

Renovation work should be little inconvenience

By William L. Weir
Staff Writer

BRANFORD - Except for a rearrangement of student parking, the Branford High School renovations work should not have much effect on students when they return to school Tuesday, school officials said.

Construction on the \$24.3 million renovations project began in early July. According to David Kozma, chairman of the School Building Committee, much of the heavy work was being done over the summer, so it wouldn't disturb students when school is in session.

Assistant Principal Joseph Fazzino said last week that the project seems on schedule.

"I think that as far as the students are concerned, there won't be any hardships for at least a year," he said.

The parking lot has been rearranged, with some new spaces created near the sports fields. The new spaces make up for the 150 spaces, used by students, temporarily taken away due to construction. The new spaces should accommodate all parking, Fazzino said, but will require students to walk farther to the school building.

Besides parking, some lockers have been relocated.

Since students won't be able to cut through the courtyard in the middle of the building, school officials relocated some of the lockers to cut down on walking time between classes.

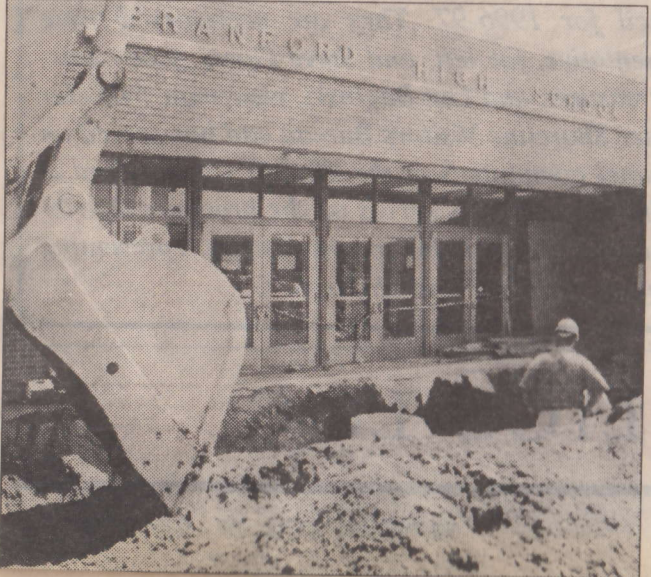
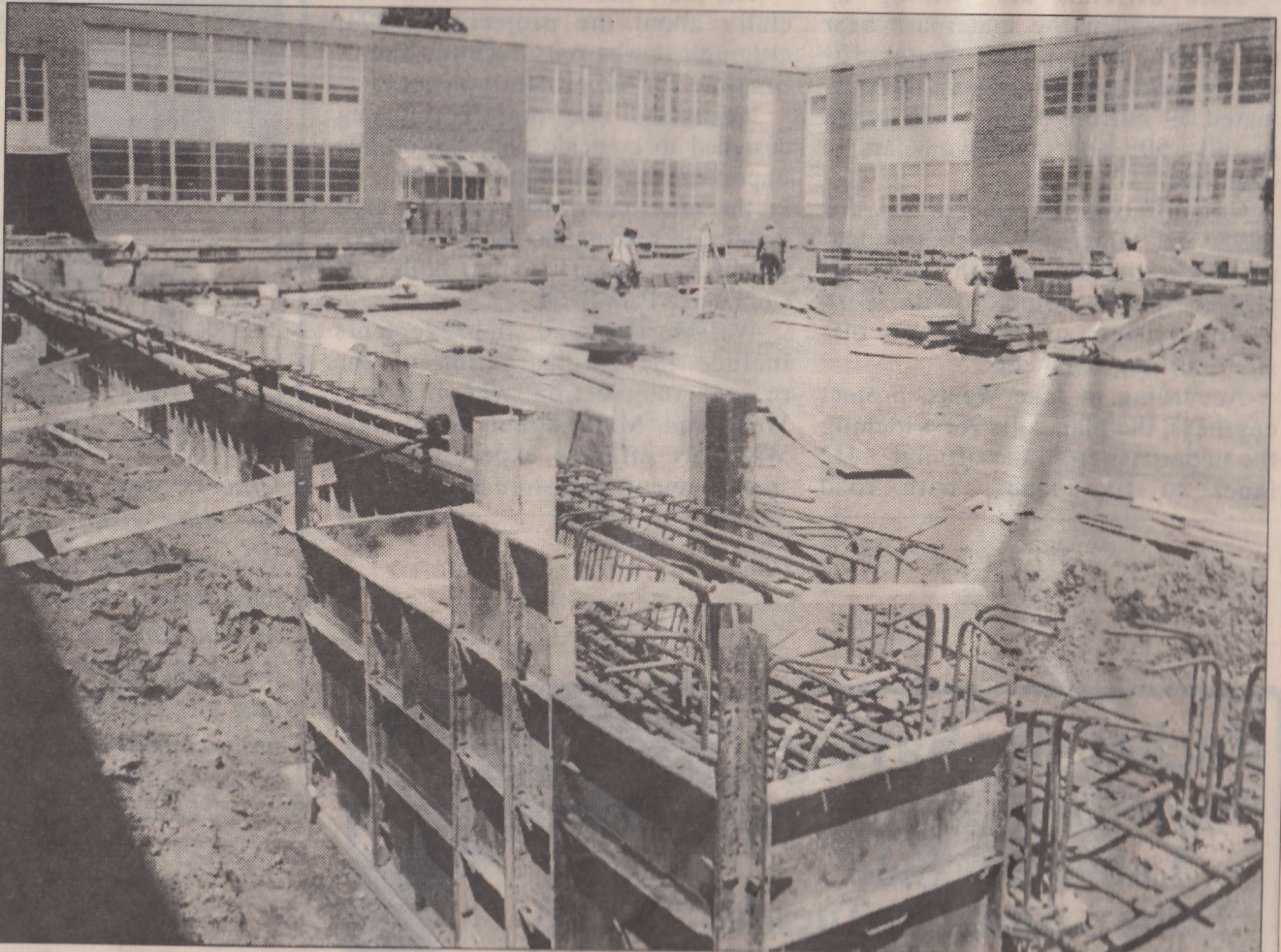
"As of Friday, no problems were anticipated for the first day of school," Kozma said.

