

HISTORY OF

CANNON FALLS SCHOOLS

ESTABLISHED 1856



The story begins in 1855 when E.L. Clark, a native from Maine, arrived in Cannon Falls. He was a carpenter by trade and was hired to finish the inside of the Falls House, which was located where the Cannon Falls Laundromat is located currently on Main Street.

In 1856, Clark erected the first public school building, which was called The Basswood Seminary since it was erected of basswood. The school was located at 721 west main street, just south of highway 19 and west of the little Cannon River. In 1856 Clark became the first teacher to open a public school in the village of Cannon Falls. The building was 16'x24'. Mr. Clark taught 31 students.

Cannon Falls grew in population within the year and there was a need for a larger school. In 1857 a group of bachelors constructed a two story 28'x38' school on Hoffman street which was located just west of Rod's Liquor's.

It was necessary to double the size of the school by 1875 as well as to build an additional one room school on the north side of the river. It was located just east of Progressive Rail on the east side of 7th street. (The blue house by the railroad tracks).

In 1877 there were 181 students enrolled in Cannon Falls which prompted another addition to the Hoffman Street school house in 1880.

1880 also saw the first commencement celebrated with two graduate's, Minnie Clifford and Mamie Allyn.

By 1893 enrollment was so large (305 students) that the district purchased land for \$750.00 and sold \$15,000 worth of bonds to finance a new school. Local limestone was used which defrayed cost. After the building was built the school house on Hoffman street and the school house on the North side of town closed. The Hoffman Street schoolhouse became a cheese factory.

In 1912 the school district added on to the 1883 building with an addition of the same size. This building cost \$12,000 to build. The first gym for the district was located on second floor of this building, which later became the library.

1931 brought another addition to this complex which added the north half of the current gym at the Community Center plus a stage for \$43,000.

Continually growing, the school district added on again in 1949. This addition added the south half of the gym at the Community Center plus three classrooms and a kitchen.

By 1954 the school district had 787 students and 32 teachers and ran nine bus routes with the consolidation of 17 smaller districts and formed Cannon Falls School District #252. It also brought another addition costing \$300,000 which added six more classrooms and a cafeteria and kitchen.

Two years later in 1956 another addition was added giving the complex five more classrooms, district offices and locker rooms.

The high school got its own building in 1962 when the district bought thirty-three acres of land on the east edge of town and built a 55,000 square foot structure for \$800,000.

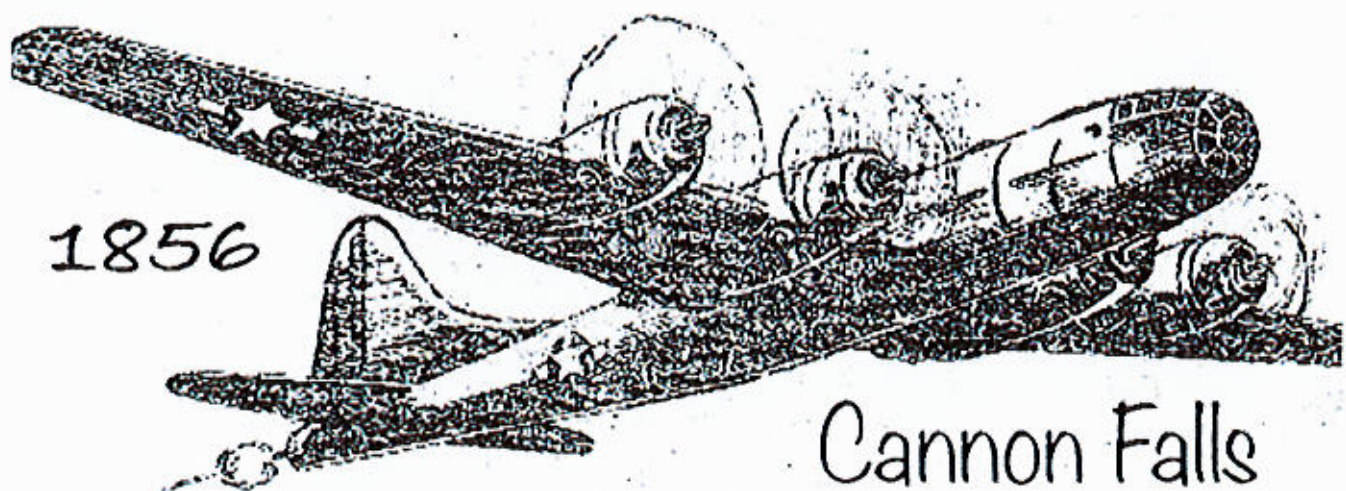
The Wastedo and Vasa school districts joined Cannon Falls in 1970 & 71. The Vasa building was used for sixth grade for several years and was later sold in 1987. Students in various grades went to Wastedo until 1989.

In 1973 thirty-seven more acres were bought adjacent to the high school and two new wings were added for \$1,647,380. The enrollment then was 845 junior/senior high students, 811 elementary students and 90 teachers. The west wing included art rooms, music rooms, industrial art areas a new gymnasium increased the locker rooms and added a wrestling room and receiving area. The east wing included a new media center, district offices, board room, science rooms and several classrooms.

On September 5th, 1989 a new Elementary School was opened its doors to about 965 preschool thru sixth grade students for a cost of \$7,300,000.

In the 90-91 school year there were 826 elementary students, 625 jr/sr high students and 138 preschool students. The staff included 89 full time certified instructors, 130 classified and 5 administrative positions.

In 2008 a referendum for \$21,000,000 was past for the remodeling of the Elementary school and the Jr/Sr High school plus the addition of a field house, auditorium, weight room, locker rooms, music department, larger wrestling room, atrium, construction shop area and classroom, new kitchen and cafeteria and air conditioning were added to the high school plus a new track, bleachers, two softball fields, a baseball field and concession stand plus a new parking lot.



CF school one of earliest employers

by Kathy Ericson

One of the earliest employers in Cannon Falls was the school. Settlers in the area started schools as soon as there were enough children to teach. These were often private classes conducted at home for an individual's own children and neighbors.

