

Colby Community Building 1955 - 2005

First You Dream, Second You Plan, Then You Build

A big thank you to Keela Case who conducted the research on the Community Building.

In May of 1953, the Chamber of Commerce began discussing the possibility of a Community Building. C.M. "Mose" Miller of the Farmers & merchants Bank was appointed to chair the committee to consider such a facility for the city. The dream of an adequate community building had been in the minds of many Colby people for a long time. The group decided to survey the situation and find out a possible size, cost and to visit Lamar, Colorado to look over the recently constructed community building there.

The committee made their visits and early in 1954 it was set for a vote. In a presentation to the Colby Lions Club on March 31, 1954, Leon N. "Penny" Roulier stated that "Colby is what it is today because the folks who lived here did the necessary things to help it grow and prosper. They did some of this when business conditions were not good." The proposition was to issue general obligation bonds of the city in an amount not to exceed \$350,000. With a heavy voter turnout on April 6, 1954, the question of whether or not a Community Building should be built was decided with a 32 favorable majority. The site was purchased which was the W.E. Bjork blacksmith building and home, and the home and lots Frank Wolf occupied.

Architect George Tewksbury and Associates of Mission, Kansas was hired to prepare the plans. The construction contract was awarded September 29, 1954 and ground was broken in October of 1954. The Garden City Telegram reported on October 7, 1954, that "Colby is the latest western Kansas city to get into the municipal construction act. Despite drought, acreage allotments and the temper of the times, western Kansas continues to build. The municipal, school and church projects are going forward at a comfortable clip in not only Colby but also Garden City, Liberal and Dodge City among the larger towns and at a dozen points among the smaller. No forward looking community can afford to sit back and wait until times are right."

An entire day was spent dedicating the building and celebrating Veterans Day on November 11, 1955. The day started with children attending a free show at the Colby Theatre. At 1:30 the Colby National Guard, American Legion, V.F.W., the CCHS band and other organizations with floats participated in a parade. Prior to the ribbon cutting at the doors, Mayor William Nikl and former mayor Willard E. Cooper made brief speeches. George Tewksbury, the building architect and construction superintendent Earl Brackett were introduced. For the American Legion, Commander A.A. Carlson made presentation of a flag to be used in the interior of the building and V.F.W. Commander Eldon Van Campen presented a flag to be used in front of the building. William Beck led the CCHS band in the National Anthem. With the cutting of the ribbon people flooded into the building. Sam Lowe served as the master of ceremonies and introduced city manager Town Browne, former City Manager Hal Everett, the Colby City Council, and Mrs. Bernice Berg, city clerk. C.M. Miller, chairman of the committee for the Community Building, gave a brief account of the history of the building. Senator Frank Carlson was the guest speaker and he complimented the people of Colby for their enterprise in building such a structure. An open house and tours of the new facility followed the program. Starting at 9:00 p.m. the ending at 1:00 a.m. Ronnie Bartley's orchestra played to a huge crowd of both spectators and dancers. The day was a big success.

Over the years the building has served the community and surrounding area well. In 1995 the new elevator and entrance was added to accommodate handicapped accessibility in the building.

Resources:

A History of Thomas County by Wayne Wingo

Thomas County, Kansas: The First One Hundred Years by Cline Curtiss

City of Colby Yearly Report, 1954

Dedication Program, November 11, 1955

Greetings from the F&M Bank, May 1953; April 1954

Colby Free Press, 1-1-1954, 1-28-1954, 3-18-1954, 4-1-1954, 4-8-1954, 4-12-1954, 10-7-1954, 11-3-1955, 11-14-1955, 1-23-1995.