

**Comprehensive Survey Report****Former Hospital, USD #315**

*...the commonplace interplay of land and life that truly characterizes a place.* James Shortridge, 1984  
*Introduction*

***National Register Criteria***

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Summary Statement of Significance**

This report surveys the property in Colby, Kansas, commonly known as the hospital. No longer in use as a hospital, portions have been remodeled for use by the public school district for administrative offices. The property is significant under National Register criteria for its association with the Works Projects Administration Era of national history. On a local level, the property is significant for its association with the settlement patterns of Western Kansas history and rural towns.

The 1941 Building is late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20 Century Revival--Georgian Revival. The 1948 wing is Modern Movement—International Style. The 1948 Chapel has a Roman Ceiling.

The Smoky Hill limestone and brick building of 1941 was designed to blend in with other stone and brick buildings in Colby. Even with the 1948 Extension and Addition the design of the stone and brick exterior is distinctive for its remote location. The building construction was remarkably durable with a functional aesthetic that has lasted for over 50 years.

Basically the structure of the former hospital is still intact although failure to adequately maintain guttering and tile roofing has lead to isolated areas of deterioration from water damage.

**Making History/Making Place: A Community's Search for a Usable Past**

This survey links the stories of several key regional individuals whose efforts to preserve, protect and promote their communities through the use of collections, monuments and the

built environment shape our perceptions of the past and of the places where they worked and lived. Among the individuals involved are Sue Taylor, Dr. Cathy Ambler, Diane Hiltabidle, Judy Kleinsorge, Kirk Nielson and Linda Davis-Stephens. In addition to their concern for the history of community health and well being they have been collection builders, consensus builders, and explorers into the role of public building preservation.

Public landmarks, memorial halls, historic preservation, public buildings and other forms of art are essential in creating a sense of living history. Why a sense of living history is so important and what role history and art today play in shaping civic identity has been discussed extensively throughout the planning of this survey.

### **Seeing the Importance and Urgency**

Individuals trained on the job built St. Thomas Hospital. They had a skilled artisan supervising their efforts. The building stands as a work of art. This masterpiece of construction was not simply a roof for medical and surgical facilities. For its period of construction and remote location St. Thomas Hospital was designed to house the work of the healing arts.

More like a mansion in its day, St. Thomas Hospital stood in the Colby community on the edge of town. It appeared on the cultural horizon of a people as a shelter from the ills of the world.

The property represents a type that is significant to the historic context of WPA era buildings. The relative importance of this property among others of this property type is its unique structural integrity and subtle elegance of designing native stone, local brick, and tile roof.

The 1938 original part of the property is in urgent need of repair. The roof leaks. This has been left without attention for enough time that other parts of the building are deteriorating. Local opinion on preservation of the integrity of the building varies from demolition to renovation.

### **Deciding the Future: Before Colby, Before Settlement**

This land is open country. It doesn't take much for it to just go back to grass. The brick and stone building could be left to decay and return to a pile of fired clay in the land.

The Cheyenne lived in this land among other native people long before Colby was built. They lived in tipis but also in stone homes built by the Plains Apache.

When the Cheyenne built their Medicine Lodge it was like building a house. The Medicine Lodge was created for healing and renewal of life.

When something was taken from the land for the people to use, the law was not to take more than was needed. Leave some for others. Leave some to grow more.

The Cheyenne Medicine Lodge was a New Life Lodge built for healing. It involved the family and the whole community of people, and the communities of plants and animals of the Plains. After the lodge was built and the ceremonies were over it was left to go back to the earth from which it came.

Cheyenne medicine men and women understood the principle of reciprocity. "Where a man builds his house is sacred", as the Cheyenne have said.

The Cheyenne were not a throwaway culture. They did not practice the settlement patterns now in the land of consumption and waste. But they did try to take care of what they asked for from the earth.

Perhaps there is something in the Code of the West still livable in the minds of Colby residents. Cheyenne and Colby alike may share the values of taking care of widows and children, respect for the elders, and hard work in a harsh land.

The present generation did not ask for the building to take care of on Range Avenue. Like an unwanted pregnancy, should the building just be cast aside, or should it be cared for among us—now that it's here? It may never come again—that unique building on the High Plains horizon.

### **Deciding the Future: Colby As It Was**

People and place, the interrelationship of the building with people's lives, this seems the most significant of all other considerations for preservation of the former St. Thomas Hospital building.

The essence of the building itself stands in contrast to what people thought of the land at the time. To most settlers and colonizers it was a wasteland haunted by nomadic Indians who did not belong there. The hazards and hardships endured by the pioneers of the frontier were still commemorated by the celebrations and memorials of Colby inhabitants the first 50 years after building the railroads in 1888.

The Colby Rock Island Depot was one of the few stops of the Rocket from Kansas City to Denver. As far away as this trade center was from American cities, Colby developed an urban lifestyle with access to goods and services from transportation crossroads.

Colby has been known as the Medical Center of Northwest Kansas and the economic Hub of Northwest Kansas. Colby was the Golden Buckle on the Golden Wheat Belt. Presently Colby's image is as the Oasis on the Plains.

People have had to make do with what they had. They had to look around for prairie sod and rock for making shelters or import lumber from timber stands elsewhere.

Building with local quarried stones and fired bricks from local clay gave people a sense of overcoming the difficulties of a remote, harsh environment. Coming out of the “Dirty Thirties”, people needed to work at something other than farming. The land and climate had left them once more facing a wasteland. People had to work together to care for each other.

The limestone bluffs along the Smoky Hill River had affordable, moderate cost building material. The abandoned schoolhouse had reusable bricks made locally. People were resourceful not extravagant. Yet, the elegance of the hospital, for its day, is still on display. It is doubtful that any building in Colby will nowadays exhibit the endurance and subtle beauty of the hospital’s nature.

The water fountain in front of the entrance to the original hospital is hardly noticeable to most Colby residents. Commonly known as a flowerpot, the fountain was made of native stone, smoothed into an arc, and placed in a semi-circular pool. The boyhood memory of a native Colby resident recalled the streams of water on the daybreak side of the building. The preservation of this historic building could include reviving the fountain.

### **“Remembering how things became the way they are”**

What stands out is the number of individuals that could be named for their efforts to bring the best health care they knew was available to a remote region.

Auntie May Hay was one of the earliest Doctors in the area in 1884. Her town of Otterbourne on Sappa Creek was filled with native medicinal plants, natural spring water and plenty of room for people. As with most early towns in northwest Kansas the failure of Otterbourne to prosper was due to the upland routes taken by the railroad developers.