E. L. Clark constructed the first school building in January, 1856, according to Joan Risty's history in the "Chronicles of Cannon Falls." Located on the south side of the present Highway 19, on the west side of the Little Cannon River, the 16'x24' structure also served as a meeting place for lyceums, spelling bees, and church services. Clark taught 31 students in the building called the "Basswood Seminary," named after the basswood boards that formed its walls.

The next year, a 28'x38' two-story school was built on Hoffman Street. In 1864, when the first county superintendent of schools was appointed, Cannon Falls had a faculty of two teachers. The school building was doubled in 1875, and a one-room school was built on the city's north side.

During this time, many of the areas that now make up the CF public school district had their own small rural districts, operated by the townships. In 1864, there were 87 organized school districts in Goodhue County, most of them one-room rural schools.

Wilbur H. Scofield was an early teacher in one of these small districts in Stanton Township. He kept a diary from 1861, detailing the numerous duties of a teacher in that era.

He was paid \$14 a month that year, and started with seven students, whose number grew to 17 the following year.

It seemed that the teacher was responsible for getting a school built and setting a schedule for classes. Scofield wrote on December 4:

"I have been around today among our neighbors, with the oxen and sled to get wheat to buy lumber for a floor to our school house. . . I intend to have school commence Monday, if possible. I shall work

every day till the house is ready."

Teachers often got room and board from the students' parents, moving from family to family. Scofield commented on this arrangement, "Boarding around is not very pleasant, especially in this district, where the people have to 'stuck' their children upstairs and where I will have to walk a mile and a half. I would rather pay my board."

In 1877, there were 161 students enrolled at the school in Cannon Falls, prompting an addition to be built on the building's east side in 1880. The first commencement was also celebrated that year with two graduates, Minnie Clifford and Mamie Allyn.

By 1893, the school was bursting at its seams with 305 students coming to school on a split schedule, half in the morning and half in the afternoon.

This is when the decision was made to build the oldest part of what we now call the old elementary school. The district sold bonds for \$15,000 and bought the land for \$750. The north side school was closed and all Cannon Falls students used the new building.

In 1911, a high school addition was built to the east of the first building. When a gymnasium was completed in 1931 at a cost of \$43,000, "new life began at the school," according to Jeannette Burch, a 1937 graduate.

"There was a stage for plays — before that we could see the plays in the assembly room of the high school, sitting two in a seat," recalled Burch. The new gym also provided space for sports. "We did exercises played girls' basketball with a divided court, and something with a huge heavy brown ball. Maybe it was soccer."

Burch's graduating class included seven boys and 26 girls. The size of classes grew substantially in 1952, when 17 nearby school districts consolidated to form District #252. By 1954, the district had 767 students, 32 teachers, and ran nine bus routes.

In that year, a \$300,000 addition added six classrooms, a dining room, kitchen, and teachers' lounge and enlarged

the gym. Three years later, five more classrooms were added, plus offices for the superintendent, high school principal and school nurse, and locker rooms, at a cost of \$225,000.

The high school got its own building in 1962, when the district bought 33 acres of land on the east edge of town and built a 55,000 sq. ft. structure for \$800,000.

The Wastedo and Vasa districts joined Cannon Falls in 1970 and 1971. The Vasa school was used for sixth grade for several years, and was sold to the Vasa Lutheran Church in 1987. Students in various grades were also bused to the Wastedo school until 1989. That building is still owned by the district. The Goodhue County Education District will use it next year as a day treatment center for emotionally and behaviorally disabled students.

In 1973, 37 more acres of land were bought adjacent to the high school and two new wings were built, at a cost of \$1,647,380. The enrollment then was 845 in the junior-senior high school, 811 in elementary, with 90 teachers.

As early as 1970, Superintendent Gerald Brynildson said the old elementary building was neither conducive to education nor safe. The state director of school planning in 1971 called the two oldest parts of the building "totally inadequate" due to poor ventilation and lighting, narrow stairs, outdated wiring, and lack of handicapped accessibility.

Referendums to remodel or build a new elementary school were turned down in 1981 and 1983. After a strong community campaign, a \$7.3 million bond issue was passed in September, 1987, by a vote of 1,325 to 1,290.

On September 5, 1989, the spacious new state-of-the-art building opened its doors to about 965 students in preschool through sixth grade.

In the 1990-91 school year, there were 826 students enrolled in the elementary school, 625 in high school and 138 in preschool. The staff for the coming year will include 69 full-time certified instructor positions, 130 on the classified staff, and five administrators.

History Lesson - Cannon Falls Schools

- by Joan Risty -updated by Cindy Risty

Early schools were held in barns, an extra room of a dwelling, the lean-to summer kitchen of a log house, or abandoned log cabins.

The first school constructed in Cannon Falls was built by E.L. Clark, January, 1856.

It was on the west side of the Little Cannon, on the south side of the present Highway 19.

Due to cold weather, a stove was placed on the ground and the building was built around it.

It was a 16' by 24' structure made with basswood boards placed upright and battened.

The school opened on the second Monday in January, having taken a week to be constructed.

There were 31 pupils. Mr. Clark was the teacher.

It was given a nickname, "Basswood Seminary."

The building served as a school and the first meeting place in Cannon Falls.

It was used for church services, lyceums, spelling bees and community events.

In 1857, a group of bachelors put together their skills to construct a school on Hoffman Street.

It was a two-story building, 28 by 38 feet, located near the present Public Safety Building.

By 1875 it was necessary to double the size of this building.

A one-room school was built on the North Side and expanded two years later to two rooms.



This was the second school building in Cannon Falls, built in 1856-1857. It was located at 305 West Hoffman St. near where Rod's liquor store now stands. The building was enlarged in 1875 and 1880. Note the numerous white aprons on the girls and knickerbockers on the boys. A new school was built in 1893 and this building became a cheese factory.



PROGRAMME

—TOP—

GRADUATING EXERCISES

—OF THE—

Cannon Falls Schools,

At Van Campen's Hall,

Friday Evening, May 28th, 1880.

