

The History of Sheridan High School



Written by Roger B. Rowland
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Sheridan, Colorado

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Sheridan Historical Society, Inc.

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The Sheridan Historical Society is an organization created by the City Council of the City of Sheridan in May of 1991. It was incorporated in the State of Colorado as a not for profit corporation. The purpose of the Society as stated in the Articles of Incorporation is to solicit and encourage contributions to be devoted to the public use in the preservation of historic sites. Further to promote, solicit and encourage charitable, education, historic, artistic, musical and dramatic programs and events related to historic preservation.

About the Author



Roger B. Rowland was a founding member of the Sheridan Historical Society. He took a break from the Society for a few years. In 2000, he returned as an active member of the Society. He currently serves as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Society.

In 2001 he undertook his first research project for the Society by creating the historic listing of city officials. It was difficult task because of the lost and damaged city records from the 1965 Platte River Flood. Each name had to be researched from individual City Council minutes covering a period of almost forty years.

This history represents his fifth major project for the Society and represents several days of research and writing. He grew up in Sheridan and attended Sheridan schools. He graduated from Sheridan High School in 1973. He has served on the City Planning Commission and as Mayor from August, 1983 through December, 1989.

Dedication

This history is dedicated to the over 700 faculty and staff that have served at Sheridan High School since 1952. Especially, the first 16 faculty members, that took a chance with a brand new school when the classrooms had not even been built.

*Kathreine Ann Boersma
Linus E. Davis
Gladys E. Dunton
Earl G. Gary
Dawna Horner
Carl P. Kusick
James F. Martin
Alvin A. Parker
Helen A. Rohrer
Sybil J. Rosser
Karl E. Slatt
Patricia A. Sullivan
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Helen B. Vaus
Barbara Williams
Francis "Frank" S. Williams*

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For the original history she wrote about the school district and high school back the 1990s for the Historical Society. Bonita is the only “Lifetime” member of the Society.

Clark Bond

For his invaluable assistance and reminisces about his experiences at the beginning and later when he returned as a teacher and then assistant principal.

Cyndi Wright

Director of Facilities, Sheridan School District #2

For her assistance and access to historical information about the district and high school.

Shirley Miles, Principal and **Leslie Gomez**, Activities and Athletic Director,
Sheridan High School

For their assistance and access to the high school and high school annuals.

And, finally to,

Christine York, Class of 89

Chris formed the “Sheridan High School Alumni” group on Facebook in 2008. And, without knowing, got me started down a path to the writing of this history.

The History of Sheridan High School

Before the High School

Before there was a high school, there were three elementary school districts. Petersburg was the first school in the Sheridan area and was built in 1892. Petersburg was rebuilt after a fire burnt the first school down in 1927. Petersburg was organized as a school district in 1909. Fort Logan School was first built in 1923 and was a separate district from Petersburg. College View split off from Fort Logan and their district was created in 1941.

The neighboring school districts of Englewood were created in 1916 and Littleton in 1889. Up until the late 1940's Englewood High School took Sheridan and College View students. After World War II, the Colorado population was booming especially in the areas around Denver. Englewood schools experienced tremendous growth in their student population. There were several local newspaper articles in the late forties about overcrowding. Englewood was booming with several annexations. In the 1950 census, Englewood was the sixth largest city in the state of Colorado.

Location	Population	10 Yr Growth	County	Population	% of State	10 Yr Growth
Colorado	1,318,048	17.30%	Adams	40,358	3.06%	79.50%
			Arapahoe	51,867	3.94%	60.80%
Denver	412,856	28.10%	Denver	412,856	31.32%	28.10%
Pueblo	63,561	21.90%	Jefferson	55,465	4.21%	80.00%
Colorado Springs	45,268	23.00%		560,546	42.53%	
Greeley	20,286	26.80%				
Boulder	19,916	53.70%	El Paso	74,265	5.63%	37.50%
Englewood	16,619	71.70%	Pueblo	89,592	6.80%	30.10%
				163,857	12.43%	
Littleton	3,370	50.20%				
Sheridan	1,710	140.20%		724,403	54.96%	

Reminiscing

Reminiscing about his school days, Clark Bond remembers that Petersburg only went through the eighth grade and that for "a period of time when students finished up at Petersburg ... they [Petersburg school board] were constantly trying to work out an arrangement for somebody to take the students after they got out of Petersburg. There was an agreement between Petersburg and Englewood for a long period of time and then around the late 40s Englewood discontinued for whatever reason and would not take Petersburg students after that. For a period of time there was another arrangement and those students went to South High School in Denver. Then I guess it became apparent that arrangement was not going to last. In fact, I think some may have gone to West High School. It was kind of jumbled relationship, and I think at one-time high school kids were being parceled out to whom ever would take them."

