CHAPTER VII

The financing of Winter Shows operations has always been a local grassroots effort; no application has ever been made for a grant of federal funds or state taxpayers’ money for building and facility construction. The funding of general operational expenses is developed from rentals for use of the building, from concessioner space rental, gate receipts, food concession profits, and gifts from individuals and businesses. No tax monies of any kind are appropriated directly to the Winter Shows board of managers. A very modest amount is given to the Livestock Association, the Daughters' Association, and the Red River Valley Development Association, most of which is expended for show premiums paid to exhibitor winners at the Winter Shows. All land purchases and major building projects except the latest addition of balcony space have been largely funded by fund drives within northwestern Minnesota among the agribusinesses and individuals.

The support of time and money given by the community of Crookston and the immediately surrounding area was a major developmental factor for operations at the outset, but could not be continued at that level. Likewise, the support of building projects by the Crookston community has been substantial.

According to accounts in newspapers, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and program books produced annually, the first major fund drive for buildings commenced early in 1918. The Red River Valley Livestock Association was in the process of being incorporated. C.G. Selvig was elected as president of the budding corporation, and he was also president of the general arrangements committee for the planning and conduct of the Winter Shows. A campaign to sell shares at $10 each was organized in the ten counties which supported the Red River Valley Development Association. Additionally, and very interesting, is the fact that there were also $2 memberships sold in the RRV Development Association to individual citizens. This fee entitled them to a button which admitted them to show activities. The latter turned out to be more of a public relations than a fund-raising effort. Fifteen thousand dollars was raised for the first building, the livestock pavilion located adjacent to the old armory in downtown Crookston. It was a two-story building plus a basement measuring 50' x 142'. The plan was to house the Crops Show, a livestock judging arena, a food service section, and livestock.

Demand for livestock housing was greater than anticipated by the space available in the new pavilion; as a result the people proceeded to raise more funds, about $50,000. Not only did every county have a drive to sell shares, but Duluth and St. Paul businesses, and the Minneapolis Journal each provided a couple thousand dollars to add to the project. This additional money provided equipment for the livestock pavilion and made it possible to build Annex A, the second building, 73' wide by 141' long, a two-story livestock housing structure suitable for all classes of livestock.

Livestock breeders found that despite their good planning, some problems were encountered. The beautiful second floor of sturdy wood planking wasn’t necessarily impervious to urine trickling on the livestock housed below. Mid course corrections were made.

The first show in the livestock pavilion in 1919 was a time for celebration. The governor of the State, the president of the University, and major agricultural leaders from the Midwest were on hand to celebrate the event. What was planned to handle the largest anticipated crowds was already crowded the first year. Thousands of people came on the train looking for places to stay, places to eat, to see the new facility, to greet friends, and to learn. There was no question about the success, excitement, and the good feeling towards the new home of the Red River Valley Winter Shows!

There is evidence of some in-house disagreements while the RRV Livestock Association was taking title to the buildings. The campaign that sold the shares included men and women representing all facets of production agriculture. The University leadership found themselves refereeing the various demands made by participants of the show during the year 1919. The general arrangements committee changed its name to the Winter Shows Board of Managers in 1920, which, at least in word, identified the multiplicity of interests, including educators, county agents, researchers, businessmen, and farmers. Too, there was a problem of the limited space for the farm equipment demonstrations at the Industrial Show. There was sufficient space in the new armory, but the building served as the largest facility for the educational meetings.

Consequently, the success in fund raising by the cooperating organizations encouraged the leadership to plan Annex B, the third building in as many years for the Industrial Show, today called the Farm Service Show. The structure was 40' x 127' and stands today as the bus repair barn and storage building for the Crookston Public School District.

The campaign for funds began to lag in 1920. The post World War 1 farm depression was fast approaching. The economy was adjusting to the post-war period. One morning a banker from the city of Crookston met C.G. Selvig and was extremely pessimistic.

“'We need $23,000 to finish that building, to pay for the land, and to equip it. And with the farm economy in such bad shape, I don’t think we’re going to get this done. I think we’re whipped.”'

Well, that was a different kind of talk from had being gone on, previously, but it was true that raising money for the third building was in trouble. Some money was raised. The sale of shares of stock in the nonprofit RRV Livestock Association was in trouble. The banks got together and said, "Well, we’ll loan the money at the least possible rate of interest. Let’s go ahead and