HISTORY OF THE EMERSON SCHOOL

**(1). In 1901** the Emerson School was built on Garrison Ave. It consisted of a brick building, heated by coal and wood stoves with an outhouse. It had windows in all four rooms. The highest enrollment in this little school that I have been able to document was 180 “sittings” as it was called back then which included the teachers. This would never pass today’s classroom size requirements. It was in the Cobban Addition and was valued at $$7,857.00 with an additional valuation of $1,200.00 for the furniture. The lot size was 100x150. This building was later modified to become Section B addressed later in this report.

**(2) Sometime later** this building was replaced by three individual brick buildings on the same lot. One building faced Phillips Ave and the other two faced Garrison Ave. These three buildings had to be erected in the late 1920’s or early 1930’s because my mother went to this school in these buildings and so did I from 1945 – 1953.

I have found that the three buildings were built by the architect firm of J.G. Link & Co. I have recently found out that these records are all housed in a dedicated facility on the Montana State University Campus. When weather permits I intend to visit this library to clarify all of this data.

These 3 buildings housed grades 1-8, a special reading teacher, a teacher named Bess Stone who taught music, penmanship, diacritics, and art and it had a large gym and auditorium which coupled as a library. It also housed, in the basement of Section C, the woodworking and home economics classes. Kids from other schools walked to or were bused to attend these special classes. It was always ranked as one of the biggest schools in Butte.

In 1956 a School District #1 appointed study group reported that the school presented a very serious problem both in regard to increased enrollment and for lack of sufficient ground to new construction. The school was drastically overcrowded. The auditorium had been divided into two classrooms.

The study group recommended to the School Board that they modernize the present buildings and add a multi-purpose room which could be an addition to the present plant, but additional ground would have to acquired. East Junior High would be taking some of the overload by the loss of 7th and 8th grade leaving four empty classrooms to help with the over-load.

**In 1957** the recommendation began to be implemented. The facility on Phillips Ave , known in records as the new Section C, was torn down and replaced with a 62’ wide x 83’ long facility. It is a single-story concrete block and 4” face brick building adjacent to Section B. This new building contains a 50’x83’ gymnasium and stage area. It also included a recessed entry area, corridors, dressing rooms and a storage area. This building had no connection to sections A and B so gym classes required the students to go outside, cross the playground, even in winter, to have gym class.

During the massive change in the Emerson structures, St. John’s Catholic School had closed so this building was leased by the District. The over-flow created by the increased enrollment of the area and the construction of the new building now became the temporary campus for grades 3-4. This building was called the Emerson Annex. More family connection to the Emerson – my son went to the Emerson in what is known as the new building for first and second grade and then the Emerson Annex for third and fourth grade and back to the new building for fifth and sixth grade.

(3**) In 1967 Section A** which is the building on the south facing Garrison and **Section B** which was also on Garrison were replaced with the building we now know as the Emerson on Phillips Ave.

The new Section A is 182’x65’ wide three-story concrete block masonry building with 4” brick with decorative concrete walls below each window. There are 6 classrooms with toilets on the 1st floor, shop; mechanical and boiler rooms are also on the first floor. The second floor includes 6 classrooms with toilets, reception room, vault, library and 2 teacher toilets and teachers’ lounge. There are 9 classrooms, 3 toilets and a storage room on the third floor. Original plans called for the construction of a hydraulic passenger elevator with three stops. This was not ever completed.

The new Section B is 66’x79’ long and is a single story concrete block masonry building with 4” face brick connecting the areas between the main school building (section A) and the multipurpose building (section C). This section houses the music room, 2 toilets, 1 dressing room and the principal’s office.

This school stands today with 23 classrooms, 22 use K-6, averaging 25 per classroom. The school capacity is 550. The largest enrollment recorded 556 in 1973; however other statistics site an enrollment of 836 in 1973. In 2012 it serves 404 students grades K-6. The original plans called for an elevator.

According to Joyce Dresser, who as of this writing (2012) is an employee at Books and Books, was one of the first teachers to be assigned to the new building in 1967. She taught one of the younger grades. For the first several months there were very limited supplies in the new building.

This information was compiled through research at the Montana Standard records department at the Butte Public Library, questioning former teachers at both facilities and by the attendance of my family. In no way is this report to be considered 100% accurate, however the dates herein are accurate. I will continue to substantiate this information and keep all recipients of the report updated. I found no records on the history of this school at the School District #1 office.

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2/26/12