

The Gymnasium Building Mooresville, Indiana



In 1996, the Save the Newby Gym Committee was formed to raise money to repair the aging building. The committee was comprised of junior basketball league officers, school administrators, and civic leaders, some of whom had played on the Newby court during their high school athletic careers. The committee worked from 1996 until renovations were completed in the fall of 1999. A grant from the Lilly Endowment in the amount of \$77,150 was presented to the committee in 1997. These funds, along with other money raised by the committee through donations and fundraising efforts, allowed for the much needed repairs to the facility. These repairs included; improving the structural integrity of the north wall, building and painting bleachers for the north side of the gym, replacing all of the windows, replacing the entire floor, and the installation of a handicapped accessible bathroom – not to mention evicting numerous bats that had made the Newby Gym their home. The renovated gym was rededicated on September 11, 1999.

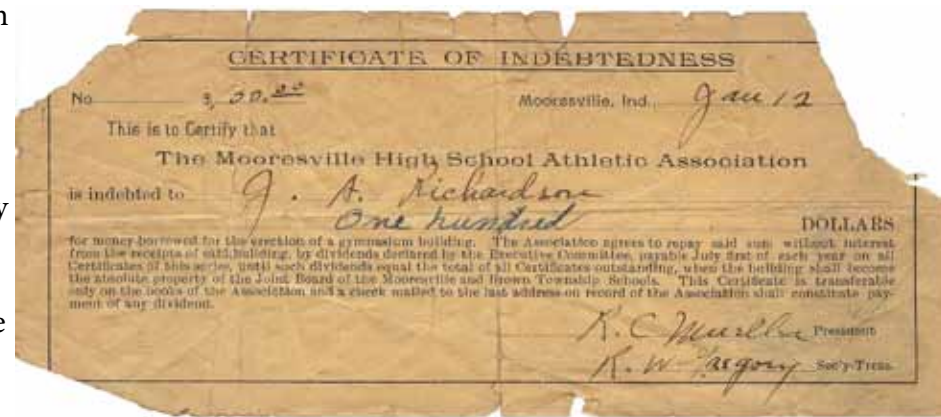
Top right: Sophomore girls dance around the Maypole during May Day 1957 events; Top Left: Homecoming dance 1956; Below: The Girls Athletic Association plays basketball in the gym 1955. Front Cover: Top: 1957 Graduation; Lower Left: Basketball 1955; Lower Right: The Gymnasium in 2012.



A fund for the preservation of the Newby Gym is set up at the Community Foundation of Morgan County. Plaques with pieces of the original wood floor are available for sale with proceeds benefitting the fund. Find more information at www.cfmconline.org or 317-831-1232.



The idea for a basketball gymnasium in Mooresville began on the Martinsville division of the Indianapolis, Terre Haute and Eastern interurban railway. A conductor on the railway, Virgil Self, who was an avid basketball fan, was constantly talking to his Mooresville passengers about the need for a basketball gymnasium in town. In the summer of 1920 the idea took flight and plans were made to build the gymnasium.



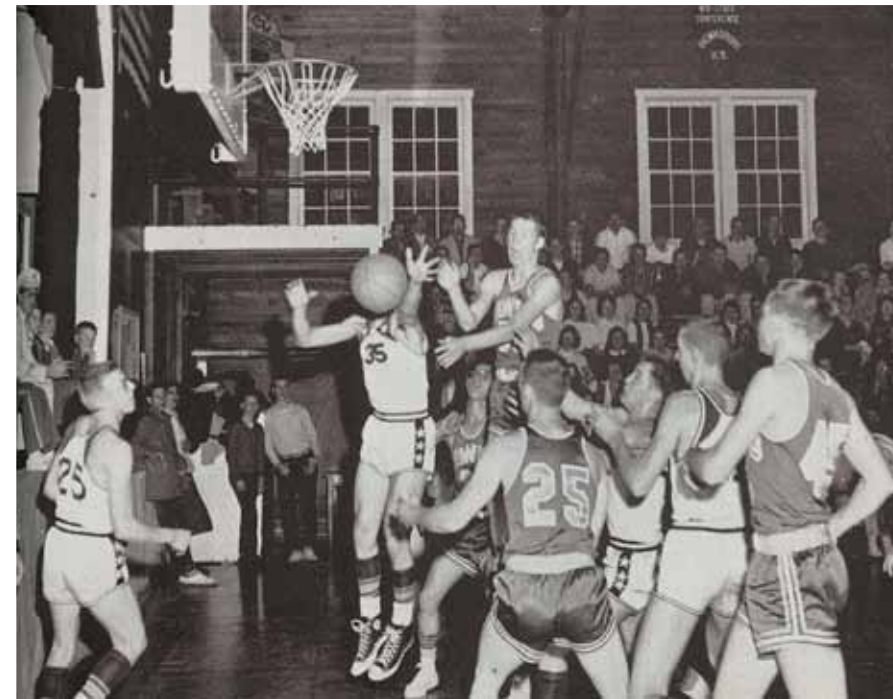
To finance the building of the gymnasium, local merchants and residents loaned \$100 each to the Mooresville High School Athletic Association, the money to be repaid in an unspecified period with no interest.

