

Will Rogers Research

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY / STILLWATER 74074



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

To: The Amon G. Carter Foundation
P. O. Box 1036
Fort Worth, Texas 76101

From: Theodore L. Agnew
Professor of History, and Director Will Rogers Research

Subject: Request for a grant to support The Will Rogers Papers Project

1. Name of Institution: Oklahoma State University
Dr. Robert B. Kamm, President
Whitehurst Hall, Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
Area Code 405 - FRontier 2-6211 Extension 201
2. Name of unit responsible for project: Office of Will Rogers Research
3. Name, title, address and telephone number of person to be in charge of project:
Dr. Theodore L. Agnew
Director, Will Rogers Research
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
Area Code 405 - FRontier 2-6211 Extension 581
4. Category of project: Research and Publication
5. Brief descriptive title of project for which support is sought:
The Will Rogers Papers Project
6. Brief analysis of the project and its objective:

Will Rogers (1879-1935) was a man of many careers. Born in Indian Territory of a prominent part-Cherokee family, he was informally schooled. A period of wanderlust began in his late teens, taking him to South America, South Africa, and Australia. His skill with a rope and other ranching abilities, plus a talent at entertaining, found him employed by wild west shows as a trick rider and roper. He began a running comment almost by accident, gradually adding it to his routine. Later, as in the Ziegfeld Follies, he was a successful stage comedian, perfecting his patter to

include sharp commentary on men and events of the day. About 1917 he commenced writing for newspapers. His articles took several forms. Some were parodies on other humorists' columns, others elaborated on his stage routines; some were a few dozen words long, others several thousand. Beginning in 1920, he commented pungently on the presidential nominating conventions. A weekly column received syndication by McNaught, beginning in 1922; a series of elaborate jokes appeared in 1925; a daily telegram commenced in 1926. Other Rogers products included longer magazine articles, advertising copy, speeches for the lecture tour and banquet circuit, and a radio commentary. Meanwhile his career had taken him to motion pictures, in which he starred both in silent and talking films. Selected writings appeared in six Rogers books.

Throughout his public life Rogers consistently played the role of a guileless yet clever "cowboy philosopher." "All I know is what I read in the papers," was a recurring first line, to be followed by rapid-fire comment on headline topics and people. Special targets were the nation's, and the world's, political and business leaders. Yet Rogers successfully strove to please the average middle-class American. Indeed, his characteristics mirrored theirs - his frankness, his naive air, his versatility, his energy, his generosity, his ideals. Thus his writings provide a continuous view of American aims and actions in the quarter century of his prominence. Many of them are strikingly applicable to the world since his death.

The Will Rogers Papers project intends, by providing a comprehensive scholarly edition of Rogers' writings, to serve scholars studying American and world history in the first four decades of the twentieth century. The project also aims through these columns to assist his fellow Americans, notably school and college students, to understand their nation, its contributions, and its possibilities. And it should also be a fitting tribute to a man whose death was widely mourned and whose memory is cherished in Oklahoma and throughout the United States.

7. Brief description of the writings:

Three decades of devoted work by Mrs. Paula McSpadden Love, Rogers' niece, and her husband, Robert W. Love, at the Will Rogers Memorial in Claremore, Oklahoma, have gathered nearly five thousand pieces of Rogers' writings, totaling more than two million words. While the collecting continues, the Loves have done much preliminary collating and verifying of the materials. A generation having elapsed since Rogers' death, it was determined in 1967 to arrange for editing and scholarly publication of the papers. A contract to this effect was therefore signed by the Will Rogers Memorial Commission, a state government agency, and Oklahoma State University, whereby the latter agreed "to edit all of the published and unpublished works, letters, documents, and other memorabilia pertaining to the late Will Rogers."

It is anticipated that The Will Rogers Papers will require fourteen volumes to complete, which at the rate of two volumes per year would commit Oklahoma State University to a project of at least nine years duration, including two years of editing before publication begins. The Daily Telegrams (1926-1935), which were in many ways his most characteristic pieces, and which brought him to the pinnacle of fame, will be the first volumes published.

8. Brief description of similar projects:

Collections of the writings of prominent literary and political leaders have been published for over a century, with gradually more rigorous standards of editing and scholarly presentation. Historical agencies, particularly the National Historical Publications Commission, and literary groups such as the Modern Language Association, have prescribed standards which are currently accepted as the best. The Will Rogers Papers will be published in conformity with these standards, with identification and documentation of places and persons mentioned, with scholarly introductions, footnotes, appendices, and indexes. Thus it should be authoritative and useful.

Oklahoma State University intends that The Will Rogers Papers will rank in quality with other series currently being produced, such as the Adams, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton Papers, and the writings of Whitman and Hawthorne.

9. Brief statement of the project's cost:

Oklahoma State University has located the project office in a commodious room in the new wing of the library, where the million-volume resources of the latter may most efficiently be utilized. Preliminary financing has been provided on a very modest scale, including part-time salaries of the editor, secretarial assistance, and certain research and travel expenses. Nevertheless the principal support of the project must be sought from outside agencies and sources.

BUDGET FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1, 1969 - JUNE 30, 1970 (Emphasis editing for first publication)

Salaries (editor 3/4 time), editorial assistance, secretarial assistance)	\$ 35,000.00
Office equipment	1,500.00
Office and research expense	10,000.00
Travel	3,000.00
Total	<hr/> \$ 49,500.00

Memorandum Page 4
Item Budget continued

ANNUAL BUDGET FOR PERIOD JULY 1, 1970 - JUNE 30, 1977 (Emphasis completion
of gathering material, with enlarged operations to
facilitate completion)

Salaries (editors, research assistance, secretarial assistance)	\$ 40,000.00
Office equipment	500.00
Office expense	12,500.00
Travel	3,000.00
	<hr/>
Total	\$ 56,000.00

Total cost of the project is thus estimated at \$497,500.00

10. Dates of project initiation and completion:

January 1968 to June 1977

Theodore L. Agnew

Theodore L. Agnew
Professor of History, and
Director, Will Rogers Research

Homer L. Knight

Homer L. Knight
Head History Department, and
Chairman, Advisory Committee
Will Rogers Project

Robert B. Kamm

Robert B. Kamm
President, Oklahoma State University

TLA:np