

= World 's littlest skyscraper =

The Newby @-@ McMahon Building , commonly referred to as the world 's littlest skyscraper , is located at 701 La Salle (on the corner of Seventh and La Salle streets) in downtown Wichita Falls , Texas . This late Neoclassical style red brick and cast stone structure is 40 ft (12 m) tall , and its exterior dimensions are 18 ft (5 @. @ 5 m) deep and 10 ft (3 @. @ 0 m) wide . Its interior dimensions are approximately 12 ft (3 @. @ 7 m) by 9 ft (2 @. @ 7 m) , or approximately 108 sq ft (10 @. @ 0 m²) . Steep , narrow , internal stairways leading to the upper floors occupy roughly 25 percent of the interior area .

Reportedly the result of a fraudulent investment scheme by a confidence man , the Newby @-@ McMahon Building was a source of great embarrassment to the city and its residents after its completion in 1919 . During the 1920s , the Newby @-@ McMahon Building was featured in Robert Ripley 's Ripley 's Believe It or Not ! syndicated column as " the world 's littlest skyscraper " , a nickname that has stuck with it ever since . The Newby @-@ McMahon Building is now part of the Depot Square Historic District of Wichita Falls , a Texas Historic Landmark .

= = Background = =

A large petroleum reservoir was discovered just west of the city of Burkburnett , a small town in Wichita County , Texas in 1912 . Burkburnett and its surrounding communities became boomtowns , experiencing explosive growth of their populations and economies . By 1918 , an estimated 20 @, @ 000 new settlers had taken up residence around the lucrative oil field , and many Wichita County residents became wealthy virtually overnight . As people streamed into the local communities in search of high @-@ paying jobs , the nearby city of Wichita Falls began to grow in importance . Though it initially lacked the necessary infrastructure for this sudden increase in economic and industrial activity , Wichita Falls was a natural choice to serve as the local logistical hub , being the seat of Wichita County . Because office space was lacking , major stock transactions and mineral rights deals were conducted on street corners and in tents that served as makeshift headquarters for the new oil companies .

= = Proposal and blueprints = =

The Newby @-@ McMahon Building is a four @-@ story brick building located near the railroad depot in downtown Wichita Falls , built in 1906 by Augustus Newby (1855 ? 1909) , a director of the Wichita Falls and Oklahoma City Railway Company . The oil @-@ rig construction firm of J.D. McMahon , a petroleum landman and structural engineer from Philadelphia , was one of seven tenants whose offices were based in the original Newby Building .

According to local legend , when McMahon announced in 1919 that he would build a highrise annex to the Newby Building as a solution to the newly wealthy city 's urgent need for office space , investors were eager to invest in the project . McMahon collected \$ 200 @, @ 000 (US \$ 2 @, @ 730 @, @ 000 in 2016) in investment capital from this group of naive investors , promising to construct a highrise office building across the street from the St. James Hotel .

The key to McMahon 's swindle , and his successful defense in the ensuing lawsuit , was that he never verbally stated that the actual height of the building would be 480 feet (150 m) . The proposed skyscraper depicted in the blueprints that he distributed (and which were approved by the investors) was clearly labeled as consisting of four floors and 480 inches (12 m) .

= = Construction and ensuing legal battle = =

McMahon used his own construction crews to build the McMahon Building on the small , unused piece of property next to the Newby Building , without obtaining prior consent from the owner of the property , who lived in Oklahoma . As the building began to take shape , the investors realized they had been swindled into purchasing a four @-@ story edifice that was only 40 ft (12 m) tall , rather

than the 480 ft (150 m) structure they were expecting .

They brought a lawsuit against McMahon but , to their dismay , the real estate and construction deal was declared legally binding by a local judge ? as McMahon had built exactly according to the blueprints they had approved , there was to be no legal remedy for the deceived investors . They did recover a small portion of their investment from the elevator company , which refused to honor the contract after they learned of the confidence trick . There was no stairway installed in the building upon its initial completion , as none was included in the original blueprints . Rather , a ladder was employed to gain access to the upper three floors . By the time construction was complete , McMahon had left Wichita Falls and perhaps even Texas , taking with him the balance of the investors ' money .

= = Early occupancy and subsequent abandonment = =

Upon its completion and opening in 1919 , the Newby @-@ McMahon Building was an immediate source of great embarrassment to the city and its residents . The ground floor had six desks representing the six different companies that occupied the building as its original tenants . Throughout most of the 1920s , the building housed only two firms . During the 1920s , the Newby @-@ McMahon Building was featured in Robert Ripley 's Ripley 's Believe It or Not ! syndicated column as " the world 's littlest skyscraper " , which is a name that has stuck with it ever since .

The oil industry would ultimately prove to be a resource curse to Wichita Falls , and the Texas Oil Boom ended only a few years later . The building was vacated , boarded up , and virtually forgotten in 1929 as the Great Depression struck North Texas and office space became relatively inexpensive to lease or purchase . A fire gutted the building in 1931 , rendering it unusable for a number of years .

After the Great Depression , the building housed a succession of tenants , including barber shops and cafés . The building changed hands many times and was scheduled for demolition on several occasions , but escaped this fate apparently because a sufficient number of local residents came to its defense . It was eventually deeded to the city of Wichita Falls . As the building continued to deteriorate , in 1986 the city gave the building to the Wichita County Heritage Society (WCHS) , with the hope that it would eventually be restored , making it a viable part of the Depot Square Historic District .

= = Purchase and renovation = =

By 1999 , the Newby @-@ McMahon Building had proved to be an excessive burden on the limited capital reserves of the WCHS . The following year , the city council hired the local architectural firm of Bundy , Young , Sims & Potter to stabilize the crumbling structure , amid steadily growing talk of demolishing the building . Dick Bundy and his partners became fascinated with the history and legacy of the building ; they arranged a partnership with Marvin Groves Electric , another local business , to purchase the building . In December 2000 , the city council voted to allow the WCHS to sell the building to Marvin Groves for \$ 3 @, @ 748 .

On June 11 , 2003 , a storm swept through Wichita Falls , bringing gusts of wind as strong as 97 mph (156 km / h) . A 15 @-@ foot (4 @. @ 6 @-@ metre) section of brick wall from the McMahon Building complex was knocked down . The damage from this storm was repaired , but full restoration of the building and the adjacent Newby Building was delayed until late 2005 . In June of that year , the City Council granted \$ 25 @, @ 000 in funds from the city 's Tax Increment Financing Fund , to be invested in the restoration of the McMahon Building . Restoration of the building is estimated to have cost more than \$ 254 @, @ 000 , the remainder of which was paid by the owners (Bundy , Young , Sims & Potter , Inc. and Marvin Groves Electric) .

= = Current status = =

With the passage of time , the Newby @-@ McMahon Building has become a monument to a long

@-@ gone era . It has survived tornadoes , a fire , and decades of neglect to stand as a monument to the greed , genius , graft , and gullibility of the oil boom days of North Texas . The building is currently part of the Depot Square Historic District of Wichita Falls , which has been declared a Texas Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places . The building has never met the criteria for the definition of a skyscraper , nor even that of a " highrise " building . Aside from serving as a local tourist attraction , the building is home to an antiques dealership , The Antique Wood , which opened in 2006 on the ground floor . The third floor has been converted into an artist 's studio .

The Newby @-@ McMahon Building is among several historic buildings featured in the documentary film Wichita Falls : The Future of Our Past , a retrospective analysis of the city 's architectural past produced in 2006 by Barry Levy , a public information officer with the city of Wichita Falls .