The J. R. Colby Homestead –1884-1885, tells the history of the namesake for town. Railroad developers convinced J. R. Colby to relocate his townsite along the Prairie Dog Creek, three miles north of where Mr. Colby had lived.

One of the earliest Doctors in Colby was Dr. V. C. Eddy. Wayne Wingo said,

“When Dr. V.C. Eddy and his son, Dr. Murray Eddy, closed their hospital in the fall of 1931 because of a lack of sufficient numbers of patients to make it a paying proposition, the county was left with no institutional facilities for care of the sick.” (p. 87)

Church denominations funded public health care needs with donations. There were not enough paying patients in 1931 to support the doctors’ services. Dr. Eddy was honored with a memorial after the first public hospital was built in 1938.

One of the earliest Doctors to practice in St. Thomas Hospital who lives in Colby was Dr. Floyd Smith. His relatives originally settled in the Otterbourne area with Auntie May Hay.

Dr. Floyd Smith said the Sisters used to sleep in chairs, in the hallways, anywhere they could get rest in the Original Hospital. That was before the expansion and addition were built. A residential dwelling on site for the Sisters to use.

After the war polio and other illnesses needed timely, loving care. Some patients died, some were left debilitated but alive. Their caregivers suffered along with them.

The Sisters of St. Agnes who served the City of Man in their service to God are remembered individually by those whom they met. The present generation and newcomers know the Sisters by name from the occasional historic lecturer.

Community volunteers and service providers adjusted over time to the closing of St. Thomas Hospital. Some individuals have intense feelings for closing the hospital instead of modernizing and expanding the facilities.

St. Thomas Hospital stood for the cause "To Serve Christ in His Sick" as Brian Windholz stated in his article "St. Thomas Hospital—First 30 Years", (The Colby Free Press-Tribune, 9/23/71?)

The building use changed to the Administration of Public Schools for USD #315. The role of the school district while using the building has not been heroic, but at times notorious. The School Board meets in the former laboratory room of the south wing of the building.

Their decision to raze the Junior High School building recently has still left some people with hard feelings. Public dissatisfaction was due partly to not reusing the building or its interior furnishings efficiently. People wanted a less costly decision.

### **Defining Potential Historic Contexts**

Some Themes of the surveyed property include Health and Medicine, Hospital care/religious orders, and Federally Funded building projects of the Work Projects Administration Era.

The geographical area of this survey is a remote location of over 100 miles between general hospitals—from Colby, Kansas to Denver, CO, to St. Anthony's in Hays, KS, and to Garden City Hospital, KS.

The period of time is from the 1929 Petition for a county hospital, to when USD #315 took over the building from 1982 to 2000.

Similar efforts of research on properties related to a common historic context for Colby Historic Landmarks and Works Progress Administration Projects include the 1935 City Hall (KERC and WPA) and the 1936 High School (Public Works Administration).

Certain community patterns and trends that effected the reason for the building were that hospital care costs had increased beyond the means of the private Doctors. (*Colby Free Press Tribune* (CFPT) 2/27/1930) Caseload had increased beyond the capacity of the local hospitals. A self-supporting hospital was needed closer to the rural, northwest Kansas population.

Several developments in the character of the community are relevant to the building. Colby was a Plains Country Town, 1885-2000, whose primary economy is based on agricultural trade and supplies. Colby was an inland, colonial, rail-shipping station, 1888-2000.

Transportation was important to the development of Colby. It became a Highway Thoroughfare and Crossroads for the Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway, Highways 24, 25 & 83, and Interstate 70.

Rural School Consolidation, 1921, helped increase the school age population of Colby. Thereby, increasing the health and welfare needs of the families of the educated youth. The Depression years of the 1930's also increased population migration to town.

Local settlement and development trends and cultural values were significant to the property. Work relief measures were enacted at a national and state level in the 1930's. Wheat supply was down in the drought years. Town population was up. People needed work

Federal money was loaned and granted through PWA to build Colby Community High School, 1935. The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee Funds and Federal money helped build Colby City Hall, 1936.

Public Improvement Projects along with the hospital included the local Swimming Pool and Tennis courts. (CFPT 9/20/39)

A Catholic sisterhood ran St. Anthony Hospital at Hays, Kansas. Sisters of St. Agnes were from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. They supplied the work force for various facilities in the United States. Hays was a hundred mile drive east of Colby for medical care.

The Dominican sisters ran St. Catherine Hospital in Garden City, Kansas. That location was a hundred mile drive south of Colby.

Judy Kleinsorge authored an article indispensable to this survey which compiled the archive files for this information. (*Prairie Winds*, Spring 1998)

*Colby Free Press Tribune* newspaper sources indicate that hospital care was

denomination-funded. In 1929, petitions circulated for a County hospital. (CFPT 7/25/29) Doctors closed private hospitals (CFPT 2/27/30) E.A. Brown building was considered for a hospital. (CFPT 2/2/35)

Local tax support came from corporate properties.

The increasing families needed a new high school constructed. (CFPT 9/9/31) Bequests left money that allowed the city to propose remodeling the High School, located then on the survey property grounds. (CFPT 4/24/35)

Thomas County Chamber of Commerce formed a hospital committee. From that the Thomas County Hospital Board formed, of which some members were also on the School Board. (CFPT 9/16/36)

They decided to raze the old High School using WPA labor—58 men, and salvage the Colby-made brick for hospital construction materials. (CFPT 9/20/39),

No state WPA funds available, but there was legislation drafted for financing the hospital. (CFPT 11/25/36)

A frontiersman Priest built the foundation for the Sisters of St. Agnes in America. He walked into the Wisconsin woods finding German settlements. In their faith And devoted service, the Sisters supported many frontiers.

