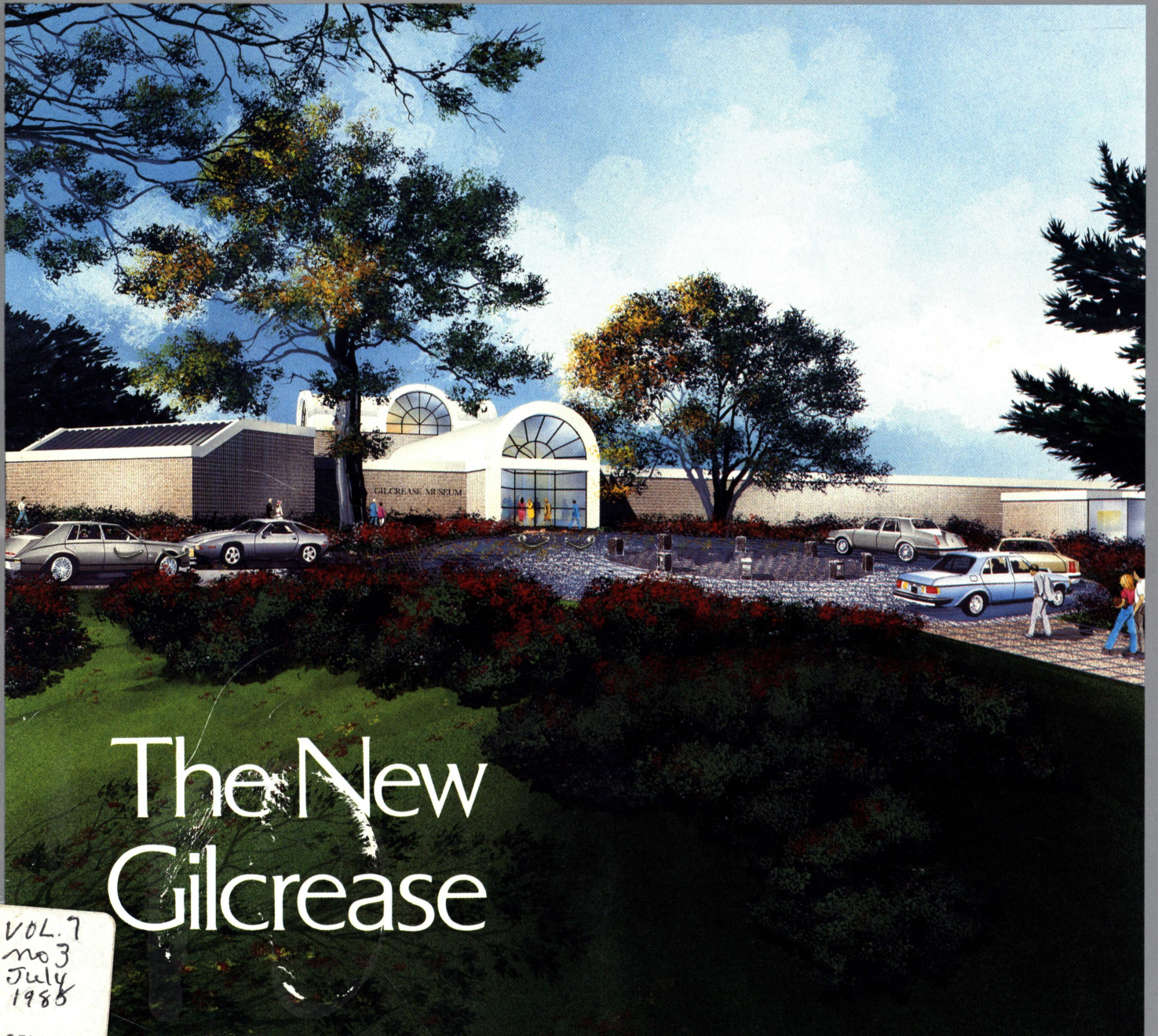


GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART



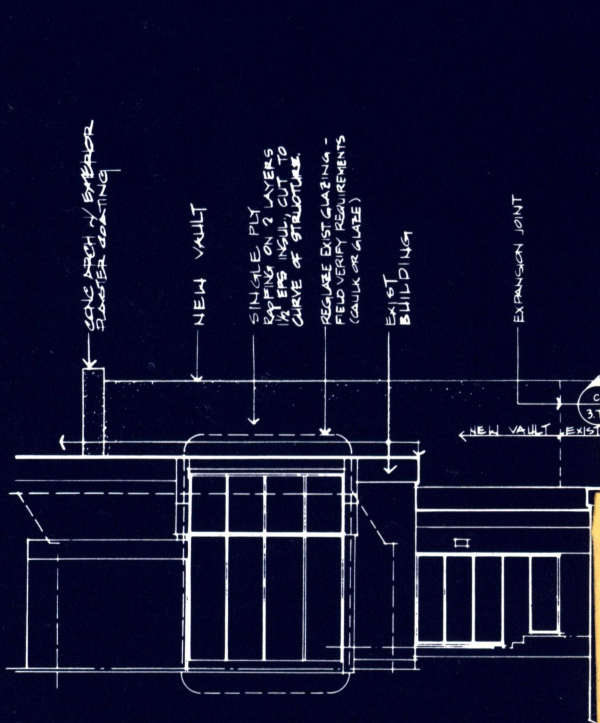
The New
Gilcrease

VOL. 7
no 3
July
1988

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Gilcrease Magazine

vol. 7 no. 3 July, 1985

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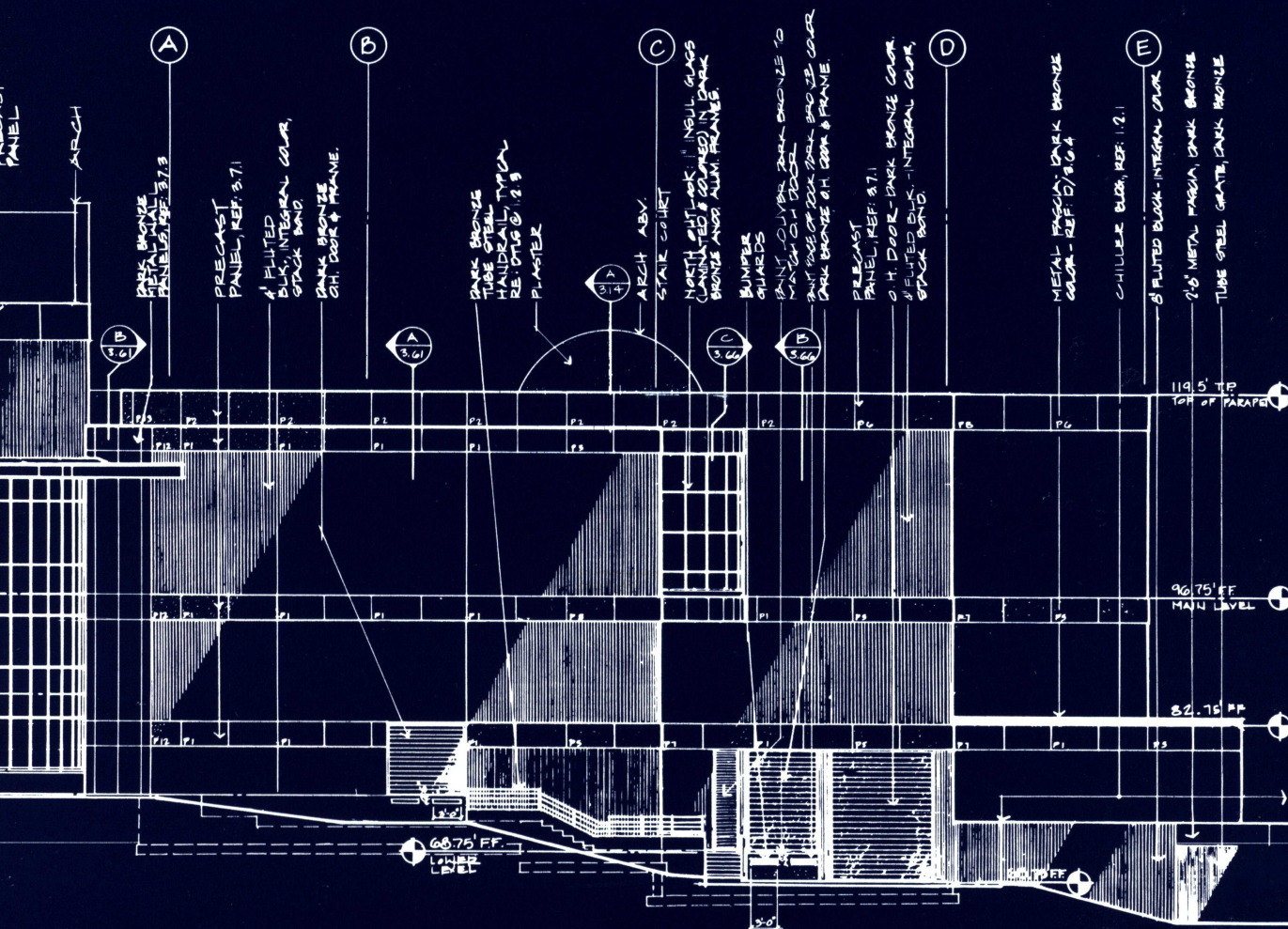
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BY FRED A. MYERS

A new building program has just begun that in two years will greatly change and improve Gilcrease Museum. Portions of the existing building will be remodeled, and, to the west, an entirely new three-story addition will be constructed. Additionally, the museum grounds will be improved with new access roads and more landscaping.

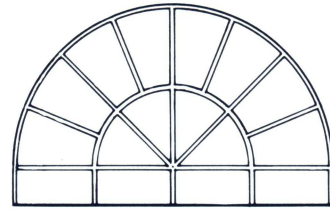
Fred Myers is director of Gilcrease Museum and author of many features in the Gilcrease magazine. Here he takes us on a tour of what the expanded Gilcrease Museum will be in 1987.







Gillie Library



This new construction will nearly double the space available to the museum, allowing Gilcrease for the first time to show a significant portion of its unparalleled collection of American art and western Americana. The expansion program will provide a new and expanded entrance, a new and larger library and reading room, and a unique facility for open storage that will put on view almost all the more than 200,000 Indian artifacts that are part of the Gilcrease collection.

Also enlarged and improved will be the behind-the-scenes facilities for art storage and handling. Important in fulfilling the museum's function of preservation will be the installation of state-of-the-art systems for control of humidity and for detection and prevention of fire and theft.

The history of the building that houses the Gilcrease collection is an intriguing one. As with most institutions that play an increasing role in their communities, the building has expanded gradually but continuously through the years.

It all began in the late 1940s when Thomas Gilcrease constructed on the grounds of his estate a museum building to store and display his burgeoning collection of Americana. There was no professional architect for the original museum building. The earliest drawing showing the plan for the front facade of the building was done by Tulsa painter and head of the art department of Tulsa University, Alexandre Hogue. Hogue's drawing incorporates the architectural feature that continues to be the dominant element in the museum building, the east/west barrel vault. Gilcrease lore offers the insight that this barrel vault is meant to remind the visitor of the longhouse construction typical of some Indian tribes in the East.

Hogue's design also depicts the roughly rusticated stone wall that characterized the museum building in its first years. This stone was quarried on the grounds by the same Indian workmen who constructed the original building under

Heart of the expanded Gilcrease Museum will be Helmerich Hall, a large ceremonial space whose most dramatic architectural feature will be intersecting barrel vaults in the ceiling. In this room will be displayed important paintings by such artists as Sully, Eakins and Moran.

