



postscript.

Building for the Future

The University of Oklahoma Foundation's move into its own building in 1984 marked the first time the organization had had facilities specifically designed for its function of receiving, investing, managing and expending the University's private support funds. The copper-roofed, single-story structure on OU's south campus boasted 12,800 square feet for offices, spacious lounges, a massive board room, skylights and interior landscaping, a catering kitchen, a break room, file rooms—and most importantly an initial venture into computerization.

The Foundation's 11 employees had some rattling-around room in their new quarters; it seemed to provide for the ages—and for the next quarter-century, it did. Eventually a building that was adequate for a staff managing \$61.3 million in assets strained to accommodate the staff of 23 and the supporting technology required for an organization whose assets were pushing a billion dollars.

In December 2008, the staff vacated its home for temporary quarters as construction crews moved in to reconfigure the building's footprint while preserving the original architectural design. More space is being created by better utilizing the interior common areas and adding 600 square feet of offices. Nearly half of the \$2 million total price of the project is going to replace the 25-year-old heat and air conditioning with a more cost and energy efficient system, along with additional electrical infrastructure to support the Foundation's robust computer system.

The cost of the makeover is being met through a building reserve fund that the Foundation trustees established a number of years ago. The trustees themselves provided private funding in 1981 to construct the south campus facility, which then was decided to the University and leased back to the Foundation for \$1 a year.

The late President Emeritus George L. Cross was serving on the Board of Trustees at that time, and on visiting the building, marveled that this was the same Foundation that had its beginning in the



Image provided

The OU Foundation's first real home was just an architect's vision at groundbreaking in 1984. In 2009, the footprint is being reconfigured for a larger staff and expanded mission.

lower left-hand drawer of his desk. That year was 1944, and Cross did not need much room to accommodate \$160 in contributions and the paperwork that implemented the new vehicle he had established to channel private giving to his institution.

For several years, Cross reported, the drawer was able to hold the minutes, financial records and other items pertaining to the fledgling, staffless organization. That was about to change.

In 1948, R. Boyd Gunning, director of the Extension Division, also took on the direction of the Foundation, now expanded to several file drawers, which were moved to his office on the north campus. When Gunning became executive secretary of the OU Alumni Association two years later, the Foundation files moved with him to Oklahoma Memorial Union. By 1968, the organization had grown enough to require its own three-person staff, headed by Gunning, and its own office space in Evans Hall, first on the third floor, then on the second.

Gunning retired in 1978, succeeded by Ron D. Burton; the assets totaled \$17.5 million. The coming of a new University president, William S. Banowsky, signaled

a sharp increase in private funding, nearly doubling the Foundation's assets in two years, necessitating further staff expansion in the already cramped Evans Hall offices. With trustee approval, Burton looked south for a construction site, settling on the corner of Timberdell Road and Asp Street, in an area subsequently named Gunning Park.

The David Boren era at OU has ushered in an even greater explosion of private gifts to the University through the Foundation. A new Foundation president, Guy L. Patton, arrived in 2007 and quickly recognized the need to maximize the space available for the Foundation's operations. The staff expects to return to 100 Timberdell Road by early fall with enough elbow room to remain there for many years to come. In the meantime, they are once again in cozy temporary quarters at 1816 West Lindsey in a converted Chinese restaurant smack in the middle of fast-food heaven. It could be worse.

—CJB

During the building renovation, the OU Foundation mailing address remains 100 Timberdell Road, Norman OK 73019 and its phone number 405/321-1174.