Sisters of St. Agnes operated hospitals in Hays, KS, Monroe, Michigan, and Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. They also operated two orphanages in Michigan. (CFPT 8/20/41)

- Sisters of St. Agnes entered 99-year lease for St. Thomas Hospital
- Sister Seraphia, in charge of Fond du Lac hospital came to take charge of St. Thomas Hospital (CFPT 8/20/41)
- Thomas County Hospital name changed to St. Thomas while the sisters ran the hospital.
- Sisters House moved to lot north of hospital.
- Sister Seraphia, died October 20, 1946
- “The first administrator’s death touched deeply the hearts of all who had known her and especially that of Wendell Berens, the hospital plant engineer, who has assisted the sisters’ efforts from the time of their arrival to the present day.” (Winholz CFPT 9/23/71?)
- She was succeeded by Sr. M. Agneta Meyer who continued the plan to enlarge the hospital.
  - Sisters Loan \$350,000. Sisters of St. Agnes paid \$100,000 of the \$150,000 for the addition and extension (CFPT 9/23/71 Winholz)
- Polio Ward planned 12/12/1946 CFPT; opened 1948

- Extension completed 1948, dedicated in 1949.
- X-ray unit updated.
- Thomas County Health Department used a portion of the building.
- Sisters of St. Agnes left St. Thomas Hospital, 1969; and settled for the remainder of the lease terms.

Five administrators in the first 30 years were

Sr. M. Seraphia Fellenz, 1941-45

Sr. M. Agneta Meyer, 1945-60

Sr. M. Joan Wirz, 1960-63

Sr. Mary Josephine Escher, 1963-69

George Prusynski, 1969-1971

(CFPT 9/23/71 Winholz)

A Master Plan was made for a new hospital, 1971. (CFPT 9/23/71 Winholz) Hill-Burton Funds became available in 1971.

Colby became a Junior College Town, 1964-2000. The medical, business and Industrial needs of the community expanded with the building and operation of the college.

High Plains Mental Health Center and the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center used rooms for serving surrounding counties. The Northwest Kansas Local Environmental Protection Group used some rooms for office space in 1990's.

As a Highway thoroughfare and Crossroads Road Improvement Projects continued in Colby since the White Way to 1960's Interstate. There has been a Business District exodus from the City Hall downtown area to a Franchise Row along the western artery of Interstate 70. Public Services are migrating toward the Franchise Row area. This is a return to the original location of the J. R. Colby homestead/townsite.

USD #315 presently uses the building for Administrative Offices.

### **Historic Description of Related Facilities**

Of utmost importance during medical emergencies are distances, skilled personnel, and up to date equipment furnished in an adequately sized facility.

One of Thomas County's First Doctors

Auntie May Hay, Doctor, Minister, teacher, Town builder of Otterbourne,  
Sappa Creek, Thomas County, 1884

### **Colby's First Hospital**

1894 or 5?—"J.L. Jones established the first hospital in Colby, over the Thomas County Bank, operated by himself, wife and son, only a few rooms were available for patients and he stayed only a short time."

(Book 2, P. 13 Vern Dimmit Notes)

“J.L. Jones established the first hospital in Colby in the early 1890’s. It was located on the second floor of the old Thomas County Bank building. Jones, along with his wife and son, operated the hospital, which had only a few patient rooms. The hospital was open only a short time, as Jones did not stay long.”

(Donna Lamm Article CFP 4/23/94)

### **County’s Second Hospital**

1908 Open House for **Carmen Hospital**, built in Rexford, operated by Dr. B.J. Paterson, named after his daughter. Became residential after Dr. left. Building was moved to Len Teel farm. (CFP 4/23/94 Lamm)

The Colby Commercial Club authorized a committee and sent them to Salina to get the Methodists to locate a hospital in Colby. (CFPT 6/3/1920)

Hospital care facilities were available in 1920’s Colby on a private basis. Two places were available to the sick and injured.

The **Eddy Hospital** was a two-story structure in Colby. Dr. V.C. Eddy and Dr. Murray Eddy planned to use the Vail house at 260 N. Mission Ridge Ave for a new hospital, 1928. (CFPT 3/1/1928? Book 2, P. 13 Vern Dimmit Notes)

Dr. V. C. Eddy closed his hospital that was located near downtown Colby, in 1931. (CFPT 9/9/31) He moved his equipment into his offices on Franklin Avenue. (CFPT 9/2/31) Dr. Eddy had the first patient in the new 1941 hospital southwest of Colby. (CFPT, Two A, Brian J. Winholz article, 9/23/71). The former Eddy Hospital is still standing and is used for apartments.

The **Davis Hospital** offered “a complete classification of cases” and extended “every modern convenience.” (Rexford News 6/25/1931) Dr. E. M. Davis saw patients in his office and at the private hospital. Patients came from all over Kansas to the Davis Hospital. That hospital also closed in September 1931.

“For several years Dr. Davis has done his operative work either in his office or at the private hospital conducted by Mrs. Ollie Mae Passell.” (CFPT 2/2/1935)

When the Eddy and Davis Hospitals closed, Dr. Davis was among those considering the E. A. Brown building in downtown Colby for renovation into a hospital.(2/2/1935 CFPT) The two story Brown building on East Fourth Street was vacated by the Perry Store. (CFPT 2/2/1935) Mr. Brown had come “from Dodge City to lease the building to Dr. Biederwell of Goodland, and others associated with him in the enterprise.” (CFPT 2/2/1935)

Both Dr. Biederwell and Dr. E.M. Davis were reported to bring their equipment to the Fourth Street hospital. The ground floor was to be renovated for offices, consultation rooms, diagnostic equipment and an operating room. The upper story would accommodate a 10- or 12-bed hospital. (CFPT 2/2/1935)

Goodland, Kansas

A hospitalization Plan existed in 1941 from Blue Cross through Farm Bureau Insurance, Colby. St. Thomas, St. Anthony, and **Boothroy Hospital**, Goodland, KS, carried Blue Cross patients. (CFPT 9/18/1942)

*Methodists had established a Goodland hospital—the Boothroy?*

Comparisons were published of public hospitals existent in McPherson and Ellsworth, Kansas. (CFPT 2/27/1930) McPherson hospital was too large for its patient numbers. Ellsworth was more balanced for size and patient numbers.

Denver, Colorado

Hospital care required traveling over 200 miles west of Colby

Hays, Kansas

**St. Anthony's Hospital**, was 100 miles east.

McCook, Nebraska

**McCook Community Hospital**, 1974, replaced the original facilities which would have been about 60 miles north east of Colby.

Hutchinson, Kansas

The Catholic and Methodist hospitals originally in Hutchinson would have been almost 300 miles from Colby.

**Hutchinson Hospital** was built in 1975 after the merger of two ailing hospitals; one, Catholic; the other, Methodist. Two hospitals, owned and operated by separate denominations, gave up their identities and turned over all assets to a new corporation. The merger is still regarded as a model for communities across the country.

