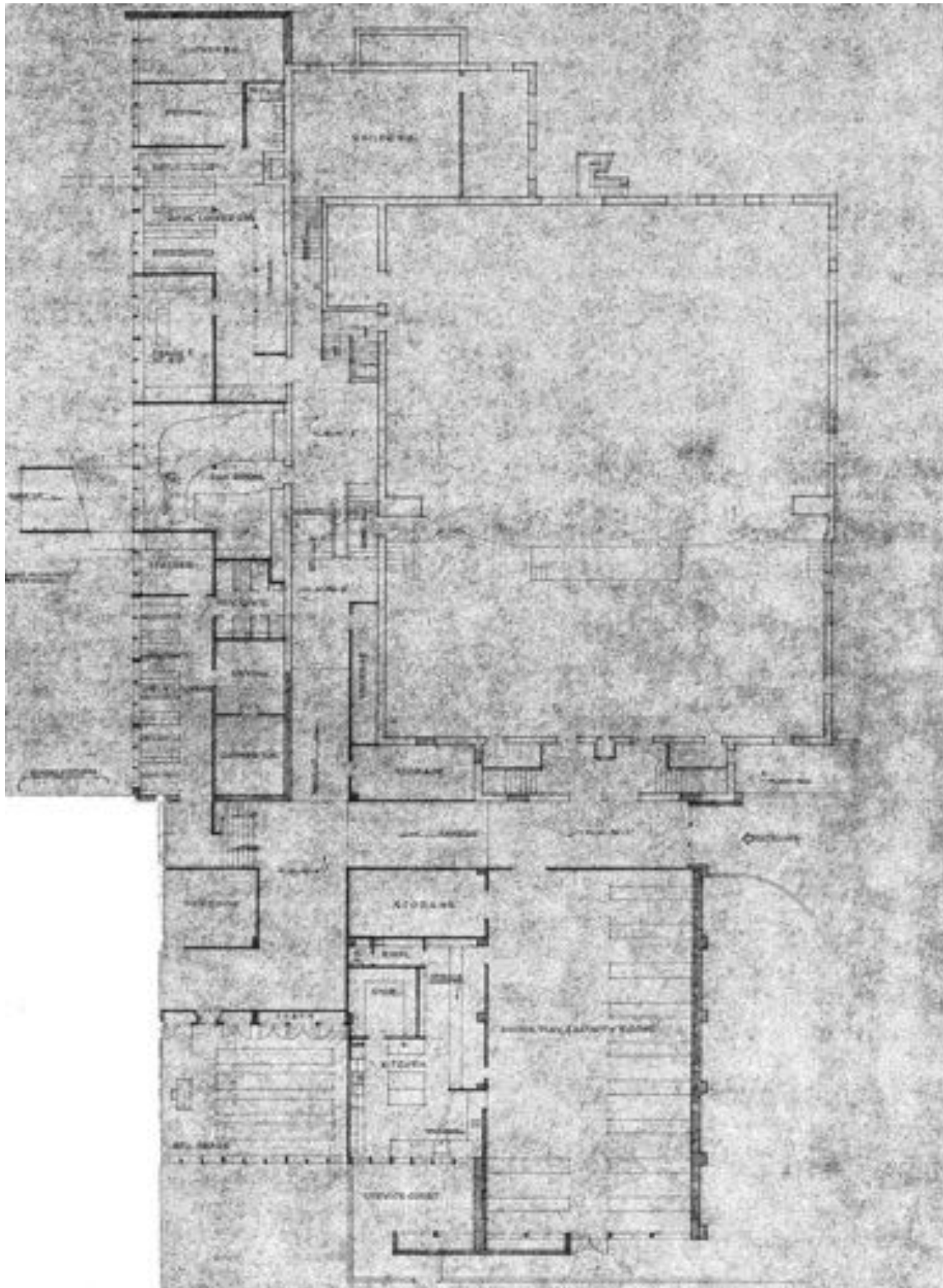


Second Floor Alterations – 1929 Addition

1946 Proposed Addition Plans by Long and Thorshov Architects

