

Planning Programs for the Oklahoma Centennial - 2007

by Kathy Adams

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A Unique History...An Extraordinary Future

Presenter: Jeanie McCain Edney,
Deputy Director, Oklahoma Centennial Commission

Several hundred projects statewide have been approved by the Oklahoma Centennial Commission as official centennial projects, festivals, and events. It is the Commission's goal to have all 77 counties in the state represented with at least one official project. Master plan projects include the Capitol Dome; American Indian Cultural Center, Oklahoma City; Biggest Parade in the history of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City; ceremonies in Guthrie; centennial show at Ford Center in Oklahoma City; Tulsa Spirit Poles, Tulsa; an Oklahoma float to lead the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York and the Tournament of Roses Parade in California; and much more. The latter two projects will give Oklahoma national and international attention. The Centennial Year Kickoff is November 9-19, 2006, in Tulsa; the Centennial Parade is September 14, 2007 in Oklahoma City; and a Spectacular Finale at the Ford Center in Oklahoma City will happen on Statehood Day, November 16, 2007, featuring the best of Oklahoma musicians.

Lasting legacies are a large part of the centennial commemoration and creating a "bricks and mortar" memorial will encourage citizens to learn more about Oklahoma. Some of these projects include the Land Run Monument, Oklahoma City; Centennial Botanical Gardens, Osage Hills; Chisholm Trail Corridor; historic schools restoration in Edmond, Lawton and Chickasha; memorial to the first mayor, Ponca City; restoration of historic railroad depots, county courthouses, military sites, and historic homes, statewide.

Several museums are planning centennial projects and a few include the Bellmon Museum, Billings; Freedom Museum, Freedom; Cherokee Heritage

Center, Tahlequah; and Museum of the Cherokee Strip, Enid. Some communities are painting murals on downtown buildings. Centennial tree groves are being established around the state. Centennial clocks and park benches are just two commemorative items that are available from the commission. They also have life-size characters, known as Oklahoma Centonials, depicting Oklahoma's state symbols: a raccoon, a scissor-tailed flycatcher, an American buffalo, and a collared lizard. There is even a centennial calliope that can be used in a parade or festival. The characters and calliope are available to recognized festivals and events for a nominal fee.

The Oklahoma Centennial Commission is accepting proposals for official centennial projects until September 1, 2006. Grants are no longer available, but the Commission will publicize all approved centennial projects and events. All official projects will be listed in a special state events guide and on the centennial Web site. Events will also be listed in every newspaper in the state and on statewide radio stations.

Many statewide activities incorporate students, performers, musicians and athletes. The Centennial All-Star Band, comprised of members from grades 8-10, will appear around the state and at the Rose Bowl Parade in 2007. High school athletes will wear a centennial patch on their uniforms. High school students in speech, debate, music and career tech will receive centennial pins. By September 2006, communities across the state with highway entrances will have a centennial welcome sign...totaling 4,500 signs! All airports feature a recorded "welcome message" from Oklahoma celebrities such as Reba McEntyre, Toby Keith, James Garner and others. A centennial license plate is available by special order. A commemorative centennial postage stamp will be available for sale in late 2006. Commemorative CDs featuring Carrie Underwood, Roy Clark, Vince Gill, Garth

Brooks, and many other famous Oklahoma singers are being produced....plus a NEW Oklahoma Anthem has been written and will be recorded by Vince Gill and Jimmy Webb, accompanied by the Oklahoma City Philharmonic.

Visit the Oklahoma Centennial Commission Web site at www.oklahomacentennial.com for the latest information, centennial project applications, and much more! Contact Jeanie Edney at (405) 228-2007 with centennial questions.

Celebrating Together: Toolkit for Oklahoma Centennial Programs

Presenter: Jan Davis, Archivist, Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Susan Feller, Development Officer of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, in partnership with the Centennial Toolkit Committee has developed an all inclusive *Toolkit for Planning and Presenting Oklahoma Centennial Programs*. The contents of the toolkit include much information on the following topics: Centennial Project Ideas; Planning Events and Programs; Volunteers, Fundraising and Budgeting; Marketing and Public Relations; Post Event Activities; Resources for Programming; and Resources.

