

“EMPTY CHAIRS, BROKEN LIVES”:
THE OKLAHOMA CITY NATIONAL MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers a description of the memorial and museum of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum; provides a critical analysis of the memorial process used to generate the institution; and, finally, documents a historical context that situates the bombing and the subsequent memorial within a rich and complicated urban history. The dissertation describes the constructed Memorial and the Memorial Museum in Oklahoma City, designed by Hans and Torrey Butzer and Sven Berg, built to honor the 168 people who died in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial is comprised of specific interventions that correspond with the particular identities of social groups affected by the bombing, including survivors, victims, children, and rescuers. I argue that these interventions – the Gates of Time, the Survivor's Wall, the Field of Empty Chairs, the Reflecting Pool, the Rescuer's Orchard, the Children's Area and the Survivor's Tree – form a memorial circuit, intended to be experienced through bodily engagement with the series of stations by a visitor.

The Museum relies on re-enactment in order for a visitor to understand the traumatic experiences encountered by the people within the Murrah Building at the time of the bombing. The Museum highlights the generosity and courage exemplified by the people of Oklahoma in the immediate aftermath of the bombing during rescue and recovery operations - what came to be known and celebrated as "The Oklahoma Standard." I argue that the Memorial and the Museum work in tandem. A visitor is encouraged to "experience the museum," where the exhibit strategies simulate the trauma experienced by the original victims. In turn, they are then encouraged to "visit the memorial," where they are soothed by the tranquil setting of the Butzer's design, an example of how nature is regarded as a restorative agent. The dissertation details and critically analyzes the memorial process including the initial public survey, the competition brief, the architectural competition, and the controversy that led to the firing of the competition advisor, Paul Sperigeren. This process began within days of the bombing, when a call for a memorial was put forward. The rush to memorialize was an attempt to provide psychological triage in the immediate aftermath of the destruction. It forestalled a sustained examination of the event and its possible meanings. It also had the effect of privileging the voices of victims and family members who had lost loved ones. Great deference was shown to the victims and family members throughout the memorial process, culminating in family members being the final arbiters of the memorial design competition. The Butzer's design, with its distinctive element of 168 chairs, supplied family members with a specific location to interact with their lost loved one by leaving mementoes - the simple markers of the domestic sphere function as an example of what Kenneth Foote has called sanctification. Furthermore, the Reflecting Pool offers a tranquil, therapeutic space. The success of the Butzers' design can be traced back to the results of the original survey about people wanted "to feel and experience."

Finally, the dissertation charts the history of the built environment of Oklahoma City from its founding in 1889 through to the dedication of the Memorial Museum in 2001. In addition, it traces the history of the site of the Murrah Building and the subsequent memorial grounds. This history includes a discussion of I.M. Pei's 1964 Master Plan for Oklahoma City. The urban analysis reveals that the implementation of Pei's urban renewal plan was piecemeal, where parts of the downtown were demolished faster than his vision could be constructed, leaving a large

swath of undeveloped, and empty lots within the heart of the city. After the bombing in 1995, leaving the site of the decimated Murrah building as a urban void was not an option given the citizens' frustration with the glacial progress of the implementation of I.M. Pei's plan. The bombing put to rest longstanding political differences and allowed the city to finally spend tax revenue it had been collecting for two years to fund urban infrastructure. In addition, the bombing provided the city with a national identity, one exemplified by the Oklahoma Standard, which became a civic brand. This historical contextualization is significant for understanding the Oklahoma City memorial because it helps reveal the economic and political realities that were in play at the time of the bombing and throughout the truncated memorial process. In a sense, the Memorial Museum was part of a longer-term effort of civic boosterism.

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INTRODUCTION

On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh parked a Ryder rental truck in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, lit the fuse of a 4800 lb homemade bomb (a concoction of diesel fuel and fertilizer) and walked away. The resulting explosion destroyed the federal building as well as two other structures nearby and caused the death of 168 people. The United States had experienced another terrorist attack just two years prior in 1993 with the World Trade Center Bombing in New York City, and the bombing in Oklahoma City was almost immediately portrayed as a fundamental strike against the nation *itself*. In provocative headlines and story titles, newspapers invoked notions of regional simplicity, tranquility and provincialism to alarm their readers and viewers. The CBS television network broadcast their news updates regarding the bombing under the moniker “Terror in the Heartland.” The effect that such reporting had was to increase public anxiety, implying that if a relatively small and homogenous American city such as Oklahoma City could be selected as the site for an attack, nowhere in America was safe.

The Oklahoma City National Memorial was formally opened to the public just five years later. President Bill Clinton dedicated the “Outdoor Symbolic Memorial” on April 19, 2000, the fifth anniversary of the bombing. A Memorial Museum was later dedicated by President George W. Bush on February 19, 2001. The extraordinarily short span of time between the catalyst and the memorial did not go unnoticed. Cultural geographer Kenneth E. Foote, author of *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, remarked upon the speed with which this major new national memorial was constructed: “It seemed to appear too quickly and on too grand of a scale for a site associated with mass murder and terrorism and of such potentially

equivocal meaning — that is, what would drive an apparently normal middle class American to attack hundreds of innocent civilians?”¹

This dissertation explores the commemorative process in Oklahoma City, beginning with an initial survey conducted by the Oklahoma City Memorial Trust, followed by the establishment of an international competition for the design of the memorial and, ultimately, the construction of the memorial designed by Hans and Torrey Butzer and Sven Berg. In chronicling the compressed time frame of the commemorative process, I examine economic, political and social factors that were at work in the formation of the memorial complex, which ultimately included a Memorial Museum. The speed with which the memorial complex was established was a function of social and economic necessity and pertains to the determinative role that the victims and family members played throughout the memorial process in Oklahoma City. Speed was deemed necessary in order to privilege the voices of victims and family members, who were recovering from the trauma of the experience and grieving the loss of their loved ones. Just at a time when families and individuals were experiencing painful reminders of their recent losses, they were also being called upon by civic leaders for their thoughts about what should be remembered and how this could be accomplished. Family members insisted on their continuing role in selecting the memorial design, which eventually led them into an adversarial relationship with the original architectural competition advisor. The privileged role of the grieving family members directly influenced the design and function of the memorial. In this way the Oklahoma memorial competition was unlike the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial competition where the veterans insisted upon an all professional jury of designers and architects to select the winning entry, hoping that the jury’s selection would result in a memorial worthy of the lives that it remembers. The

¹ Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. 338. Writing before 9/11, Foote saw sites of mass murder as inherent sites of shame, places that would be intentionally erased and forgotten from social memory.

presence of veterans as part of the jury, it was believed, could result in preferential treatment, with the architects and designers deferring to the veteran's selections. In Oklahoma City, the emphasis on the personal grief of living individuals and the privileging to the victims and family members in the process led to a de-politicization of the memorial and museum in the sense that there was no exploration of what the bombing meant, the political perspective that prompted it or the larger cultural context.

To provide some of that larger context, this dissertation also offers a brief history of Oklahoma City and documents the steady decline of the urban core from the late nineteen fifties onward. This malaise was still palpable at the time of the bombing, and I posit that the construction of the memorial complex contributed to and was an extension of a larger downtown revitalization effort. The establishment of the memorial complex was, in effect, an additional urban infrastructure project that was heavily subsidized by the Federal and State governments because of the political nature of the event. Yet the event itself was framed in personal rather than political terms. "The Oklahoma Standard," a term that rescue teams from around the United States used to describe the generosity that was shown to them in 1995, soon came to define the identity of the wounded city. It was a branding that simultaneously celebrated the pioneering spirit of the people of Oklahoma *and* distracted the nation's attention from the bombers' political motivations.

The dissertation also closely examines the proposed and built work of the memorial complex, providing a detailed description of the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial (which I will refer to as the Memorial) as well the Memorial Museum (Museum). I review the finalists' submissions and reflect upon certain prevalent themes, especially the reliance on using nature as a restorative agent to "heal" the traumatized citizens of the city. The insistence on providing a specific

destination for each of the particular social groups affected – for instance the Survivor’s Tree and the Rescuer’s Orchard – was lauded at the time as inherently democratic, but at the same time the separated memorial locations for each social group, seems to form a *pastiche*. The narrative that the memorial complex tells about the event and the process celebrates individual and collective triumphs over adversity. By design, it focuses on an aftermath of healing and hope rather than demanding a nuanced understanding of what actually *caused* the tragedy. This examination of the commemorative process, evolution and final form of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum reveals the complex relationship of trauma, civic pride, violence and the urban form in commemorative contexts.

Recent scholarship on memorials

Commemorative sites define and sustain a society’s collective memory, exerting an influence on how past events are narrated, perceived and experienced.⁴ Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a reinvigorated scholarly interest has focused on locations of commemoration and memorialization. Such works as Kirk Savages’ *Monument Wars:*

Washington, D.C., The National Mall, and The Transformation of the Memorial Landscape

(2011), Robert Bevan’s *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (2006), Terry Smith’s

The Architecture of Aftermath (2006), Alison Landsberg’s *Prosthetic Memory: The*

⁴ Maurice Halbwachs refers to these locations (and others) as *landmarks*: “It is through a series of reflections that we have the impression of passing from one object to another and from one event to another as if we think of the object and its exterior aspects, of the event and of its place in time and space, at the same time we think of their nature and significance.” From *On Collective Memory*, ed. and translated by Lewis A. Coser (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992), p. 175. Benedict Anderson equates sites like cenotaphs and the tombs of Unknown Soldiers with representing “ghostly *national* imaginings.” See *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso Press, London, 1983), p. 17. Paul Connerton notes the importance of the public ritual on specific dates and anniversaries — he refers to such public rituals as the “rhetoric of re-enactment,” as “under the conditions of modernity the celebration of recurrence can never be anything more than a compensatory strategy, because the very principle of modernity itself denies the idea of life as a structure of celebrated recurrence. It denies credence to the thought that the life of an individual or a community either can or should derive its value from acts of consciously performed recall, from the reliving of the prototypical.” See Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), p. 64.

Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture (2004), Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer's (eds.) *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Spaces* (2004), Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin's *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade* (2003), and Jenny Edkins' *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (2003) are just a few of the titles released within the last decade dealing with memorials, trauma, and the built environment. (See bibliography).

Pierre Nora's now famous essay, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*" in *Representations* (1989), informs the scholarly interest in memory. Nora argued that, "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory."⁵ In other words, the monument, museum or archive is necessary as a substitute for "real memory," which for Nora is embodied in cultural practices. In the modern world of abstraction, memories have to be consciously *made*. The need for memorialization is a product of modernity. In the name of efficiency, modernity has all but erased social relations within communities, and memorials can be seen as an attempt to reestablish those weakened social bonds.⁶

Despite the enduring interest in the subject of memorials, monuments, memory and commemoration, there is often conceptual slippage caused by linguistic convenience. I find the

⁵ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, (Spring 1989), p. 7. Nora later published his thoughts in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* with a foreword by Lawrence D. Kritzman, and translated by Arthur Goldhammer. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

⁶ Nora pointed to the study of peasant culture, which used to be the embodiment of collective memory, the "quintessential repository" as he calls it, at a time when industrialization was rapidly hitting its zenith. For Nora, "real memory" is an embodied practice, inherently communal and unmodified by interpretation or intervention, as it is fundamentally personal to the participants themselves. Nora indicates that history is a ceaseless activity of the present concerned with the "reorganization of the past," and that it is "the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer." In effect, Nora condemns historians and their methodologies as being part of the forces that have disrupted and effectively destroyed social, embodied memory (7). One commentator has noted that for Nora, "... memory was an archaic mode of being that had been devastated by rationalization." See Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse." *Representations* 69, Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering (Winter 2000), p. 127.

distinctions put forward by Foote in *Shadowed Ground* insightful. For Foote, *commemoration* operates as an umbrella term and indicates a formal hierarchy comprised of four distinct levels of historical engagement and treatment of sites. The highest form of commemoration (in terms of its symbolic value within a society) is that of *sanctification*, which elevates an everyday location to that of a “sacred” place. As Foote makes the point, the sanctified place is “a site set apart from its surroundings and dedicated to the memory of an event, person, or group. Sanctification almost always involves the construction of a durable marker, either some sort of monument or memorial or a garden or a park, or building that is intended to be maintained in perpetuity.”⁷ In this dissertation, I focus upon the commemorative level of sanctification caused by tragedy (usually the loss of life that occurred upon a site), rather than the elevation of a site because of historical or symbolic importance.⁸ In order of social importance and practice, the next levels of commemoration that Foote mentions are: *designation*, an acknowledgement, usually through signage, that a historically significant event occurred at this particular place; *rectification*, a corrective process that attempts to transform a site normally associated with tragedy with a new, and often unrelated use; and, finally, *obliteration*, the erasure of any trace of past usage, usually associated with sites connected to mass murder or sites of shame, encouraging people to forget what occurred there.⁹ These memorial categories are useful for how they acknowledge the variety of commemorative strategies and the different levels of social respect accorded to sites. I will use the term “commemoration” in the broadest sense, following Foote. However, Foote’s categories as conceptual distinctions begin to break down when applied to the memorial complex

⁷ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, p. 8.

⁸ For instance the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. possesses a level of sanctification because it was dedicated to honor the memory of the sixteenth President, Abraham Lincoln, who was assassinated during his first term of office. The site upon which the memorial is located is reclaimed land from the Potomac River, and at the time of the memorial’s construction, possessed no noteworthy history that would warrant such commemorative treatment.

⁹ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, pp. 16 – 27.

in Oklahoma City. Foote's surprise (mentioned above) that a memorial would be built to honor the site of mass murder, stems in part from his sense that such a site would more likely lead to the commemorative strategy of *obliteration*. As my analysis will show, in Oklahoma City commemoration entailed aspects of rectification as well as erasure and obliteration, all in response to the call to remember. What Foote has underestimated in his treatment of commemorative strategies is the power of nationalism, civic boosterism and how a memorial can be a part of economic redevelopment.

The scholarly interest in memory and memorials, as traced above, has also led to the emergence of a new institutional category, namely the *memorial museum*. Paul Williams has traced this phenomenon in *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (2007). He defines a memorial museum as a "specific kind of museum, dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind."¹⁰ Williams analyzes some of the recent practices and strategies of this new type of institution.¹¹ These include the exhibition of emotionally charged images and objects, the proximate relationship of the location of the museum to its site of tragedy, the expanded role of personal testimony against a historical or interpreted narrative, and the role of the visitor "directly situated in relation to the event itself."¹² The memorial museum seems to allow for both the primacy of personal narrative (the lived experience of memory) and the larger reconstruction of history through the interpretative act of sifting through the past to produce historical narratives. In effect, memorial museums operate under the assumption that they can combine the best qualities of memorials (in the sense of

¹⁰ Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Berg Press, New York and Oxford, 2007), p. 8.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 190.

providing a meaningful social location for remembering) and of museums (as institutions which interpret and narrate history).

