FREMONT -- For a lot of Fremont residents, Sunday represented one final time to get a last glimpse at the old Fremont Middle School with its memories of swim classes, noontime dances and an old-style auditorium with a raised gym floor.

Fremont City Schools hosted a farewell open house at the Croghan Street building, as hundreds of city residents took a last tour through a local landmark slated for demolition this summer.

Marc Roosen attended school at the building in the early 1960s, and he remembered that the boys swam naked in their swim classes.

"It was no big deal. I think even the swimming team did that too," Roosen said.

Roosen said he also recalled science classes conducted on the building's fourth floor.

He said that Sunday's visit to the old middle school was the first time he'd been in the building since the 1980s.

Visitors like Roosen walked the halls, peeked into classrooms and met up with other old classmates during the open house.

They also took turns looking at memorabilia spread out on tables in the middle school's front lobby. In one of the school's rooms, a video entitled "A Walk Down Croghan Street- Remembering FMS" played, with former students and staff sharing memories of the building.

A first school house, made out of logs, was constructed on the site in 1816, with construction of Fremont High School coming later in 1909.
The school district has salvaged several items from the old middle school, including an 1891 Central School cornerstone, and will incorporate those into the new Fremont Middle School and other district schools.

Peggy Rutherford went to school with Roosen in the early '60s.

She talked about the noon dances, where students met and danced to the latest music from Elvis Presley, the Four Tops and other popular acts of the time.

Students at that time were allowed to go off campus, Rutherford said, with a lot of her classmates running down to Woolworth's on their break for an order of french fries and a Coke.

Like Roosen, Rutherford said she hadn't been back to the building in a long time.

"So this was a lot of fun. A lot of changes," Rutherford said.

Superintendent Traci McCaudy said there was a strong turnout for Sunday's open house, adding that a lot of visitors were sharing their memories of the old building with her as they entered the building.

"And I'm enjoying their stories," McCaudy said, as she handed out programs for the open house.

Beneda Burkett, a Lindsey resident, also turned out for Sunday's open house.

Burkett, 91, said she could remember lettering in basketball when she attended classes in the building. She went on to be a music major in college.

"I remember coming back here when I was in college," she said.

Dan Linder and his wife, Jan, met while they attended school together in the mid-1960s.

Linder said he and several of his classmates were holding a class reunion Sunday at the open house.

He said he could recall trying to dive into the swimming pool while being wary of the pool area's low ceiling.
Linder, whose last time in the building before Sunday was 1994, said he supports building a new middle school and tearing down the old one.

"It's time. My dad graduated form here. It's time," Linder said, adding that he hoped that the school district turned the property into something private.