<http://www.hutchinsonhospital.com/>

Dodge City, Kansas

Hospital would have been beyond the 100-mile drive to Hays, Kansas, and further south.

Garden City, Kansas

St. Catherine Hospital would have been about 100-mile drive from Colby.

Their website gives excellent details.

**St. Catherine Hospital** was founded by two pioneering physicians and the Dominican Sisters over 65 years ago. They created and maintained the spirit that has enabled St. Catherine Hospital associates to develop a growing health care facility unlike any other in southwest Kansas.

Dr. O.W. Miner and Dr. Charles Rewerts opened a one-room Garden City Clinic in 1923. By 1931, capacity had grown to 45 beds and the Sisters of St. Dominic in Great Bend, Kansas, purchased the clinic to care for patients and run St. Catherine Hospital. In 1996, St. Catherine Hospital became an affiliate of Catholic Health Initiatives, the largest Catholic not-for-profit health organization in the country.

St. Catherine Hospital is licensed for 132 beds and is a JCAHO-accredited regional health care center. Much has changed from its 1923 beginnings. One can only imagine how awestruck the founding physicians would be by the technology and sophistication perhaps only dreamt of in their early days on the Kansas plains.

As a health care leader, St. Catherine Hospital was one of the first in the state to establish a Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Mobile Lithotripsy.

St. Catherine Hospital is constantly growing. We are involved in developing a regional network system with a secondary service area that includes 18 counties and more than 140,000 people. More changes are on the way and new technology is consistently added.

But our mission remains clear: St. Catherine Hospital has a mission to heal and promote good health – a mission of excellence that is the strength of our medical community.  
<http://www.stcath-hosp.org/>

### **Saving a Local Historic Landmark**

Even now, like a mansion, the former St. Thomas Hospital stands in the Colby community along a main artery of town. It appears on the cultural horizon of a people as landmark.

The property represents a type that is significant to the historic context of WPA era buildings. The relative importance of this property among others of this property type is its unique structural integrity and subtle elegance of design using native stone, local-made brick, and tile roof.

The wave of the future is rising in the wake of the past. People without history are a people without a future.

Restoration projects take imagination. With a will to renew the art of living we can envision a space for the fountains in the memories of our children.

*...tried to understand the complex web of circumstances that give character to a place ... the elusive sense of place that was the State in 1939. James Shortridge, 1984 Introduction*

### Data Record:

- shape  
irregular, asymmetrical
- height  
three floor original, four floor extension
- scale  
one of the largest buildings in Colby  
Cooper elevator taller
- size  
dimensions of each wing  
Main Building (1948)  
174x42 feet, four stories high  
Connecting addition  
42x29 feet, three stories high  
Chapel  
86x 35  
Dining and Recreation facilities for Sisters beneath Chapel  
Root Cellar 48x16
- function  
health care  
educational administrative offices
- type  
hospital/public institution/WPA project
- condition  
roof deterioration, otherwise usable
- date of construction  
1941
- architect/builder  
1938 Plans  
Radotinsky, Kansas City  
  
1948 Extension  
Overend and Boucher, Wichita, KS, hired to build extension and addition, also, built St. Joseph Hospital in Wichita, KS  
General Contractors, Mont Green and Company, Manhattan, KS  
General Superintendent, Edward J. Cekal CFPT 3/24/49

Construction Description:

- construction materials, Blue Print sources  
native stone, brick, steel, Terrazzo tile, wood, pine, concrete  
steel frame windows, stone sashes, stone copings, tile roof  
  
1948 South Wing  
Steel frame, brick outside walls  
concrete slab floors over steel bar joists  
20 year bonded tar and gravel roof  
CFPT 3/24/49
- mode of construction  
brick and mortar  
steel frame addition  
concrete floors
- workmanship  
1938  
WPA crew, unskilled workers trained on the job  
1946  
Unskilled workers, high turnover  
Sub-contractors  
CFPT 3/24/49
- organization of building  
divided into wards, operating rooms, labs, kitchen, patient rooms,  
nurse stations, admissions, elevator, stairwell, entries, etc.  
  
Used now for duplicating room, storage, administrative offices of  
school district
- modification through time  
1941 Original structure modified in 1948 to include wing with  
Chapel and wing with patient rooms, X-ray, emergency canopy,  
and surgery rooms  
  
1964 Three car garage  
  
1966 Power Plant and Laundry rebuilt
- evidence of activities that occurred in it  
Nursing stations, patient rooms, kitchen, elevator, stairwells,  
chapel, surgical rooms, X-ray window, heavy lead door, call bells,  
oxygen outlets, plumbing, lighting, heating

## Architectural Description:

- building style  
The 1941 Building is late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20 Century Revival--Georgian Revival. The 1948 wing is Modern Movement—International Style. The 1948 Chapel has a Roman Ceiling.
- form  
rectangular original building with extended windows  
asymmetrical with extension and addition
- architectural features  
native stonework  
tile roof  
brick walls
- design  
Open house visitors “did not expect the beauty of the place which had been especially designed and decorated for the comfort of the patient even to the homey atmosphere of flowered drapes and bedspreads. Nor could they have expected the exceptionally fine equipment which can be matched favorably in quality, article by article with that used in the largest and best equipped hospitals in the country.” (CFPT 8/20/41)
- embellishments  
native stone  
tile roof
- features  
tile roof  
native stone  
Colby-made brick walls, original building  
Terrazzo tile steps in stairwell  
Stone water fountain, small pool at original entrance
- landscape features  
Deeded 3 acres from Colby school district board to hospital board  
(CFPT 9/23/71-Brian Winholz article)  
Former House and gazebo for Nuns stood north of hospital  
Outdoor classroom for school north of hospital  
Cement fragments still visible north  
Pine trees grow as high as the power lines north of hospital.  
“The hospital ground has some trees fairly well started and there will be more in time to come.” 3/24/49 CFPT  
Elm trees stand west of the gravel driveway around the hospital.  
Railroad tracks north of hospital.  
Fairgrounds and soccer field west.  
Range Avenue east, Crab apple tree in front of building.  
Former Thomas County Care Center, now Chamber of Commerce building south of hospital parking lot.

## Building Description

The building main entrance is on the south. A canopy from the emergency entrance shades the walk. Double glass doors open to a ramped breezeway.

To the left, the west corridor leads to school administration and curricular offices and copy center at the end of the hall. Vacant hospital supplies, utility and other rooms are on both sides of the hall.

Roger Hale uses one room for networking custom cutters with wheat farmers at harvest time.

