

Exhibit tells the stories of ...

# 'MODEST PEOPLE'



BY MATT STRASEN, THE OKLAHOMAN



M.J. Alexander, left, looks with Ida Lewis Turner at Turner's portrait in Alexander's book, "Salt of the Red Earth." They were attending Thursday's grand opening of the Salt of the Red Earth exhibit in the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center in Oklahoma City.

■ Salt of the Red Earth features photos of centenarians.

**By Brian Sargent**  
Staff Writer

M.J. Alexander describes herself as a messenger using photographs of centenarians to communicate a message.

Some of those photographs will be publicly displayed until the end of 2007 by way of the Salt of the Red Earth exhibit.

The exhibit's grand opening was Thursday at the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center. It's a collection 30 life-size and larger than life-size portraits of Oklahoma centenarians taken by Alexander.

"One of the things that centenarians have in common is they're modest people. They're not famous. Very, very few of them got a lot of ink in their prime," Alexander said. "They're not going to blow their own horn. My job is to blow their horn."

Carole Ayers' grandmother, Marie Boudreau, was photographed by Alexander eight months ago. Ayers attend.

## Life-size portraits

Boudreau's portrait is one of five that has been printed on floor-to-ceiling silk banners. Thirty portraits are either 24 inches by 32 inches or 12 inches by 16 inches and have been placed in black frames.

Photographs incorporate a modified golden sepia tone. This makes the image appear in shades of brown, as opposed to grayscale in a black-and-white image.

Subjects' names, ages, hometowns and a quote that describes their philosophy or secret to longevity is typewritten below their images.

Salt of the Red Earth is the first special exhibit to be displayed in the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center since its May 2007 opening.

"Our mission is to tell the sto-

## IF YOU GO

### Salt of the Red Earth

■ **What:** Portraits of 30 Oklahoma centenarians.

■ **Where:** The Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center, 1400 Classen Drive, Oklahoma City.

■ **When:** Through Dec. 31. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. The center is closed on Monday.

ed Thursday's opening.

Her eyes swelled with tears as she described her 105-year-old grandmother.

"She's my hero," Ayers said. "She taught me to sew. She's babysat all of my kids and their kids. She's a strong person and she lives a very healthy life.

ry of Oklahoma through our people. What better people than those that were born during the year of the years leading up to statehood," said heritage association chairman Glen Johnson. "They've had a chance to watch our state develop."

**More Information:** Call 235-4458.

Source: Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Center