

Charles Ford Transcription

Chapter 01 - 0:46

Introduction

Announcer: Since the 1920s, Oklahoma's history has been captured by Oklahoma artists and on display in the Oklahoma State Capitol. In recent decades, the collection has expanded thanks to the efforts of State Senator Charles Ford. The State Senate Fine Arts Collection sponsors include citizens, companies and legislatures. Today more than 100 works of art are on display in our State Capitol, becoming a resource for those interested in the history and character of Oklahoma.

To see all of these fine works of art, you are encouraged to visit the Oklahoma State Capitol as you take pride in our state's history. Thirty portraits have been selected for your viewing here as Senator Charles Ford talks about their historical significance on VoicesofOklahoma.com

Chapter 02 - 8:46

The Senate Collection

John Erling: Today's date is August 3, 2010, and I am visiting here with Senator Charles Ford about the book, *The Senate Collection Art of the Oklahoma State Capital*.

Senator Ford, tell us when you were elected to the Oklahoma legislature.

Charles Ford: I was elected in 1966 and went to the House of Representatives for 14 years. And in 1981, I was elected to the Senate and served 24 years there, a total of 38 years in the-the legislature.

JE: You retired in what year?

CF: I retired in 2004.

JE: What we're talking about here is a book that represents much of the artwork in our state capital. Before you got involved in this, what sort of works of art were in our capital?

CF: When I came to the capital in 1966, basically there were what we called the pro patria paintings that were sponsored by Frank Phillips of Phillips Petroleum Corporation.

There were four large paintings over the main staircase that represent the memorial of the Oklahoma dead of War World I. Basically, that was it. We had a couple of paintings in the Supreme Court of the former members. They were pretty well locked inside the courtroom. We had 2 bronze pieces of Mr. Payne who was head of the Boomers back in 1880s trying to open up development for Oklahoma and one bust of a former governor. That was basically it.

JE: Your background in addition to your legislative experience was in the building business.

CF: Yes, in the building and architectural business. I have been a lover of art and antiques my whole life, I guess.

JE: You brought the experience of your love of the capital, because that's where you worked, and you were a collector of art. That all came together in this project.

CF: Yes, but it didn't all happen at one fell swoop like everybody else who shows up to try find the restrooms and so forth, but the capital was painted all one color. It hadn't been decorated. The ceiling in saucer dome over the rotunda half of the blue plaster had fallen out due to a leak in the roof. They repaired it, and it fell out again.

JE: We should say there was no dome on the building.

CF: There was no dome, but it was what we called a saucer dome over the rotunda, interior dome. The niches were the four magnificent paintings—Charles Banks Wilson. Those were places to set your old paper coffee cups and empty coke cans and throw your cigarettes on the floor and scratch it out with your foot. The marble looked yellow. I hardly looked like white marble. It was a pit, it really was.

JE: Talk us through what you have done here, the genesis of it.

CF: Governor Bellman, back in the 60s, got rid of all the artwork at the capital. The artwork that he got rid of was some stuffed animals, deer, beaver, and so forth. The hair was worn off. Holes were pouring out sawdust. He got rid of it and sent it over to the wildlife department. He got criticized by the press for getting rid of the artwork at the capital. It might have been his interest in getting art started at the capital. He is the one who pushed the department of capital improvement to start doing some artwork at the capital in which they commissioned Charles Banks Wilson to do the four famous portraits there on the rotunda, the 4th floor.

JE: What are those four paintings?

CF: They are *Sequoyah*, *Senator Robert Kerr*, *Jim Thorpe*, and *Will Rogers*.

JE: When does Senator Charles Ford get involved in this?

CF: Basically, he got involved over in the House. The House chamber was in pitiful array. We

decided at one time in the early 70s that it needed some restoration. The red shag carpet had duck tape taped over the rips and tears. We decided to get the press off of the floor. They set on the floor and could listen to your private conversation and report accordingly. We built a new student box, which allowed students to be lectured the chamber without interrupting the chamber. Then, on top of that, we put the press box, which is at the rear of the chamber in the House of Representative, and I was on the committee that evolved that. In fact, it was my idea to put the press box above the student box.

So, that was kind of the start of it. Then, the following year, we needed more conference rooms, and we added to a big area that was being used for a little of nothing, three conference rooms on 4 and one on 5. The Senate started the next year and did the same thing on the other side of the grand staircase. We hired an architect names Paul Meyer. Paul kept the integrity of the capital in building these conference rooms. We won several national awards for doing so.

This was kind of the start of the restoration of the capital because it had been abused pitifully so that every department that decided they wanted a new door. They just tore a new door in the wall, put in an aluminum door, and totally disregarded the integrity of the building. Took down bronze light fixtures and put up fluorescent lights because they were more efficient. This just went on and on, and finally, in the 80s, about 1982, we set up a capital preservation commission, and they began to stop what was going on. Then, as the money became available, they would restore certain common areas to the capital.

JE: How did you choose the portraits, and did funders help you immediately from the beginning?

CF: No. How I got started was, we had spent \$300,000 restoring our Senate lounge. It had been destroyed. They put a drop ceiling in for us, and lights, shag carpet, took all the marble off of the wall in the name of modernization. We decided to restore it back to it's original intent and did so. Unfortunately, we had nothing but some \$25 prints and some \$85 frames for artwork, and I thought the room needed more than that. I decided to contribute something, maybe get something started. I hired an artist names Wayne Cooper, who is from Depew, Oklahoma to paint a painting about Washington Irving when he came through Tulsa area in 1832. He had a friendly encounter with the Osage Indians. They would come into camp. They liked to drink coffee and do a little trading, whatever they could do. We depicted that in a large painting about 36" by 48".

Other Senators, once we dedicated that, thought, "My goodness, I'd kind of like to do that, something about my hometown historically." The next one was about Round Mountain over near Keystone Dam. Senator Ted Fisher did that one. Cooper also painted it. It kind of caught on from that point, and I formed a 501(c)(3) foundation to assist the other Senators in accomplishing similar things, and it just kind of blossomed and grew and

grew. Then, it became a passion to me that we went on beyond just what Senators could do, moving in some corporate sized paintings that were 6' by 10' gold leafed frames and so forth in the public areas, and it's continued to this day.

JE: The book that we're going to go through here, not all the picture, but we will go through many of them. Just tell us about the book and what these works of art represent.

CF: This book represents an exhibit that we did at Gilcrease Museum. I asked them if they had an interest in showing our artwork. They sent over 4 or 5 people to look at the artwork and were anxious to bring it to Gilcrease to show. We brought 81 pieces of fine art as well as 7 bronzes that we had produced as well as 26 hand-painted lithographs about the Indians that were produced in the 1820s and 1830s. This book represents a catalog, and I look at it as a catalog plus, because we not only talk about all the artwork that on display at Gilcrease in 2009 from August through October, but it also talks about the other works that we got involved in outside of the capital that the foundation, 501(c)(3) helped decorate some other public buildings in Mayes County over at the School of Math and Science and other places.

