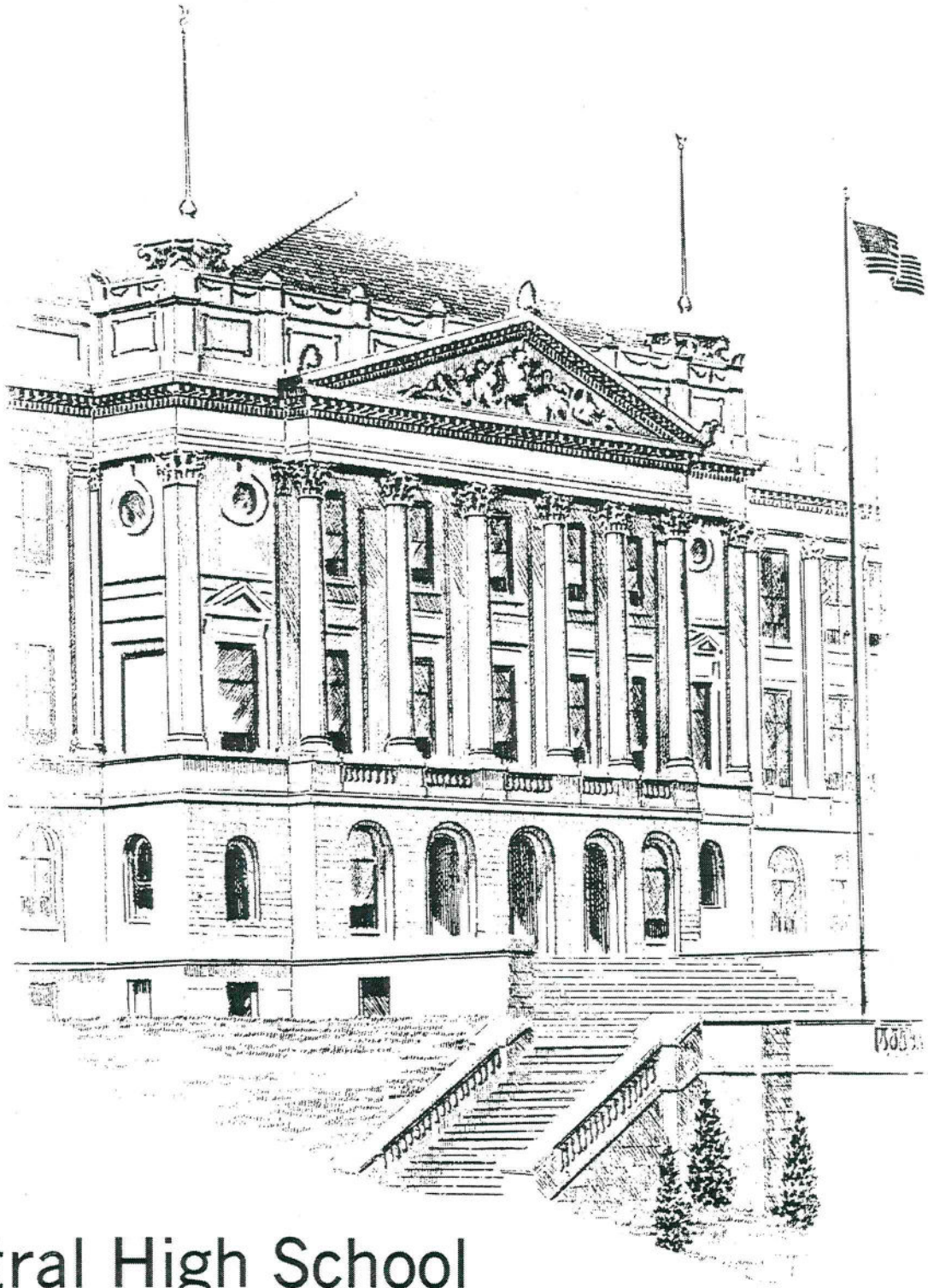
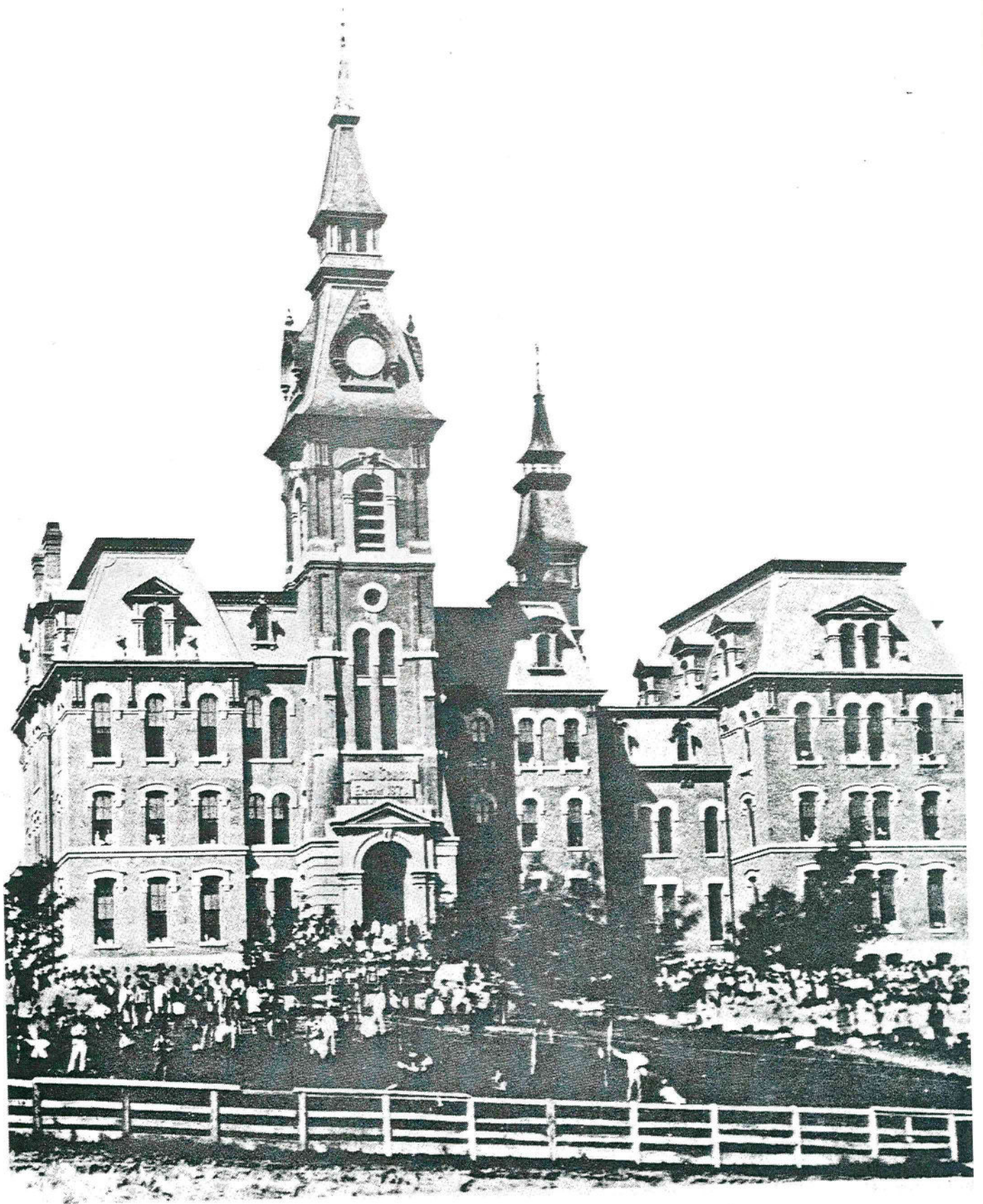


The Story of 'Old Central'



Central High School
Omaha, Nebraska





1. Omaha High School, 1871. 2. The old State House at Ninth and Farnam Streets. 3. The old Capitol Building where Central High School stands today.

Public schools in Omaha began in 1855 when the territorial legislature provided for a system of free public schools.

