

# RAYMOND A. WHITWER TILDEN PUBLIC LIBRARY

## BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT

In April of 1999, Raymond A. Whitwer, a 1938 graduate of Tilden High School, who has been a general building contractor in California for 50 years, offered to build a new library building for Tilden, Nebraska, if the city would provide the site. His offer was accepted.

Mr. Whitwer picked the site location for the new building and The Tilden Library Foundation used funds, set aside for a new microfilm reader, to fund the down payment on the property. By July 17 (less than 2 months after the offer, enough money had been raised through grants and the efforts of the Friends group, that the Foundation could pay the remaining \$32,500 for the site. Mr. Whitwer provided the building, bookcases, cabinets and circulation desk and the Foundation provided the other furnishings and equipment.

The site was razed by the first week in August and additional land was donated. Groundbreaking for the new building was held on October 17, 1999. Mr. Whitwer helped design the building and acted as general contractor. As the project continued, Mr. Whitwer included an office for the City Clerk and decided to include an upper room for storage. There is also an 800 square foot basement that contains the 7-unit gas heating plant. The grand opening of the library took place on October 21, 2001.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

**Foyer:** There are 358 engraved bricks in the foyer. They were sold for \$125 apiece. Bricks sold from now on will be displayed in the outside garden area.

**Bronze Plaque:** The large bronze plaque on the right of the front entrance acknowledges the other major donors to the project and the various boards and individuals involved with the new building. Donor amounts range from \$500 to \$80,000.

**Children's Area:** \$80,000 for the Harvey A. Oppliger Children's Area was donated by Marian Oppliger in honor of her husband, Harvey, a former Tilden resident. Mrs. Oppliger lives in Florida, but was able to attend the grand opening of the library. This gift includes funds for the Stained Glass Window, three computers for children's use, programming equipment including the large TV/VCR which is used in all parts of the library. This generous gift has allowed us to increase our children's collection and use our regular funding for adult materials.

**Stained glass window:** The EVHS seventh grade art class of 2000 submitted designs for the window and Kyle Hasebroock's spiral design was selected. Local stained glass artist Pam Ashburn took the design and created the window around it. She used cut agates to decorate the glass and included two viewers that make a kaleidoscope of the window when you view it through them.

**Artwork:** The artwork was selected and donated by Deborah Seaburg Crites, Interior Designer for the building. Raymond Knaub is an internationally renowned artist whose work has appeared in *Southwest Art*, *Colorado Homes and Lifestyles*, *Western Art Digest*, *Art Talk*, *Art of the West*, and *Who's Who in American Art*. His work is collected by museums, private collectors and corporations throughout the world. In March 2010, three new paintings, by famed artist Paul Maxwell, were donated to the Library from Raymond Whitwer's personal collection.

**Bookcases, magazine rack and tables:** Curved bookcases, mission style tables, circulation desk, magazine rack-storage and office furniture were made by Cornhusker Industries of Lincoln, NE (the state prison system). The wood is Ash with a cherry stain. The pillars were constructed and stained on site by Rick Volk and Duane Ritter.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling is not connected to the beams. It is called a 'floating ceiling'. This allows heat to go up around the edges and protect the sprinkler system from freezing. You will notice the different heights created by the roof and the massive glu-lam beams, which are at least 3 feet in depth at the peak of the ceiling. The clerestory windows allow light to warm the building in winter when the sun shines in the South most of the day and in summer the sun is far enough North that it's not a problem through those windows.

**Lighting:** Most of the lighting in the building is indirect or reflected light. The 50 hanging lights in the main part of the library cost \$700 per fixture.

**Fireplace area:** The Rumsford Fireplace is gas and is 14 feet across. The leather furniture was donated (plaque is on table).

**Computer room:** The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation donated the lab computers and software for use by patrons. This was truly a 'one of a kind' grant. The foundation no longer makes grants for community computer labs outside of the state of Washington. It includes 10 patron computers, an instructor's computer and a server that we have been allowed to use with our other computers. Our Gates Foundation project coordinator Jon McConnel made a total of four trips to Tilden. He visited at the beginning of construction, came and set up the lab, attended the grand opening and returned for two days of staff and volunteer training.

**Director's Office, Kitchen & City Clerk's office:** The director's office is behind circulation desk. Next door to the left is the City Clerk's office. There is a small kitchen which connects the library to the auditorium. In the kitchen is the door that leads upstairs to an unfinished storage area.

**Lied Auditorium:** The Lied Foundation of Las Vegas donated \$36,000 toward furnishing the 2,000 square foot auditorium. A storage closet contains the 12 round tables, 12 rectangular tables and 200 chairs. There are data and electrical receptacles in the floor to accommodate program equipment. Between the chair and art rails are sound/tack board panels that contribute to the wonderful acoustics in the room. Display items can be tacked to these panels and larger items can be hung from eye hooks behind the art rail. Light switches right inside the hallway door allow the lights to be dimmed. Located in the auditorium is a 1916 antique oak table with self storing leaves, donated by the family of Herman and Anna Marks.

**Grand Piano:** The Yamaha grand piano, located in the Lied Auditorium, was donated by Louise Prevo. It was purchased new at a cost of \$24,000. The piano is kept on a special dolly so the instrument can be moved about the auditorium. It is kept locked when not in use.

**Hallway:** The hallway door from the auditorium leads to the Janitor's closet and men's and lady's bathrooms on the left and the basement stairway and second City Office are to the right. The tile in the bathrooms are imported Italian Crystal.

**Bas-Relief:** A beautiful Bas Relief is located on the outside South wall of the building, which was carved by Sten Eisentrager of Lincoln. The work was done in a studio at the Endicott Brick Factory in Southeast Nebraska. The unfired bricks were used (with spacers to represent mortar) to construct the curved wall at the studio. After which the carving was done and each brick was taken down, placed on a pallet and fired. The relief was then reconstructed at the studio to be sure everything was as planned. Each brick was then marked per row and column and packed for shipment to the site. Rick Volk and Raymond Whitwer laid the bricks on the building. The work was commissioned by the Whitwer children in honor of their parents, Marjorie and Raymond Whitwer. The scenes on the relief represent Raymond's and Nebraska's heritage.

**Landscaping and Garden:** Ginny Werkmeister did the landscaping for the building and designed the terrace garden. This is where any new engraved bricks have been placed.