

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS TO MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS CHAPTER**

Steve Voth, Class of 1973, for memories of the new grade school addition

Janet Voth, Class of 1973, for memories of the new grade school addition and classes in the gym

Terry Thesman, Class of 1973, for memories of the new grade school addition and classes in the gym

Debbie Thesman Wright, Class of 1974, for memories of the new grade school addition and classes in the gym

Pam Voth, Class of 1977, for clear memories of the new grade school addition

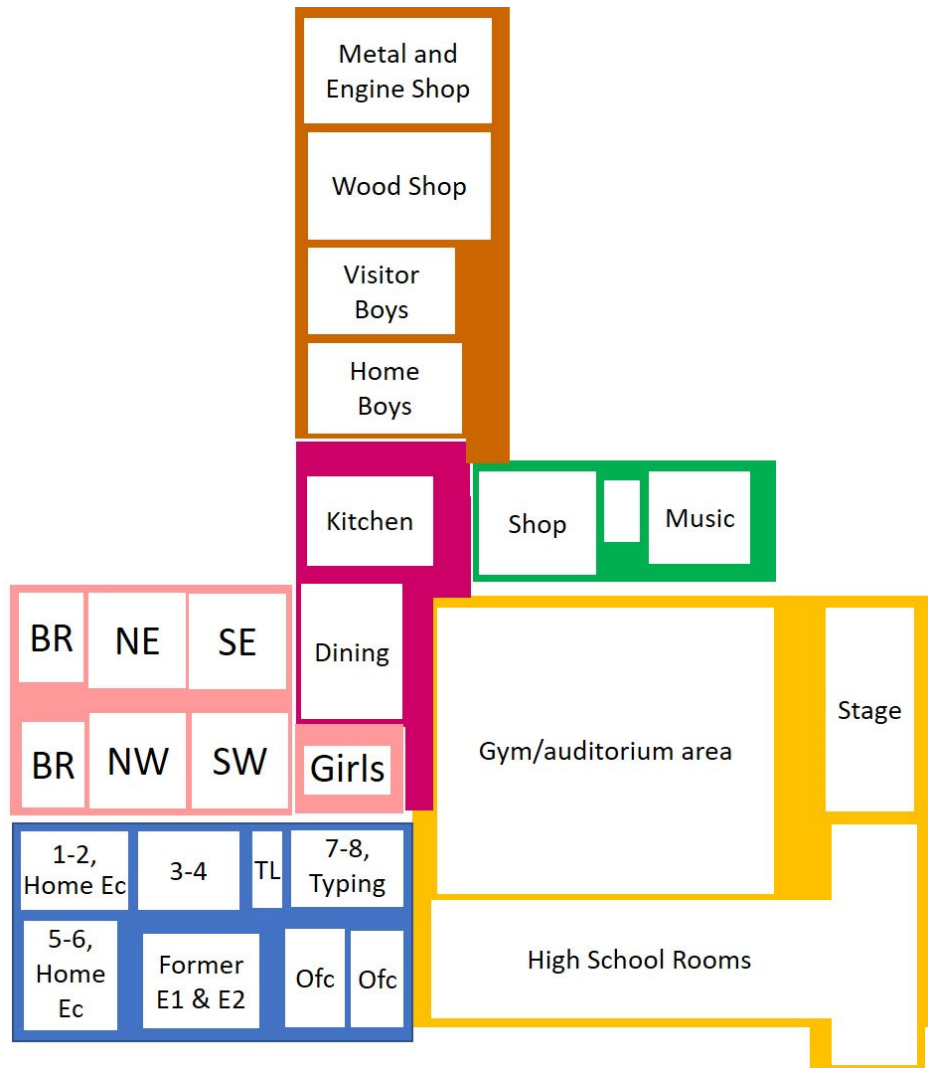
Dusty Bittle, Class of 1989, for information on his grade school years

My brother Arrel Toews, Class of 1966, for help with editing and style content suggestions