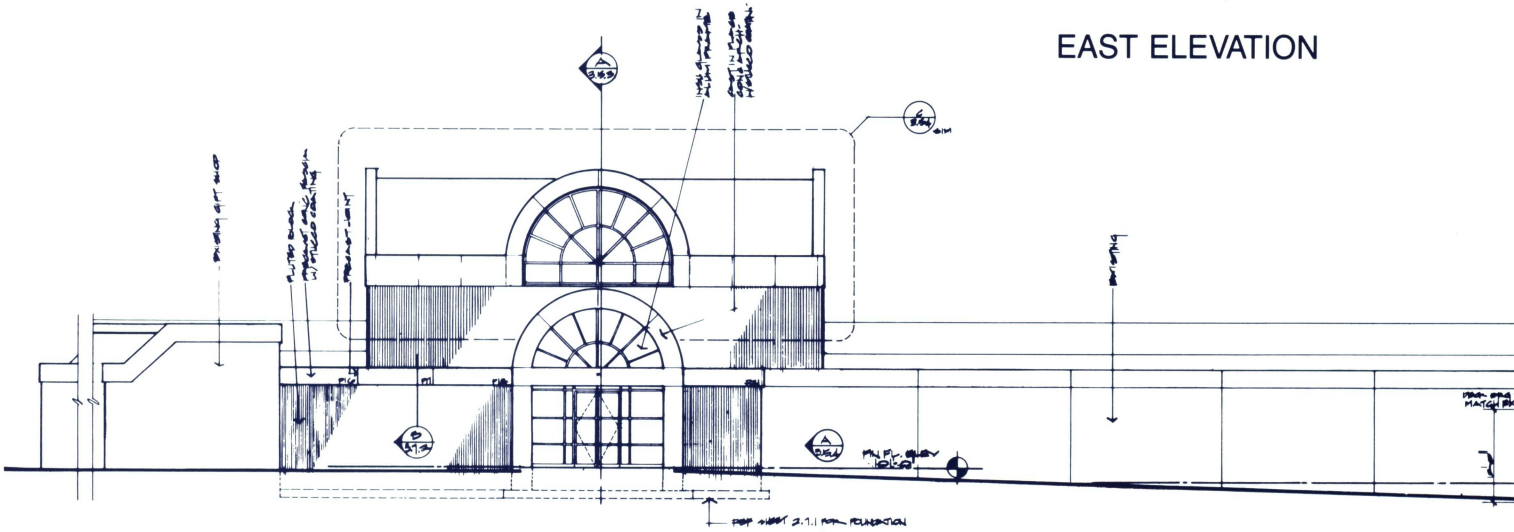
Thomas Gilcrease opened his private museum in 1949. After he deeded his collections to the City of Tulsa in 1955, the building was expanded in three major phases, once in the mid-50s, and again in the mid-60s, and again in the mid-70s. The largest expansion to date was that undertaken in the mid-60s under the guidance of the Tulsa architectural firm of Joe Koberling when the west range of galleries was added along with the Vista room and the storage levels tucked away beneath the Vista room. The mid-70s expansion added the Auditorium and Special Events Gallery, and more recent expansions have encompassed new quarters for the Museum Shop and for special exhibitions.

planned to be far and away the largest addition to the museum building to date. The recent plans trace their origin to a facility study commissioned from John Hilberry and Associates, museum planning specialists, by the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association in 1981. The major instructions to the planners were for more and better space to display the Gilcrease collection.

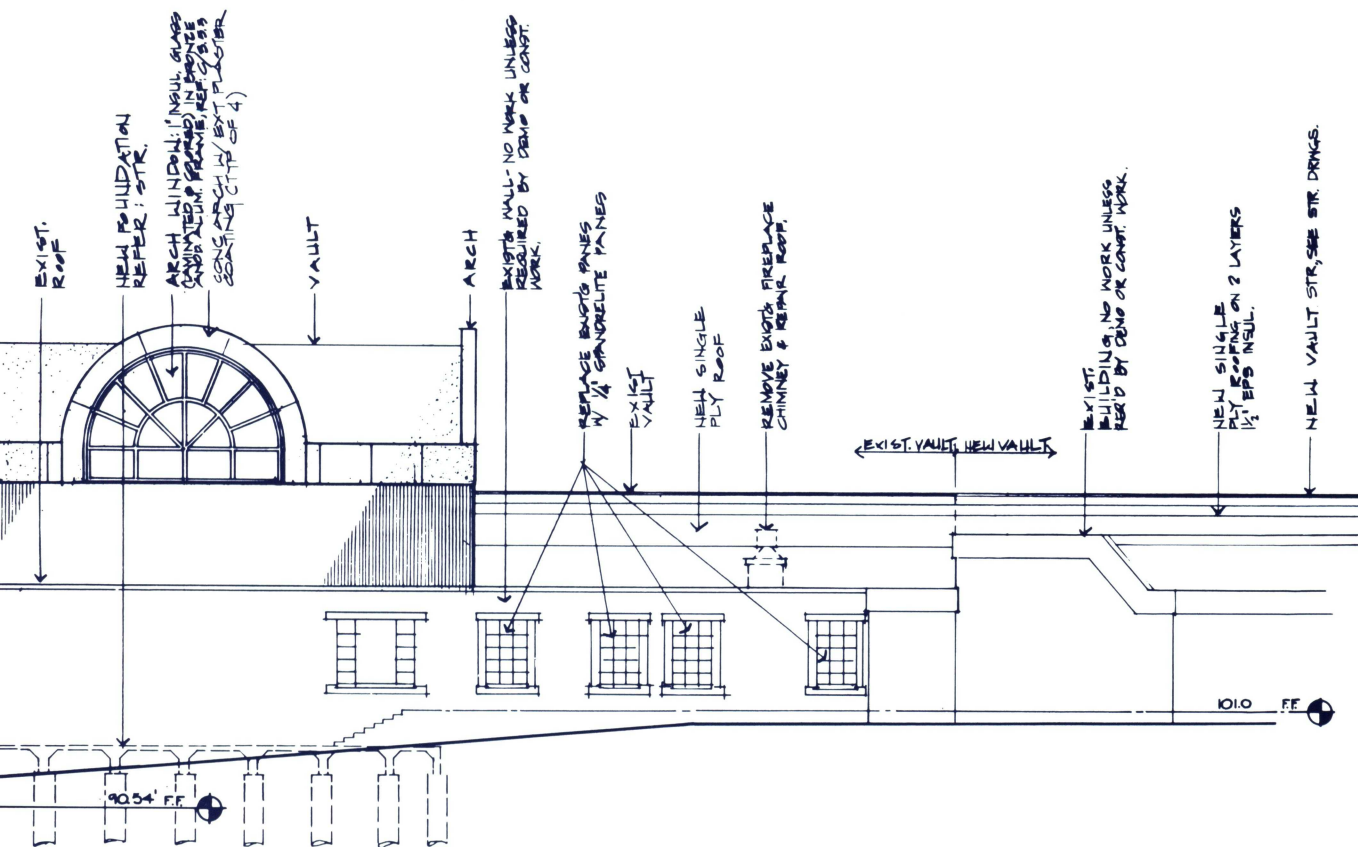
As developed by Hilberry with input from trustees, directors, and staff, the facility master plan provides for a large increase in display space and great improvements in the traffic pattern within the galleries. A large, new ceremonial space, to be called Helmerich Hall, will be constructed to serve as a communal gathering space at the center of the museum with all routes to the various galleries radiating in grid fashion from this hub. At the end of each of the three major corridors of galleries will be a vista into the grounds and distant Osage Hills, an amenity that not only helps the gallery visitor to orient himself but also reinforces the impact