"In the late '40s, early '50s, they began to feel that would not be a permanent solution because when I went to Petersburg in '50 when we continued through the seventh grade they had no place for us to go, so they added the eighth grade. When I got out of the eighth grade, they still did not have a place so they added the ninth grade. When I got out of the ninth grade, they still did not have a place, so they added the tenth. When I got out of the tenth grade I don't know where I would have gone, but they had completed the Union High School over here. That was the fall '52, so I was able to come over here."

"That got to be kind of interesting for a period of time, 'Where do we go next?' I could see myself graduating from Petersburg, going through the twelfth grade because they didn't have any place for us to go." Jim Taylor, a 35-year veteran of the district, mentioned that many of these students also went to Littleton High School in addition to those attending West and South High Schools.

Sheridan Union

In 1950 it became apparent that the arrangements with Littleton, West and South High Schools were not going to meet the needs of the area's students and Sheridan Union School District was formed in 1951.

It was reported in the November 22, 1951 edition of the *Englewood Enterprise* that a "Union High School May be Erected." Meetings were held in each of the districts by Arapahoe County School Superintendent Beulah Davis and Lucy Auld with the State Department of Education. All three elementary school boards approved the formation of the "Union" district on November 15, 1951. Named to the new Union Board were E. L. Druley, Fort Logan; Carol C. Elkins, Petersburg, and Don Dunn, College View.

"This has been difficult, due to crowded conditions everywhere, and we will certainly be happy to have a school of our own..." said Don I. Dunn, the new union school district board secretary. The union district encompassed the area roughly from West Jewell Avenue on the north, Sheridan Boulevard on the west, Santa Fe Drive on the east, and Belleview Avenue [extended]

on the south. In order to accommodate the large distances the students had to travel a bus system was added. Roughly 200 students were anticipated from the three elementary districts in grades nine through 12. It was anticipated 15 teachers would be hired.

A bond issue election was held in the amount of \$360,000 for the purchase of property and construction of the new Union High School. Work was begun in September, 1951. "The school will contain 14 classrooms, general office space, and a combination gymnasium-auditorium.." Harvey Stenmark's firm was hired for the construction. Thomas J. Murphy, the former superintendent of Frederick, Colorado schools was hired as superintendent. Work was expected to be completed by September of 1952.

The School is Not Ready Yet

The building was not ready as hoped in the fall of 1952. Classes of the Sheridan Union High School actually started in buildings on the grounds of the old Fort Logan military base.

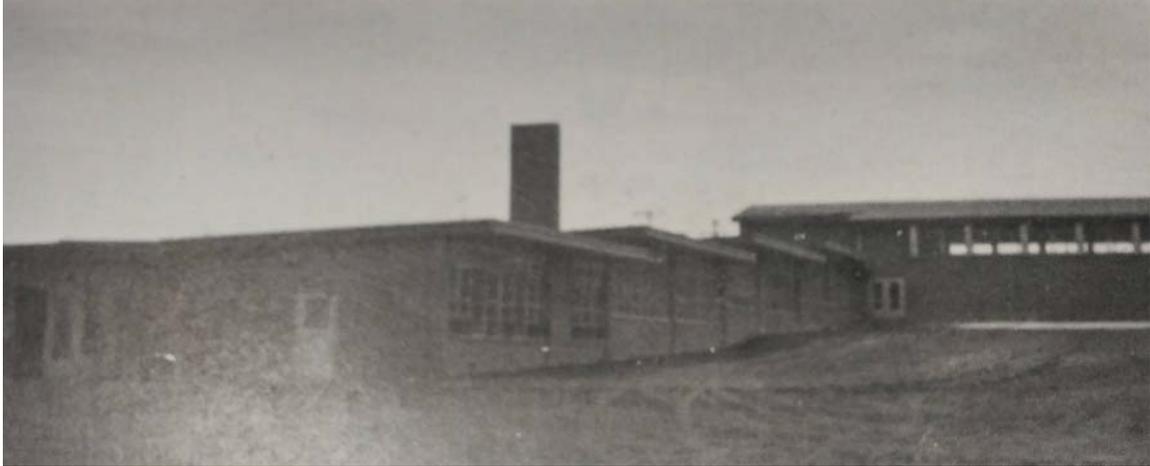
When Clark Bond was asked about starting in the new school, he recalls. "It was sometime during that school year...we were aware there was a school contemplated and we did not know how far along it was in the construction process. I was a little concerned as to where I was going...early 1952." "The school is not ready yet. It was all new at that time. I wasn't going to have to go to Petersburg another year."

