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New history museum makes debut

By Kelly Kortekaas
Emerald Associate Editor

A large crowd of about 300 Eugeneans gathered Saturday to join in the grand opening and dedication of the University's new Museum of Natural History building, 1680 E. 15th Ave.

The ceremonies featured the traditional burning of sweet grass to purify both the new building and all those who entered. George Wasson and Ed Edmo, two well-known Native American storytellers, began by igniting short braids of sweet grass and circling the crowd that was gathered outside the main entrance. Wasson explained to the crowd that they were going to purify the building from "whatever it might've needed purifying from." He added jokingly, "The same with all of you."

After the grass burning, people were allowed into the main lobby where Edmo and Wasson told the humorous Native American stories of the porcupine and of "The Coyote and the Strawberries."

The new Natural History Museum is "not just a building



Ed Edmo

on campus," said Donald Van Houten, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He said the museum was special not only as the display, research and teaching facility for the Oregon State Museum of Anthropology collections, the historic Thomas Condon Geology Collection and the Shelton and Prill zoological collections, but also as a "special collection of the people that have been part of the museum."

University President Paul Olum dedicated the new

building, calling it the "only building at the University that's really clean," humorously referring to the grass-burning purification.

"This building is here because the community wanted it here," he said. "It's nice for the University to have something made possible by a community that cares about the University," he added.

Olum said the new building, with its eight-foot copper salmon gargoyle, and other sculptures by Milton-Freewater and artist Wayne Chabre, is "a declaration to the world that this is the Museum of Natural History."

Originally located in a former shop area for the University's Physical Plant, this is the first time the 51-year-old museum has had a building of its own. The new 11,000-square-foot, all-wood structure was designed to reflect the influence of coastal Northwest aboriginal architecture.

Total cost of the building to date is about \$600,000, \$485,000 of which is in relocation monies from the U.S. Department of Energy grant for a \$45.6 million expansion of the University's science facilities.

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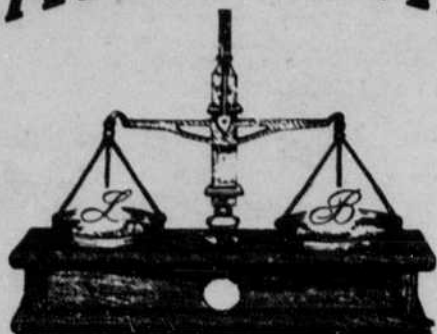
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