In March of 1859, Howard Kennedy was appointed superintendent of education by the Omaha Board of School Directors. Kennedy was to organize the Omaha Public School system.

In November of 1859, Kennedy opened his school for all grades in the old State House at Ninth and Farnam Streets.

At this time, Omaha was a small prairie town with a population of 4,000.

Howard Kennedy, after teaching a year, was replaced by John Kellom. Kellom taught Kennedy's classes from 1860-61.

After the depression following the panic of 1857, the city was unable to support the public schools, and with the outbreak of the Civil War, public schools had to close.

Samuel D. Beals opened his own private school in the old State House in April of 1861. His school became quite popular and was moved to several locations throughout Omaha because of overcrowding. Beals closed his schools in 1867.

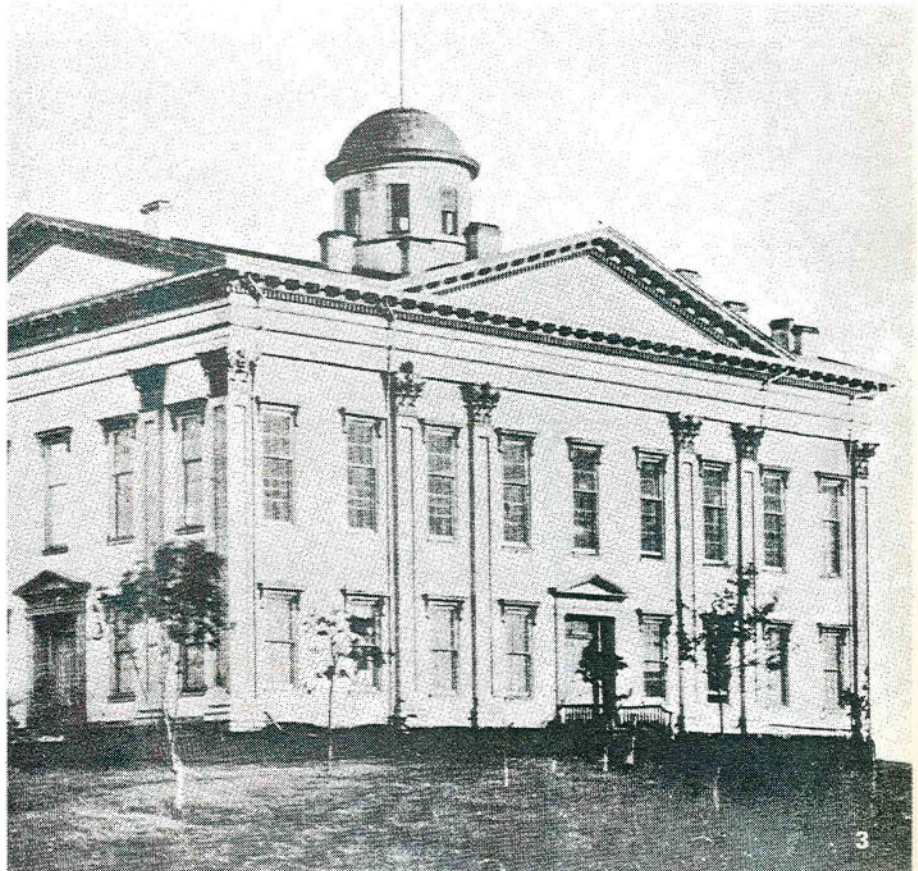
In April of 1869, Beals was appointed State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Beals required teacher examinations to improve the education quality of the state. He also helped raise the number of public schools from 74 to 301.

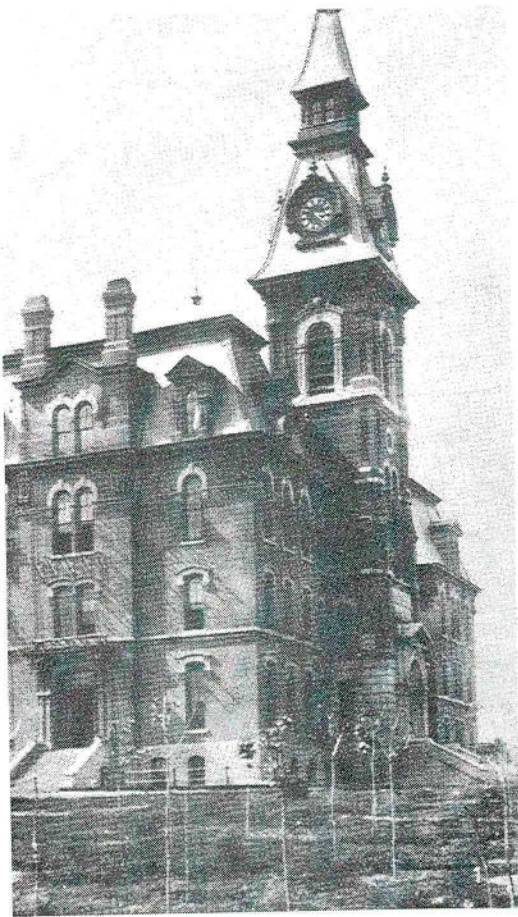
The year 1976 not only signifies our nation's two-hundredth year as a free country, it also signifies the one-hundredth year since the first graduating class of Omaha High School, the original Central High.

The "O-Book" has attempted to present an accurate historical account of the changes that have taken place and traditions that continue at Central High. Through each section, brief historical facts have been mentioned along with the information concerning each group or activity.

The cover on this book is also a tribute to the past. It is a replica of the "O-Book" cover of 1921.

The "O-Book" staff wishes to emphasize the fact that the innovative and excellent academic standards of Central High School have been unsurpassed in its one-hundred year history.





In July of 1874, Beals was elected superintendent of the Omaha schools. Beals accomplished the task of grading the public schools from primary through high school levels. Beals became a teacher at Omaha's High School from 1880 to 1900.

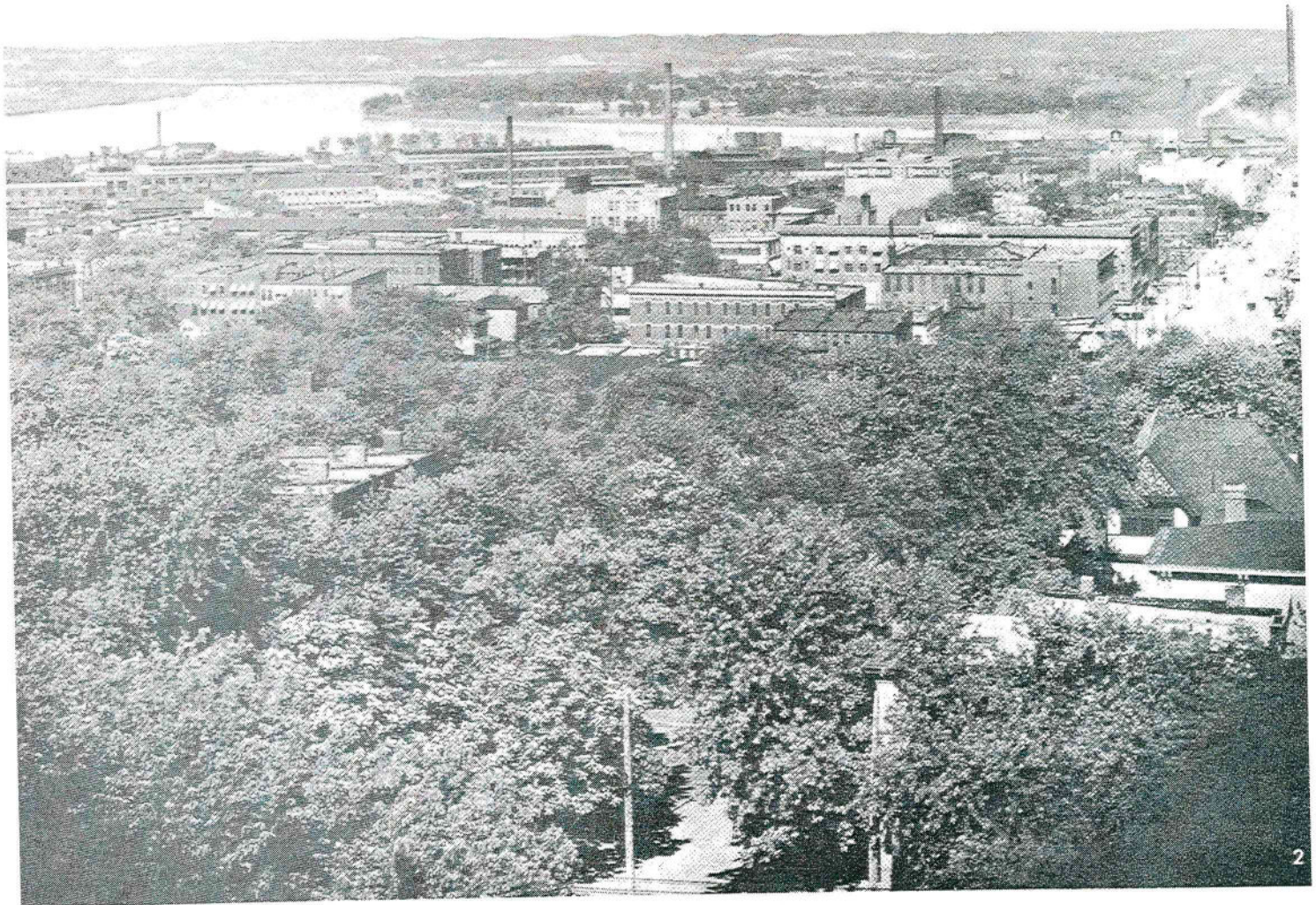
The search for a permanent site for the high school was headed by S.D. Beals and later by John Kellom. The problem was solved when, in 1869, the Legislature donated the old Capitol building at Twenty-first and Capitol to Omaha with the condition that it be used for high school purposes. The Legislature also appointed a Board of High School Regents. The Legislature had given

