



PROPOSED MUSEUM for the UNIVERSITY
RICHARD N. KUHLMAN AND RAYMOND C. DRAGOO, JR.

With an Eye Toward

o. u. has a good museum
could become the best



of OKLAHOMA
ARCHITECTS

Greatness

program which
the southwest

MAUSOLEUMS and museums have very little in common. One contains only reminders of a past that is dead, while in the other the relics of the past provide knowledge and understanding for the future. With this latter objective as its goal, a \$3½ million museum program has been proposed for the University of Oklahoma.

Last month this proposal was outlined for the Board of Trustees of the O.U. Foundation by Museum Director Dr. William J. Mayer-Oakes. The plan is calculated to give O.U. and the State of Oklahoma the outstanding museum of natural history in the Southwest. Financing for the program—the building, the specialized equipment and furnishings, the preparation and installation of exhibits and collections and the expansion of the educational and research program—will come from private sources.

To label the establishment of such a museum program as “new” would be something of a misnomer. Actually it is the culmination of the foresight and planning of museum enthusiasts at the University since 1899 when first recognition was given the need for preserving the natural history of this region. In the years that have followed, the University Museum has acquired collections with a replacement value of more than \$6 million—and many which could not be replaced at any price. The development of these collections has been accomplished largely by “volunteer” curators from the faculty and more recently by the museum directors, notably the late Dr. J. Willis Stovall.

By CAROL J. ROBINSON
'59journ

continued

the new university museum will be a cultural, educational and economic stimulus for the state of oklahoma

With collections of the size and scope of those already on campus, the next logical step is the construction of a building which can make the most of the museum's extensive resources. Until such facilities are made available, further growth and expansion of the museum program are impossible.

The proposed Museum of Natural History, designed by University Architects Richard N. Kuhlman and Raymond C. Drago, Jr., is a two-story completely air-conditioned structure of reinforced concrete with a red brick exterior and marble trim.

Central portion of the 70,000 square-foot building will be devoted to the main exhibition area. The northeast wing of the building will house an auditorium and lecture hall with a seating capacity of 500. The other three wings will contain collection, research and teaching areas for the museum's three main departments—social science (primarily archaeology, ethnology, history, textiles and classical art), life science (zoology and botany) and earth science (paleontology and mineralogy).

A one-story raised-earth terrace will surround the central part of the museum—a landscaped promenade which can be used as an outdoor exhibition area. Museum visitors will enter on the mezzanine level with four broad flights of stairs leading to the main exhibition hall below.

The location for the Museum of Natural History is on the corner of Jenkins Avenue and Timberdell Road, just inside the old entrance to the South Navy Base, property recently acquired by O.U. from the federal government. The site is southeast of the new Center for Continuing Education. Parking lots on three sides of the museum building will accommodate 150 cars.

The present University Museum is located in the old ROTC armory with storage and laboratory space in the adjacent "stables" and "gun shed." These facilities provide slightly more than 21,500 square

feet of floor space for the exhibit, storage, preparation and care of well over 2½ million specimens in collection as well as laboratories and research work areas for students and faculty, lecture rooms, office space and maintenance areas.

Many of the museum's most valuable specimens lead a rather precarious existence in ill-suited storage areas, stacked away in boxes and all but inaccessible for research and study purposes. A complete dinosaur is stowed away in several drawers, awaiting the day when there is space for it to be assembled. Of the University's 2,000,000 archaeological specimens, only 1,300 can be exhibited; of 181,000 paleontological specimens, 1,000 are on view; only 100 of the 140,000 botanical specimens are exhibited. Exhibit and storage areas are neither dust-proof nor fire-proof, and the collections are in constant danger of damage or loss.

To ease the storage problem, many of the collections have been farmed out to the classroom buildings throughout the campus—a decentralization which makes any coordinated museum program impossible. The volunteer faculty curators have no office and workroom space for their museum activities. The student assistants face the same problem. The workshop and preparation room doubles as a garage for the museum truck. Lectures and other museum programs often attract crowds of from 200 to 300 to a lecture room which will accommodate 150.

But as enormous as the value of the new museum would be to O.U., its significance would not be limited to the University alone. The planners envision this museum building and its expanded program as a cultural, educational and economic boon to the entire state, extending its influence throughout the Southwest.

The University of Oklahoma natural history collections are the only ones of any real consequence in the state, and the O.U. museum, even in its present form, is the



In a few years museum visitors may view this Columbian mammoth skeleton in a new setting.

only one of any size in this region. More than 30,000 visitors will tour the museum this year. The new museum, located in the midst of the main highway network centering on nearby Oklahoma City, can be expected to attract at least 200,000 visitors annually.

Not only will the new building enable the museum staff to make full use of the extensive collections now in storage or on limited exhibition, but adequate facilities will also attract significant additions to the collections. In many instances during past years, valuable collections have been offered to the University and of necessity have been refused—simply because there was no place to house them. Such collections are either funneled to other museums or lost altogether—an irreplaceable loss that the state can ill afford.

The University and the State of Oklahoma have a sizable investment in the O.U. museum program. More than 60 years of the time and effort of countless volunteer curators and collectors have been poured into the project; contributors from outside the University have had the foresight to preserve past treasures for future learning and have entrusted these treasures to the University; a considerable amount of money has already gone into a good program which could easily become a great program. With the initiation of its new plan the University intends to capitalize on this investment by creating a museum which will bring the cultural and educational profits home to O.U. and to Oklahoma.