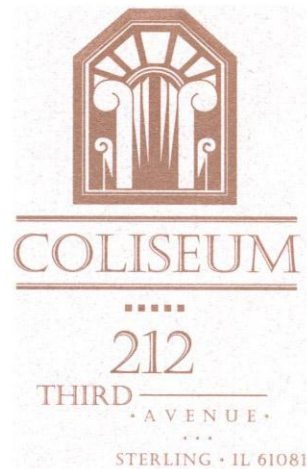


The Sterling Coliseum

Dedicated May 8, 1931



An Idea is Born



In the mid 1920's, the need for a large civic hall for public events in the community becomes apparent

- ❖ Conventions
- ❖ Dances
- ❖ Athletic Events
- ❖ Theatrical Performances
- ❖ Concerts

The 1st Steps

- ✧ Municipal Coliseum Executive Committee and Campaign Committee were formed to lay the groundwork
- ✧ July 27, 1927, Sterling voters approve mill levy for the construction and operation of the Coliseum
- ✧ August 1, 1927, Mayor A.J. Platt appoints the first Coliseum Board; G.L. Robinson, C.E. Sheldon and Leo J. Wahl

The Original Coliseum Board



C. E. Sheldon

C.E. Sheldon
Original President



G. L. Robinson, Secretary

G.L. Robinson
Original Secretary



Leo J. Wahl

Leo J. Wahl
Original Member



J. W. McDonald, President

J.W. McDonald
President in 1929



C. M. Waters

C.M. Waters
Member in 1929

Plans

Architect Elmer Behrns of Chicago was hired to design the Coliseum. He estimated that a building that would meet the Board's requirements would cost \$110,000.

A sketch of the planned building appears to the right.



Site Preparation Begins



After much debate as to where to locate the Coliseum, including the possibility of Rock Falls consolidating into Sterling and locating the building south of the Rock River, the Coliseum Board finally settled on the location of the old Hearse Factory on 3rd Street in Sterling. The Hearse Factory building was originally constructed in 1855. The grounds were purchased for \$25,000.

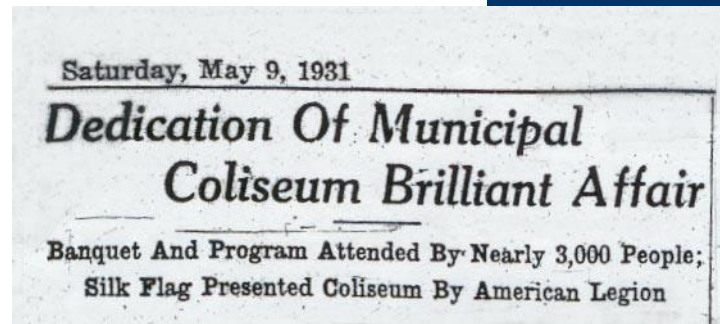
Bids

- ◆ The Sterling Gazette described the number of bids received for construction of the Coliseum as an “avalanche.” In fact, 97 bids were received for construction of the Coliseum. The Board needed two nights of meetings to evaluate the bids
- ◆ Paul Kornman won the general contract
- ◆ All contracts let totaled \$110,360 for construction whereas the architect’s estimate was \$110,000

Construction

- ◆ Construction of the Coliseum began in the fall of 1930
- ◆ Coliseum was finished May 1, 1931 at a total cost of nearly \$200,000
- ◆ Dedication of the Coliseum took place over the May 8th & 9th weekend of 1931

Dedication



A brilliant affair indeed! On May 8, 1931 the official dedication ceremony kicked off. The Coliseum Board presented the new hall to Mayor H.E. Burkholder during ceremonies at the evening's formal banquet. Nearly 5,000 people attended dedication ceremonies over the weekend. Among the guests were the Governor Emerson and Lt. Governor Sterling, as well as the Director of Public Works and the Chief of State Police. The following night, the State Head of High School Athletics, and the Assistant Secretary of the US Navy Spoke.

Coliseum Uses

The Board probably had no idea just how many uses the Coliseum would have.

- ❖ National Guard Armory
- ❖ High School Basketball
- ❖ Pro Wrestling & Boxing
- ❖ Bowling Alley
- ❖ Roof Dances, Concerts, and Theater
- ❖ City Hall, Chamber of Commerce & Red
- ❖ Professional Exhibits and Recruiting



Coliseum Today



Today the Coliseum is more than 70 years old, nearly as old as the building it replaced. Whereas once it was the center of social activity, it is now the center of civic activity. Though times have changed, the importance of the Coliseum remains as the building is now home to the City's offices.