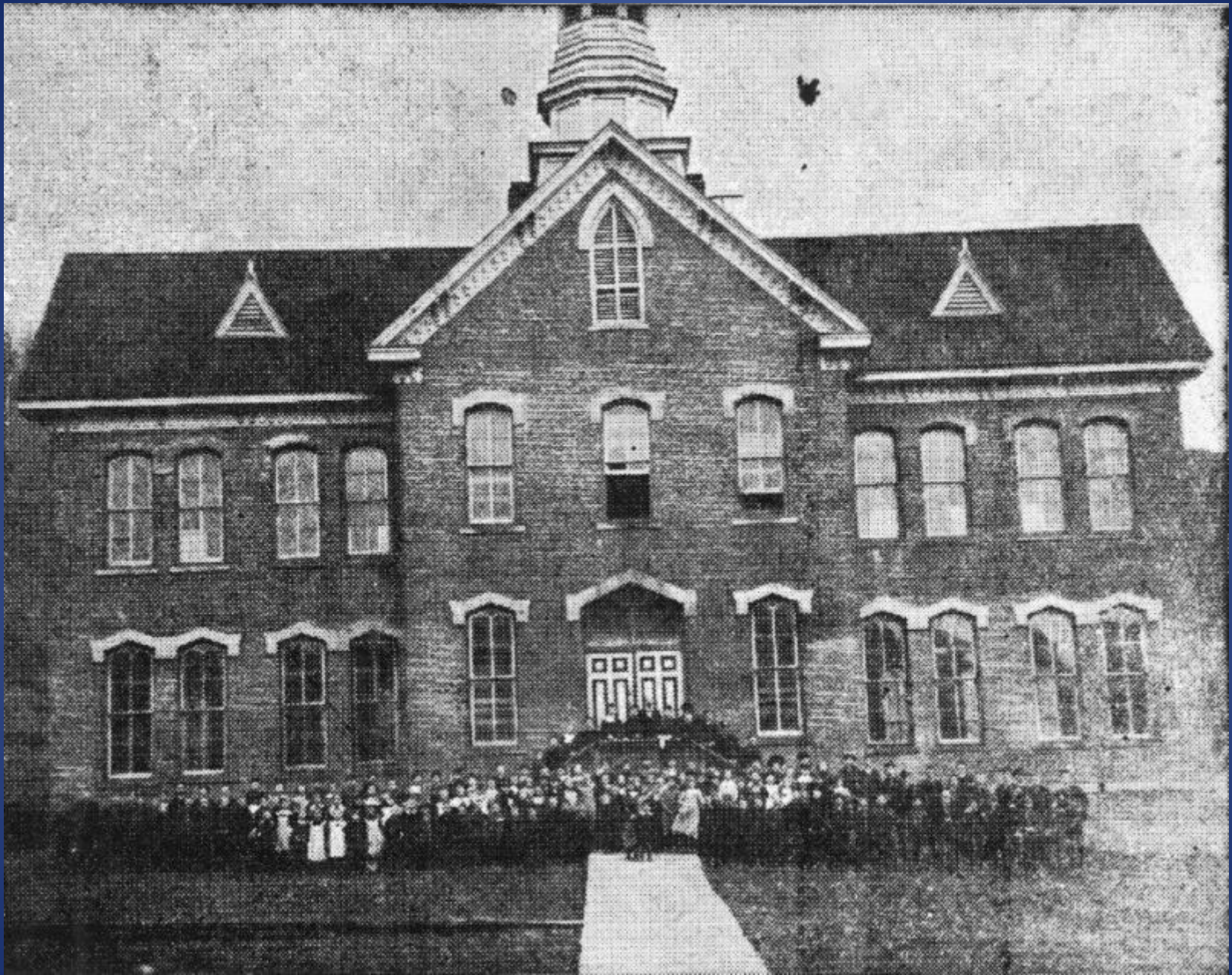


# *A Brief History of Hinton High School*

*Historic Narrative and newspaper  
accounts provided by Fred Long*



*First High School 1887 - 1896*

# First High School Building

By Fred Long

The building was originally just one story with a window on each side of the front door. It was the first brick school and built on land owned by the Central Land Co. Miller's history says it was built in 1879 and went by the name "Hinton College" although it was just a grade school. College must have meant something different in those days. It was located on the lot now used by the school system and the former Hinton High School. It stood along Ballengee Street on lots 8 and 9 and faced Temple Street. If the building stood today it would be next to the old library/band room building. This was a subscription school and not part of the school system.

Hinton grew and worked to add a wing on each side of the building and a second floor was started the following year.

Something happened after this and the school trustees went into bankruptcy. The property reverted back to the Central Land Co., but the court intervened and the trustees were ordered to auction the property with the stipulation that the proceeds would first pay the amount due the Central Land Co. (\$488), second all bills against the building, and third to the trustees to be divided between shareholders.

The Greenbrier District Board of Education bought the property for \$680 on Nov. 26, 1881. They gave \$57.66 cash and two notes for \$311.17. The building sat vacant for the next year while the Board tried to decide what they wanted to do. On July 19, 1882 the Central Land Co. offered to give the Board the two lots if they would put a high school on the property. By this time the back wall of the original building had fallen to the ground and the two

