

Historic designation: They still love their Timken High School

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Several people join the Timken High School Alumni Association in celebrating having the Timken High School building placed on the National Register of Historic Places

CANTON Cathy Toth expresses feelings of gratitude toward the stately downtown building once known as Timken Vocational High School for putting her and others on path to “great careers.”

In return, Toth, a 1968 graduate, joined two other women, Nancy George and Kathy Prosser Bovard, in the arduous task of convincing the Ohio Historical Society to put the high school structure at 521 Tuscarawas St. W on the National Register of Historic Places.

“We really remember the great education we got here,” said Toth after a ceremony Sunday recognizing the honor for the Timken High School building. “It helped us get great careers. We had a really great high school experience.”

Toth, who lives in the Massillon area, held jobs with local nonprofit social service agencies. The event attracted enough people that the school cafeteria, or Timken Commons, appeared to be near capacity.

“I would say probably 95% of the people here are Timken (alumni) people,” said William “Bill” Trbovich, president of the Timken High School Alumni Association, who presided over the ceremony.

Canton City Board of Education closed Timken High School in 2015 and merged its academic and extracurricular activities with McKinley High School. That made Canton City School District a one-high-school system. However, the Timken High campus remains in use by the school system. Several McKinley High School programs, such as classes for the freshman class, are in the Timken building.

“The building is still part of the economics of what we do as a (school) district,” said John Rinaldi, president of the Canton City Board of Education. “It is still a viable part of how we run the district. We can’t just shut one (high school building) down and put everyone in one building.”

The National Register of Historic Places, which is under the U.S. Department of the Interior, recognizes structures and sites that are deemed worthy of preservation because of historic and cultural significance.

The Timken High building opened in 1939. In its early years, Timken High was devoted to vocational education.

“This is truly a community celebration,” Canton Mayor Thomas Bernabei said at the ceremony. “Timken High School has a proud history in downtown Canton. It was built back in 1939 with a substantial gift from The Timken Co. and the Timken Foundation.”

It became a general and college preparatory education high school in the mid-1970s.

Nancy George, one of the ceremony speakers, listed six factors which give the school building historical significance. One is the site was designated for education by Bezaleel Wells, who founded Canton in the early 1800s.

The building features art deco architecture, and there are art deco murals inside which are the work of former student Frank Marchione. Another factor was the donation from H.H. Timken, who joined his father, Henry, in founding the Timken Roller Bearing and Axle Co.

Another factor was the building was one of the first vocational schools in the nation.

Lastly, the high school building was open 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week at one time to provide training for adults during World War II.

“We are happy to see so many hearts that bleed blue and gold,” George said.

Blue and gold were the school colors, while the mascot was the Trojan. Among some, there remains resentment to the closure of Timken High School.

“I don’t like what they did,” said Jim Abbott, a 1961 graduate of Timken High. “I don’t agree with them doing away with Timken High School. Hopefully, this (historic designation) will help keep it here longer.”

Abbott, founder of local business Abbott Electric, credits his high school education with providing him with early knowledge to operate an electrical business.

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