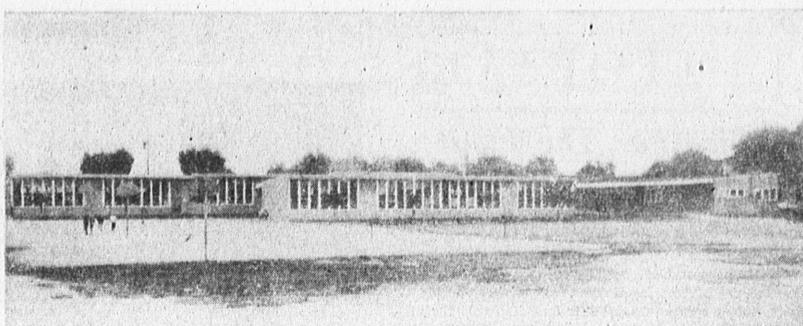


OLD STYLE SCHOOL . . . When Fern School was built in 1932, it was considered the most elegant building around, but a number of features in it are now considered out of date in school construction. It features high ceilings, long

corridors, some gingerbread, a boiler, and inadequate lighting, in addition to the fact that it does not meet the state earthquake requirements. It will be torn down and replaced by a quake-proof structure. (Herald Photo)



NEW STYLE SCHOOL . . . Right across the street from Fern School is Greenwood School, completed in 1952. It is of the spreading, finger-tip design, eliminating many of the construction faults and wasteful expenditures in

older schools. Each room has its own heating unit and drinking fountain and is designed for better and more uniform lighting throughout. School officials profit from their experiences to improve each new school built. (Herald Photo)

Schoolhouses Change Size, Shape

YOUR SECOND FRONT PAGE

Torrance Herald

EDITORIALS * * * FEATURES * * * WANT ADS

TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1957

School Building Costs Go Up Less Than Others

The little red schoolhouse ain't—woops, isn't—what it used to be. The narrow "finger-tip" schoolhouses of today bear little resemblance to the stately buildings with huge Greek columns that Mom, Pop, Grandma, and Grandpa were used to. There are several reasons for the changes—changes in styles, different concepts of what a school building should be, and, of course, that old bugaboo—money.

Yesterday's schoolhouse generally was a compact multi-story structure—with enclosed corridors, high ceilings, huge windows, and considerable gingerbread. Good examples of this would be the Fern or Torrance Elementary Schools, both built in pre-World War II days.

Longer, Lower

The schools of today—like the 1957 automobiles—are longer, lower, and take up lots more room, consisting of many buildings instead of one. There's considerable debate over whether schools are more beautiful than they used to be, but they are cheaper, on a comparative basis.

Examples of these new buildings are everywhere in Torrance—with \$14,000,000 worth of schools, representing 20 elementary schools and two high schools. Although taxpayers have groaned heavily under the weight of school taxes, experts have praised Torrance schools for the economy with which this huge task was carried out. The end of the job is not yet in sight.

During the past 20 years, the cost of school buildings has gone up 150 per cent, while the cost of all buildings has gone up 210 per cent and cost of homes has increased about 225 per cent.

Why is this so?

Schools today have given way to "functional planning" or streamlining. Gone are gables, cupolas, towers, turrets, decorative columns, and gingerbread. Plastic tiles laid on concrete have replaced more expensive hardwood floors. Plaster on classroom walls is becoming less common and finished roof decks have eliminated ceilings in many instances.

California schools, including those in Torrance, have been able to move out into the sunshine, eliminating the huge, high, expensive corridors which were features of the old schools. They have only covered walkways to protect children when it rains. California has not the weather problems of many other states.

Single-story schools have eliminated the need for stairways, which are space-consuming and expensive to build.

Single Stories

Although land is expensive, Torrance has found it cheaper to build schools which cover lots of territory than to build additional multi-story structures. Earthquake regulations in California make the cost of reinforcing the bottom story almost prohibitive. This situation is changing somewhat, with the gradual filling of land in California, but the rule still is true.

Torrance school officials study past experiences with buildings in this district and others to learn ways to improve both the facilities and the costs. Since school building is such a big business, especially in California, much use can be made of stock materials and eliminating the use of hand labor.

Ceilings Drop

Ceilings also have dropped in schools from the old 12 and 14-foot heights to an average of about 10½ feet in most local schools.

A new wrinkle in the school construction business is the so-called "portable" classroom, which, if no longer needed at one school, can be moved to another school where the enrollment is heavier. By this means, Torrance hopes to

avoid the situation in which Los Angeles finds itself—with too many classrooms in some parts of town and a shortage in others.

Modern schools also are designed to be flexible—to allow construction of partitions where needed or to allow removal of the same partitions when not needed. In the backs of their heads, the planners keep the idea that the school might need to be used for some other purpose in the future.

Windows Change

Windows are smaller, to allow better control of the light. One of the biggest items to be considered in modern school construction is lighting, a factor often ignored in older schools. Fern School has only two light sockets per room and officials have had to improvise to increase the light, now considered inadequate. Later schools have more and better fixtures to diffuse the light.

Inflation, of course, is affecting the Torrance Unified School District, as it is everywhere else. WALTERIA School, built in 1950 for \$277,550, contains almost identical facilities to those in ANZA School, recently opened after expenses of about \$347,017.

Over a 20-year period, however, school building costs have gone up about 150 per cent, while the cost of all buildings went up 210 per cent. Structural school has gone up 215 per cent; face brick 200 per cent; common labor, 330 per cent; skilled labor, 220 per cent; and materials and components, 200 per cent.

Schoolhouses today are usually neither little nor red, but they serve the same purposes as the old schools and do it better in many cases.



HAVE A DRINK . . . One of the old teacher's bugaboos—the boy who just had to go out in the hall to get a drink—was eliminated by placing a drinking fountain and wash basin in each classroom. Here, Arlene Yeskin takes a drink. (Herald Photo)



THE BOILER ROOM . . . Modern schools have pretty well eliminated that old smoker, the boiler room, studied here by Assistant Principal Ed Brown. Classrooms today generally each have their own thermostatically controlled heating units. (Herald Photo)



OPEN-AIR CORRIDOR . . . At Greenwood School, the corridors between classrooms are all open air, covered to keep the youngsters from getting wet when it rains. This modern trend, possible in California, saves considerable construction money and is part of an open-air trend. Here, Rodney Urrein and Tracy Timmons talk things over with Assistant Principal Ed Brown. (Herald Photo)



CLOSED CORRIDORS . . . Miss Judy Garden and Sandra Lambert talk over schoolwork in one of the halls at Fern School. Educators consider these 14-foot-high, dark corridors a waste of money, since California climate permits open-air facilities. (Herald Photo)



BAD LIGHTING . . . Principal Joe T. Brandon of Fern-Greenwood School points out the silver area on the ceiling of one of the Fern School classrooms—painted to create better diffusion of light. Old schools were built with little consideration for lighting. (Herald Photo)



GOING UP? . . . Assistant Principal Ed Brown looks down a flight of stairs at Fern School, one of the few schools which has two stories. Stairs are expensive to build, take up considerable space, and create hazards. They also are a reminder that multi-story schools are not often built any more, since construction costs are higher than land costs. (Herald Photo)