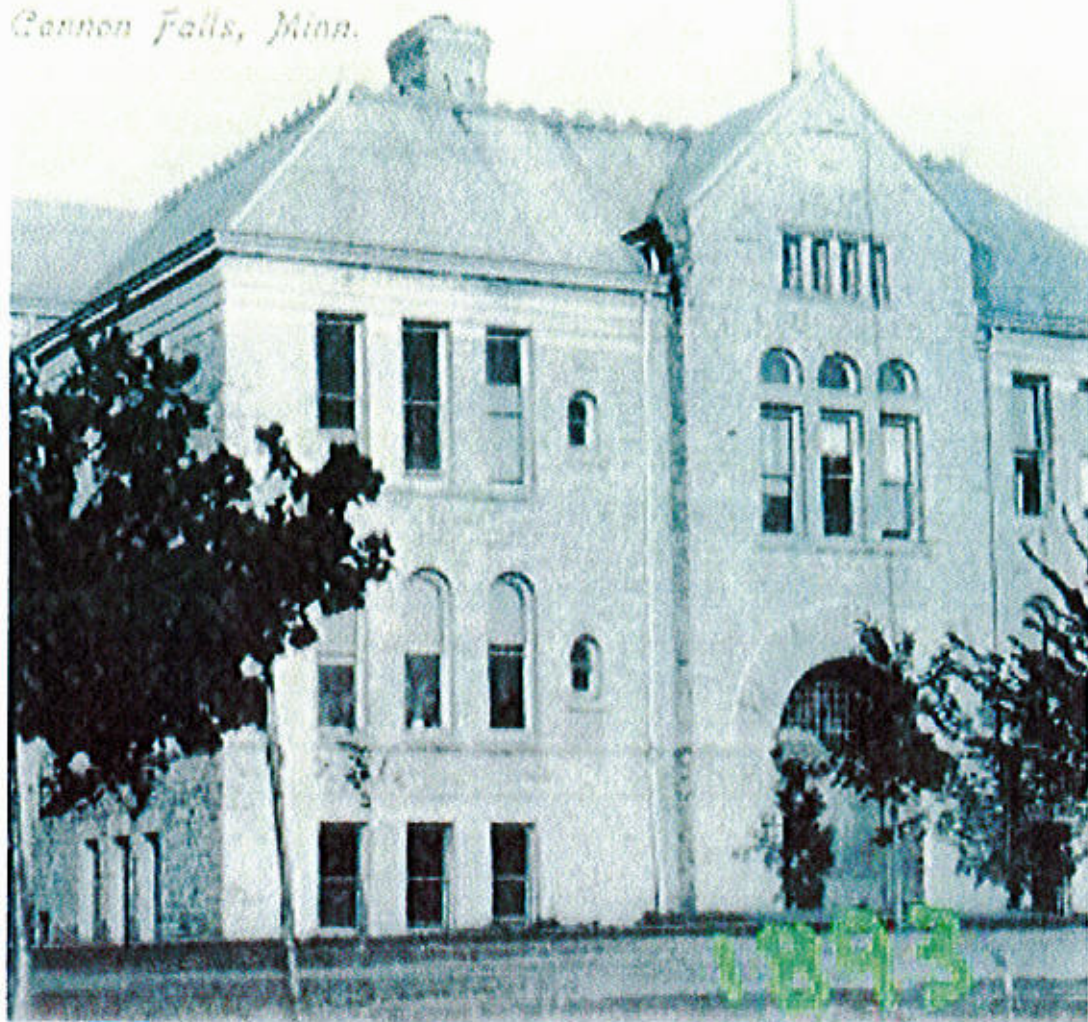
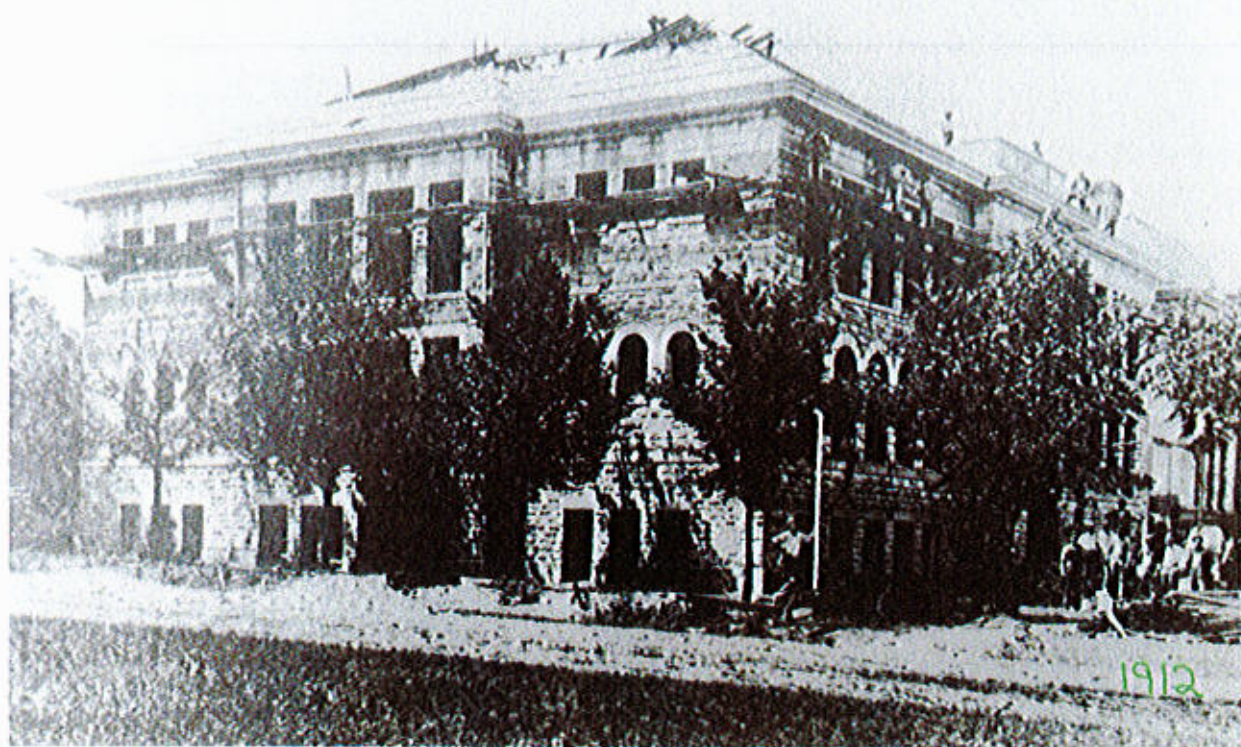
COMMENCING AT 8:00 O'CLOCK.