wings badly damaged. On Oct. 28, 1882 they started rebuilding the back wall from the bottom of the windows up. They replaced brick in other locations in both wings and began to finished the work to make it a two-story brick school. Work was finished Aug. 4, 1883. The Board was unable to pay construction costs and a suit was filed. Interior work was unfinished and the building remained vacant.

The board finally paid construction costs and started work on the interior on July 20, 1885. On Oct. 28, 1885 all work was completed. The Central land Co. was contacted and they offered to sell the four lots facing Ballengee St. for \$200 a lot and give them the four lots facing Temple St. This was agreed. The property was deeded to the Board on April 17, 1886. The school opened that year with three teachers: J.J. Campbell, J.S. Rudd and Minnie French. One of them also served as principal. But it was not a high school as promised.

The following year a petition was presented demanding that the Board establish a high school. The Board had the issue submitted to the voters on May 17, 1887. The vote was 301 for, 16 against.

On Sept. 1, 1887 the high school was born. John Hugh Jordan became the first principal. The building did not have any indoor plumbing, that was added in 1892. School enrollment in 1891 was 244, average attendance 163.

In 1895 a large crack appeared in the building. It was decided to take it down and build a new school. A special election was held Dec. 31, 1895 for the issuance of \$12,000 in bonds for the construction of a new school. It passed 279 to 123. Work on the new building began May 4, 1896. It opened Jan. 25, 1897 and the old school building came down.



*Hinton High School Postcard - 1906*



*The Carnegie Library on Ballengee*

*This library was one of 3 libraries in WV built with funds from multi-millionaire Andrew Carnegie. The funds for the Hinton Library were approved on April 8, 1907.*

