



8 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Jesus has left the billboard



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

A phone call to the *Colby Free Press* on Tuesday afternoon reported Jesus missing from a billboard facing west-bound traffic on Interstate 70. An up-close investigation revealed that the wind Monday had shredded the plastic

fabric. The part with Jesus could be seen hanging down between the two sides of the billboard near the K-25 exit on the west edge of Colby. The sign is owned by Tuffy and Linda Taylor of Colby.

## Charter school officially closed

By Kevin Bottrell

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The Colby School Board officially voted to close the Thomas County Academy after a public hearing Monday night. The academy, licensed as a separate school, but now a part-time program at the Middle School, will close at the end of the school year.

The board decided last year to close the academy, designed to help students who learn better through projects rather than lectures, to save money, cutting it to half time for 2009-2010.

The board has to hold a public hear-

ing to close any school "building." The academy was considered a separate building, even though it was housed in the Middle School, said Principal Diana Wieland.

Wieland, who spends most of her time as the district's curriculum coordinator, thanked the parents, students, staff and board members for their support of the program. She said she appreciated the challenges of setting up and maintaining an alternative charter school.

"As we close the door to Thomas County Academy this next year," she

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## National prayer day gathering planned

For the National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 6, the Thomas County Ministerial Association plans a "Meet Me at the Flagpole" event from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. at the Thomas County Courthouse in Colby.

Pastor Tom Peyton of the Mingo Bible Church, said the theme for this year's event is "For Such a Time as This," a quote from the book of Esther. "Particular focus of prayer this year

will be on our nation," he said. "We will sing one verse of 'America the Beautiful' and one verse of 'My Country Tis of Thee.'"

Scripture reading, corporate prayer and small-group prayer will follow, he said.

"The event will start promptly at 12:15," Pastor Peyton added, "and will

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## Colby electric plant marks 100-year anniversary

By Vera Sloan

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What was at one time thought to be a luxury soon became a necessity once Colby residents got their first spark of electricity in 1910.

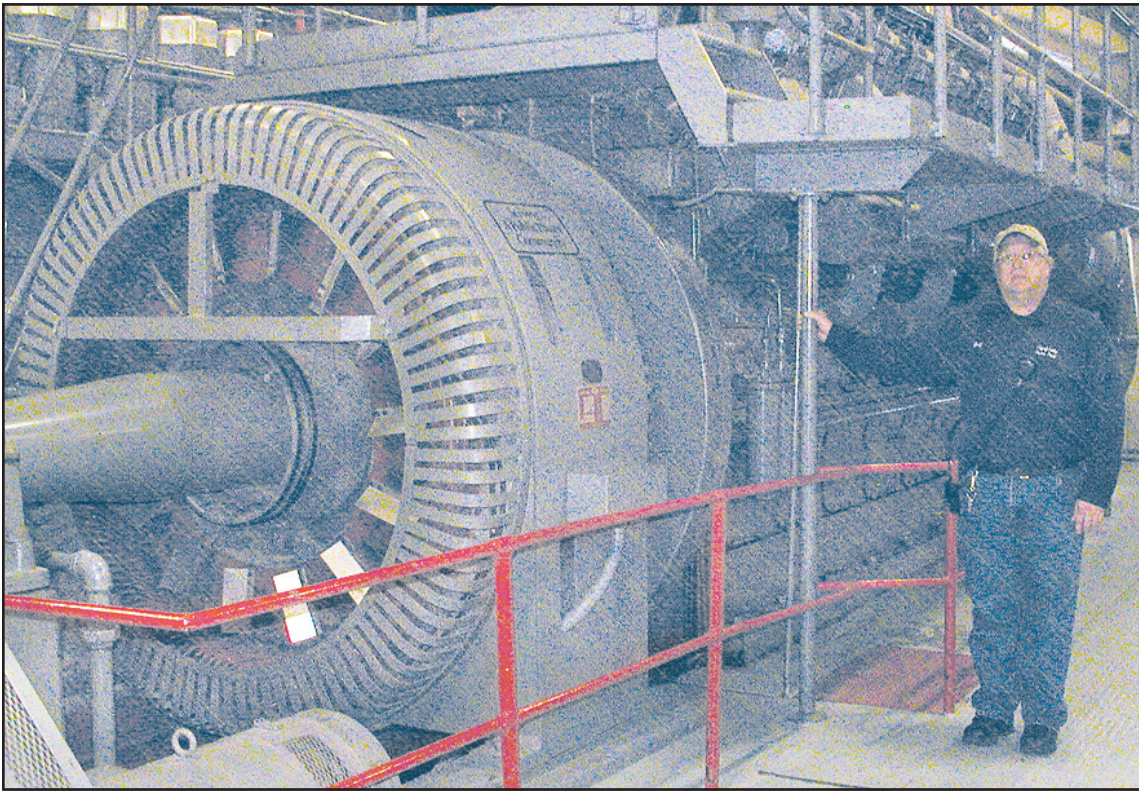
This year marks the city's 100th anniversary of having electric power at the flip of a switch.