Bond was asked about the Fort Logan buildings. "Just big buildings with large rooms ... they were two story brick buildings. They were able to convert some of the rooms to classrooms." "The Fort Logan area was still under federal control at that time and access was limited and controlled by guards. That first semester ... we got on buses at one of the two gates and the bus would take us to the school."

"There was no set up for a bell system. There was teacher by the name of Francis Williams, who was an English teacher, and to this day I can remember when students were out of the building for whatever ... he would hang out the window and ring a hand bell and that is when the students knew to come in. That lasted only one semester"

Sheridan Union High School

Bond said, "When we came back after the Christmas break we came to the new building." "I'll never forget walking into the building and looking down that hallway, and I thought it must be a half mile down that hallway." "We were so busy getting acquainted with other people. It was an enjoyable time because it was new." At the west end of the gymnasium there was a cafeteria and a kitchen area. We ate at tables in the gymnasium.



“Suddenly I was in situation when I was in a building where we could move around.” I remember going out and participating in the stage plays. That was always a fun, interesting thing that I thoroughly enjoyed doing.” It would be another four years before the west wing of the school was built, along with the lower campus, and the football field.”

There was a gully coming from Fort Logan that ran south of the school buildings. The football field was dug out in the area of the gully. “It happened during the interim when I was not here.” “It was a nice situation because of the fact it was a bowl. It was the only field in the Denver that was a bowl. It was very popular and there were numerous requests to use the field.”

Bond Returns as a Teacher

Bond was asked, what made you decide to come back as a teacher? “That was an interesting story. When I graduated from college, University of Denver, I had a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and science. At that time Denver Public school system was the first school system to get the opportunity to interview potential teachers. I got interviewed, they offered me a job at Gove junior high ... teaching algebra at the ninth grade...I kind of ignored that one. I went to Jefferson school district and interviewed. They offered me a job. I’ll never forget, it was a Friday, to teach mathematics at Lakewood High School. I verbally agreed that was something I would like to do. They had given me a number of the text books to take home with me over the weekend ... and was to come back on Monday to sign a contract. That Saturday night there was a basketball game at the high school here and my brother played on the basketball team. So I came up to see the game. As I was leaving I ran into Tom Murphy, the old superintendent who had been my superintendent [while I was in school], and he said ‘Hey, Bond, so I understand you are out of school.’ I said, yeah I am. ‘Says, you want a job?’ Well what do want me to do? ‘I want you teach mathematics at the high school.’ I think maybe that’s something I consider. I did and decided I rather do that then go to Lakewood.”



How was the high school different from when you came back? “By that time they added the west part of it. There were a lot of teachers that I did not know. I was different because I was there in a different capacity.” “The first year of teaching ... for all teachers an interesting time because in most cases you don’t have anything to fall back on, you got to create it as you go.” “It was an exciting fun year for me.”

The student population continued to grow at Sheridan Union. In 1955 the Martin Company announced it was coming to the Denver area. This spurred new housing subdivisions in Sheridan and Englewood adding many new students to the high school. By the fall of 1960 the Union High School had a student population of 597 students.

Devastation Denver Style

In February, 1962 the City of Denver adopted an ordinance annexing the College View area. College View Elementary School District was one of the three districts which made up the Sheridan Union School District #2. The other two districts were Fort Logan and Petersburg. The annexation had a devastating affect on the Union school district.

At the end of the 1961-1962 school year the high school would lose 209 students which made up 31% of the student body. The loss would result in an election for the creation of the new

Year of Change

The year has been different from all other year's we've been at Sheridan. First of all, we arrive before 7:00 am in the dark and cold of a winter morning. Since there is no lunch hour, we have a mid-morning break of 17 minutes, with quantities of candy, milk, and potato chips consumed. The mornings seem quieter than they used to, the halls are less crowded. But then comes the end of fifth hour, and split sessions really hit us. Suddenly the halls are full of small people darting under our feet; everyone seems to be about four feet high. For one hour the building is bursting at the seams. When we want to meet after school, there are no rooms available, and club membership has fallen off. Pep assemblies are quieter; in the gym we take up only one side of the bleachers, and there is less class competition, because, for the first time, there are no freshmen.