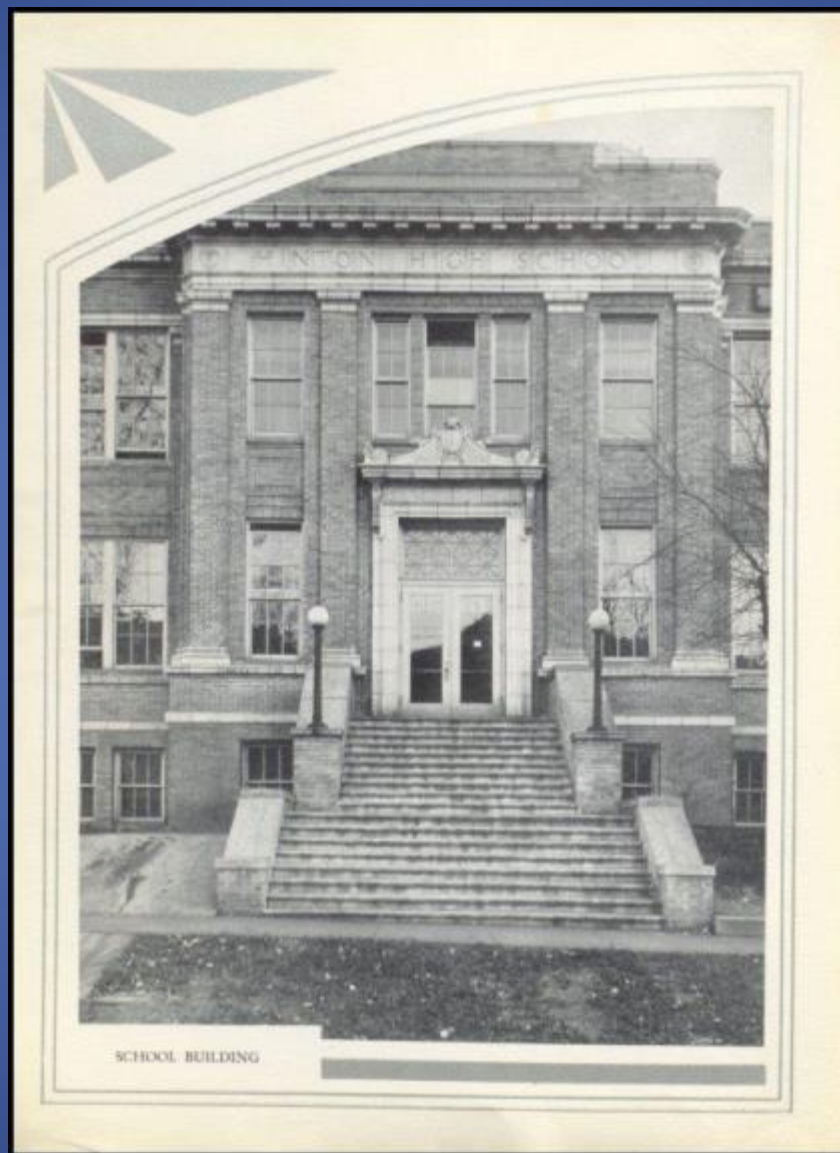




*The corner stone of the new Hinton High School was laid June 27, 1925.*



*The new high school was completed and was first occupied in 1926.  
Note the tower of the old school can be seen in the background.*

