

# T Tracks



Sam Noble Museum

SPECIAL EDITION

Vol. 29, No. 1



## IN THIS ISSUE

Read through stories from  
our archives to celebrate 30  
years as the state's natural  
history museum.





*Become a part of the legacy*

To celebrate our 30th anniversary, please consider a gift to the museum's endowment fund and become a part of the Oklahoma Heritage Walkway.

Please contact Pam McIntosh, (405) 325-5020 or [pjm McIntosh@ou.edu](mailto:pjm McIntosh@ou.edu) for more information.



TRACKS, SPECIAL EDITION 2017

VOLUME 29, NO. 1

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## OUR MISSION

The Sam Noble Museum at the University of Oklahoma inspires minds to understand the world through collection-based research, interpretation and education.

## OUR VISION

As one of the finest museums, we are at the heart of our community, collectively working to inspire understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the earth and its peoples.

## TRACKS

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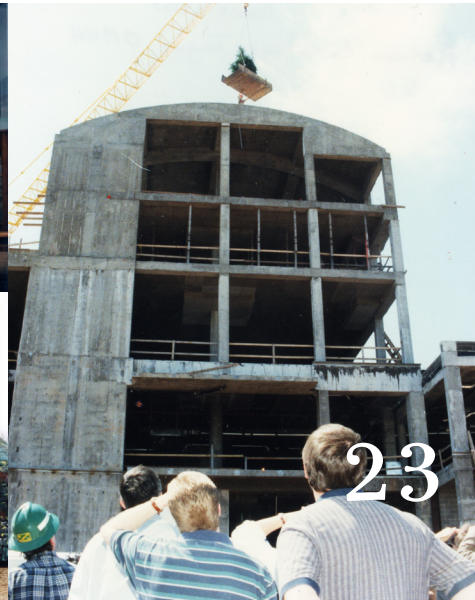
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#### ON THE FRONT COVER:

*The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History under construction*

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*The completed Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.*

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# From the Director



**T**his special edition of Tracks is a look-back at our first decade as the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. Gov. Henry Bellmon signed the bill making the “Stovall Museum of Science and History the state of Oklahoma’s natural history museum” on July 1, 1987.

As part of our 30th-year anniversary as the OMNH, we selected some special stories to take you through the history of the museum, the campaign for a new building, the groundbreaking, packing up the collections and the tree topping of the new building in May 1997. More special editions will continue our look back at our move into the new museum, the grand opening, special exhibits, research, collection growth, awards and more. The Sam Noble Museum is an extraordinary museum that serves the university, and the people of Norman and of Oklahoma.

Meanwhile, 2017 is off to an exciting start for museum curators, education, exhibits and collections. Rich Cifelli, Ph.D., curator of vertebrate paleontology, was recently honored with the prestigious Joseph T. Gregory Award for outstanding service to the welfare of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology. Cifelli has dedicated many of his professional years to the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, having served on the society’s executive committee, acted as the society’s program officer and served as editor for several science journals.

Assistant curator of herpetology Cameron Siler, Ph.D., was honored as the Irene Rothbaum Award winner for Outstanding Assistant Professor in the University of Oklahoma’s College of Arts and Sciences. Siler is the museum’s first faculty curator to receive the prestigious award. As a biodiversity and museum scientist, Siler often focuses his work on education outreach. Additionally, we are near completion of the national search for a new curator for the Native American Languages collection, and will announce a curator soon. This faculty position will be split with the university’s Department of Native American Studies.

We hosted almost 5,000 visitors during Spring Break Escape, and the 15th annual Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair is on the horizon. It is anticipated to be our largest Fair attendance to date. “Roots of Wisdom: Native Knowledge. Shared Science.” is on display through May 7, and I urge you to experience this special exhibit funded by the National Science Foundation. “Ugly Bugs!” celebrates 20 years of the Oklahoma Microscopy Society’s Ugly Bug Contest and was developed in collaboration with the society. You can always find out more about our curators, exhibits, educational programs and events on the museum website and social media.

These “look-back” special-edition Tracks will jog your memory, remind you of where we were and perhaps hint at where we are going as a museum. I hope you will enjoy this reminiscence over the years. To help celebrate our 30th anniversary, please consider a gift to the museum’s Oklahoma Heritage Walkway. The walkway bears the names of those who stepped forward to help the museum. You and your loved ones can be a part of a very special Oklahoma building that has attracted more than 2 million visitors and preserves Oklahoma’s natural and cultural history. Please contact Pam McIntosh, development and communications officer for more information.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Mares".

Michael A. Mares, Ph.D.  
Director



1987

# Museum Attains State Status

STOVALL MUSEUM NEWSLETTER SUMMER 1987 VOLUME 11, NUMBER 2



**G**ov. Henry Bellmon signed a bill June 10 designating the Stovall Museum as the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. The museum name change takes effect on July 1. Recognizing the Stovall Museum as a state museum is the first step toward saving the irreplaceable artifacts of Oklahoma's cultural past.

