

Circular school officially historic

National Register of Historic Places adds Tecumseh's unique Olive Branch school.

By Elaine Morris Roberts
Staff Writer

SPRINGFIELD — Martha Blakley Hahn was thrilled to find out her alma mater has made its way on to the National Register of Historic Places.

Hahn, 100 years old and a 1927 graduate of Olive Branch High School, said she has many fond memories of her time spent at the school, which is now used as a storage facility by the Tecumseh Local School district.

"I got a good education and was very successful. I went on to business college and my education at Olive Branch prepared me so well, I had a salary during the entire Depression," she said.

Hahn shared her experiences Sunday, Jan. 17, during a ceremony held in Tecumseh High School's Pflaumer Auditorium to unveil the official plaque placing the school on the National Register.

She was joined at the ceremony by many, including students, past employees, a former principal and 98-year-old Charline Flora, a former principal and teacher at the school.

The building, erected in 1908



Donna Clarkson, (right), who attended elementary school at Olive Branch looks over pictures on display from the unique school's past during Sunday's ceremony honoring the school's placement on the National Register of Historic Places. In the foreground at left is Charline Flora, a former principal and teacher at Olive Branch School.

and known as the "Little Round Schoolhouse," was built with four classrooms that all pointed inward, toward the central cafeteria and gymnasium.

After being destroyed by fire in 1913, it was rebuilt. Olive Branch served as a high school until 1928 and housed classes into the early 1970s.

The Tecumseh school board decided in 1972 to maintain the building and use it for storage after the district determined it would no longer house students.

"That was the best thing that ever happened to that building," said Olive Branch School Preservation Soci-

ety Chairman William Berry, who was the district's assistant superintendent in 1972.

Berry and the other members of the OBSPS began their work to obtain the historical designation in January 2007, with the historic approval coming late in 2009.

Now that the building has been recognized as historically relevant, Berry said work will begin to raise the estimated \$1.6 million necessary to restore the building so it can be used as an archival museum and board office.

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Staff writer Tom Stafford contributed to this story.



Jon Mowery recalls playing with hula hoops in the center rotunda of Olive Branch School when he attended grade school in the building from 1957-61. The unique school was opened Sunday, Jan. 17, following a ceremony celebrating its placement on the National Register of Historic Places. Staff photos by Bill Lackey