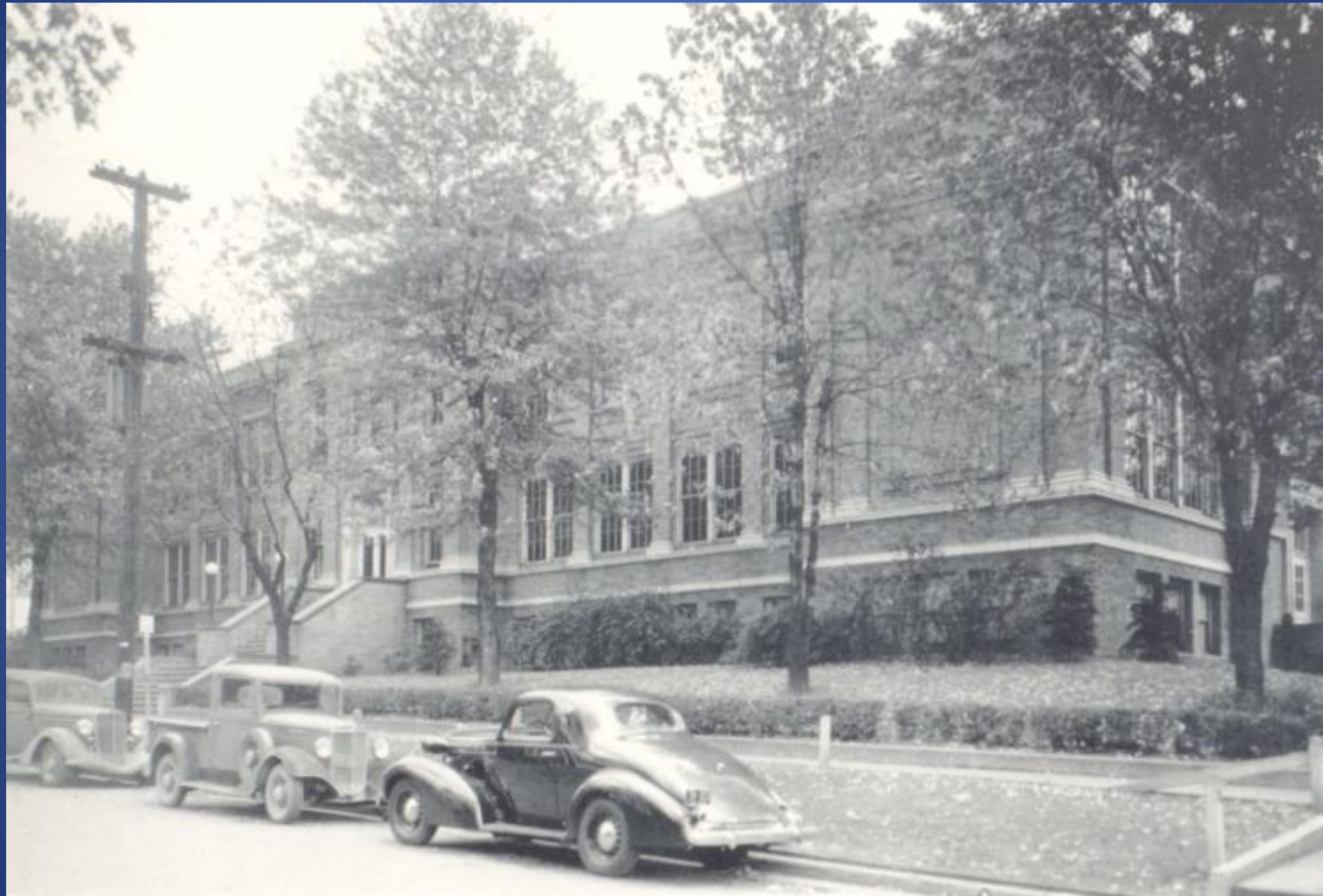


SCHOOL BUILDING

*Hinton High School 1932*



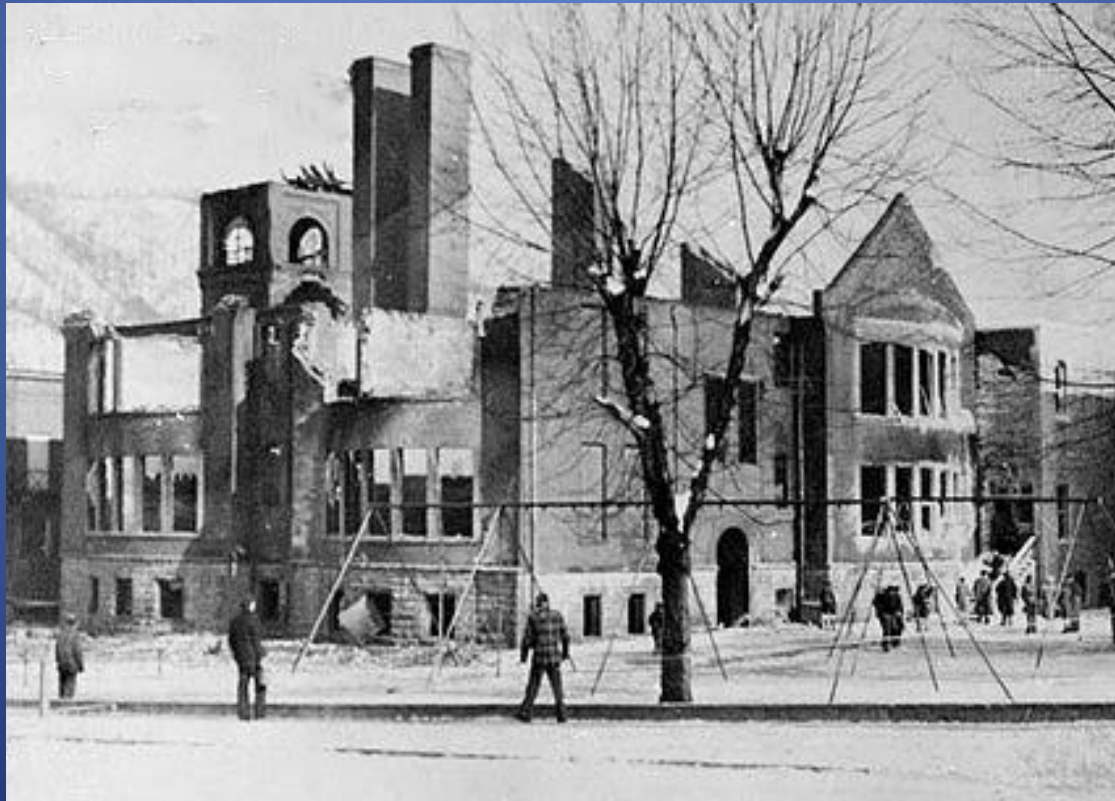
*Hinton High School 1938*



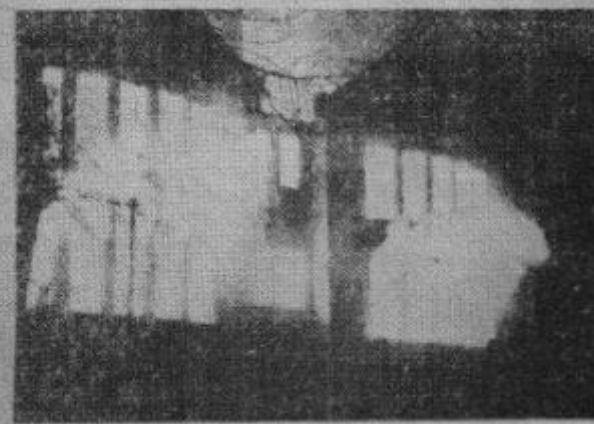
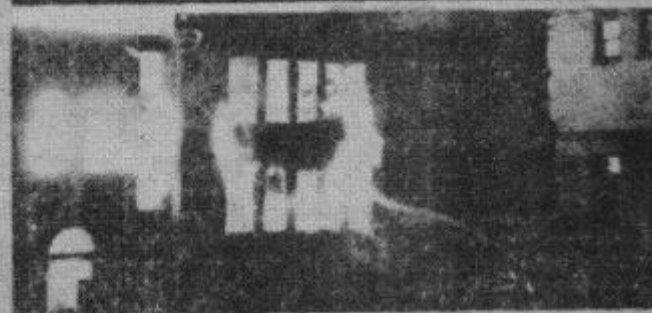
*Hinton High School 1941*

# Central Elementary School Burns

*Following the construction and opening of the New Hinton High School in 1926, the old building became Central Elementary. Central Elementary was destroyed by fire on 23 January 1940. The following photos and article were provided by Fred Long.*



## AS FLAMES DEVoured CENTRAL SCHOOL BUILDING



..These striking photographs show the spectacular glare of flame and smoke against the night sky as fire gutted the old Central school. Upper left gives the scene from the Ballegee street entrance; upper

right is the picture the roaring flames made at their height, showing a part of the throng of hundreds who gathered to watch; center, firemen play a stream of water on the burning building from a point beside the

Carnegie library. The two bottom photos give you the scene as it looked from Fourth avenue, the left one after one of the brick gables had tottered and fallen.