*Gov. Henry Bellmon signs the bill making the Stovall Museum the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.*

The bill was introduced by House Reps. Carolyn Thompson and Penny Williams and State Sens. Gary Gardenhire and Roy Sadler. It states the purpose of the museum is to collect, preserve and interpret to the public the natural and cultural heritage of the state of Oklahoma. The bill contained no provision for funding for the museum, but by establishing Stovall as the state museum, support can be gained for proper collection

storage, research, exhibits and academic and interpretive programs.

“The bill makes the museum eligible for future state funding,” said Thompson. “It has already triggered private fund-raising efforts.”

Long-range plans call for building a new and larger museum. Since 1947, the museum has been housed in the University of Oklahoma’s old ROTC building. Artifacts not on display are scattered in buildings across campus, which include a converted stable, a converted gun shed, a wooden World War II barracks and the Gould Hall basement.

“We may have 300 to 400 items on exhibit; we have 5 million in storage,” said museum director Michael Mares. “They’re not all of exhibit quality, but they all have a story, and they all form part of the story, which is the very rich history of this part of the country. I think those stories are waiting to be told, given the proper facilities, and I think people would like to hear about them.”

Several collection areas, notably archaeology (because of the Spiro collection), classical archaeology (Greek and Roman artifacts), paleontology (one of the largest fossil collections in the United States) and the collection of fossil invertebrates and fossil pollens are famous throughout the world.

Thompson said a new first-class museum has great economic potential. By receiving official state status, the museum has become one of the largest state museums in the country and could become one of the leading tourist attractions in the state. The museum now hosts approximately 100,000 visitors a year.

“That figure could triple with a new first-class facility,” said Thompson.

Norman mayor Dick Reynolds said, “This

is a great step forward for the museum, the first step in a long journey to get a new facility built where the artifacts can be cared for and properly displayed.”

The museum holds collections that Oklahomans have been preserving for almost 100 years. In 1899, the territorial legislature authorized the establishment of a department of geology and natural history at the University of Oklahoma. The pioneer curator was Albert Van Vleet. By 1902, the museum was composed of zoological, botanical and geological collections. They were all destroyed in a fire a year later. The tedious work of re-building the collections began in 1904, and they were housed in various buildings on campus until the ROTC buildings were assigned to the museum in 1947.

The museum was originally named in honor of paleontologist J. Willis Stovall, the first director of the University Museum. The Stovall Museum of Science and History has collected items that are considered priceless treasures not only of Oklahoma, but of the entire country.

“I am hopeful that in the near future, all of the people of Oklahoma will have the opportunity to appreciate the materials that belong to them,” Mares said.

*The front entrance to the Stovall Museum, the former home of the current Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History’s collections.*





# Museum Earns National Honor

SPRING 1988 VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

**D**esignation as a state museum has helped the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History to be reaccredited by the American Association of Museums, but inspectors cited some areas in need of improvement.

The OMNH was first accredited in 1972, becoming one of the first museums in the state to be recognized by the AAM program. Subsequent accreditation certifies that a museum continues to operate according to standards set forth by the museum profession, manages its collections responsibly and provides quality service to the public.

"Accreditation is a mark of excellence for our museum," said Peter Tirrell, assistant director. "It is a sign that our museum peers and colleagues recognize that this museum meets professional standards."

The AAM evaluates museums by making on-site inspections and interviewing the museum staff. The inspectors look at areas such as the quality of the staff and their experience, the physical facilities, museum membership organizations, and the types of exhibits and programs planned by the museum.

The inspectors were positively impressed with the museum's new designation as the state museum of natural history. The bill that facilitated the change states that the new OMNH "shall be housed in buildings offering appropriate shelter to the artifacts and specimens comprising such collections, while also offering appropriate and adequate space for exhibition, collection, storage, research, preparation, education and teaching activities."

"Becoming a state museum was one of the big factors in our subsequent accreditation," said museum director Michael Mares. "The distinction gives us more stability and potential for financial support."

Recognizing the state's new commitment, the AAM report stated, "The Oklahoma Museum ... has moved forward at a time when the state of Oklahoma has experienced financial stress. ... This has been possible only because of the visionary administration, the dedication and loyalty of the museum staff, the support provided by the University administration, and the financial and political support of a concerned citizenry."

Along with its merits, though, the AAM inspectors cited problems with the museum, such as the small staff, a shortage of education programs and the poor condition of the exhibition and storage facilities.

Mares agrees that the museum collection are extensive and valuable enough to demand a larger staff, but, due to state budget cuts, it has not been possible to hire additional staff during the last five years. "It's like trying to operate a large ship with a skeleton crew," he said. "You can make it go, but it doesn't run as effectively as it could."

The AAM report stated that "most of the problems (with the museum) could be solved automatically with the construction of a new museum building constructed to state-of-the-art specifications. This should be first priority for the museum, the University and the State of Oklahoma."