the Regents \$25,000 to repair the old Capitol building. The building, however, was declared unsafe and was torn down in 1870.

At a cost of \$225,000, work on the new high school building began in the fall of 1870. The red brick building stood on a ten-acre campus, and when completed it was a source of pride to Omaha residents.

The school faced east and consisted of a main building with north and south wings. It had four stories and a basement. There were fifteen school rooms and four recitation rooms. The spire rose one-hundred fifty feet above the ground.

1. The south side of Omaha High School, 1871. 2. and 3. A view of Omaha from the high school.

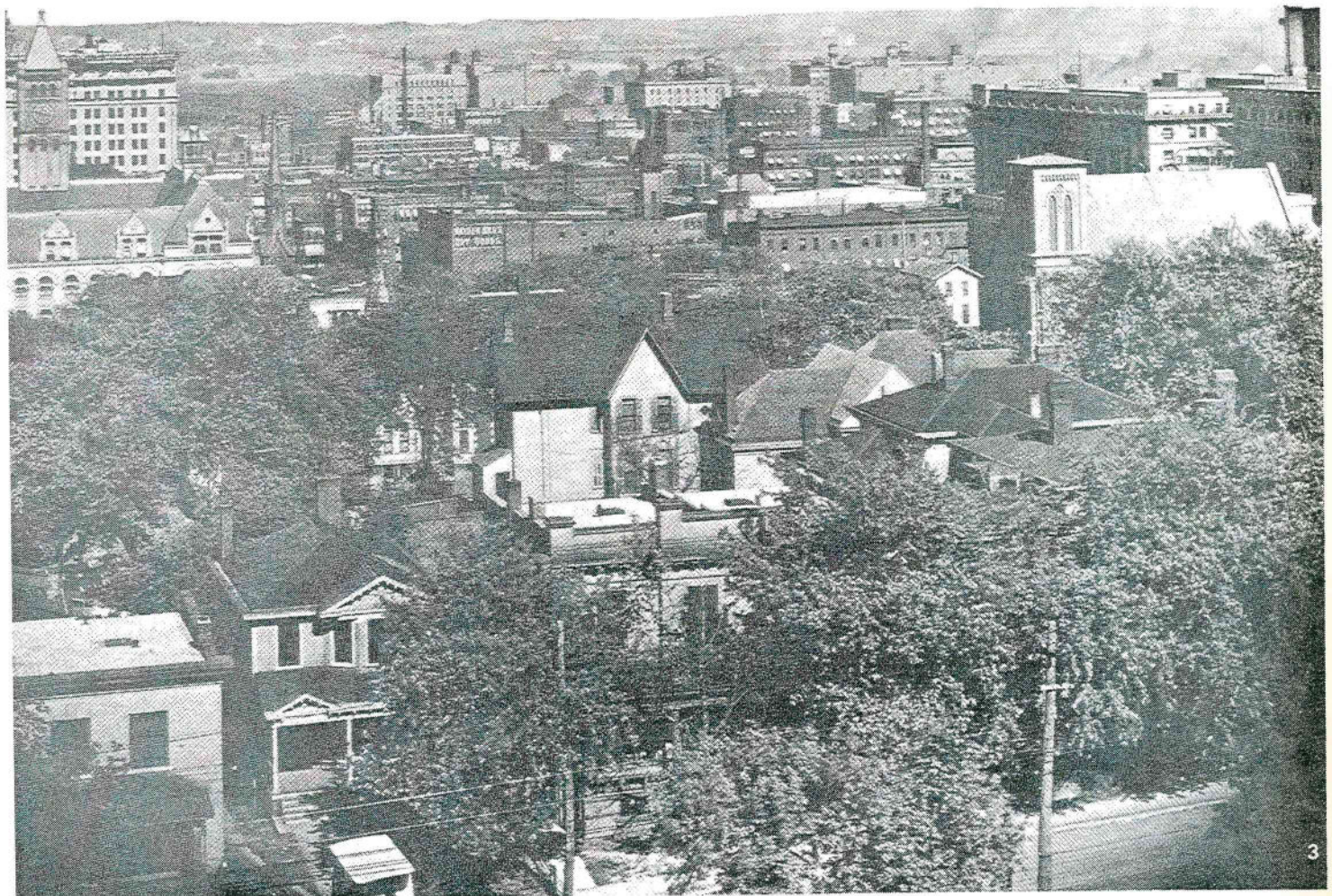


NUMBER OF GRADUATES OF CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Year	Number of Graduates	Year	Number of Graduates
1876	1	1930	327
1880	1	1940	440
1890	1	1950	374
1900	1	1960	486
1910	1	1970	535
1920	281	1975	486

PRINCIPALS OF CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

John Kellom	1871-1875	E.U. Graft	1908-1911
W.H. Merritt	1876-1877	Kate McHugh	1911-1914
C.H. Crawford	1877-1881	Clayton Reed	1914-1915
Charles Hine	1881-1882	Joseph Masters	1915-1939
Homer Lewis	1883-1896	Fred Hill	1939-1944
Irvin Levinson	1896-1899	J. Arthur Nelson	1944-1968
A.H. Waterhouse	1899-1908	G.E. Moller	1968-





Changing times. . .

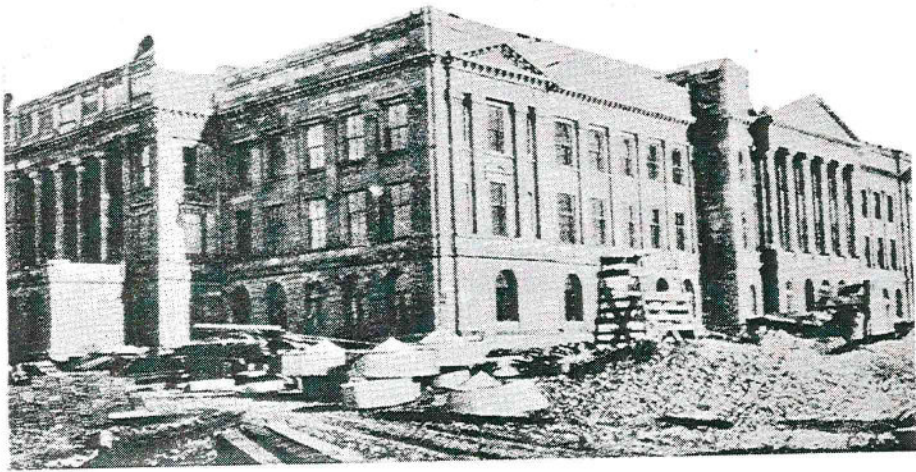
By 1897, the problem of overcrowding became very serious. Inadequate ventilation was a threat to the health of teachers and students alike. In the school board's annual report for 1897-98, the President of the Board wrote in favor of building a larger building on the same site. Although there was some opposition, the construction of a larger building began in 1900.

