



Pooling the past

Artifacts like those pictured above will populate the planned State Museum of Natural History, to be built at Alton Baker Park. Several groups, including the

University's Museum of Natural History, have offered their collections to the state museum.



Natural history museum to link Oregon's heritage and future

Story and Photos
by RON TAYLOR
Of the Emerald

When the Indians living in Oregon's Great Basin weaved their sandals and baskets 9,000 years ago, they probably didn't give any more thought to their chattel's future importance than most people do today when buying their Birkenstocks or Tupperware.

But now those antediluvian sandals and baskets, along with a myriad of other relics, have taken on a new meaning for the people trying to establish the State Museum of Natural History. The museum will demonstrate how those artifacts, as a part of Oregon's heritage, have consequently become a key to its future.

The Lane Cooperative Museum Commission's plans to build the museum could culminate this year when Oregon legislators make a decision on financing the museum, which is to be located in Alton Baker Park.

The Senate Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs last week unanimously passed a proposal for \$4.5 million in state funds to finance the museum.

The offer is now headed for the Joint Ways and Means Committee, where a tougher fight is expected. The proposal asks for \$4 million to finance the construction, and to

acquire and construct displays for the museum. Another \$500,000 is earmarked to operate it for the first two years, says Alice Carnes, director of the University's Museum of Natural History.

"Once we get the museum initially established, we will be operating the museum because by then we'll have a track record to show," Carnes says.

An important aspect of the project, according to Carnes, is that for the first time a museum will bring together the collections of both natural and manmade artifacts from around the state that are currently housed in cramped and sometimes inaccessible storage areas.

"It (the museum) should be in Eugene because of what is already here and what has been done," Carnes says.

Alton Baker Park has already been designated as the site for a three-museum complex. Last year, the site received improvements totaling \$1.4 million, including the installation of utilities and a 240-space parking lot.

Landscaping and construction of an 11,900 square-foot science museum and planetarium are to be completed this summer. Also, \$2.7 million worth of improvements have been made to the park land around the site.

"The project provides a model showing how different organizations

can cooperate to build something really significant," Carnes says, noting the cooperation that has brought the project this far.

The University has pledged its natural history collections to the museum, along with the time and expertise of its faculty, and has hired a museum professional to plan the museum building, exhibits and programs.

In addition, the University Foundation Fund donated \$18,000 for the initial architectural planning.

The Butler Museum of American Indian Art in Eugene offered its entire collection to the museum, plus any new items the Butler Museum acquires. The Butler collection, valued at \$1.5 million, is reputed to be one of the broadest collections of North American Indian artifacts in the country.

Carnes stresses that the state museum would no longer resemble the dusty and dank burial grounds of moldy fossils usually associated with such relics. The new museum will be able to use its collections to shape public attitudes toward the natural environment and its relationship to traditional and modern culture, she says.

The collections will stand as an educational tool so everyone might understand the past, and by learning what has been, be able to preserve

Oregon's land and heritage. Carnes says the vehicle for this kind of education is the exhibits and programs that will be offered by the museum.

"The museum will give a visual sense of what Oregon has looked like. It has practical applications, like being able to direct people to interesting parts of Oregon shown in the displays."

Through the museum's diversity, visitors will be able to see the historical heritage of Oregon as a "dynamic process rather than as a set of conclusions," Carnes says.

Whenever possible, the museum plans will allow visitors a chance to become actively involved in the displays by introducing their own ideas of participating in an experiment or demonstration.

The plans call for topics that will illustrate how humans have adapted to the constantly changing ecological situations in Oregon. A presentation of Oregon's volcanic and geothermal history will show how it can help meet current energy needs.

Museum programs will also offer an insight into the past and present species of plant and animal life in Oregon and discuss how currently endangered species may be saved.

Eugene Sufis plan seminar

Murshida Vera Corda, a senior teacher in the Sufi Order, will guide the weekly Sufi Message class tonight at 8:30 p.m. at the Friends Meeting House, 22nd Avenue and Onyx Street.

A \$2.50 donation is requested at the door for the class entitled, "Freedom and Self Discipline."

Saturday the Sufi Order will sponsor a seminar called "Education and Parenting — Guiding the New Age Child in a Changing Society." The seminar will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Erb Memorial Union. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased at the EMU ticket office or at the door.

More information on either event — and arrangements for childcare on Saturday — can be obtained by calling 343-2432.



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