Williams has observed that the memorial museum is premised on an inherent contradiction:

A memorial is seen to be, if not apolitical, at least safe in the refuge of history. This is largely because we recognize that honor will accrue to most people — no matter their actual worldly deeds — simply because an honest evaluation of the dead is normally seen as disrespectful. A history *museum*, by contrast, is presumed to be concerned with interpretation, contextualization and critique. The coalescing of the two suggests that there is an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts.¹³

Williams' summation, that memorial museums act as a "moral framework" for their visitors while providing additional "context," is aspirational, a hoped-for outcome of the memorial museum. In reality, however, the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum relies upon engagement, reenactment and ultimately a kind of entertainment for the paying visitor. It is unclear what moral framework is constructed or whether there is any moral engagement of the visitor at all. The use of multimedia displays that include personal testimonies as well as video and audio narratives are carefully arranged to establish the *authenticity* of a particular moment and to create a personal connection to the event. These "sound bites of history" are an effective way of collapsing complex events into understandable and even visceral moments for the museum patron. For example, one of the first exhibits at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is a reconstruction of a meeting room where, once the visitor is seated, an audiotape of a water resource board meeting taking place on April 19, 1995 is played. The clerk's tape recorder documents the explosion of the truck bomb, and when the sound of the bomb's detonation occurs, the lights are extinguished within the room, and a flash of light reveals the

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 8.

images of the 168 people lost, as the sounds of screams and the resulting chaos is left playing on the tape.¹⁴ The effect is palpable, but what does one learn from this?

Memorial Museums have become extremely effective in creating rich sensory environments to provide a visitor with an affecting experience; they offer a mirage of tragedy, one that encourages a visitor to identify and imagine himself or herself as a victim. This harnessing of the visitors' emotional response may be strategically necessary for such sites to remain meaningful and fiscally viable. The contemporary financial realities that face museums and sites of commemoration are severe, and as civic sponsorship of such institutions declines, directors and curators are faced with limited choices for either generating revenue or for cutting costs. The entrepreneurial model for such institutions that are supposed to be archives of knowledge for places of tragedy that are culturally and socially significant, has yielded to a "user pay" system in order to keep the doors open.

Three recent scholarly works address memorialization in the United States and discuss the memorial in Oklahoma City specifically. Edward T. Linenthal, Professor of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University, has devoted much of his career to looking at commemoration in American culture, previously examining battlefields, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and the general topic of American sacred space. In *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City and American Memory* (2001) Linenthal offers a description of the memorial process used in Oklahoma City – a sympathetic treatment and even auditory account, celebrating their process as inherently democratic and grass-roots. Marita Sturken, Professor of Culture and Communication at New York University, explores the function of kitsch and material culture in *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City*

¹⁴ Notes from personal visitation, June 2008.

to *Ground Zero* (2007). Sturken is interested in the valorization of the everyday and the expression of identity through material objects in the face of tragic events. Her analysis of consumer culture highlights the desire for a sustained sense of innocence and ultimately the de-politicization of the events memorialized. Yet in focusing upon mementoes and particular objects left at a memorial, Sturken's treatment ignores the history and power of the larger commemorative site. In *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (2010), Erika Doss, Professor of American Studies at the University of Notre Dame, diagnoses a cultural anxiety and preoccupation with the creation and reinforcement of sites of commemoration. She notes particular emotive responses such as grief, fear, gratitude, shame and anger as the underlying cause of contemporary American commemorative practices. Specifically in regard to terrorism memorials such as the one in Oklahoma City, Doss argues that:

Terrorism memorials are the primary public sites where the nation remembers the victims of violent acts of extremism. For family members and survivors, they are sacred sites of bereavement and, often, burial. For politicians, they are ideological rallying grounds. For millions of tourists, they are "authentic" destinations marked by tragic death and traumatic loss. Bearing witness to unfathomable death, these memorials serve to offset the threat and fear of terrorism and its rupturing of American invincibility by reproducing national narratives of social stability, unity, and endurance. The minimalist aesthetic adopted by many contemporary terrorism memorials helps to manage these security narratives by simultaneously expressing and containing affective conditions of fear.¹⁵

Doss's analysis of how the politics of affect operate in American memorialization is informative and her account is compelling at the broad level of cultural criticism. She argues that memorials offer social stability and restore social order under presumed national norms and expressions of national identity. However, in painting the picture of American memorialization with such broad strokes, a lot of important details are left out and her analysis is incomplete. The close examination of the memorialization process that I offer here confirms and deepens the insights of

¹⁵ Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 122-123.

Doss. My project builds on these three works (Linenthal, Sturken and Doss) to investigate the Oklahoma City Memorial where notions of national identity are asserted and reinforced.

Dissertation structure

Chapter One addresses the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial through a detailed description of its component parts as well as an overview of scholars' reactions to the memorial. I suggest that a visitor is invited to experience the component parts as a memorial circuit. I offer my critique of each part and show how they work together as a whole and yet have the effect of being a *pastiche*. Chapter Two provides a detailed site history of Oklahoma City dating back to the formation of the city in 1889 and charts important stages of development including the 1964 urban renewal plan provided by I.M. Pei. This historical context provided in this chapter reveals that the downtown in Oklahoma City had suffered multiple traumas over the decades through the process of urban renewal, where demolition often outpaced construction. It also suggests some of the political and economic pressures that accelerated the memorial process in 1995.

Chapter Three traces and examines the rushed memorial process used in Oklahoma City and indicates how an informal memorial survey ultimately shaped the international design competition brief, and thus was determinative of the final design. This chapter also shows the privileged role that victims and family members played throughout the memorial process, which led to a conflicted relationship with the original competition advisor, Paul Spereigeren. In this chapter, I also explore the political dimensions of the memorial process. Out of their desire to create a nationally recognized memorial, the city lobbied Congress and ultimately was successful in securing for the memorial the status of being a unit of the National Park Service.

Chapter Four examines the other four finalists' designs, tracing similar design strategies and showing in particular how nature was understood to act as a restorative agent (an aspect that is significant within the built work). With one exception, the finalists were all therapeutic in tone and therefore function. The last chapter traces a visitor's experience of reenactment within the memorial museum. It highlights the progressive narrative put forward by the Memorial Foundation, one that celebrates the "Oklahoma Standard" while erasing the larger political context of the perpetrators and their act. It also shows how the memorial museum circumscribes the bombing as being *unique* (the worst terrorist attack in the history of the United States at that time) while at the same time *representational* – the attack could happen anywhere in America.

CHAPTER 1

THE OUTDOOR SYMBOLIC MEMORIAL

Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial in Oklahoma City, as it is called by the Memorial Foundation, and analyzes the scholarly and professional reception of the memorial upon completion. Beyond the necessary description, the chapter examines the intellectual and cultural framework that situated the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial within the larger, contemporary discourse concerning memorials and memorialization in American culture. I argue that the discrete, commemorative elements present within the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial combine to form a larger, memorial circuit that contribute to the particular narrative about the event and its meaning that the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum establishes. This narrative represents the horrific tragedy as being simultaneously unique to Oklahoma City and yet also fundamentally representative of any American city – the idea that terrorism can strike anywhere.

The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is located on the northern periphery of the downtown business district of Oklahoma City. Its 3.3 acres include the memorial park, including all the *external* commemorative components that were specified by the winning design entry to the international memorial competition held in 1997, and the area occupied by the memorial museum itself (See Figures 1.00 and 1.01 for aerial photographs of the Downtown Oklahoma City area, including the memorial's location, and Figure 1.02 for the plan of the memorial complex itself.)¹ The "Outdoor Symbolic Memorial" comprises everything outside the museum and thus accessible to the public, free of charge, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum, refers to the internal organization of the museum including display areas, offices, archives and storage. There is a fee for public access to the museum during the specified operational hours. The staff and volunteers of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum often refer to the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial simply as the "Outdoor Memorial" as a way of not only removing the implicit redundancy of "symbolic memorial," but also adding a degree of specificity to their conversations, particularly when concerning topics of collection, commemoration, and exhibit display.²

¹ The term, "memorial complex" is used here to describe both the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial and the memorial museum.

² Since both the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum contain the word *memorial* in their respective titles, confusion often results when the term "memorial" is used as a short hand descriptor. For example, a common question that staff and National Park Service employees are often asked is "what time does the memorial close?" The answer depends upon *which* memorial is actually being referred to. To, the memorial museum is open from 8 am until 5 pm daily, while the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial is open twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. To add the term "symbolic" prior to any discussion of memorial seems to fail to acknowledge the conceptual power that memorials inherently contain. This confusion It is of note that the attempt for clarification about which memorial is being discussed, reveals a contemporary trend in commemorative culture, the necessity of *the Memorial Museum*. For a detailed analysis of this trend of pairing a memorial with a memorial museum, please refer to Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Although the memorial stands on the site of the former Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, the memorial grounds dedicated to the tragedy of April 19, 1995 are almost six times larger than the original footprint of the federal building, and their presence has fundamentally altered not only the character of the area, but also the urban fabric of the city.³ The relative expansiveness of the Memorial is a telling testament to the lasting importance that the event has had on the citizens, the social and political institutions, and the fortunes of Oklahoma City. It reflects the fact that, in a post 9/11 world, the term “Oklahoma City” has become a form of political shorthand, a placeholder for substantive and necessary discussions concerning homegrown, domestic terrorist threats, and the impact that those upon American society. While the acutely political meaning of “Oklahoma City” lies outside the intended scope of this dissertation, I mention it as a term because it is often implicitly invoked in discussions about the “lessons learned” from the tragedy. However, one of the most striking lessons to be learned from the Oklahoma City bombing is that past events, while they appear to be “fixed” in historical significance and meaning, are frequently interpreted and reframed by subsequent generations to inscribe a particular meaning that is relevant to an entirely different set of unique circumstances.⁴ In this way, in the dedication speech of the Oklahoma City National Memorial

³ The building footprint of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was equal to 24,150 square feet, while according to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial is 3.3 acres in size. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, “Building and Memorial Site,” <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=1&catid=49> (accessed March 14, 2011). The building footprint was scaled off of the plan of the area which was included as part of the Oklahoma City International Competition packet that was sent to all registered participants. The map consists of an aerial photograph of the Murrah building and surrounding environs, post bombing, scaled to one inch to a hundred feet. The map was prepared by the Oklahoma City Planning Department, while Ace Aerial Photography of Oklahoma City provided the original aerial photograph. (Figure 1.03)

⁴ One example of this phenomenon occurs within the dedication speech of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum by then President George W. Bush on February 19, 2001. Bush states, “Last year the United States Secret Service conducted a study of targeted violence in our nation’s schools. They found that most of the time, the person who planned the violence told someone before the attack. In almost every case, the individual displayed some behavior that caused others to be concerned. We all have a duty to watch for and report troubling signs.” (Source: <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/02/20010219.html>, accessed September 16, 2011.) This statement seems out of place considering the details of the actual event being memorialized at that

and Museum by then President George W. Bush on February 19, 2001, the President issued a statement about violence in Americans high schools—which had no relevance to Oklahoma City but was instead a reference to the Columbine High School shootings. This conflation of one tragedy with reference to another is a common strategy that attempts to unify individuals in their suffering, and provides grief as a common link to otherwise apparently, unrelated events.

This chapter provides a physical description of each of the memorial components of the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. Whenever possible, statements of design intent by the Butzer Design Partnership are provided. I chart the discourse concerning the Memorial and the Museum by scholars, including Edward T. Linenthal, Professor of History at Indiana University; Erika Doss, Professor of American Studies at the University of Notre Dame; and Marita Sturken, Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at NYU Steinhardt, all of whom have written about the historical and cultural significance of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. I include the comments of landscape practitioner and scholar, Rebecca Krinke, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, from her account of visiting the Memorial published in *Landscape Architecture Magazine* in 2000. Finally, I offer my own analysis and thoughts concerning the Memorial, and evaluate the critiques that have been offered. This chapter specifically addresses the constructed memorial (the winning design by the Butzer Design Partnership) that constitutes the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial in Oklahoma City. For information concerning the memorial process used within Oklahoma City please consult Chapter 3, and for details concerning the four *other* selected finalists to the 1997 international design competition, please see Chapter 4.

service, however the rhetorical purpose of that section has little to do with Oklahoma City, but rather a statement about the Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado on April 20, 1999. But it served political interests concerning idea of security, personal responsibility and even constitutional issues. For more a detailed discussion on this topic refer to “One Tragedy in Reference to Another: September 11 and the Obligations of Museum Commemoration.” Jeffrey D. Feldman, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 105, No. 4, December 2003, pp. 839-843.

The order in which specific design interventions within the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial are presented move in a *clockwise* direction, starting at the eastern entry point to the memorial and concluding back at that location. This descriptive order specifically follows the expected sequence that a visitor arriving at the Memorial would follow if they arrived on foot from the entertainment district of the city to the East, or if they were dropped off at the memorial complex as part of a bus tour.⁵ I posit that this expected and specific sequence of visitation of the commemorative elements functions as a *defacto* memorial circuit, providing a spatial and temporal narrative that provides a visitor with detailed, local knowledge, thus making a visitor an insider.⁶

The design elements that form the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial include: two sets of large walls known as the Gates of Time; a remnant piece of the Federal Building's façade inscribed with the names of those in the immediate area who lived through the bombing known as the Survivor's Wall; a series of 168 stylized bronze and glass seats referred to as the Field of Empty Chairs; a long and shallow water feature marking the location of the former fifth street called the Reflecting Pool; a series of "nourishing" plantings named the Rescuer's Orchard; a play area immediately in front of the memorial museum identified as the Children's Area, complete with mortared chalkboard slate within its paving pattern; and, finally, a ninety year old American Elm that serves as the "social heart" of the memorial, the Survivor's Tree.

⁵ Tour groups are frequently dropped off by bus tours along North Robinson Avenue directly by the 9:01 Gate of Time. North Robinson Avenue is a one-way street (heading southwards) that is two lanes wide and provides an excellent place for tour busses to idle, without hindering the flow of traffic.

⁶ While the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum offers a cell phone tour of the memorial grounds which follows a slightly different order, namely the tour starting at the Survivor's Tree and then The Gates of Time, the necessity of picking up a *Memorial and Museum Guide* pre-assumes that a visitor is *already within* the memorial grounds.