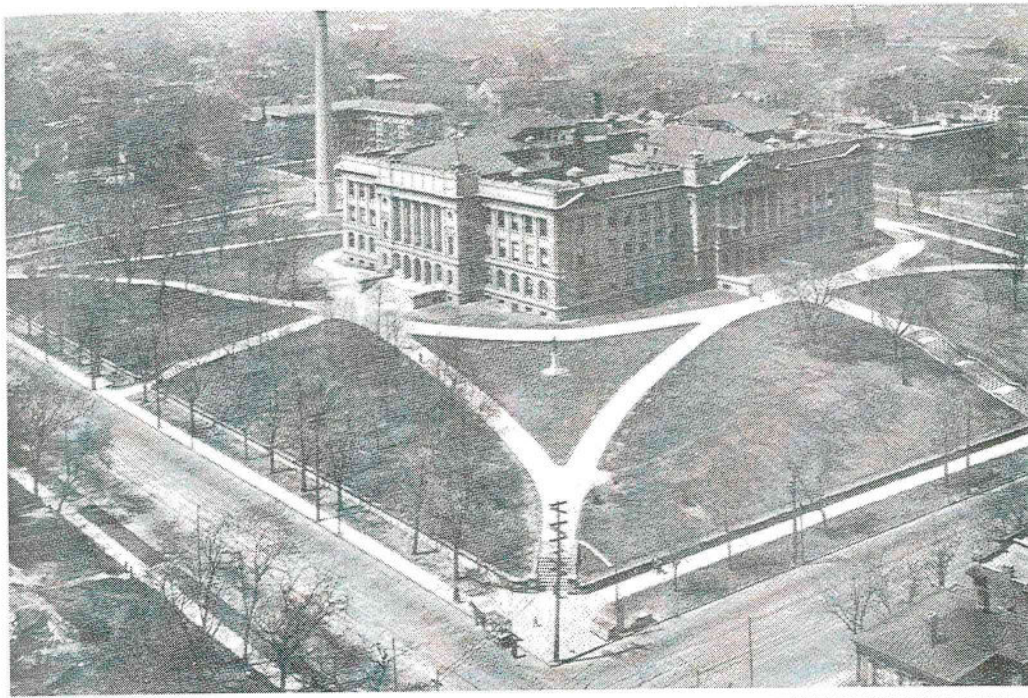
The cornerstone of Central's present building was laid on November 16, 1900. The east wing of the building was completed in 1901. The construction continued, encir-

cling the old high school building. Classes were held in both buildings until all but the north wing of the new building was completed. Then, the old high school was dismantled and removed. The north side was completed in November, 1912. The total cost of the new school was \$750,000.

Through the efforts of principal Kate McHugh, the heating and ventilating plant was removed from the space in the center of the building. The ground left vacant was converted into the courtyard.

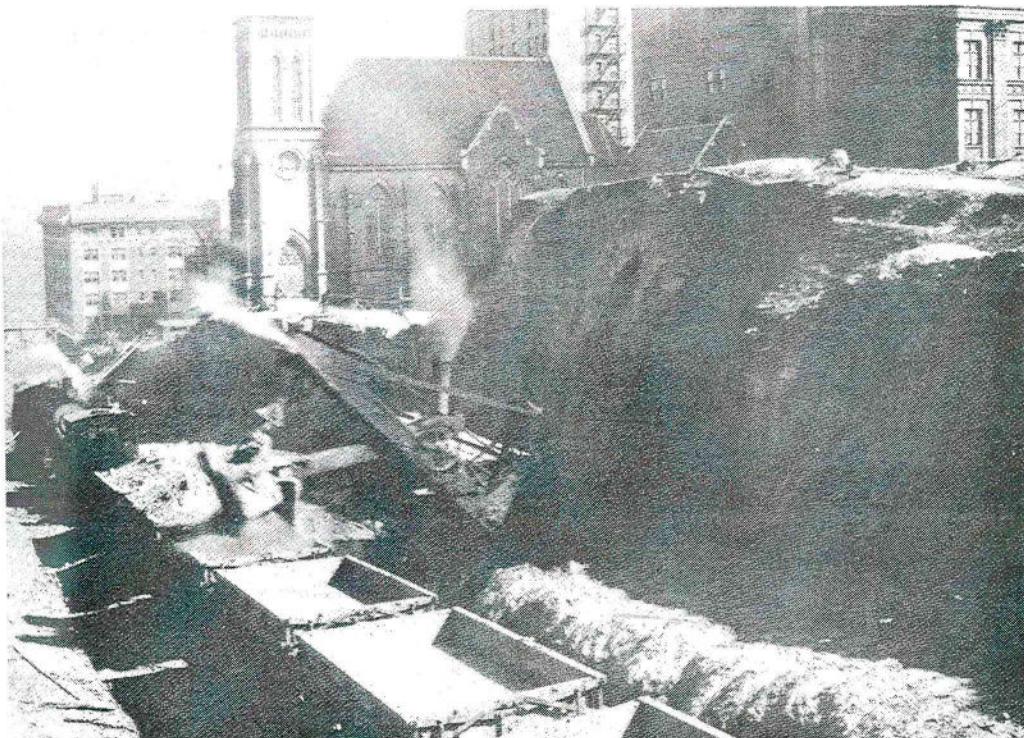
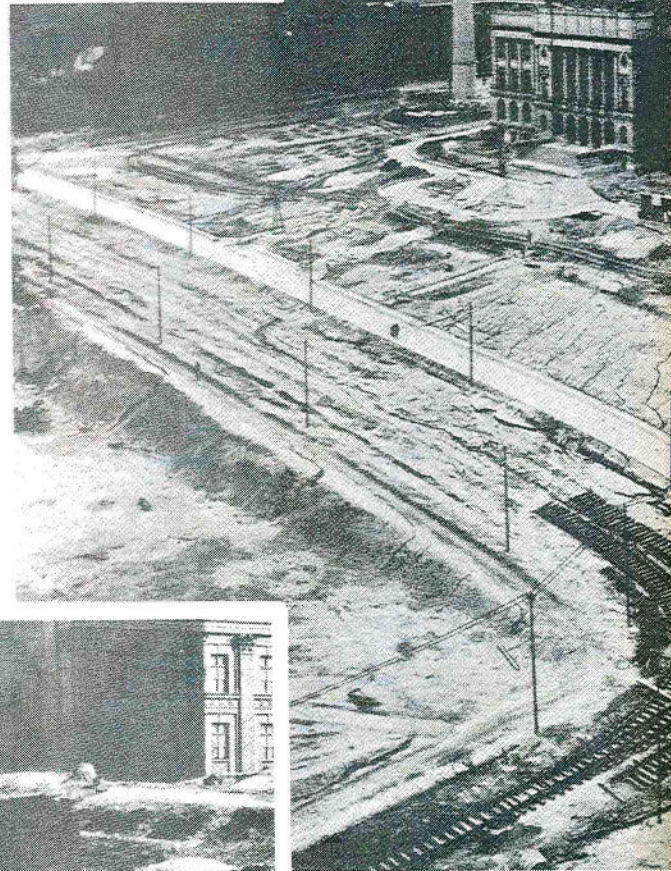
The photos on these pages show the transformation of old Central to new Central.

