

Old Elgin High

Old Brick New Brick Old Elgin High

T

he first Elgin High, known as "Old Brick" was located at Kimball and Center Streets. In 1882, when overcrowding became a problem, Elgin voters approved a \$40,000 bond issue to be used for a construction of new buildings. A site on DuPage Street near Chapel was chosen for construction of the new high school.

And so it was that the second building occupied by Elgin High School was built in 1884. The property was purchased for \$8,000, and the building was erected at a cost of \$29,950. It was considered, "One of the finest buildings of the kind in the northwest" and had a seating capacity of 450.

However, student enrollment grew at a tremendous rate, and within 20 years' time, more space was needed. In 1905-06 an east wing was completed. The original building was then razed, and a new west wing erected in 1910-1911. The central section (main entrance and auditorium) was the last section to be completed. The architect was David Postle. The little hat box gym on the third floor was "home" to the 1924 and 1925 state basketball champions.

The Chapel Street wing extending out to East Chicago St. and the gymnasium extending along DuPage to Gifford Street were added in 1938, and the Elgin High

Maroons were undefeated in 1938-'39 and 1939-'40, their first two seasons in the new gymnasium.

Administrative offices for the district were located in the Chapel Street wing until 1949, when they were moved to a house on the corner of Gifford and East Chicago Street.

Elgin High is one of the ten oldest, continuously operating public high schools in Illinois. We have an impressive list of famous graduates:

- Max Adler, donator of Chicago's Adler Planetarium
- Fred Adams, designer of America's first streamlined train
- James Roche, President of General Motors
- John Teets, President of Greyhound Corporation.
- Tom Shales, a nationally syndicated television critic & Pulitzer Prize winner
- Paul Flory, a recipient of the Nobel Prize in chemistry.

Emmie U. Ellis and T. A. Larsen, after whom the two east side middle schools are named, were long time faculty members in this old building.

This former EHS building was vacated by the High School in 1972, when the new building opened on Maroon Drive.

Old Elgin High is where Elgin Community College got its start, operating out of the Chapel Street wing. In 1969-70, they opened their main campus on Spartan Drive, and in 1983, they added a downtown extension in the old Swan Department Store on Spring Street.

Today's House Tour registration is being held in the old Elgin High gymnasium. You may also walk upstairs and watch live broadcast from WEPS, the oldest non-commercial educational radio station in Illinois, which will be 50 years old on January 13, 2000. It will be an "All House Tour, All Weekend" radio broadcast.

Walk up another flight, and you can cross over to the old section of the building, where there are ornate display cases of interest, outside the library. Be sure to check out the original library doors -- they'll be closed for easy viewing, and they're splendid.

And if you want, you can peek inside the grand auditorium, and watch the Elgin Community Theater players rehearsing an upcoming performance of "The Boyfriend." Be sure to note the large tapestry hanging over the auditorium stage.

Special thanks to E.C. "Mike" Allt for historical information on Elgin High.