The Gates of Time:

At the intersections of where N.W. 5th Street used to intersect N. Harvey and N. Robinson Avenues, stand two large pairs of urban-scaled walls known as The Gates of Time. These towering gates act as an way-finding device, a permeable threshold into a “sacred” yet civic urban territory. They have become a widely identified icon for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, and the gates have become incorporated into numerous public relations campaigns and fund raising appeals for the memorial complex itself.⁷ When viewing these gates from outside the memorial, from the adjacent streets of the city, a visitor sees the mission statement of the Memorial Foundation as a cut void in the bronze cladding that wraps the exteriors of the concrete walls. The mission statement reads:

We come here to remember
those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever.
May all who leave here know the impact of violence.
May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity.⁸

While each set of walls appear identical from outside of the memorial grounds (Figure 1.07 and 1.08), the surfaces that are internal to the memorial are distinguishable because of the large, numerical value of time that are precisely cut through the bronze cladding. (Figures 1.09 and 1.10 respectively.) The gates are commonly referred to by the time that they permanently indicate, with the “9:01” gate located at the eastern edge of the memorial grounds and the “9:03” gate at the western perimeter. The times refer to the moments immediately preceding and following the explosion of the truck bomb at 9:02 am on Wednesday, April 19, 1995. It is the eastern, “9:01” gate that is considered to be the main entry point to the Outdoor Symbolic

⁷ For example, the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum’s “favicon,” the small icon appearing before the url for the memorial museums website, is that of a Gate of Time. (Figure 1.04) The “9:03” Gate of Time is also the icon for the annual award diner for the memorial foundation, whose likeness is present not only on the invitations to the diner, but is also the form of the Reflection of Hope Award itself. (Figure 1.05 and Figure 1.06)

⁸ For a detailed examination and analysis of this statement, please to Chapter 3.

Memorial, establishing a spatial sequence that reflects a temporal sequence — creating a clear before and after — that asks visitors to experience the former in order to understand the later.⁹ The resulting demarcation of a sacred space by the Gates of Time is particularly effective. The gates offer the visitor a constant visual reminder that they are inhabiting a particular moment in time, an eternal and everlasting minute in which the lives of 168 people were extinguished here, on this very ground. Torrey Butzer describes the commemorative function of the gates in terms of a moral imperative: “we have these large gates at either end of the reflecting pool...saying to the city— STOP— something happened here... you cannot go through here anymore.”¹⁰ To create the sense of a rupture in time and space, the Memorial Foundation asked the Oklahoma City Planning Department to close the section of N.W. 5th Street. This decision to close the street was a highly contentious one among the citizens of Oklahoma City, but one that the designers insisted upon, wanting to keep the memorial grounds as a separate and sacred zone, removed from the everyday experiences of vehicular traffic within the urban condition.¹¹

Each “gate” consists of two concrete walls whose final height above the finished grade is 47’— 6”, each wall is 56’— 0” wide and taper from 22” thick at their respective bases, to 14” at their pinnacles.¹² The void that forms the portal through each gate that allow visitors to enter and exit is 7’- 0” wide, and 38’- 6” tall, and the distance between interior surface of each paired wall

⁹ The physical layout of the city further reinforces this perception, as the social center of the city lies to the east of the memorial. Visitors staying in the entertainment and convention district of the city will encounter the 9:01 gate as the closest entry point into the memorial grounds.

¹⁰ The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum’s *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*, available at <http://feed.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/2009/09/08/outdoor-symbolic-memorial-walking-tour.aspx> (Accessed May 3, 2010.)

¹¹ Jack Money, “Planners Support Closing NW 5,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, September 13, 1996. p. 9. Refer to Chapter 2 for more information regarding the urban significance of the Memorial.

¹² The tapering of the concrete walls allows for “dramatic shadows” to be cast under the bronze cladding façade during the day, as well as concealing the wiring and lights that backlight the façade joints, the memorial’s mission statement, and the numerical times after dusk. The bronze façade appears to level and plumb from the base of the gate to the top. M.K. Hurd, “Forming the Gates of Time: Concrete Walls Define the Oklahoma City National Memorial,” *Concrete Construction* November 11, 2000, accessed October 14, 2011. <http://www.concreteconstruction.net/concrete-articles/forming-the-gates-of-time.aspx>

is 14' - 0".¹³ After preparing the structural foundation, and the framework for the placement of the concrete, there were three separate lifts of the pigmented concrete.¹⁴ Each lift consisted of multiple concrete placements (commonly referred to as *pours*) that were no greater than 4' - 0" in total height across the entire section of both paired walls; this was done to guarantee a consistent color and finish across the entire surface of the wall.¹⁵ The gates were constructed in a three-stage process of consecutive concrete lifts, the first lift was from the prepared foundation to approximately 16' - 0" in elevation, the second from 16' - 0" to 30' - 0" and the final to the final elevation of 47' - 0".¹⁶ These separate lifts, and the numerous pours that they contained, are not visually noticeable in the final product, partially because of the extraordinary efforts to ensure a standard mixture throughout the different concrete mixes, and partially because any slight variation that might have occurred would only be visible on the sides of the walls that form the internal area of the gates themselves.¹⁷ Given the large span width for each wall, the amount of material required for the framing of each pour, and the high visibility of the project, the construction contractor, Lippert Brothers, decided to erect a continuous platform around the perimeter of the walls including the 14' - 0" internal gap, for safety and ease of movement of

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The term *lift* is defined as "the concrete placed between two consecutive horizontal construction joints, usually consisting of several layers or courses." American Concrete Institute, *Concrete Terminology*. 40. (2010). A *pour* of concrete is a misnomer, with the term *placement*, being the preferred parlance. *Placement* is defined as "the process of placing and consolidating concrete; a quantity of concrete placed and finished during a continuous operation; inappropriately referred to as pouring." American Concrete Institute, *Concrete Terminology*, 52. (2010). (Accessed October 14, 2011).

¹⁵ Hurd details how each mix of concrete was performed mechanically, with a computer controlled allocation of pigment and water. Steps were also taken to ensure that if any additional water was required during transportation, the water added was carefully measured, and then added to each subsequent mix for that particular lift. From "Forming the Gates of Time."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Given that this internal area between the two concrete walls is a transitional area that is passed through to access the memorial, and that it is only 14' wide, it is unlikely that any color variation (if present) would be noticeable. Despite spending a large amount of time looking for such color variations, under different lighting conditions, I noticed no change of color or texture in any of the concrete work that forms the walls of the Gates of Time.

their workforce.¹⁸ This platform was subsequently raised into place for each consecutive lift that occurred. (Figure 1.11 for image of the concrete work and continuous platform established.)

The bronze panels for each Gate of Time were milled in and imported from Japan, and are a combination of naval and yellow bronze.¹⁹ (See Figure 1.12) The precision die cutting and additional finishing was performed in New Jersey, and then the bronze cladding was shipped to and installed in Oklahoma City. Since their installation, the color panels have patinaed and therefore significantly changed, transforming from a warm golden color, to a dark, cool metallic bronze, which stands in stark contrast to the warm tone of the concrete gates themselves.²⁰

(Figure 1.13 and Figure 1.14 for comparison.) Given the large width of the gates and the visual density of the material choices of concrete and bronze, the designers desired to have the mass of the gates metaphorically “break apart” as the gate increased in height. This was achieved by increasing the spacing between the bronze panels as they progress skyward, from no visible gaps at the base of the gates, to a full 4” gap at their apex. Hans Butzer notes the variation of plate spacing as a fragmentation of a uniformed surface, as it moves “towards the heavens.”²¹ Butzer states, “we wanted to make the gate lighter as it moved up.”²² While the spacing is difficult, if not impossible, to notice during the light of day, the variation of spacing between the bronze

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum website, <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=5&catid=119&id=61> (Accessed October 15, 2011.)

²⁰ The designers originally specified “warm tone” concrete to be used for the Gates of Time, which was a popular material in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, and which was used for the construction of the Alfred P. Murrah Plaza and Parking Garage, and the Federal Courthouse less than a block away. This decision of using similar materials as the surrounding built context was dashed as the materials that went into warm tone concrete were no longer available. Instead, white cement was used as the base mix, with a 2% buff pigment by weight was added to add a warm, yet faint yellow tint to the concrete of the gates. The specifications also called for a 4000 psi compressive strength, ¾ to 1” maximum size coarse aggregate, and a water cement ratio of 0.45 or less. Given the absolute necessity to correctly color match each of the four walls, the mixtures of the concrete were all computer controlled, and the contractors even ensured that if water needed to be added to the cement delivery truck to the site, the same quantity of water would be added to all future deliveries. M.K. Hurd, “Forming the Gates of Time.”

²¹ *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour.*

²² *Ibid.*

panels becomes apparent as night falls. Between the bronze façade and the concrete wall, the lighting behind the bronze façade makes the inscription, and the symbolic time to which it refers, clearly visible (Figure 1.15 and 1.16). Hans Butzer says that one must visit the Gates during different times in order to experience the “transformation” of the gates:

It was important that the experience of the Gates change during the day and at night, and so we clad these concrete walls with bronze and allowed light to glow from behind the bronze panels so that at night, these very stout and heavy gates start to feel as if they lift upwards towards the heavens... And you have this change... a sense of understanding of the space and *suddenly your thoughts are more about the sky and less about the events that happened...*²³ (My emphasis.)

Why would an architect want a visitor’s focus to shift to a natural element and away from his own creation, designed specifically as part of a larger commemorative installation, constructed to memorialize a particular tragedy. Butzer only hints at the underlying choice to appropriate the sky rather than focusing on the details of the tragedy. The therapeutic aspects of contemporary commemorative culture has increasingly demanded that memorials perform more than simply marking an event; they now have the cultural expectation that by their very presence, they will assist in healing those most effected by loss, trauma, and tragedy. But Butzer does not explain how the memorial is to assist those dealing with their own grief.

The Gates of Time are regarded by the designers as the formal entrances into the memorial, and since they are located where the former roadbed of N.W. 5th Street used to be, the gates possess an awkward relationship for pedestrians who walk to the Memorial as the gates are located in the middle of a superblock. While the Gates are clearly visible to automobiles from a distance, pedestrians, depending upon the chosen path used to arrive at the memorial, can easily overlook them when they arrive at the memorial site. Visitors tend to enter the Memorial through

²³ Interview with Hans and Torrey Butzer, *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

the Gates, and specifically use the 9:01 Gate of Time as their entry point. The placement of the 9:01 Gate is especially frustrating for those visitors who are staying in the convention district of Oklahoma City southeast of the site, as the first item to be encountered is not the 9:01 Gate of Time, but rather the elevated Murrah Plaza Memorial Overlook on the southeast corner. The stairs up to the overlook, combined with the location of the 9:01 Gate in the middle of the block, obscures the eastern Gate of Time, and it is only when a pedestrian reaches the overlook of the plaza that he is rewarded with the view into the memorial itself. (Figure 1.17) It may be that this perspective is intentional, allowing a visitor to see the outdoor memorial from the location where the Alfred P. Murrah federal building once stood.

The Gates of Time operate as visual “frames” from which the larger memorial landscape is viewed. This is especially true for the 9:01 Gate where the elevational change from North Robinson Avenue down to the final elevation of the memorial ground plane below is close to eleven feet. From this particular vantage point at street level, the Reflecting Pool and the Field of Empty Chairs are clearly visible. (Figure 1.18) While each gate allows a visitor to peer into the enclosed commemorative landscape, the physical act of entering into the memorial is not so straightforward. Because of the noted elevational changes between the adjacent city streets, each gate requires the visitor to change his or her orientation to the memorial through the use of stairways and/or ramps. Instead of a series of stairs that directly lead straight into the memorial, the orientation changes via a series of “switchbacks”; walking immediately perpendicular to the pedestrian openings in the Gates, down (or up) a short flight of stairs, turn again 90 degrees to face the memorial, then turn another 90 degrees to finish descending (or ascending) the second series of stairs, to finally turn one final time to enter the memorial itself. (See Figure 1.19) For example, internal to the 9:01 Gate there are two flights of stairs separated by a small landing at

the end of the first flight, the second set of stairs “doubles back” 180 degrees from the first, allowing the visitor to leave the second flight of stairs in a straight line when he entered the gate of time, only now at the level of the memorial instead of street level.

At the 9:03 Gate at the western side of the perimeter of the memorial there is a ramp structure to facilitate access for those who have impaired mobility (Figure 1.20). The elevational change on the western edge from the street level of North Harvey Avenue down to the memorial landscape is approximately three feet and six inches at the 9:03 Gate of Time. There is no elevator or ramp structure within the 9:01 Gate for people with limited mobility. The series of switchbacks and change in elevations in each gate demands actual bodily engagement, as well as a conceptual re-alignment of the body to the site itself. While most apparent in the eastern gate because of the significant grade change, such repositioning is also necessary in the western gate because of the ramps’ gentle slope.

This act of bodily reorientation through barriers to direct access is a significant design element in and of itself; unlike other memorials that allow the direct line of access both visually and physically, the outdoor symbolic memorial allows visual engagement through the constructed frame of the Gate of Time itself.²⁴ The physical engagement with the memorial is more complex, and can be considered as a symbolic realignment of one’s body. The memorial grounds, but especially the footprint of the former Murrah building, are widely regarded as sacred territory consecrated through the loss of life. The Gates of Time function as important thresholds that intentionally slow the pace and gait of a visitor, signaling that she is entering a distinctly separate space. The distance between the concrete walls provides a transitional zone for a visitor, allowing her to adjust from the noisy and harried urban context into the tranquil

²⁴ Specifically, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. allows a visitor to look at the large seated Lincoln statue as they ascend the numerous stairs to the interior of the memorial. Even the Vietnam Veterans Memorial allows a close parallel journey between the visual experience of the site, and the physical engagement of the visitor.

setting of the park-like memorial grounds. Hans Butzer refers to this space as being akin to a “vestibule” or hypostyle hall in a building—a place of transition within a building that is a form of landscape encapsulated by architecture, while also compensating for the significant grade changes that occur.²⁵ The view of the Memorial becomes “framed” by the openings within the Gates of Time, allowing a conscious and constructed glance at the internal arrangement of the memorial components within the commemorative landscape, while visitor participation requires the physical engagement with the site itself.

Criticism of The Gates of Time

The Gates have been criticized by Rebecca Krinke as being “too cramped and utilitarian to effectively begin to remove one from the day to day world and into the realm of symbolic space.”²⁶ But, after my own multiple visits at different times of the day and night, what I experienced was that this “cramped and utilitarian space” actually served a vital *social* function in placing an individual within a commemorative mindset. Specifically, I observed this when bus tours as they dropped off passengers on Robinson Avenue. I saw that by the time that the passengers had descended the staircases, their conversations had taken on hushed tones, or ceased all together.²⁷ This was particularly noticeable when larger groups entered the transitional area within the 9:01 Gate of Time. Part of this social function was a result of the compression that Krinke notes and criticizes— when there was a large group of people in the confined area, a slower gait was required in descending the staircases. (Groups in numbers less than ten were less likely to slow down in this way). This physical act of slowing down caused the

²⁵ *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

²⁶ Rebecca Krinke, “Perspective” in *Landscape Architecture: The Magazine of the American Society of Landscape Architects*, September (2000) Volume 90, No. 9. p. 76.

