# A History of Dreher High School

*Written by Mike DuBard – Dreher’s Athletic Director*

In 1938 the third high school in Columbia was completed. It was built at 701 Adger Road on a ten-acre lot which at one time was part of Governor Wade Hampton’s plantation. The land later became part of Epworth Orphanage and the site of Columbia’s first airport, which was operated by Paul Redfern, a Columbia native and noteworthy aviator. By 1936 the land belonged to Burwell Manning who sold it to the Columbia City Schools for $10,000. Construction of the new building was completed by Mechanics Contracting Company at a cost of $239,306. Two three-story wings, the north and the west, consisted of classrooms, laboratories, offices, conference rooms, a cafeteria, a school store, a teacher’s workroom, a nurse’s office, a music room, a library and a gymnasium.

The new school was named for Ernest S. Dreher, the second superintendent of Columbia City Schools. Serving in the position of superintendent from 1895 until 1918, Dreher was the man responsible for the building initiative which had led to the constructions of Columbia and Booker T. Washington High Schools.

The first principal, D. Leon McCormac, and five faculty members formulated the organization of the new school under the auspices of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Doors to the new facility opened or the first time on September 12, 1938, with a faculty of thirty and six hundred fifty-one students in grades 9-12.

In 1947 property north of the original lot was purchased for athletic and physical education facilities. In 1952 the General Construction Company built an addition, the east wing, at a cost of $686,610. A new auditorium, the south wing, was completed in 1954. With the completion of this wing, Dreher was an enclosed facility with a central courtyard. Through the efforts of several classes, the courtyard became a focal point of the school, complete with statuary and a fountain.

From the air, the Dreher complex had a block “D” appearance. The profile changed with the final additions of a new science wing in 1969, followed by a new gymnasium in 1972.

In November of 2002, a $381,000,000 bond referendum passed for school construction in Richland District One. Dreher High School had been in existence for sixty-four years. The condition of the physical plant, the inadequacies of space and classroom size, and the technological shortfalls of the old school made the decision to construct a new facility necessary.

Property was acquired along the western border of the school and new construction began in June of 2005. In December of that year, the science wing was demolished and portables were used to accommodate the displaced classroom space. Construction continued for two years, followed by the demotion of the old school from June 7 until August 8. Occupancy of the new facilities took place on August 16, 2007.

The new $42,000,000 complex has 80,000 more square feet of floor space, a large commons area, a state of the art theater, spacious classrooms, numerous meeting facilities, an NJROTC suite, a dance studio, rooms for choral and music ensembles, and ample parking for students and staff. A new courtyard is also present, complete with the fountain the old school and historic plaques. Other reminders of the past include statuary and the extensive art gallery that was accumulated over the years through the efforts of various school organizations and graduating classes, along with donations from many benefactors.

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# Principals

Information provided by Warner Montgomery (click to read article in [Columbia Star](http://www.thecolumbiastar.com/news/2007-05-11/News/054.html))

D. Leon McCormac (1938-47)

JK Blum (1947-59)

Arlie Whittinghill (1959-69)

Enoch Smith (1969-72)

James Wilsford (1972-75)

Christine Webb (1975-86)

Rae McPherson (1986-98)

Jan Roberts (1998-2000)

Jeanne Stiglbauer (2001-present)

# Some Distinguished Alumni

John Martin (’39), SC State Senator

J. Walter Bristow, Jr. (’41), SC State Representative and Senator

Anne Brodie (’46), Dancer and Ballet teacher

O’Neal Humphries (’49), Dean of USC School of Medicine

Henry J. Cauthen (’49), President of SCETV

Gayle O. Averyt (’51), Chair of Colonial Life

Crosby Lewis (’52), SC State Representative

Christian Thee (’56), Artist

Blue Sky (’56), artist

Alex Sanders (’57), Chief Judge of SC Court of Appeals, President of College of Charleston

Jean Hoefer Toal (’61), SC State Representative, Chief Justice of SC Supreme Court

Kary B. Mullis (’62), 1994 Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry

Joel Smith III (’63), President of Bank of America, Eastern Division and Dean of USC School of Business

Oliver Washington (’68), First African-American student to enroll at Dreher

Brenda Fruster (’68), First African-American student to enroll at Dreher

Lonnie Randolph (’68), SC President of NAACP

Bob Coble (’71), Mayor of Columbia

Alex English (’72), NBA Hall of Fame

Darrell Jackson (’75), SC State Senator

Sarah Gilbert Fox (’76), Author

Chris Potter (’89), Jazz Saxophonist and composer, Grammy Nominee