The east corridor leads to the USD #315 Superintendent Nielsen's office, secretarial offices, reception lobby and workroom.

Board of Education meetings are held in the Ground Floor room that used to be a laboratory.

Former business classes/offices on the first floor have modernized the patient rooms with new doors and carpeting. South Wing First Floor is educational and business use.

The educational institution uses the 1948 South Wing, Ground Floor for Office space and various rooms on other floors for storage.

The remainder of the South Wing other hospital floors are unused.

South Wing Second and Third Floors have been left unused since the hospital moved. No theater productions occur in the former Chapel. No public meetings are held there.

### Building plans

#### a. floor plans

Main Building (1948)

174x42 feet, four stories high

Connecting addition 42x29 feet, three stories high

Chapel 86x 35

Dining and Recreation facilities for Sisters beneath Chapel

Root Cellar 48x16, electrical dumb waiter serving cellar

Three dumb waiters in hospital proper and passenger elevator

Ground Floor Emergency Room

(CFPT 3/24/49)

#### (1) modifications

Fountain shown in 1938 architectural plans not used in 2000.

Charles Davis is the only Colby person so far that even remembers water running in the fountain. Most people call it a flowerpot. May have discontinued use when main entry opened in South Wing.

*Dr. Smith thought that Dr. George Marshall may have wanted the fountain in the plans because he was fond of them. He said, Dr. Marshall also wanted a fountain at the college.*

(2) illustrations/dates

*See Inventory List of Map Drawer*

b. type and degree of alterations

Office furnishings, no X-ray, surgical, or lab equipment

Stained glass window at front foyer enclosed, difficult to view except by removing ceiling tile. *Probably required to cover a religious object on a public building.*

Chapel without altar, had also been used as theater, no chairs or pews remaining.

Basically intact walls and windows. Some bricked over.

Board of Education meetings are held in the room that used to be a laboratory

c. use of various rooms

School District Offices, Copy Center, Storage

d. outbuildings

Power Plant and Laundry 1966

*Need to Schedule on site visit for interior photos of Power Plant*

*Probably no longer a laundry facility*

e. features

Chapel, kitchen, tile, stone, roof, windows

Plan of the property

a. shape

elongated hallways with rooms on either side of hallways

b. arrangement of interior spaces

by medical function

Location

a. legal description

*See Deed*

- b. owners' names and addresses  
 USD #315, Thomas County?  
 210 S. Range Avenue  
 Colby, Kansas 67701
- c. relevant historical information gathered at the site  
 Floor Plans, Blue prints, architectural modification  
 Plan inventory
- d. placement  
 1941 the hospital was placed in southwest Colby  
 2000 building is now west central Colby with the I-70  
 developments  
 artery to town, Range Ave. right in front of the hospital  
 Range Ave also Hiway 25 north/south
- e. boundaries  
 N=railroad tracks  
 E=Range Avenue, Highway 25  
 S=Parking Lots and Thomas County Office Complex  
 W=Thomas County Fairgrounds/Soccer field
- f. setting  
 Plains Country Town, under 10,000 population  
 Highway 25 traffic east of building  
 Faces east, overlooking Medical Clinic, Public School Complex  
 And residential housing  
 Railroad tracks on north abandoned by Union Pacific?  
 Fairgrounds and parking lot to the west occupied for seasonal  
 events
- g. association  
 Power Plant and Laundry building remains on the property  
 northwest of the 1948 extension

#### Condition

- a. deterioration  
 Weather and neglect have left portions of the 1941 roof in urgent  
 need of repair.  
 Lack of roof maintenance continues to degrade the integrity of  
 ceiling and floor.  
 Dr. Smith thought the original part was not used for patients after a  
 while because it had a wooden roof, therefore a fire safety concern.  
 Where the floor slopes to join the addition to the original building  
 water has damaged the ceilings, floors, and walls.

One main stairwell falling apart.  
Original front entry decay for lack of guttering maintenance.

- b. original architectural elements
  - Good condition
  - native stone, Terrazzo steps, Colby brick, WPA craftsmanship, woodwork, windows, floors, Chapel, kitchen, cold storage, dumb waiter
  
- c. effect on historic integrity
  - Weather and neglect have left portions of the 1941 roof in urgent need of repair.
  - Lack of roof maintenance continues to degrade the integrity of steps, ceiling and floor and doorways
  
- d. Feeling
  - Institutional
  - Bright, pastel colors
  - Open hallways
  - Enclosed surgical rooms
  - Hard floors
  - Acoustical Chapel/Also called Little Theater
  - Sunny South Wing, south warmer side in winter
  - South Wing, north side cooler in summer, maybe colder in winter
  - No musty or decay smell
  - Livable

## References and Other Sources

Curtis, Cline, *Thomas County, Kansas, The First One Hundred Years*, Colby, Prairie Printers, Inc., 1973

*Dr. Floyd Smith Interview* Produced by Sue Taylor, Channing Middleton, and Linda Davis-Stephens, Spring 1998, Colby Community College, Instructor Files

Kansas Historic Preservation Office, *Historic Resources Inventory Survey Manual*, Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, No Date

Kleinsorge, Judy, "Heritage Enrichment Series: *Our Built Environment*, St. Thomas Hospital" Article in *Prairie Winds* Newsletter of the Thomas County Historical Society, Spring 1998, Vol. 25 No. 1

Kleinsorge, Judy, "St. Thomas Hospital" Files in Thomas County Historical Society Vault

Naber, Sister M. Vera, C.S.A., *With All Devotedness, Chronicles of the Sisters of St. Agnes, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin*, New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1959, LCCCN: 60-5904. Book given by W. D. Ferguson to Dr. Floyd Smith

Thomas County Historical Society, *Land of the Windmills, Thomas County, Kansas*, Colby: Thomas County Historical Society, 1976

Thomas County Historical Society, Vault Files and Photographs on "Hospitals"

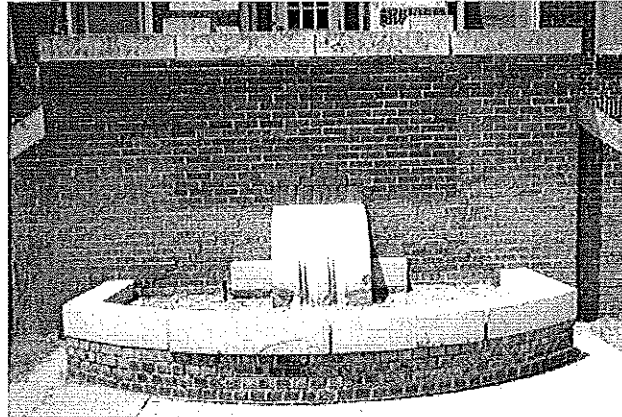
*The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas*, Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Kansas with a New Introduction by James R. Shortridge, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984

Wingo, Wayne, *A History of Thomas County, 1885-1964 Kansas being A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts*, 1964? No Date, No Publisher listed, available for sale at Prairie Museum, Museum Mart.