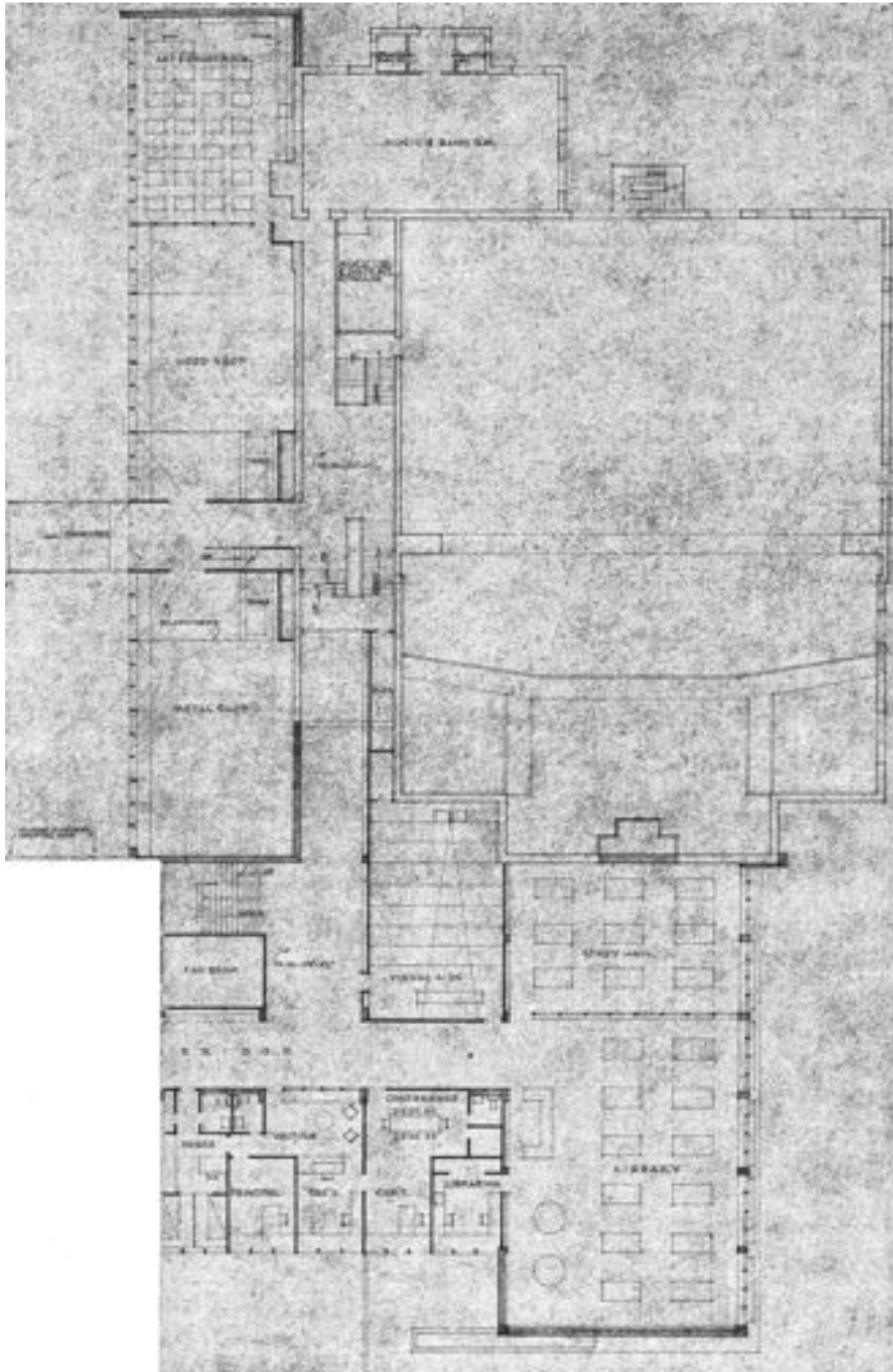


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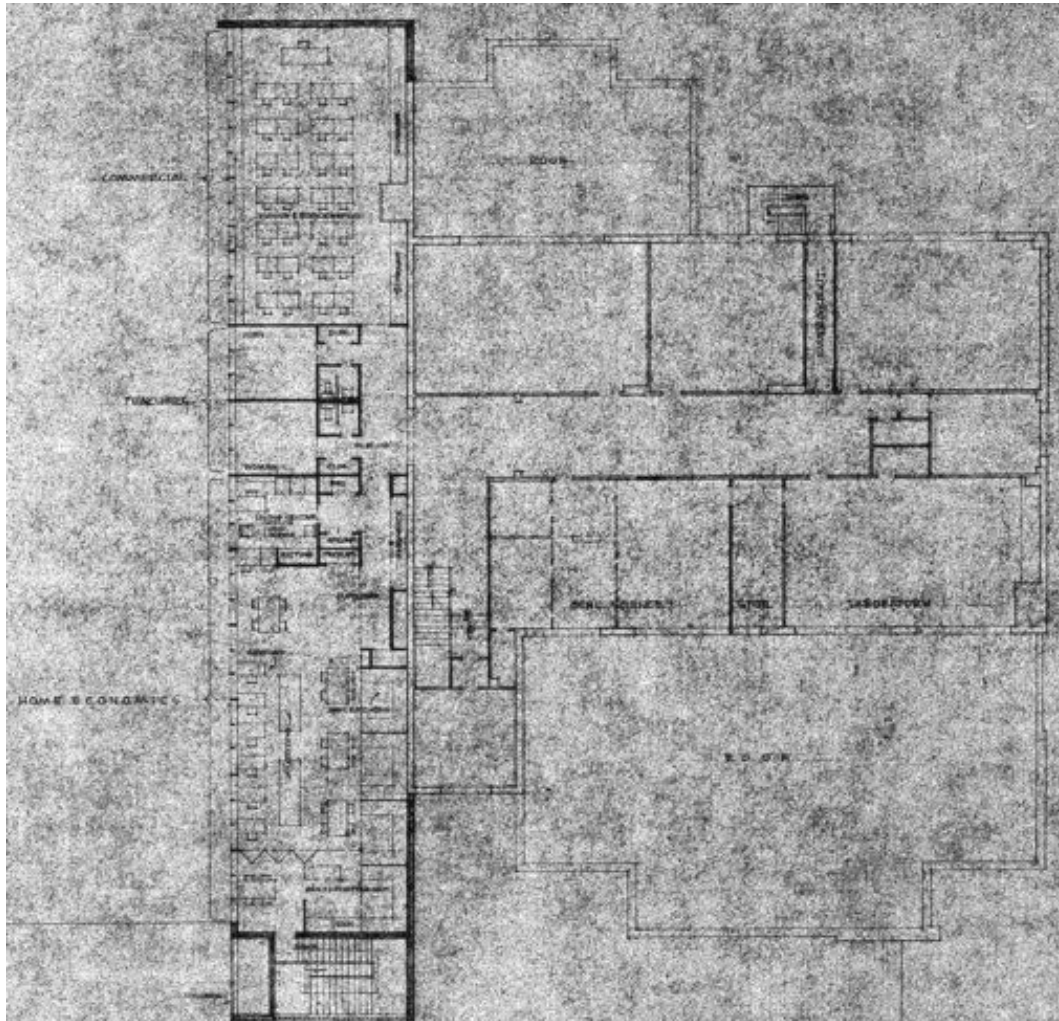
First Floor – High School Area