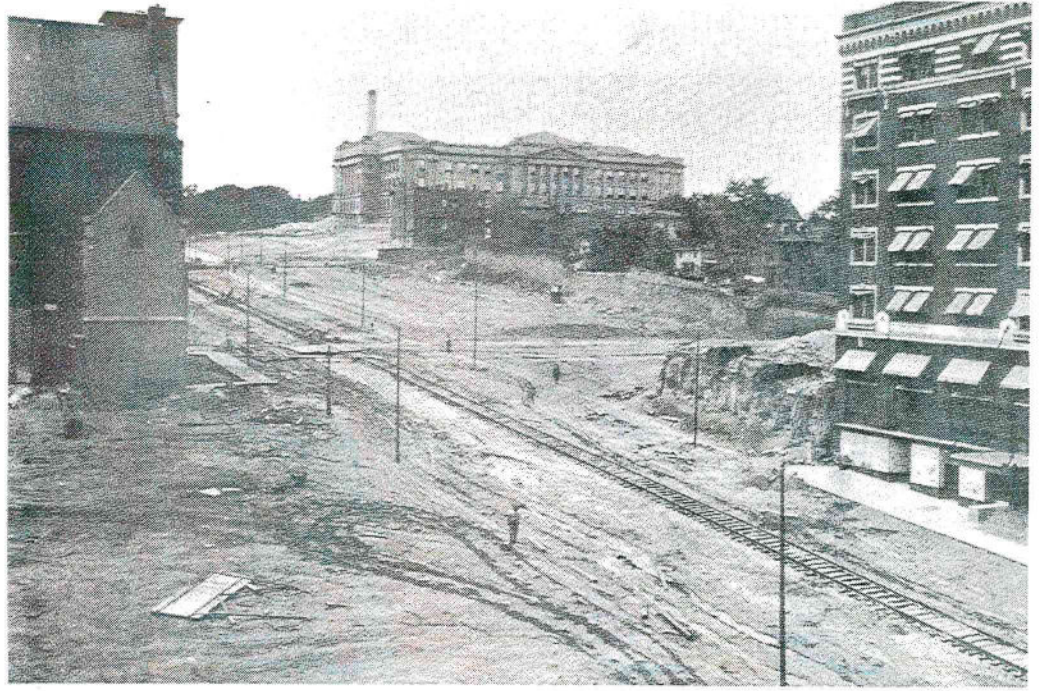


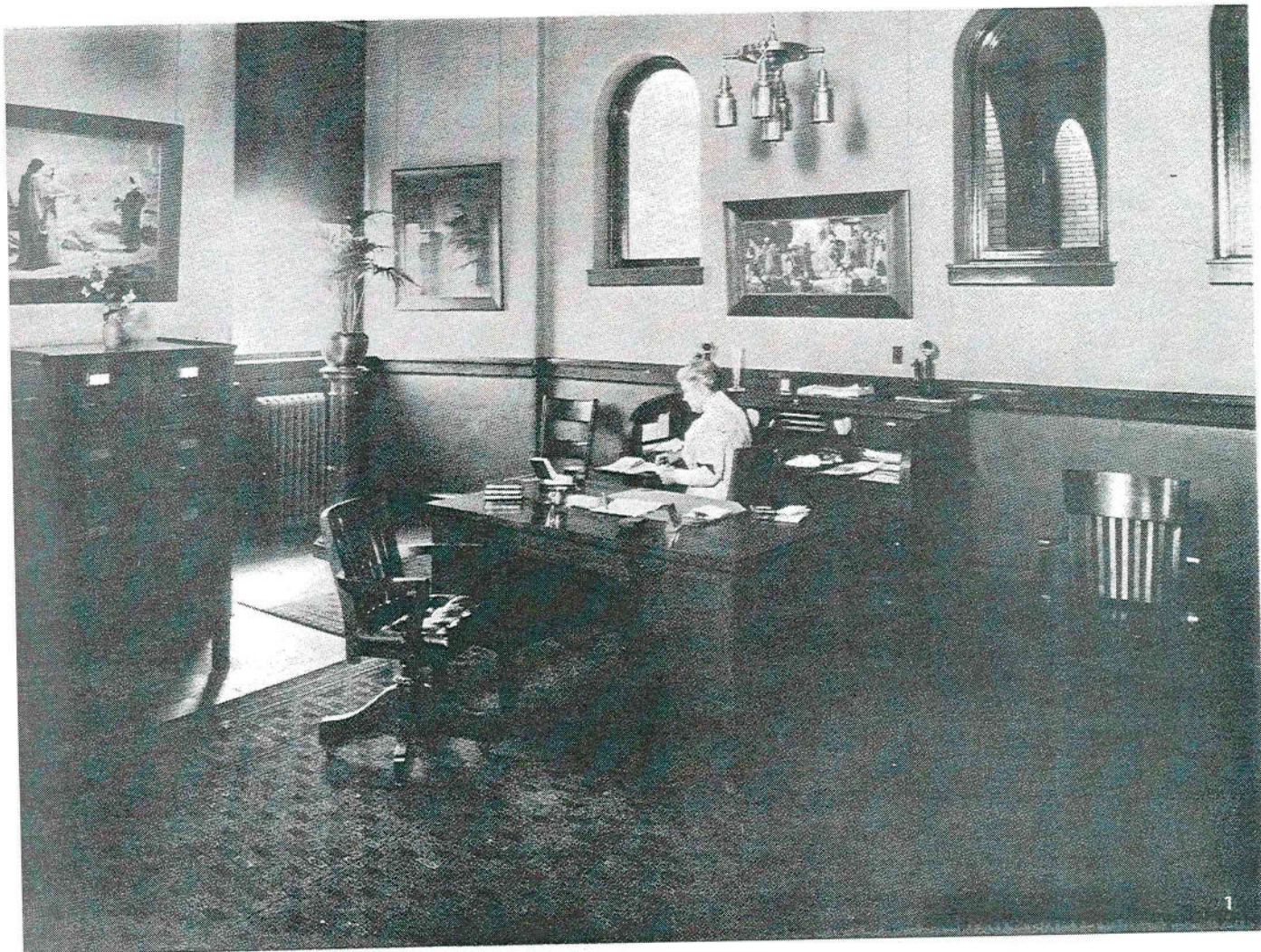


More changes

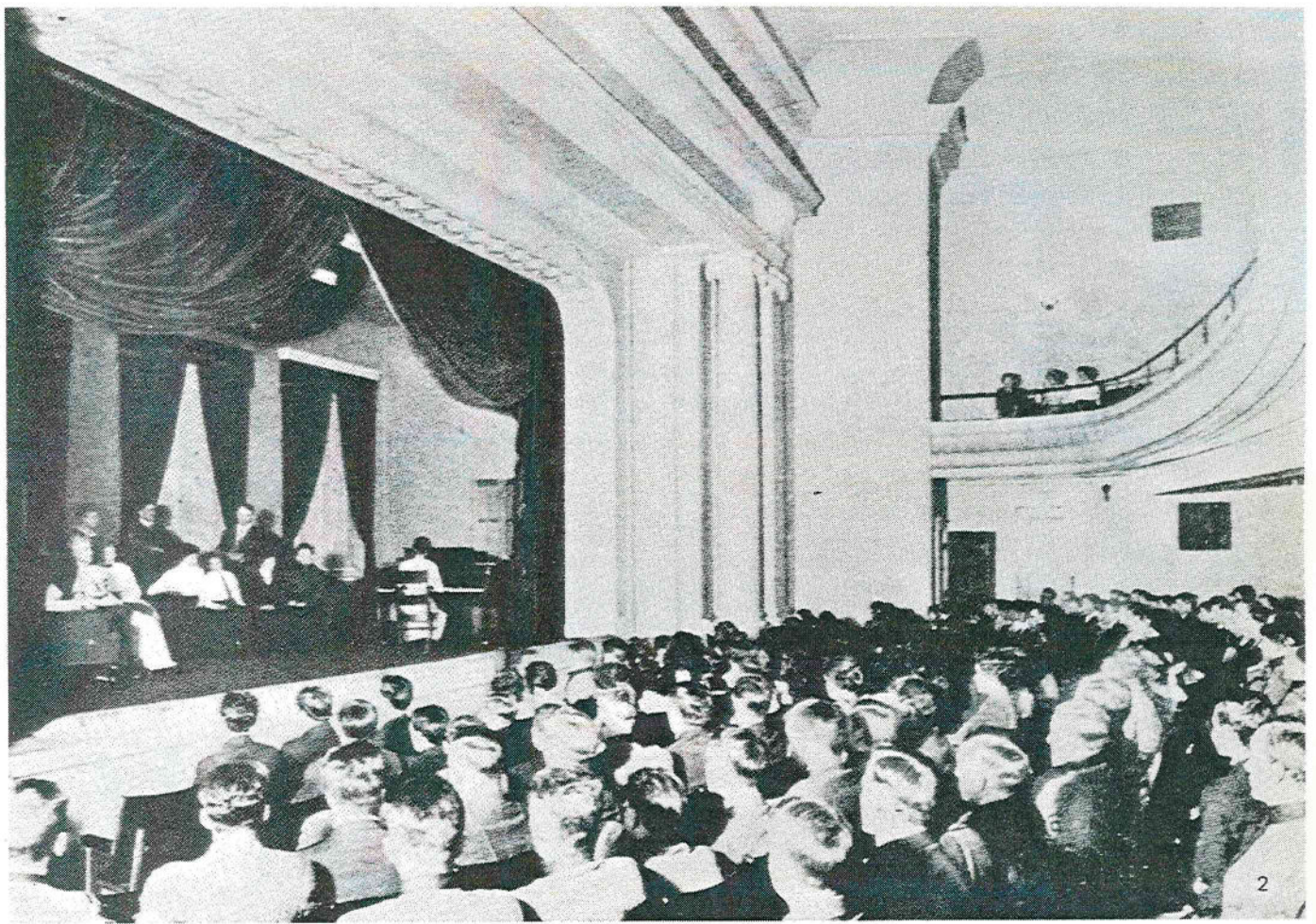
The year 1920 saw a change of scene for Central. As a result of the petitions of motorists, the grade of Dodge Street was lowered from twelve per cent to seven per cent. Traffic was banned in the once busy area for more than a year while work was in progress. This construction left Central on a cliff with a sheer twenty foot drop. New terraces and flights of stairs restored the grounds to their present condition.



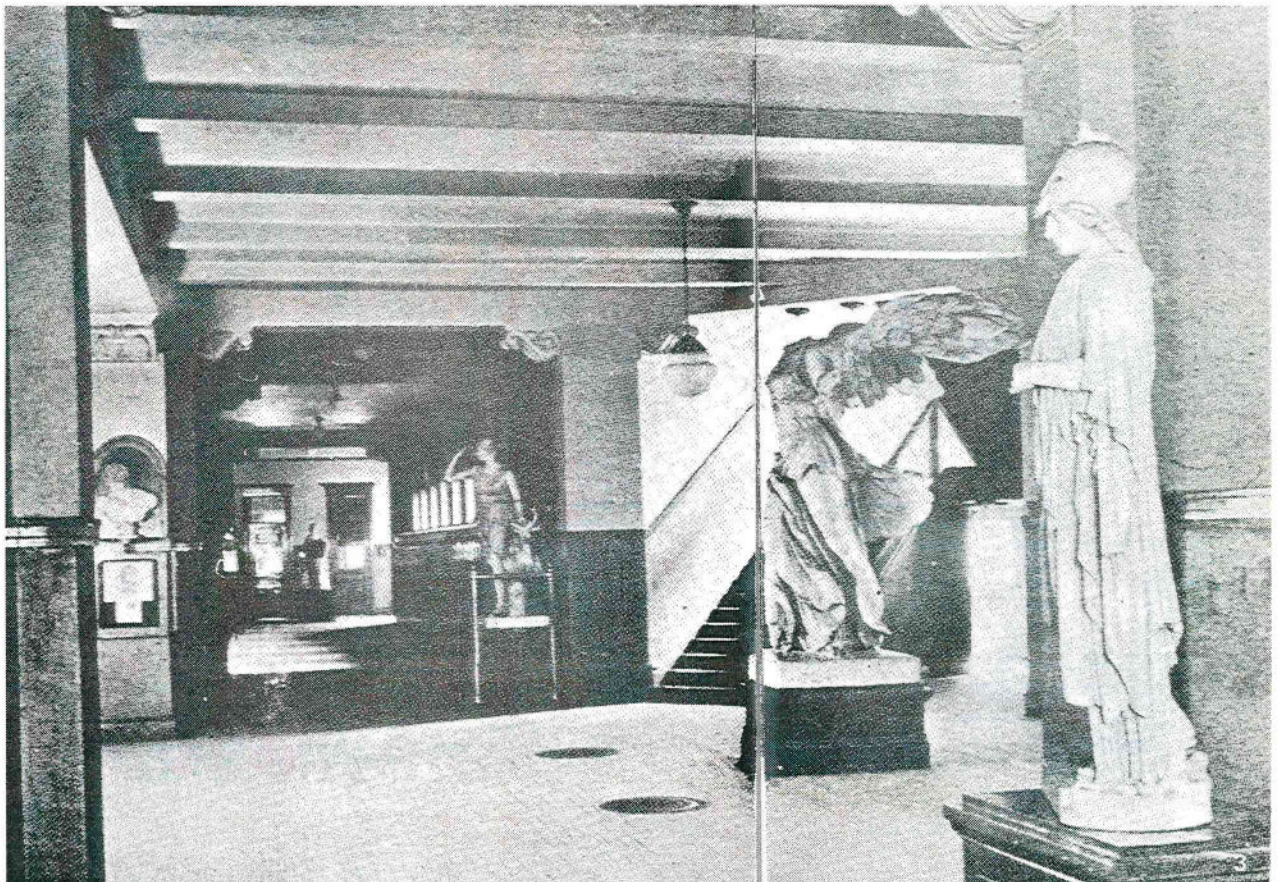




Central High School has changed in many ways through its one hundred years. The people inside the school have changed also. The photos on these pages present a glimpse of what constituted the Central of yesterday.



1. Principal Kate McHugh at her desk. 2. The old auditorium which is now rooms 145 and 245. 3. The east corridor of Central, 1921.



Faces at 'Old Central'





RUTH FINLEY

Student Club (1, 2), L. T. C. (1, 2, 3, 4), Girls' Senior Glee Club (4), Captain of Plymouth (2), Mam'zelle Taps (4).

A girl whose jolly laugh is well-known to the entire school.

MARY E. FISCHER

Register (4), O-Book (4), Spanish Club (4), Gym Camp (1, 2), Girl Reserves (1), National Honor Society (4).

Mary is one of the rare girls who can produce a maximum amount of work in a minimum of time, and still be a good pal and jolly company.

SARAH RAE FISH

Senior Glee Club (4), Mam'zelle Taps (4), Road Show (4), Orchestra (2, 3, 4).

She is fondest of the piano, and she can play it, too.

HENRY J. FONDA

Hi-Y (3), Purple and White Week (1, 2).

Henry has great ability in art. He can detect a good picture or a pretty girl with no trouble at all.

CAROLINE LOUISE FORGY

An up-to-date girl in every way.

VIOLA FORSELL

Student Club (3, 4), Orchestra (1, 2, 3, 4), Road Show Orchestra (2, 3).

It's nice to be nice when you're naturally nice.



