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Erin Page[Log-Out](#)**My Account**[Acct Info](#)[Change Username](#)[Acct Options](#)**Oklahoma on display: New state heritage center to preserve culture, history of state**by David Page
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OKLAHOMA CITY – On May 10, 1927, R.T. Stuart opened the Mid-Continent Life Insurance building at 1400 Classen Dr. in Oklahoma City.

[Journal Record Photo](#)

The building was more than just an office for Stuart and the insurance company. He lived on the third floor.

On May 10 this year – 80 years to the day after Stuart first opened the building – grand opening ceremonies are planned for the building's new tenant, the Edward L. Gaylord-Boone Pickens Heritage Center.

"This new building will help us ensure that the diverse and rich history of our state's people will be preserved and told to future generations of Oklahomans," said Shannon Nance, president of the Oklahoma Heritage Association.

The association has already moved its administrative offices into the building after 30 years in the Hefner Mansion.

The 40,000-square-foot Mid-Continent building was renovated after being purchased by the association from American Fidelity Assurance Co. in 2001. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The purchase was funded by a \$3 million donation by the late Edward L. Gaylord, who was chairman and CEO of Oklahoma Publishing Co. Boone Pickens, a native of Holdenville, provided \$3 million to launch the renovation.

Work on the build-out of the exhibits is scheduled to start in February. Time is needed to let dust settle after the renovation.

"Due to the video and interactive components, they must have a 90-day dust-free environment," Nance said.

Exhibits are being designed to tell Oklahoma's history through the lives and accomplishments of its people. Themes will center on five characteristics – individuality, perseverance, pioneer spirit, optimism and generosity.

"It has taken over a year of diligent and deliberate evaluation to ensure diversity in geography, gender and field of work in hopes everyone that enters the building will be able to identify with an inspiring Oklahoman from every walk of life," she said.

Two film crews spent much of the summer traveling throughout Oklahoma taping scenery. Northern Lights Production, a film and video production company, is helping prepare the exhibits.

"The cutting-edge hologram technology Northern Lights is developing for us will truly make visitors feel like they are part of the exhibits," said Nance.

An Oklahoma Hall of Fame exhibit is being created on the second floor. Each year the current class will have their portraits displayed and guests will have the opportunity to learn about each of the more than 500 Oklahoma Hall of Fame members at the new site.

The exhibit will include video presentations of past induction ceremonies.

The 2007 Oklahoma Hall of Fame induction ceremony is scheduled Nov. 8 in Oklahoma City. March 9 is the deadline for nominations.

Another exhibit will be "Leave Your Story." Visitors will answer questions on film about life in the state to be archived and integrated to Oklahoma-specific curriculum for use in classrooms.

Nance expects 5,000 to 11,000 students from state schools to visit the museum the first year.

The museum will also include an Oklahoma Through Its People gallery. This portion of the center will have displays about accomplishments of Oklahomans throughout.

"We have always felt our new facility was truly an opportunity not only to create pride in Oklahoma but to educate others about the many ways the Oklahoma spirit has changed the lives of people around the world through science, art, aviation, sports and so much more," Nance said.

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