1946 Proposed Addition Plans By Long and Thorshov Architects



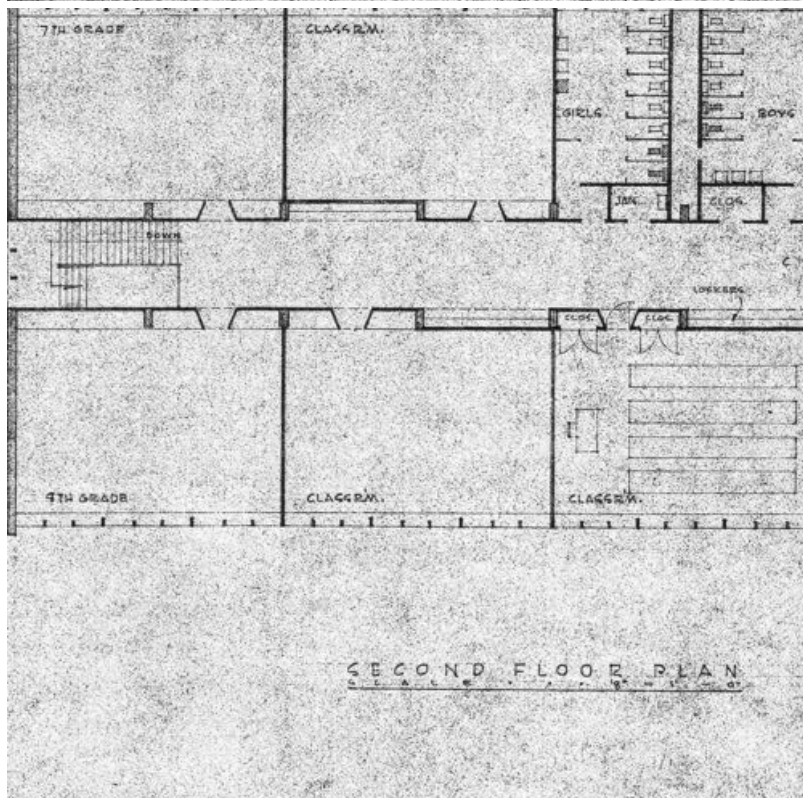
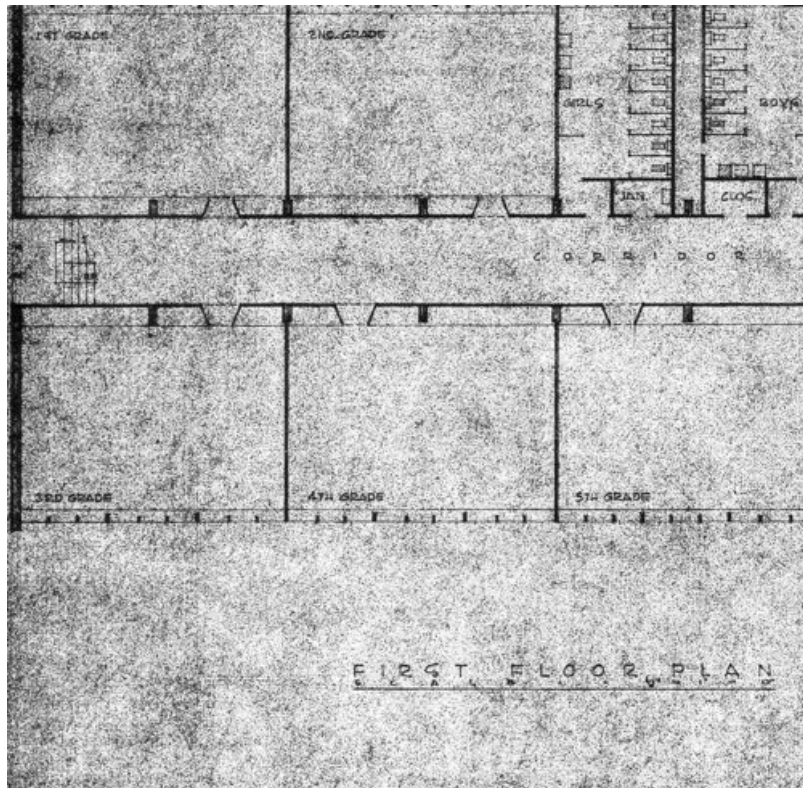
Second Floor – High School Area

