

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Sheerar Museum closes January and February for exhibit renovation

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This January and February, the Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History will close to begin a year long expansion and update of the Museum's "permanent" exhibits on the perimeter of the exhibit gallery. In August, the Buel Staton Trust awarded the Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History Board of Trustees a \$25,000 grant to fund the renovation and expansion of the Museum's Exhibit Gallery Bays.

Since 1989, the Sheerar Museum has featured a permanent exhibit "100 Years of Stillwater History" arranged by decade in the outer perimeter exhibit gallery bays. The arrangement of these exhibits has not changed for over twenty years except for the occasional addition of a newly donated artifact and other minor updates of content. The decades-based chronological design has remained mostly unchanged.

With only nine bays, the chronological design has not allowed room for expansion beyond the twentieth century. Seven of the nine bays include false walls concealing stored objects, including: obsolete exhibit furniture (ie. old cases and shelves) and other non-artifact items. Other objects include larger artifacts such as a bank vault from early Stillwater History, a bank cashier's desk, a large spinning wheel, and a wheelchair from the early part of the twentieth century.

Expansion of the exhibit space in the Sheerar Museum gallery will allow for larger, more extensive displays, interpreting the history of Stillwater and its place in Oklahoma History. The perimeter exhibit gallery displays will be reorganized to focus on specific themes in Stillwater's history. With the help of Museums Studies Graduate students from the Oklahoma State University History Department, Museum staff members and volunteers have created a plan to arrange the exhibit areas by important local historical themes including: the Founding of Stillwater, Stillwater Businesses, Agriculture and Ranching, Transportation, Education, Arts and Culture, and Making a Home in Stillwater.

The opening of the storage areas behind the current displays and removal of these stored items for disposal, use, or display will increase the Museum's ability to interpret Stillwater's history as well as improve the visitor's experience at the Sheerar Museum. Due to the nature of the historical building where the Museum is located, the space in the exhibit gallery is limited and this expansion of display areas will make better use of the area for the interpretation of Stillwater's History.

The \$25,000 grant from the Buel Staton Trust will be used to pay for tools, supplies, paint, flooring, construction materials, labor, exhibit display cases, printing costs, and other exhibit expenses. The Sheerar Museum is pursuing additional funding for technological upgrades of the exhibit space as well. "We would love to include in our exhibit plans a sound and video element, but at this time our budget does not allow for those kinds of modern additions," Museum Director, Ammie Bryant said. "We are just so excited to have the funding from the Buel Staton Trust to go ahead and move forward with our plans to expand the space and give the exhibits a fresh new look. When we receive additional sponsors for the exhibit we can easily add those technological elements to the exhibit plans."

During January and February of 2012, when attendance is lowest, the Museum will close in order to dismantle the exhibit bays and remove all of the items currently in storage. Once staff and volunteers have removed all of these items staff can begin removing the ceiling and flooring tiles and paint the space. The Museum will re-open in March with an altered floor plan using the temporary exhibit walls. These walls will be placed in the front of the exhibit gallery to keep the visiting public from viewing the perimeter of the exhibit gallery where construction and installation of the new exhibits will take place beginning in March and continuing throughout 2012. This will allow approximately 4-6 weeks per exhibit bay for work to be completed on each theme.

While the perimeter exhibit gallery bays are under construction the interior temporary exhibit walls will host a variety of exhibits and displays throughout 2012 including an exhibit on Will Rogers provided by the Will Rogers Memorial in Claremore during March and April. This exhibit is a component of a community partnership between the Sheerar Museum and the Stillwater Public Library and the OSU Library for the spring community wide reading event, "One Book, One Community; Stillwater Celebrates Will Rogers." During late summer, the Sheerar Museum will open a temporary exhibit of the Museum's collection of Bibles in conjunction with the OSU Library's hosting of "Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible." The year will close with the traveling exhibit of the "Star Quilt" quilt studies offered by the American Quilt Study Guild.

Tentative plans are to open the newly expanded exhibit bay space with an Exhibit Grand Opening Reception in the Fall of 2012. The coming year promises to be a very busy one at the Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History as the Museum undertakes a major exhibit project while at the same time maintaining community partnerships, presenting programming and hosting temporary exhibits. Visit the Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History in December to view "Stillwater's First Responders", the artist show featuring works by Helen Koons Gragert, and "100 Years of Stillwater History" before these exhibits come to a close on December 30, 2012. Hours during December are Tuesday-Friday 11am-5pm, Saturday & Sunday 1-4pm, Closed

Mondays and Holidays (including Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve).  
Admission is free. Please call 377-0359 for more information.