²⁷ I stayed in Oklahoma City at the Regency Towers, just a block away from the Memorial, and visited the site daily, at all times of the day and night over a three-month period from April to June 2010.

visitor to adjust from the hustle and bustle of the surrounding city to a contemplative and reflective pace.²⁸ While there are multiple rationales for this slowing of movement, including the visitor's age, physical ability, and sensory comprehension, the critical components were the changes in conversational tones and the reversion to silence as visitors exited the stairs at the foot of the Gate of Time and encountered the large reflecting pool.

Erika Doss views the Gates of Time not as the demarcation of a sacred territory separate from the everyday life of the city; instead she views the gates as “tomblike monoliths.”²⁹ For her, the gates are an inherent contradiction that simultaneously combine and commemorate the “temporal and spatial dislocations of Timothy McVeigh’s terrorist act and the deaths he generated” with the memorial’s mission statement—a message of comfort, strength, peace hope and serenity. While I fully concur that the Gates of Time can be “read” as a spatial “text,” Doss’ argument that the meaning of the gates is negated by the apparent conflicting messages contained on either of their sides fundamentally dismisses the visitor’s participatory role in the act of reading and ignores the role that space itself exerts on both the text of the gate and the reader/visitor. Doss would prefer to remove the Gates of Time as marking the memorial territory, and in turn, to reduce their message *only* to the actual text that is inscribed upon them. In effect, Doss wishes to remove both the visitor and the sacred space that the gates occupy from the interpretative act of reading. The contradictory message of marking the time of the explosion (and thus acknowledging the violent act itself) on one side of the gate, and having the memorial foundation’s optimistic mission statement are *only* at conceptual odds with one another if a

²⁸ The criticism of the space being cramped and utilitarian also fails to note the urban context of the surrounding cityscape of Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. Oklahoma City, unlike larger cities like New York, Boston, or Houston, Oklahoma City has a relatively small downtown core. The compression of space that the two walls that form the interior transitional of the Gates of Time are therefore a noticeable contrast to the relatively wide open spaces within the city itself.

²⁹ Doss, *Memorial Mania*, p. 137.

single visitor could occupy two spatially separate vantage points at the same time.³⁰ However, through the act of visiting the memorial, it becomes possible to recall these statements, and in turn, the meanings of the two inscriptions remain in constant tension.

Marita Sturken also has concerns regarding the Gates of Time since “in marking the moment of the bombing, [the Gates] not only frame the moment of death and loss, the moment between life and death, but *could* award monumentality to the bomb itself”³¹ (emphasis added). Struken then argues that the rest of the memorial “counters this monumentality in its focus on the individual, and hence, the therapeutic.”³² Despite Sturken’s tentativeness about the Gates of Time, she fully acknowledges the real focus of the memorial is on the individuals affected by the bombing. However I believe that her statement, stating that the Gates of Time might be misunderstood as honoring the explosion of the bomb raises two interesting possibilities. If she was worried that the monumentality of the gates was a physical representation of the blast *itself*, its size and power, Sturken is then implying that the gates are, by proxy, honoring the sublime power of the bomb. On the other hand, if Sturken is attempting to state a connection between the size of the Gates and the effect that the explosion had on Oklahoma City, then her focus *only* on the memorial itself is misplaced as it does not indicate the substantial rebuilding effort

³⁰ Her criticism underlies one of the fundamental problems that exists when rhetoric scholars start to offer criticism for spatially based works. While communicative theory can broaden and enrich architectural and landscape theory, often when it is practiced, it unnecessarily reduces the spatial component of the work itself simply because of a disciplinarily blindness, and a lack of vocabulary needed to articulate and describe space. There are numerous papers and articles by rhetoricians that are incredibly informative and can potentially change how a particular work is “read”, however the majority of them are poor when it comes to the articulation, role, and meaning of space *itself*. The majority of the those scholars view space merely as a *void*, and in turn, are unable to read or articulate that space is also meaningful text *in of itself*; one which can further modify the readings of other spatially based objects and interventions. This is a disciplinary blind spot that needs to be filled by engaged scholarship from the academic fields that deal with space as a tangible, and culturally rich medium. For an excellent example of how rhetoric can help inform the design fields, see Carloe Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr., “Public Memorializing in Post-modernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 263-288. Thanks to Dr. David Timmerman for bringing the article to my attention.

³¹ Marita Struken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2007), p. 111.

³² *Ibid.*

undertaken by Oklahoma City in the weeks, months and years afterwards. It may be the case that her observation linking monumentality of the bomb and the gates might just be awkwardly worded; however, by using the word “bomb,” rather than “explosion,” she implies that the gates might be read by some as a lasting testament to Timothy McVeigh himself.

If Sturken finds the gates too large, Krinke criticizes the Gates of Time as being not monumental enough, too diminutive to perform the necessary demarcation of a sacred territory within the larger city. “The gates themselves, while very beautiful in bronze clad concrete, were not large enough to be readily seen within the urban fabric,” she notes.³³ Her concern with the size of the gates seems to be more of a reflection of her frustration with attempting to locate the tragic site itself, and her irritation with the awkward relationship that the Alfred P. Murrah Plaza has to the larger Outdoor Symbolic Memorial of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. She details her experience of locating the memorial as follows:

As I drove through downtown scanning for street signs, looking for the memorial, it was the sight of blank and boarded-up windows that signaled that I must have found the site of the bombing. I was startled to see that there was more than one building still standing that had been gutted by the bombing... I found a parking place and looked for the entrance to the memorial itself. I walked along Robinson Street from NW 4th Street, saw a raised plaza of planters and vegetation, and wondered if this was part of the memorial (I found out later that this was the restored Murrah Plaza). It was disconcerting to have this be my first relationship with the new memorial: “Have I found it?”³⁴

However, the presence of the Murrah Plaza at the corner of Robinson and NW 4th Street is the first indication of the nearby proximity of the Oklahoma City Memorial. With the closing of 5th Street, the memorial landscape occupies a strange midpoint between city blocks. If Krinke had walked up the steps at the plaza, she would have been rewarded with an elevated view into the entire memorial landscape.

³³ Krinke, “Perspective,” p. 76.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

The Gates of Time act as visual screens, simultaneously framing and also denying particular views into the Memorial. Given the elevations of the adjacent streets to the immediate East and West (Robinson and N. Harvey respectively) and the considerable width of the Gates of Time themselves (56' wide) there are few opportunities to gaze into the memorial walking along either of these streets. This blocking of the comprehensive view helps provide a degree of privacy to the memorial grounds while at the same time fostering in the viewer a desire to investigate by entering the memorial grounds. This sense of privacy is particularly important in the Field of Empty Chairs, as the chairs are individual representations of the loss of a loved one, and often they are the locations of both prayer and offering (Figure 1.21). The gates assist in creating an atmosphere that is shielded from the casual observer walking down the adjacent streets. This act of screening is also assisted by the overall grading scheme developed and implemented by the Butzer Design Partnership, and the presence of both the Journal Records Building and the Murrah Memorial Plaza. The Journal Records Building to the North and the remnant of the Murrah Plaza to the South of the memorial provide strong built edges; with the insertion of the Gates of Time, the Eastern and Western edges are also well defined and established.

The Gates of Time provide a clear and defined boundary that denotes the space that they contain as special, even sacred. The short distance one must walk through the transitory space within each gate's pair of walls seems minor when compared to the powerful realignment of the body and the engagement with the site's grade. These physical changes in the relationship that one has with the memorial provide a symbolic connection to the tragedy that occurred here. A visitor cannot have a straight, unhindered line of access into the site, almost as if honoring the

chaotic debris field after the explosion, or out of respect of those whose lives were extinguished. To walk here, on this ground, is not a simple, direct, or easy task.

The gates also perform a symbolic function. Placed at the eastern and western edges of the site, they are like a mythical gesture. As the sun rises in the sky at the start of a new day, the easterly gate offers the promise of new beginnings, while the westerly gate, as the sun slowly sets, offers a portal into the realm of the dead. The Memorial Foundation does not miss these ceremonial opportunities, as during the 15th anniversary ceremony, like the ceremonies that came before it, a procession started at the eastern gate and recessed through the western gate post-ceremony. The invited group of dignitaries, politicians, special guests, staff, and family members descended the 9:01 Gate as they entered for the event, and departed through the 9:03 Gate when the proceedings were finished (Figure 1.22).

The Survivor's Wall

The Survivor's Wall consists of four large slabs of exposed concrete veneer cut and polished and then inscribed with the names in alphabetical order of the 850 individuals who survived the explosion. The Wall is a recovered fragment of the Murrah Building's original façade, but the names that were etched on the surface were chosen through a highly contentious process where the apparently simple term, "survivor," became based not on merely living through the trauma of the explosion, but doing so within a crisply defined four block, geographical radius.³⁵ Each tablet section is approximately four feet high by six feet wide, and was originally part of the external finished concrete veneer of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. Torrey Butzer, one of the architects responsible for the Memorial's design, saw a parallel in using the former façade of the

³⁵ Edward T. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 195.

Federal Building as an appropriate material to acknowledge those who directly experienced the explosion, asserting that the “theme of surviving is very inherent to this whole corner of the Murrah Building Footprint.”³⁶ Hans Butzer reflects:

[W]e attempted to do all we could do to retain the integrity of these walls... We started to see them (the panels) as a chapel like space, where you could begin to focus not just on the surviving walls, but actually on the names of the survivors of the bombing.³⁷

The naming of the injured helps humanize the scale of the trauma, and stands as a record of the lasting effect that the bomb had on the citizens of Oklahoma City. However, given the placement of the Survivor’s Wall on the concrete retaining walls, and the absence of any form of seating adjacent to them, it is doubtful that the survivors’s names will be pondered for very long by any visitor to the memorial who does not have a personal connection with one of the inscribed names. During the three months I spent at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, I never saw anyone stop to read the names listed on the Survivor’s wall, even during the 15th anniversary commemoration.

As visitors stand at the base of the 9:01 Gate of Time, looking westward into the Memorial, the Survivor’s Wall is located fourteen feet *behind* them. The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial plan presented within the *Memorial & Museum Guide* locates the Survivor’s Wall clearly, but fails to indicate the existing concrete sidewalk that awkwardly extends from the southern edge of the reflecting pool to the northern wall of the memorial overlook (Figure 1.23). While this oversight is a minor one, the failure to indicate the existing walkway diminishes the chances that a visitor with physical disabilities viewing the guide will actually visit the Survivor’s Wall as it appears inaccessible

³⁶ *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The desire to identify individuals by naming them is a strong one, and as Erika Doss notes, regarding memorials to terrorism, “survival is a defining motif, and many families of survivors insist that they, not just their lost kin, should also be acknowledged.”³⁸ Yet, the idea of naming *survivors* at a memorial is an unusual commemorative gesture. The traditional practice of the listing of names at a memorial implies that those names are an accounting of the dead, not those who experienced and lived through the event. This “naming of the dead” is best exemplified in an American context by Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, but it has its traditional origins deep within commemorative and funerary practices. Few memorials or monuments, either ancient or contemporary, actually name the *living*.

The inclusion of the survivors’ names was a highly contentious issue for the Memorial Task Force, exemplified by the contradictory terms that were established within the rules of the memorial competition itself.³⁹ The Task Force endorsed two recommendations regarding the memorial’s treatment of survivors; 1: “There should be no representation of survivors on the symbolic Memorial itself” and 2) “The individual identities of survivors (those who meet one or more of the defining criteria) should be represented on the site where the Murrah Building stood in a manner separate, distinct and apart from the tribute to those who died.”⁴⁰ Originally, the Butzer Design Partnership had intended to have only the names of those who were within the Murrah building listed on the Survivor’s Wall, addressing the other names at the Survivor’s Tree.⁴¹ This design strategy was part of their larger conceptual plan where the Survivor’s Wall would occupy “the side chapel” while the visually dominant Field of Empty Chairs would be the

³⁸ Doss, *Memorial Mania*, p. 157.

³⁹ The Memorial Task Force consisted of some three hundred and fifty individuals, personally selected by then City Mayor Ron Norick. For more information concerning the Memorial Task Force, refer to Chapter 3.

⁴⁰ Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, 1997), 14. The wording of these two recommendations, possibly indicates that the members of the Memorial Task Force were conceptualizing the outdoor symbolic memorial as an *object* (i.e. an arch, column, or wall), not as an immersive environment or landscape.

⁴¹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 220.

focus of the memorial.⁴² Thus the focus of attention was originally going to be on the victims of the bombing, not the survivors. But when the Memorial Task Force pointed to the second recommendation concerning the definition of survivor within the competition booklet, insisting that *all* survivors be listed on the plaques,⁴³ The Butzers and Berg compiled. They listed in alphabetical order every individual who was officially defined as survivors by the Memorial Task Force, grouping them according to the buildings in which they were at the time of the explosion, with the Murrah Building being the first one to be listed.

The physical context of the Survivor's Wall is one of the few remaining reminders of the destructive force of the truck bomb. The two sets of tablets that form the Survivors' Wall are attached to an exposed section of a concrete foundation wall of the demolished Federal Building. This particular area, in line with the outside bronze clad wall that forms the external wall to the memorial on Robinson Avenue, submerged from street level, is the only place within the entire memorial where any hint of physical damage to the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building still remains. (The standing remains of the Federal Building were imploded on May 23, 1995 out of concern to public safety, and were then subsequently hauled off site.⁴⁴) There are other traces of violence such as the pox-marked façade of the Journal Records Building (now part of the Memorial Museum) complete with permanently bricked up windows. The twisted rebar set in the reinforced concrete that formed the foundation of the Federal Building is the strongest visible indication of the power and destructive force that was unleashed here (Figure 1.25). The visual pairing of the damaged concrete wall of the Murrah Building and the smooth and highly polished, inscribed Survivor's Wall (which also originated from the Murrah Building) can be

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 218.

⁴³ Specifically it was the leadership of the Memorial Task Force itself that overrode the survivor definition subcommittee's preference of not having any reference to the names of the survivors at the symbolic memorial. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, pp. 220-221.

⁴⁴ "Damaged Building Will Fall Today, Weather Allowing," *The Daily Oklahoman*, Tuesday May 23, 1995. p. 1.

jarring; the pristine smoothness of the pair of panels seems not to acknowledge the very real physical, psychological and emotional trauma that the people experienced.

