



postscript. Happy Birthday, Sam Noble

When a cherished dream is decades old, the danger lurks that finally achieving that dream could be a disappointment. Not so with the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, which marks its 10th anniversary in May. From the moment the doors opened on a \$42 million structure worthy of the more than seven million objects in its collections, the celebration began—and it is still ongoing.

Since May 1, 2000, more than 1,613,000 visitors have flocked to the museum at Chautauqua Avenue and Timberdell Road on Norman's south campus—42 per cent of them children. They have come from all the counties in Oklahoma, all 50 states and several foreign countries to explore the wonders of their own origins come-to-life in galleries and exhibits that equal and even surpass those anywhere in the country.

Amazing as this world-class museum was on that opening day, there was still work to be done in completing the permanent exhibits in the Hall of Ancient Life, where the dinosaur skeletons reign supreme, and the Hall of Natural Wonders, where the Limestone Cave Exhibit has since been added.

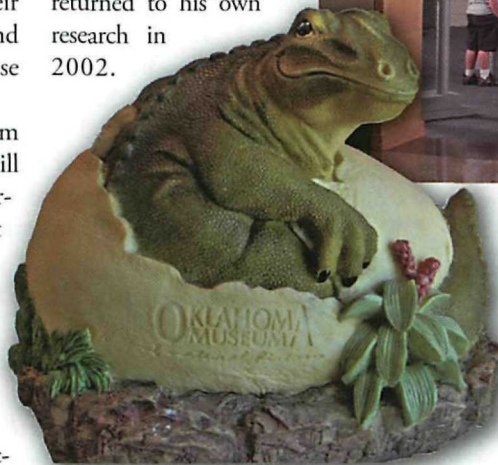
The Gallery of World Cultures, bringing to light a wide range of artifacts from long-hidden, scattered collections, was ready for the May 2000 opening. However, the extensive Hall of the People of Oklahoma, which benefitted from considerable tribal input in celebrating the state's Native American heritage, did not open until September.

The new Paleozoic Gallery was added in May 2008, followed a year later by the interactive display-packed Orientation Gallery, a gift of Noble Corporation and Noble Energy. The newest gallery is designed to enhance visitors' museum experience by explaining the mysteries of collecting, preserving and displaying specimens and objects.

In all, the museum's pursuit of its education and research objectives involves 13 curators overseeing 12 major collections, the newest being Genomic Resources, a collection of approximately 8,000 tissue specimens for DNA research. The Sam Noble

Museum has hosted 52 special exhibitions, 18 of them in-house exhibitions showcasing the museum's own collections. "Chocolate," an intriguing traveling exhibit from Chicago's Field Museum is being featured this summer.

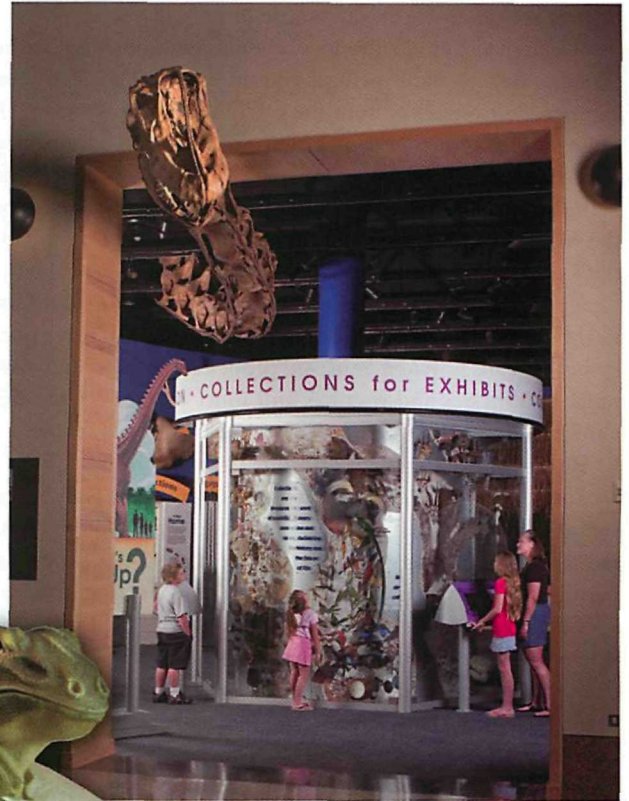
Leadership changes have been minimal. Michael Mares' efforts as director are credited with keeping the often-stalled decades-old project alive from 1983 to its realization, before he returned to his own research in 2002.



Ellen Censky served as director for the next five years. Mares reassumed the post in 2008.

While the Sam Noble facility marks its first 10 years, the museum traces its origins back 111 years to a territorial act establishing a Territorial Geologist to probe the beginnings and development of Oklahoma's natural resources. A home of sorts for the priceless collections gathered over many years was found in the old Stovall Museum on Asp Street from 1947 to 1999 and in a "ragtag assortment of sub-standard buildings" across the campus.

Faced with loss of the collections from wind, rain or fire, local supporters made one last push for a proper facility through a \$5 million Norman city bond issue, followed by \$15 million in state bond mon-



Entrance to the new Orientation Gallery above. At left a Dino Bank.

ey. A \$10 million gift from the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Samedan Oil Corporation and Noble Drilling Company brought the project's goal within sight, then \$12 million in private donations completed the deal.

The Dino Banks, which schoolchildren throughout the state filled with their pocket change, became symbolic of the public campaign. For years after the opening, busloads of those children, plus many others now grown into college students, came to see the results of their philanthropy. And today the yellow buses still come.

For those contemplating a visit to the Sam Noble Museum, a full calendar of events, plus podcasts of historical highlights, is available online at www.snomnh.ou.edu. For more information, call (405) 325-4712. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. A family of four can enjoy the full Sam Noble experience during this birthday year—or any other time—for under \$20.

—CJB