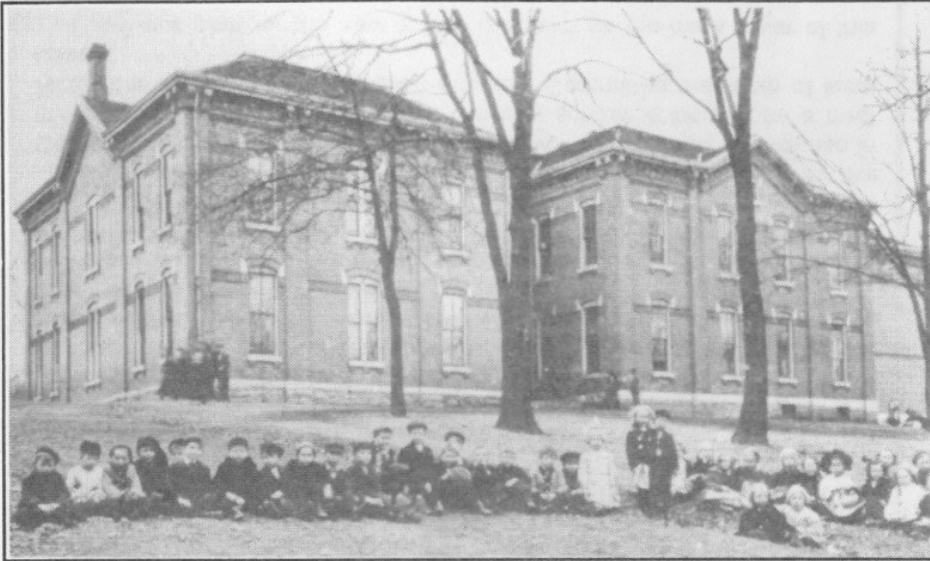


Old Central School - 1884



According to *Goodspeed's History of McDonald and Newton Counties* (1888), the **first school** in the Neosho area was in the Hearrell, Ruark and Price neighborhoods, about the time Newton County was organized (1839). Earlier in the decade, schools were operating in the Newtonia area.

Lemuel B. Hearrell is credited with opening the first school in **Neosho** in 1842, three years after the city was established. Classes were held in the old Masonic Hall, located at the southeast corner of Spring and Lafayette Streets. It served as many as 42 students. The playground was the dirt street in front of the Hall. Later, as an outgrowth of passions during the Civil War, Hearrell narrowly avoided a lynching for being a Southern sympathizer.

Central (Academy) Hill, the present site of Central Elementary School, was the focal point of **public education** in Neosho during the post-Civil War period. In 1866, intent upon restoring educational opportunities disrupted by the war, Neosho organized a six-member board of education. Plans were launched to repair the two-room,

brick school on Academy Hill, which had housed Miss Savage's Academy. This structure had sustained heavy damage during the war. In 1870, a two-story, four-room building was constructed at a cost of \$2,675. This school served the community until 1885.

In 1882, after a period of rapid growth in Neosho, approval was given to build a new school, but a big fuss erupted over the site for the structure. This delayed construction for more than a year. Finally, with a court order in hand, the board of education proceeded to build the **school shown here**. This structure was completed in 1884 at a cost of \$10,000. This facility, destined to house Neosho's first high school, served the community for forty-five years.

