



WILL ROGERS *Memorial Dedicated*

NO SOONER had the news of the tragic death of Will Rogers been flashed to the world than friends and admirers of the Oklahoma humorist began plans to perpetuate his memory with a suitable memorial. The life and writings of this great man stand as his most lasting monument, but the millions who loved him and laughed with him wished to give concrete demonstration of the esteem in which he was universally held.

The Nation joined Oklahoma a few weeks ago in dedicating the Will Rogers Memorial, erected on a little knoll at the edge of Claremore, not far from the birth place of the State's most noted native son. The unpretentious memorial building follows the general style of a ranchhouse, familiar to Will Rogers in the days when he rode the plains as a cowboy. A bronze statue of Rogers, modeled by his friend, Jo Davidson, noted sculpture, stands just inside the main entrance. Behind the statue is a room in which many of Rogers' personal belongings will be displayed. These are now being collected and readied for permanent exhibit. In other rooms are his saddles and other mementoes of his early days.

The memorial program centered around the unveiling of the statue of Will Rogers. The President of the United States, the Governor of the State and

individuals of note spoke the words that rolled through the loudspeakers to the tremendous gathering on the hillside.

A few of the many tributes paid to the "world's greatest cowboy" follow:

President Roosevelt:

"This afternoon we pay grateful homage to the memory of a man who helped the nation to smile. And, after all, I doubt if there is among us a more useful citizen than the one who holds the secret of banishing gloom, of making tears give way to laughter, of supplanting desolation and despair with hope and courage. For hope and courage always go with a light heart.

"There was something infectious about his humor. His appeal went straight to the heart of the nation. * * * *

"From him we can learn anew the homely lesson that the way to make progress is to build on what we have, to believe that today is better than yesterday and that tomorrow will be better than either.

"Will Rogers deserves the gratitude of the nation and so it is fitting that the dedication of this memorial should be a national event, made so by the magic of radio. The American nation, to whose heart he brought gladness, will hold him in everlasting remembrance."

Fred Stone:

"All of us gathered together today by the power of radio are gathered more closely by the power of the great love and admiration in our hearts for a



man who was the friend of all. Whether we knew him personally, whether we knew him through his writing or his speaking as an actor, didn't matter so much. It was knowing him. And Will Rogers gave so much of himself that his physical presence was not necessary for one to say with great truth, "I'm a friend of Will Rogers."

"In your hearts and in mine a shrine already stands for Will. We do not need a memorial there. The memorial we build with our hands will be merely the gracious expression to coming generations that those things for which he stood, and for which we loved him, deserved a permanent acknowledgment beyond the power of voices.

"His simplicity was the simplicity of the immortals. His was the language of the heart, a vocabulary of homely phrases made eloquent by his tolerance and understanding."

Irvin S. Cobb:

"In a sense Will Rogers was one man who needed no tablets of bronze, no stately tributes in marble to keep his name alive after he went away from here to ride the everlasting ranges beyond the stars. For so long as there survive any of us who knew him our hearts will be throbbing monuments to Will Rogers' memory.

"And when we too all are gone we may safely depend upon it that the generation which follow after—our children, yes, and our children's children—will treasure as a precious heritage the thought that their fathers were the friends of this man, even though that category includes millions on millions who never met him in the flesh; never caught at first hand the shrewd, kindly twinkle in the squinted eye; never heard, save over the radio or from the sound machine, the accents of a whimsical Oklahoma drawl, nor saw, except upon the screen, the twisted grin on that homely weatherbeaten face of his. But to the last man and the last woman they will remember—and be the happier for having remembered—that in his day he walked amongst them and was as one of them.

"Why shouldn't his anchorage with America's immortals be secure? By his simplicity and his sanity and the charity of his understanding, by his philosophy which was searching without being cruel; by his comedy, so free as it was from smut or snobbishness; by his humor which was salty without being sour; by his delineations of savory wholesome native types; by his patriotism—not lip service merely but true devotion to our flag and what it stands for; by his unstinted service on behalf of suffering mankind in times of national disaster; by the example

The statue, unveiled November 4th, is one-sixth larger than life size.



