



Casey's walls recall school's history

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BOULDER, Colo. — In September 1924, when students first entered the brand new North Side Intermediate School, Principal Susie Lovelace was so concerned with keeping the building spotless that she wouldn't let her seventh, eighth, and ninth-graders brush against the walls as they walked down the halls. Renamed Casey Junior High School two decades later, all but two exterior walls have been demolished to make way for new construction.

Those two walls, however, have been spared the wrecking ball and will be incorporated into the new school's design as visual reminders of the past.

Intermediate schools — or junior high schools as they came to be called — were a new concept in the 1920s. No longer did elementary schools go through the eighth grade. Students on the south side of town attended classes in a new addition to the University Hill School, but those north of downtown Boulder got their own building.

Even earlier, the land had been the site of pioneer resident Eugene Austin's Boulder Pressed Brick Co., where bricks were produced from 1890 to 1906. Clay for the bricks was dug from a bank on the west end of Lovers' (now Sunset) Hill and baked in on-site coal-fired kilns.

Then, in 1909, the site housed a temporary wooden tabernacle which seated the 4,000 people who came to hear evangelist Billy Sunday during his five-week Boulder tour. After he moved on to new audiences, the building was used briefly as a roller skating rink before being demolished.

Construction of the intermediate school began in 1923. When the building opened the following year, it held 373 students taught by 20 teachers. The starting salary for the teachers was \$1,300 per year.

The strict and red-headed Lovelace had come from her former position as principal of Mapleton Elementary. She forbade talking in the halls, so students eagerly looked forward to lunch to catch up with friends. In the early days, there was no cafeteria, so everyone brought sack lunches and ate in the gymnasium.

Feared but respected, Lovelace retired in 1936 after a teaching career that spanned 46 years. Lovelace once spoke to a reporter of the pride she felt for her students and said, "I have the finest group of boys there is, and the girls are very good, too."

In 1944, the school board renamed North Side in honor of then-84-year-old William V. Casey, former superintendent of schools. In recent years, Casey Junior High was renamed again, as Casey Middle School.

Although previous plans called for the entire building to be torn down, a team of community members — the Casey Design Advisory Team — came up with the idea of retaining the south and west walls.

Many years ago, Supt. Casey, in an address to a group of teachers, urged them to “not pursue the beaten path of mediocrity.” The new building’s design, posted on signs mounted on the chain-link fence at the intersection of High and 13th streets, will be an innovative blend of the old and the new.

No doubt Casey — and maybe Lovelace, too — would be appreciative of the still-standing walls.

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