HISTORY OF HINTON  
HIGH SCHOOL  
PART XLVI

By Frederick D. Long

Wednesday, January 24, 1940.

A blanket of snow, measuring almost seven inches in depth, covered the City. It had been snowing, almost continuously for the past twenty-four hours, but by 7:30 a.m. it had slackened off to a few drifting flakes. The temperature had dropped from a high of 30 degrees Tuesday to a low of 12 degrees above zero.

The falling temperatures brought added hazards as the deepest snow in several years turned into a coat of dangerous ice.

Mr. C. N. Gwinn, assistant county superintendent of schools, stated that only two school bus routes in the county would be suspended on account of the snow. They were the Elk Knob and Sand Knob routes carrying pupils to the Hinton High School. The schools would be open.

The furnace in the Central school worked hard that day--but no one can say if that was the cause of it. The coal room was nearby, and much of the day was spent "feeding the

furnace that had been installed new a five or six years before, it was in good condition.

School let out at its usually appointed time. Over four hundred students marched from the Central school building, then the teachers left. J. Logan Cox, janitor, went about the twenty room building doing his daily tasks.

The building had been remodelled the past summer, new floors and ceilings, new joists and light fixtures had been installed. This work had cost almost \$6,000, one-third of what the entire building had cost when built in 1896, forty-four years ago, but it had been worth it. The Board had determined that the building, although old, would stand for several years to come. Several years ago there had been talk of tearing the old building down. But that was back in the twenties.

In the old school paper, *Orange and Black* of January 24, 1930, Maude McLean wrote a column titled "Hinton High School in 1940." She predicted that the "old" Central building would be "Torn down." Now ten years had gone by, to the day, and the school was still standing.

The school housed 458 children, one of the largest enrollments since the new Hinton High School had been built; 172 elementary students and 286 seventh and eighth grade pupils were using the building.

It was about 5:00 o'clock. Mr. Logan Cox went to the basement to check the furnace that was located almost directly under the stairway leading to it, and the stairways leading to the other stories directly overhead. Everything was in order, he left the building.

Starting home, walking up Ballengee Street, on the opposite side of the street; he looked back towards the Central school and saw black smoke coming from the building. In a very few minutes the top of the building was ablaze. Cox turned in the alarm and firemen were on the scene almost immediately. Soon several hundred persons had gathered to watch the fire.

The fire spread rapidly as the Hinton fireman laid four lines to the building; two from the fire truck, a 1926 Seagrave; and one from a water hydrant at the corner of Fourth avenue and Ballengee Street, another from a hydrant at the corner of Temple and Fourth Avenue.



Soon four streams of water were turned into the basement; but due to the configuration of the building, the stairways acting as a "flue" that carried the blaze skyward acting as a certain suction to its ascent, flames climbed quickly to the upper floors.

The fire truck carried 1250 feet of hose and all of it was being used. Fire Chief, Sam Boland, ordered that another 500 feet, which the department kept at Bellepoint, be brought to the scene and a line be laid to the hydrant at the corner of Temple and Third avenue.

The upper floors at the rear of the building were ablaze and great columns of black smoke were rising from the school, flames shooting through the roof. The flames advanced rapidly to the front of the school, then drove downward toward the lower floors. The fire-fighters could do practically nothing to bring it under control.

A short time later the roof

caved in, one of the brick gables on the Fourth avenue side near the Hinton High School toppled outward, almost crushing a fireman; falling at the feet of the hundreds of spectators that had gathered closely to watch.

For more than six hours firemen battled the blazing inferno. After the fire had gone beyond control, efforts were directed toward preventing spread of the flames to the high school and library building, one on each side, separated from the burning school by only a few feet.

Through the long hours, residents of the neighborhood, Mrs. Ira Briers, Mrs. Charlie Lane, Miss Frances Bowman, Joe Lipscomb, Miss Gertrude Lipscomb, Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Hanifin and Fred Maddy, supplied the firemen with hot coffee.