Mares said that plans are in the works for development of a new facility for the museum. The University of Oklahoma Centennial Commission has included the museum in its major fundraising effort to support university priority needs. A new museum facility would cost about \$22 million to construct.

The accrediting program by the American Association of Museums has been in existence since 1970. More than 600 museums have participated in the accreditation program, and only 307 have had their accredited status renewed. The AAM is a national organization based in Washington, D.C., that has served the museum profession for 80 years.

# Stovall's Vision Near Fulfillment

SPECIAL EDITION 1991, THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

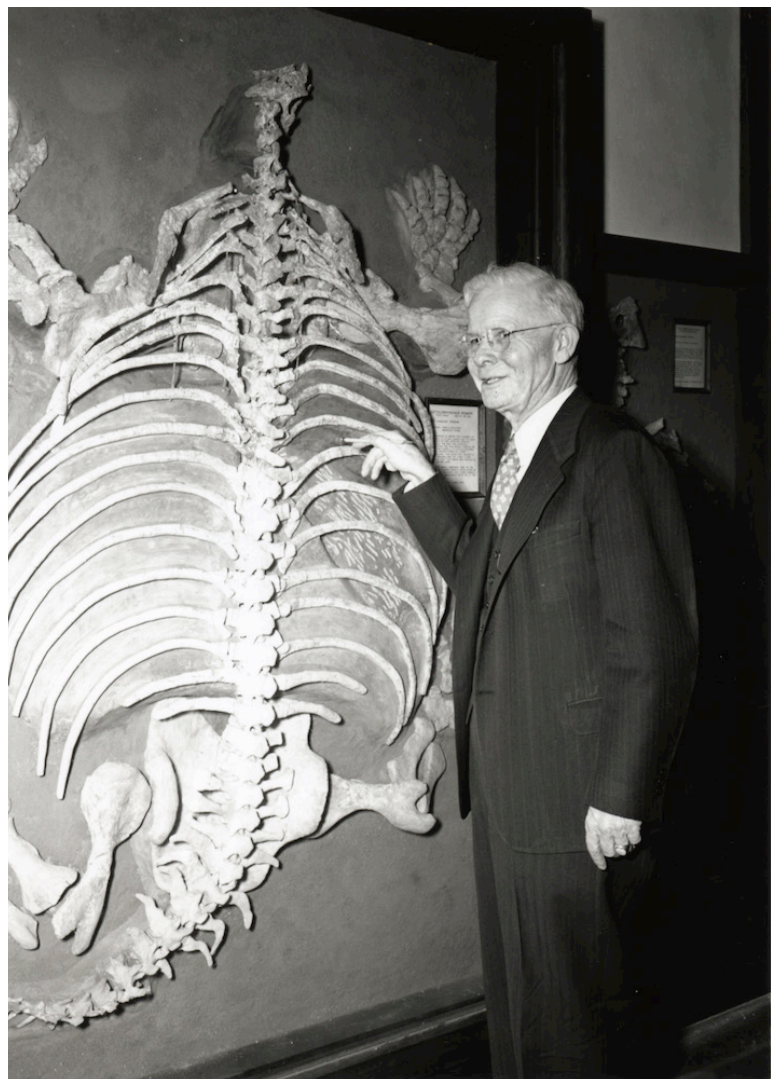
**T**he Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, formerly known as the Stovall Museum of Science and History, and, even earlier, the Museum of the University of Oklahoma, is nearing its second century of existence. No doubt, certain Territorial Legislators would be amazed to see what their inadvertent creation has become.

In 1899 they authorized the establishment of a "department of geology and natural history" at the fledgling University of Oklahoma. The professor of biology of this department would also be the "Territorial Geologist and Curator of the Museum."

From this germ of an idea that the geologists and biologists of a new university in a new territory would be making collections of rocks, fossils, minerals, plants and animals, a one-room Museum of Geology in the old geology building was established in the mid-1930s. The founder and curator of that one-room museum was J. Willis Stovall, a paleontologist who had come to the university in 1920. He was the first university geologist to concentrate on collecting vertebrate fossils. From him would come a vision of a great comprehensive natural history museum housed in a magnificent building, serving not only the university, but the entire state of Oklahoma, and the greater southwest region as well. This vision has endured to the present day. It

has guided the efforts of subsequent museum directors, all of whom have contributed in important ways to the development of the present Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

*Willis J. Stovall, one of the museum's most celebrated and foremost directors is pictured below with a mount of *cotylorhynchus*.*





The collections, of course, predate the organization of the Museum of the University of Oklahoma. In the university's early years, various departments built collections for teaching, research and display for students. The earliest collections consisted of zoological, botanical and geological materials made by staff of the department of geology and natural history.

