

Summary History of the San Carlos School District and Central Middle School

The San Carlos School District was established in 1916. Classes were held in a house at the corner of San Carlos Avenue and Elm Street until 1918, when the first school building was constructed using bond funding, and our current PTA was first formed. As the school population grew a second school bond was issued and a new school was constructed in 1930 at the current Central Middle School site. The original school on Elm Street was purchased by the City of San Carlos for use as their City Hall. The new concrete building designed by San Francisco architect Col. E.L. Norberg featured six classrooms and an auditorium.

In 1939, the school trustees received funding through the Federal Emergency Administration for an addition at the north end of the school building. Mustang Hall included an auditorium with a stage and dressing rooms, two classrooms, a kindergarten and a clinic. Additionally, a cafeteria was located underneath the stage. Architects Thomas M. Edwards and Harry A. Schary designed the 1939 addition.

In 1941, in a stark departure from the previous design style, a Modern classroom addition was constructed at the south wing of the grammar school building, and in 1942 a free standing classroom building, an early “finger plan” model, was constructed across Chestnut Street near Woodland Avenue. Architects Birge and David Clark designed the addition and the new classroom building in the Modern style that was being used across California in the development of school buildings in the 1940s.

The district continued to expand and constructed six more schools between 1944 and 1956: White Oaks, Brittan Acres, Tierra Linda, Arundel, Laureola, and Heather. Arundel and White Oaks were both designed by San Francisco-based architect Ernest J. Kump. Kump was well-known for his Modern post-war school designs. Architect Delp W. Johnson was a San Carlos resident and an associate architect of Ernest Kump on at least two projects: San Jose Technical High School in San Jose and Las Lomas High School in Lafayette. Johnson would become the primary architect for the San Carlos School District from 1960 to 1970. In 1960 he designed both San Carlos High School (which was razed in 1988) and a new classroom building for Central School.

In 1960 a portion of Chestnut Street was deeded from the City of San Carlos to the school district and closed for the construction of the third classroom building. Delp W. Johnson designed the new building to contain six classrooms and a library. At this time Johnson also renovated the north end of Mustang Hall for use as the school district offices and designed an addition at the southwest corner of the building to accommodate new locker rooms. Harrod and Williams of Sunnyvale served as the project contractors.

At the Central School site Johnson’s firm Delp W. Johnson, Poole and Storm also designed the four octagonal “pod” buildings that were constructed in 1970 (currently 2 remain: one houses the Band, Orchestra and Library rooms shared by Central and Arroyo, and the other is for the SCEF offices). That was when the original 1930 school building was demolished, as it was found to be seismically unsafe. The 1930 building and the 1941 south-end addition were both removed and the pods were built. The contractor for the project was De Narde Construction Company of San Francisco.

1982 and 1990 saw design work completed for the site by architect James Coke of Sausalito. In 1982 renovations were done to two of the pod structures, the faculty area, the library, and the classroom wings. In 1990 a classroom building, most likely a portable unit, was relocated and a covered porch constructed.

Then in 1998 the new gymnasium designed by the architectural firm of Stafford King Wiese was constructed at the north end of the campus. An existing one-story wood frame building was demolished to allow for the new gym. Also at this time interior alterations and modernizations occurred throughout the campus.

Central School Campus Chronology

- 1930** Central Elementary School opened at Chestnut Street (Architect E. L. Norberg)
- 1939** North end auditorium addition constructed (Mustang Hall) (Architects Edwards and Schary)
- 1941** Classroom addition constructed at the south end of the original 1930 school building (Architect Birge M. Clark and David B. Clark)
- 1942** Classroom building constructed through Chestnut Street, near Woodland Ave. (Architect Birge M. Clark and David B. Clark)
- 1960** Section of Chestnut Street closed and property deeded to the school; Classroom building and library constructed; Mustang Hall renovated for school district offices and an addition was constructed at the southwest corner for locker rooms (Architect Delp W. Johnson)
- 1970** Original classroom building demolished. Pod structures constructed; Interior alterations to 1960's classroom building (Architect Delp W. Johnson)
- 1982** Alterations to 2 of the pods, the faculty area, the library, and classroom wings (Architect James Coke & Associates)
- 1990** Construction of covered porch and relocation of a classroom building (Architect James Coke & Associates)
- 1998** Gymnasium constructed; One story wood frame building at the north end of campus removed; General modernizations throughout the campus (Architect Stafford King Wiese)
- 2014** Major remodel and a new 2-story addition completed with entrance on Cedar St. The new building is designed with innovative learning spaces and furniture that encourage community building, flexible groupings and blended learning. Portions of the old Central Middle School campus buildings were remodeled and became the Arroyo Upper Elementary (grades 4 and 5).