Afternoons we have athletic practice, and many of us have jobs to go to. Most students seem to like split sessions for this reason; they can work and earn more money and be more independent and mature. As for the effects on academic work, opinion is divided. Most students seem to feel people work harder in the time they have available. Complaints are that there isn't enough time to eat or enough variety of food. People would like to be able to get sandwiches and fruit as well as candy, ice cream, and pop. Some also object to sharing lockers and to the fact that if they want to stay at school to study, or come back in the afternoon, junior high has taken over. Still most people would prefer to come in the morning instead of coming in late like the Junior High and staying to 6 o'clock at night. There are some other changes, like the new school sign, the student parking lot to the west, the new room which is being built and will be finished later this year, and the library which now contains both Junior and Senior High School books. In spite of all the changes, Sheridan is basically the same. The roof still leaks; the boys still stand in middle hall. Most of our teachers from other years are back, and we study, or loaf, as we've always done. Most important of all, school spirit remains high. No matter happens, Rams stay on top.

New High School

It took two tries of bond elections. The first failed and the second bond election passed on May 26, 1970. Bonds were issued resulting in \$1,670,000 in construction funds for a new high school to be built on the north side of West Oxford Avenue at South Irving Street. The new school would eliminate split sessions. The building was designed by J. D. Willis of Sternburg & Associates. The general contractor was Weaver Construction Company. The building resulted in approximately 70,000 square feet on two floors.

The new Sheridan High School opened in the fall of 1972 and "they moved the ninth grade back into the high school and brought the sixth grade up from Fort Logan and formed the Middle School," says Bond.

Just like the Union High School, the new high school opening was delayed. The high school students spent the first two weeks taking national standardized tests in the gymnasium at the old high school. When the new high school finally opened, the building was still incomplete. The main floor was walled off on the west side of the main commons. The cafeteria kitchen, gymnasium, locker rooms, and west restrooms would not be opened until the second semester. During the interim, lunch meals were made at the middle school and transported to the high school.

Part of the delay was because of the new floor in the gymnasium. The floor was a synthetic surface called tartan. Sheridan was the first high school in state with such a surface. A fungus had grown on the floor and had to be cleaned off before the gymnasium could be used.

The new high school used many new ideas in educational technology. The second floor of the building utilized open space with the classrooms delineated by moveable partitions. Business, math, science, and home economics classrooms were situated around the perimeter. This open space was bisected by teacher offices.

Other amenities included a career center, a library media center, a combination school and public library, fine arts classroom, theatre/auditorium. The facility was designed with four program areas in mind including: academics, occupations, fine arts, and special services.

A new flexible/modular schedule was adopted with an extended school day. This would allow for students to include work experiences, SEMBECS (Southeast Metropolitan Board of Educational Cooperative Services) classes, and other approved outside activities.

The principal of the new high school was James F. Martin. Mr. Martin returned to Sheridan in 1971, after a seven year absence. Martin was a teacher and coach at Sheridan (Union) High School from 1952 to 1964. He served as principal of the new high school until 1982.

Changes have occurred over the years as technology and research has improved. The second floor has been redefined with permanent rooms that run in two rows down the length of the space, separated by two hallways. A music wing has been added.

Impact of Title IX

Title 9 is a portion of the US Educational Amendments of 1972. In essence “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” These amendments were a follow up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The act of 1964 did not prevent discrimination based on sex. Title 9 is known for its impact on high school and college sports although it did not expressly mention sports. The impact was not generally understood until the department of Health, Education, and Welfare published the final regulations in June, 1975. Educational institutions were given three years to comply.

Sheridan was ahead of the curve establishing its first girl's sport of track in the spring of 1974. The following school year girl's basketball was established with Avonell Mitchell as the head coach. Volleyball followed in the fall of 1975 and gymnastics in 1976. Girls were also included in cross country and swimming sports programs. Girl's soccer was started in the spring of 1979. The last year of gymnastics at Sheridan was in 1992. It was replaced by girl's softball in the fall in 1992. Like most schools in the beginning, Sheridan had no budgeting for these programs. In the early years some uniforms were shared by multiple girls' sports.

There was some early success in girls track and basketball. Pam Toney won individual state track titles in high jump three consecutive years in 1974, 1975, and 1976. The girl's basketball team made it into the state playoffs in just their second year of existence. The head coach was Avonell Mitchell.

Decade of Changes

The eighties was a decade full of changes at Sheridan. In 1982 Jim Martin retired as the Principal. Martin had started at Sheridan in the beginning back in 1952. He left in 1964 but returned as principal in 1971.

Note: There is a web page with Mr. Martin's bio on the Sheridan Historical Society website.