JE: Let's take a look.

Chapter 03 - 1:58

Mahongo at the court

John Erling: Let's go to page 16 of the book, *Art of the Oklahoma State Capital*. This is a piece of work known as *Mahongo at the Court of Charles X of France* and as done by Mike Wimmer. Charles, can you tell us about this portrait?

Charles Ford: This is another piece of art I gave myself. It's a very interesting story about Mahongo, which was a young Osage woman who had a little dance troupe. She stayed at the area of the Chouteau Encampment and Trading Post up in Northeastern Oklahoma. She attracted an individual that came through that was interested in taking aborigines to Europe to exploit them, you might say, and show them off... which was quite common to take aborigines to England and so forth.

He promised them that they were going to go see the Great White Father in Washington, D.C. But when they got off of the boat, they were in LaHavre, France and, of course, they were at the mercy of this guy. He took them all around and made money off of them, I'm sure. He got an audience with King Charles X in court. That's what we're depicting here which we think is the first Oklahoma woman that went to Europe.

It's quite an interesting story. The guy that took them over there, he got arrested and put in jail and left these people... there were five of them... on the streets of Paris not knowing any language or having an interpreter, wouldn't beg and they were eating out of garbage and so forth.

Lafayette found out about them. He had visited the Osage when he was in St. Louis so he paid their passage back to Washington, D.C. They finally got to meet the Great White Father. In fact, her portrait is painted and hangs in the National Portrait Gallery there with her child, which she had on the boat coming back. Her husband died of smallpox on the way back and Robert Henry or Judge Henry, who is now President of Oklahoma City University, was the model for Charles X.

Chapter 04 - 2:04

Pryor and Houston

John Erling: Now on page 17 of *the Senate Collection, Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol*, we have *Nathaniel Pryor and Sam Houston at Three Forks* by Mike Wimmer. Tell us this story.

Charles Ford: This is another painting by Mike Wimmer, who is a very excellent artist. He's a greater illustrator, does a lot of books. That's the main part of his business is illustrating books. Mike Wimmer is just excellent on any subject you want to throw at him.

This painting's about Nathaniel Pryor and Sam Houston at Three Forks. Three Forks is where the Verdigris, the Arkansas, and the Neosho River come together. This was the place where everything happened in pre-Oklahoma times. The Cherokee Nation, the Creek Nation, and the Choctaw Nation all came together at this place. Fort Gibson was the place was the place for the military outpost that went forward. The Osage Nation was moving out at this time, but Sam Houston lived there for three years after he left Tennessee, before he went to Texas.

Nathaniel Pryor was a sergeant on the Lewis and Clark expedition. He was the only enlisted person on the expedition that wasn't disciplined. He also was a lieutenant at the War of 1814 in New Orleans. He got a commission to be a trader and also was at Three Forks. This shows basically what a trader would do. Sam Houston, for instance, we show him in a Mackinaw. It said in the book that Sam, when he left, he sold his three slaves and a warehouse full of class a Mackinaws. You got to be an old person to know what a Mackinaw is. They're black and red checkered wool jackets. They were quite trading material of the period. We put him in one of those. It's just a great opportunity to honor those two people.

JE: And the dog?

CF: I think he's just a next-door neighbor of the artist dog.

JE: Who was this sponsored by?

CF: This is sponsored by Senator Kevin Easley.

Chapter 05 - 0:58**Green I. Currin**

John Erling: On page 27 I'm looking at a portrait of *Green Eye Currin*. This is in the book *Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol*. The artist here is Timothy Tyler.

Charles Ford: Timothy Tyler is a young man that went to high school, and I think he went to college down at Ada, Oklahoma, in that general area, who now lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The portrait is of Green Currin, the first black person to serve in the territorial legislature in 1889, which was the first session of the territorial government. He introduced some civil rights legislation that didn't get passed. Only served one term, but he was a very important person, and ended up on the regents to Langston University. He died in 1918.

It's sponsored by Mr. And Mrs. Russell Perry of Oklahoma City. Mr. Perry is a person of color and owns the Black Chronicle Newspaper, a couple of radio stations, as well as a banker in Oklahoma City.

Chapter 06 - 1:44**Andy Payne**

John Erling: Now we're turning to page 28 in the book *Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol*, and we come to *Andy Payne*, done by the artist, Christopher Nick. First of all, about Christopher Nick...

Charles Ford: Christopher Nick is a young man in Oklahoma City. He's originally from McAlester, struggling to try to make a living illustrating books and doing art work. He's just the nicest person to work with. In fact, all these artists are just wonderful to work with.

He painted this painting of Andy Payne, who was a Cherokee Indian, part Cherokee Indian, from Foyil, Oklahoma. He ran in what was called the Bunion Derby. He ran from California, from LA to New York City and won a \$25,000 prize in 1928. That was quite a bit of money in 1928. He paid off the family farm and later ran for public office, was the clerk to the Supreme Court. He was there for 24 years. Then he left when we made the office appointive in 1972... just an interesting person. I knew him personally, but he was quite a person business-wise. He took that money, as well as other monies, and ended up a very wealthy person.

JE: I was reading where he ran six miles an hour, so he ran a 10-minute mile, for those runners who want to compute that.

CF: And he didn't run in tennis shoes. He ran in Brogan shoes. He wore out three pairs of shoes in all. We depict him here running through his hometown of Foyil. There's only one building left in Foyil, and that's the old gas station that's shown there, and we've depicted that. It's sponsored by his family and Senator Sean Burrage of Claremore.

Chapter 07 - 2:42**Alice Robertson**

John Erling: From the book *Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol*, we're turning to page 33. Here we have a portrait of *Miss Alice Robertson*. Who was she, Charles?

Charles Ford: Alice Robertson was quite a woman. She was the daughter of a missionary at Tallahassee Oklahoma over in Wagner County. You would not understand what she did with her life. She was the first congresswoman to ever serve from Oklahoma. She was the first Republican to serve in the Congress. She was elected in 1920 and never got to vote for herself because women suffrage was voted that same election. She was elected as congresswoman, served only one term. She was the first person to chair the speakers chair in the history of the Congress.

She left during the Civil War and they came through and burnt the mission. The family came back and rebuilt the mission. Her mother translated the Bible into the Creek language. At 18 years old she went off east to raise money for the Presbyterian missions. A young national person, who's Assistant Secretary of the Interior, heard her speak about the plight of the Indians and he agreed with her. He became her very closest friend for many years. That was Teddy Roosevelt. When it came time to recruit cowboys for the Rough Riders, she recruited over 204.

