HERITAGE PRESERVED

A VISIT TO THE TREASURE BOX

THE HALL OF ANCIENT LIFE

THE HALL OF THE PEOPLE OF OKLAHOMA

THE HALL OF NATURAL WONDERS

THE WORLD OF GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON

HANDS-ON DISCOVERIES

THE PEOPLE’S MUSEUM

THE CURATORS AND THE RESEARCH MISSION

THE GALLERY OF WORLD CULTURES

THE NATIVE AMERICAN ART

CREATING THE PERFECT SETTING

SOONER SPOTLIGHT
The University of Oklahoma had natural history holdings prior to the coming of J. Willis Stovall in 1930 as the faculty’s first paleontologist to concentrate on vertebrate fossils. But the collections did not approach museum quantity and quality until Stovall set out on field expeditions that would reap thousands of specimens of dinosaurs and other reptiles and mammals.

His work became a project of the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) from 1935 to 1942, making possible the collection, cataloguing, and restoration of an enormous amount of material. Stovall’s teams unearthed many of the skeletons on display in the new Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, including the Apatosaurus, Saurophaganax, Columbian Mammoth and Pentaceratops. He was the first to begin restoring and mounting fossils and constructing dioramas for a museum that had no real home until acquiring the old ROTC building and its stables in 1947.

A Texas native with degrees from Union and Vanderbilt universities in Tennessee and the University of Chicago, Stovall was the museum’s first director, 1943 to 1953. Upon his retirement, the old museum was given his name, as was the Preservation Center in the SNOMNH and the drive leading from Chautauqua Avenue to the new museum’s front door.