Another resource is the Oklahoma Onstage Web site at www.oklahomaonstage.org. This easy-to-use site, launching in fall 2006, will be provided as a free service for Oklahoma. Users can search the Oklahoma Onstage Web site to find program ideas; staging locations; performers, artists, and scholars; museums, libraries and other community organizations; a list of other events taking place and much more. The Web site www.oklahomaonstage.org and the toolkit were produced, in part, by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

To order a toolkit, contact Susan Feller, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 200 NE 18th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105, (405) 521-2502, (800) 522-8116 or sfeller@oltn.odl.state.ok.us. The cost of the toolkit is \$35 and includes shipping and handling. Supplies are limited.

Celebrate Oklahoma's Centennial with Oral History Projects

Presenter: Rodger Harris, Oral Historian, Oklahoma Historical Society

Oral history collections can help organize and tell the stories of a county, community, school, church, industry, famous citizen, or family. They are a permanent way to "leave a legacy."

Museums are encouraged to create centennial projects that portray the community's history. Oral histories can be incorporated when planning new exhibits and events.

What is oral history? What equipment is needed? How do you plan your project? The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) has produced a CD titled *Celebrating Oklahoma's Centennial with Oral History Projects*. Contents include how to do oral history, suggested projects, video advice, check lists before and at the interview, creating an oral history questionnaire, constructing a timeline, legal and ethical concerns, oral history and exhibit planning, family research, and an introduction to the Oral History Collections of OHS. The oral history staff is also available to assist with local oral history projects.

Suggested centennial oral histories:

- What happened to Main Street?
- Fads and Fashions, 1907-2007
- How Did World War II Change My Hometown?
- Local Entertainment Venues in My Hometown.
- My High School Since 1940.
- The History of Your Place of Worship
- Food Ways in My Town – traditions, ethnic foods; a good idea for schools and institutions
- Family Research

Planning Centennial Projects and Exhibits: Using Your Museum's Permanent Collections

Presenter: Nancy Lowe-Clark, Consultant, ITIN Museum Services

When planning centennial projects and exhibits, museums are encouraged to look first at their permanent collections. This is an opportunity to fill in some gaps in the collection or take another look at a well-known story. Search for ideas in the storage area. Fill extra or underutilized space with themed exhibits that relate to the centennial. Consider a collection of "unmentionables" or historic undergarments displayed on padded hangers and showing their original prices. Old newspaper or magazine ads are an easy way to enhance the exhibit.

Think of what is in the museum's collection that would make an interesting interpretive exhibit. Quilt exhibits are very popular right now. Use any quilts or quilting artifacts from the permanent collection, collaborate with local quilting societies to

fill in any missing gaps, and have a quilting bee during the exhibit.

Why do people go to antique stores? TO REMEMBER. Your “reminiscence exhibit” will help visitors enjoy their memories of advertising items, cooking utensils, shoes, tools, or hats. If you are out of space, trade out some artifacts—put currently exhibited artifacts in storage and let them rest while artifacts from storage take center stage.

Another way to gain space is to collaborate. Talk to the local library and suggest a small exhibit that could tie in with books about early Oklahoma. Create a small portable exhibit or a traveling trunk show to take to schools or to set up in an operating business, such as a bank. Be sure to include a sign identifying your museum, address, hours, and admission fee. Collaboration also creates a marketing opportunity for your museum!

