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An Era Comes to an End

Tonight's basketball game marks the final varsity cage contest scheduled for historic Sheridan Coliseum. Fifty-six years of service to college athletics will end for the ancient building this spring and a new era begins in M. C. Cunningham Hall and Paul B. Gross Memorial Coliseum, a new \$7 million complex scheduled to open in late summer or early fall, 1973.

Sheridan Coliseum had its beginning in 1915. What had been uppermost in the minds of many became reality when, according to the 1916 college yearbook, Reveille, "The legislature of 1915 granted the institution an appropriation of \$100,000 to be used for the erection of Sheridan Coliseum, now under construction, which stands south of Picken Hall. It will be the largest building on the campus and will contain the auditorium, gymnasium for men and women, showers and swimming pool, departments of music, blacksmithing, manual training and farm carpentry, gas and steam engines, and public school art."

The 1918-1919 yearbook (it was combined because of the aftermath of World War I) recorded, "The spirit and solidarity of the school have been expressed in a bronze table. It adorns Sheridan Coliseum, a big stone building on the plains, seating 3,600 persons, in which are given tractor shows, grand operas, livestock shows, oratories, automobile shows, dramas, basketball games, conventions, and tennis matches."

A picture in the 1917 yearbook shows the grand opening of the Coliseum on March 23, 1917. However, the first basketball game was not played in the Coliseum until fall, 1917.

Forward looking people existed in the early days of the Coliseum, the same as they do now. In the 1920 yearbook, the editor said, "What is born into the mind of men who not only dream but act finds glorious fruition in some form. When William S. Picken opened the school in June, 1902, he saw far beyond the building of an institution under his care. He had dreamed of an institution here on the plains of Western Kansas that should meet the great need for adequately equipped men and women and he at once set about the realization of his dream. President William A. Lewis succeeded W. S. Picken in 1913 and has carried on the plans for a bigger and better school with splendid success. The latest and largest addition to the group of buildings is "Sheridan Coliseum" on the south side of the campus. This new structure has been rightly termed "The Convention Hall of Western Kansas."

—Basketball Games—

It is estimated that over 500 college basketball contests and countless high school games have been held in the Coliseum. Several high school tournaments used to be played here and just this past month that program was re-born

when several members of the Mid-Continent League got together for some competition. Many will recall the high school tournaments played here and the dust storms that in 1935 forced the teams and fans to bed down in the Coliseum. Hays High and Thomas More Prep played each other and others for years in the confines of this building.

—Basketball Records—

Among the more interesting basketball marks established in and out of the Coliseum by Tiger squads were those of longest win streaks, 11, in 1948-50; 1950-52; 1958-59; and 1962-63; most consecutive home victories, 22, 1948-50; most consecutive victories in one season, 11, 1958-59 and 1962-63; and best won-loss percentage for one season, .860, in 1959 when the Tigers were 24-4.

—First Coach—

The first FHS basketball coach to field a team in Sheridan Coliseum was W. G. (Bunt) Speer. According to the 1918-19 yearbook, Coach Speer's team consisted of Robert Spencer, guard, Penokee; Glenn Archer, center, Great Bend; Ira Spencer, guard, Penokee; Ralph Archer, center, Great Bend; Granville Hays, forward, Almena; Oaklie Washburn, forward, Hill City; and Paul Gross, forward, Hays.

—Flood of 1951—

Many will remember the flood of 1951 which not only took a toll in equipment, records and furnishings in Sheridan Coliseum as well as other campus buildings, but also took the lives of six persons in the area. The Coliseum lost many of its contents but also proved to be a popular place for refugees during and after the flood. According to the Alumni News of September, 1951, "A few miles west of Hays, 11 inches of rain was poured onto the already water-soaked hills in 30 minutes."

—Future of Sheridan—

Though tonight's game ends all athletic competition in Sheridan Coliseum, the important old building will continue to be used for other purposes at least for the foreseeable future. There are no plans for major remodeling but minor work will take place and offices and classrooms will continue. Plans are for the continued use of the structure for musical presentations and other programs that lend themselves to the furnishings and acoustics. There is a possibility classrooms will be constructed within the confines of the present structure. Plans for the future of Sheridan Coliseum are indefinite at present but one can believe that as long as the nostalgic structure can be utilized, it will.