The current Pottstown High School was constructed in 1961, replacing a 1926 high school at Chestnut and Penn streets, since demolished.

The high school’s population peaked in 1975-1976 at 1,324 students after the ninth grade was moved from Pottstown’s junior high school (now its 5-8 middle school).

Although the high school’s population had dropped below 700 students in the mid 1990s, the school board nevertheless decided to enlarge it with a huge new gym. A 1997 architecture study did not suggest the need for a new gym — but, hey! — we had a championship basketball team and needed a voluminous space to showcase Trojan pride.

A second story floor was installed in the original gym for a spacious library on the upper level and classrooms and locker rooms on the ground floor.

Additions were made to the high school cafeteria, along with a culinary arts kitchen, and a new home was constructed for Pottstown Community Television, all at a cost of $18.9 million.

Today, a school that once accommodated 1,324 students before it was enlarged now houses about 800.

The high school is a prime example of prior school boards confusing lavish buildings with quality education.

We can’t afford to make the same mistake with the former Edgewood Elementary School. With plenty of space at the high school and middle school, we cannot afford to spend $750,000+ annually to move the fifth grade into Edgewood, which will cost $6 million to renovate.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

POTTSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL was enlarged about 25 percent in 2001-2002 at a cost of $18.9 million. Additions are outlined in red, above. The original gym was replaced with one of the largest high school gyms in the state. Below, last summer the district installed a new roof on the 20-year old gym at a cost of $375,000.