Then after he became President, he appointed her postmistress. She was the first woman postmistress of a class 1 post office. That's a post office that has a Federal Court conjunctioned with it. She had a restaurant in Muskogee and during World War II the soldiers came through in the troop train. She'd take cookies-pass them out. She has such a great history of what she did. She died of cancer in 1932 in poverty.

She also was the mother of Kendall College, which later became Tulsa University of which she claimed she was a grandmother of Tulsa University.

JE: We have elementary schools named after her as well I see.

CF: Yes, there were two elementary schools and I had them over on the dedication of this painting. By the way, I did give this painting, sponsored it. I had the kids help dedicate the painting and unveil it. We made a giclee of the portrait and put it in the same frame that we put it in at the capitol and gave it to both schools.

JE: That's the Alice Roberts elementary school in Muskogee and in Tulsa.

CF: There's several books written about Miss Alice and if you're interested, you ought to read about her. She's quite a woman.

Chapter 08 - 1:00**Henry S. Johnston**

John Erling: Now we're looking at *Senator Henry S. Johnston*. This comes from page 34, *Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol*, and it's by Mike Wimmer.

Charles Ford: Henry S. Johnston was a senator. He was quite active in the constitutional convention that set up Oklahoma. He was the first President pro tempore of the state senate in 1907. He was from Perry, Oklahoma... quite an interesting guy. He later became Governor of the State of Oklahoma and was impeached. But the next election he ran for the senate again and came back and served four more years for the people who threw him out of office.

JE: Do we know why he was impeached?

CF: They just were in the mood to impeach somebody because they couldn't get to him to talk to him. He had an executive aid that protected him. That's the basic reason. Nobody really knows when you read the history of it. It's sponsored by our senator Robert Milacek of Waukomis. Robert passed away here just a couple of months ago.

Chapter 09 - 1:04**Bessie McColgin**

John Erling: Here's a portrait of *Representative Bessie S. McColgin* by Mike Wimmer, found on page 40. Tell us the story of Miss McColgin. Bessie is quite a gal. She was the first female elected to the House of Representatives. She lived way out in Roger Mills County. She had to catch three different trains and transfers twice in order to get to Oklahoma City. She had like seven children, but she was quite a gal.

Sponsor on that was Frank Lucas, congressman from the area and her family. She also later became postmistress of the Ridgeton town, or was earlier. A good example that this picture showed, we have bought a number of antique picture frames and we paint them in the style of the period that they would have been painted if they were painted during her lifetime. When you see it and you see the antique frame and the style of the painting, you think maybe this painting was painted during 1920. Well, it wasn't; it was painted four years ago.

Chapter 10 - 2:08**Houston B. TeeHee**

John Erling: Now we turn to page 42 of *Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol* and the portrait here is of *Houston Benge Teehee*. Why was he selected for this collection?

Charles Ford: Houston Benge Teehee, Houston B. Teehee, was a Cherokee over from Sequoyah County. He served as mayor over there and he served two terms in the Oklahoma House of Representatives. That alone would make him a very important person except that during the Woodrow Wilson years, from 1915 to 1919, he served in the Treasury Department as, what we'd call today, the Secretary of the Treasury, the political arm of the Treasury Department.

His signature appeared on all paper money during that period of time. His signature appeared on all the bonds that were sold during World War I. Always wondered and I never could figure out who his influence was to get him all the way to be appointed to this very important office in Washington D.C.

I first learned about him when I used to collect paper money when I was a young man. The real double story here that Chris Benge, who is the outgoing speaker of the house at this time—

JE: In 2010.

CF: I asked him, I said, is this a relative of yours? He says, I'm Cherokee but I don't keep track of that, but my dad does. If you'll call Glen, his father. I called Glen and gave him the information. He said, I don't know but I'll call you back shortly. He called me back that afternoon, says, Chris Benge's father, which is me, my father and my father and my grandfather sister was Houston B. Teehee's mother.

We got a double shot here of honoring the Speaker of the House's ancestor as well as Houston B. Teehee who was quite an important person. I don't know of anybody else from Oklahoma that served in a cabinet— well they do, one other, but not in this position in early. For a young Cherokee man, quite interesting to get all the way to Washington.

Sponsor on that one was the Cherokee Nation Tourism Department. That one hangs in the House lounge.

Chapter 11 - 1:05**Frank Frantz**

John Erling: Now from page 43 in *the Senate Collection*, we see this picture of *Frank Frantz—Rough Rider, and Territorial Governor* by Timothy Tyler.

Charles Ford: Yes, we've talked about Timothy and his work, but Frank Frantz was the last territorial governor before statehood. He ran for governor and was defeated. Of course, all the territorial governors except for one were Republicans because they were appointed by the president. Oklahoma was a Democrat state, basically a southern state at the time.

Frank Frantz was a lieutenant in the Rough Riders. His captain, as they charged up San Juan Hill, was killed immediately. Teddy Roosevelt immediately appointed him as the new captain and head of the company. We depict that, them charging San Juan Hill, with Teddy in the middle of it.

Because of his activity with the Rough Riders, Teddy Roosevelt ended up appointing him territorial governor of the state of Oklahoma. This painting was sponsored by Senator Patrick Anderson—the senator from Enid where the Frantz family is from.

Chapter 12 - 1:38**Admiral Crowe**

John Erling: Now we're looking at a portrait of *Admiral William Jay Crowe, Jr.* by Mike Wimmer. This is on page 44, *Art of the Oklahoma State Capital*.

Charles Ford: Admiral Crowe was a personal friend of mine that visited when he was ambassador to England a couple of times and he also sponsored a painting about the Battleship Oklahoma being attacked at Pearl Harbor. He was a sponsor of that painting.

But, Admiral Crowe was quite an individual. He went to school at OU. He was in the Naval ROTC there. He went to school one year and he ended up going to the Naval Academy.

Interesting was that every time he would come home he would visit the fraternity. Admiral Crowe came back and he didn't have a date for the dance and my friend had an obligation and he couldn't go to the dance, he said, well take my girlfriend and go because she likes to go to the fraternity dances. And he never gave her back, he married her.

But the Admiral was quite an important person. He was a four-star rank admiral, commander and chief of NATO forces in southern Europe and commander of the Pacific forces. He also, under President Reagan, was a chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and served as ambassador to the court of St. James in England.

He died just recently, a couple of years ago, just a very intelligent great guy and for a flatlander from Oklahoma to end up with all that is quite an achievement.

JE: And the sponsor on this?

CF: Senator Glenn Coffee, it was from his district.