The placement of the Survivor's Wall on the exposed, damaged section of the Murrah Federal Building's foundation is an attempt to draw a symbolic parallel between those who experienced the bombing and the visual representation of the damage that was inflicted on the building. However, this relationship is an awkward one, partially because of the seemingly isolated physical location of the area in relation to the rest of the memorial elements, and partially because of the particular microclimate that exists there. Specifically, since the concrete panels are mounted on a westward facing wall, the relentless sun of the southwest has slowly bleached the names and the concrete plaques themselves, diminishing the legibility of the names (Figure 1.26). By the summer of 2008, the list of the names were so faded as to be completely illegible at a distance. Ironically, this slow erasure of the names of the people who lived through the immediate trauma is viewed by some as a symbolic gesture, because some of the survivors of the bombing feel as if the City and the Memorial Foundation have forgotten about them and their various needs. The creeping sense of abandonment was rooted in the very definitions established within the memorial hierarchy itself, one where the families that lost more than one loved one, and those who lost young children were placed at the top of the hierarchy, and therefore the priority for the foundation.⁴⁵

The representation of survivors, people who were physically present within a narrowly defined geographical area at the time of the explosion, is a contentious topic within the Memorial and the Museum. Unlike those who died during the attack, the survivors were not elevated to

⁴⁵ Linenthal reveals the inner workings of this social status through interviewing survivors, one of which offered him the following ranking of the memorial hierarchy. "Family members who lost more than one person; those who lost small children; those who lost a direct relation; those who were severely wounded; those suffering "indirect loss" (cousin, aunt, for example); those suffering lighter injuries, those who survived." Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 197.

heroic status and did not receive the community's sustained sympathy for being *victims*. They were applauded for being a "survivor," implying that it was some form of inherent skill, ability or tenacity that kept them alive, but the greatest sympathy and attention was given to another kind of survivor, the families of the victims of the explosion. Increasingly, the survivors who found themselves near the Federal Building on April 19, 1995, are still wrestling with the trauma that they experienced, whether mental, physical or emotional, and sense that the public goodwill they once might have received has long since ended.⁴⁶

At the heart of the tension between survivors and the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, is the fact that the survivors can offer an alternative narrative to the one preferred by the foundation itself, one that counters the optimistic rhetoric of a community coming together, of shared sacrifice and loss, and eventual triumph over adversity. The survivors' narratives, rooted in real pain, are hardly as simple. There is a parallel between the memorial foundation's treatment of survivors and the location of the Survivor's Wall that extends past the physical isolation of their memorial component, for the idea of *damage* also roots survivors to the foundation of the former Federal Building. The majority of the memorial grounds that are impeccably manicured and meticulously maintained, obscuring the fact that that the place was the site of a powerful explosion, whereas the exposed rebar and remnant foundation of the Murrah Building are the only hints of the former land use, and of the trauma inflicted on site.

Edward Linenthal refers to the precise desire to narrate exactly who is being remembered and why they are worthy of being memorialized as "memorial exactitude;" its influence and presence during the discussions of the Memorial inevitably created conditions of conflict, pitting

⁴⁶ In an informal conversation with a senior manager at the memorial museum, a disparaging comment was made about a survivor known in the press and to the memorial foundation. The criticism was that although this survivor had lost her husband in the bombing, she was in a long term, stable relationship with a "new man" whom she refused to marry because she did not want to lose her survivor's benefits. Personal notes, 2008.

survivors against grieving family members. As Jeannine Gist (mother of Karen Gist Carr who was killed in the Murrah Building) pointedly relayed, “Those who died aren’t here to tell us what they want for a memorial. The survivors are.”⁴⁷ And yet it is the survivors of the blast whom appear to be marginalized in the commemorative process undertaken by the Memorial Foundation. Unlike the accusation that Gist levies against the Survivors — that just by their very existence, they can only offer self-serving narratives in the kind of memorial that they want — it appears that the survivors were either neglected in these memorial discussions, or they resisted the commemorative process altogether, ceding any social authority over to victim’s families—another group of “survivors.” To challenge, let alone contradict, a grieving parent’s wishes regarding how a child is to be represented at the memorial would be difficult and socially awkward. Regardless of the traumatic experience that was endured, survivors of the event had little social authority over the memorial design competition or selection process.⁴⁸

The Field of Empty Chairs

The most iconic symbols associated with the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum are the 168 precisely arranged, glass and bronze chairs, each etched with the name of a person killed in the attack.⁴⁹ Located immediately north of the Murrah Memorial Plaza and south of the reflecting pool, between The Gates of Time, the Field of Empty Chairs is a stark reminder of the explosion’s human toll. Surrounding the Field of Empty Chairs, marking the periphery of the

⁴⁷ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 198.

⁴⁸ I am certain that the members of the memorial task force would counter that they made every attempt to solicit survivor’s wishes into the memorial design, and that they did in fact have survivors involved in every step of the memorial process. My point is that given the speed in which the memorial discussions occurred after the bombing itself, many survivors were incapable of participation within the memorial process either because of physical or mental trauma that the event inflicted, or because they considered themselves to be the fortunate ones that survived the bombing. Refer to Chapter 3 for more information concerning the role of the survivors in the memorial process.

⁴⁹ Three chairs possess *two* names, the name of the woman killed, and her named yet unborn infant (See Figure 1.27). There was an unsuccessful attempt to have the official death count raised to 171 to account for the three unborn fetuses that failed to be brought to full term because of the homicide of their mothers.

Alfred P. Murrah Building footprint, stand a series of Loblolly pines (*Pinus taeda*) spaced equidistantly.⁵⁰ The use of pines as a cemetery planting is commonplace as evergreens have long been associated with everlasting life. However here they were also chosen because their mature height at approximately 90 feet tall is expected to match the height of the Murrah Building.⁵¹ Like sentries standing on watch over the field, the pine trees offer a thin boundary through which visitors must pass in order to walk among the glass and bronze chairs. Kim A. O’Connell relays a comment made by Hans Butzer : “Butzer notes that one must walk a few paces to get from the granite sidewalk to the conglomeration of chairs, sited on the footprint of the former Murrah Building. The distance forces people to engage the space even as it helps to sanctify it.”⁵² The site of the chairs is already considered sanctified by many, through the considerable amount of blood shed and the life lost there.

The exact placement of a chair in the series of nine rows aligned from the southern edge of the Murrah Memorial Plaza northwards towards The Reflecting Pool indicates the victim’s vertical location within the Federal Building at the time of the attack. The position of a particular chair within a row is based upon the location where individuals were at the time that the building collapsed. The specific locations are organized by a column numbering system starting at the western edge of the footprint of the Murrah building and progressing eastward.⁵³ This design feature attempts to provide a spatial explanation of who died where. While such information

⁵⁰ The pines are spaced 25’—2” on center. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, as per the layout plan, C5-2 prepared as construction documentation package. Spacing confirmed on site.

⁵¹ The pines maximum height is detailed in Michael Dirr’s *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses* (Champaign, Illinois: Stipes Publishing, 1975), p. 745. It is also worthy noting that Dirr believes their best landscape value is to form “a quick screen in southern landscapes.” Details concerning the use of the loblolly pines to match the height of the Murrah Building come from John Kifne, “In Oklahoma, a Week of Remembrance,” *New York Times*, April 18, 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/18/national/18oklahoma.html?pagewanted=print&position=> (Accessed November 12, 2011). No known human remains were interred on the memorial site, and the designers were adamant that absolutely no funerals or interred remains were to be placed within the Field of Empty Chairs. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 224.

⁵² Kim A. O’Connell, “The Gates of Memory,” *Landscape Architecture*, Volume 90, No. 9, (2000), p. 74.

⁵³ There are 43 “columns” in total.

might only be of passing interest to a tourist visiting the site, such detailed information is immensely significant for the friends and family members who lost loved ones in the bombing. This precise nature of the architectural location diagram, and the desire to know exactly what their person's last moments were like and where they died, is a crucial part of the forementioned "memorial exactitude" that Linenthal defines. Linenthal describes this memorial exactitude as an overwhelming desire to be obsessively accurate concerning any and all details regarding the death of another. He writes,

It is never enough for a bereaved community to just "remember." It must strive for exactitude in what is being remembered, who is being remembered, and the forms through which remembrance is expressed. Such memorial precision is a way of paying what people understand as their debt to the dead. Conversely, failure to accomplish this, to mischaracterize the significance of an event, to blur lines between different groups, or to commemorate in an inappropriate ways is often perceived as an act of defilement, a polluting of memory."⁵⁴

The particularly precise arrangement of chairs is more than an obsessive accounting of the lost; it forms a kind of community of the dead. Of course, the area is not literally a *necropolis*, a term usually reserved for large-scale urban cemeteries. Instead the Field of Empty Chairs provides those left behind with an opportunity for reconnecting with other family and friends of those who were also lost.⁵⁵ Unlike cemeteries, no human remains are buried on the site, and the chairs serve as conceptual rather than actual markers.⁵⁶

The social reconnection with people who share a tragic, common past makes the attendance at the anniversary services a necessity, year after year. The prime reason for attending

⁵⁴ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 195.

⁵⁵ Erika Doss implies such a morose relationship when she states, "With this tidy grid of headstone-like chairs fixed at the site of each death, this section of the memorial resembles a well ordered necropolis." Doss, *Memorial Mania*, p. 137. The fundamental difference is of course, that The Field of Empty Chairs is *not* a cemetery.

⁵⁶ It is possible that minute fragments of human remains, often referred to as "common tissue," are present within the Field of Empty Chairs given the nature of the attack, and subsequent structural damage to the Federal Building. During my meeting with Kari Keating in 2008, she volunteered that a rumor had been circulating within Oklahoma City that the ashes of Timothy McVeigh had been secretly spread within the Field of Empty Chairs after his execution and cremation. She admitted that she had no idea if this were true, and was indifferent in trying to establish any legitimacy to the claim.

such services is nominally for honoring the dead, but there is also an inherent shared social value in these annual ceremonies (Figure 1.28). In the aftermath of the destruction of the Federal Building, intense friendships were formed that persist and thrive, even today. It is this *social* aspect of a chair that dominated the Butzers' thoughts after they heard about the bombing on the Voice of America in Berlin. Hans Butzer remarked, "Like an empty chair at a dinner table, we are always aware of the presence of a loved one's absence. These chairs will provide family members with a special place where they can stand near, or even sit and think about their loved one."⁵⁷ Thus the chair becomes a symbol, a representation of the physical absence of a missing family member. This architectural intervention is also inherently domestic in tone, for although the attack was focused on a building that was the embodiment of the US government – a place of work and labor— the lasting legacy of the attack is not experienced in either of those places but is, rather, grounded firmly within the domestic and private realm of the home. Empty chairs at kitchen tables, dining rooms, dens and living rooms haunt the survivors with the lasting and unforgettable absence of who they lost. Torrey Butzer remarks, "poetically the idea behind the chairs is that it reminds us so starkly of the number of people that were taken from us in an instant. The chairs speak of the absence. It is almost a literal way that so many people can relate to, a chair, something that we are all so familiar with."⁵⁸ For the families, the everyday grief is experienced privately at home, but the articulation of loss through the use of a chair as a symbol highlights the loss, and places it out in the open, for all to see. Private grief is now expressed within in the public sphere. An empty chair also has religious significance in both the Jewish and Christian traditions. In the Jewish tradition, a chair is left empty for the prophet Elijah at the

⁵⁷ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 218.

⁵⁸ *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

Passover Seder. In Christianity the empty chair is a reference to the mercy seat immediately above the Ark of the Covenant.⁵⁹

Even with a passing glance, a viewer will notice that there are two different scales of chairs located within the matrix of precise rows; one set of chairs is scaled to that of an adult, while the smaller ones are sized for a child at 75% scale (Figure 1.29). The effect is chilling: a material reminder of the deaths of 19 children. Hans Butzer remarks that “the decision to have these two sizes of chairs was very important in helping people to recognize the innocence of the victims is just so overpowering. And the fact that you have these small children that are folded into this senseless act of violence is all the more painful.”⁶⁰ Butzer’s comments implies that while everyone within the Federal Building was undeserving of the suffering that McVeigh inflicted, the children were more innocent than the adults. This qualification seems to have permeated the entire memorial complex where much of the discourse focuses upon the children. (The Children’s Area within the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial will be discussed shortly within this chapter.) The cost to the children was dramatized by the iconic image of the body of Baylee Almon being cradled in firefighter Chris Fields’ arms (Figure 1.30). That single image dominated the news coverage of the event, both nationally and internationally, and set the emotional tone of concern and consternation for the child victims of the bombing for years following (Figure 1.31).

All the chairs are constructed of similar materials, a combination of glass that forms the chairs base, metal (the elongated chair backs and seat frame) and stone (the seat insert). The chair’s base consist of architectural strength glass, with each consisting of four separate panes of

⁵⁹ “It was regarded as a throne-seat above which the LORD was invisibly enthroned.” Exodus 25:17-22. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, eds. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 102.

⁶⁰ Hans Butzer in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

hand blown glass, and approximately an inch and a half thick.⁶¹ The glass panels were then subsequently machine milled to finish the edges of the glass plate, and on each a victim's name was etched upon the front of each glass panel. At night, the chairs are internally illuminated at their bases by a cluster of light emitting diodes (LEDs) attached to the stone insert that forms the "seat panel" of the chair. Each chair is linked to a low wattage landscape lighting conduit that is connected to a nearby light sensor. As darkness falls at the end of the day, the bases of each chair flicker to life in unison with the lighting of the Survivor's Tree, the Gates of Time, as well as stair and pathway lights throughout the memorial. The original incandescent lights were replaced in 2008 by the LED lights (which last longer, thus reducing the necessity for frequent bulb replacement).⁶² The LED lights are more energy efficient, and in turn, significantly reduce the heat load of each glass chair. The original low wattage landscape lighting was specified because of the volume of foot traffic, and the desire for absolute safety. Neil Deal, FASLA and a principal at Sasaki Associates (the landscape architect of record) explains, "because the chairs were metal they wanted to minimize the chance of anyone receiving a shock."⁶³ However, with so many lights, an excessive number of transformers was required. But the designers absolutely wanted to avoid having the transformers visibly present out of fear that they would be misread as allusions to an electric chair, and by proxy, a reference to Timothy McVeigh.⁶⁴

Despite the apparent similarities of the chairs, the hand blown glass base makes each chair unique.⁶⁵ Torrey Butzer describes the glass panels as "each having their own unique

⁶¹ Originally, the chairs were specified to be made out a combination of stone and glass, however, the use of stone as a texture and a material was too reminiscent of a headstone, so bronze was substituted instead. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 220.

⁶² This conversion from low voltage standard landscape lighting to light emitting diodes (LEDs) within the chairs, was performed by Roberts Step Lite Systems of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. www.robertsstepelite.com

⁶³ O'Connell, "Gates of Memory," p. 77.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ The dimensions of these glass panels are, for an adults' chair, 21.5 inches high and 15.5 inches wide, which when fully assembled, form a 15.5 inch square base. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, "Chair

character,” and that “even though they look the same, they are in a smaller scale very different to the next (one), representing a 168 very different people.”⁶⁶ But in fact, the variations present within each panel are almost undetectable. Instead, it is the naming of the dead that gives each chair its symbolic power.