Unfortunately, most of these collections, housed in the first administration building, were lost in a fire in 1903. From that day to this, the fear that fire could destroy irreplaceable collections has haunted curators, directors and staff, yet fireproof storage facilities have yet to be attained.

New geological and biological collections were begun immediately. Zoological collections included mounted mammals and birds, bird eggs, molluscan shells, marine invertebrates, fish, reptiles, amphibians and land invertebrates such as insects, crayfish and spiders. Large botanical collections also were built.

Geological collections included minerals and rocks from all over the United States, graptolites and other fossil invertebrates, mining ores and, finally, fossil invertebrates. Stovall assembled thousands of specimens of dinosaurs, other reptiles, elephants, horses, camels and mammalian carnivores. Much of his work was done during a Works Progress Administration project from 1925-41.

Other collections also developed, the origins of some being obscure. By 1916, there was an "Indian Museum" in the basement of the Law Building, with E. E. Dale, of the history department as its curator. Another growing history collection included costumes, tools, weapons and Oklahoma pioneer items.

Some Oklahoma archaeological materials from the Spiro Mounds were excavated by Joseph B. Thoburn in 1916. These eventually were taken over by the department of anthropology, which was organized about 1930. Later, Forest E. Clements added greatly to this collection when he conducted excavations at Spiro during a WPA project from 1935-41. Maurice Smith of this department, who did field work with the Comanche and other Oklahoma tribes around 1930, also assembled a collection of American Indian items.

The department of classical languages had a collection that began with some casts of Greek sculpture, which had somehow come to the university in early days. This

collection grew in the early 1940s to include Greek pottery, Roman glass, jewelry and various items of ceramic, marble and bronze. Some Mesopotamian and Egyptian antiquities were also acquired.

Thus by the 1930s there were several important museum collections growing independent of each other, and located at various places on the campus. However, both the paleontology and archaeology WPA projects, lasting from 1935 to 1941, resulted in great amounts of new materials, and together must be regarded as a major impetus to the organization of a consolidated museum.

In 1943, the 19th Legislature appropriated \$5,000 to provide rooms under the Athletic Stadium for museum specimens and displays. Probably in order to utilize this appropriation, President Joseph A. Brandt on Dec. 13, 1943, asked the Regents to create "The Museum of the University of Oklahoma," in which collections from the departments of anthropology, classical languages, plant sciences and the School of Geology and Paleontology would be consolidated. He further recommended that J. Willis Stovall, professor of paleontology, be named director of the museum. Shortly thereafter, collections from the departments of zoology and history were added, the history materials including both the "Indian Museum" and the Oklahoma pioneer items. The Regents approved the resolution and the consolidated natural history museum was established.

The remarkable story of the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History is that of an organization brought into being almost by accident, and shaped, nurtured and kept alive by many dedicated persons throughout the years.

The renaming of the museum should not be interpreted to mean that those now administering the museum have forgotten J. Willis Stovall, the first director. Rather, the renaming should be seen as an important step in the realization of Stovall's own vision that "The Museum of the University of Oklahoma" was to become a great natural history museum serving all of Oklahoma."

Stovall will be forever a part of the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. He wrote many years ago, "When the museum is completed, it will stand as an ever living memorial to the intelligent thought and energy of the people of the state who make it possible."

1992

# Voters Approve Funding

FALL 1992 VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1

**O**n Nov. 3, 1992, Oklahoma voters approved \$15 million for a new Oklahoma Museum of Natural History as part of a higher education capital improvements bond issue.

As shown in this architect's rendering, the redesigned facility is housed in a single building rather than in a complex of buildings as it appeared in an earlier plan. Museum director Michael Mares never doubted the higher education bond would pass.

He affirms his faith in the wisdom of Oklahoma voters and said, "The people care about their heritage. They want it protected and they want to enjoy their treasures. Moreover, they want their children to know

the glory of their state – the glory that is reflected in these collections. In a resounding vote, they said, Build it."

Thank you, Oklahoma, and thank you, friends. Now we must begin the task of raising the final \$15 million from private donors. We must all work together to ensure that this great new museum is in place as soon as possible. With your help, we will have the new Oklahoma Museum of Natural History open for your entertainment and edification by summer 1997. A long road lies ahead but, thanks to you, the journey has truly begun.