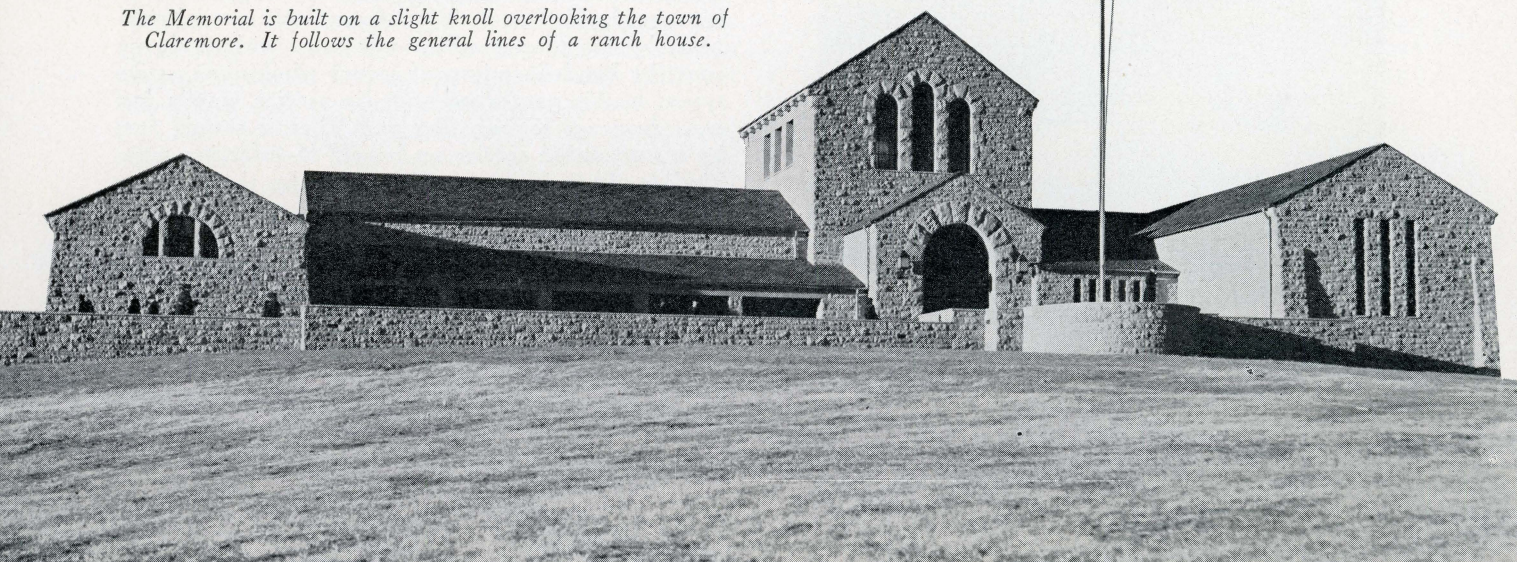
The birthplace of Will Rogers, near Claremore, Oklahoma.

he set, as father and husband, as actor and writer, as a citizen and a man he fixed the record of his fame in foundations firmer than granite, more enduring than basalt.

"Once, in an occasion somewhat similar to this I said of him—and now say it again and still mean it—that here was almost the only man I ever knew who went clear to the top, yet never used the necks of his friends for the rounds of the ladder he climbed on.

"So today, in honoring the spirit and the achievements of her dearest son, the people of his home state honor themselves, making manifest through the years to come their affection for and their pride in one who in our ignorance we call dead but by his deeds and his words lives on, offering this spontaneous testimony of gratitude to their own Will Rogers—he who made the whole world laugh and made the whole world love him!

The Memorial is built on a slight knoll overlooking the town of Claremore. It follows the general lines of a ranch house.



"Thank you for listening to me."

Jesse Jones:

"It is a high honor you have conferred upon me, Governor Marland, in asking me to address you and to join in dedicating this building to the memory of Oklahoma's illustrious son, Will Rogers.

"Planned by the architect to embody the friendliness of the old-time ranchhouse and built of native stone on land Will himself had purchased for the site of a home when came the time he would return to live with the people of his boyhood.