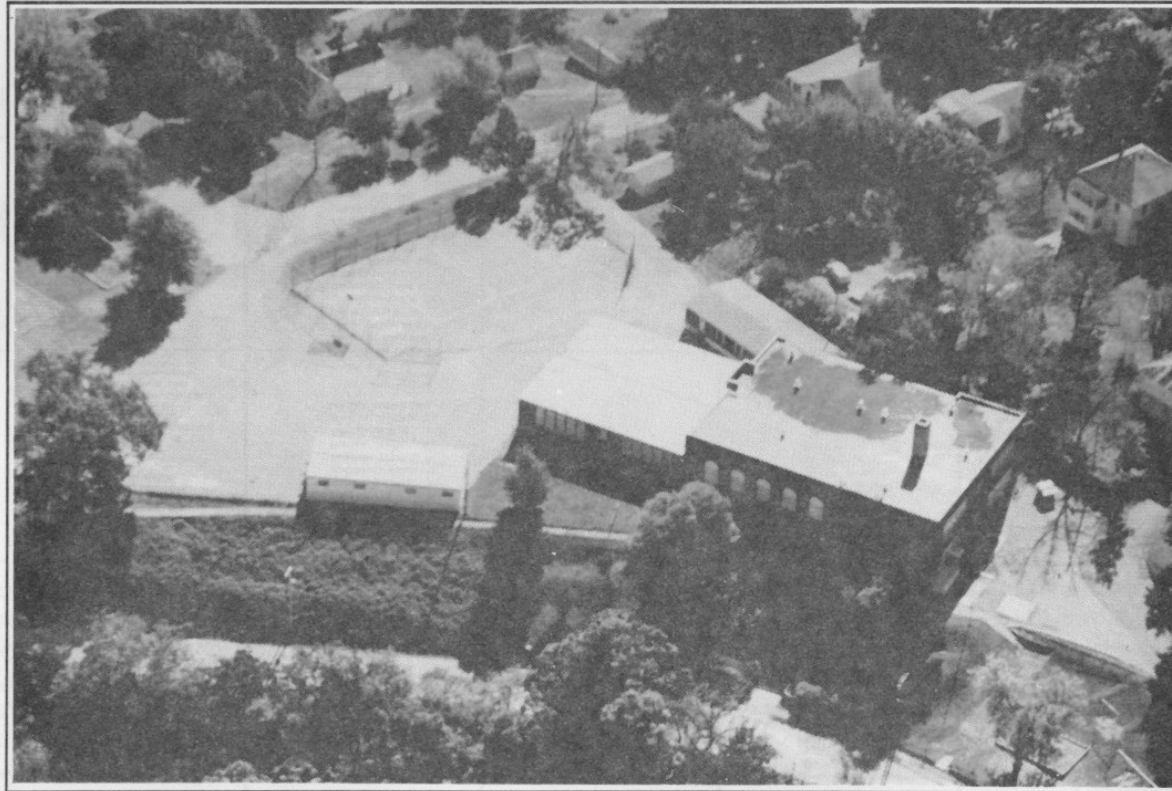
This edifice, initially featuring twin towers, was visible from the city square. In his unpublished *History of the Old School* (1930), Harold Geyer spoke of the community pride in the structure:

...It was some building for those days, and the patrons of the school and the citizens generally pointed to its magnificence as it stood on this commanding height, and the *Stroller* of that date, in his journalistic exuberance, compared it favorable with the Capitol Building in Washington.

The **first classes** for Neosho High School were held September 6, 1886. The first graduating class in 1889 consisted of six students, all girls. The high school course of study consisted of a three-year program until 1900, when the fourth year was added. Central School continued to house the high school program until 1915, when a new high school (now Intermediate) was completed.

The central facility on West Hickory Street continued as a school center until 1930, when it was razed to make way for the new Central Elementary School. An emotional **farewell party** was held April 7, 1930, to honor the old school.

Central School



Central Elementary School is the custodian of a rich educational heritage in Neosho. A school has been located on the West Hickory Street site since before the Civil War.

The present school was built in 1930 and enlarged in 1954. It replaced a facility that had served the Neosho community since 1884. The old United Service Organization (USO) building of the Camp Crowder era, which later served the community as a recreation center, was located on the Central campus, east of the school, until it was destroyed by fire in 1966.

Central is a two-story, brick structure, which contains 17,085 square feet. For the year just ending, Central had 250 students in grades 1-5.

**The mission of the Neosho R-5 School District is to facilitate learning,
to nurture individual potential, and to assist students to believe
in themselves through successful learning experiences.**

**—Mission Statement for the
Neosho R-5 School District**