Z.M. Smith, Superintendent of Mooresville Schools, Principal R.C. Mueller, and R.W. Gregory, director of training in vocational agriculture, talked it over with school board members W.L. Milner, H.V. Johnson, C.R. Wilson and G.E. Larmer. The Mooresville Athletic Association While the goal was to get 100 donors, the Mooresville Athletic Association ledger shows a total of 94 donors.

The construction began in the fall of 1920 and was completed in the spring of 1921. The gymnasium was dedicated on December 31, 1920 before construction was totally finished. The dedication ceremony included a concert by the Friends Church Orchestra, a tug of war between area youth, followed by four basketball games. The first game played in the new gymnasium was between the Mooresville High School boys' team and a team from Center Grove. That game was followed by a girls' game between Mooresville and Brownsburg, then the Monrovia girls' team played Center Grove, followed by a game between the Mooresville Elks and a team of Mooresville alumni. A portion of the proceeds from the dedication were used to pay off some of the indebtedness from the loans. All of the families that loaned money for the construction of the gym were given free passes to attend all of the home basketball games for the coming season.

The official accounting ledger for the a percentage of all receipts were devoted to cancelling the notes of indebtedness against the Athletic Association, although several of the note holders had signified their intention of cancelling their notes. In later years, when all the income was needed by the athletic department for its program, Superintendent Forrest Caldwell devised the plan for the note holders to be given free passes to athletic events to repay them for their help in building the gym.

Top: J.A. Richardson's original Certificate of Indebtedness for his \$100 contribution to the Mooresville High School Athletic Association; Below: Newby campus aerial shot from 1951 yearbook; Right: 1959 basketball game action and student cheer block



The gymnasium building is 100 feet by 75 feet, with the basketball court measuring 70 feet by 45 feet (a regulation high school court is 84 feet by 50 feet). The original seating consisted of portable bleachers on each side of the court. Portable chairs were placed in the balcony (now the concession stand) for basketball games. Portable opera chairs were placed on the floor when the stage was used, seating approximately 1,200 people. The chairs were stored beneath the stage when not in use.

The total cost of the gymnasium was approximately \$23,000. Originally the building had a wood frame exterior, but a brick veneer was added in the summer of 1921 so that the gym matched the other buildings on campus.



The building of the gymnasium was truly a community effort. Not only was it financed by the community, the boys' high school basketball team hauled the 180 yards of gravel needed in making the concrete base for the floor and foundation. The young men also did the excavating for the basement.

The Newby Gymnasium (known as the Mooresville High School gymnasium at the time) was the first basketball gymnasium built in Morgan County. In 1924 Martinsville High School opened their gymnasium (later renamed Glenn Curtis Gym, in honor of their state championship coach – it is now the Martinsville West Middle School gymnasium), the largest gymnasium in the state at that time with a seating capacity of 5,200.

The need for the gymnasium coincided with an explosion of interest in the game of basketball in Indiana. The first state tournament was held in Bloomington in 1911 with 12 teams participating. By 1915, there were so many teams involved in the tournament that 14 sectional competitions were organized. That number grew to 32 sectionals in 1921 and to 64 sectionals in 1925.

The Newby Gym served as home to the Mooresville High School basketball teams from 1921 until 1959, at which time the new high school was opened. From 1959 to 1965 it served as the junior high gymnasium, when Paul Hadley Junior High was opened.

The gymnasium has been the home of the Mooresville Junior Basketball League since the early 1960s. It was used for elementary school physical education from 1936 to 1993, when a gym addition was built onto Newby Elementary School. In 1993, the Junior Basketball Leagues signed a lease with the school corporation for sole use and upkeep of the facility. The school corporation occasionally uses the gym for special programs.

Many of the features of the gymnasium were donated by graduating classes of Mooresville High School and local fans. These donations include the backboards (Classes of 1930 and 1931), the scoreboard (fans of 1943-44), and the stage curtain (Class of 1954-55).