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# Sooners Should Visit Cowboy Hall

**T**HE National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center at Oklahoma City is one of the nation's great museums. It attracts visitors from every other state and foreign countries. Yet hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans haven't seen it.

The annual Western Heritage Wrangler awards banquet last week was a gala affair which recognized the importance of the institution as an ongoing development of western art and history.

The complex of buildings atop Persimmon Hill on a 37-acre site at Northeast Expressway and Eastern Avenue has grown in 20 years from a notion into a cultural center that will have special meaning in our Bicentennial celebration.

Without the development of the west, the Atlantic Coast colonies might never have developed into a world power. Parts of the west once belonged to Spain, France, Mexico and Russia.

The idea of a Cowboy Hall of

Fame originated with Chester A. Reynolds, Kansas City manufacturer, after he had visited the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore. He said later: "This is a great memorial to one great cowboy. Why not have a hall of fame for all of the great men and women who helped to build the west?"

Reynolds did something about it. At his own expense, he visited governors of 17 western states (Alaska and Hawaii were still territories), and asked each of them to serve with two other appointees from their respective states on a board of trustees to establish such a hall of fame. All did so.

The Hall of Fame was a success from its opening day. Dean Krakel is the only director it has ever had. He selected a well-qualified staff of artists and curators to prepare the exhibits. Notable personalities of the west were selected by the trustees for places of honor and contributions of art and money came in.

At first, art was borrowed and some still is, but now the Hall of Fame owns millions of dollars worth of rare exhibits. Latest major addition was the gift of \$1.7 million worth of works by Charles M. Russell and Frederic Remington from Mr. and Mrs. Albert K. Mitchell of New Mexico.

On the way also is a 35-foot tall Italian-cast bronze of Buffalo Bill, which will stand taller than the building which houses the huge "End of the Trail" statue by Frazer. A Western Motion Picture Hall of Fame addition is to be built soon.

People from all over the world come to Oklahoma City to see this great museum. It seems strange that anyone who lives within easy driving distance would fail to visit this display of western heritage that is so close to all of us.