-Michael A. Mares, Director

*Rendering of an early conceptualization of the museum.*





PHOTO GALLERY 1987-1997



*Left: Like sorting pieces in a complex puzzle, exhibit assistant Beth Larson arranges vertebrae for the 90 foot-long Apatosaurus skeleton. The specimen is based on petrified fossils collected from the panhandle of Oklahoma during the 1930s under the direction of J. Willis Stovall, first director of the museum.*

*Lower left: Silhouetted against the winter landscape of Atoka County, Oklahoma, Charles Sanders (volunteer), Randy Nydam (OU graduate student), Nick Czaplewski (curatorial specialist), Erine Sanders (OU undergraduate student) and Richard Cifelli (curator of vertebrate paleontology) carefully remove the remains of a 100-million-year-old dinosaur.*

*Below: Plastic bags are used to protect 100 year-old Native American baskets stored in the former ROTC stables.*





## PHOTO GALLERY 1987-1997

*Right: Over 550 guests filled the huge tent and spilled out onto the grounds for the Feb. 23, 1996, groundbreaking ceremony for the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. Among the distinguished guests at the ceremony were U.S. Sen. Don Nickles, museum director Michael Mares, OU president David Boren, Oklahoma Museum of Natural History campaign chair W.R. Howell, OU regent Melvin Hall, Gov. Frank Keating, OU regent Donald B. Halverstadt, M.D., Norman mayor Bill Nations and OU regent Stephen F. Bentley.*

*Below: Following the “topping out” ceremony in summer 1997, during which an Oklahoma Eastern Red Cedar was raised to the topmost section of the under-construction Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, guests toured the inside of the new building, climbing the curving stairway of the south rotunda and enjoying the view from the second story. The “south rotunda” is now known as the Pleistocene Plaza and houses the museum’s famous bronze mammoth sculpture.*

*Photos courtesy of Robert H. Taylor, CCE Electronic Media and Photo Services.*





PHOTO GALLERY 1987-1997



*Above: The museum's dino banks, which were donated by United Design Corp., became a popular way for families to get their children involved in raising money for the new museum facility in the early to mid-1990s. Participants collected money (about \$50-\$60 fit inside the bank) and brought their dinos to participating banks to donate the money. The porcelain banks were in the shape of an Acrocanthosaurus, a dinosaur that lived more than 100 million years ago in the region that is now Oklahoma. A limited number of collectible dino banks are now available for sale at the museum front desk.*

*Right: Michael Mares, museum director, poses with the final architectural model (full model on following page) of the Sam Noble Museum. This model of the new facility was approved by the OU Board of Regents in January 1995. Groundbreaking for the building took place in spring 1996. Photo courtesy Michael J. Wurth.*





## PHOTO GALLERY 1987-1997



*Above: An aerial view shows major progress toward the construction of the \$37.5 million facility. Work began on the new museum in Feb. 1996 and is approximately 40 percent complete, as of spring 1997. Photo courtesy Roger Bondy.*

*Below: The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, represented by an architect's model, was originally scheduled for completion in 1999. The museum opened in May 2000.*





# A Sign of Things to Come!

WINTER/SPRING 1993 VOLUME 6, NUMBER 2



A sign designating the future site of the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History has been placed at the corner of Timberdell Road and Chautauqua Avenue. The University of Oklahoma invites the public to join us at this site for the OMNH Capital Campaign Kick-Off, to be held Friday, April 30, at 3:30 p.m.

The university and the museum are pleased to celebrate the success of the local and state bond issues and acknowledge the efforts of the many individuals who were instrumental in building support

*Sign at the location of the building site of the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History in 1993.*

for this outstanding new facility, which will house Oklahoma's treasures.

The event marks the beginning of a private fundraising drive to complete funding for the new museum. The citizens of the city of Norman and state of Oklahoma voted \$20 million to support the new building and an additional \$20 million must be raised in private funds to complete construction costs and create an endowment for the museum.

# Historic Gift Honors a Very Special Man

SPECIAL EDITION 1994 VOLUME 7, NUMBER 3

**T**wo gifts totaling \$9 million for the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History were announced in early February by the Ardmore-based Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation and Samedan Oil Corp. to honor the late Oklahoma oil, business and civic leader Sam Noble.

The Noble Foundation will contribute \$7.5 million to the campaign to build a new museum on the Norman campus of the University of Oklahoma. This gift is the largest one-time gift in the history of the university and the largest grant ever made by the Noble Foundation.

The foundation is one of the 50 largest private foundations in the United States and is dedicated to the simple creed, "To Help Others."

Samedan Oil Corp., an Ardmore company founded by the late Lloyd Noble, will contribute \$1.5 million to the museum campaign. Samedan is a subsidiary of Noble Affiliates Inc.

"These are historic gifts that honor a special man and assure the construction of a facility to showcase and preserve this state's rich and diverse heritage," said W. R. Howell, chairman and CEO of J.C. Penney Co. and chair of the museum Campaign Council.

"All Oklahomans will benefit from the cultural and educational programs of the museum, which is nationally and internationally recognized for the quality and breadth of its collections. The new Oklahoma Museum of Natural History will be a source of state pride and a tribute to Sam Noble and all who are contributing to make it a reality."



*Sam Noble, for whom the museum is named. It was his life's work "To Help Others." Photo courtesy of the University of Oklahoma Western History Collections.*

The University of Oklahoma Board of Regents designated the new museum facility as the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History at its March meeting.

"The name of Sam Noble will bring great honor to the new museum," said OU President Richard L. Van Horn.

