

WELCOME HOME THE HISTORY OF BUFFALO COURTS

In 1933, the concept of the Buffalo Courts Athletic Dormitory at West Texas State Teacher's College (now West Texas A&M University) was suggested by Coach Al Baggett, head of the West Texas Athletic Department, and C.H. Jarrett, president of the Canyon Athletic Club, and Mayor of Canyon. Buffalo Courts would be the first strictly athletic dormitory in the state, designed to house 55 students.

The Canyon Athletic Club started a fundraising project; R.S. Terrill, editor of *The Canyon News*, began various activities to raise money; and the state legislature appropriated funds. Along with these funds the college contributed enough money to begin construction. Gifts and grants for Buffalo Courts totaled \$150,801.00, including a grant from the Works Progress Administration.



The Federal Emergency Relief Administration hired students from the college to help build Buffalo Courts, and construction began on August 22, 1934, on the site of the home of the original college mascot, the buffalo. The original building was constructed with student labor, augmented with only one carpenter and one rock mason to direct the construction. The rooms were arranged around a patio in a "U" shape, approximately 138 feet on each side. In front of the patio rose the recreation hall, which was not completed until 1941, and is the only part of the original structure still standing.

Buffalo Courts was the architectural wonder of the United States, unique in its appearance – built of petrified wood, stalagmites and stalactites from Carlsbad Caverns, blue flint from the Panhandle, and native stone from Palo Duro Canyon. Syndicated sportswriters carried stories of the West Texas Athletic Department and their athletic dormitory. The lower floor of the recreation hall held a 38' x 52' reception room. At each end was a large fireplace constructed of stone and faced with native Texas petrified wood. A massive staircase led to the second floor, where a large dance floor of hardwood was used for receptions and open houses. A fireplace adorned each end of the room, faced with crystal and stone from Carlsbad Caverns.



In the mid-1980's, the University's Alumni Association was looking for a place to call home. Although Buffalo Courts was in need of a face-lift, the Alumni Association moved in. After a renovation project which created an office for the director and replaced badly needed items such as carpet and ceiling tiles, the Association had a place of which they could be proud and which served their purposes perfectly – a permanent home on campus where groups would gather, alumni could reminisce and that would always evoke fond memories of a campus known and remembered for its uniqueness and history.



Additional renovation projects in 1994 and 2002 provided for a kitchen, offices and the T Club Reception Hall upstairs, in honor of "the men who called Buffalo Courts home and those committed to the preservation of this historical structure. Combined with comfortable furnishings and artwork, the Buffalo Courts Alumni Center continues to provide a campus "home away from home" for alumni and friends of West Texas A&M University.

Buffalo Courts most recent facelift in January 2013 included asbestos abatement, new carpet and paint, an update to the bathrooms and some furnishings. It is a wonderful building with rich history where we are proud to tell our alumni *Welcome Home*.