**Chapter 8. New Grade School and Girls' Locker Room Addition, 1968**

The final addition to what began as the 6-room red brick schoolhouse complex came during the 1967-68 school year, in preparation for the upcoming merger of the Kremlin and Hillsdale school districts for the 1968-69 school year. Some changes inside the existing buildings were made in preparation for this addition. The new grade school was added along the north side of the new kitchen and lunchroom, running the full length of that building and all the way to the east wall of the 6-room red brick schoolhouse. The yearbook noted that this addition had classrooms with both carpeting and air conditioning, in contrast to the earlier grade school rooms and the rest of the high school classrooms. The remaining rectangular space between the new lunchroom and the 6-room red brick schoolhouse was filled in with a new girls' locker room, located just north of the gym and with convenient access. Much like the story for the 1951 high school and gymnasium addition, there was a good bit of shuffling and perhaps "disorder" for many grades to make this all happen.

A schematic of this addition is shown here. Details have been removed from most of the earlier additions to focus on the new pink addition. "Girls" indicates the girls' locker room. The classrooms are labelled with directional labels, because their uses changed after the first year (1968-69). "BR" indicates bathrooms, *not yet certain which was boys' and which was girls'.*



### 8.1. Preliminary changes in the existing building in preparation for this addition

To my knowledge, the first change toward this addition was moving the home ec room from the far south end of the 1951 high school into Rooms A and D from the early 6-room red brick schoolhouse, where grades 1-2 and 5-6 had been located previously. New cabinets and appliances seem to have been purchased for this new room. Some who were there remember the cooking part of the new home ec room being in Room A (former 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade room) and the sewing part being in Room D (former 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade room). With Home Ec out of its former room, this room became the science classroom to go along with the adjacent science laboratory room. Photos of the new location for Home Ec and its facilities appear in the 1968 yearbook, so this change took place at least by late spring of that year. The photos below seem to show one image still in the old Home Ec room (left, 1968) and one in the new location and with new stove and wood cabinets (right, also 1968); these photos are consistent with the move to the new location having taken place sometime during the school year. I am not certain, but I believe that a new wall and doors may have been put across the north end of the north-south hallway, making a new entry into the newly combined home ec rooms; that wall/door was even with the north wall of what had been Rooms E, so that the north end east-west hallway and north entry door were effectively closed off to all traffic and became part of the new combined home ec area. I presume it was at least at this time, if not sooner, that the divider wall in Room E was removed to make it one large room instead of the two smaller rooms from years prior; if I am correct about the “loss” of the east-west hallway at the north end, there would no longer have been an accessible entrance into the north half of that room, the former E1.



### 8.2. Building the new addition

Moving Home Ec into the far north two rooms, plus the construction of the new addition to the east of the entire 6-room red brick building, mandated different places for all of grades 1-8 for most of the construction. Many grade school students from those years remember their classes being held in the gymnasium for some part of that year, though none seem to have definitive memories of exactly when that started or when it ended. One thought they started the year in the gym and moved out near the end of the year; another thought they were there only for their last 9 weeks. [More clear strong memories are needed!](#)

It seems that each “classroom” (2 years) faced a different direction. Debbie Thesman Wright was in 5th grade and remembers facing the scoreboard to the north; Donna Voth was in 7th grade and remembers being at the north end and facing the west bleachers.

What was done for normal gym activities during this time? No one remembers having desks moved off of the basketball court during this time. Perhaps grade school classes did not move into the gym until basketball season was over; or perhaps Kremlin arranged to play only away games for that period; but they would still have needed space for practices, so the former possibility seems more likely. [Additional help from any and all on these changes that I was not involved in and do not remember clearly are greatly appreciated!](#)

Eldon Toews had a fairly clear memory that the long-ago cellar and boiler room under the first stage, then the janitor's closet, now the teachers' work room and lounge, was filled in with dirt at this time; otherwise, all access to it would have been blocked off. Peggy thought she remembered several of the boys wheel-barrowing dirt into this space to fill it in, though the specific time frame for that was not clear.

### 8.3. The new grade school classrooms

Regardless of missing details from this period, grade school students seem to all remember moving into their new grade school area before the end of the 1967-68 school year. There were still 2 grades per classroom for this year, but this was the last year of each grade not having its own classroom space.