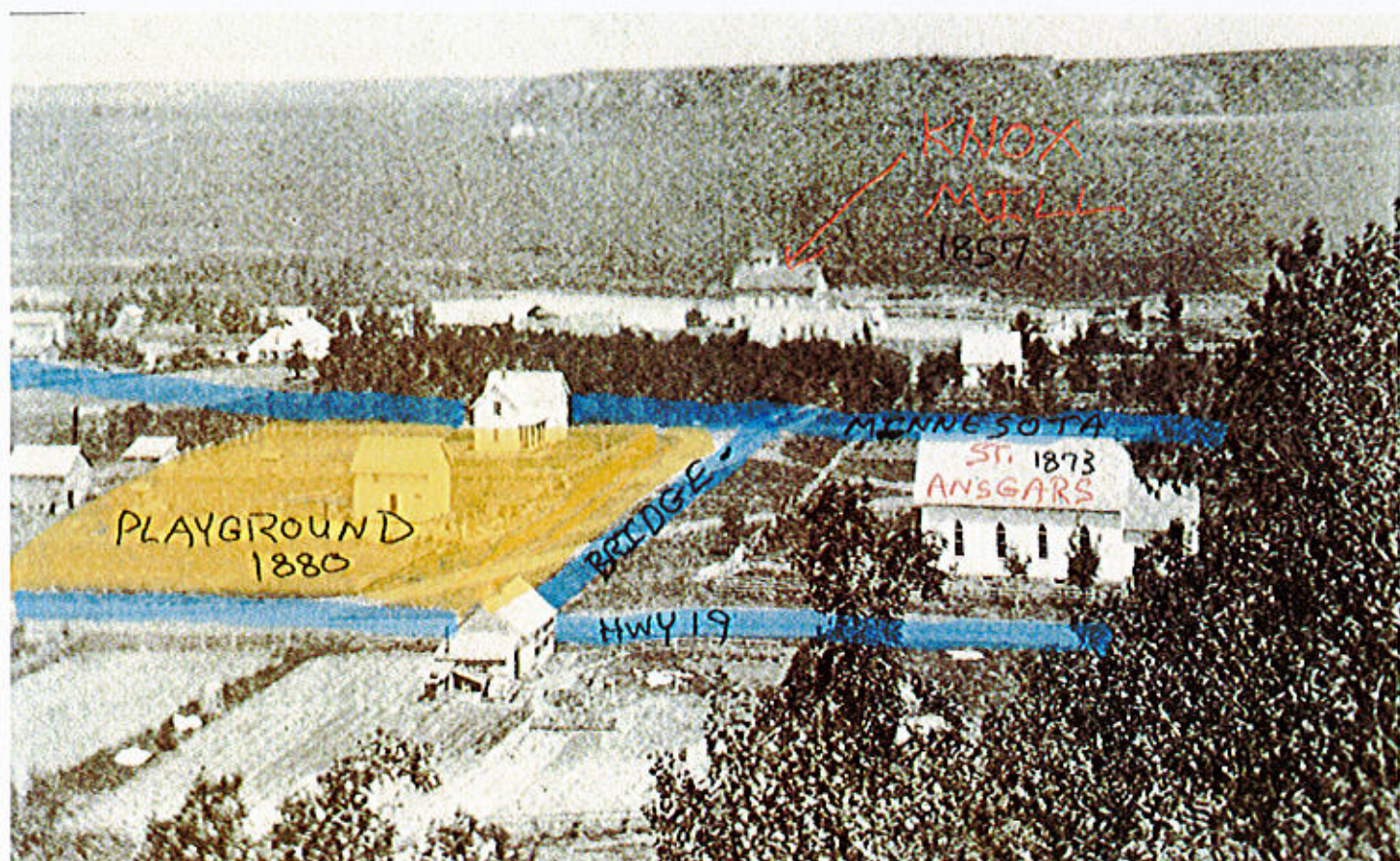
1. MUSIC	Bacon's Orchestra
2. PRAYER	
3. INVOCATORY	MAMIE E. ALLYN.
4. DECLARATION	JOHN GRAVER. Room For You
5. RECITATION	LOLU BACON. Prayer and Answer
6. MUSIC	CHORUS. Light and Gay
7. DECLARATION	JAMES SMITH. Eclogy on Hamilton
8. RECITATION	CECILIA BACON. That Dropped Dutch
9. ESSAY	MARY TANNER. John of Arc
10. MUSIC	HATTIE MARRIS. Gratitude
11. RECITATION	HATTIE MARRIS. The New Church Organ
12. RECITATION	HATTIE MARRIS. Love Incarnate
13. RECITATION	Minnie Bacon. Business
14. RECITATION	HATTIE MARRIS. How to Catch a Peas
15. MUSIC	CHORUS. Sweet Chimes—Solo
16. DECLARATION	GEORGE VALENTINE. Anthony's Speech
17. DECLARATION	GEORGE VALENTINE. Pledgeless
18. MUSIC	CHORUS. Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep
19. ESSAY	MAMIE E. ALLYN. Social Position of Woman
20. ESSAY	MAMIE E. ALLYN. The Pioneer—With Voluntary Exercises
21. MUSIC	CHORUS. Christus
22. COFFEE	CHORUS. Christus
23. BENEDICTION	MAMIE E. ALLYN.
	MINNIE E. CLIFFORD.

