

Marion Community Building (est. 1936)



The Marion Community Building was constructed for the City of Marion in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration, one of the New Deal Programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt after the Great Depression. The City has owned and maintained the building since its construction.

The building was constructed of local rock from McDowell County. The majority of the rock came from Mount Ida, the mountain that overlooks Downtown Marion from the south. The colored rocks on the building came from property off of Lentz Road near the Catawba River just to the north of Marion.

The Community Building was dedicated in 1937 and has been actively used by the City and the community ever since. Since its construction, the Community Building has been used for public and civic club meetings, receptions, parties and many other public and private events.

The Community Building served as the home of the McDowell County Public Library for many years. Many civic clubs, community and professional organizations have met in the Community Building, including the Marion Rotary Club, Christian Women's Club, McDowell Ballroom Dancers, the McDowell Board of Realtors, Newcomers and Friends, Sweet T.E.A. for Jesus, the Child Evangelism Fellowship, Kiwanis Club, Lion's Club, Civitan Club, Jaycees and the Francis Marion Club. The Marion Rotary Club was chartered in 1939 and continues to meet in the Community Building, as it has for its entire history.

Several famous bands played in the building during the "Big Band Era." The building served as the first location of the McDowell Chamber of Commerce and a square dancing club met in the building for many years. The American Legion met in the front room on the north side of the Community Building for several years and the Girl Scouts continue to meet in the front room on the south side of the building. Porches were added to the building in 1991.

For many years, Geneva Blanton cooked delicious, made from scratch meals for civic clubs and other events in the Community Building. Ms. Blanton was an institution in the community until her passing in 2000. A tree is planted behind the building in Ms. Blanton's memory. Mary

Katherine Walker took over as the lead cook after Ms. Blanton's death and cooked for several more years.

The Community Building Basement served as the location for Marion High School basketball games in the 1930's and 1940's and hosted basketball practices for local private schools into the early 2000's. In addition, the Basement was used by the McDowell County Unit of the State Guard during World War II and served as the National Guard Armory for many years. The Basement has also been the location of a teen club and skating rink and hosted many dances and a summer youth program at various times through the years.

The Community Building Park adjacent to the Community Building was first constructed in 1958. The Park has been improved over the years and now includes picnic shelters, a playground area, splash pad and basketball and tennis courts.

Since 1936, the Community Building has played a vital role in Marion, hosting and bearing witness to the history created in our great City ever since.