Chapter 13 - 1:58

Will Rogers

John Erling: Now we're viewing a picture of "Oklahoma's favorite son," *Will Rogers*, and this is by Boris Gordon [found on page 46]. We haven't heard about Boris yet.

Charles Ford: Boris Gordon's been dead for thirty years. Boris Gordon was a very famous painter that did portraits in the US Capital. He did about eighteen portraits of speakers and pro tems of the Senate, that level of portraiture. He also did the five paintings that we have in the Supreme Court of the first five members of the court.

He did a number of other paintings in Oklahoma. He did one of Patrick Hurley who was Wilson Hurley's father, who was the Secretary of the Navy, I think, during the 20's and from Tulsa. He did this painting in 1931 of Will Rogers. It's reported that this was a painting that was done from life rather than from a photograph. I'm sure that Will Rogers didn't sit for that, probably did sketches. Other seems to think that's not a true story, but that's what Boris Gordon claimed.

JE: That it was from life.

CF: Yes, this is a painting that when I first went to the Senate used to hang in the lounge. All of the sudden it disappeared. It was loaned to Will Roger's Follies in Branson, Missouri, on a permanent loan basis. When we remodeled our Senate lounge and I started this program, I said well, let's go get the damned thing. So we went up and got it, brought it back.

JE: Was that difficult to retrieve it?

CF: No, it wasn't. No, it wasn't. I accused Joe Carter of stealing it, told him I was going to tell everybody that he stole it (laughs), so he went up and got it for us. He was the one responsible for going up there.

JE: And Joe Carter was the curator of the Will Rogers...

CF: He was the curator of the Will Rogers Memorial. But he was a good friend of our President pro tem at the time and convinced him that we needed to put it up there. It was in storage somewhere, and I thought such an important piece of art had ought to be brought back.

Chapter 14 - 1:00**Robertson S. Johnson**

John Erling: Now we're looking at a picture of *Colonel Robert S. Johnson*. We want to know the story about Mister Johnson [found on page 48].

Charles Ford: The artist is R.T. Foster. He is a illustrator and works in the Art Department, now retired, at Tinker Air Force Base. He does a lot of good military type paintings. We needed to do something for World War II. Robert S. Johnson was from Lawton Oklahoma. He was an individual that exceeded Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's 26 enemy planes down. When they did, they brought him back to the United States to do a War Bond Tour. He never made it back to the front. He shot down Germans when they had good planes and good pilots. Flew a B-47. The painting depicts exactly what he did and that was shooting down Germans as well as, if you look at the small detail of the painting, they bomb bridges and strife railroad trains and other important activities. It was sponsored by Tom and Hilary Clark of Tulsa.

Chapter 15 - 1:48**Elk Herd**

John Erling: Now we're looking at *Elk Herd in the Wichita Mountains* [found on page 71]. First of all, this is by Barbara Vaupel.

Charles Ford: Barbara Vaupel was just a lovely little artist. She lived in a singlewide trailer near Oat Malgey in Henryetta. She moved to Oklahoma from California so she could paint horses. She loved to paint horses. Also, in order to paint horses, she had to learn to paint a setting for them rather than just portraits of horses. She learned to paint scenery. She kind of self-taught, you might say.

I first saw her work, and I thought boy, she ought to fit somewhere in our program. So former state representative, Don McCorkle, wanted to sponsor a very major painting for the House of Representatives. This painting is 60 by 96 inches. Don McCorkle was originally from Lawton, Oklahoma, so this fit very well with what he wanted to do. This is about the elk herd in the Wichita Mountains just west of Lawton, Oklahoma.

We went down there and photographed this place. She wanted to paint it in spring time so she could show the wildflowers that are natural to that area. At that time, the elk would have their antlers in velvet because they'd just be growing. She said she had difficulty painting the elk. She had to paint this one elk that you see here about three times she said because it kept looking like a horse, since she had painted so many horses in her life. But she did such a beautiful job, she did three different paintings for us.

That's sponsored again by Don McCorkle. The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Preserve was established by Teddy Roosevelt.

JE: And many people from across the United States, having never been to Oklahoma, would have a hard time believing they're looking there at Oklahoma.

CF: Yep.

Chapter 16 - 1:40

Battle of Round Mountain

John Erling: This portrait is titled *Battle of Round Mountain* and it's by Wayne Cooper [found on pages 74-75].

Charles Ford: *Battle of Round Mountain*. This is the second painting that we did and this was sponsored by Senator Ted Fisher of Sapulpa. Ted wanted to do something about Creek County, and this was on the very edge of Creek County.

The battle of Round Mountain was a battle during the Civil War where Indians fought against Indians. Opothle-Yahola was the principal chief of the Creeks, and he was the loyalist to the Union. The Texas Rangers and another band of Creek Indians that had signed the treaties with the Confederacy all ended up fighting here at the battle of Round Mountain.

They left here and went to the Battle of Caving Banks and fought there, which is up on Bird Creek. Later, they were decimated and Opothle-Yahola went up into Kansas to get away from them, and I think later died up there.

It's quite a picture. Nobody knows exactly where this is. We had read the journals of the Texas Rangers. They talked about that it was a bend of a creek. These two round knolls and that there was a guy setting the prairie afire behind the troops, and so we tried to depict that the best we could.

These paintings, every one of them, we've spent anywhere from two to six months researching to make sure that we get everything just right, that we don't do something incorrectly, either as to costume or as to setting or to its subject matter that we're trying to depict.

Chapter 17 - 2:20**California Road**

John Erling: We're looking now at the *California Road* and this is by Wayne Cooper [found on page 79].

Charles Ford: Wayne Cooper was the first artist I used. He had done several large paintings for the Will Rogers Memorial. He's probably the best Western painter to do horses and cowboys and things of that nature that we have in the group of artists that do our paintings. *The California Road* was sponsored by a former senator, Joe McGraw, and his wife, Carol, of Tulsa.

The California Road was a very important road. People would come up the Arkansas River to Forge Smith, Arkansas. Then they would catch a stage or coach or traveling commercial wagons or whatever it was and travel across Oklahoma on the way to Santa Fe. Then from Santa Fe they would go on into California. It's very important. It's been depicted on the Canadian River at the mouth of the Little River, Edward's Trading Post, which is down there in Hughes County.

The California Road was active from the time of the gold strike in California until the railroads were completed in the 70s. It went through this place. Edward's Post, the daughter of Edward's married Jesse Chisholm. All these things kind of interconnect. Every time you read something about a location you find something else that you've already either read about or a person who came through and it just crisscrosses and all ties together in some kind of a web work.