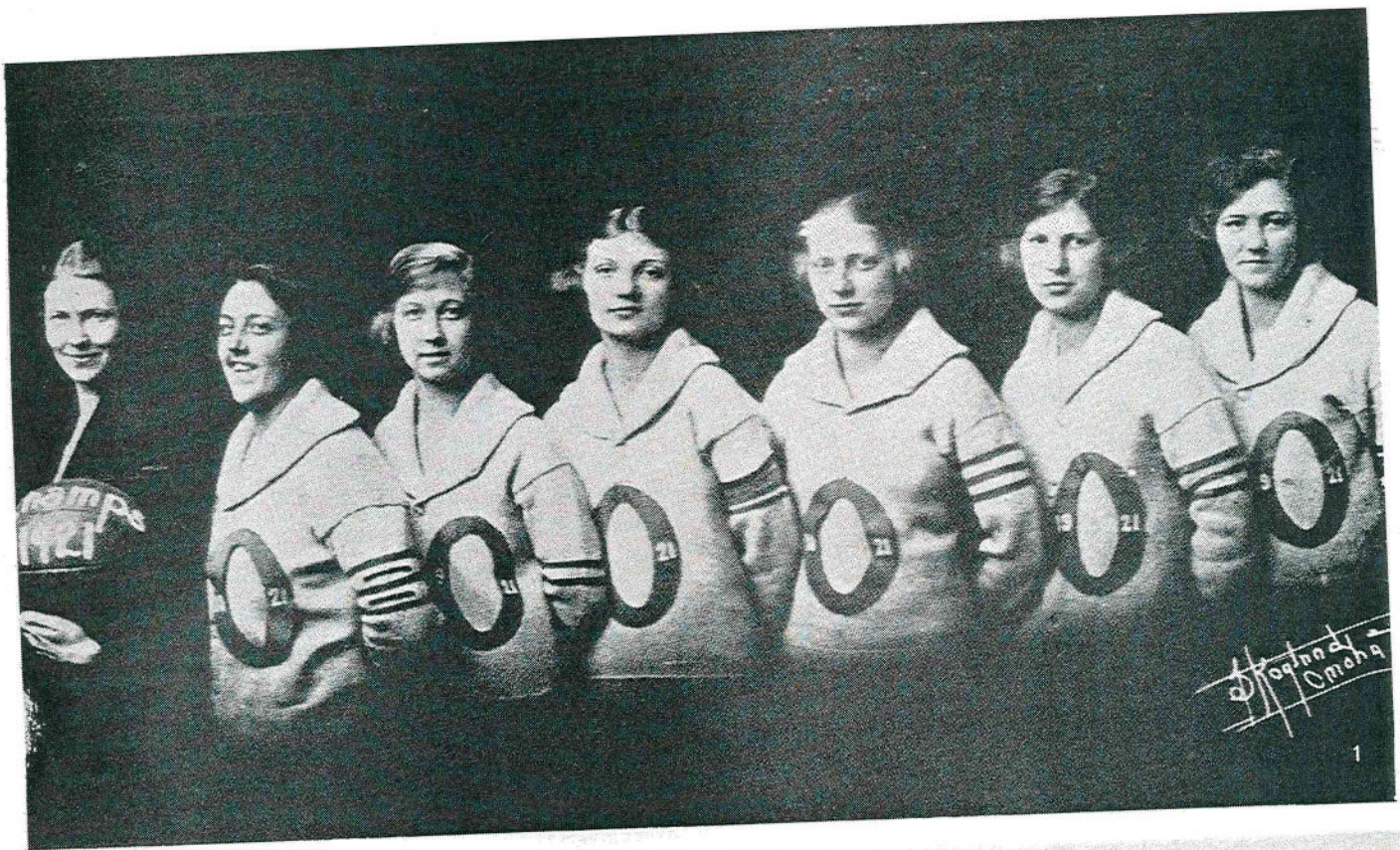
The first graduating class, in 1876, had only eleven members. The nine girls were the only graduates present for the graduation photo. They were nicknamed "the nine muses."

Also in 1876, on July 4, electrical engineers rigged lights up in the high school tower. This arrangement gave Omaha its first demonstration of electric lights.

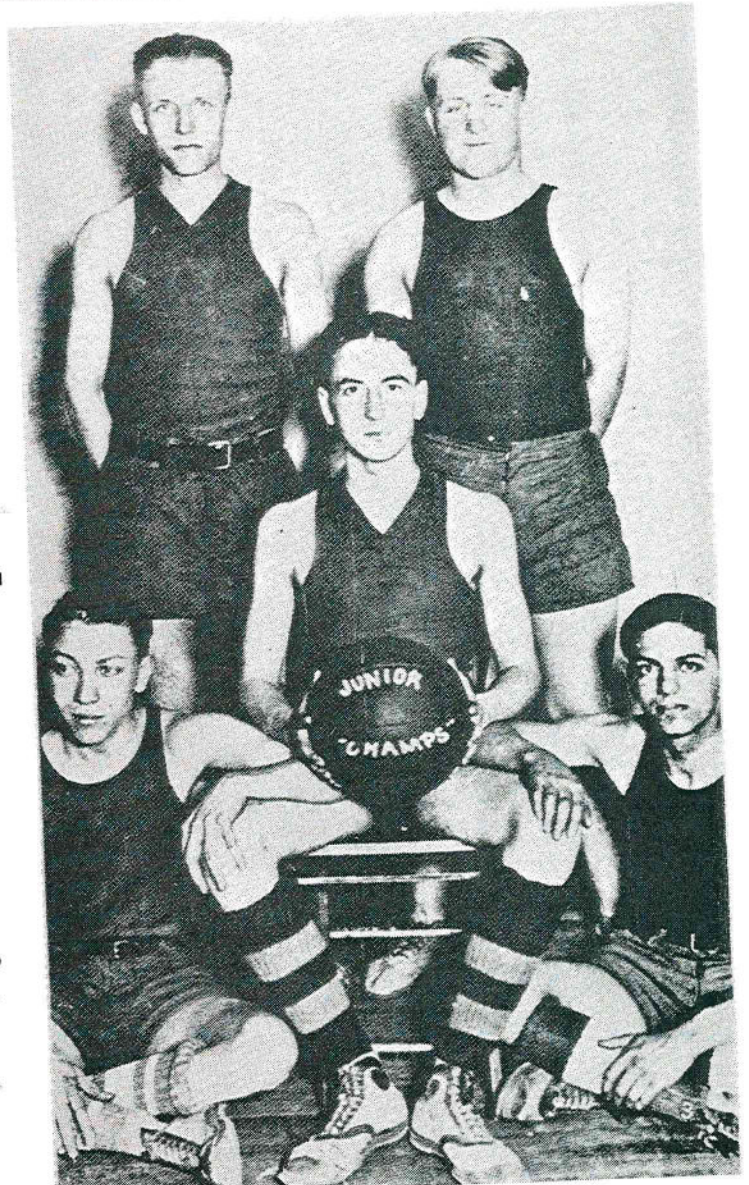
Important visitors were inevitably given a tour of the high school. These visitors included Presidents Grant, Hayes, and Harrison.

High school in 1876 was not all studying. A graduate of the 1876 class recalls the boys in the high school. "They used to slide down the steep, curving bannisters, four flights at once! The boys contrived a dummy figure of a man. Attached to a rope, this was dropped down the opening of the staircase. How we girls shrieked as it hurtled past and fell with a sickening thud on the floor below!"

1. A group of Faculty members from 1927. 2. Group shot of faculty in front of the original Central High School. 3. The "nine muses" from the first graduating class of 1876. 4. A section page from an old "O-Book." Note graduate Henry Fonda.