Finally the fire burned out and only the charred brick shell remained.



*Hinton High School 1951*



*Early Construction of the Perry Memorial Gym - 1952*



*Hinton High School Fire of 1952*

## Account of the fire By Fred Long

The night air was bitterly cold, and the freezing wind off New River made it an unpleasant night for the young Marine that was trying to thumb a ride to his home in the West End of town. He was stranded on Temple Street waiting for a ride, but it was nearly 5:00 A.M. and the streets were deserted. The wind made it feel much colder than its actual thirty-five degrees, and he had been standing on the corner stamping his feet and blowing into his hands longer than he wanted. Frustrated, he turned his coat collar up and started walking, the wind at his back. When he reached the old bank building at the corner of 3rd Avenue he noticed a light in one of the upper floor windows. It was the telephone office and for a minute he thought about going inside just to get warm. But he figured the only way he was going to get home was to keep walking and maybe someone would come along to give him a ride.

He walked another block and noticed light coming from the windows of the Hinton High School. He thought that was odd and hurried across the street to get a closer look. It was coming from one of the front upper floor windows. The building was on fire. He immediately turned and ran back to the telephone office, telling the operator the school was on fire. He had seen orange flickering light coming from one of the classrooms. She quickly called the fire department. It was 5:02 A.M., Sunday, December 21, 1952.

Eight minutes later the fire department was on the scene, Fireman James E. Meadows driving the truck. Captain John Lively was with him. Numerous other firemen arrived in their personal vehicles. They hooked to a hydrant and climbed the front steps where the flames were eating away at the interior of the building. Within seconds, they were shooting a heavy stream of water on flames that were sweeping across the auditorium.

The heat was intense and heavy sheets of plaster fell from the ceiling, crashing to the floor, endangering the brave firefighters that stood their ground. Theodore Sembley and his brother Walter were at the front of the hose directing water on the flames when suddenly they shot through the roof. They could see the flames shooting twelve to eighteen feet into the air. Theodore called to the firemen to vacate the room. They had just begun to back out when a large section of the floor collapsed with a tremendous roar. Within seconds, the entire auditorium was engulfed in flames.

In moving toward the door Walter stumbled on the hose, falling back, his head hitting against the wall. He had knocked himself unconscious. Theodore didn't see him fall and was at the front entrance when he noticed his brother was missing. He turned to look inside and saw his brother prone on the floor just inside the door to the auditorium. The flames were not five feet from him and Theodore rushed back in. He grabbed his brother in his huge hands and threw him over his shoulders.

The flames were licking at the wall and at his feet when he carried him from the building and down the concrete steps to safety.

They were giving his brother first aid when an explosion within the building caused the entire structure facing Temple Street to go up in flames. Only the Central school wing was spared. Firemen had already entered that part of the building and were holding the flames back in an effort to save the elementary school that was housed in that section. For almost an hour, in spite of the heat and smoke, they prevented the flames from spreading into that part of the building.

It was several hours before the fire was brought under control and firemen were recalled to the scene several times before it was finally extinguished. The steel columns between the auditorium and the gym, which was underneath, were bent like so much taffy. The interior was completely gutted, but only the rear wall would have to come down. The remaining walls remained stable. On June 11, 1954, the high school building would reopen.



*Results of Hinton High School Fire*





*Results of Hinton High School Fire*



*Results of Hinton High School Fire  
Main Entrance*



*Results of Hinton High School Fire  
Notice Library Building on Ballengee Street*



*Hinton High School 1955*

# Hinton High School Buildings



*Hinton High School 1969*



*Hinton High School – 1980s*



*Hinton High School – 1990s*

*The Class of 1994 was the last Graduating class of Hinton High School.*

*Summers County High School officially opened its doors in the fall of 1994. The Class of 1995 became their first Graduating Class.*

*Summers County Middle School occupied the Hinton High School building until the end of the 2020 – 2021 school year.*