If the downtown has empty storefronts, research setting up exhibits in front windows. Find ten storefronts, choose one for each decade, 1907 – 2007, or choose ten themes – churches, schools, famous people, celebrations, local businesses, etc. Inquire as to climate control, access, security, light levels, etc. before planning your exhibit. Use artifacts from the museum’s educational programs instead of artifacts from the permanent collection. Remember to use copies of photographs, not originals. Involve the community to help you get permission for the space. Initiate an “Adopt a Storefront” fundraising campaign and help spruce up the downtown area in the process. This could lead to a downtown memorabilia museum. For inexpensive panel displays, purchase used hollow-core doors from a lumberyard, paint the doors or cover with fabric and trim, then hinge together to create a freestanding panel system.

Do not overlook the volunteer resources that are available...you really do not want to do all this by yourself! Check with Americorps, Master Gardeners, Vo-Tech carpentry classes, community service individuals, prospective Eagle Scouts and others who need a project.

There are many traveling exhibits that can be used to enhance a permanent collection available from several sources including:

- Rogers Historical Museum in Rogers, Arkansas – has exhibits that are good for small museums
- CATE (Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibits) – has several art related exhibits

- Museums on Main Street – focuses on small rural museums and libraries.
- SITES (Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit Service) – has both large and small exhibits
- ExhibitsUSA – offers discounts to Oklahoma museums
- Oklahoma Humanities Council TRACKS exhibit service – has a number of exhibit themes specific to Oklahoma
- Oklahoma Museums Association – offers three Oklahoma Arts Council sponsored exhibits

Visit the traveling exhibit page of the Oklahoma Museums Association Web site at www.okmuseums.org for more information on these traveling exhibit sources.

Museum, Library and School Collaborations

Presenters: Brenda Granger, Executive Director, and Stacy O’Daniel, Administrative Associate, Oklahoma Museums Association

Museum, library and school collaborations are generally successful. For example, in 2000, the Oklahoma Museums Association was involved in the “Oklahoma Museums for the Millennium” project, funded in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The project featured collaborative activities involving a museum, school and library in each of nine communities across the state that focused on planning and implementing a family-oriented celebration or event. Each town had a team represented by the museum, library and school. There are two IMLS publications available at www.imls.gov that could be of benefit if one is planning collaboration between a museum, library and school. The publications are *True Needs, True Partners: Museum and Schools Transforming Education*, and *Landscaping/Mapping New Paths: Museums, Libraries and K-12 Education*.

Participation and evaluation are important aspects of successful projects. According to The Diversity of Cultural Participation survey, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and conducted by The Urban Institute, findings released in November 2005 show that most people who attend museums say they are strongly motivated by a desire to learn something new. This is not true of those who attend music performances or plays, for whom a primary motivation is to socialize with family or friends. Everyone planning centennial events wishing to reach a broad audience should be aware of such differences and

collaborate often. A few numbers from the study also showed that the largest numbers of people attended music performances and arts and crafts fairs and festivals. The third most attended were museums, plays, dance and other events. There were many overlaps between the visual and performing arts, and this is one reason to consider developing collaborative relationships to expand participation. Another good note is that frequent arts attendees are more civically engaged, including doing volunteer work, and are more likely to be donors.

It is very important to perform some kind of evaluation of your centennial program. Conducting an evaluation will:

- Provide a baseline for goal setting,
- Measure your outcomes,
- Develop resources, and
- Build community support.

Many granting agencies do require some sort of evaluation of your program. A few ideas to evaluate and measure the success of your program indirectly could be as simple as:

- Tracking attendance—including number of people and zip codes represented,
- Distributing evaluation forms to artists and participants,
- Monitoring how well program results meet the goals set forth in your program plan, and
- Holding wrap-up meetings with committee members who assisted in planning the programming.

References and Resources:

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* *The Toolkit for Planning and Presenting Oklahoma Centennial Programs* is available from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries for \$35 (including shipping and handling). Supply is limited. Contents include: centennial project ideas, planning events and programs, volunteers, fundraising and budgeting, marketing and public relations, post event activities, resources for programming, and other resources.

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* *The CD Celebrating Oklahoma's Centennial with Oral History Projects* is available from the Oklahoma Historical Society.

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