Description

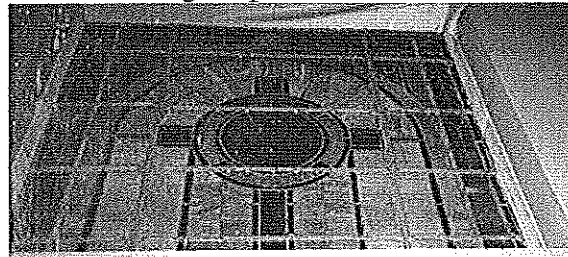
St. Thomas Hospital

At the outside steps of the hospital entrance is a stone and brick fountain.

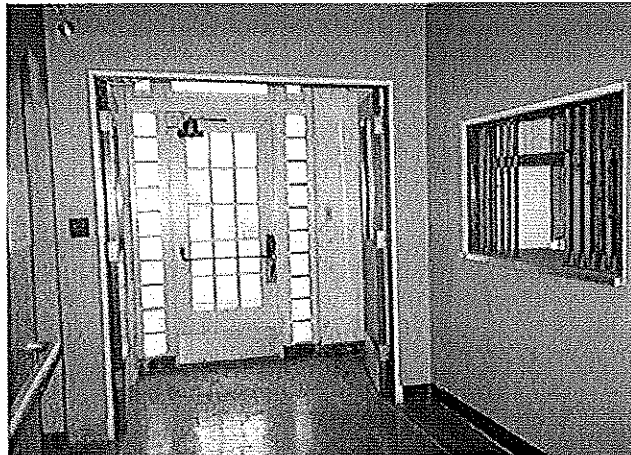


No longer in use since the 1940's, it is commonly known as the flowerpot.

Inside the South Wing hospital entrance is a stained glass window.



No longer visible without removing ceiling tile.



Main Entry, gutter leakage deterioration



Chapel floor level doorway



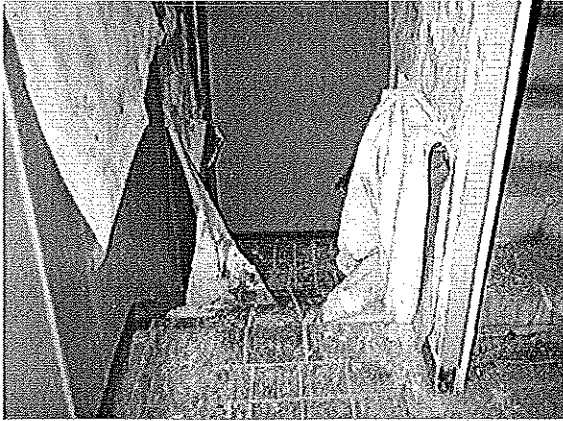
Choir level doorway



Chapel ceiling paint



Choir level, Room 8, next to stairway



Chapel level stairway



Choir level stairway



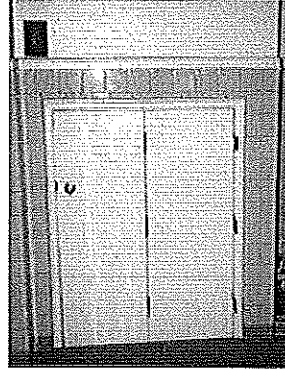
Main Building, Addition Central Hallway



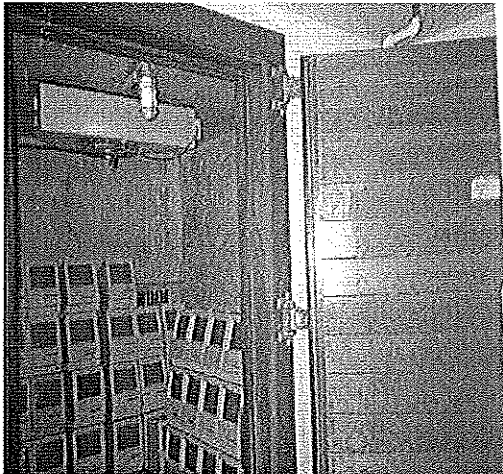
Southwest corner 3<sup>rd</sup> floor



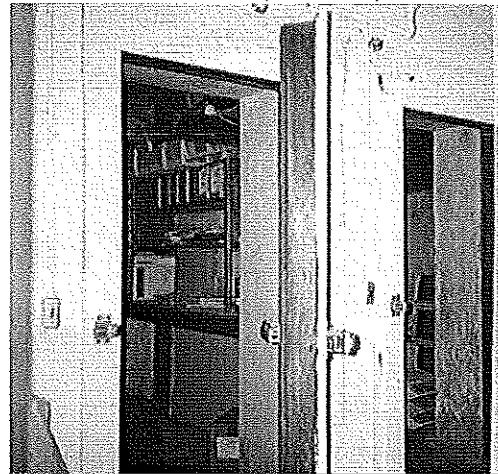
Dumbwaiter, basement, west



Dumbwaiter, kitchen, south



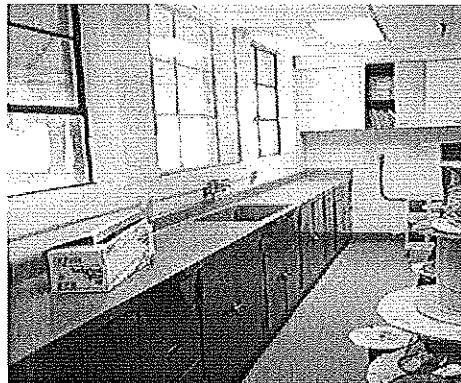
Cold Storage (1), north wall



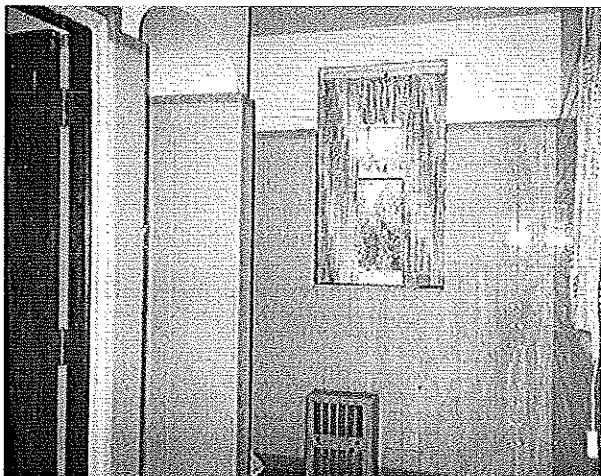
Cold Storage (2), west wall



Tile floor Cold Storage (1)