Michael A. Cawley, Noble Foundation president, and Robert Kelley, president and CEO of Samedan Oil Corp., announced the gifts in the Blue Room of the State



Capitol during a ceremony that included remarks by Gov. David Walters and a tribute to Sam Noble by John F. Snodgrass, former president of the Noble Foundation, whose friendship with Sam Noble spanned 60 years.

“‘To Help Others’ was not just a catch phrase that Sam used when it was convenient,” Snodgrass said. “It was a code by which he lived, and the mission which occupied the major portion of his time and energies in recent years.”

Snodgrass explained that Noble had an enduring interest in history and, in particular, the American West.

“It is altogether fitting then that we perpetuate his memory by the naming of this great museum building in his honor; for it, too, represents our link to the past that helps us understand the need to strive for a better life in the future.”

A group of pre-school children from Adela’s Playhouse in Norman, wearing hand-drawn signs proclaiming “I love the museum,” helped museum director Michael A. Mares accept an oversized, symbolic \$9 million check on behalf of the generations of Oklahomans who will be enlightened and entertained by the museum.

“I accept this check on behalf of these children and their grandchildren,” said Mares.

“Part of the creed of the Noble family from the start of the Noble Foundation was its desire to help and impact as many people as possible,” said Cawley.

“All of us were well satisfied that the museum was the kind of project that would have the impact on people that we felt was important.”

“Sam Noble devoted his adult life to the company he loved so much,” said Kelley.

“We were privileged to have worked with him and have been indelibly influenced by his life. Therefore, it is important to us as a company and as individuals that we be part of a memorial to Sam Noble that will be ongoing for future generations.”

Members of the Noble family, including Sam’s wife, Mary Jane, and three of their children and several grandchildren, attended the announcement along with

*Children from Adela’s Playhouse helped receive a check for \$9 million on behalf of the museum.*



the members of the Noble Foundation Board of Trustees and corporate officials of Samedan and Noble Affiliates.

The largest one-time gift to OU prior to the February announcement was \$3.3 million given by the Sarkeys Foundation in 1990 to complete funding the Sarkeys Energy Center.

OU has had a longtime relationship with the Noble family and foundation. Noble Foundation founder Lloyd Noble served as a member of the OU Board of Regents from 1934 to 1949.

The Noble Foundation gave OU its first \$1 million gift with a contribution in 1972 to the multipurpose arena. Named the Lloyd Noble Center, this arena is located on Jenkins Avenue, near the new site for the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

A \$25,000 gift in 1988 from the Noble Foundation was instrumental in funding a planning document for the new museum facility, an important step in the development of the dream of a new museum facility.

“There are a few places on the University of Oklahoma campuses that have not been touched by the generosity of the Noble family and foundation,” said Fred J. Bennett, vice president for University Affairs. “Students studying in fields ranging from business to molecular biology, watching a basketball game at Lloyd Noble Center or exercising at Huston Huffman all owe a debt of gratitude for the contributions of the Noble Foundation.”

The Nobles’ children are Lloyd Noble II, Tulsa; Nick Noble, Oklahoma City; Rusty Noble, Ardmore; and Shelley Dru Mullins, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Members of the Noble Foundation Board of Trustees are Ann Noble Brown and David R. Brown, M.D., Oklahoma City; Michael A. Cawley, Mary Jane Noble, Rusty Noble and John F. Snodgrass, Ardmore; Vivian Noble DuBose and Edward E. Noble, Atlanta; and W.R. Goddard, Dallas. Advisory trustees are Bill Goddard, Ardmore, and Nick Noble and Marianne Rooney, Oklahoma City.

Corporate officers for Samedan Oil Corp. are Kelley, president and CEO; W.D. Dickson, vice president for finance and treasurer; and M. Orville Walraven, vice president for land and corporate secretary.

The construction cost of the new museum facility is \$35 million. Of that total, the city of Norman voted

\$5 million in bonds to support construction of the museum, and state voters approved another \$15 million in a statewide bond issue.

The fundraising campaign for the museum seeks \$20 million, \$15 million to complete the construction costs and \$5 million as an endowment for museum research, outreach and educational programs. With the announcement of the gift from the Noble Foundation and Samedan Oil Corp., the museum is much closer to this fundraising goal.

Other important gifts to the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History facility include a \$250,000 gift from the Merrick Foundation, a \$1 million gift from a major Oklahoma foundation, a \$250,000 gift from Josephine Peet Andree and the late math professor Richard V. Andree of Norman, a \$25,000 gift from an alumnus in Ardmore, a \$22,000 gift from longtime supporters Bill and Barbara Paul of Bartlesville, and a \$5,000 gift from OU President Emeritus and Mrs. George Lynn Cross.

A collection of rare and valuable Native American artworks from OU alumnus Fred Brown and his wife, Enid, of New York City, constitutes another major donation.

The 180,000-square-foot-facility, which is scheduled for completion in 1998, will be located on approximately 40 acres at Chautauqua Avenue and Timberdell Road on the OU Norman campus.