The city power plant still sits at the same location at 120 N. Sterling, where it all began on Thanksgiving Day 1910.

An article found in the archives at the Prairie Museum and written by Colby High School student Theo Kleinsorge in 2004, says that some homes and businesses already had electricity from gasoline generators. The idea of increased value for city lots and growth piqued the interest of city fathers to look into the possibilities of electricity for the whole town.

They called in a Mr. McDonnell, an engineer from what became a well-known Kansas City firm, who discussed different power systems. A resolution was passed asking the City Council to put running water and the electricity question to a vote of the people.

The biggest hurdle would be to pass a \$55,000 bond issue to build a plant big enough to handle a town 2 1/2 times Colby's size. Backers felt water and power service would prompt growth, and they didn't think it would be wise to try to pass another bond issue to expand the plant a few years later.



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

After 18 years at the city power plant, Greg Ellis knows the equipment like the back of his hand. He took time out on Thursday to talk about the workings of the plant, and to have his picture taken with the No. 3 generator 47 years after it took up residence here.

One interesting note was that although women could vote in city elections, they were not allowed to vote on bond proposals, and there was a fear that the issue wouldn't pass. Who would want electricity more than a housewife? one backer thought.

The fear was reinforced because of the size of the proposed project. However, the bond issue of Jan. 10, 1910, passed 189 in favor and

44 against.

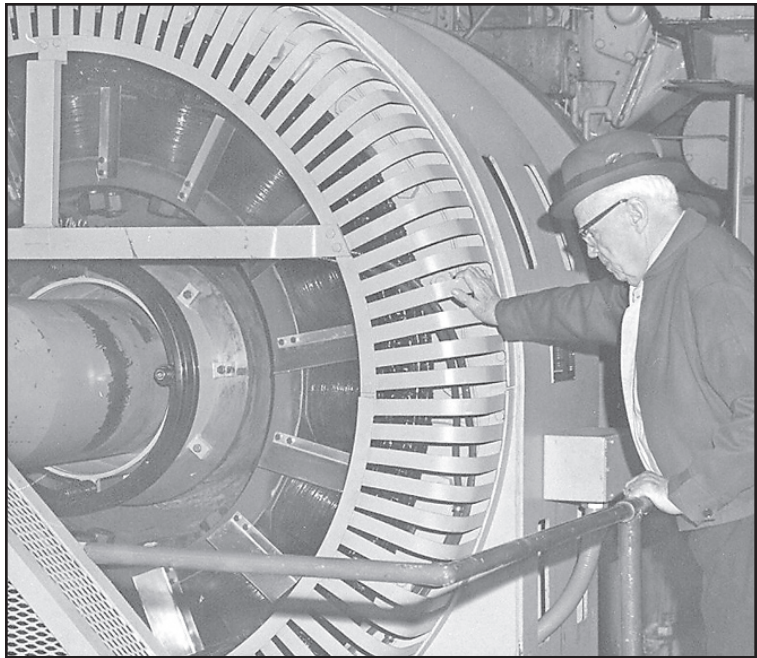
Being one of the first in the area to have electricity put Colby on the map, and the city gained the respect and envy of surrounding towns.

