

EHS Campus 2: 1927 – 1955



On March 22nd, 1927, the new Escondido High School campus opened to students for the very first time. Located just south of the original campus at what is now the corner of Fourth Avenue and Hickory Street, the new EHS was a modern, three-story building that eased the overcrowding problems the school had been experiencing. With the construction of this new building, school spirit rose to an all-time high, and EHS athletics won three county championships that year.

In 1933, a major earthquake in Long Beach was felt all the way down in Escondido. It gave all Californians quite a scare, but none more than state school officials. After the earthquake, they ordered inspections of all California schools, and the new EHS campus was one of the ones deemed unsafe. The state sent a letter to the school district confirming the results of the inspection, but the letter mysteriously disappeared...

The EHS campus grew on April 28th, 1939 when a brand new, \$134,000 auditorium was completed. With 252 seats, a basketball court, two new classrooms, makeup rooms for drama, a projection room for movies, athletic locker rooms, and a stage, the auditorium offered EHS students many new academic and extracurricular opportunities. At the time, it was one of the safest, most advanced buildings in the state with 133 tons of reinforced steel and 52 tons of structural steel used in its construction.

The 1950's brought more overcrowding and a need to build a second high school in Escondido. As a result, the school district announced plans to purchase a 45-acre piece of property on North Broadway in North Escondido. The property was to become the site of a brand new school called Vallecitos High School.

It would eventually take two voter approved bond measures to complete the construction of Vallecitos High. However, when the school district went to the state to start the process for the second bond, that missing 1933 earthquake safety report suddenly turned up. State officials stood by their claims that the main building at EHS was unsafe, and they said that the district was not allowed to attempt another bond measure until EHS was vacated.

Thus, on March 15, 1955, almost 28 years to the day since it had opened, the Escondido High School main building at 4th and Hickory was forced to shut its doors forever. For the next two years, students took their classes in new

buildings at Vallecitos, in the auditorium and other “safe” classes at the old campus, and in temporary tents. Most of the supposedly unsafe campus remained standing until the mid-1980’s. Ironically, when demolition crews tried to tear it down, they almost couldn’t because the massive bricks had been sealed using cement instead of mortar. Today, an apartment complex stands where EHS once did.

Fun Facts

- Under the direction of Coach Harry Wexler, EHS athletics thrived. Never before had football and other sports won so many championships. Some stories say that it was around this time that the EHS nickname changed to the Cougars. The suspected reason: Wexler graduated from Washington State, and their nickname was the Cougars.
- Each year at the start of football season, it was an EHS tradition to kick off the season with a large bonfire and pep rally. This ritual continued for decades, but it somehow came to an end as time marched on.
- 1941 marked the year that the school newspaper, “The Cougar,” celebrated its tenth anniversary. At this time, the paper was published weekly, and students had to buy it through a subscription plan. In ’41, circulation hit an all time high with 350 subscriptions being sold.