The glass was the work of John Lewis of Oakland, California, who describes his emotional reaction: “At the early stages we were just pressing the glass, they were just units that fit together...but when the names were sandblasted on, we became aware of the horrific tragedy. To see them (the bases) lined up, and realize how many lives were destroyed brought back the senselessness of it all.”⁶⁷ Not everyone sees the chairs in such a revealing light. Doss quotes *The New York Times* architectural critic, Michael Kimmelman, who dismissed the gesture as “a grid of chairs lined up like Donald Judd’s boxes.”⁶⁸

The bronze component of the chair back contains a narrow opening, just 3 inches wide, and 24 inches tall, which mimics the opening within the Gates of Time, (See Figure 1.34 and Figure 1.35 for comparison). The “gap” present within each bronze chair replicates the passageway that each visitor has passed through if he/she entered the memorial via the Gates of Time. This gap is not just a symbolic reference, but is also useful design feature as it encourages

Dimensions,” (Figure 1.32).

http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/uploads/documents/OKCNM_Cutler%20Math%20Unit.pdf, 12. On top of that square glass base fits a 2-inch tall bronze lip, which is also permanently connects the bronze chair back to the seat. (Figure 1.33). The bronze components for the chairs, including the chair backs were cast at A.R.K. Ramos in Oklahoma City. http://www.arkramos.com/default_new.asp Source, “Construction Elements From Near and Far...” Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/uploads/documents/Construction%20Elements1.pdf> (Accessed Jan. 3, 2012). This bronze component not only secures the tall chair back to the glass base, but it also allows a 14 inch square piece of granite to be inserted into it to form the “seat” of the chair. Each chair stands 57 inches tall and is 15.5 inches wide, by 15.5 inches deep.

⁶⁶ Torrey Butzer, in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

⁶⁷ Chip Johnson, “Glass Maker Helps Honor Blast Victims / Oklahoma City Site Includes His Work.” *SF Gate*, April 25, 2000. http://articles.sfgate.com/2000-04-25/news/17644041_1_high-schools-chairs-glass (Accessed November 21, 2011)

⁶⁸ Doss, *Memorial Mania*, p. 137.

the placement and the securing of objects that are placed as mementos at each chair (Figure 1.37).⁶⁹

All of the chairs are arranged facing northwards towards The Reflecting Pool, the Survivor's Tree, and the Memorial Museum. This orientation of the chairs indicates the direction from which the bomb blast radiated from the north, as if attempting to capture the instantaneous turning of inquisitive heads towards the rumble of the blast, a fraction of a second before the shockwave hit. The "design clue" indicates the direction of the bomb's blast, but it does not offer any hint of where the truck bomb was parked, or any reference to the blast radius.⁷⁰ The arrangement and orientation of the chairs also creates an atmosphere of reciprocity with the series of low retaining walls that hold back the grade of the memorial on the northern side of the reflecting pool (Figure 1.38). This series of retaining walls are the default seating provided for visitors to view the memorial; regardless of whether he/she are by themselves or part of a large tour group, the primary visitor uses of these wall is for seating (Figures 1.39, 1.40, and 1.41). Prior to the fifteenth anniversary ceremony, museum staff passed out small, folding cushions, complete with the logo of the memorial museum, to the audience to provide a small degree of relief from the hard sitting surface during the hour long event (Figure 1.42). When large groups gather on the retaining walls, it is as if the dead are seated looking at the living, as the living stare back across the reflecting pool toward the empty chairs. This visual relationship occurs on a slight diagonal, placing the field of empty chairs slightly to the west. This placement has a

⁶⁹ During the 15th anniversary of the bombing, memorial staff have a number of large white "zip ties" that they offer to the families and friends of those killed as a method of attaching objects to the chairs without fear of scratching or otherwise harming the finish of the bronze. (See Figure 1.36).

⁷⁰ The National Park Service lists the approximate placement of the truck bomb as being located where the fourth loblolly pine is planted moving westward from the 9:01 Gate. The question is number ten on their list of Frequently Asked Questions. The National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/okci/faqs.htm> (accessed November 3, 2011).

connotation that the dead are symbolically closer to the western horizon line, which has long been associated with the setting sun, and the passing of life.

The choice of glass for the memorial chairs is a critical aspect of the overall design, suggesting that the chairs are fragile and therefore not capable of supporting the weight of a human body. Yet they were specifically designed to do just that.⁷¹ In my numerous visits to the memorial, only once have I witnessed anyone actually seated upon any of the chairs. That occurred during the fifteenth anniversary of the bombing, with a small child seated on an adult chair (Figure 1.43). However, there are accounts of family members sitting upon the lost loved one's chair and having conversations with the departed, and even playing the guitar for them.⁷² The choice of polished granite for the seat plate for the chairs, combined with the ramrod straight back further discourages sitting. The choices of construction materials, the rigid profile of the chairs, and the specific identification of each individual victim on every chair, articulates that the chairs should not be casually used, and should remain empty. Furthermore, it is doubtful that anyone unrelated to the deceased would even contemplate sitting on one of the sculptural chairs, since merely walking through the expansive field of glass and bronze feels like a disturbance and a violation of a sacred space. Krinke notes that on her visit to the memorial in the days immediately preceding its official dedication, most of the temporary ground cover of Winter Rye had been worn away, and consequently, visitors were asked not to walk within the area. She describes the following scene, "when not allowed to walk on the lawn, visitors had to approach a park ranger, give the name of the person's chair that they wanted to visit, and enter the sacred ground. This was actually quite beautiful to witness."⁷³ This choreography of asking for

⁷¹ Conversation with John Lewis, glass artist on November 21, 2011.

⁷² O'Connell, "Gates of Memory," p. 74.

⁷³ Krinke, "Perspective," p. 94. I did not witness this choreography during my multiple visits to the memorial grounds in 2008 and 2010.

permission, and then a personal escort to a chair enforces the sanctity of the field, although it is only enacted at times when the Zoysia sod is visibly worn. Each chair provides a specific location for family to visit and to remember their lost loved one, while also placing their suffering within a larger, communal context of grief.

This is the ground where 168 people lost their lives in the worst act of terrorism inflicted in the U.S. by agents who were born and raised in the United States itself, and while the events of September 11, 2001, have since then directed attention away from Oklahoma City, the site still resonates with grief and loss. One of the concerns of the designers and family members was that each individual chair would be read as a grave marker, rather than a sign of physical absence. The preoccupation with the location of the human remains — “the memorial exactitude” — played a large role in this.⁷⁴ Specifically, how does a designer satisfy the desire for spatial accuracy that families demand concerning the loss of a loved one while also considering the passing trivial glance of a tourist? Linenthal details the amount of design development required on behalf of Hans and Torrey Butzer to ensure that the families were satisfied with their efforts:

As in every other part of this process, the final design bears the imprint of family members and survivors. Some felt the original plan for chairs of stone and glass too evocative of a tombstone, and straight backed chairs too severe. Consequently, chairs are made of bronze and glass, and chair backs are somewhat curved. Some family members questioned the Butzer’s plan to locate the names on the glass base (“primarily because we were interested in the illumination of the names at night from within the glass base,” Hans Butzer noted) and wanted the names placed near the top of the chair backs to be more visible. To others, however, this was also too much like a tombstone, and the names remained on the base.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ One of the functions that the Memorial provides is a central, civic location where all those killed by the explosion are identified as a collective loss, unlike the numerous cemeteries throughout Oklahoma City where the individual remains are buried. In the context of the cemeteries, the deceased is identified as an individual and as a part of a larger familial unit.

⁷⁵ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 220.

The lengthy process of design development involving family members eventually was successful, as the glass and bronze chairs have become regarded more as *altars*, than grave markers. The chairs have become destinations where prayers are offered, and where offerings are left behind. While the chairs are subject to similar material and cultural practices that would occur graveside the large communal gatherings that occur on the yearly anniversary of the bombing provide evidence that the chairs are central components of a social practice, not just private expressions of grief (Figure 1.44 and Figure 1.45). These offerings are so emotionally charged and endowed with meaning that any non-perishable item left on a chair is itemized, indexed and archived in perpetuity within the archive facilities within the memorial museum. This is an almost Sisyphean task for the archivists, as only two are employed at the Museum, with a significant amount of the collection and indexing performed under their supervision using volunteer labor.⁷⁶

The Reflecting Pool

Emerging from the 9:01 Gate of Time at the ground level of the Memorial, with the Field of Empty Chairs visible to the immediate left, the visitor is physically centered on the eastern edge of the expansive, reflecting pool (Figure 1.46). With its unhindered view of most of the memorial, the Reflecting Pool is an essential ordering device for the memorial grounds; yet it also acts as a physical obstacle that must be traversed in order to visit those commemorative elements. Hans Butzer describes the pool as “the very heart of the memorial space” and adds that “the way it is designed, had to play the role of helping to bring *order* to where there once was

⁷⁶ If this task was not herculean enough, this collection and archival process extends to the memory fence just outside the 9:03 Gate of Time, where passersby also leave mementos and notes to the deceased, their families and to the people of Oklahoma City. For a robust examination of collection and archival practices at locations of tragedy, see Joy Sather - Wagstaff's doctoral dissertation entitled, *Tragedies, Tourism and the Making of Commemorative Places* (University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign), for a comprehensive overview.

chaos” (emphasis added).⁷⁷ The Reflecting Pool, which forms the very spine of the memorial, is fittingly scaled to evoke the street that used to occupy the location. He further remarks that, “the edge at which all the different characters of the story meet—the Gates of Time, the Field of Empty Chairs, the Survivor’s Tree, the city skyline—all of these elements are reflected in the pool.”⁷⁸

The pool is 318 feet long by 53 feet wide, and despite the appearance of significant depth, it is only three quarters of an inch deep.⁷⁹ It becomes even shallower toward the pool’s edges, where the depth of the water ranges from half an inch to three eighths of an inch.⁸⁰ The construction details, and the overall craft of the pool is remarkable, especially the tight leveling tolerances required to establish a uniform depth over such a large surface area. The rationale for this thin sheet of water was not due to a concern for professional liability, but the desire to have the pool be as reflective and still as possible.⁸¹ The pool becomes a giant mirror that conveys a sense of stillness and even timelessness (reinforced by the Gates of Time), as well as providing an optical *doubling* of the visitors to the site itself. When standing at the pool’s edge and looking down at its surface, one sees one’s own reflection, a doubling that gives one the opportunity to literally be “beside oneself”— to be outside oneself — “because of rage or grief.”⁸² One popular

⁷⁷ Hans Butzer in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

⁷⁸ Meg Calkins, “Reflecting on a Tragedy: Innovative detailing and precise construction have produced a dramatic pool in Oklahoma City.” *Landscape Architecture*, September (2000), Volume 90, No. 9. p. 24.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ The designers expected that children would attempt to walk in the reflecting pool, so the surface of the black granite tiles that forms the surface of the reflecting pool were all uniformly thermally treated to establish a slight raised texture to prevent slipping on what appears to be an incredibly slick expanse of material. The depth was also determined through experimentations to ensure that the winds that were present on site did not ripple or otherwise disturb the surface area of the pool thus interfering with the reflective surface.

⁸² Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, (London and New York, Verso Press, 2004), p. 24. Butler argues that the legal definitions that provide victims with both legitimacy and recourse, fail utterly to capture the grief and rage which “tear us from ourselves, bind us to others, transports us, undo us, and implicate us in lives that are not our own, irreversibly, if not fatally.” Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 25.

photographic strategy at the site is to quickly capture passersby as they walk past the Gates of Time, which results in an image of people appearing to walk on water.⁸³

The reflective quality at the pool also has another purpose, according to Torrey Butzer: “when you look into the reflecting pool you see the face of one changed forever.”⁸⁴ This raises a critical question: Who is the intended audience for the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial?⁸⁵ When a family member who lost a loved one during the bombing looks at his/her own reflection, he/she can have a different reaction than that of a tourist who has no ties to the state, and experienced no loss from the tragedy. The only way that this statement could operate is if by merely experiencing the Outside Symbolic Memorial (and perhaps the Memorial Museum), a visitor could also be fundamentally “changed forever” in similar ways to the grieving family member. Personal engagement with memorials, cemeteries, battlefields, and other sites of tragedy can prompt remembrance of our own lived pasts— such as recalling where we were when we learned that a passenger plane had hit the World Trade Center, or what we were doing at the moment we heard that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated; that uncanny experience forms a new association or new memory that links the lived past to the present moment. However this process of tapping into memory is far different from the emotionally traumatic experience of losing a spouse, child or sibling. Visitation to monuments and memorials dedicated to events that

⁸³ Refer to Figure 1.47, and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/vogelium/2329477433/>, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/67337342@N08/6739794781/>, and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/hankster123/4589594971/> for further examples of the popular desire to capture this iconographic scene. (All flicker accounts accessed July 13, 2012.) The *act* of walking on water, has tremendous religious symbolism for Christians; see Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, and John 6:16-21. All three gospels reference the necessity of faith in Christ. This “walking on water” effect is also apparent when early morning maintenance is being performed and the surface area of the reflecting pool is brushed to remove debris and spare change from its surface (Figure 1.48 and 1.49).

⁸⁴ Torrey Butzer in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

⁸⁵ This statement has two possible meanings. The first is that through the act of the bombing everyone “was changed forever” by virtue of the world itself being fundamentally altered. The other possibility, and the one that I believe Butzer was attempting to articulate, was that through the visitation of the Memorial and the Museum, a visitor will be “changed forever” by virtue of experiencing this particular, tragic place.

occurred prior to lived experience are even more difficult to reframe conceptually, as the past seems as alien and remote as “a foreign country.”⁸⁶

However, if Butzer’s comment is directed towards those residents of Oklahoma City who experienced the loss of a loved one, or suffered by being in the area at the time of detonation, then why is this memorial complex identified as The Oklahoma City *National* Memorial and Museum? The Federal Building is the local representation of the United States Government within Oklahoma City, and a large percentage of the victims were Federal employees. On that basis, Congress contributed to the final cost of construction. This however sidesteps the essential question of, who the memorial is for. Is it for those who wish to remember the people who worked in the building? For the parents of the deceased children? Questions like “what is being commemorated by this memorial”, “who is the intended audience” and “who is being remembered here” are the essential questions addressed in this dissertation. The answers are not obvious.

Hans Butzer describes the reflecting pool as representing the loss of loved ones, “the blackness symbolizing mourning.” He continues: “the elements are abstract, but they say so much...we’re saying enough without saying too much.”⁸⁷ The stillness and reflective quality of the water sitting on top of an obsidian black granite tiles is one of the more powerful conditions that a visitor can observe within the memorial. The pool was designed to provide the calming and barely audible sound of water lapping against the taut edges of the pool. Torrey Butzer states,

⁸⁶ Lowenthal articulates the power of nostalgia for the past that makes it so compelling and also so limiting: . “People flock to historic sites to share recall of the familiar, communal reflections enhancing personal reminiscence. What pleases a nostalgist is not just the relic but his own recognition of it, not so much the past itself as its supposed aspirations, less the memory of what actually was than what was once thought possible.” David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (New York and Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 8. However, there is no such nostalgia or personal recognition to events that occurred outside one’s own lived experience.