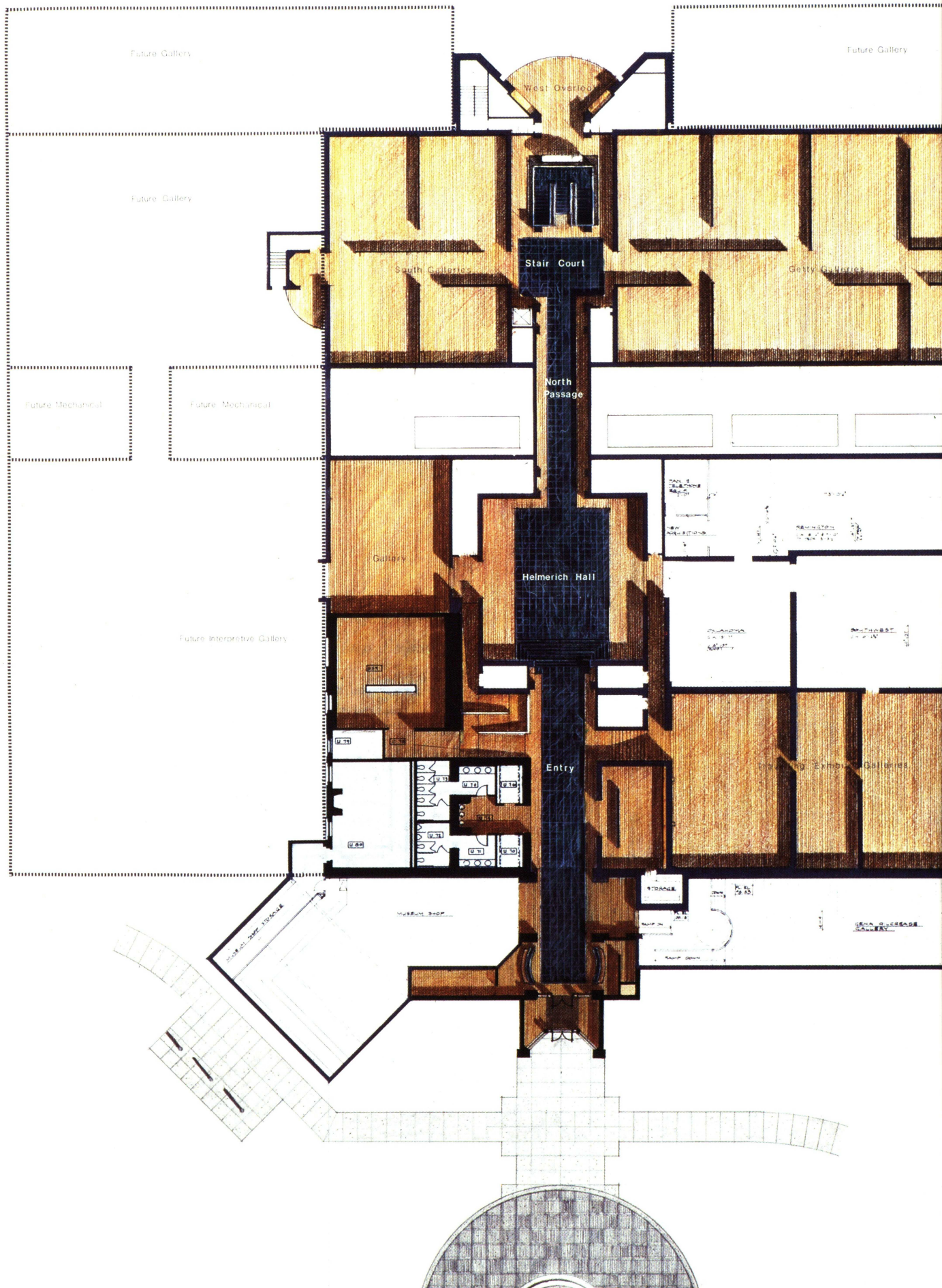


EAST ELEVATION



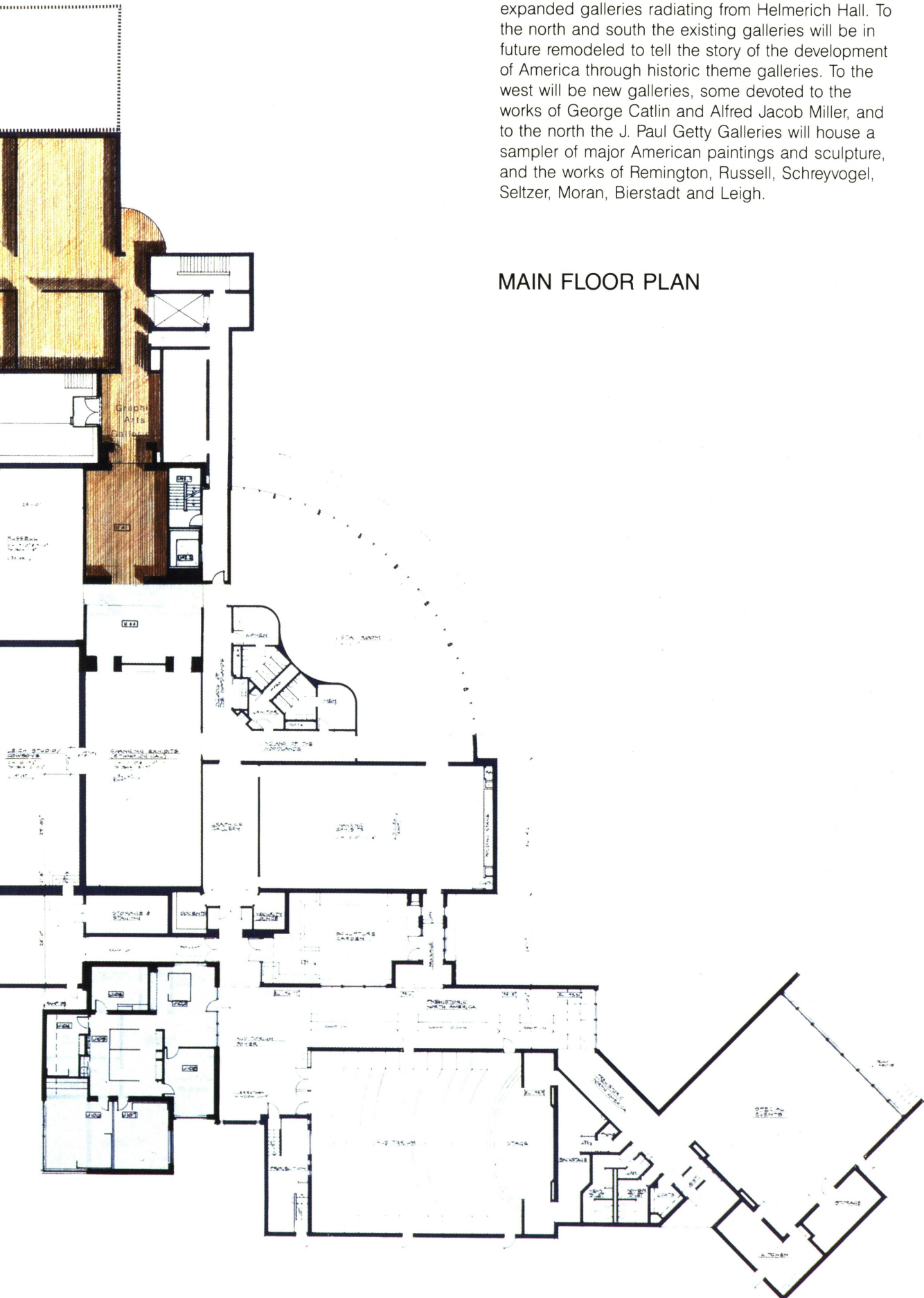
SOUTH ELEVATION

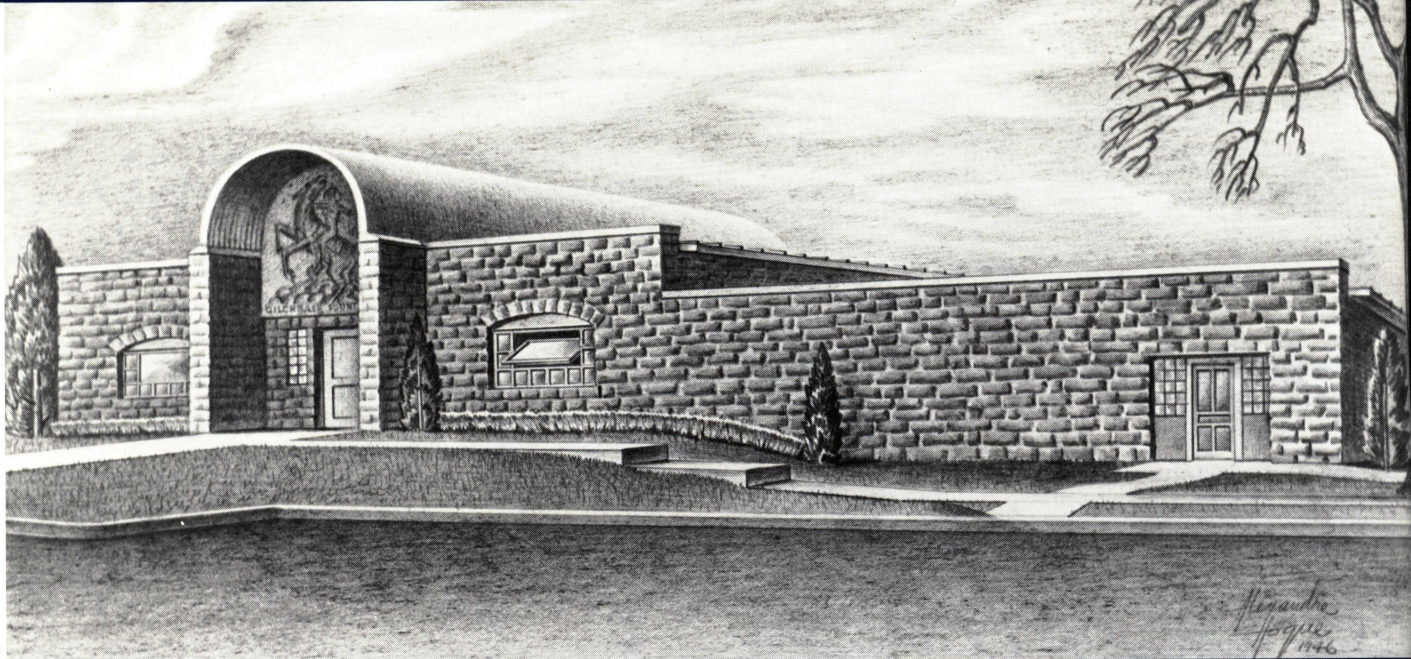




The main floor of Gilcrease Museum will have greatly expanded galleries radiating from Helmerich Hall. To the north and south the existing galleries will be in future remodeled to tell the story of the development of America through historic theme galleries. To the west will be new galleries, some devoted to the works of George Catlin and Alfred Jacob Miller, and to the north the J. Paul Getty Galleries will house a sampler of major American paintings and sculpture, and the works of Remington, Russell, Schreyvogel, Seltzer, Moran, Bierstadt and Leigh.

MAIN FLOOR PLAN





Three stages in the life of Gilcrease Museum:
 at top, the original design for the building as sketched by
 Alexandre Hogue, a drawing in the Gilcrease collection.
 Center is the museum as it looked to visitors in the seventies.
 Below, the 1985 look of the Gilcrease east facade,
 to be enlarged as shown on the front of this issue.

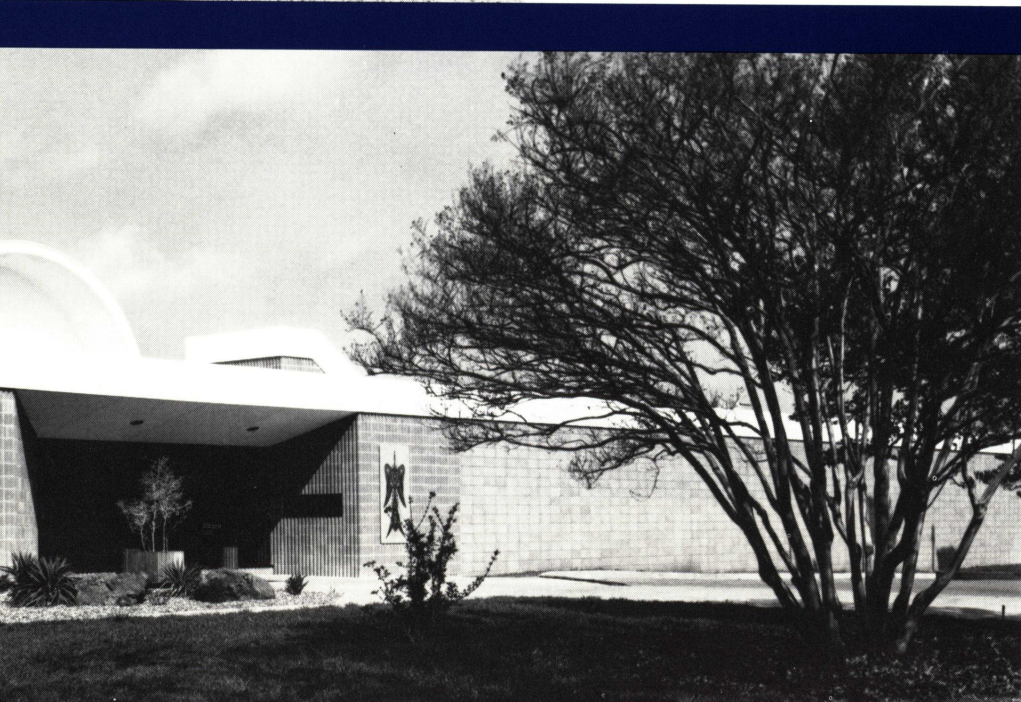
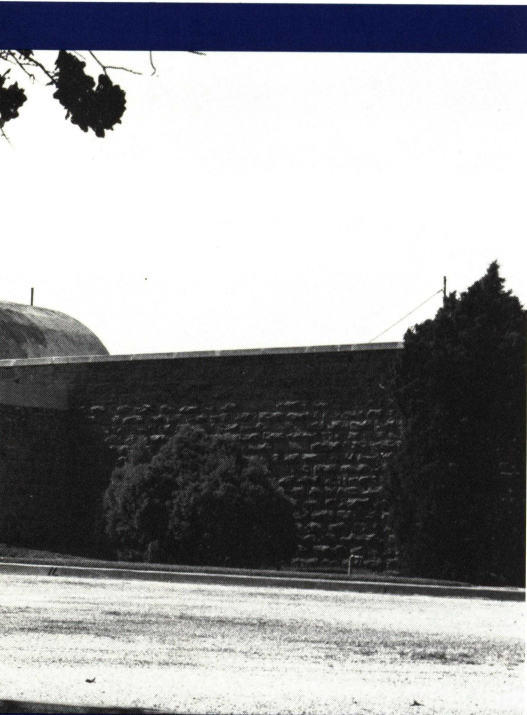


of so many of the paintings on view which depict the unspoiled western landscape. Another important concept of the facility master plan was the establishment of a large area in the building for more detailed study of the Gilcrease collection. As finally detailed, these activities will be encouraged in the middle level of the new construction. Located there will be the new reading room next to the library storage stacks and storage space for prints and drawings, allowing for public study of these works on paper which formerly were difficult of access.

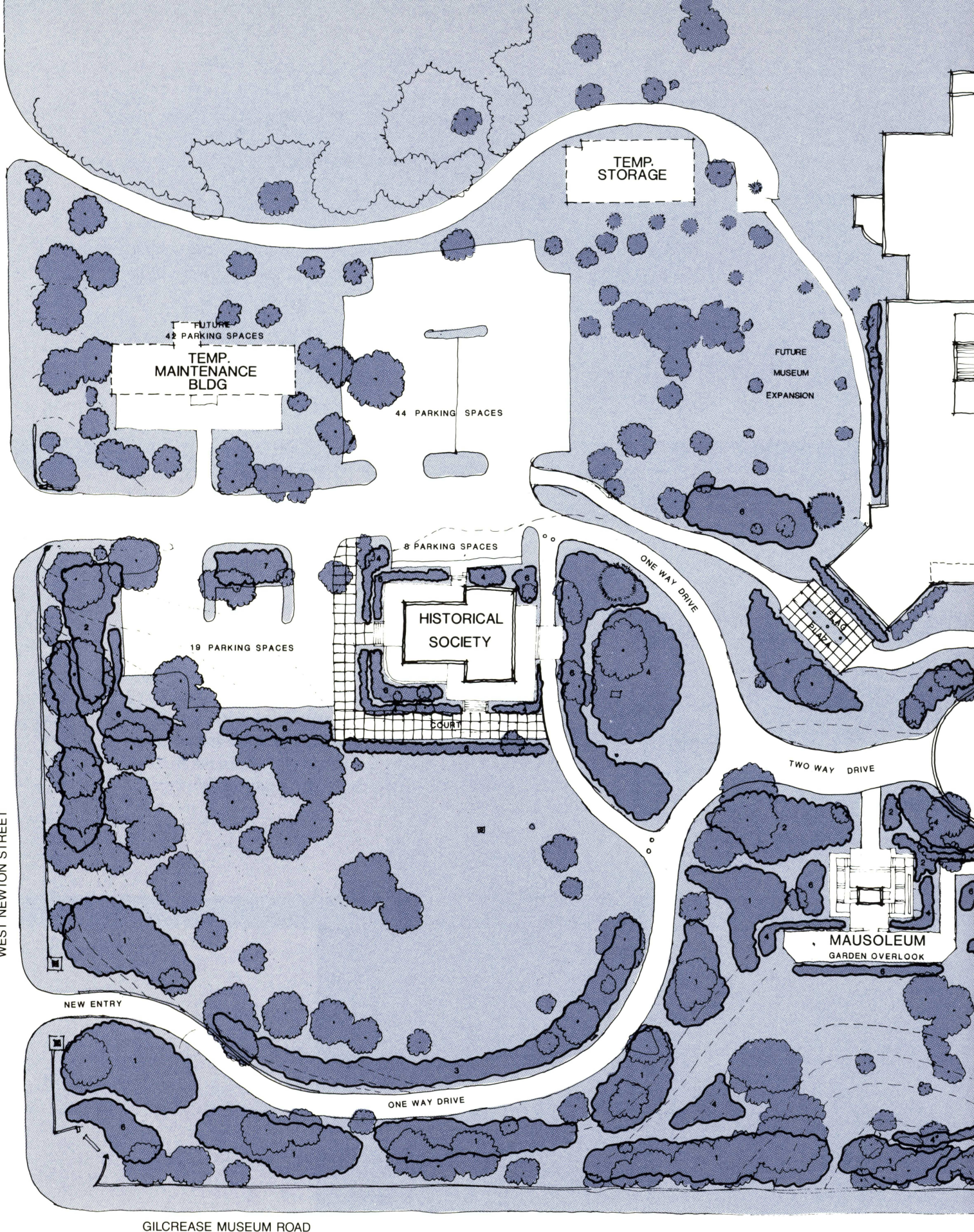
Also on this level and just next to the library reading room will be one of the unique features of the new construction, the visible storage provided for Indian artifacts. Displayed behind a floor to ceiling glass partition will be many of the museum's most beautiful and rare Indian artifacts, such things as the feathered headdresses, hide clothing, weapons, clay pots, fiber baskets, and woven textiles. These objects will be displayed densely but with clear organization on carefully lighted glass shelves. Eventually visitors will be able to call up for themselves additional information on the objects on display through a computerized information source located nearby.