Kitchen, west windows

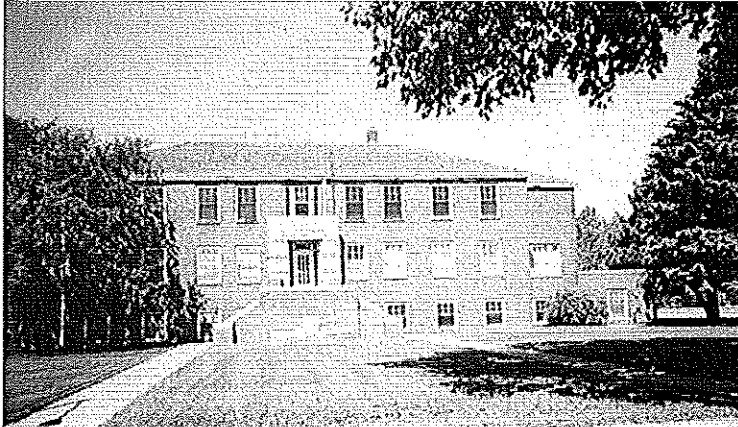


Scrub Room

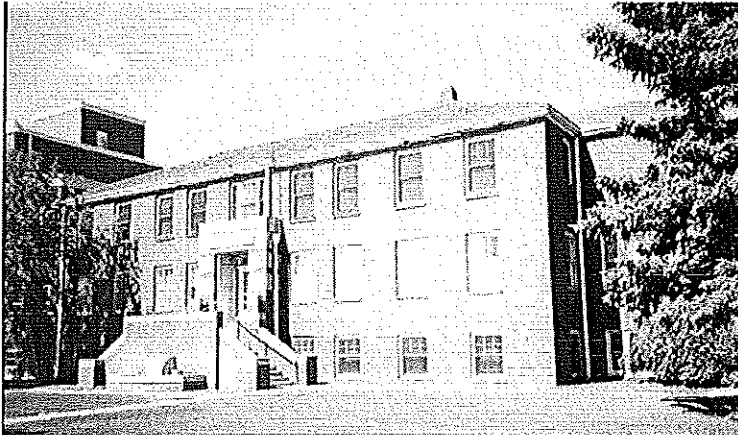


Labor and Delivery

## **St. Thomas Hospital Exterior Views**



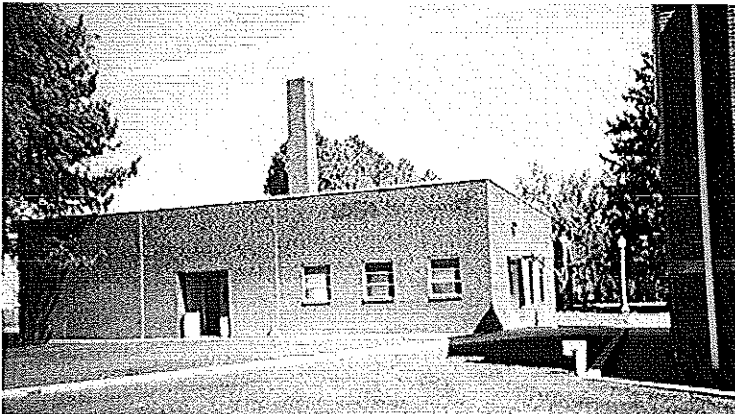
**East side of 1941 St. Thomas Hospital  
Front entrance**



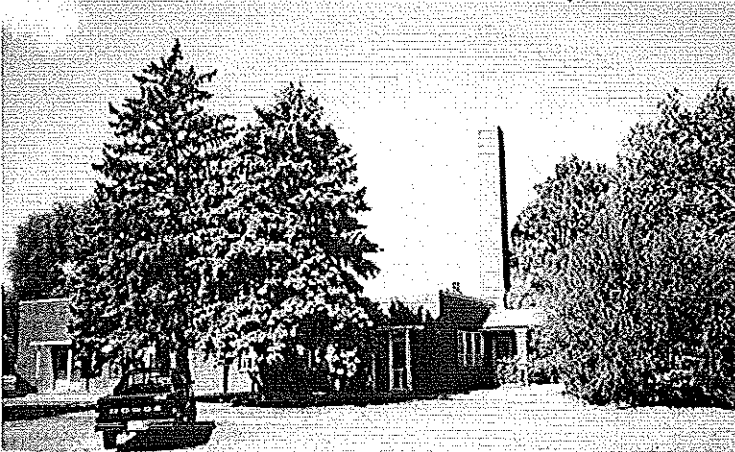
**Northeast view of 1941 St. Thomas Hospital  
Limestone Fountain east of steps**

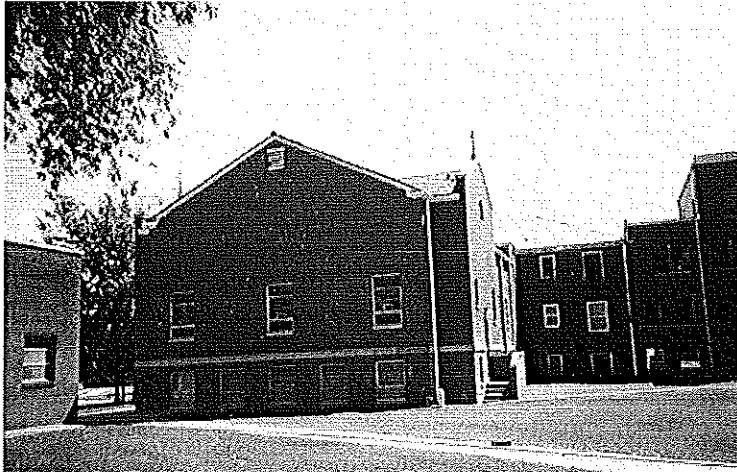


**1948 South Wing Attached to 1941 St. Thomas Hospital  
Southern Former Emergency Entrance Canopy with balconies above  
Canopy Entrance used by USD #315  
1948 Main Entrance faced east, Stained Glass window enclosed above doorway**