Kozma added that there have been a few minor problems since work began, such as a concrete pipe, discovered while digging, that had to be relocated.

Also, an electrical transformer had to be moved. So far, though, nothing has thrown the project off schedule, he said.

Most of the work this summer has entailed clearing out the courtyard, which will be covered with a roof, and driving piles into the ground for the construction of a second story floor on the building's G wing, which

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Renovation work at Branford High School entails the construction of a second story on the building's G wing that will contain 14 new classrooms.

Photo by Lisa A. Lee

High school wall collapses over weekend

By Dave Altamari
Register Staff

BRANFORD — High school officials scrambled to find classroom space Monday for students after a wall collapsed over the weekend near where workers were drilling pilings for a \$24.3 million expansion project.

The wall, on the north side of the building facing Route 1, collapsed sometime Friday night or Saturday morning.

"It was a quick pop — like snapping a Hershey bar," Board of Education Chairman Anthony Uzzo said, noting that the roof sagged as well.

About 10 classrooms, including all social studies classes, had to be moved to the new gymnasium at least temporarily while engineers and architects tried to figure out why the wall in G-wing collapsed. Some students even had class in the front lobby near the school offices.

No one will be allowed in the damaged section until engineers determine whether it's stable, and there is a good chance classes will not return there at all, Superintendent of Schools Bruce Storm said.

G-wing, located near the football field, was built in the 1970s and includes the Horizons program classrooms as well as social studies classes. The Horizons program is a special program designed for students at risk of dropping out.

Storm said the short-term plan will be to move the Horizons programs into the old gymnasium and use some other resource rooms on the second floor for other classes.

Fusco Corp., the contractor for the first phase of the project, was drilling pilings in the area although it hasn't been determined if that caused the wall collapse, according to School Building Committee Chairman Dave Kozma.

The pilings were part of the initial phase for a second floor over G-wing while classes were going on below.

Once the second floor was completed, G-wing was going to be demolished sometime in the spring, Kozma said.

The \$24.3 million plan calls for adding a 60,000 square-foot addition to the 37-year-old school. It would include 21 additional classrooms, separate science, music and art areas and a new two-story media center.

Fusco put fill in along the wall and installed support braces over the weekend to make sure the wall didn't slip any more.

"We have to determine if it can be repaired and how much it will cost," Kozma said. "Clearly, if it can't be used again or the cost is high, then we would have to demolish it."

The School Building Committee will meet tonight and get a report on the damage and possibly decide the next step, Kozma said.

School officials said it was fortunate the accident happened on the weekend when students weren't sitting in class.

"I don't think anyone would have gotten seriously hurt but certainly it would have upset everyone," Kozma said.

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Peter Casolino/Register

Ralph Camputaro & Son Excavating demolishes the damaged Branford High School wing.

Damaged school wing comes down

By Dave Altimari
Register Staff

BRANFORD — A demolition company has begun tearing down the damaged wing of the high school, and the remnants will be carted away by the end of next week.

The School Building Committee agreed to spend \$44,600 to have Ralph Camputaro & Son Excavating of North Branford take down G wing.

The demolition is necessary because a wall on the north side of the wing collapsed in early September while workers were drilling

pilings as part of the \$24.3 million expansion project.

Meanwhile, engineers are taking precautions with other sections to make sure the problem doesn't occur again.

"What happened had made everybody take a close look around and take some extra precautions," committee Chairman David Kozma said.

"They're going to place some additional support of A wing so we don't run the risk of a similar problem," Kozma said.

A wing includes the cafeteria and several classrooms.

School officials had to scurry to move classrooms to the old gymnasium because the wall collapse damaged four classrooms, and engineers determined it wouldn't be cost effective to fix the structure temporarily.

Kozma said Camputaro submitted the lowest of four bids.

The total cost of the demolition will be about \$70,000, including engineering and electrical costs.

"By the end of this week they will have the wing down and they should finish carting it away by

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