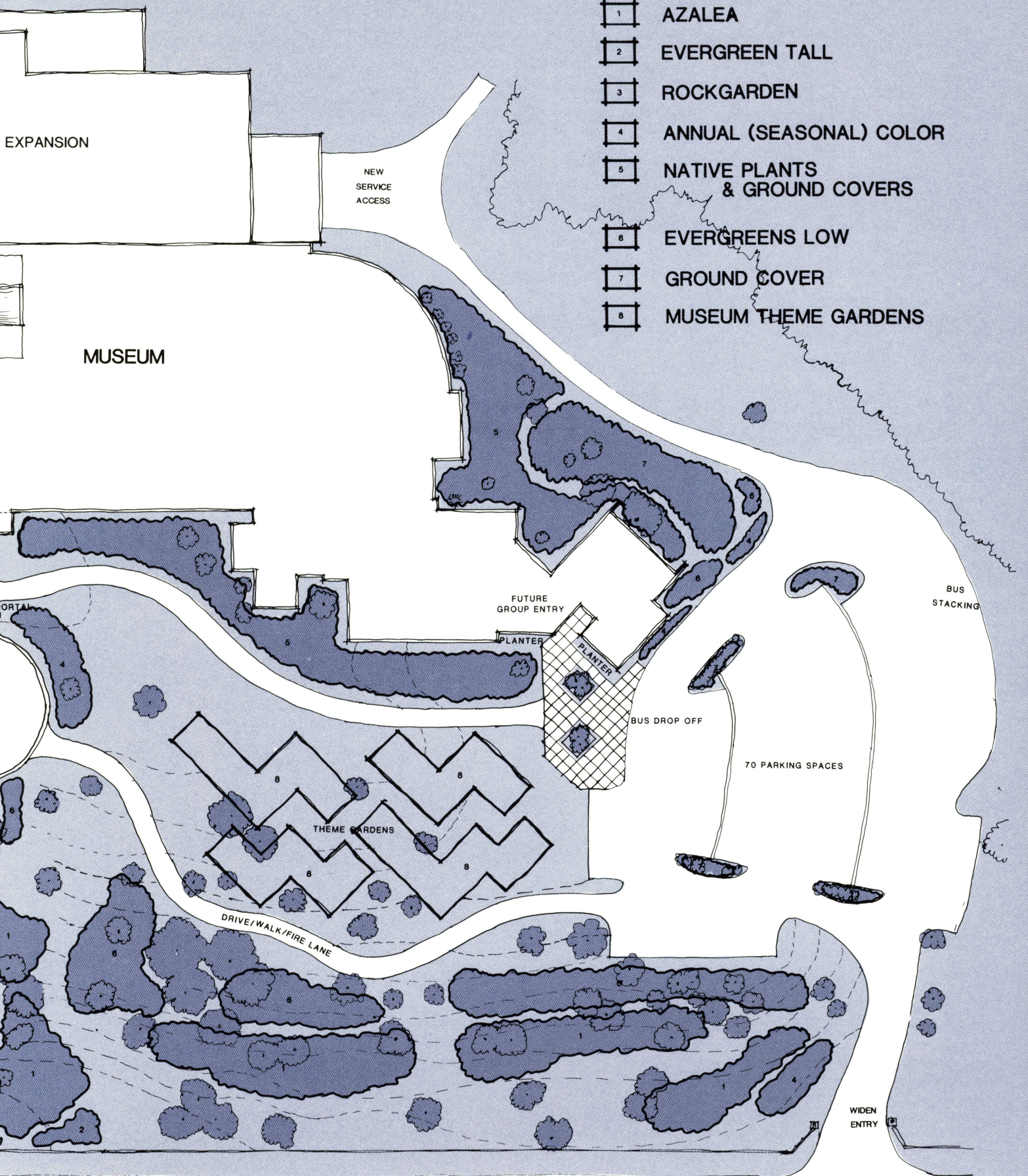
The traditional definition of a museum characterizes it as an institution that collects, preserves, studies and displays original objects. All of these traditional functions of museums will be improved and expanded in the new Gilcrease facility.

The Tulsa architectural and planning firm of Murray Jones Murray was hired by the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association to develop specific architectural plans and specifications for this expansion. To a remarkable degree the architectural plans that now guide the current construction reflect the

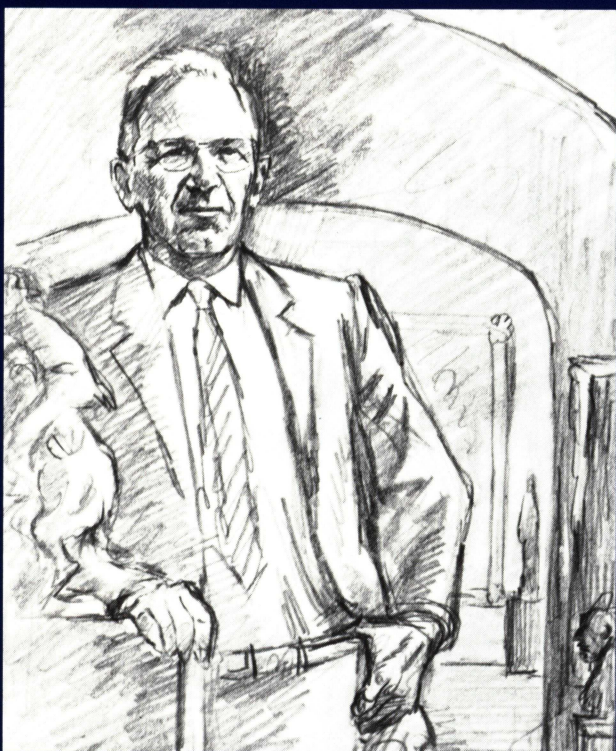
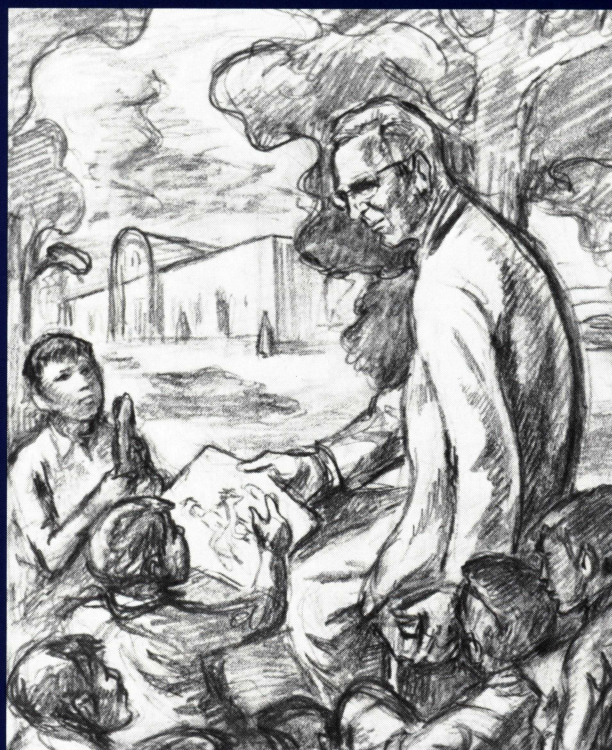


WEST NEWTON STREET





LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR GILCREASE MUSEUM GROUNDS



Charles Banks Wilson was commissioned by the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association to paint a portrait of Thomas Gilcrease which Wilson completed in 1958 and which today hangs in the Vista Room. Shown above are several of the studies Wilson did in preparation

for this portrait, studies which show Thomas Gilcrease and Gilcrease Museum. At right is a Wilson sketch, done at the same time, of the meadow behind Gilcrease Museum, a view to be seen from the vistas in the museum expansion.

basic concepts of the original facility plan.

It might be appropriate now to imagine that we are approaching the newly expanded museum and envision how it will look in two years. First of all, there will be a new entrance to the Gilcrease grounds just west of the intersection of Newton and Gilcrease Museum Road. This entrance will bring visitors onto the museum grounds relandscaped and planted with azaleas. New parking lots will be developed to the south of the museum, and the visitor will approach the museum on walks that lead to the museum entrance. The entrance will carry out and enlarge the general unifying concept of the barrel vault. Wall construction will match the ribbed concrete blocks of the current east facade. There will be much increased space just inside the entrance to better serve large groups of visitors. Adjacent will be extensive coat check facilities and restrooms.

Just ahead will be Helmerich Hall, a large ceremonial space measuring about 40 feet square and some 45 feet high. The floor of Helmerich Hall will be highly polished dark green marble bordered by red oak. Walls will be covered in natural colored linen. The most dramatic feature of the room will be the intersecting barrel vaults in the ceiling. Each vault will terminate in a fan-shaped mullioned window allowing natural daylight to penetrate this part of the remodeled museum. In Helmerich Hall will be displayed some of the museum's most important paintings by such artists as Sully, Eakins, and Moran.

Arches on the north and south of Helmerich Hall will lead to the existing display galleries of the museum which will in future be remodeled to be historic theme galleries telling the

story of the development of America. Continuing to the west through an extension of the barrel vault, the visitor will enter a second node where again north and south entrances will give access to the new art display galleries. On view to the south will be masterpieces of early western art as well as large displays of the work of George Catlin and Alfred Jacob Miller, two of the earliest artists to document the land and inhabitants of the early west. Their works will be hung in a modified Victorian fashion with a large number of works massed for overall effect.

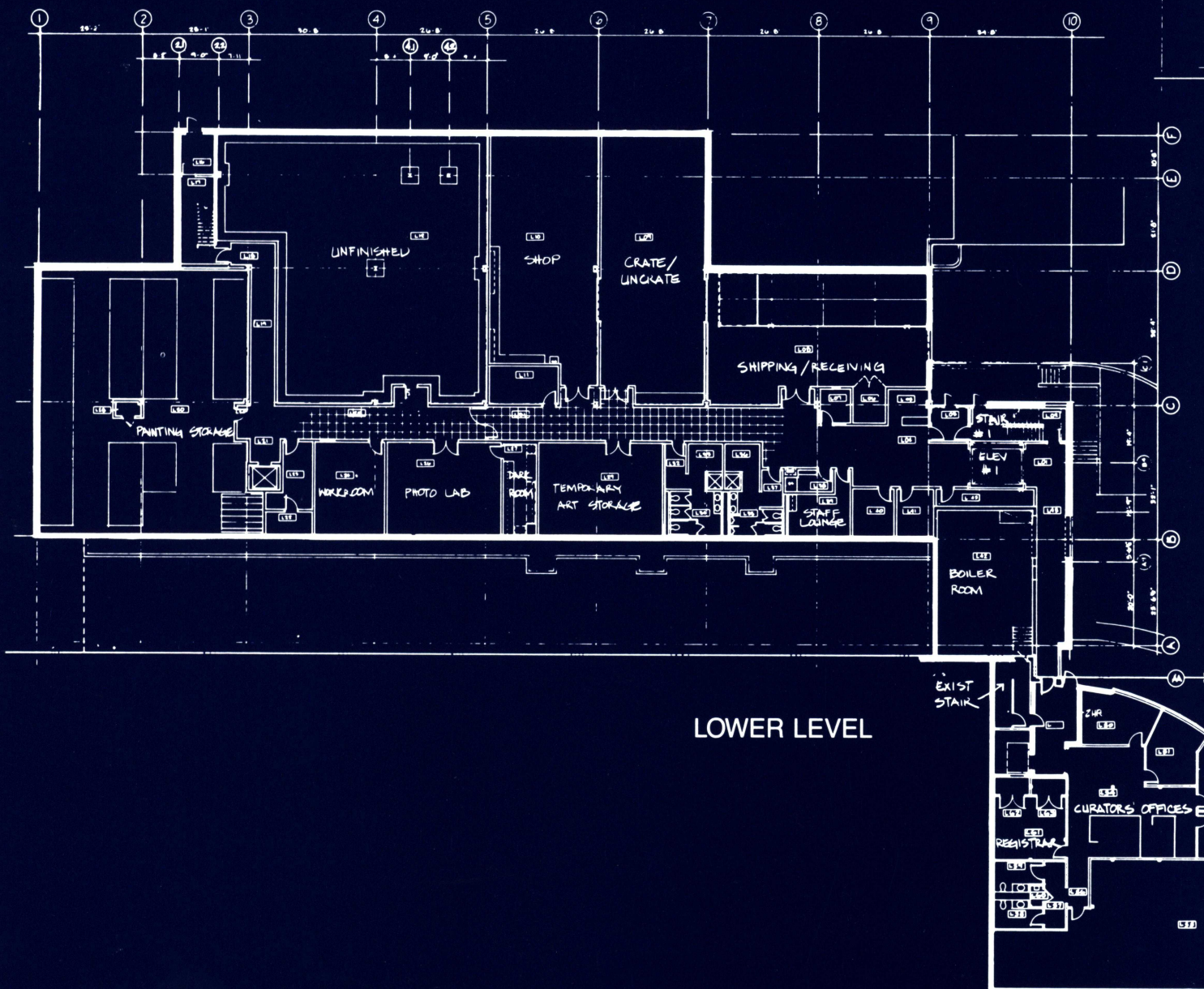
To the north will be a much larger suite of galleries to be called the J. Paul Getty Galleries that will house a sampler of American painting and sculpture, a number of paintings of eastern landscapes and everyday life, as well as the museum's magisterial collections of Remington, Russell, Schreyvogel, Seltzer, Moran, Bierstadt, and Leigh. These galleries will allow the visitor to study and enjoy large numbers of works by each of these artists, a display that Gilcrease Museum can mount better than any other museum in the world.

