

# Quality To Be Considered in History

**T**HE FACT that something is old or odd does not necessarily give it historical value or make it a matter of broad public interest.

This obvious truth often appears to be overlooked in the movement to preserve places, things and relics for posterity, housing them in numerous museums over the state and nation.

Certainly, we need to look at our past now and then, if for no other reason than to reassess our progress and reestablish our directions in social, religious, political and other matters.

There may be a danger that we may create too many commissions and authorities to compete for possession of historic objects, leaving some with collections of artifacts with little historical meaning.

We have so many ways of preserving history that it may be desirable to record some of these things by reproductions and descriptions, instead of costly restoration and maintenance. Quality and significance, rather than quantity, should be considered first.

Oklahoma is not without historic points of interest. A map distributed

by the Oklahoma Restaurant Association locates 126 of them, with one or more in nearly every county. Others are being developed.

The State Fair of Oklahoma has moved a Victorian mansion from downtown to become a permanent exhibit at the Oklahoma City fairgrounds.

Another early-day house near the capitol has been remodeled as a home for the provost of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

The South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce is promoting the designation of Stockyards City as a historic area and development of a National Stockmen's Museum to attract tourists.

The old Oklahoma City Union Station has been remodeled for use as a landmark headquarters for an appliance company. A number of other historic buildings continue to earn their keep by daily use.

Recent debates between preservationists and developers over the fate of the Hales Building (now demolished) and the Melton Building in downtown Oklahoma City typify the conflicts that arise over whether we

should preserve history or make way for the future.

Many might say we can do both, but such efforts frequently leave outdated structures standing forlornly among modern buildings. Unless well maintained, they may become eyesores. Even brick, stone, marble and granite suffer from erosion as the years go by.

Promoters of museums and historic places sometimes seem to overlook the point that original cost may be the smallest part of the expense. A staff is needed to operate, provide services and protect the exhibits from vandals and thieves. Lack of funds can lead to destruction.

Nostalgia is a common trait. Old-timers like to recount their experiences. Most people celebrate anniversaries. Many enjoy paintings and photos of old barns, run down houses, deserted roads and even an old pair of sneakers, hanging them as art in homes and offices.

It's hard to concentrate on the future if you're living in the past.

Remember what the scriptures say about Lot's wife when she looked backward too long?