Three new principals were hired during the eighties. First was Marc Stine in 1982. He was at Sheridan until 1986. He left to become a principal at Aurora Central. Ken Reiter was principal from 1986 until 1989. Mr. Reiter was promoted to superintendent in 1989. Ken Bostdorff was hired in 1989. Mr. Bostdorff brought some longevity back to the position and stayed at Sheridan for eleven years.

Declining enrollment became an issue again. This was the backside of the Martin Company boom from the fifties. A lot of children from the late fifties and early sixties were now graduating. Their parents were becoming empty nesters and they were not being replaced with new students. The students were also changing along with the culture in the community. This was the beginning of "Generation X." Other changes included the increase in single parent homes and the influx of latch key kids. Also during the early eighties there was a lot of turnover in teachers. Fifteen teachers on average were being hired each year.

New Classroom Walls in 1986

The biggest physical change came in 1986. Open space seemed the like the best and least expensive concept when the high school was built in 1972. It was a concept that did not really work for Sheridan. The upstairs was remodeled. The teacher's room area, which was a long open space area, south of the open class rooms was removed. That area along with the existing open area was changed with the addition of new walls. Eight new walled class rooms were installed. The concept of student's home room came back with the new class rooms.

One issue that was not adequately addressed was heating, air conditioning, and ventilation for the new class rooms. Floor level heating radiators were installed in the open area when the school opened in 1972. This problem continues to the current time.

Walls of Fame

The Athletic Wall of Fame was created in 1987. It includes photos of those recognized along with a list of their accomplishments. The Athletic Wall of Fame was inspired by Art Wollenweber. He was the Sheridan High School Athletic Director from 1956-1989. This wall was in the commons/cafeteria area just north of the auditorium doors.

It was later followed by The Academic Wall of Fame. This wall gives recognition to students that are selected Valedictorian or Salutatorian of their graduating class or have a grade point of 3.9 or over. Photos begin in 1954, when Sheridan Union High School was formed. This was on the opposite side of the commons area next to the main entrance.

Note: The Sheridan Historical Society maintains a list of those recognized on both Athletic and Academic Walls of Fame separately on their website.

Music Wing Added in 1988

A new music wing was added in 1988. Band and choir rooms were added on the west end of the building behind the stage. Before that time, classes were held on the stage. The configuration required the students to enter through the stage or from the outside. This would not be changed until the new south west wing was added in 2006. Also added was an elevator for the high school. This was in direct response to Sheridan's first wheel chair student, Jeff Lueck.



The music wing can be seen on the extreme left side of this picture.

New Programs

Under the direction of Principal Ken Bostdorff, a “Study Table” was created, where every morning between 7:15 am and 7:50 am students can get help with their school work. Two teachers volunteered at these tables and another was the “Mentor Program” with The Colorado Alliance of Business. Fifty young people and mentors are matched up to learn living skills, receiving training as well as mature support.

Another short lived program that was adopted was block scheduling. “The block schedule consists of a two-day alternating schedule with each day having four 85-minute periods.” Up to this point the high school used a seven period day with each period lasting from fifty minutes. The intent was to give students hands on and group activities. Part of the concept was to provide more one on one between students and teachers. The “access” or study table period was eliminated with this program. Like open space class rooms, the block scheduling program did not survive.

The Nineties and Changing Demographics

The student demographics started to change in the nineties. Back in 1970, minorities only comprised ten percent of the community. That started to change beginning in the nineties. By 2010, Hispanics and other minorities would represent fifty-five percent of the community.

This was another impact from the Martin boom and bust cycle. The parents of the students from the seventies and eighties were retiring and moving out of the community. From 1990 to 2000, there was also about a fifteen percent increase in the population in the district. Again, this was mostly Hispanics and other minorities.

Open Enrollment

In 1994 the state legislature adopted legislation which allowed for open enrollment in schools.

“Commencing with the 1994-95 school year and thereafter, nonresident pupils from other school districts within the state who apply pursuant to the procedures established pursuant to subsection (2) of this section to enroll in particular programs or schools within such school district without requiring the nonresident pupils to pay tuition.”

This allowed students to attend schools of their choice, even if they lived in another district. During the early 2000’s Sheridan felt the impact of the law. There was an influx of students from Denver. This was a spillover response from the end of desegregation in Denver in 1997 and the phenomenon of “Resegregation, Latino Style.” [See bibliography: “Denver Public Schools: Resegregation, Latino Style”]

Many of the new students from Denver were Hispanics and English was not the primary language in their home. Sheridan already had ESL [English as Second Language] teachers in place for years.