**Power Plant and Laundry, 1966, Southern View  
Northwest of Chapel Wing and hospital  
Eastern View of Power Plant and Laundry, 1966**





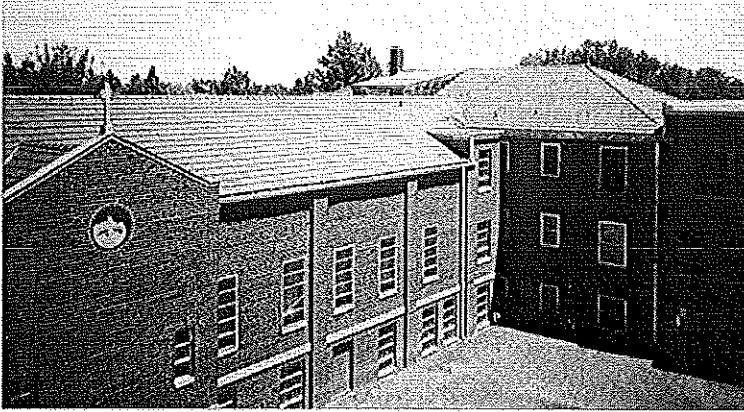
**1948 Chapel Wing extending west from hospital**



**1948 Chapel Wing, Northern View**



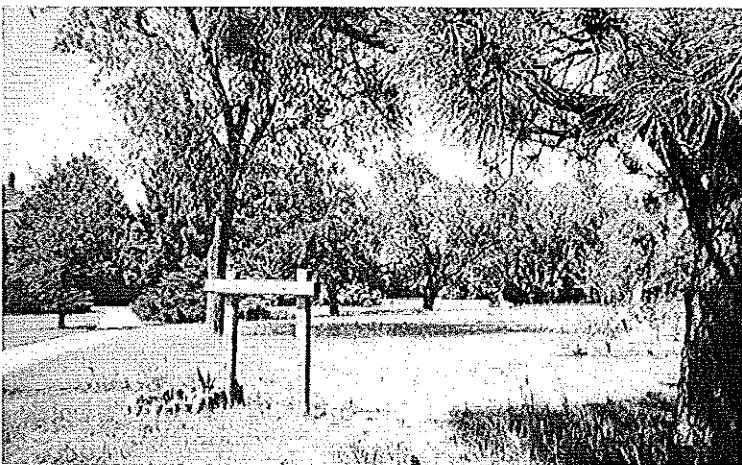
**Kitchen entrance, Northern view**



**Tile roof with modified shed, View toward northeast**

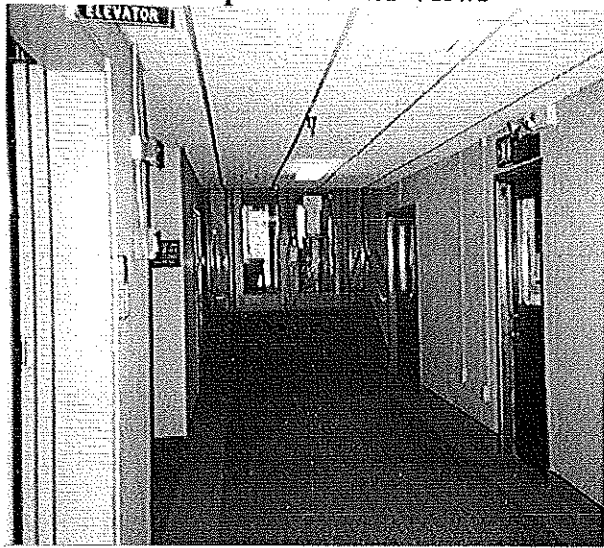


**1941 and 1948 Roof Connections, Southeast view**

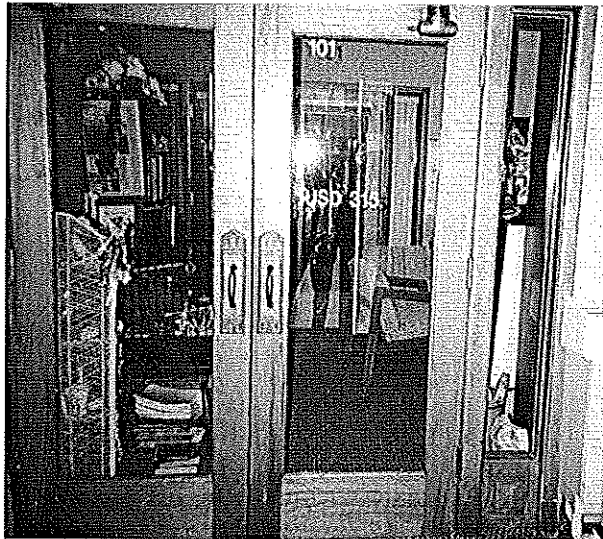


**Colby Public School had an Outdoor Classroom on the grounds of USD #315**

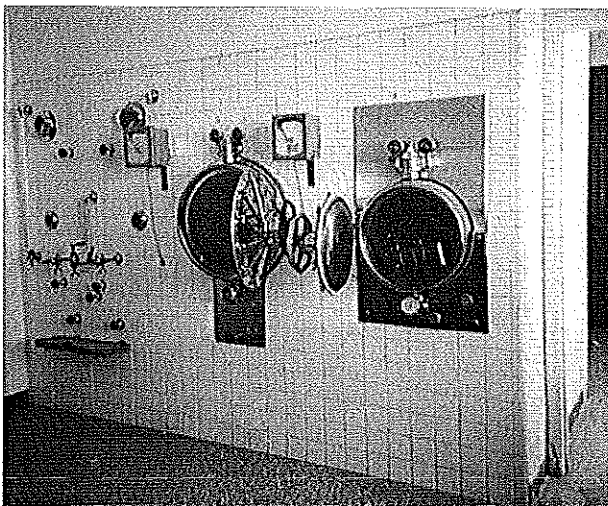
## St. Thomas Hospital Interior Views



South Wing, Ground Floor, East Hallway



Doors of former 1948 South Wing Entry



South Wing, Fourth Floor, Sterilizer