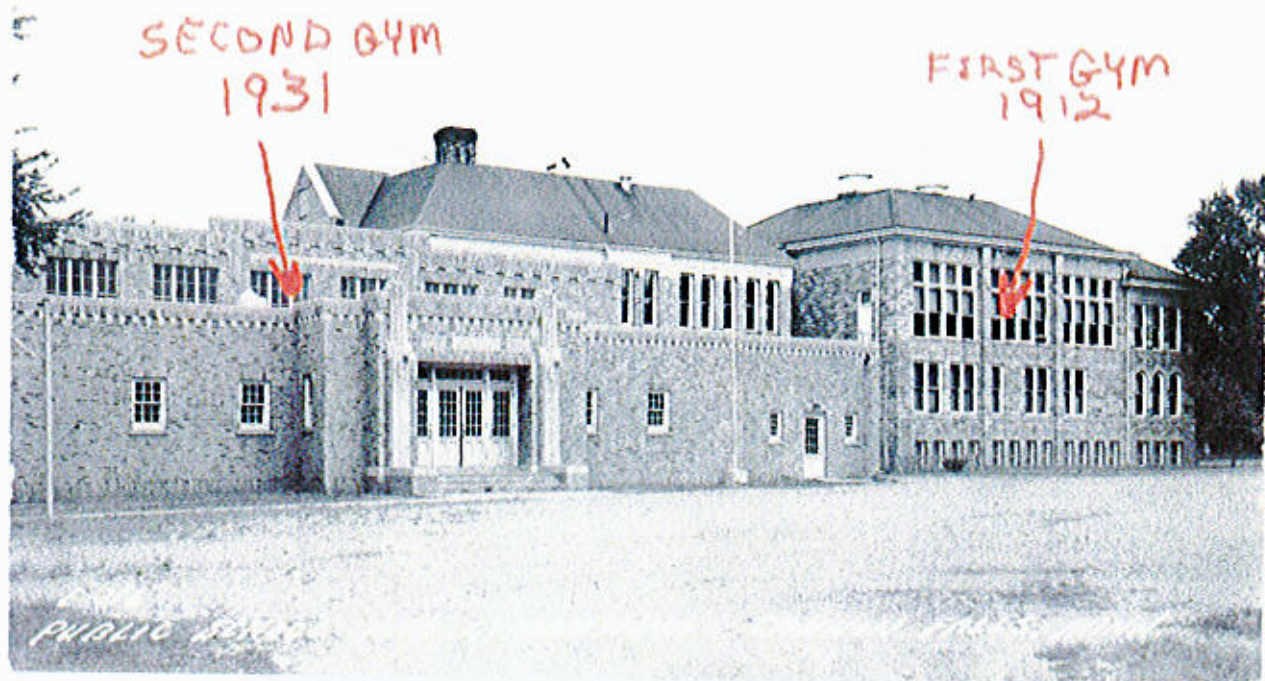
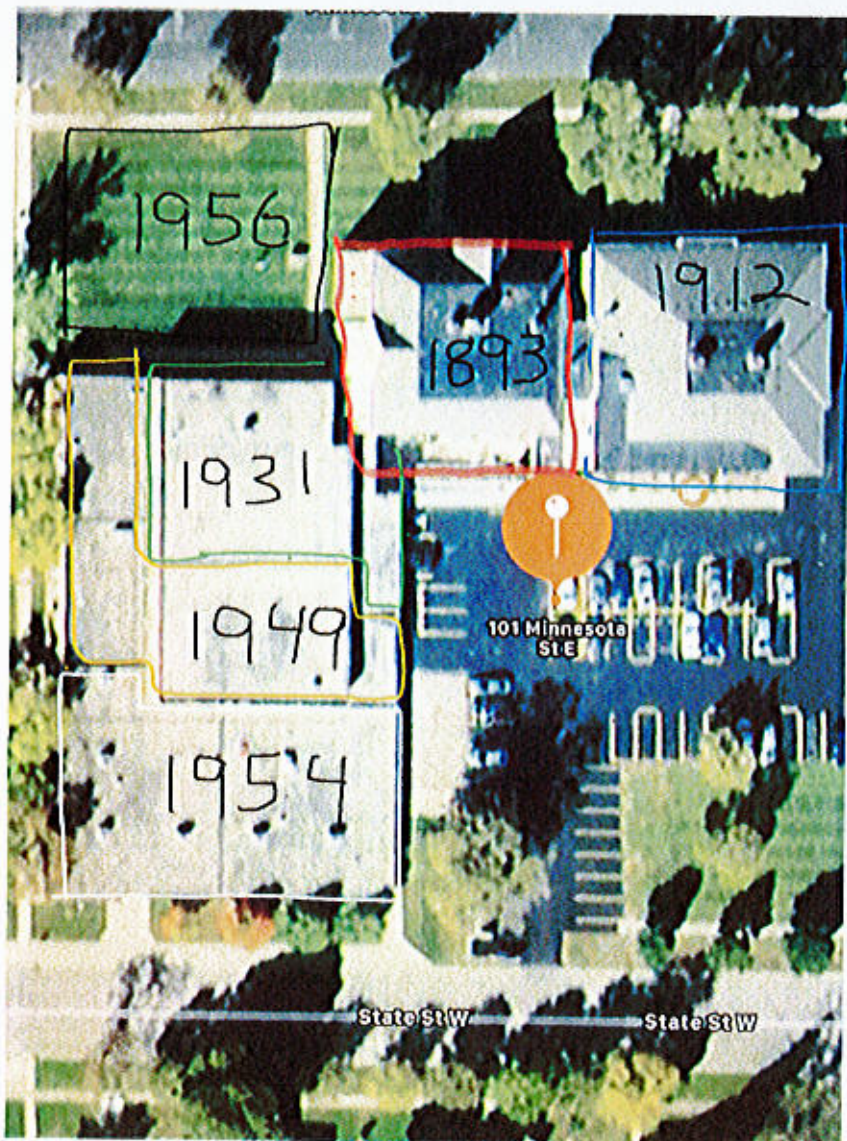
GRADUATES