The decor of the galleries has been designed to offer a compatible and clean display space. Care has been taken to keep architectural detailing to a minimum so that it does not compete with the viewing experience. Walls in these new galleries will be covered with natural color fabric. Floors will be made of lustrous oak. The ceilings, 14 feet high, will be large white coffers designed to accommodate unobtrusively a flexible system of specially designed lighting. In the corridors and galleries of the Gilcrease expansion lighting has been painstakingly engineered to provide optimum viewing condi-

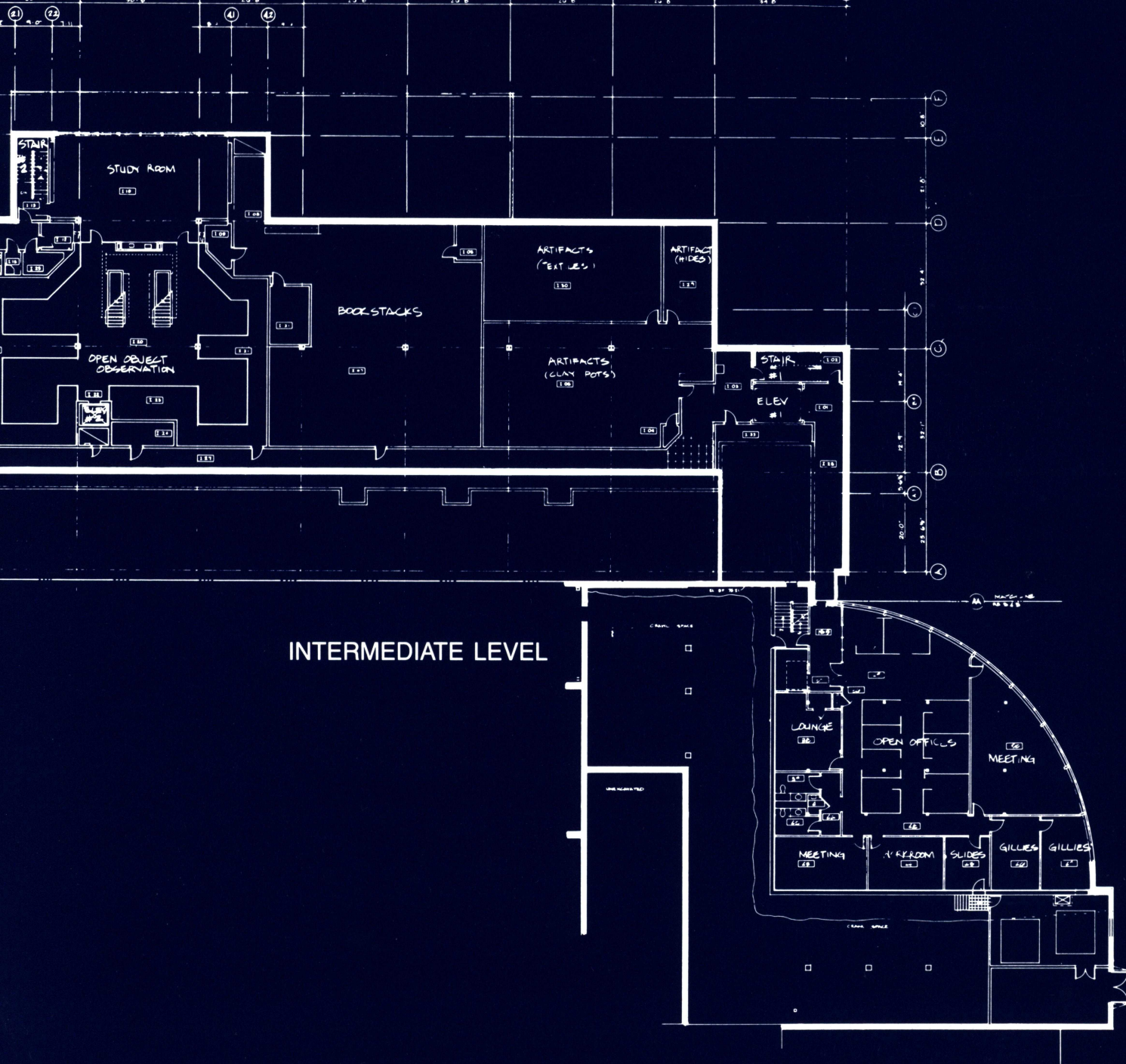


On the intermediate level of the new construction there will be a new library, reading room and graphic arts center. Next door there will be many of Gilcrease's most beautiful and rare Indian artifacts, displayed behind glass walls so that visitors may enjoy them. Also there will be new vistas to the west.

The lowest level of the new construction will accommodate collection management facilities. There will be a new loading dock, workrooms and storage areas.



LOWER LEVEL



tions while protecting the art works from overexposure to damaging ultraviolet rays.

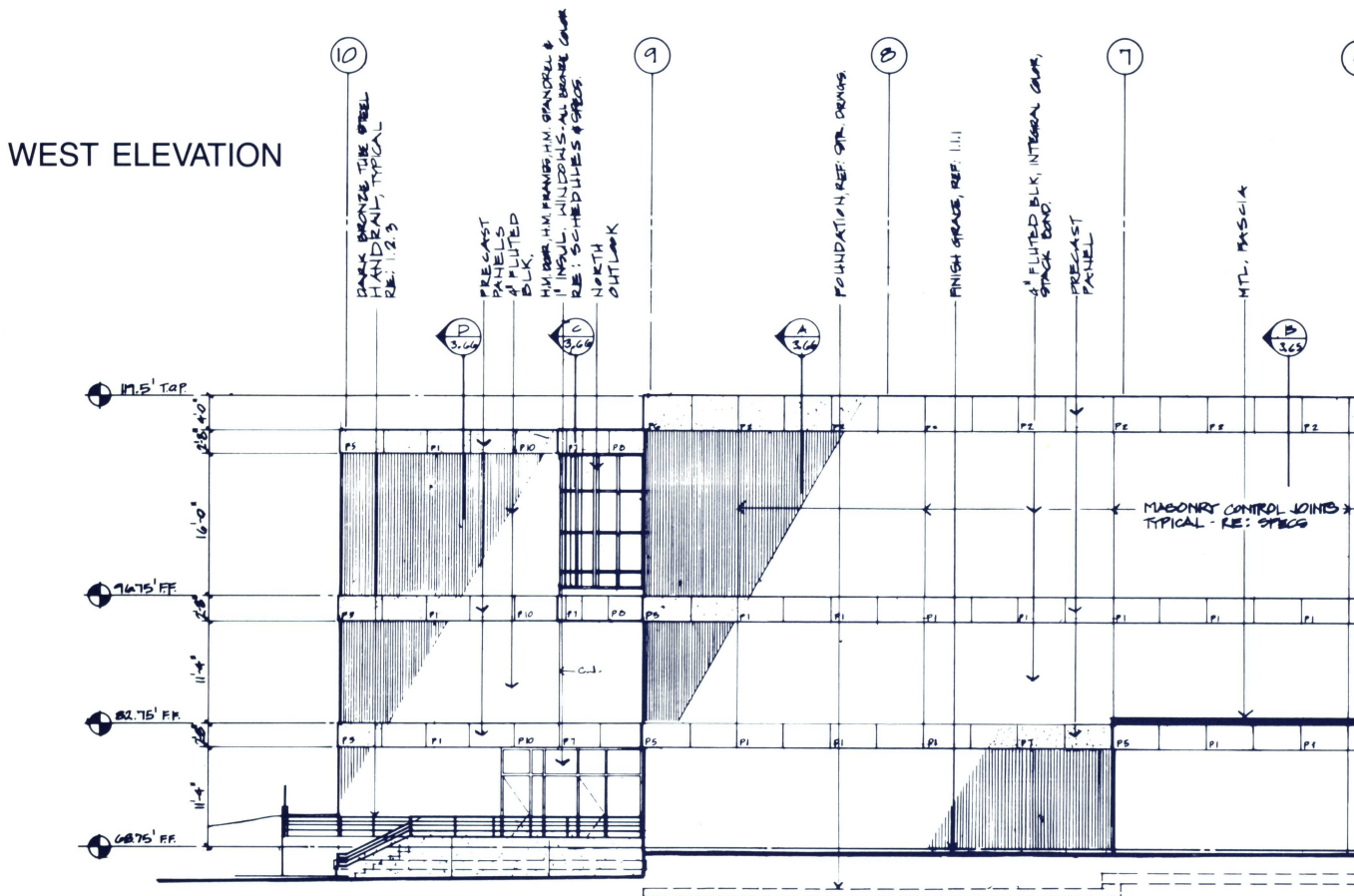
Also partly concealed in the ceiling will be heat and smoke detectors, a finely calibrated sprinkler system, and TV cameras to assist guards in surveillance of the galleries. These security devices will be controlled by computer and are planned for all areas of the new and remodeled museum building with Halon gas used in the sprinklers in the art storage areas.

The public areas of the second level, the artifact storage and reading room, will have window walls to the west allowing visitors new viewpoints from which to enjoy the valley and trees of the Osage Hills.

All other areas of the second floor and, indeed, the entire lower floor will be accessible only to staff and volunteers or specialists upon appointment. The museum administration offices will be moved to the northeast corner of the existing building in remodeled space adjacent to the auditorium. All curatorial, volunteer, and membership and development functions will be consolidated in two levels of offices in remodeled space below the existing Vista room. Access to these offices will be through the present freight elevator that will be refurbished for passenger use.

The lowest level of the new construction will accommodate those museum functions known as collections management. Some of the greatest improvements of the entire building program are anticipated in these behind-the-scenes operations. There will be a proper loading dock, a feature not available to Gilcrease Museum to date. It will be possible for trucks to drive into the museum building, a door closing behind them allowing deliveries to be made in a secure, weather-protected environment. Here will be a new room for uncrating delivered art works, a space for storage of crates, a room where installations can be tested for the galleries on the main level. The museum's woodworking shop will be located here as well as the photography studio, the staff lounge, guard facility, and storage for the art collection not on display.

Interestingly enough the basic east facade of the existing museum will not be much changed. The only new features will be the expanded entrance and the distinctive roof profile of Helmerich Hall. Reorientation of the grounds may be the most notable feature of the new plan. Just at the entrance will be a circular paved area for passenger drop-off. Plans for the grounds include extensive new azalea beds and an area of theme gardens where it will be possible to have demonstration plantings of plants typical of early America, of various



Indian cultures, and the frontier homestead.

Materials selected for the external shell of the building are the ribbed concrete block now visible on the east facade as well as a continuation of the white plaster facia to define roof and floor levels. The roof will continue to be basically of flat construction.

The building expansion and remodeling plans have been developed in the course of a year and a half of close study by staff and a building committee composed of representatives of Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees representing the City of Tulsa. The committee has been headed by Bill Fisher and its members include Mary Brett, Marian Bovaird, David Carlson, Greg Flanagan, Burt Holmes, Dave Hoyer, Bob Riggs, Joan Stauffer, and Charles Thornton. Principal architects from the Murray Jones Murray office who have been involved in the planning are Lee Murray, project manager and principal in charge, and Pam Deatherage, project architect, and Bob Schaefer, project designer.