There are more than 5 million items in the collections of the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. The proposed facility will have spaces for public programs and exhibits, collections storage, research, teaching and administration.

Exhibit planners are creating interactive and dramatic displays for the new museum that will feature such collection treasures as dinosaur fossils from the Oklahoma Panhandle; extensive collections of animal and plant life; artworks by the late, internationally renowned ornithologist George Miksch Sutton; the state’s largest collection of American Indian materials; and intricate creations by the Spiro Mounds people, who lived in eastern Oklahoma more than 1,000 years ago.

Courtesy OU News Services.



1995

# James Garner Tours Collections

SUMMER 1995, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2

**J**ames Garner, a man who has been called “Norman’s Favorite Son,” visited the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History in May at the urging of his lifelong friend, Bill Saxon.

Garner was in Norman to deliver the commencement address to the 1995 University of Oklahoma graduating class and was also one of five people awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

“It was a pleasure to have someone of the stature of Jim Garner, who has such deep Oklahoma roots, tour the collections that contain the materials of his heritage,” said Michael Mares, museum director.

Garner and Saxon, who both grew up in Norman, spent several hours touring the major collection areas of the museum. The visit gave them an opportunity to reminisce about their boyhood.

Garner recalled that when he was about 8 years old, he watched legendary OU paleontologist J. Willis Stovall unearth a huge fossil just outside of Norman. Garner surmised that it might even be the Columbian mammoth that now stands in the museum’s Paleontology Hall.

An Emmy award-winning actor with more than 40 films to his credit, Garner graciously lent a few moments of his time during the visit to videotape a public service announcement. The PSA, promoting the statewide campaign to raise funds for the new Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History facility, will air in the fall.

“Mr. Garner is simply a delightful person and is excited by the prospect of the new museum being made ready for the public,” said Mares.



*James Garner, pictured in front of a Stovall Museum exhibit during his visit to the museum in summer 1995.*

Mares said that like most people who see the depth and breadth of the OMNH collections firsthand, Garner commented he “had no idea what a tremendous collection this was.”

Both Garner and Saxon are members of the museum’s Campaign Council. Garner is one of several honorary members of the council, while Saxon has been active as a member of the Leadership Gifts Committee.

Saxon is chairman of the Saxon Company in Dallas. He graduated from OU in 1952 and has shared his time and resources generously with his alma mater. Among other OU interests, he is an Energy Center founder, an OU Associate life member, and has served as a member of the Centennial Commission/Development Committee.

1996

# Groundbreaking!

SPECIAL EDITION 1996, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 4



“... I feel very strongly that this is one of those days, that for years to come, all of us will remember,” said University of Oklahoma President David L. Boren to the crowd of over 550 people gathered in a huge tent at the museum site to celebrate the groundbreaking for the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

*University of Oklahoma President David Boren and Lars Noble, grandson of the museum's namesake, breaking ground for the new museum.*

President Boren introduced a host of distinguished guests, including Gov. Frank Keating, U.S. Sen. Don Nickles and OU Regents Stephen Bentley, Melvin Hall and Donald Halverstadt. State Sen. Cal Hobson and Reps. Laura Boyd and Ed Crocker were recognized along with Norman Mayor Bill Nations.



"This truly is a big tent," said Keating. "Underneath (it), we represent Democrats and Republicans, members of all racial groups and schools and colleges and universities of Oklahoma, and members of our very rich Native American tradition.

"This facility will, as President Boren indicated, celebrate our great heritage, not only as a people but as a state," he said.

"... Because if you really know how great your past is, how rich and varied your heritage, how intelligent your forebears, how marvelous the land, you will do well, because you will have the optimism to move forward," Keating added.

Nickles characterized the new museum as "a win for our entire state, and a win for our entire country."

"It is great to think that we're going to be able to showcase the tremendous assets that we have in the state of Oklahoma," said Nickles. "I'm really proud of the university for its leadership, for the Noble family, (and) for the other contributors that have made it happen. I think future generations will certainly be the real beneficiaries."

W.R. Howell, chairman of the OMNH campaign council and chairman of the board of the J. C. Penney Co., said he joined the campaign three years ago with a \$17.5 million private fundraising goal. Howell drew laughter when he

asked if there was one person in the audience who could write a check for the \$2.8 million – or two with \$1.4 million each – to "finish this task today."

Howell credited the success of the campaign to a remarkable coalition of individuals, foundations and corporations "who care deeply about Oklahoma's past, its present and its future."

Boren traced the history of the museum from its start in 1899, when it was established by the Territorial Legislature.

"By 1999, a century after the Territorial legislators created the museum, we will have a 190,000-square-foot facility that will rank among the most outstanding university-based museums of its kind in the nation," said Boren.