Chisholm later had a trading post further up on the Canadian River, which was the basis for the Chisholm Trail. He never took any cattle on the Chisholm Trail. It was named after him because he had a trace, a road built, from his place on the Canadian River to Wichita to bring supplies down to trade with the Indians.

But anyway, back to this, there were several places we could paint this. One was at Rock Mary, which is another identification feature of Oklahoma or the Antelope Hills, which it went by. We thought this was the best location because there were military stationed here as well as a trading post and it was the last outpost between here and Santa Fe that you could buy supplies on the way to California.

Chapter 18 - 1:06**Cattle Trail**

John Erling: Now we're looking at *Great Western Cattle Trail—1890s* [found on page 81]. This is by Barbara Vaupel. Tell us about this picture.

Charles Ford: Barbara Vaupel, again, we talked about earlier. She's unfortunately passed away with cancer here about five years ago. The last of the great cattle trails was the Great Western, which was in Western Oklahoma and it went through Camargo and Vici and all the way up to Kansas. What this depicts is the cattle trail crossing the Canadian River near Camargo. The Indians are saying "We want five of your beefs to cross our lands and eat our grass." These were assets. About all they had was the grass. The old cowboy's saying "Well I'll give you two." The bargaining begins. Senator Robert M. Kerr, who passed away a couple years ago, was the sponsor of this painting. His district stopped on the other side of the river. Little town of Trail, which is still on the map, it's where the cowboys picked up their mail on the trail as well as sent out post on the trail.

Chapter 19 - 1:42**Magic of Petroleum**

John Erling: Now we're viewing *The Magic of Petroleum*. This is on page 83 of *The Senate Collection* book; this is by Wayne Cooper.

Charles Ford: This painting is sponsored by ONEOK, Inc. Of course it's a major producer of natural gas and petroleum in Oklahoma. There were three oil springs that were discovered when the Five Civilized Tribes arrived in Oklahoma. The shamans or the medicine men would gather this oil and use it for magical and medicinal purposes. It's showing the first use of petroleum in Oklahoma, which is important to Oklahoma. Except it's not an oil well; it's not something you drill for, although later they did drill. The Indians drilled and never did find oil that they could produce.

One of the springs that they had down near Ada, the Chickasaws advertised in the Fort Worth paper that we have this oil spring and this petroleum, and if you will come up and visit our spa it cures everything. It cured warts—it cured everything. I think the Indians spoke with a forked tongue about the magic of this petroleum that they were talking about.

It's quite an interesting story that oil just leaked out into the water. I'm always amazed at the problems in the Gulf. They talk about how toxic the oil is. They ought to talk to some guy on a drilling rig out here on the deck of that drilling rig and see how much oil he

gets all over him, if he feels like he's being intoxicated by this petroleum product.

JE: They had no idea what was happening here, and then later on Glenpool would be our earliest.

CF: Yes, and Nellie Johnston (Jane) was it up in Bartlesville.

Chapter 20 - 3:28

Ft. Smith Council

John Erling: Here we come to *Fort Smith counsel—1865* by Mike Wimmer [found on pages 84-85]. What is going on with all these people here?

Charles Ford: This painting's sponsored by Lilah B. Marshall and Paula Marshall of Tulsa's Bamapie family. This is a very important counsel meeting. There was no decisions made at this, but there's a lot of indications of what they did later. They brought in 11 Indian tribes that signed treatise with the confederacy. Which meant that they invalidated all of the treatise that they signed with the United States.

The purpose of this was to get them together and sign new treatise. In the process, they lost a lot of their lands because they signed with the confederacy. They lost a lot of uses of their lands. It was a signal to start moving towards statehood because if you recall, Oklahoma was the last territory or state to have a railroad because up until the Civil War, Indians could not sell or obligate any of their lands. They were held by the tribe itself and not by individuals.

This counsel meeting brought all those together at Fort Smith shortly after the Civil War. In fact, I think it was in September and October. September the 8th is what the text says. The important thing I thought in the whole meeting was and if you look at the painting, the action of the painting was that there's a map and Chief Alan Wright of the Choctaws is pointing to the map.

In response to the government official who said, it's about time that we start pulling all these tribes together into one territorial effort in order to become one. Alan Wright said if we do that we ought to name this country Oklahoma, which is a Choctaw word for Home of the Redman. That's where the first time that the word Oklahoma was ever used in any official function. That's the very purpose of telling the story about this counsel of which they lost the opportunity, they could lease the lands, they could sell it through permission of the Interior Department and started the movement towards the state of Oklahoma.

JE: Are there any people of modern day era that are depicted in this?

CF: This one also has Paul Marshall's portrait in there. He's next to Alan Wright. Alan Wright's depicted and there's a couple others in here. We have some Indians of note.

JE: When I look at this, is that Neal McCaleb in there?

CF: Yes, Neal's used twice. He's over here with grey hair, then you got a mustache over here is Alan Wright. By the way, Neal McCaleb's great, great, great uncle was at this peace conference.

JE: Neal McCaleb was...

CF: Transportation of Germany is also a minority leader in the House of Representatives.

JE: The only soldier in this scene.

CF: Well, he represented the military. There's another one back here. It was at the military buildings at Fort Smith and of course he had military in the back for security, I guess. Kelly Haney is pictured over here a couple of times. Mike Wimmer does not make up faces. He uses portraits in every one of his faces. Now he might alter it a little bit to give age or give period appearance, but he uses real faces. And everybody he uses is somebody that's been sat down and used their image.

Chapter 21 - 1:21

Medicine Bluff

John Erling: This portrait is on page 87 of the book we're touring *Art of the Oklahoma State Capital, The Senate Collection*. This is *Medicine Bluff at Ft. Sill 1870s*.

Charles Ford: Anybody who has served in the military at Fort Sill would know what Medicine Bluff is. Medicine Bluff is about a half a mile long. It runs to a peak and then falls off to a bluff and the prairie on the West. Fort Cobb for the day was in the wrong position because the Chickasaws and the Comanches were feuding. It wasn't in the right place. This Medicine Bluff, you could stand on top of the bluff and view fifteen miles in either direction and keep control of the action between the two Indian tribes that were feuding. Of course, the government gave the land to the Chickasaws and the Comanches felt it was encroaching into their area. That's the very purpose of the bluff as at Fort Sill is that location.

What it depicts is that they had a encampment of Cheyenne Arapahos that had been brought in. They're just going out to check on them, see if they need anything. Nothing confrontational. It's sponsored by two senators from the Lawton area—Senator Sam Helton and Senator Jim Maddox.

Chapter 22 - 1:52**Traffic Jam**

John Erling: Charles, what is this all about? *The Traffic Jam at Limestone Gap* [found on page 90]?