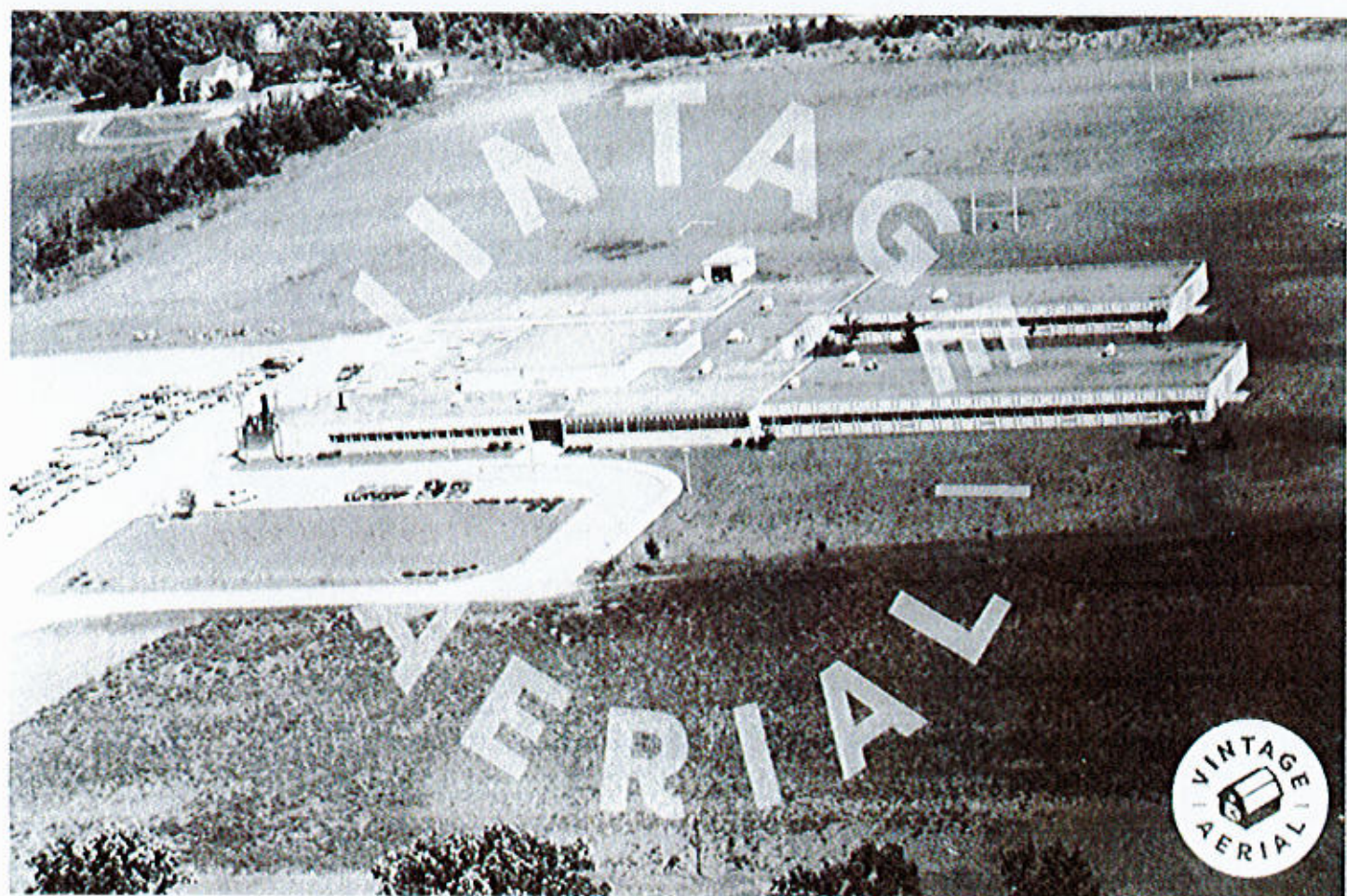
MAMIE E. ALLYN.
MINNIE E. CLIFFORD.

Cannon Falls, Minn.