1946 Proposed Addition Plans By Long and Thorshov Architects



Third Floor – High School Area

1946 Proposed Addition Plans By Long and Thorshov Architects



First and Second Floor – Junior High and Elementary Wing

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Shakopee Argus-Tribune, May 29, 1930. Page 1.
- ⁱⁱ Shakopee Argus-Tribune, January 10, 1935. Page 1.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Shakopee Story. Page 130.
- ^{iv} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, March 14, 1929. Page 1.
- ^v Scott County Argus, August 26, 1894. Page 1.
- ^{vi} Scott County Argus, September 16, 1897. Page 1.
- ^{vii} The Shakopee Story. Page 214.
- ^{viii} The Shakopee Story. Page 215.
- ^{ix} The Shakopee Story. Page 327.
- ^x Shakopee Argus-Tribune, February 28, 1929. Page 1.
- ^{xi} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, May 29, 1930. Page 1.
- ^{xii} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, May 29, 1930. Page 3.
- ^{xiii} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, May 29, 1930. Page 3.
- ^{xiv} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, May 29, 1930. Page 1.
- ^{xv} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, February 19, 1948. Page 1.
- ^{xvi} Shakopee Valley News, June 30, 1949. Page 1.
- ^{xvii} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, April 29, 1948. Page 1.
- ^{xviii} Shakopee Valley News, April 28, 1949. Page 4.
- ^{xix} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, July 21, 1949. Page 1.
- ^{xx} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, August 4, 1949. Page 1.
- ^{xxi} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, September 22, 1949. Page 1.
- ^{xxii} Shakopee Argus-Tribune, December 22, 1949. Page 1.
- ^{xxiii} The Shakopee Story. Page 411.
- ^{xxiv} Shakopee Valley News, July 5, 1951. Page 1.
- ^{xxv} Shakopee Valley News, April 10, 1958. Page 1.
- ^{xxvi} Shakopee Valley News, April 17, 1958. Page 1.
- ^{xxvii} Shakopee Valley News, July 16, 1959. Page 1.
- ^{xxviii} Shakopee Valley News, March 12, 1959. Page 1.
- ^{xxix} Shakopee Valley News, August 6, 1959. Page 1.
- ^{xxx} Shakopee Valley News, August 13, 1959. Page 1.
- ^{xxxi} Shakopee Valley News, September 10, 1959. Page 1.
- ^{xxxii} Shakopee Valley News, September 24, 1959. Page 1.
- ^{xxxiii} Shakopee Valley News, January 30, 1969. Page 1.
- ^{xxxiv} Shakopee Valley News, January 30, 1969. Page 2.
- ^{xxxv} Shakopee Valley News, February 27, 1969. Page 1.

RESEARCH CREDITS

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Shakopee Argus-Tribune, 1929, 1930, 1948, 1949.

Shakopee Valley News, 1949, 1958, 1959, 1969.

Thank you to Mr. Bob Greeley, Shakopee Community Education Director, for providing access to the structure and the school district's old building plans.

Thank you to Mr. John Cole, former Junior High Principal, for sharing his knowledge of historical school district information.

Thank you to the Scott County Historical Society for their well organized research facilities and access to Shakopee Argus-Tribune and Shakopee Valley News archives.

Thank you to Mrs. Edie Cook, Shakopee High School English teacher and yearbook coordinator, for the use of past SHS Yearbooks.

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