This had a secondary adverse impact with students of affluent families in Sheridan enrolling in the adjacent Littleton school district. The problem still persists to this day, as Hispanics represent 87% of student population within the school district.

New Technology

The nineties brought new technology into the district and the high school. This put computers in both the hands of faculty and involved extensive training. Extensive cabling was completed through out the district creating a new network for all schools. This new infrastructure came because of the 1996 bond election.

Impact of Columbine

Almost everyone knows the story of Columbine High School in 1999. It was a wakeup call for the nation. It took almost ten months before the high school completed its first mock lock down in 2000. “Though the staff thought the mock lock down went smoothly, many students didn’t approve.” Student comments included the following. “It was a waste of time.” “It didn’t help any.” Or as the student newspaper article headline said, “Mock lock down is mucked up.” The school district had created a safety task force prior to Columbine but had not really addressed lock down procedures. Issues that came up included teachers locked out of their own class room and another teacher did not have their key to unlock the door. It would not be until the bond election of 2011, before the physical security issues were addressed with the outside doors of the high school.

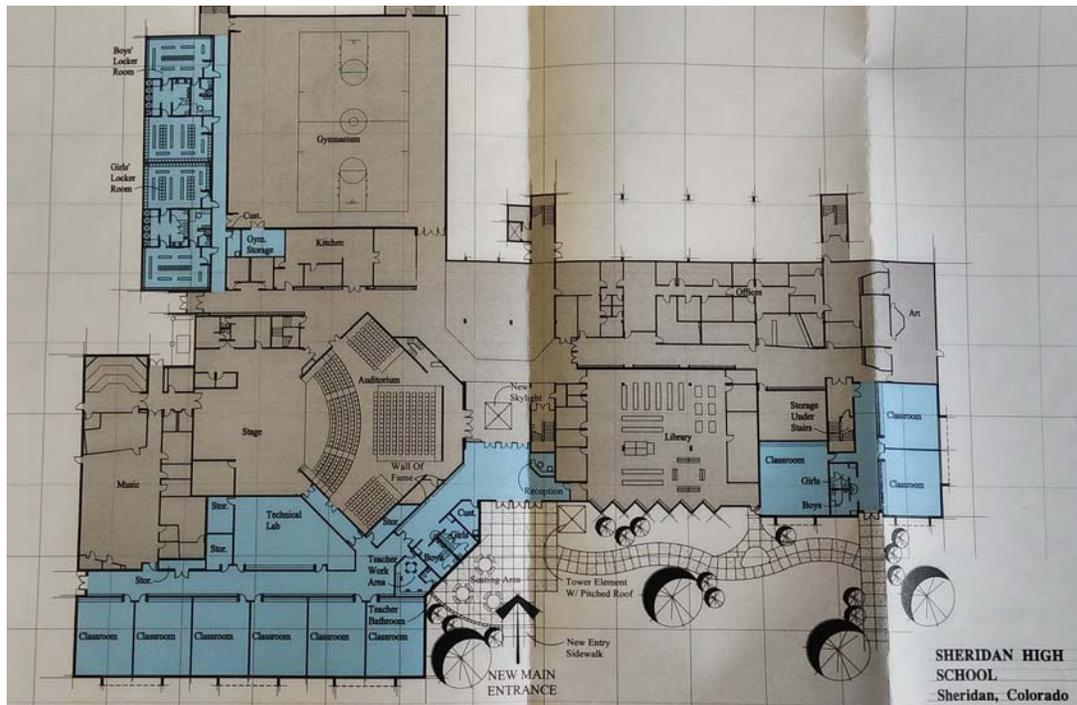
The New Millennium

The auditorium room had been plagued with leaks for several years. Different attempts to fix the roof failed. Finally, in 2001 a “roof on top of the roof” was added at cost of \$194,000.00. It was painted blue and gave the high school a distinctive new look. Not to mentioned it “fixed” the leaking problem. Or so it seemed, as the roof is now leaking again.

Greg Gotchey became the principal in 2003. There is pattern of staff turnover with principal changes which started in the eighties. In 2004, 30 faculty and staff members left the high school. This would happen again in 2008 when thirty-two faculty and staff left. This occurred just before Michele Kelley became principal. It would happen again in 2010 when 23 faculty and staff left. The ability of the Sheridan district to compete with faculty and staff salaries of other surrounding districts has always been a problem. Contributing to this problem are the state financing formulas for schools, the geographical size of the district, and a low operating mill levy especially when compared to other districts.