⁸⁷ O’Connell, “Gates of Memory,” pp. 77, 92.

We didn't design a big splashy fountain, where it was very obvious how the water was falling and where the sound was coming from, but rather something that was more mysterious. You hear this calming sound of water flowing but you can't quite tell where it is coming from. I think that is part of the mystery that we wanted to provide.⁸⁸

The sense of "mystery" and the gentle, faint sound of water lapping and falling was intended to help provide a sense of healing, of quiet reflection, to "provide a peaceful background to our thoughts."⁸⁹ It required hydrological engineering in the form of four large underground basins that collect the water from each quadrant of the reflecting pool constantly throughout the day and night, aided by the pumping mechanism hidden below grade adjacent to the concrete footings of the 9:01 Gate of Time (Figure 1.50).⁹⁰ The placement of the pumps was to conceal any necessary infrastructure that might distract or interfere with the memorial's sense of tranquility. Hans Butzer describes the placement of the pumps and the hydrological circulation system as a "wonderful mystery," where "the visitor would marvel at the continual flow of water, yet be incapable of discerning the water's source, as if it was coming up from the earth itself."⁹¹ The flow of the water in the reflecting pool is barely noticeable at the perimeter edges of the pool where the width of the overlap between the adjacent mortared but irregularly cut sandstone pavers and the rill of the pool's edge is just half an inch wide. The narrow distance sometimes becomes clogged by the fallen conical fruit of the adjacent Loblolly pines that line the perimeter of the Field of Empty Chairs, causing the pool to overflow onto the adjacent sandstone walkway (Figure 1.51).⁹² The persistent edge is where the water flows back into the four holding basins to be re-circulated after it runs through a series of treatment filters, and pumps back to the center of

⁸⁸ Torrey Butzer, in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

⁸⁹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 217.

⁹⁰ The total volume of water circulated by the four, "Olympic sized" pumps is 70, 000 gallons every twenty minutes or 3, 500 gallons per minute. Source: <http://www.nps.gov/okci/faqs.htm>

⁹¹ Calkins, "Reflecting on a Tragedy," p. 24.

⁹² The sandstone used for the walkway is from west central Arkansas and was chosen to show a fragmentation, but also a reorientation and a unification back into a cohesive whole.

the reflecting pool, where it is then forced through small gaps between the three and a half by four foot black granite tiles that form the bottom surface of the pool, radiates out in all directions along that plane of still water.⁹³ The overall effect is noteworthy for the continual flow of water from a source not visible, seemingly from a spring deep within the earth. Krinke says that the Reflection Pool's location between the Field of Empty Chairs and the Survivor's Tree is an "arrangement (that) serves to link the living to the deceased."⁹⁴ She continues, "The pool of water between these two precincts is especially effective when one contemplates the role that water has played symbolically in different cultures: passage, transition, purification, transformation."⁹⁵ Water is a fundamental human necessity for sustaining life, has been used to represent economic and political wealth and power, and has strong religious connotations with birth (and rebirth), physical and spiritual purification, and even pilgrimage. Given the rich cultural meanings associated with water, it would have been surprising not to see it utilized within the memorial design.

The Rescuer's Orchard

Located on the northern side of the reflecting pool, spanning from the outer edge of the memorial periphery by the 9:03 Gate of Time to the eastern edge on the far side of the Survivor's Tree, is the Rescuer's Orchard. Its 63 deciduous trees include 13 'Oklahoma' Redbuds (*Cercis Canadensis* "Oklahoma"), 16 clump (multistem) Amur Maples (*Acer Ginnala*) (that replace the Mexican Plums [*Prunus Mexicana*] originally specified in the planting plan), and 34 Chinese Pistache trees (*Pistacia Chinensis*), the orchard is the largest and most densely vegetated area of

⁹³ Calkins, "Reflecting on a Tragedy," p. 24.

⁹⁴ Krinke, "Perspective," p. 95.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

the memorial grounds (Figure 1.52 for the planting plan).⁹⁶ Bisecting the Orchard is the sinuous sandstone walkway that guides a visitor from the western 9:03 Gate of Time to the entrance of the Museum, located on the western side of the Journal Records Building (Figure 1.53). The orchard is arranged in a series of linear planting lines that are consistent on either side of the pedestrian path. While in some sense this seems like an orchard of consistently spaced trees, because of the different sizes of trees planted, the orchard effect is dramatically undermined. Krinke noted that “the Rescuer’s Orchard and the Children’s Area are the weak links in the memorial sequence. They don’t contribute to the primary design moves of the project—the Gates of Time, the Reflecting Pool, and the Field of Empty Chairs— and they aren’t strong spaces on their own.”⁹⁷ The name — The Rescuer’s Orchard — evokes a working landscape of fruit trees, a place that might have nourished the volunteers who came from around the world to assist Oklahoma City in its hour of need. The main narrator of the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour, Linda Cavanaugh, describes the Rescuer’s Orchard in glowing terms, “The Rescuer’s Orchard is a living tribute of fruit and flowing trees. It honors the thousands of volunteers that rushed to Oklahoma City in the aftermath of the bombing.”⁹⁸ Unfortunately the number of plantings and the size of the trees does not evoke “thousands of volunteers,” and the linear planting plan offers little variation to traditional, institutional planting plans. Given the urgent call to which the volunteers responded, a more dramatic planting plan could have made the Rescuer’s Orchard as powerful as the Field of Empty Chairs.

⁹⁶ The planting plan originally called for the Mexican plums to be planed in four rows, with each row having four trees spaced 25’-2” on center. It is not indicated why these trees were replaced by the Amur maples, but most likely it was because of limited availability in the area at the time. As per L-1, Planting plan, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.

⁹⁷ Krinke, “Perspective,” p. 95.

⁹⁸ Linda Cavanaugh, in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

Torrey Butzer describes the selection of the Oklahoma Redbud: “we chose (them) to surround the Survivor’s Tree because of their color. They bloom in April, they are beautiful, and they helped us during that time when the bombing happened. We were remembering that every year in April and we had these redbuds and their brilliant colors to comfort us in some way, to help us remember people who came to help.”⁹⁹ While the Butzers did “surround” the Survivor’s Tree with the Oklahoman Redbud, the trees appeared to be significantly smaller than the 3.5” to 4” caliper that were originally specified at the time of their planting, and their position near an almost 100 year old, fifty foot tall American Elm disappoints (Figure 1.54). Hans Butzer justifies the choice of plant material solely by their colors:

The Survivor’s Tree, which also changes colors with the season quite beautifully. Brilliant bright yellow, and so around the brilliant yellow we picked the pistache trees that have a fiery red color, and so it was very much about reminding people that life has its cycles, and that there are good times, and that there are bad times, and we always have the next season to look forward to... to see if we can become stronger.¹⁰⁰

While the spring flowers and fall color are important aspects of a tree’s characteristics, habit, growth rate, and shade canopy also merit consideration. The Survivor Tree, which provides some degree of relief from the hot Oklahoma sun, is one of the few locations on the memorial grounds where one can take refuge.

The planting plan of the trees to the western side of the walkway that leads to the entrance of the memorial museum is predictable, pedestrian, and monotonous. The ordering of tree species from the walkway northward is: pistache, maple, pistache, maple, pistache, pistache, maple, maple, and pistache. The absence of a shrub layer further makes the area a bland landscape, deterring visitors from exploring the site further. Even the two sitting areas are little more than token gestures, not places where anyone would actually want to linger. The absence of

⁹⁹ Torrey Butzer, in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

¹⁰⁰ Hans Butzer, in the *Outdoor Symbolic Memorial Walking Tour*.

shade combined with the strong southwest sun heating the cut sandstone benches make them uncomfortable to sit for any length of time. The addition of Amur maples along one side of the two narrow brick pathways perpendicular to the curvilinear walk are a welcome addition, as their multi-stem character is a welcome break in an otherwise repetitive, single stem landscape.¹⁰¹ However, these secondary walkways are not intended to be major circulation routes into or out of the memorial but provides access to a smaller scaled sitting area that offers an intimate setting for conversations within groups of two or three, or for individual reflection (Figure 1.55). The multi-stem habit of the Amur Maples assists in this creation of a slightly more private and intimate atmosphere; it offers a welcome relief to the otherwise open and expansive scale of the rest of the memorial.

The benches in the Rescuer's Orchard are precisely cut blocks of sandstone. However, with their alignment along the northern edge of the brick pathways does not encourage social interaction or permit face to face conversation. This is awkward because that such an area would seem to be inherently *social*, about people helping people, not a solitary space where it is difficult to even make eye contact to the person next to you.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty with the Rescuer's Orchard is that it lacks a defined edge and unified cohesive character. It appears to be contained by the western perimeter of the adjacent streetscape, rather than establishing its own limits. The orchard spans the sinuous main walkway, yet the selection plantings on either side of the walkway differ, thus disrupting the experience of walking *through* an orchard. While the spacing and placement of plantings are consistent within the rhythm and meter of the orchard established near the Survivor's Tree, the

¹⁰¹ The paving material also changes with these to perpendicular walkways, changing from the sandstone, to brick (mortared in place, using a running bond pattern.)

change from Oklahoma Redbud to Amur Maple, disrupts the sense of place, reducing the possible scale of the Rescuer's Orchard area west of the main pathway into a mere patch.

Mark Bays, the Urban Forestry Coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, and the official who was placed in charge of the care and recovery of the Survivor's Tree, offered insight into many of the planting changes that occurred within the memorial site. In my conversation with Bays, he noted that the original design concept called for apple and pear trees to be used, to highlight the idea of both *sustenance* and *labor* on the part of the various rescue teams from around the country that came to assist in the aftermath of the bombing. Bays recalls that Hans Butzer saw the trees as alluding to the fruits of the rescuers' labor, and how the presence of the rescuers sustained the hopes of the citizens of the City through their actions.¹⁰² But Bays had to advise the designer that such trees, although symbolically rich, had little real chance of surviving, let alone flourishing to the point of fruit production in the hot and urban conditions within and surround the memorial site. Hans and Torrey Butzer followed Bays' advice and changed the specification to trees better adapted to the conditions of the site: Chinese Pistache, Mexican Plums, and Oklahoma Redbuds.¹⁰³ The Amur Maples were chosen as the replacements for the Mexican Plums, partially because of their ability to tolerate the poor soils found on the site and their low maintenance, but also because of the shift in scale that they provide. Bays notes that this is especially true in areas surrounding the Children's Area, as the maples are multi-stemmed, and grow at a much slower rate than the originally specified plums.

¹⁰³ Ironically, Bays thinks that the amount of care that was present within the memorial grounds ultimately led to having to replace the Mexican plums in 2004. "The amount of maintenance within the memorial is incredible, and if the Mexican plums were planted just as a street tree like they were in Dallas (Texas) at the time, I think that they would have done just fine. However, because of the amount of watering that occurs, in addition to fertilization treatments, the plums were probably suffering under all that kindness." Telephone conversation with Mark Bays held on January 27, 2012.

The Children's Area

One of the most emotionally provocative elements of the memorial is the area immediately in front to the entranceway of the Memorial Museum, known as the Children's Area. The space, approximately 1,250 square feet in size, has six large slate pavers which provide a series of large, blank "chalkboards" for the use of visiting children (Figure 1.56). A container of colored chalk, provided by the memorial museum staff, is laid at the center of slight retaining wall immediately in front of the main entrance, encouraging the children to draw and write to express what they are thinking and feeling (Figure 1.57). At the start of each day, maintenance crews wash away the last day's artworks (usually messages of concern, solace and prayer) to allow for new messages (Figure 1.58). Children often ignore the chalkboards and express themselves in a much larger area than originally intended (Figure 1.59).

Overlooking the area is a tiled wall that stands three and a half feet tall, by thirty feet long and assists in keeping pedestrian traffic into and out of the Museum from disrupting the Children's Area. The wall is low enough to comfortably lean against to watch the children's activity below. The Children's Area is slightly submerged compared to the finished elevation of the area into the entrance (approximately 24" in total) to create a sense of enclosure and safety for the children. The central span of the wall changes from hand painted ceramic tile to a wrought iron fence with 3" spacers to allow a clear line of visible access from the street to the entrance of the memorial museum (Figure 1.60). The iron fence, twelve feet long, also allows the children who play in the area the constant visual assurance of their parent or other caretaker. The tiles that adhere to the wall were crafted by school children across America. Immediately after the bombing, Janet Langsam, then Director of the Westchester County Art Council, contacted

her friend Jackie Jones, the Director of the Arts Council of Oklahoma City to see if the children of New York could reach out and help the children of Oklahoma City. Her chosen medium was that of ceramic tile, hand painted by “children sending messages of hope and caring to other children.”¹⁰⁴ Using her connections with other arts directors, Langsam collected over 5,000 tiles, which the World Organization of China Painters kiln-fired. Just under half of the 5,000 tiles were used for the finished wall in front of the entrance to the memorial museum, with the extras being housed in the museum’s archive for future use, or to replace tiles that become broken on the wall over time.

The Children’s Area is a particularly powerful example of a created *social* space, where the conversations between children and between adults shape the social mores of behavior but also help to form the understanding of the April 19, 1995, bombing. The messages left by the children in chalk are both compelling and revealing, and coincide with the “take home” message of the memorial and the memorial museum. Messages that indicate a presence or witnessing are commonly noted. Some are as simple as a child’s name scrawled with the date. Others consist of an almost prehistoric gesture of tracing one’s hand as indication of presence. Other messages communicate regret and sorrow that such an awful tragedy had to occur, and the regretful accounting that some people lost their lives. Still more messages reveal religious teachings, quoting biblical scriptures such as John 3:16 (Figure 1.61) and Job1:21 (Figure 1.62) which not only place the children as authors within a specific religious tradition (Christianity) but also place their comments within a larger philosophical and theological framework.

¹⁰⁴ “Symbols of Hope”, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/uploads/documents/Construction%20Elements1.pdf> (Accessed November 14, 2011). It is noteworthy that this effort to “help” was through an existing personal relationship, and was specifically aimed as an activity for children to express their emotional states (sorrow, grief, sadness) and offering comfort to an extended peer group (the children of Oklahoma City) in an effort to reduce any sense of social isolation. The incorporation of the children’s ceramic tiles within the design of a Federal memorial is unprecedented.