In February 1921, the plant needed to be enlarged, and an election to raise \$60,000 was approved 259 to 22. The improvement allowed for a series of light clusters on each corner of Main Street. A

second improvement happened in September of that same year, with the arrival of two 200-horsepower diesel engines, making Colby's plant one of the best in the state.

At that point the city began supplying the communities of Hoxie, Gem, Rexford and Selden, bringing about the need to generate more power.

And it was the arrival of a 600-horsepower diesel engine in



Prairie Museum of Art and History

Edward Flood Sr. admired the brand new No. 3 generator sometime after it was installed in 1963. The generator is still capable of producing 2,500 kilowatts of electricity. Good maintenance by crews at the plant has kept the unit looking and performing like new as it approaches 50 years of service.

1924 that marked a turning point for the finances of the town. Debts were paid off and money began to accumulate in the electric fund.

The surplus resulted in a resolution passed by the City Council to waive any tax levies for city expenses, making Colby one of the few cities nationwide to exempt their residents from local taxes. It was noted all over the nation by towns that used Colby as a model and wrote articles about Colby being a "taxless town."

However, many residents still

remembered that the first generators had been turned off at midnight, so that late-nighters had to either get out the kerosene lamps or go to bed.

It's been a long time since the days of arc lights and tungsten lamps powered by coal and steam, to today's huge 5,700-horsepower "dual fuel" diesel and natural gas engines.

And now, although most of the power is purchased through Mid-

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## Briefly

### City to fill cracks this week

Weather permitting, city crews will fill cracks on several streets Thursday through Friday including Lynn Drive from Ninth Street to Lue Drive; and Ninth and Eighth Streets from Thompson Avenue to Lane Drive. Vehicles should be removed between 8 and 5 p.m. and drivers should find alternate routes. For information, call Chris Bieker at 460-4420.

### Band taking garage sale items

The Colby High marching band plans a garage sale Saturday to raise money for its trip to Washington. The students will be marching in the National Independence Day Parade. Band members will pick up items for the sale. Call director Joey Nichols at 460-5300.

### Scouts looking for faded Glory

Bring your tattered, torn and faded Old Glory to

the Pioneer Memorial Library through Friday. As part of its U.S. flag disposal drive, Colby Girl Scout Troop 165 reminds everyone that flags should be disposed of if they are torn, dirty, no longer rectangular, faded or in general disrepair. For information, call Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer at 460-3298.

### Senior center to hold fund raiser

The Senior Progress Center will have a potato bar, bake sale and coin raffle fund raiser from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the center. For information, call Director Kaila DeBoer at 460-2901.

### Brewster offers garden training

The Brewster Recreation Department and the K-State Extension Master Gardeners will offer landscape training sessions at 7 p.m. the next two Thursday at Hunter Hall in Brewster: this week, Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities by Extension agent

Dana Belshe, and May 6, Trees for Northwest Kansas by Jim Strine, state forester. For information, call the Sherman County Extension office at (785) 890-4880.

### College to show off horses

The Colby Community College Horse Unit will hold an open house from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday at the college farm, on County Road 23, three miles east and one mile north of Colby. Enjoy tours, hay rides, horse exhibitions and refreshments. For information, call the program office at 460-5464.

### Heartland program Thursday

Heartland Christian School will have its spring music program at 7 p.m. Thursday in the school gym, featuring its bands and choirs. Preconcert music by students will begin at 6:30. For information, call the school at 460-6419.

### College offers spring concerts

The Spring Vocal Music Concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the Frahm Theatre at Colby Community College, featuring the Sunflower Singers and Concert Choir. The Spring Band Concert, with the Concert and Jazz bands, will be Tuesday, May 4, same time and place. Admission is free.

### Offices to close for lunch

The Thomas County clerk's and road and bridge offices will be closed during the noon hour for the rest of the week for software training. Both will conduct business from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. For information, call the clerk's office at 460-4500.



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