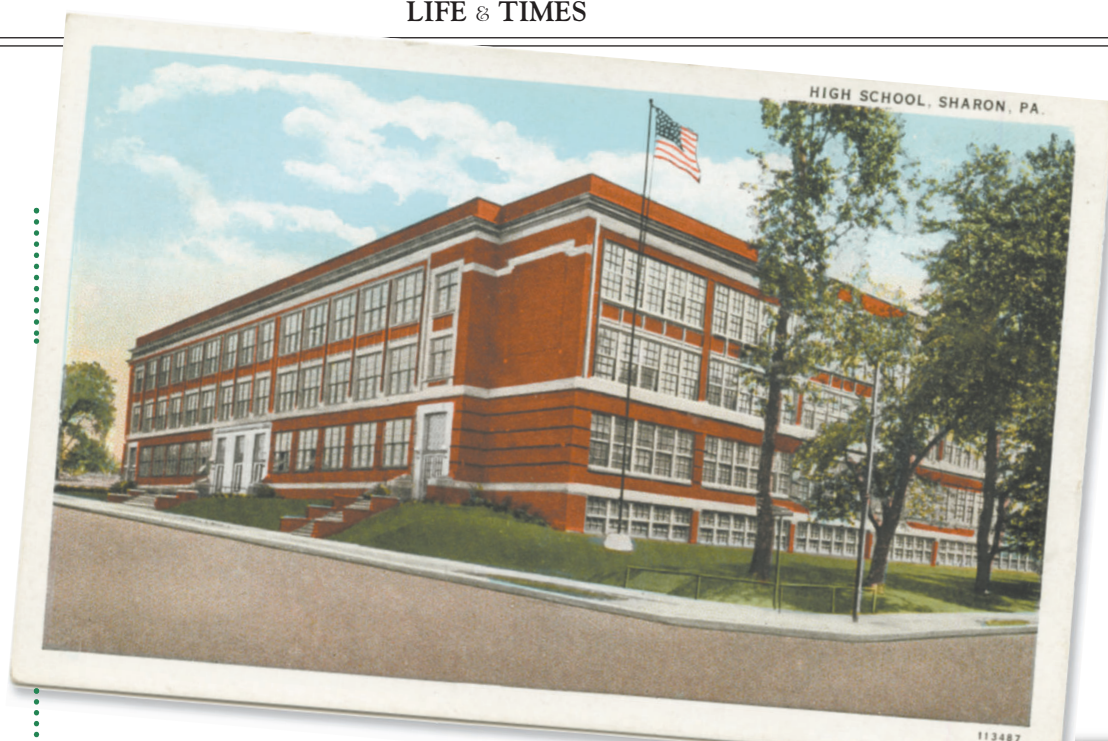




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At left, a 1927 postcard of Sharon High School at the northeast corner of Case Avenue and East State Street.

Below, a photograph from the 1924 Sharon High School Mirror yearbook showing the unfinished building that the next year's classes would be attending. It said the building cost \$600,000 and could hold 1,000 students and a faculty of 50.

Case Ave. school has served Sharon well

By John Zavinski

SHARON'S CASE AVENUE Elementary School building certainly has been proven to be versatile. In its 85-year history it has at times held every grade level from kindergarten to 12th grade.

Someday soon, however, school for will be out for good; the school board considered a renovation but recently decided to replace it with a new elementary building nearby.

The three-story, red-brick structure opened as a junior-senior high in the fall of 1924, when the growing city of Sharon had a 1920 Census population of 21,747.

It replaced the South Water Avenue high school that stood near the end of the present Connelly Boulevard bridge. That building later served as an elementary school for several decades.

Seventh- and eighth-graders moved in the '20s to a junior high downtown that today is the Shenango Campus of Penn State University.

Ninth-graders moved downtown from Case Avenue in 1949, a year after Don Bennett arrived in town and taught the unlikely combination of high school mathematics and health.

Bennett followed the ninth-graders



downtown for three years but then returned to the Case building as a teacher and later guidance counselor.

The last senior class to graduate from the Case building was 1968, and then grades seven and eight moved back into it. But the new high school just up the block wasn't finished on time. So for the first semester of the 1968-69 year, grades seven through 12 shared the Case building, attending classes in morning and afternoon shifts.

Bennett became an assistant principal at the new high school and later principal. In the year he retired – 1983-84 – the seventh and eighth grades moved into the high school building. Some neighborhood elementary schools were closed and the Case building became Case Avenue Elementary School for grades K-6.

An architectural study of the building last year notes that the Case building originally was U-shaped around an open courtyard on the east side. Most of that space was filled in 1950 with the addition of a gymnasium.

Case was renovated in 1976, but the study found that the building is simply wearing out from age. Another renovation would require not only replacing major systems such as heating but also significant work to meet modern accessibility standards.

Renovation would have cost more than building a new school, and at about 150,000 square feet, the building also is about twice as big as the space the district needs.

So after months of debate and deliberation, the school board is going with a replacement building, somewhere on the same property. And thus the Case Avenue building's days are numbered.



John Zavinski/Life & Times
Case Avenue Elementary School today houses about 500 students in kindergarten through sixth grade.