Boren acknowledged the Noble Foundation and Samedan Oil Corp. for their historic gift of \$9 million – the largest one-time gift in OU's history. The museum will be named for the late Sam Noble in recognition of this gift.

"This museum is a particularly fitting way to pay him tribute," said Boren. "A history major, he knew that understanding the past was important to assuring success of the future," said Boren.

Boren also acknowledged the children of Oklahoma. "It is these young faces and the prospect of how this museum

will open up new worlds, new wonders and new possibilities for them that has served as the inspiration throughout the campaign."

"Let us applaud these young people, who are the true reason we are here today," said Boren.



*Distinguished guests at the Feb. 23, 1996, groundbreaking ceremony, pictured: museum director Michael Mares, Lars Noble, Nick Noble, Lloyd Noble II, W.R. Howell and OU President David Boren.*

# Packing Begins for Move to New Museum Facility

SPRING 1997 VOLUME 9, NUMBER 4

Official packing is underway for the move to the new Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. Vicki Byre, museum move coordinator, spent the latter half of 1996 inventorying the collections, planning the move on paper and ordering the needed supplies. Three of the five curatorial assistants will help Byre implement the move plan began in January 1997, and another two will join the team this March.

Byre and her team have packed a lot of work into the first two months of 1997. As soon as the bulk of the displays in Paleontology Hall were dismantled and removed, steel shelving was installed to hold 35 4-foot-diameter rolls of bubble wrap, 20 rolls of Ethafoam and 80 cartons of archival boxes. In addition, the museum's portico is now stacked ceiling high with 5,500 cardboard boxes. Byre, who says storage space for supplies and packed boxes is her biggest problem, expects 6,500 acid-free boxes and 230 shelving units to arrive soon.

With a sense of accomplishment toward the ultimate goal, Byre says that 500 mounted bird specimens have been placed in polyethylene bags for a freeze treatment to eliminate insect pests. And, after removing the mineral exhibits from museum display, the team is now packing the remainder of the mineral collection.

In addition, the move team has begun the task of boxing up the education collection. These are the items that have been used for hands-on activities for school groups and summer workshops. Already packed are 454 zoological specimens, 178 ethnological specimens and 130 geological specimens.

Roberta Pales, OMNH education officer, assisted by Sheila Savage, has spent countless hours cataloging the education collection.

"Since classes are suspended, we finally have time to catalog the collection," said Pales. "In fact, the cataloging and packing process has been a real opportunity for collection improvement in the education area," she said. The archaeological artifacts and vertebrate paleontological specimens will be packed as soon as they are cataloged.

Beginning March 3, the crew will start packing the museum's largest collection, archaeology. Byre anticipates the work will take four to five team members several months.

But the job is not mundane. As the team prepared to pack 140 boxes of vertebrate paleontological specimens collected in the Oklahoma Panhandle during the 1930s, they found the specimens wrapped in World War II era newspapers featuring maps and stories reporting the progress of the Allies in Germany.



# Topping it Out!

SUMMER 1997, VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1

A gathering of about 200 guests, including project staff, subcontractors, museum staff and projects architects, watched May 2 as an Oklahoma Eastern Red Cedar was raised to the top of the five-story collections storage section of the new Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

The occasion marked the “topping out,” or installation of the topmost member, of the reinforced concrete and structural steel building.

Flintco, general contractor for the project, hosted the event as a nod to a tradition that began about 700 A.D. in Scandinavia, when builders sought ways to avoid incurring the wrath of the gods whose trees they felled for construction.



Today, the tree-topping ceremony remains an integral part of modern construction, a symbol of sturdy and lasting craftsmanship of the building and good luck for the owner.

“The real purpose is to honor the workers,” said Mark Grimes, senior vice president of Flintco. “This is a very complicated building . . . and we have had no lost time accidents. I consider that a real accomplishment,” he said.

Grimes reported that the construction is on schedule, having begun in February 1996 with completion scheduled for October of 1998.

Flintco project manager Frank Periman said that the building is about 50 percent complete. He said this project is unique in that it has a little of everything in the construction industry in it. There are 57 subcontractors or suppliers, compared to an average of about 20-25 on the normal job. Approximately 150 workers are on the job daily.

“It is a general consensus of all the mechanics and subcontractors that this is a showcase, and everyone is exceptionally proud to be a part of it because of all the things that are in the job,” said Periman.

Guests at the “topping out” were permitted a first look inside the new building. The tour wound through what will become the back of the museum – passing the education corridor; traveling exhibits storage, freight elevator; exhibits preparation areas, and loading dock. Guests caught a glimpse of the Great Hall and expansive central corridor on the first floor before climbing the curving stairway rising from the circular Pleistocene Plaza (south rotunda).

“On opening day, you are going to walk into this great space, and you are going to have certain expectations,” said Mares. “I want to meet your expectations.”

*On May 2, 1997, a crane lowers an Oklahoma eastern red cedar onto the highest point of the museum, in deference to Scandinavian tradition.*



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