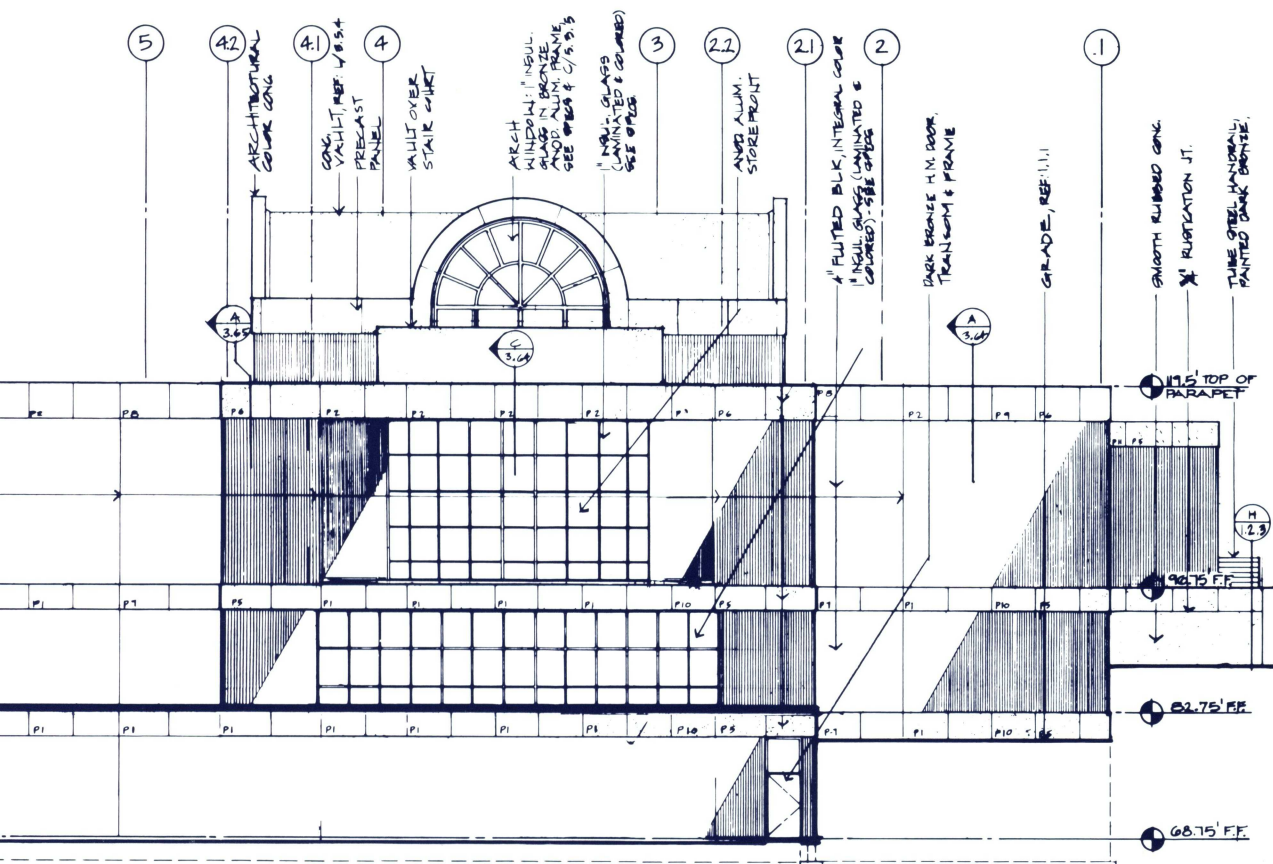
In a nutshell the plans for Gilcrease expansion can be characterized as more space, better space, space more compatible with the dignified display of art and artifacts, and better control for preservation. All in all the building program

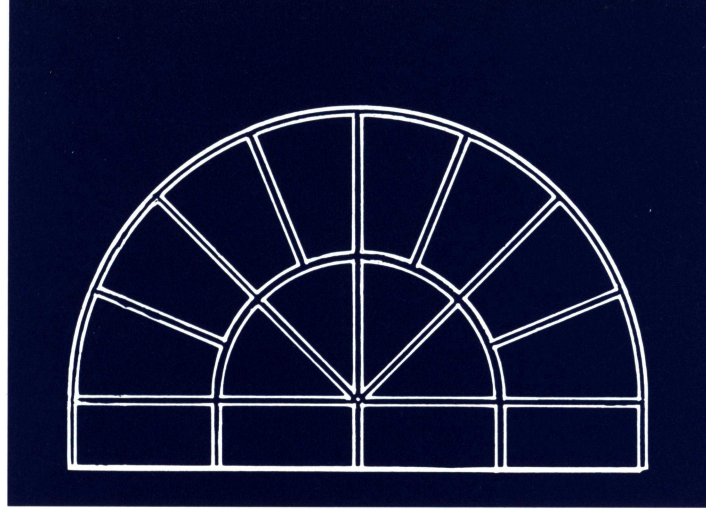
moves Gilcrease Museum well along towards the twenty-first century.

Funding for the construction is anticipated to come from a combination of public and private sources. Available now in gifts and pledges to the building fund drive is over ten million dollars. The campaign has been headed by Charles Thornton, chairman of the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association board of directors. Approximately 75 commitments have been secured, the largest of which are a one and a half million dollar gift from the J. Paul Getty Trust and a one million dollar pledge from Helmerich and Payne, Inc. in honor of Walter Helmerich, II. There have been five pledges of more than \$500,000. The average of other pledges is \$43,500.

The Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association is functioning as the client for the City of Tulsa, in anticipation of the completion of construction and remodeling approximately two years from now when the facility will be turned over entirely to the City of Tulsa as a gift for its citizens.

One wonders what Thomas Gilcrease would make of the splendid new museum building that is now nearing realization. One can only speculate that he would be pleased about this expanded and modernized home for his collection, pleased, but one dares guess not surprised. ◻





The Meaning of Quality

BY ROBERT LAWTON JONES

Before there were museums, there was art. Earliest man became creative in order to survive in a sometimes hostile world. Tools and shelter were needed. The principle of fitness was the standard against which the built-environment could be judged. What task was to be fulfilled? What materials were to be used? And gradually, how could the eye, the sense of touch and the mind be pleased? Process and form were indivisible.

Just as man's working objects became works of art, the need to communicate in a special way was evident. Painting, sculpture and dance took on new meaning. They became the expression of a culture. Art was a mind and emotion stretching experience, one which offered an expanded vision in an evolutionary world. Growth and fulfillment were made possible.

Even today, art is seen as a process of discovery. It is part of the personal development upon which we all depend. Without it, we are something less than we could be. If we accept art as an experience which can involve us all, we will

have become more open, less threatened by the unfamiliar. We will see that creative people are engaged in a quest for things that are not always apparent, for the kind of truth not visible to the naked eye.

Architecture itself is both an art and science. It is concerned with the art of providing for the human experience and the science of building. Sometimes its uniqueness comes from a balanced response to the needs of nature, man and technology.

Because we react to our environment in a total way, the enjoyment of the actual building or space cannot merely be a matter of vision. It is a matter of total sensory perception. To be truly satisfactory, the built-environment must meet all our physical and psychological requirements. It is the whole man that architecture impacts.

This raises an interesting question about museums, the space within which the visual arts can be experienced. Some theoreticians have maintained that the museum should be an efficient and self-effacing warehouse. Here, the space is seen

Robert Lawton Jones, FAIA, AICP, director of design and planning for Murray Jones Murray Incorporated, was formerly chairman of the Arts Commission, City of Tulsa, and president of the Arts and Humanities Council of Tulsa.

as a “museum without walls,” an open participant in the community. It is involved rather than removed from the mainstream of public activity. It does not seek to attract attention to itself as much as to provide suitable housing for art objects and artifacts.

Others hold that the museum should make a positive architectural statement and express a personal vision. History has certainly provided examples of this. Early museums in Europe were converted palaces. When the Louvre was declared a national trust in 1848, it was understood to be a palace, no more nor less. Today, it is a palace in which art can be viewed. In fact, the building itself is a powerful art object sending its own message to the museum viewer. At its best, it complements several centuries of Western Civilization. But at its worst, it is inhospitable to a substantial portion of the art world, both past and present. The same can be said of many museums in this country.

Perhaps our real responsibility is somewhere in between these positions of debate. Museums should primarily emphasize art objects and artifacts. They should provide, with a certain ambience, an environment for experiencing art. If it is art which is important, then the space within which it is placed should be elegant without being luxurious, modest rather than ostentatious.

The task really begins with putting things in their right place. Galleries should be grouped instead of intermixed with the many support services found in today's museum. This makes possible the independent access to various facilities so that programs which take place outside the standard museum hours can be accommodated easily. It also suggests that circulation patterns be provided which afford the visitor a degree of choice or selectivity not found in the continuous maze. There should be a sense of direction and order which is easily perceived and convenient to use. This implies a readily identifiable image.

It is important that a “sense of place” be created, a point which orients the visitor. Thomas Gilcrease understood this very well when he constructed a major vaulted space near the entrance. This provided a focus not unlike the “long

house” or communal dwelling used by the Iroquois and some of the tribes of the Pacific Northwest. It is now possible to reinforce this space with an enlarged entry and a new circulation spine which includes a great hall in addition to a separate viewing opportunity of the Osage Hills. From this spine, all galleries are accessible.

Each gallery must be appropriately scaled for its collection. The use of light and space are as important as the interpretive message itself. Controlled views to the museum grounds can provide a comfortable change of pace or contrast.

The current expansion program brings seven specific benefits to the users of Gilcrease Museum. These were early objectives from which alternatives were identified, concepts refined, and construction now proceeds. They include:

- Double the gallery space and improve the quality of exhibition installation.

- Clarify public circulation throughout the building and group functions according to need.

- Increase storage by one-quarter, including the open viewing of 35 percent of the artifact collection.

- Expand the library and other facilities related to the documents collection and make it more accessible for study.

- Improve collections management and storage, the handling of traveling exhibits, and staff facilities.

- Satisfy modern museum standards in terms of improved climate control, security and fire protection systems.

- Provide a sequenced expansion for orderly growth in the future.

Our quest is for quality. Gilcrease Museum must be an appropriate container that in no way competes with the art, but rather contributes to its significance. It should evoke a physical, emotional and intellectual response in each of us. Perhaps in this way, we can better understand the meaning of quality in our lives. ◡

A Visit With Wi



ard Stone

BY CINDI MADDOX



Willard Stone, top, in an early photograph with examples of his sculpture in wood.

Right, Willard Stone, "The Appeal," wood, 15¼ inches by 5½ inches by 7½ inches.

It was wartime. A ravaging depression paralyzed this nation. America was a testing ground for the "survival of the fittest" theory. Barefoot children toiled in cottonfields alongside their sharecropper parents, who frantically tried to scrape a meager living from the stingy soil. But one young quarter-blood Cherokee boy near Oktaha, Oklahoma, found momentary escapes from all the hardships. He spent hours fishing along the creek banks and hunting the woods for supper. It also afforded him time to ponder the wonders of nature around him. His imagination was unleashed, never to be harnessed again. He saw the world as few others did, and

Cindi Maddox is assistant travel editor of *Southern Living* magazine. She first discovered Willard Stone's art while researching a story at Gilcrease Museum. Her story, "The Old West's Enduring Art," appeared in the February 1985 issue of *Southern Living*.



eventually created tangible reminders of that world for the rest of us to admire.

Looking back at those days, he once said that a bean-flip, pocket knife, and fish hook were standard equipment for all farm boys. He had long ago discarded his bean-flip, and traded the bottle cork fishing hook for a modern rod and reel, but "still am holding onto my pocket knife. It has been too good a tool to discard."

That pocket knife, carried like a treasured heirloom in the worn pocket of the young boy, continued to bring home food for his own wife and children in later years. With it, the late Willard Stone also carved his fame as perhaps America's finest wood sculptor.

I became infatuated with Willard Stone's works at Gilcrease several years ago. There is a gripping magnetism that draws you to his pieces. The fluid lines. Sleek abstract movement. Subtle symbolism. Drama and warmth of the wood. The grain that symmetrically guides you across every inch of the object. The sweet innocence in the face of a child. A solitary tear in a mother's eye. All are indelible marks of Stone that lead you not only into the soul of the art, but eventually into the soul of the artist.

James Leake, a Muskogee businessman and Gilcrease director emeritus, has frequently compared his friend Stone

to another artist friend.

"Willard was a totally unique artist. He and Walt Disney were two of a kind," says Leake. "When Disney looked at an ordinary mouse, or duck, or rabbit, he saw something totally different. He saw a Mickey Mouse or a Donald Duck. He saw fantasy.

"Stone too was a magic artist. He couldn't draw or carve just a common chicken or rabbit. He added a bit of fantasy, or sometimes a lot of fantasy. But he was still a realistic artist. If one could improve on the figures of nature, Willard could."

Leake owns several of Stone's pieces, but says there is one figure the artist never carved for him. "I kept asking him for a fox. One day I said, Willard, look at that old fox running across there with that chicken in his mouth. I know you can do something with that.

