

The Brookings Chamber's Background

Information on the Chamber's origins are sketchy. Historical newspaper accounts cite Commercial Club actions in the 1920's that were aimed at drawing visitors, conventions and students, as well as improving area roads.

A typewritten speech on file is attributed to Dr. A.A. Harris, the first Chamber President. The speech was delivered to the General Membership at the Brookings Country Club on September 13, 1949. In it, Dr. Harris says (in part) . . . "a special invitation was extended to me as the first president of this organization back in 1911." And a brittle, yellowed two-page document that provides a chronological account of early activities begins, "George P. Sexauer appointed first committee to consider forming Commercial Club on March 9, 1911. "

The early group supported the issuance of bonds for a new City Hall, had charge of the Court House corner-stone laying ceremonies, supported the securing of one mile of good road west of the city, considered a Winnipeg-to-Gulf automobile road, considered oiling Brookings business streets and a street lighting project, sponsored construction of the dam at the north end of Lake Campbell, entertained 1000 at the Opera House and served 900 at the Club's Rooms for the first college and city people get-to-together, and others. In 1912, the Club sponsored the Brookings census: Population –3380.

The Chamber was incorporated as the Brookings Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 25, 1938 *"to advance and promote the welfare of the City of Brookings . . . its surrounding territory and the State of South Dakota. To promote civic activities and development and better trade relationship; to sponsor events having in their nature the advertisement of the City of Brookings; to do all things having for their purpose the advancement and betterment of the City of Brookings or any of its institutions, industries, business and commercial interests and to advance and promote the moral and social welfare of the city and its surrounding territory. . ."*

The Chamber changed its name to The Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce effective December 2, 1971, and then, following several years of a separate Convention Visitors Bureau group, to The Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce & Convention Bureau on July 1, 1991. Prior to that time, the Chamber and the CVB were separate.

Survey data (perhaps sponsored by the US Chamber) from 1947 has interesting data:

Number of 1946 members	180
Number of 1947 members	196
Individual Dues	\$12
Farmers' Dues	\$6
Firms' Dues	\$24
Office Located in City Hall, no rental	
Salary of chief paid executive in 1946	\$2,400
Salary of Stenographer	\$1,440
Number of Committees	12
Total membership of committees	100
Incentives offered to new industry	0
Retail Trade promotions	0
(handled by separate committee)	
Dues Income, 1946	\$5,273.50
Income from tax funds	\$1,000.00