

Thurber Hall

Harold Thurber, a successful rancher, and member of the Patagonia Community Church believed that Patagonia was going to grow. This was 1950 and there were only about 100 families but there was no building large enough that could be used by the youth, for large events, meetings, pot lucks, etc. So he started pitching for such a building.

As you can imagine moving forward with his “dream” provided a number of road blocks and challenges. The church did not have enough property to build the size he envisioned so some lot changes had to occur, fund raising was slow and a legal promise for a \$5,000 challenge was revoked because the church did not meet the timeframe to match the challenge, so the money was withdrawn, several contractors were no longer available because of the long wait so a local contractor Lamma and Haverty were selected.

Supplies would be purchased only to end up sitting on the property because they didn’t have enough money to proceed. Some suggested modifying the building so the cost would be less, but Thurber wouldn’t hear of it.

The grand opening in the fall of 1959 of the Youth/Community Hall as it was called had a large celebration with 125 invitees (actually 250 showed up). There was no ceiling and no kitchen but the building was “debt free” so they could plan to make those improvements.

During the construction the building was known as a Community Hall or a Youth Community Hall, but around 1963 Harold’s wife Carrie suggested the name was changed to Thurber Hall.

People have always been curious as to why the building had a stage and very high ceilings and loft area. Thurber was very involved in the Pima County Fair and prior to the start of the fair for several years a close friend who provided the entertainment at the Fair would bring acts to Patagonia. There were aerial acts, singing groups (actually the Osmonds were one of them) and others. The Loft Area was designed to show movies since the town didn’t have a movie theater and pictures of Thurber Hall show large crowds attending.

Sometime later the rooms in front of Thurber Hall were added for offices/choir, etc. which connected it to the church.

Thurber Hall celebrated 60 years in 2019 and is currently undergoing changes, which have been delayed because of Covid.