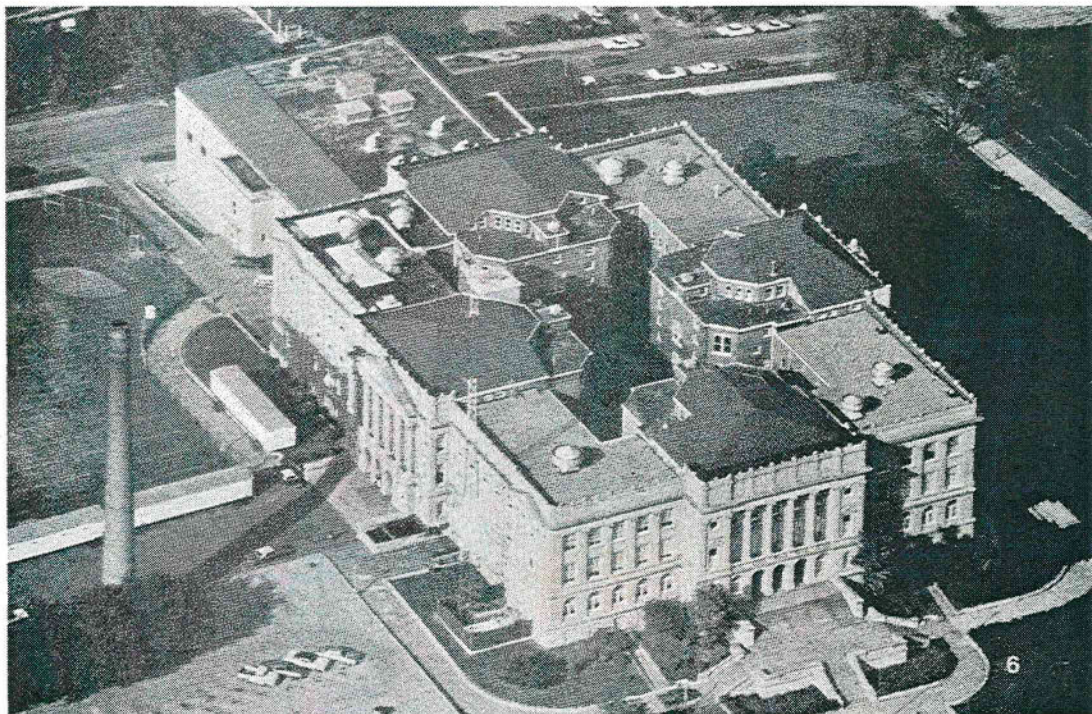
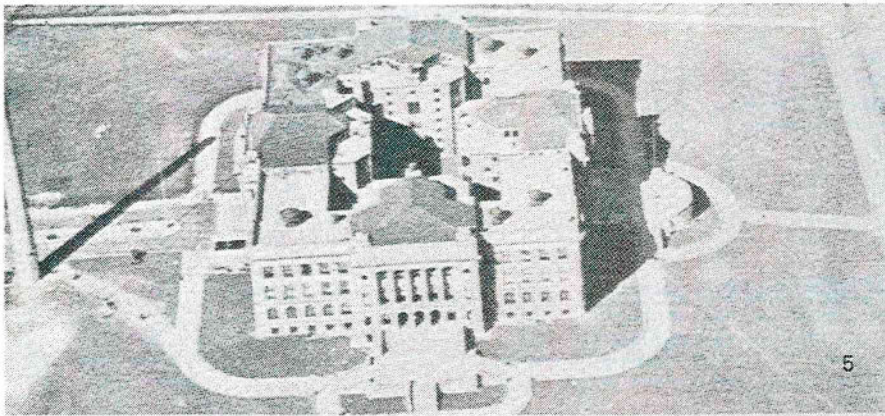
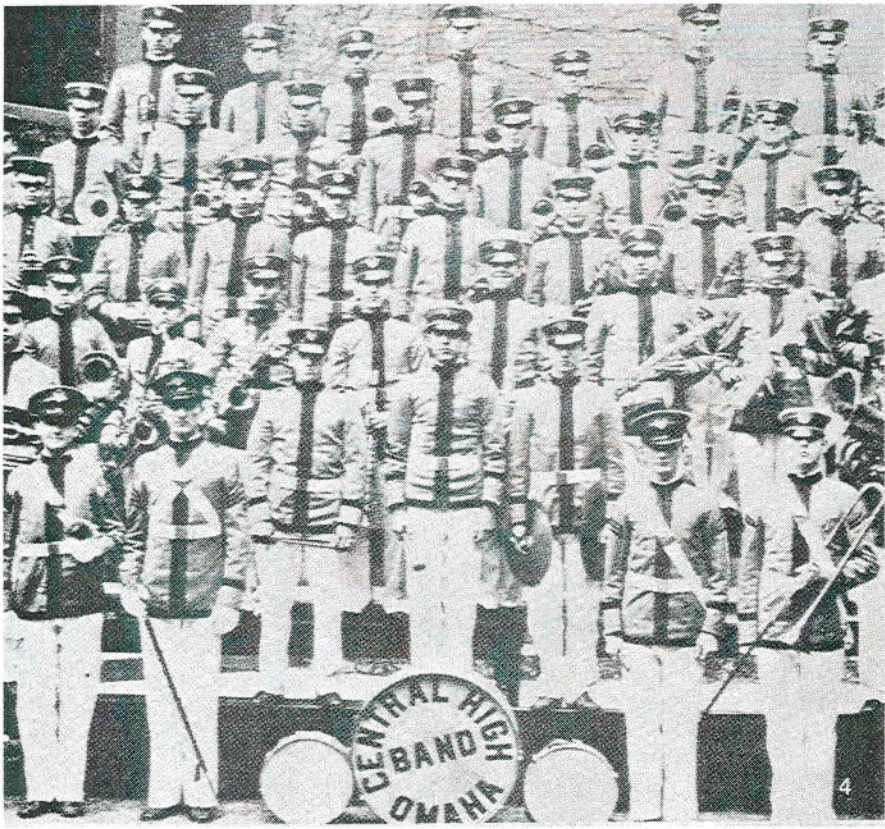


1. The girls' basketball team, 1921. 2. The swim team, 1921. 3. The junior basketball team, 1921. 4. The Central High band, 1927. 5. A view of Central as it looked in 1927. 6. A view of Central as it looks today.



Acknowledgements:

The "O-Book" staff wishes to thank the following people for their help in producing this section: Harold Becker, Bostwick-Frohardt collection, owned by KMTV, Mr. Al LaGrecia. Special thanks go to Vickie Werner for the historical facts concerning Central.



CHS building boasts architectural beauty

Sean Kershaw

The date was November 10, 1859: John Brown just raided Harper's Ferry, triggering the Civil War; the Colorado Gold Rush was in full swing; Edwin L. Drake discovered oil in Titusville Pennsylvania; J. Sterling Morton, founder of Arbor Day, was the territorial governor of Nebraska; and Central High School, then called Omaha High School, held classes for the first time.

"The history of Central is long and fascinating," Mr. A.A. LaGreca, former assistant principal at Central, said.

The hill on 20th and Dodge overlooking downtown Omaha has not always been Central's home. The basements of the Congregational and Baptist churches and an old unused government building all held classes for the high school. The first location of Omaha High was in a two-story brick building on 9th and Farnam, just east of the Central Park Mall.

Territorial capitol

Due to an ever-increasing enrollment, a new, permanent location for the high school was badly needed. J.H. Kellom and S.D. Beals were in charge of finding a new home for the school.

A few years later, when the territorial capitol moved to Lincoln, Kellom and Beals' hopes were realized. The future home of Omaha High was to stand on a ten acre overgrown hill, the site of the crumbling territorial capitol.

According to "Omaha and Douglas County, a Panoramic History," the workmen built the territorial capitol so poorly that the outside pillars began to collapse before the doors had been installed.

After a long and bitter fight, the legislators managed to move the capitol to Lincoln, much to the dislike of many Omaha representatives.

The annual report of the Omaha Board of Education in 1873 revealed that \$60,000 would go to the building of a new school.

The 1873 report noted that the school's spire rose 200 feet off the ground and from a look-out 150 feet up one could see six different counties. The clock in the tower was noted for its accuracy, and many people set their watches according to it.

"The high school occupies the most prominent position in the city . . . It combines the advantages of comfort, convenience, and architectural beauty," a 1885 edition of the "Omaha Bee" said.

Central's courtyard

As the population of Omaha skyrocketed, the School Board decided that it was time to move on with plans for a new school.

"In 1900 they built the east side of Central right in front of the old Omaha High," Mr. LaGreca said.

When that became overcrowded, they built the south portion of the school. After the south end was completed, the old high school was torn down and the west and north portions of the present school were built. The old school occupied the area that is now Central's courtyard.

According to Mr. LaGreca, the departmental offices on the east and south end of the building overlooking the courtyard were originally hallways that connected the two buildings by means of small bridges.

Finally, in 1912, workmen completed the present building at a cost of \$750,000.

The 11th annual report of the Board of Education said the following about Central: "The ability, fidelity, and untiring industry of the teachers in the discharge of their important duties cannot be commented in terms too strong — they are alive to the dignity and significance of their work."