2006 Bond Election

In 2006 a bond election was approved for improvement of facilities in the district. The high school portion for this bond election would result in the addition of seven classrooms in a new southwest wing of the high school. Three new classrooms were added on the southeast side of the building. It also included upgrades to the physical education locker rooms and second floor science rooms. There were also improvements made in the basement level. The library was modified, and the school offices were relocated to the south side of the building near the main entrance. Also, a new telephone system was installed. The high school portion of the 2006 bond election proceeds was \$4,821,144.



2008 Budget Crisis

A budget crisis is nothing new for the Sheridan school district. Ironically, the last crisis happened in 1999. In 1999 the “district administration developed an action plan that cut back, reduced and reorganized, and the set the district back on the right track.”

Just prior to 2007 there had been a drop in student population in the district. The problem had gone undetected and had been uncovered by interim Superintendent Roscoe Davidson. There was a loss of approximately one hundred students. This translated into a loss of state funding of approximately \$800,000. State funding is heavily dependent on student head counts.

In response, the band programs within the district were eliminated. There were also staff and faculty reductions. Some elective classes in the high school were also eliminated. The loss of the band program was not well received by the community or alumni. The high school band had won several state championships during the prior twenty years.

The district band programs were reinstated in 2010. But, the damage had already been done as the high school band uniforms had been sold off. The program had to be rebuilt from scratch. When the band was reinstated, there were no new band students coming into the high school. After eight years, the high school still has not been able to put a marching band back on the field.

Another unrelated impact in 2009, was the closing of the swimming pool. The pool was operated by the South Suburban Park and Recreation District by agreement with the school district. The park district received all income from the pool rentals and patron user fees. The school district was responsible for the maintenance of the facility. The Park District wanted another \$50,000 for the operation of the pool. The school district declined, and the park district withdrew its operational support and the pool was closed. The pool has never been reopened.

Life Safety Improvements and Remodeling Projects

In 2011 a matching grant was obtained from the state for safety improvements and remodeling projects. This \$1,085,985 project resulted in the remodeling of the library, bathroom improvements, nurse station area, and new double doors at the front entrance with new security features. It was at this time that all outside doors were equipped with electronic automatic lock devices. The inside doors still have not been addressed.

Another grant was obtained in 2014. This resulted in the “public library” moving out the high school and into their own building, just west of Irving on Oxford. The grant was for \$1,200,000. The former library was turned into a technology and computer lab area.



The Dreaded “Accountability Clock”

In 2009, Colorado’s legislature passed the “Education Accountability Act” that created a system to hold the state, school districts and schools accountable for student academic performance on specific indicators and measures, including performance and growth on state tests and graduation rates.

Every year, schools and districts receive performance ratings. Those that don’t meet expectations are assigned a rating on the state’s “Accountability Clock.” Schools and districts can only receive these low ratings for five years in a row. After that, they are subject to any of the following “draconian” actions. 1. Grant innovation status to provide flexibility from certain state and local rules. 2. Require a district or charter school to replace its operator or governing board. 3. Require a district or school to work with an external management partner. 4. Convert a district run school into a charter school. 5. Close a school. 6. Initiate the district reorganization process.

In 2016, after several years, Sheridan High School finally moved from “Improvement Plan” to “Performance” and off the accountability clock.

This Lock Down is For Real

Sheridan High School had experienced two previous lock downs in March, 2013 and May of 2015. The lock down on November 18, 2015 was all too real as gunmen were in the area. The incident started out as a robbery in Lakewood with the suspects wearing “Scream” masks. The suspects were then involved in a carjacking in which the driver was shot.

The carjacked vehicle was subsequently abandoned near the bus garage adjacent to the high school. Another person was shot in the area of the recreation center. One suspect had actually been in the bus garage, as they had abandoned some clothing there. Police from several agencies were searching the area with some in SWAT gear.

All the district schools went into lock down along with Mullen High School. Parents were notified of the lockdowns from automated school district phone calls. Alice Terry and Early Childhood students were released to their parents at their schools. Students from Northgate and the high school were bused to St. James Church at 3601 W. Belleview Avenue to be reunited with their parents.

Several police SWAT teams and K-9 units searched the Sheridan area for several hours. At one point, over 100 police officers were in the area. Residents were advised to lock their homes and stay inside. As the suspects, were still at large, all Sheridan schools were closed the following day.

In this instance, all of the school district security improvements from 2011 had paid off. All district schools were able to instantly and automatically lock down all of their outside doors.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters Mentoring Program

In 2015, the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Colorado created the Mentor 2.0 program. This matches students from Sheridan High School with college educated mentors and provides them with the support and guidance they need to graduate high school and succeed in college and the workforce. Mentor and students get to know each other through an innovative combination of weekly emails and monthly group events at the high school. The program has been so successful it has expanded into Englewood and Colorado Springs.