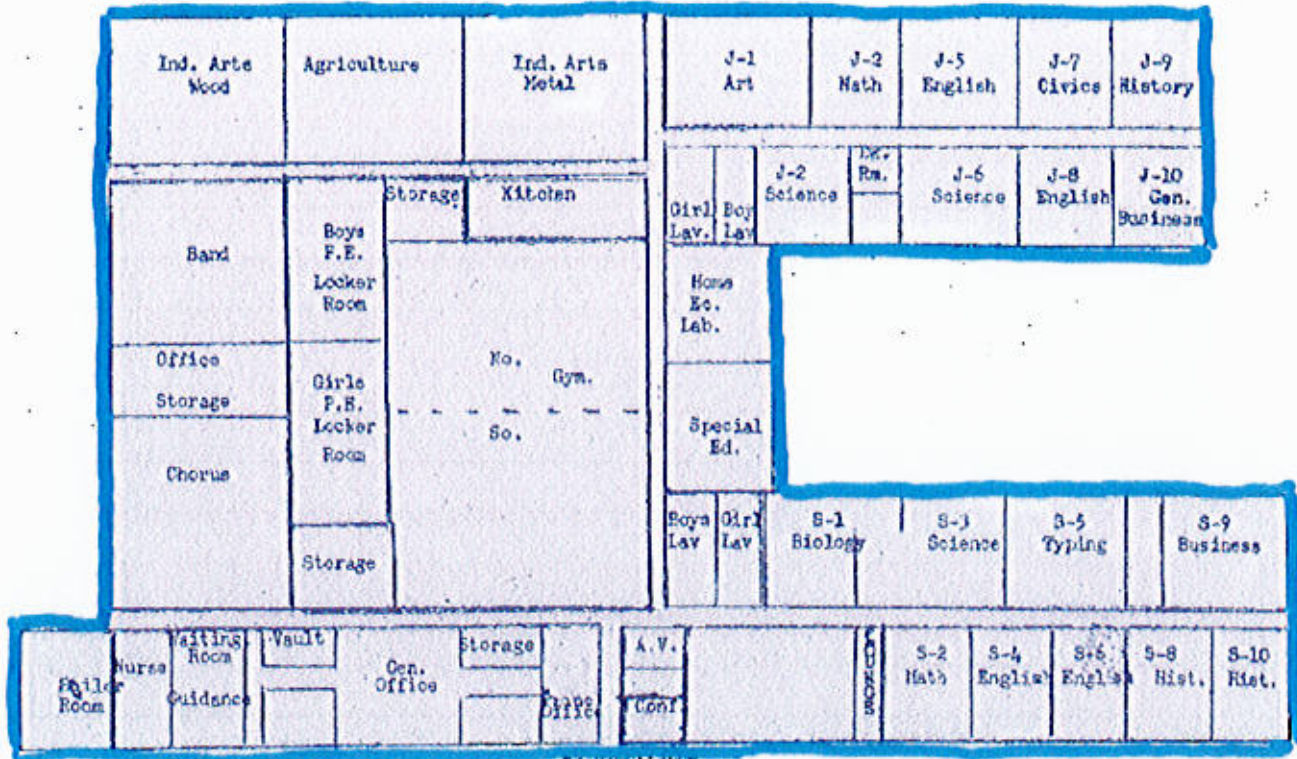








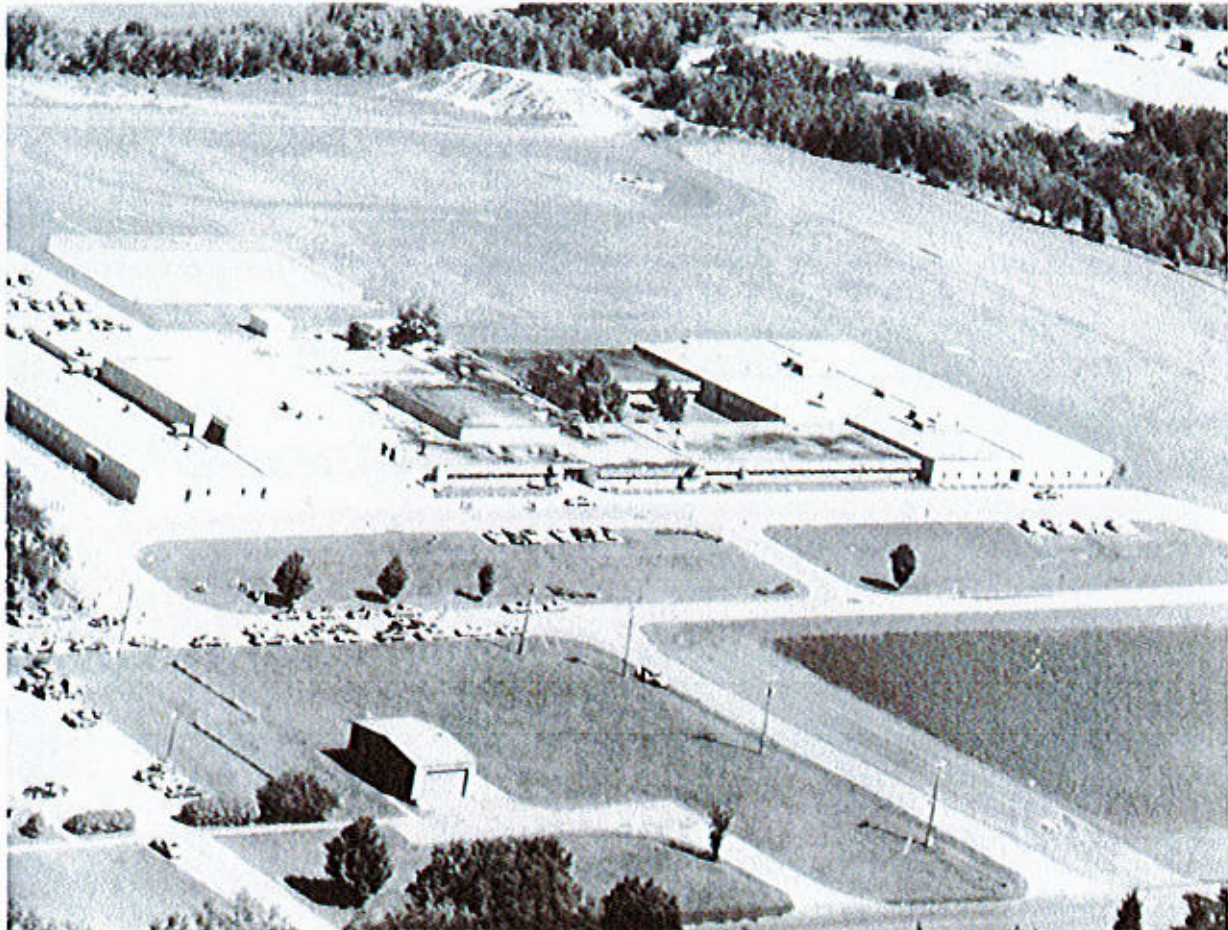
North

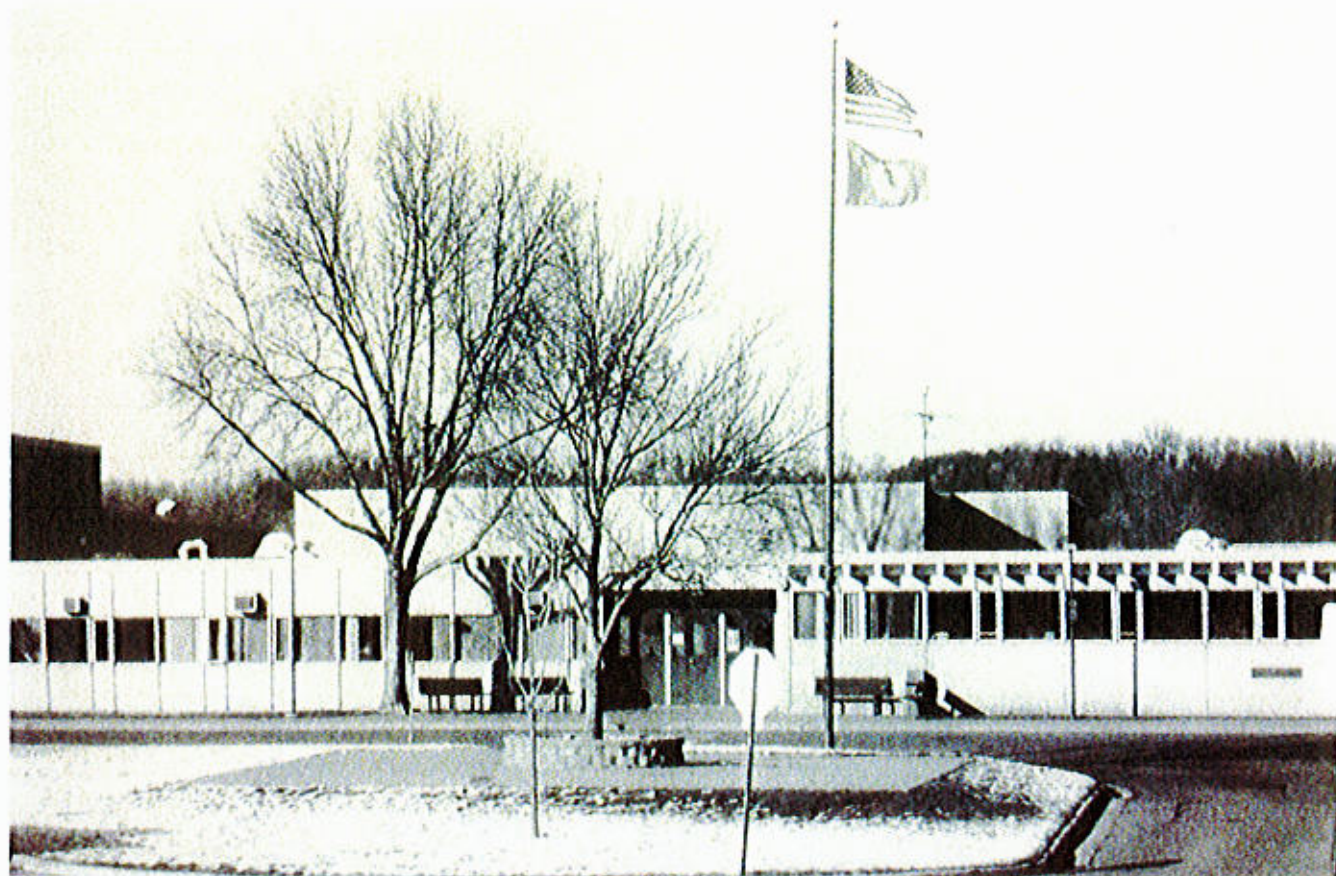


South

ORIGINAL

CANNON FALLS JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 1962





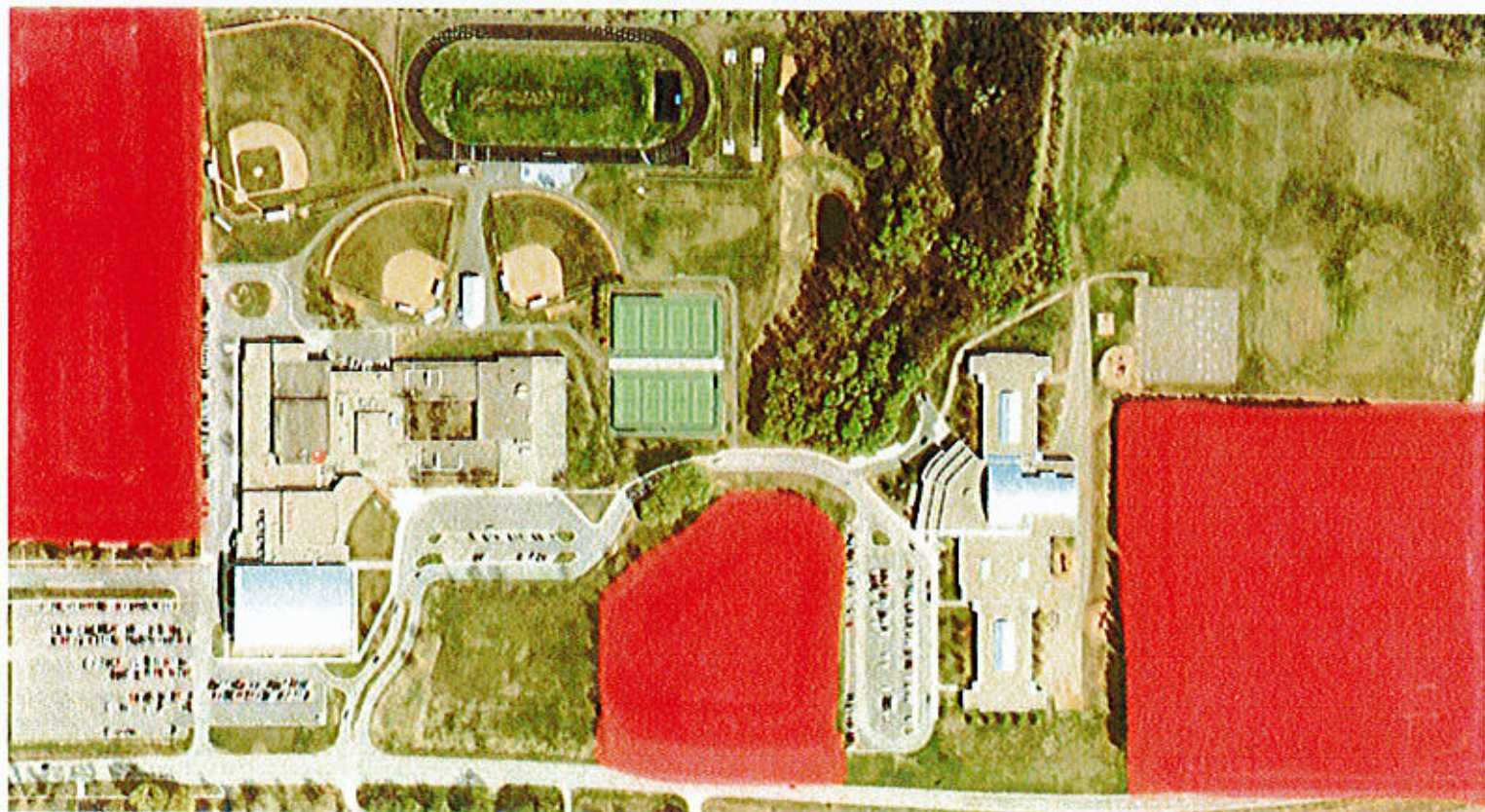


The Cannon Falls School held a groundbreaking ceremony for remodeling and new 500-seat auditorium in May. L to R: Dave Davisson, project coordinator; Mayor Glenn Weibel, committee chair Mark Sjoquist, assistant principal Beth Giese, Supt. Todd Sesker, committee member Randy Schneider, committee chair Lynee Schaefer, school board members Cathy Banks, Pat Dougherty, Dick Peterson; city administrator Aaron Reeves, school board member Bob Brintnall, committee member Roxanne Flaten. The project was on schedule at year-end.



Cannon Falls High School & Middle School







SO IN CONCLUSION, CANNON FALLS SCHOOLS WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1856, NOT 1893



REPORT BY: DAVE DAVISSON (FORMER DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE FOR CFAS)

JUNE 10TH, 2022