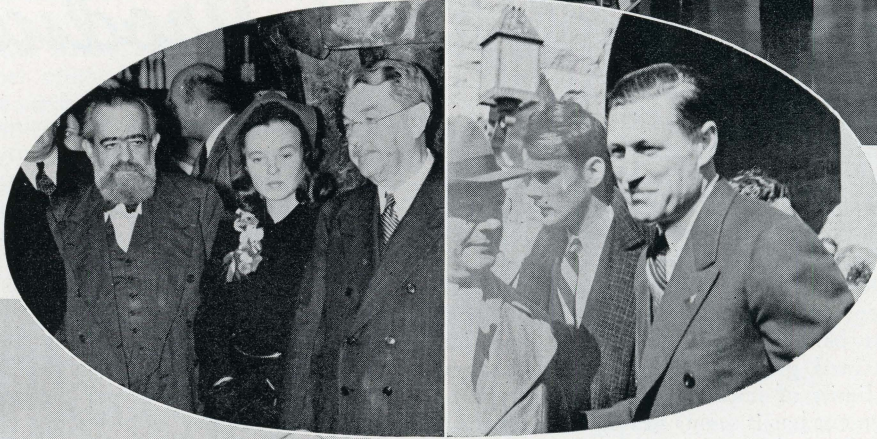
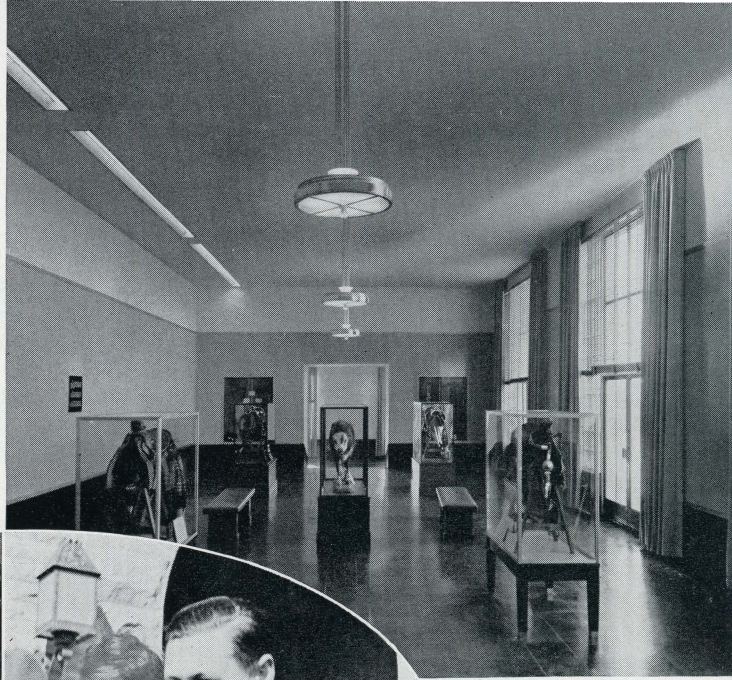
"Woodrow Wilson gives us the answer in a word. He said: 'There is not much discriminating use of individual words in America. We use the word "great" to describe anybody who has been talked about. It does not require character

to be great. It requires only size of achievement. You may throttle everybody else and get everything they own and be great. You may be great and be feared.'

"'But there is one word which we bestow with great discrimination, and that is the word "noble." You cannot be noble and not be loved. You cannot be noble and not serve somebody. You cannot be noble and spend every energy you have on yourself.'

"As floods of memories of Will Rogers come to me, I think of his nobility. I thought of it a few

Top: One of the rooms in the memorial showing saddles and other personal belongings of Will Rogers. Center, left: At the unveiling were the sculptor, Jo Davidson; Will Rogers' daughter, Mary; and Oklahoma's governor, E. W. Marland. Center, right: Joe Crosson, famous Alaskan flier, at the unveiling. Lower, part of the many thousands who attended.



weeks ago in Paris, when I stood before this impelling statue, this speaking likeness, which we have just unveiled, a replica of which will stand for all time in the Hall of Fame in our nation's capitol.

"Cowboys knew Will Rogers' nobility when they rode herd with him on pitch-black nights when the only light on the trackless plains was a flickering lantern on a far-away chuck wagon. They also knew that while he was one of them, he was thinking of something further on. A broader life.

"Men and women of the stage and screen tell of his nobility, of the generous things he did to help them.

"No philosopher, no character in American his-

tory had a better understanding of our country, the new world, than Will Rogers.

"I like to think of Will Rogers as continuing to grow, as being with us today. I like to believe that he is looking down on these proceedings. That there has been no break in his love and thought and care of those dear to him.

"I like to think of him as a young man, courting and winning the hand of Betty Blake across the line in Arkansas. I like to think what I know to be true, that Betty Blake saw in Will Rogers something more than a cowboy, something more than an actor, a comedian, or a wit.

"Will Rogers was a great humanitarian. I have known him to fly from city to city and state to state in drought or other disasters, pleading for help for the suffering, usually making a personal contribution at each appearance. Will Rogers never asked anyone to do that which he himself would not do willingly, and he set action to the word.

"We miss Rogers as we have missed no other man. We did not fully realize, while he was still with us, the tremendous service he rendered his country. Many times since he left, I have seen situations where Will Rogers' droll comments would have been of immense help.

"Here in the country of his birth and youth was begun the building of a character that was the foundation stone of his philosophy, his code of life."