Charles Ford: Traffic Jam at Limestone Gap is sponsored by Senator Gene Stipe. It tells of the Texas road that went from Baxter Springs, Kansas down to Fort Worth. It was the earliest road that took cattle north to the market, and it also took commerce south to Texas because there weren't any railroads at that particular time. More cattle went north on this road than all the other trails in Oklahoma combined, primarily because it was there for many years. It was a branch that took off once they got to Muskogee and went up through Tulsa.

As the railroad moved west in Kansas, these trails followed the end of the trail. It was cheaper to take them that direction, and it's at what's called "Limestone Gap." If you've ever been down Highway 69, north of Stringtown and south of Kiowa, you go through a rock formation that's called "Gap," and that's where Reba McEntire went to grade school, by the way, but it's a very noticeable area.

Later, the MK&T Railroad went down that same route. Now, it's Highway 69 going down that same route through this same gap. In reading one of the journals of people who went through there, one of them was that when it got to the Limestone Creek, which goes through Gap, there was a bridge built there out of timber, and there was a Choctaw Indian sitting there charging a toll to cross that bridge. Why, this guy gave a half a bushel of oats to cross the bridge.

We kidded Gene Stipe, this is his first toll road built in his district back in the 1850s.

Chapter 23 - 1:38**Washington Irving**

John Erling: Now we come to this portrait of *Washington Irving Meeting the Osage* [found on page 90].

Charles Ford: The book *Tour of the Prairies* by Washington Irving, which is about his tour from Fort Gibson all the way out to Edmond, Oklahoma south to Norman and then return was quite a famous book that he wrote. It was very popular in Europe because Europe at that time, anything that had to do with aborigines they were excited about.

JE: Washington Irving would be known for the short stories, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*.

CF: Yes. It's the painting that I gave. It's the very first one that started this whole business of

artwork at the capital. It's just a vignette out of that book. The Indians liked to come into camp, visit, do some trading. The vignette shows other Indians off in the distance to the right. It shows the Dragoons that accompanied the tour, which Washington Irving kind of piggy backed on to because they were going out to try to settle the wars between the Pawnee's and the Osage. The Pawnee's were quite vicious at that particular time.

In reading the book, it's a wonderful book to read, there were 2 Indians sitting there and they started laughing. Washington Irving asked this interpreter what they laughed about and he said, "well, the Dragoon was talking to the Indians that we need to be brother and be one family and everything and this one Indian told the other Indian, well we better go out and steal their ponies before they make us brothers." But anyway, that's the first one that we started.

Chapter 24 - 2:48

Louisiana Purchase

John Erling: Now we come to this huge portrait. This is the *Ceremonial Transfer of Louisiana Purchase—1803* [found on pages 92-93]. Oklahoma was right in the middle of all that.

Charles Ford: Yes, Oklahoma is part of the Louisiana Purchase. The thing that we decided to use about it that you could make a painting about it was the transfer and that was the ceremonial transfer. The treaty's were signed in Paris and in Washington DC but the date it was determined that they would transfer, if you go to New Orleans and go to Jackson Square, you'll notice the old buildings on the north side of the square. The Cabildo—that building's still there. This transfer was done inside that building.

In fact, the room is still there. We went down there and took a picture of that room. They even had an inventory of all the furniture and everything that was in the room at the time of the transfer.

The transfer was basically a symbolic transfer because Louisiana Purchase, the only thing that was there was the city of New Orleans. There was no other development in the whole area. They transferred the city of New Orleans, the keys to the city of New Orleans over to the Americans. It depicts that.

Notables in the picture are the sponsors, Jane and Henry Primo, are just below Napoleon, in the picture. Then there's some prissy little fresh General over to the left and that's me. I work cheap.

JE: Behind the table there.

CF: Yes.

JE: Who's the man over here that's sleeping?

CF: I don't know. Mike does a great job of depicting these people. Most of them are people from Norman, Oklahoma. When he lived in Norman. I think my head's used down here at the bottom is two backs of the heads.

JE: With your hair slicked back.

CF: Changed my nose and shows my bald spot in one of them.

JE: Again, we would say he actually wanted to use people. Take your picture, I guess and then he'd paint from that. That's why he used modern day people.

CF: They talked about in the journals of the Damps Green Table Covering. Of course he gave the artist a lot of license and we had some portraits in there and some flags to give it some color. Makes a great depiction.

JE: About 15 million dollars paid for the Louisiana Purchase?

CF: Real cheap. Henry and Jane Primeaux were just absolutely excited about this. Of course, they're from New Orleans originally. He's French, of course. He's now in Oklahoma and this is home and he was glad to be involved in doing something to represent his family. I don't know of a sponsor that wasn't just totally excited about being involved.

JE: You can see them right below the picture on the wall. I guess that would be Napoleon up there.

CF: Yes, that's Napoleon up there. Probably wasn't there but it makes for the picture.

Chapter 25 - 1:59

101 Ranch

John Erling: On page 95 of the book *Art of the Oklahoma State Capital, The Senate Collection*, we have the very famous *101 Ranch* by Harold T. Holden [found on page 95]. I don't think we've talked about Harold.

Charles Ford: Harold Holden is one of our premiere artists in Oklahoma. He shows quite a bit at Prix de West in Oklahoma City, the Cowboy Hall of Fame as well as Gilcrease—his portraits, paintings and so forth. He's quite a bronze sculptor. He's done a lot of monumental bronzes throughout the state, really one of the top artists we have in the State of Oklahoma. He doesn't do much painting. I got him to do this particular painting because he really loves the 101 Ranch and its history.

We tried to show in the picture the Old White House and the commercial store, which are all gone now. We tried to show that the ranch had two purposes. They were a Western show, traveled Europe and throughout the United States as well as a working ranch. They had 120,000 acres at one time, leased from the Cherokees.

What we depict here is Bill Pickett who was a black cowboy who was featured with the Wild West show. He invented bulldogging. If you look here, he's approaching the cow

from the right side rather than the left side. They do it from the left side now, and the hazer is usually on the opposite side.

He invented it, and his way of bringing the bull down was to reach over and with his mouth, grab ahold of his snout or his lip and pull him over. I don't think too many of them use that technique today. We had his grandson, Bill Pickett's grandson at the dedication of the painting and looked just like Bill Pickett. That apple didn't fall very far from the tree, I can tell you that.

This was sponsored by Senator Paul Muegge of Tonkawa, which is pretty close to the ranch.

Chapter 26 - 1:53

April 29, 1889

John Erling: Now we come to *Oklahoma City—April 29th, 1889*, the famous date in our history. This is in page 96 of the book *Art of the Oklahoma State Capital*. What do we see here, Charles?