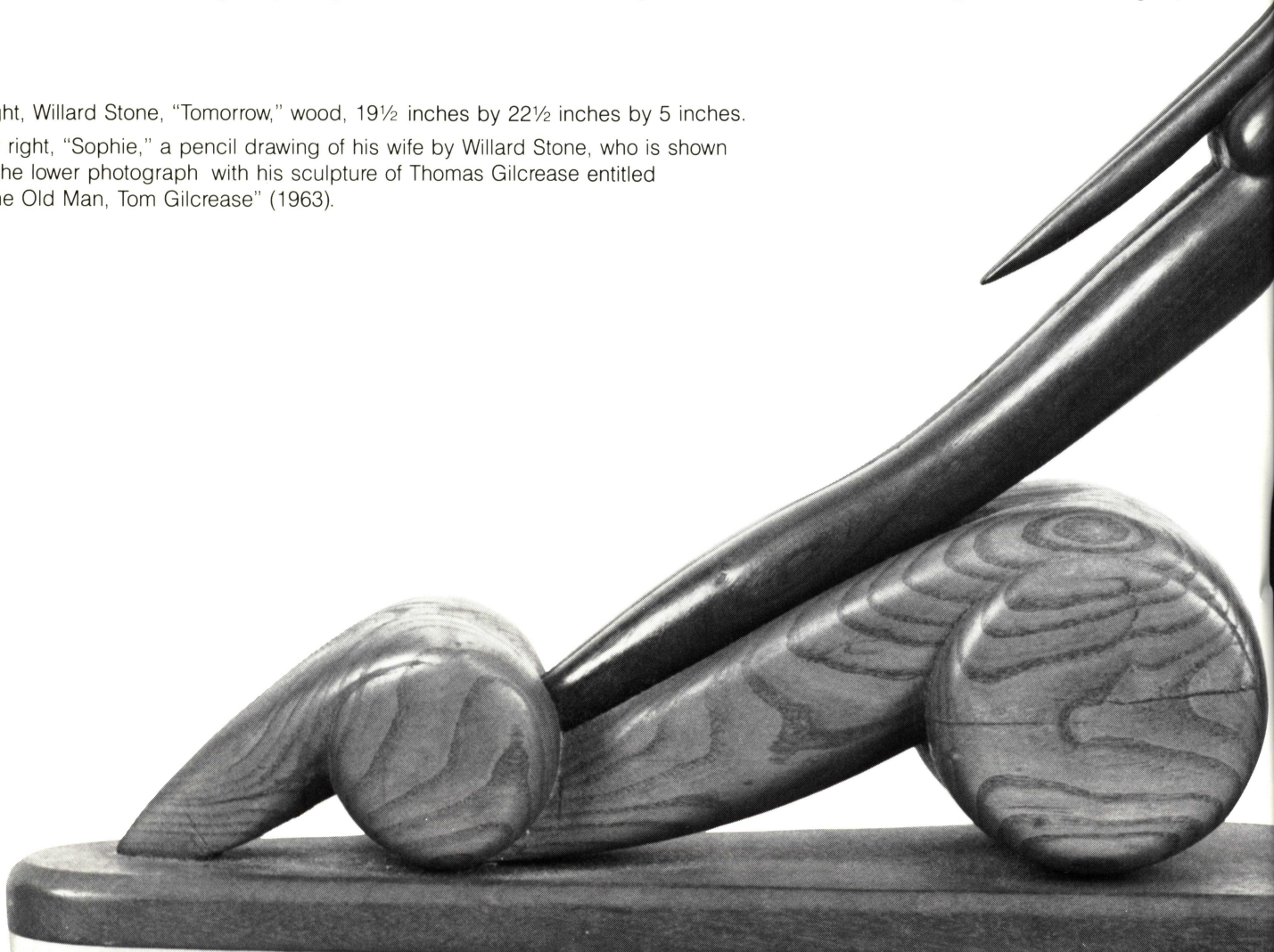
"He never did give me a fox."

It has been said the highest compliment paid to a sculptor is for the viewer to reach out to touch the work. Stone made his almost impossible not to touch. You want to feel the smooth contour of the wood that he has shaped into a baby's chubby legs and arms, trace the bold ascension of the phoenix in "Re-Birth," or gently caress the windswept hair of the young mother in "Exodus."

"Exodus" is probably Stone's most recognized work. From its pedestal at the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah,

Right, Willard Stone, "Tomorrow," wood, 19½ inches by 22½ inches by 5 inches.

Far right, "Sophie," a pencil drawing of his wife by Willard Stone, who is shown in the lower photograph with his sculpture of Thomas Gilcrease entitled "The Old Man, Tom Gilcrease" (1963).





the riveting work tells the story of thousands of Indians whose forced migration took them from their homes in the Southeast to what is now Oklahoma. "Exodus" is a work of beauty at first glance. A closer look reveals the heartbreaking tears in the young mother's eyes. She's moving slowly westward, carrying a baby on her back. But the load is much heavier than just from the weight of the child. There is also the pain of leaving her home, the sorrow of losing loved ones along the journey, the fear of the unknown that lies ahead.

Stone designed the piece to symbolize two large tears, one balancing the other — the carefully curved head of the mother tilting slightly upward to balance the downward curve of the baby in its pouch. Like weights on a scale, the teardrops delicately teeter on a base that represents the contour of the earth. From a block of a walnut tree, Stone carved a chilling reminder of the most tragic and cruel chapter in this country's history.

In the original sculpture the baby's face is turned sideways. Stone said he wanted it to face in the same direction as the mother's "but there was a damned knot in the wood and I had to turn it sideways."

"Exodus" is one of three major statements made by Stone about the Trail of Tears and tragedy of his ancestors. "Uprooted" (Five Civilized Tribes Museum collection) starts with the people being pulled away from their roots. The two-

dimensional "Transplanted" (Cherokee Historical Society collection) ends the journey with a young mother planting a seed in the earth of the new land.

Even though Stone was one-fourth Cherokee, he "grew up in the white man's ways." He learned the traditions and history of his ancestors through books. His heritage began seeping into his art while Stone was a student at Bacone College under the instruction of Acee Blue Eagle and Woody Crumbo. Later Thomas Gilcrease offered him a position as artist-in-residence at his budding museum "to show the Indian's point of view."

It was during his three years with Gilcrease that Stone began to realize his own rare talent for turning a tree trunk into an unparalleled work of beauty. He had a patron for his "whittlings." Gilcrease took care of the essentials. Stone's time was spent carving, creating, and training himself in his chosen field. Stone was a self-taught artist, and Gilcrease was a self-taught judge and collector of art. Many of the pieces Stone produced during his tenure are still in the Gilcrease collection, including 54 sculptures and more than two dozen original sketches.

"The Gilcrease has been like a flat-top to me — something to take off from and go back to," Stone said.

One of his favorite stories was the time he showed

Right, not too many years ago Willard Stone, far right, showed Gordon Hicks, now a director emeritus of the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association, and Pat Nixon, then First Lady, through some of the Gilcrease collection of Indian art, including his own sculpture.

Center, Willard Stone, "The Mighty Colt," wood, 21½ inches by 4 inches by 2 inches.

Far right, Willard Stone, "Fall Season," pencil on paper, 19¾ inches by 27½ inches.

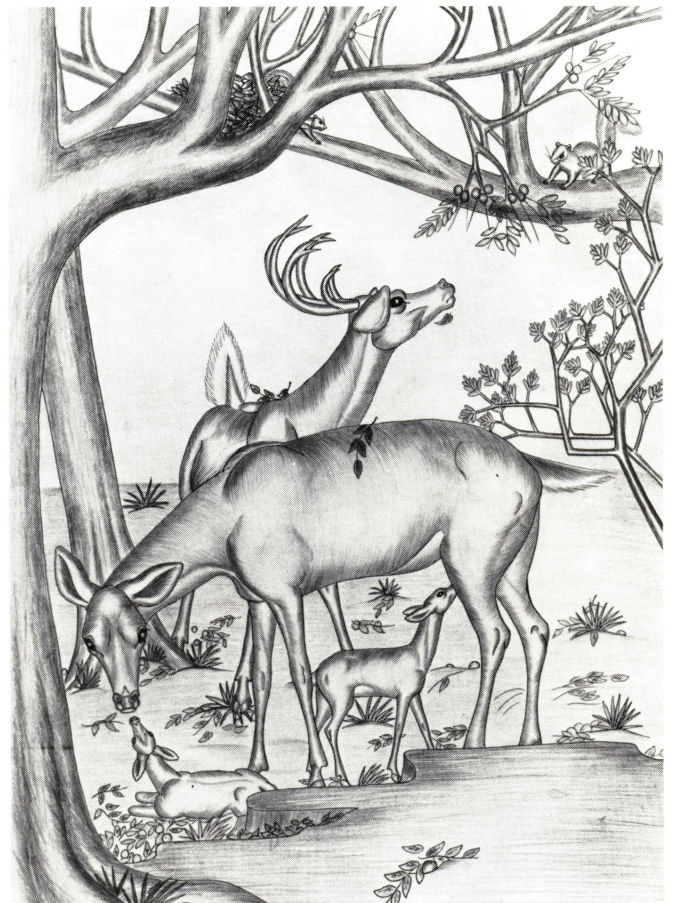


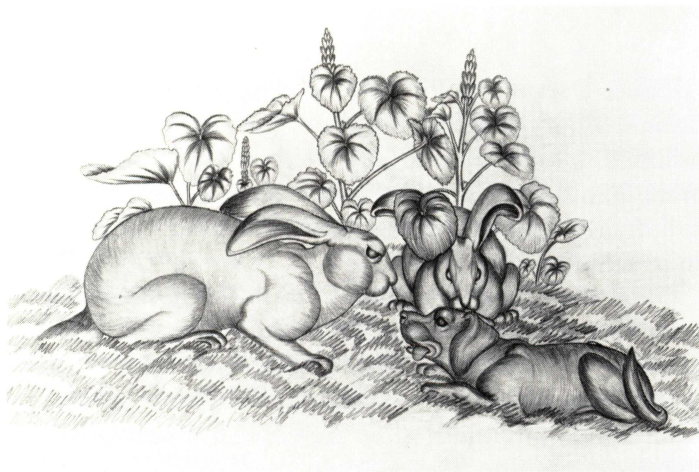


Gilcrease a sculpture of a curvaceous young girl, her face buried in her hands and her body bare. She was pregnant and ashamed of herself. Stone said Gilcrease asked the title. When Willard said "Shame," Gilcrease replied, "Well, it's got to be something she has done; she doesn't have anything else to be ashamed of."

Stone earned his fame primarily as a Native American artist, but his work transcended a regional appeal. With nature as the primary source of inspiration, he gave us all something to appreciate — whether it was mystic abstracts, hatching birds, a mother goose protecting her goslings, or the Madonna. His political ideologies also took shape as art. There were statements on Viet Nam, power of the federal government, international tensions, and man's wanton disregard for his own species. And his deep religious convictions permeated almost all his creations. The beautiful serenity on the face of "Madonna" (Five Civilized Tribes Museum collection) is an inspiration for all to behold. Fashioned from the trunk of a cedar tree, "Madonna" was his first effort to sculpt rather than carve wood.

The English writer Havelock Ellis once wrote, "Every artist writes his own autobiography." That was especially true of Willard Stone. His art is a lasting testament of his life. The works illustrate his heritage, childhood, the man as a father and husband, and the insightful philosopher.





Top, Willard Stone, "The Aggravator" (1947), pencil on paper, 19½ inches by 27¾ inches.

Below, Willard Stone, "Buffalo Bulls" (1946), wood, 8½ inches by 23¾ inches by 4 inches.

Far right, Willard Stone with Thomas Gilcrease, left.

While his art said much about Stone, he could tell you even more. Last January, about six weeks before his death, I spent a few hours visiting Willard at his home.

A perfunctory chamber of commerce sign welcomes you to Locust Grove as "The Home of Willard Stone." Stone was the town's best known son and it was certainly proud of him. With saw, chisel, hammer, and pocket knife, he put Locust Grove on the map.

The Stones' home is perched along a rocky hillside a few miles from town. Chickens peck in the yard out front. The small house was indicative of the people who lived there — warm, sincere, and modest. To Willard, he himself was nobody special. "Just a poor old country boy," he often told his friend Jimmy Leake.

During much of the conversation, Willard sat on a stool behind the easel where so many of his works took shape. First a thought, then a sketch, then the carving and sculpting. Most of his time, Willard said, was spent on the thinking process.

He and Sophie, his wife of 44 years, had a lifetime of stories to tell, most of them rooted in the hard soil of their homeplace. Sophie reminded Willard that he probably had a lot more stories than she, and pointed toward a wall cabinet filled with carvings of squirrels, children, rabbits, and other objects. Sophie's treasures of Willard's works were collected





in much the same way as a priest receives confessions. Every time her mild-mannered husband was hit with a wild streak, and his antics landed him in the dog house, the only way to get out was to carve something for Sophie.

"You can tell from my collection how much he's enjoyed life," she said laughingly.

Willard reminded his wife that he wasn't the only one who pulled tricks out of the bag. It seemed that Sophie was still holding onto an ace card that she used to persuade Willard to marry her. The two met while students at Bacone College. Willard was beginning to toy with "whittling" and would scour the campus for suitable pieces of wood. He always worked with hardwood and preferred sassafras because of its prominent grain. During one date, when Willard was complaining about the scraggly sassafras trees around Muskogee, Sophie told him about two trees near her childhood home in Arkansas that were at least three feet in diameter years before.

