

Smith-Cotton High School

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Sedalia High School

Before the Smith-Cotton High School, the public high school for the school district was the Sedalia High School. It was built in 1895 for \$40,000 and stood on the corner of 6th Street and Massachusetts Avenue.



Sedalia High School

The old high school had several serious problems, from its lack of cafeteria to its susceptibility to fire. The building nearly burned down multiple times, and the school district began to consider establishing a new high school.

March 25, 1898

A HIGH SCHOOL BLAZE.

Serious Damage Narrowly Averted There Yesterday Afternoon.

There came near being a very destructive fire Thursday afternoon at the High school building on East Sixth street and had it not been discovered when it was the handsome building, which is one of the prides of Sedalia, would have been ruined.

Shortly after 4 o'clock, Miss Bertha Damon as she was leaving the school heard the crashing of a glass and discovered that flames were issuing from the physics room on the third floor. The alarm was at once turned in and the department responded quickly but not till the High school fire brigade under the direction of Lieut. Tom Stillwell has extinguished the fire with the High school apparatus.

The fire originated from a large five-inch lens which was used in the physics department. It was a large glass and was supported on a stand and was sitting in the window. The heat of the bright afternoon sun was focused in the proper manner on the window curtain which caught fire and communicated to the woodwork. The loss will only be a few dollars.

There was considerable comment on the possibility of a fire in the building when there were the usual classes in the building and it is urged that there

building, as a precaution against a terrible holocaust.

Janitor Anderson informed The Capital last night that there might have been another fire at the same place if it had not occurred to him to go up and make another investigation after all the fire was supposed to be extinguished. Mr. Anderson got to thinking that possibly there might still be some fire not put out and his surmise proved to be correct. The cords on the window weights had been burned off and dropped down inside the frame. He pried open the casement and found that the cords which were burned off were still burning and had he not made the investigation there would undoubtedly have been another fire and it might not have been discovered until it would have been too late to have saved the building.



June 6, 1899

Gave Their Mite to Charity.

Mrs. E. A. Coe, of the Associated Board of Charities, Monday received from the class of '99 of the Sedalia High school \$1.10, the balance in their treasury, which sum will be added to the charity fund.

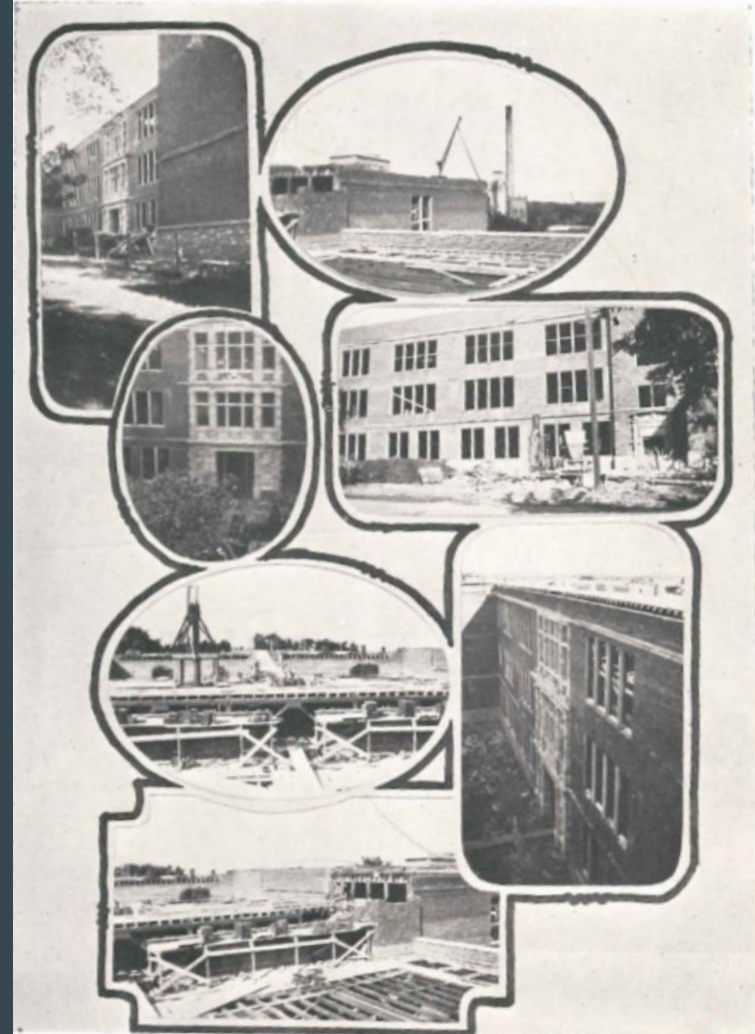
Donation



In the early 1920's, Sarah Cotton donated a large portion of her land to the construction of the new Smith-Cotton High School. It was built directly in front of her mansion, which is now the park area outside of the Junior High. The donation was part of a deal with the city of Sedalia, in which she provided the land and the city provided the funds for the construction.