Charles Ford: Well, it's an imaginary painting of all their items in the painting that are fact. It picks seven days after the run of 1889. We wanted to show something about the run, but through common picture of horses, people on bicycles and all that, it was quite common and we wanted to show something a little different that we depicted Oklahoma City, what it might have looked like the activity going on. It shows lumber being hauled, train over there to the left. The only thing that was in Oklahoma City before the run was called Oklahoma Station and it was a little bitty post office that was made out of a chicken cope last depicted right there at the center on the left. A little hotel. We show the train stop of water, coal trains and steam trains and stop for water ever so often. Then there is a bridge tassel of the very road going across the North Canadian River. It's basically just to artist depiction of what might have been going on.

It is sponsored by former attorney general G.T. Blankenship and his wife Libby. Libby is a Warren of the Warren family in Chelsea and G.T. was also a state representative and minority floor leader and a house representative. This does hang in their lobby of the house representative.

JE: This is the most famous land run. There were other land runs, about seven others, I believe.

CF: Yes. They had some lotteries as well as runs. The unassigned lands consist of about 5 counties'. They have not assigned to any Indian tribe and that was the first run.

Chapter 27 - 1:54**Statehood**

John Erling: Now, we come to *President Teddy Roosevelt Signing Statehood Proclamation*.

Charles Ford: This is a very important thing about the absolute time of 10:16 am on November 16th, 1907. Teddy Roosevelt signed the proclamation making Oklahoma a state. Teddy Roosevelt expanded the White House to create the oval office and that area. This would've been what we call the day of the Roosevelt Room. One end of the room is a portrait of Theodore Roosevelt and on the other end is of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and, depending on who's in which end is over the main part of the room.

In order to not have his head down, Roosevelt signing something, there was a little incident that happened at this deal. A fellow from Enid, Oklahoma, Albert Hammer, who was a clerk at the land office, was the witness of the signing. When Teddy Roosevelt signed the proclamation, he used a blotter to blot his signature. Most people today don't know what blotters are. I tried to buy some, you can't buy the damn things. Anyway, so when he blotted it, his signature was in reverse on the blotter, and Albert Hammer said, "Mr. President, could I have the blotter for a souvenir?" and he's handing that blotter to Albert Hammer.

Mike Whimber has his own portrait in there. He's the reporter above the globe on the left. The painting's sponsored by Walt and Peggy Helmerich of Tulsa. Walt's picture is in the painting above Teddy Roosevelt. Now, he didn't know his portrait was going to be in there. I connived with Peggy to get a portrait of him. Could of had to put people in there. There was no picture taken of this ceremony at all. Anyway, we stuck it in there, though. He didn't know it until we unveiled it that his picture was in there. He was somewhat embarrassed about, but I'm sure he's proud of it, but he was put back by it at the time.

Chapter 28 - 2:00**S. W. Woodhouse**

John Erling: This is a picture of *S.W. Woodhouse at Lost City* [found on page 102].

Charles Ford: Mr. Woodhouse was a physician and a naturalist from Philadelphia. He came on the survey of the northern boundary of the Creek Nation, which doesn't follow any natural river or anything. In 1850 when they got to Sand Springs, they camped out there and they rock formation on the south side of the river near Chandler Park and all along that south side of the Arkansas River. He imagined those as being an old abandoned city. Lost City was termed at that time.

As a child, when I grew up in Tulsa that was always known as Lost City. We used to go there as Boy Scouts and hike and camp out in the rock formation because the Avery Drive on the road from Sand Springs on the south side of the river was no open. It wasn't opened until the late 50s, early 60s. They camped out here and this is an area of importance to the area of Sand Springs.

Woodhouse was a naturalist and he's the first one that identifies scissortail flycatcher as the Oklahoma bird. He also carried with him smallpox vaccine. I thought it was something invented around the turn of the century, 1900. It wasn't. It was invented in the 1700s. The Indian families would find out that he had vaccinations for smallpox, which was still decimating Indian cultures because they had no immunities to that type of disease. They bring the Indian kids into the camp and he would inoculate them against smallpox.

It was quite an interesting bit of history. In his journals that are in the Philadelphia Museum of Natural History, he has a drawing of these rock formations. That's what we've depicted here. It's sponsored by a Senator Nancy Riley of Tulsa and Sand Springs.

JE: That's the story of SW Woodhouse at Lost City.

Chapter 29 - 1:47

Pres. Theodore Roosevelt

John Erling: Now we're looking at a portrait of *President Theodore Roosevelt at Frederick, Oklahoma Territory* [found on page 102]. What's going on here?

Charles Ford: Teddy Roosevelt heard of a guy in Frederick who hunted wolves and caught wolves and coyotes with his bare hands, and Teddy says, "I've got to see this." Plus, the guy also fought with him at the Battle of San Juan Hill.

Another person, named Burt Bennett, was very influential with the President and brought him down to Frederick to visit with these individuals and see the action of the wolf hunt. They'd take these—and we show them over here on the right—Greyhounds, and they would chase the wolves until the wolves wore out. Soon as the wolves would get winded. He'd jump off his horse and grab them by the throat and catch them.

When Teddy Roosevelt was there, he got to see the Wichita Mountains and went back and declared the Wichita Mountains, a section of it, a wildlife preserve, and they brought back elk to the area. It was quite an influential opportunity.

There's a funny story. Senator Capps and his wife wanted to do something about Frederick and Snyder and the area where they were from. I said, "I'll go back and try to find some incident or something of historically and we'll be happy to do it." They came back and said, "We can't find a thing." There was one thing but my wife didn't think it was worth doing." I said, "What was that?"

He said, "Well Teddy Roosevelt visited Frederick." I said, "The President of the United States coming to your area is not important enough?" "Yeah, but my wife said he was a Republican. She didn't want to do it." (laughter) Anyway it's sponsored by Senator Capps and his wife Wanda, who is now deceased.

Chapter 30 - 2:36

Osage Treaty

John Erling: Now we come to page 105 in the *Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol* book. This is titled *The Osage Treaty of 1825*.

Charles Ford: The Osage Treaty of 1825 was a very, very important treaty with the Osage. It's a very large painting of 10 foot by 6 foot. It's sponsored by the Tulsa World and the Lorton family. When they started removing the Cherokees and the Creeks into Oklahoma area, Indian Territory, this land already was for the Osage, so they had to come in and sign a treaty to move the Osage up into Kansas because the Osage were quite upset that the Cherokees were moving into their area and their hunting grounds. They were quite fierce fighters and it was quite a problem.

William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame was the Indian Commissioner for west of the Mississippi in St. Louis. They had this treaty in St. Louis and it was signed by chief of the Osages and sixty great little chiefs. Claremont was the principal chief but it was signed by sixty other small chiefs. Was done in William Clark's museum that he had in his offices that he brought all this memorabilia back from the—the Lewis and Clark expedition.