This picture of students meeting with their mentors was taken on August 23, 2017.

SOAR Moves Out

SOAR (Student Outreach and Academic Recovery) was launched in 2009 as an alternative high school program. It started with just nine students and was located in the basement of the high school, below the gymnasium.

On January 5, 2016 SOAR moved out of the high school, dubbed "Operation Daylight." It was relocated to the east wing of the old middle school at 4107 S. Federal Boulevard. Grant funds of \$400,000 were used to repurpose the east wing for SOAR.

The move gave the SOAR students their own school identity and sense of belonging. With the move, SOAR Academy got their own mascot, the Eagles. However, eligible SOAR students still participate in the sports programs at Sheridan High School.

A New High School?

The school district staff has submitted the application for BEST (Building Excellent Schools Today) grant fund to build a new high school. The school would be located southeast of the current building and would be ready for use in January of 2021 under the proposal. The plans first must be approved by the state's Capital Construction Assistance Board. A decision is scheduled for May, 2018. The proposal would then go the Colorado Board of Education in June. If the proposal achieves green lights at the first two stages, the project would then be submitted to Sheridan voters for consideration of a bond proposal in November, 2018. Sheridan's share of the project would be 36 percent (\$21.2 million) of the \$59.1 million cost. This same grant process was used to build Fort Logan Northgate School.

The grant proposal provides detail on the current high school's deficiencies, including safety and security, plumbing, mechanical systems, site drainage, food service, technology, communications, traffic and pedestrian flow, accessibility for students with disabilities, and other issues as well. If the project wins approval from the state and also from local voters, the new building would be constructed at the same time as the current high school continues operations. The plan would also affect the bus garage, the warehouse and the building that houses the district's unused swimming pool.

The following was reported by Mark Stevens.

Sheridan School District's application for grant money to build a new high school with the help of the state's Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program has been turned down. Cyndi Wright, Director of Facilities and Transportation for Sheridan School District 2, told the board of education and its last meeting [on May 22, 2018], the district's application was lauded for its clarity and readability. She added that she expected to receive a detailed explanation for the rejection.

The total estimated high school construction project for Sheridan's proposal was \$59.1 million. The district was requesting a state grant of \$37.8 million. If the state board had approved, Sheridan voters would have been asked to approve the local match of \$21.2 million.

The district could potentially proceed with requesting voter support for the concept this coming November, to demonstrate the community's commitment to shoulder its share of the cost, but Superintendent Michael Clough said after the meeting he did not think such a bond campaign would be advisable.

As expected, the grant applications were very competitive in 2018. The needs through out the state are very significant. Seven of the eleven major grants were awarded to rural school districts. The largest grant was to Hayden for a Junior/Senior High School replacement in the grant amount of \$38,879,497.00 for a total project of \$61,175,897. The second highest grant was to Buena Vista for a high school and middle school renovation and replacement in the grant amount of \$21,362,125 for a total project of \$50,862,204.

There are two apparent issues with the Sheridan application. The Sheridan application was not seen as one with a greater need. The Sheridan application was for a high school only. The two biggest grant awards were for junior and senior high school combinations. With this source of state funding now exhausted, it is not known when or if the district will be able to reapply.

Declining Enrollment - Again

It was reported to the school board at their meeting on March 28, 2018 that enrollment in the district had declined by 100 students. A survey had been done with those families where students had left the district. Some of the reasons included “access to better athletic programs, better programs for gifted and talented students, and perhaps more college and university scholarship options.”

Note: For 2018, there were 67 graduates. A total of \$1.8 million in scholarships were received by this class. In 2017, there were 77 graduating students. That class received \$1.1 million in scholarships.

This could be a repeat of the same budget problem that occurred in 2008. There is one significant difference this time. The district has the benefit of using a multiple year rolling average of head counts for consideration in state funding. Cuts will still be required but can be moderated over time. There is also time for the district to do additional recruiting to stem the decrease in enrollment. For now, it is not known what the impact will be on the high school.

Notes: The athletic, music, and Century 21 programs at Sheridan High School were not included in this history. The Historical Society intends to publish separate histories for the athletic, music, and Century 21 programs.

The Sheridan Historical Society maintains separate lists and web pages from 1952 to the current time of the following:

- Academic Wall of Fame
- Athletic Wall of Fame
- Faculty and Staff
- Home Coming Royalty
- Principals

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