Construction

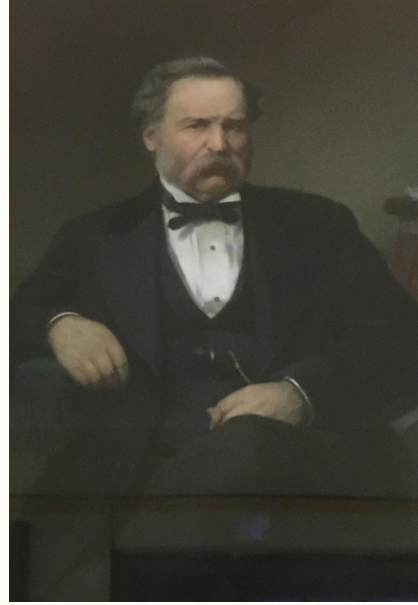
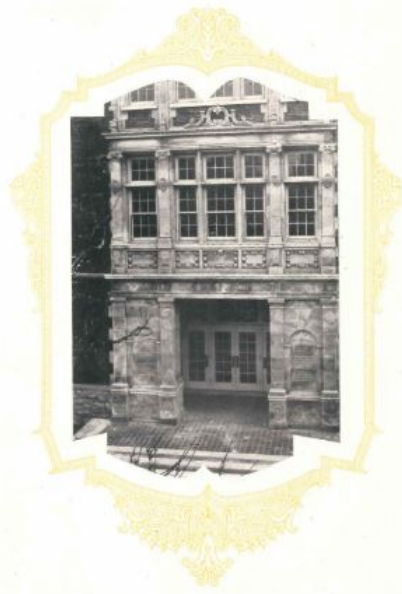
The city raised around \$400,000 for the construction of the school building (almost \$6 million today). They hired T. W. Bast, a popular architect in Sedalia at the time, to design and build the school.



The Smith-Cotton High School Building under construction.

Smith-Cotton High School

The new high school was very modern for its time, and its construction was a big deal in the school district. As such, they wanted to honor Sarah Cotton's donation of land by naming the school after her. However, she wanted to honor her father, George R. Smith, so the district settled on the name Smith-Cotton. The building was completed in 1924.



How New High School Will Appear When Completed



Martha Lett's Junior High

After the new high school building was completed, the old high school became the junior high. It was named the Martha Lett's Junior High, after the principal that was serving at the time. She continued to serve in the old high school building for several years before retiring, while the new high school hired Heber U. Hunt as principal.



The Old High School

Good bye, dear old high school,
You afford us many joys,
But your sides are fairly bursting
With so many girls and boys.

You have been a faithful servant,
And we wish to tell you so,
But you don't meet our requirements;
You're not modern, don't you know.

So we're moving to a new place,
Where we may all expand.
Where class rooms are as countless
As the mighty desert sands.

Many happy memories
We'll associate with you,
But dear, old crowded high school
We are glad that we are through.

CHAS. D. CASELEY, '27

Central Business College



The Martha Lett's Junior High was only in operation for a few short years before its transition to a college in 1934. It remained the Central Business College until 1968, and remained mostly unused until it burned down in 1974.

Smith-Cotton Junior-Senior High

In the absence of a junior high building, the high school was required to house grades 6-12. During this time period, it was known as the Junior-Senior High. It was largely split in half, with separate classrooms for junior high and high school students, and even a different library.



The Cafeteria

In 1951, the school district received funding for the construction of a cafeteria, just outside the main building of the school.



1960 Expansion

With the high school housing all of grades 6-12, it was in desperate need for more classroom space. The city of Sedalia voted to provide funding for an expansion to the school in 1960. 6 classrooms were added to the main building of the school at this time, located on the second and third floors. Another addition they made was the Little Theater, which is connected to the main school building.



Physical Education and Arts Building

With the same funds used to expand the main building, the school built a large gymnasium and several art classrooms in a separate building. Up until this point, PE classes were held outside in a large grass field, and any indoor sports were held on the auditorium stage.



Sedalia Middle School



Even with the classrooms that the district added to the high school, it was still not large enough to hold all of grades 6-12. The school district recognized this, so in 1972 they built the Sedalia Middle School. It was designed to hold grades 6-8 and allowed the high school return to its original 9-12.

FEMA Building



The high school remained the same for a long time after the construction of the Sedalia Middle School, but the school was quickly becoming outdated. One of the major flaws was the small cafeteria, which had to feed the over a thousand students that attended the school. In 2009 the district addressed this problem by building the FEMA building.

FEMA Building

While the FEMA building contains the cafeteria, a gym, and several classrooms, these are not its only purposes. It was funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for over \$3 million and serves as a storm shelter for nearly 4,000 people from the surrounding area.



New Smith-Cotton High School

The cafeteria was not the only part of the building that was outdated, however. Much of the building was designed before technology like the internet existed, and it would need a lot of renovation to support a modern class of students. Instead of these costly expansions, the school district elected to build a new high school in 2009.



Smith-Cotton Junior High

When the new high school was completed in 2009, the old building became the Smith-Cotton Junior High. It held grades 7-9 for a short period of time, until the freshman wing at the high school was completed. Then it changed to grades 6-8, which it still teaches today.



The Tunnels

When the school was first built, they decided to leave access to the foundations and plumbing of the building through maintenance tunnels. They were also used for many years as storage, but have since been cleaned out. Today, they house the boilers, pipes, and wiring for the school.



The Auditorium

The auditorium in the high school was one of the nicest parts of the building, and hosted many of the community's gatherings. Musical performances were done there regularly, indoor sports such as wrestling and basketball were held on the stage, and the theater department put on several performances each year.



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