It was witnessed by Chouteau, Pierre Chouteau, who ended up here of course. He was quite influential with the Osage. The Osage were very closely connected to the French. Of course the French were Catholic and if you study the Osage Nation it's one of the few Catholic Indian tribes in Indian lore, you might say. It was signed there and it's a great composition that Mike Wimmer put together.

They do not know where this was, the Missouri history people do not know where this was. They don't know what it looked like but I thought Mike did a great job of putting it together. We have the portrait of Jefferson over the mantle. I love the little vignette at the door where the dog and the boys are looking in there. They're wondering what is all those Indians doing in there. The Indian down here on the left, that's Chris Nick, who studied under Mike Wimmer. In fact, these images of the Indians, Mike used a vignette that Charles Banks Wilson did of a whole bunch of Indian portraits in one. Charles Banks was looking at this painting one day and he says, "Tell Mike that so and so up there was a wide receiver for the Minnesota Vikings." He recognized—Charles is not easy to fool.

Chapter 31 - 1:31**Code Talkers**

John Erling: Now we come to *the Comanche Code Talkers at Omaha Beach* [found on page 106]. Tell us how important they were to the war.

Charles Ford: World War II, there were twenty Comanche kids out of Lawton, Oklahoma, that were brought into the signal corps to work out a system where they would talk back and forth in the Comanche language, and the Germans couldn't figure out what the hell they were talking about. I mean, they didn't know what in the world was going on. Code talkers had to invent words. They didn't have a word for tank. They used the word turtle for tank, their word for turtle. Then airplane, they used eagle. All the military terms, they had to find something equal to it.

Charles Chibitty was the last of the code talkers living, and he lived in Tulsa. We visited with him and got copies of what the radios looked like. Omaha Beach was really a tough beach, but he said that it was just a wonderful place to be during the war. It was very important. This basically indicates part of the battle of Omaha Beach, sponsored by Senator Dunlap and the Phillips Petroleum Corporation.

JE: Charles Chibitty, has he passed on?

CF: Yes, he has.

John Erling: Yeah.

CF: He passed away a couple of years ago.

JE: Yeah.

CF: But it was interesting, when we dedicated the painting, we did it in the senate chamber. He's quite an exciting person. I told Charles, I said, "Well, you've got about three minutes, and we'll let you talk about code talkers." After about ten minutes, I figure he was into his Rotary speech. (laughs) But everybody was enjoying it.

Chapter 32 - 0:52**Last Farewell**

John Erling: So, now we're looking at *The Last Farewell of Will Rogers and Wiley Post* [found on page 107]. Tell us where this setting would be.

Charles Ford: This is in Anchorage, Alaska. It's sponsored by the Sisk Charitable Trust.

Charles Harris of Tulsa is the head of that trust and quite an aviation enthusiast himself.

There is a photograph called the last photograph or Will and Wiley. This is basically what it looks like. That photograph shows Will up on the wing of the plane and Wiley down on the dock talking to the kids. We've moved Wiley up to the plane, and they're kind of waving to the kids goodbye. We call it the last farewell before they crashed and killed both of them in August of 1935.

JE: A major day in the life of our nation.

CF: Yes, it was.

Chapter 33 - 4:22

In Conclusion

John Erling: Well, that brings to a close our tour through the book, *Art of the Oklahoma State Capitol: The Senate Collection*, which if you'll go to our book section here on VoicesofOklahoma.com, you'll see how you can purchase this book. While we have gone through 30 of them, in total there are how many in the book?

Charles Ford: There's eighty-one oil paintings, and then there's seven bronzes, and there's twenty-eight stone lithographs, hand-painted in the 1830s and '40s.

JE: All of these are displayed at the capitol, which has made our capitol, now with the dome, one of the most beautiful we have, I would imagine.

CF: Our capitol is not the most opulent. Our walls were supposed to have been of sandstone. We didn't have the money, so we have plaster scored like sandstone. A number of special features of the prominent rooms. For instance, our baluster in the senate was supposed to have been pierced marble, but it's plaster and faux marble painted. A lot of other features of the building were left out. When the capitol opened in the capitol building in 1917, we didn't even have the front steps yet. They had to fund that.

The legislature left the session appropriating a small amount of money and a capitol that was no more than two stories tall. Well, you look at the original plans, the fifth floor is the second story, the fourth floor is the first, and everything else is subfloors. (laughs) That's how the architect got around the legislation. Of course, they only met every other year then. By the time they got back into session, it was too late. The building was under construction.

JE: But your collection of artwork continues here in 2010.

CF: Yes, it does. We've done twelve paintings since the book was published, and we will continue to do things as long as we have people who are willing to sponsor and those proper subjects that include something about Oklahoma: its beauty, its history, its

persons. For instance, we started a series of portraits of all the pro tems of the senate. We've done five so far, and we've got a new pro tem coming up in January. We will do that one. At our last meeting of the board, we tried to figure out how to close this thing down. We haven't figured out how to do it yet.

JE: Well, we've learned a lot just by viewing these pictures, and so we hope that students of Oklahoma history and others will be encouraged to go to our further reading section to continue to learn about our great state. You, Senator Ford, are to be congratulated for what you've done. This is beyond your legislative work, a major, major accomplishment.

CF: Yes, none of this was assigned to me. This is something I just volunteered to do. Of course, I've been retired from the legislature for six years. We've probably done thirty-some paintings since that time, and we'll continue to do things. The main thing is, I hope this encourages people to go to the capitol, view these things where they sit, and see what a beautiful capitol we have. Again, it's not the most opulent, but the way it's decorated and the way it's adorned with art, there's none more beautiful than our state capitol today.

JE: We can emphasize again, that's a good point that you don't have to look at these in a book. You go to our state capitol to see these pictures. It's our capitol, but it's a museum, too, now.

CF: Matter of fact, when we took them down to go to the Gilcrease Museum, it sure looked bare. We'd gotten used to all this artwork, and everybody was complaining about it. We didn't take it down while the legislature was in session. We did it during the interim. But they've told me that they don't want to do that again, people at the capitol. In fact, I had one lady come to me with tears in her eyes. She says, "What's happened to the artwork?" I said, "Well, we've had it scheduled for six months to take to Tulsa." She said, "But you took all the artwork down from our senate lounge." I said, "Yes." She says, "I'm going to be married there next week, and all the artwork's gone." I felt so sorry for her, but there wasn't anything I could do about it.

JE: Here in August 2010, everything's been returned to the capitol, and it's all there to be seen. Thank you, Charles.

CF: Very good. Thank you.

Chapter 34 - 0:33**Conclusion**

Announcer: (music) This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories.

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