Access to the new grade school was through the lunchroom to its south. I believe that the former lunchroom door from the east-west hallway was widened to a double door, likely always open or perhaps without doors. A companion new door was added to the north wall of the lunchroom, which became the entrance to the new grade school. There were four similar- or equal-sized classrooms; Steve Voth remembered Grades 1-2 in the north-east corner room (NE), Grades 3-4 in the north-west corner room (NW), Grades 5-6 in the south-east corner room (SE), and Grades 7-8 in the southwest corner room (SW). [I assume that each classroom had a door near both its north and south ends into the hallway.](#) Bathrooms were at the north end; Pam Voth remembered the boys to the east and girls to the west. Another important memory from Pam was that the two bathrooms were separated from the classrooms by a door or doors that could be locked; this allowed the two bathrooms to be open for those attending football games to use, without them having access to the rest of the school buildings. [I presume there were water fountains in front of one or both of these bathrooms also.](#) However, Pam remembered that there was a sink with access to drinking water in each of the four new classrooms also. There was a door out to the north for access to the playground, and for access to the bathrooms from the football field; the playground was again moved further to the north and east because the new building was where the playground had been previously.

The left photo below is inside one of the new grade school classrooms, from the 1969 yearbook. The newer-style chalk trays below the blackboards confirm that these are the new rooms. The bottom right photo, also from 1969, shows the north door to the new grade school and reveals a few structural features of the outside of the building.



For the 1968-69 school year, the first year of the merger, only Grades 1-4 remained in the new grade school. Clark Bittle's memory is that Grade 1 was in the NE room, Grade 2 in the SE room, Grade 3 in the NW room, and Grade 4 in the SW room. Students in grades 1-4 from Hillsdale rode the bus to the Hillsdale school and then were bussed from there to Kremlin to the rooms in the new "pink" addition, and all of Grades 5-8 from Kremlin rode the bus to Kremlin school and then were bussed to Hillsdale, where "junior high" or "middle school" classes were held in the Hillsdale school building. The students at Hillsdale seem to have used a somewhat "high school" model, with different teachers coming in for each class, rather than having a dedicated teacher for all courses for each grade level. I believe that the gym and ball fields at Hillsdale were used for sports for grades 5-8. Dusty Bittle said that he was in 4<sup>th</sup>-grade in 1981 and his was the first class NOT to be bussed to Hillsdale for 5<sup>th</sup> grade and on. Teacher Roger Gossen had similar information, that the new grade school started being used in 1981. This would then be the year that the Hillsdale School facilities were closed (temporarily) and all students were at Kremlin. Those buildings re-opened to become the Hillsdale Christian School some years later, and it is still operating today. Dusty remembered his 5<sup>th</sup>- and 6<sup>th</sup>-grade years being in the new grade school and his 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade years being in the high school building. I need to get more information on which grades and classes were where; [or perhaps leave this to others to document!](#)

#### 8.4. The new girls' locker room

The new girls' locker room filled in the remaining unused space, west of the lunchroom, east of the 6-room red brick school, north of the hallway to the lunchroom, and south of the new grade school building. The locker room was on the same higher level as the former Room F (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade room, then Typing), accessed by a raised walkway from just east of the door to Room F, now Typing. A steel guardrail kept people from falling off. I was never allowed into that room, though I taped many ankles and knees just in front of the door; so I cannot give any details on what was inside. [I hope/trust that some of my sports girl friends will provide at least some information.](#)

#### 8.5. Many more changes to come!

Not long after this addition, an entire new grade school was added to the north, where the bus barn had been located. This led to many more changes in the buildings and additions I have described here. Eventually another addition was made to that new grade school, a new gymnasium and entry area added to the east. A new bus barn was built just south of the entrance to the metal shop. [I was not around for any of these changes, but Chapter 9 is a start on documenting those. I will need lots of help from others to either write about those buildings and changes or to share their memories and photos with me so that I can write those chapters.](#)