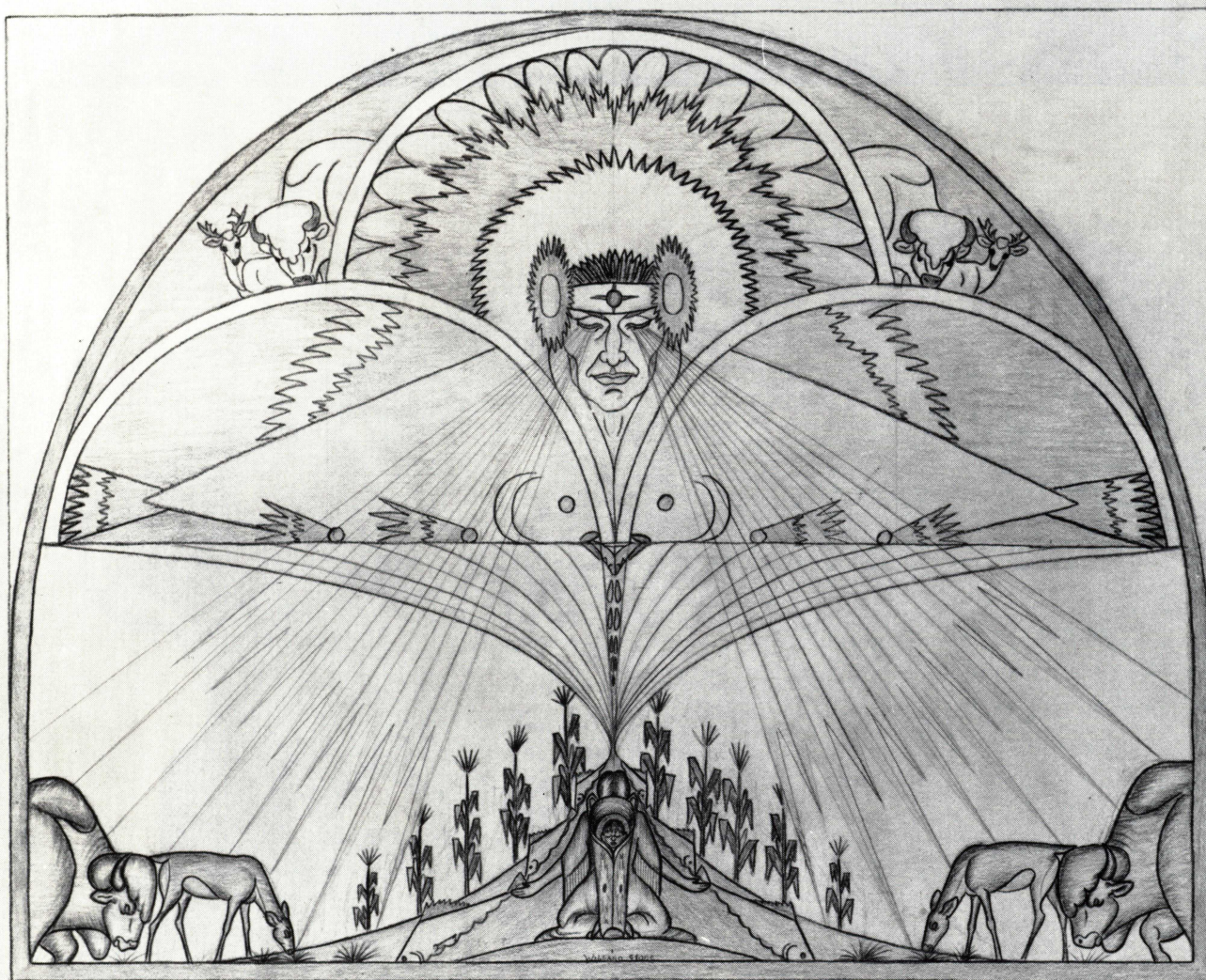
The deal was — she would take him to the trees if he would marry her.

"So I married her, and she did tell me where one was. But I'm still waiting for her to tell me where the other one is," Willard added. Sophie smiled smugly as she listened to the tale.

Sophie and their 10 children were the inspiration for many of Willard's works. He tenderly sculpted "Sophie in a #2 Washtub," a sensual portrayal of a young woman bathing in a washtub. His ability to make the wood come alive with movement was at its height here as the woman wrings water from her long hair.

Stone said wood has a warmth that no other medium will ever have. And he had an innate ability of applying his own warmth to the wood, in a way that gave life to his art.

As a young boy Willard drew figures in the sand and on any scrap of paper he could find in the schoolhouse. His dream



was to be a painter. But at 13 years old, that dream ended when a dynamite explosion took two of his fingers and the thumb on his right hand. Dejected and disinterested, he quit school to spend his days farming, hunting, and fishing. That, said Willard, turned out to be the best education for him and the best source of ideas for his work.

Without the paintings, the artist in him needed some other outlet of expression. He began molding figures from the clay he dug from nearby creek banks. In his studio is a clay bust of Abe Lincoln that he sculpted when he was about 13. The bust, baked in the sun, was an early indication of the young Indian boy's immense talent. It was several years later, while studying art at Bacone, that he tried his hand at wood sculpting.

There was a serious, philosophical side of Willard Stone. But there was also the more visible, spirited, humorous side. While almost all of his works have symbolic meaning, he created some just for pure enjoyment without the viewer having to study them deeply. "Up a Stump" shows a little girl who has innocently picked up a baby gosling and the protective mother goose has chased her up a stump. Stone said children especially like that work — they look at it and laugh without anyone explaining its meaning.

Even his missing fingers were fair game for Willard's keen sense of humor. "I've always had a sure way to keep my kids from sucking their thumb. I just showed them what happened when I sucked mine," he said, holding up the nub of his thumb.

Great integrity, unique artist, loving father, kind-hearted, poignant love of nature and mankind, humility — all describe Stone.

"The world is much better off that Willard Stone lived. He created beauty that will remain here for years to come," says Leake, remembering his friend.

In 1821 William Hazlitt wrote: "Wonder at the first sight of works of art may be the effect of ignorance and novelty; but real admiration and permanent delight in them are the growth of taste and knowledge."

The first sight of "Lady of Spring" at Gilcrease was indeed novel to me. I was intrigued by the artist's unique concept of the rites of Spring — the pure beauty and fragile femininity of the figure emerging in birth. By the time I viewed "Exodus," the artist had captured my emotions. I developed an even stronger admiration after meeting him and gaining some insight into the man. Willard showed me a sketch he had been working on for some time. He called it "Liberated Lady." I was mesmerized by his stylistic statement about women's role in society. It was to be his next major work. Jason Stone, Willard's oldest son and a talented artist in his own right, says he plans to sculpt this piece himself, continuing the treasured legacy of his father. ◡

Left, Willard Stone, "Community of Thanks," pencil on paper, 16½ inches by 21 inches.

Below, Willard Stone, "Tree Dog," wood, 14½ inches by 6½ inches by 5½ inches



WORKS BY WILLARD STONE IN THE GILCREASE

WOOD SCULPTURES

- "Bait Thief" (1947), 8½ inches by 18 inches by ¾ inch
"Bait Thief," 4¾ inches by 9½ inches by 2 inches
"Bird" (1947), 30¼ inches by 3 inches by 3 inches
"Birth of Atomic Energy," 23¼ inches by 4½ inches by 4½ inches
"Buffalo Bulls" (1946), 8½ inches by 23¾ inches by 4 inches
"Buffalo Hunt" (1945), 14⅞ inches by 19 inches by 1 inch
"Chisolm Trail" (1947), 11¼ inches by 30 inches by ¾ inch
"Crazy Buffalo," 17 inches by 12¼ inches by 3⅜ inches
"Dying Buffalo" (1947), 6 inches by 7½ inches by 23 inches
"Expression," 12¾ inches by 5¼ inches by 2¾ inches
"Gar-Fish," 4 inches by 39 inches by 3½ inches
"Indian Madonna" (1945), 17¾ inches by 1¼ inches by ⅞ inch
"Indian with Headdress" (1946), 13½ inches by 14½ inches by ½ inch
"International Peace Effort" (1946), 5¾ inches by 24 inches by 4¼ inches
"Lady of Spring", 27½ inches by 5 inches by 5½ inches
"Modernistic Indian Girl," 9¼ inches by 2½ inches by 1¾ inches
"Our Atomic Baby" (1946), 29¾ inches by 4¼ inches by 4½ inches
"Prairie Song," 19 inches by 3 inches by 3 inches
"Pregnant Jackrabbit," 21 inches by 2½ inches by 2½ inches
"Robbers" (1946), 21½ inches by 3 inches by 1¼ inches
"Running Buffalo," 12 inches by 16¾ inches by ¾ inch
"Shame" (1946), 21½ inches by 3 inches by 3¼ inches
"Spoils of War," 19½ inches by 7½ inches by 7⅝ inches
"Stylized Buffalo Head" (1945), 12 inches by 8½ inches by ⅝ inch
"Tendency of Art," 19 inches by 4 inches by 2½ inches
"Tense Jackrabbit," 4½ inches by 16 inches by 4 inches
"The Appeal," 15¼ inches by 5¼ inches by 7½ inches
"The Chase" (1947), 11¼ inches by 31¼ inches by ½ inch
"The Cherokee Follower," 23¾ inches by 3¾ inches by 3½ inches
"The Doctor," 15¼ inches by 9½ inches by 6 inches
"The Eagle Dance," 8 inches by 28⅞ inches by ¾ inch
"The Guardian," 8½ inches by 3½ inches by 2 inches
"The Jap Prisoner," 4 inches by 6⅞ inches by 2¾ inches
"The Mighty Colt," 21½ inches by 4 inches by 4 inches
"The Mustang" (1946), 8½ inches by 11¼ inches by 4 inches
"The Observer" (1946), 31½ inches by 7 inches by 5½ inches
"The Old Man, Tom Gilcrease" (1963), 15⅞ inches by 5 inches by 6½ inches
"The Old One" (1947), 13¼ inches by 11 inches by ½ inch
"The River," 9 inches by 21½ inches by 7 inches
"The Road Back," 10 inches by 18 inches by 2½ inches
"The Wood Carver," 15 inches by 3 inches by 2¾ inches
"Today's Fullblood" (1943), 12¾ inches by 2½ inches by 2½ inches
"Tomorrow," 19½ inches by 22½ inches by 5 inches

COLLECTION

- "Tree Dog," 14½ inches by 6½ inches by 5½ inches
"Unity of Purpose," 28¾ inches by 5¼ inches by 5¼ inches
Untitled (Male Indian, Bust), 7¼ inches by 1¼ inches by 2 inches
Untitled (Two Headed Duck Bowl), 2¼ inches by 15 inches by 3½ inches
Untitled (Buffalo), 5¾ inches by 7 inches by 2½ inches
Untitled (Plaque: Two Horses' Heads), 11½ inches by 21 inches by ¾ inch
"War Widows," 7½ inches by 20¾ inches by 4½ inches
"Warhead Fruit Bowl" (1946), 3¾ inches by 18½ inches by 5½ inches
"Watermelon Thief" (1946) 4 inches by 25 inches by 3½ inches
"Young Buck," 9¼ inches by ½ inch

DRAWINGS

(All pencil on paper)

- "Abstraction in Limbo" (1947), 19¾ inches by 26 inches
"Black and White and Brown" (1947), 19¾ inches by 28 inches
Untitled (Buffaloes at Twilight) (1946), 20 inches by 28 inches
"Buffaloes Departure" (1946), 16½ inches by 22⅞ inches
"Buffaloes Return" (1946), 18 inches by 23 inches
"Communion of Thanks," 16½ inches by 21 inches
"Fall Season" (1948), 19¾ inches by 27½ inches
"Forgotten Enemies" (1947), 20 inches by 27¾ inches
"Ghosts on our Landscape — Trail of Tears" (1948), 20 inches by 28 inches
"John Ross's Home Near Ross Landing, Now Chattanooga, Tenn.," 4½ inches by 20⅞ inches
"Let Them Live and Multiply" (1946), 22 inches by 30½ inches
"Peyote Birds," 10 inches by 13 inches
"Peyote Birds," 10 inches by 13 inches
"Peyote Birds and A Flat Wrap," 10 inches by 13 inches
"Precaution, 12½ inches by 21¾ inches
"Sophie," 16½ inches by 21 inches
"String Beans with Modern Indian Basket," 18 inches by 22¾ inches
Study for a Mural (Indian Wagon Train), 9 inches by 37½ inches
Study for a Mural (Indians and Covered Wagon), 16¾ inches by 22 inches
Study for a Mural (Pencil mural for three walls), 9 inches by 37½ inches
"The Aggravator" (1947), 19½ inches by 27¾ inches
"The Family Tree" (1947), 20 inches by 28 inches
"The Individual's Decision" (1947), 19½ inches by 26 inches
"The Stretch," 17¼ inches by 23¼ inches
"Leo Vann," 19 inches by 24 inches
"Verne" (1948), 16 inches by 16 inches
"Stand Watie" (1947), 20½ inches by 26 inches
"Yesterday Fires — Medicine Man," 18½ inches by 26¼ inches

Right, Willard Stone, "The Cherokee Follower,"
wood, 23¾ inches by 3¾ inches by 3½ inches



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FRONT COVER:

Architect's rendering of the new entrance to Gilcrease Museum.

BACK COVER:

"The River," a sculpture by Willard Stone in the collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

ILLUSTRATIONS:

All illustrations of Willard Stone works on pages 20 through 31 of this issue are of works from the collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

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THE RIVER

This wood sculpture by Cherokee artist Willard Stone is one of 19 sculptures and a sampling of drawings by the artist in the recently reinstalled exhibition of Stone's works in the Modern Indian Gallery at Gilcrease Museum.

One of the leading Indian artists of the twentieth century, Stone used the natural grain of the wood to suggest the structure of his figures. His works exhibit a distinctive element of fantasy in their interpretation of the natural world and are favorites of visitors to Gilcrease.

Stone's association with Thomas Gilcrease and the Gilcrease collection began in 1946 and ended only with Stone's death in March, 1985.