The difficulty that underlies this particular area is that these statements from children have a conceptual power over all who read them. The preoccupation with the loss of social innocence and the tragic loss of children has always dominated the conversation about what occurred in Oklahoma City. The reality, as bleak as it is, is that while nineteen children died in the bombing, they only account for about eleven per cent of the total victims. The inordinate preoccupation with the deaths of children, constantly portraying them as innocent victims, dominated both the tone and the content of the news media within Oklahoma City, and the nation. It reached a point where some survivors, those who lost spouses and parents, became irate at the ceaseless media attention on the topic of “lost little ones.” A letter to the editor from Denver helps to capture some of the frustration that this willful blindness caused within families and friends who also lost people in the bombing. The letter in its entirety states;

I was drawn to televised news reports of the Oklahoma City disaster day by day — an act by deranged humans who, as an expression of hatred and cowardice, destroyed the lives of many, while erasing the image of tranquility associated with mid-America. The news media placed emphasis on the children who were lost, children who had no cause, no politics, no enemies, and no chance. Children who were left in a safe place to be cared for while their parents earned wages to support their families. I lost a child at Oklahoma City, too. Not a product of my genes, but a child I loved, a child I will not forget.

She liked candy, fried chicken and fun. She laughed easily and her seemingly limitless energy placed her in the center of activity. She sat upon my lap only briefly until her shining eyes spotted some other place or thing to occupy her quick mind. I recall the Easter when she was 3. We made colored eggs, and I hid them in the backyard. Gleefully she took a basket and quickly found them. Once the eggs were collected she asked that they be hidden again, and again, and again. When evening arrived the eggs were cracked, mashed and broken, but she had great fun and so did I. One cool October night her dad and I escorted her on a trick-or-treat mission through the neighborhood. I drew my coat close to ward off the cold night air; her enthusiasm kept her warm.

It seems only a brief moment in our lives passed until I watched a beautiful lady march down the aisle on the arm of her dad. She caught my eye, and we exchanged smiles. At her wedding reception she was a whirlwind of activity, sharing her bubbly personality with all.

When she applied for employment and there was no position available, an astute manager created one. Her personality and love of people came through. A week and a day passed before an Oklahoma City rescue crew identified the body of Kimberly Klaus Burgess, age 29. Like the children, she had no cause, no politics, no enemies, and no chance. I am one of many who mourn the loss of a child, the girl and the lady I will remember as Kimmie. — Harry McMullen.¹⁰⁵

The placement of the children's area in front of the main entrance to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum entrance makes logistical sense, as the public washroom and drinking fountain are located nearby. It also provides a clearly defined play area for children in a landscape where, because of its quasi-sacred and commemorative nature, it might not be appropriate for children's play. Having the "chalk boards" or "blank slates" in front of the entrance seems to oversimplify the wide range of complex emotional responses to the tragic event. Regret, anger, guilt, envy and shame are rarely expressed in the children's works. Instead only childish versions of sadness, sorrow and hope are articulated. It is difficult not to feel that a visitor's emotional state is being manipulated by the presence of the messages concerning loss, death, and trauma. To read narratives concerning the children's own emotional states, in their own writing as one enters the memorial museum somehow trivializes the contents of the museum even before one steps inside. Doss and Linenthal have both written extensively on the role that trauma therapy has played in the creation of this Memorial and Museum. The Children's Area is an extension of that form of therapy, but one primarily based in art therapy where children are actively encouraged to draw and represent their anxieties and worries via artistic expression.¹⁰⁶ This is not to criticize the necessity of providing effective mental health services to children in need of them, but the placement of the 'chalkboards' makes me wonder if the child's visit to the memorial museum (whose primary narrative structure promotes and depends upon a form of

¹⁰⁵ Harry McMullen, "I, too, lost a child in [the] *sic*. Oklahoma City bombing— one I will never forget," *Rocky Mountain News*, Sunday, June 18, 1995. Letter to the Editor.

¹⁰⁶ Edith Kramer, *Art as Therapy with Children* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972).

historical reenactment of the tragedy) is the inspiration for their artwork, or if it is the event itself.¹⁰⁷ To put it another way, are the displays and the visitor's reenactments that occur within the Museum the actual "trauma" to which the children then react, and subsequently "work out" in their drawings and messages in the Children's Area? The Children's Area starts to become a location where parents and the memorial institution itself can silently inquire whether or not the memorial museum and its exhibits were sufficient in expressing its overly optimistic take home message of hope, recovery and resistance.

The Survivor's Tree

The spirit of this city and this nation will not be defeated; our deeply rooted faith sustains us.

— Inscription on the stone wall facing the Survivor's Tree.

After the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Murrah Federal Building, a single American elm (*Ulmus americana*) tree took on a special significance to the citizens of Oklahoma City. Though the powerful blast sheared the majority of leaves from its branches, its bark was pox marked and riddled with shrapnel, its canopy set ablaze from a flaming hood of a car that landed in the upper branches of the tree's crown, the elm did not succumb to its extensive and serious wounds.¹⁰⁸ Originally a "volunteer" from when the site was primarily a residential area, scant attention had been paid to the tree in the decades leading up to the bombing.¹⁰⁹ Estimated at over ninety years

¹⁰⁷ Refer to Chapter 5 of this dissertation for more information concerning the role of reenactment within the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum.

¹⁰⁸ Details of the damage sustained by the elm tree was provided by Mark Bays in a telephone conversation held on January 27, 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Bays believes that the term "Survivor's Tree" is well earned, but not solely from the trauma caused by the bombing. Bays identifies no less than seven major events that the tree endured including the removal of the other few surrounding trees that were adjacent to it, the demolition of the homes that were present on site in the 1940's by heavy equipment, the significant re-grading of the site including the addition of three extra feet of soil, root compaction from when the area was transformed into a parking lot, the suffocating conditions that the asphalt on site caused (the paving went to the trunk of the tree itself) the significant root compression of having cars parked within the tree's drip line, break outs of Dutch Elm disease in the 1980's within Oklahoma City and the lack of water and general care of the tree with the parking lot. Telephone conversation with Mark Bays on January 27, 2012.

old, it was only after the bombing that a renewed interest developed in the location, condition, and even the meaning and purpose of the tree.¹¹⁰ Located 70 feet from the Journal Records Building's southern facade, and 120 feet west of N. Robinson Avenue, the tree stands some fifty feet tall in 2012, and the trunk is approximately twenty-four inches in diameter.¹¹¹ The Survivor's Tree is different from most American elms in that it is an excellent example of "prairie form" which indicates that while not as physically large as a typical elm of its age, the survivor's tree's branches are more open and spreading than the traditional upright and "vase" shaped form of the tree. The variation is attributed to the open and exposed location on the western border of the Eastern forest, where strong and prevalent winds often alter the traditional shapes of hardwoods.¹¹²

How did a self-seeding, volunteer, American elm tree, long neglected in a surface level parking lot on the periphery of Downtown Oklahoma City's Business District, suddenly become "a profound symbol of human resilience"?¹¹³ Bud Welch, father of bombing victim Julie Welch, noticed that a bulldozer that had been re-grading an area north of the former Federal Building had parked directly under the elm as he was making his way to a survivor and family support meeting nearby.¹¹⁴ A rumor had been circulating within the Oklahoma City that the Federal Bureau of Investigation intended to have the tree taken down in order to extract all possible evidence imbedded within its trunk and branches. Welch feared that the bulldozer indicated that

¹¹⁰ The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum *Memorial & Museum Guide* anthropomorphizes the tree stating that it "bears witnesses to the violence of April 19" and that it "now stands as a profound symbol of human resilience." In addition, Edward Linenthal refers to the elm as a "symbol of endurance." Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p.164.

¹¹¹ Telephone conversation with Mark Bays, January 27, 2012.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, *Memorial & Museum Guide*.

¹¹⁴ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p.172.

the tree would soon be removed from the site¹¹⁵ He made an impassioned plea to the rest of the survivors and family members, stating that his daughter used to park under the elm, and that it was “the only living thing left” on the site. The elm was soon referred to as “The Survivor’s Tree.”¹¹⁶ Work feverishly began to revitalize the tree from its severely compromised condition (Figure 1.63). So important was this single tree that it became incorporated into the final memorial scheme as a fundamental requirement of the international design competition rules that were in the process of being established. There were only two such critical resolutions established by the Memorial Task Force Committee, the group responsible for the establishment of the terms of the memorial competition as well as the construction, administration, and maintenance of the memorial museum. The committee stated:

The first resolution pertains to incorporating biographies and photos of the victims, and stories and photos of survivors within a memorial information center. The second resolution relates to incorporating within the Memorial Complex the “Survivor Tree” located in the south portion of the Journal Records Building Block.¹¹⁷

While such resolutions are common in providing guidance and clarity in the early stages of a project, they often diminish in importance as the design process progresses and the final design is established. This inclusion of the Survivor’s Tree as a fundamental element, at the insistence of a bereaved father, is a specific example of “the democratization of the memorial process” that Robert Johnson, the chairman of the Memorial Foundation, celebrated.¹¹⁸

The tree was in terrible shape, but the bomb blast was only partially to blame for its condition. While the blast did indeed cause obvious damage, the tree’s location in a parking lot

¹¹⁵ Conversation with Mark Bays confirmed that he had heard of a plan by the FBI to cut the tree down to search for further evidence in the wake of the bombing. Telephone Conversation, January 27, 2012.

¹¹⁶ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 172.

¹¹⁷ *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, The Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation. p. 12.

¹¹⁸ Robert M. Johnson’s witness testimony to the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands of the Committee on Resources United States House of Representatives on H.R. 1849, September 9, 1997.

had already caused a long, serious decline in its health. The heat of parking lot pavement reflected and absorbed sunlight, incurring a heat load. The limited the amount of soil available for new root growth and caused root compression with the daily parking of cars within the tree's drip line, and therefore directly upon the tree's existing roots. Mark Bays observed:

The tree was not dealt a great hand to begin with. It survived being surrounded by asphalt up to its trunk. It survived several waves of Dutch elm disease in Oklahoma City; it survived the blast from the bomb and fires from exploding cars around it; and it survived massive debris hurled into it from the force of the blast. It lost all of its leaves after the bombing, and it was not until [Bud] Welch took notice of it that there was any interest in saving the tree.¹¹⁹

Bays remains dumbfounded that the tree even survived until 1995: "To claim that it is the Survivor's Tree is a bit of a misnomer — this tree has survived *multiple* traumatic events, each of which could have easily killed the tree."¹²⁰ Only after the bombing did the citizens of Oklahoma City notice the American elm for the first time.

Given the design that the Butzers and Berg had originally submitted as part of their winning competition entry, Bays knew that he had to intervene to ensure that the design was modified to incorporate the best practices of urban forestry. The modifications that Bays suggested, and which were incorporated, were significant, and ran counter to traditional "business as usual" practices for the field of landscape construction.¹²¹ Bays, the Butzers, and

¹¹⁹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 172.

¹²⁰ Conversation with Mark Bays. January 27, 2012.

¹²¹ For example, because of the necessity of the memorial dedication happening on the fifth anniversary of the bombing, meant that most of the Loblolly pines had to be planted in the intense heat of August. Bays initially refused to consider such an option as he felt that such an unusual planting time would only lead to increased mortality rates for the pines. It was also a violation of traditional practice of having all the site's hardscape components (all necessary infrastructure such as foundations, walkways, lighting conduit, etc) installed prior to planting any vegetation. However, given the size of the pines, and the addition of the Gates of Time and the Reflecting Pool, the pine trees had to be planted well before that construction would occur as the site would have very limited access after such constructed components were installed. Bays relented about the planting time for the pines, however he insisted that if an August date was to be the deadline, that no tree could be planted on the memorial site after 10 am, that the tree delivery service had to extraordinary steps to ensure that the each individual tree's roots had to be constantly watered during transportation, and that he would personally oversee the entire process from the initial dig of the tree spade through to installation on site. Bays noted that the tree service that they

the contractors devised a support system that would distribute the entire weight of the surrounding the 36” tall, cut lannon stone wall that encircles the Survivor’s Tree as well as the paving material that the wall contains, off of the tree’s root system. Instead of establishing a traditional base for the area, usually a compressed gravel base and a poured concrete foundation, an intricate network of deep concrete piers was designed to act much like the floor joists in a home, upon which the wall would be constructed, and the paving beneath the Survivor’s Tree installed. (Figure 1.64) The 86 concrete piers ranged in size from 12” to 16” to 24” in diameter depending how close they would be placed to the central leader of the tree. All of the piers locations had to be hand dug to ensure that no insertion would interfere with the root system. Bays describes his relief when he and a crew started to dig the holes

We started off counting our blessings as we finished the first dozen or so holes. We had yet to run into any significant roots, and since elms normally have a fairly shallow root structure, by the time we hit a depth of three feet, we thought we were in the clear. But as the day went on, and more and more holes were dug, we started to get an uneasy feeling. We weren’t hitting *any roots*, not a single one. I was thinking of my own back yard and how I always seemed to hit a root within four inches of soil as soon as I started digging. I was left scratching my head, because by that time, we had holes surrounding the entire tree, at various distances from the trunk, and still never found *any* root system.¹²²

The roots of American elms are normally found within the first three feet of soil depth surrounding the tree, but it was only when his team dug past four feet did they discover their first root. Bays was surprised that the tree was still alive. In addition to water and nutrients, oxygen in the soil is a fundamental condition to allow for new root growth.¹²³ Given the depth at which the elm’s roots were found, the tree should have withered away. Bays believes that the elm, since it

used could have easily installed all the pine trees around the footprint of the Murrah Building in the course of a single day, however with the new stipulations that he required this process took a period of ten days.

¹²² Conversation with Mark Bays, January 27, 2012.

¹²³ “An oxygen level of 25% of the soil volume is considered good for root development. At 5% oxygen level growth stops, and at 2% the root’s decline and die.” Ohio Department of Natural Resources, “The Perils of Planting Trees Too Deeply”, <http://ohiodnr.com/forestry/urban/features/treeplanting/tabid/5462/Default.aspx>, Accessed January 30, 2012.

was a “volunteer” planting, must have been subject to a significant re-grading effort when the homes that were surrounding it were demolished, with approximately four feet of soil added to the existing grade of the site.¹²⁴ How did the elm manage to survive this drastic and invasive change? An old cistern nearly seven feet below grade was discovered within the Survivor’s Tree’s drip line. According to Bays: “When we hit the cistern, I realized that this is why the tree was able to make it for these years. When the homes were demolished, the wrecking crews tossed the bricks and other debris into the cistern. The voids and gaps present between the debris and the cistern itself was enough to allow the air exchange to occur for the roots of the elm.”¹²⁵

Unfortunately, the cistern was also in direct line of where a critical support pier for a plaza support joist was to be placed. As a key structural component to the cantilevered design engineered to carry and distribute the weight not only of the paving materials, the stone walls, but also the pedestrian traffic as well, the pier could not be moved. Therefore, a series of concrete piers were poured to depths of 10’ to 15’ depending upon location, upon which support joists were placed to allow a wall to be constructed around the Survivor’s Tree. Thus, there is no weight or pressure applied to the roots of the Survivor’s Tree because the area beneath the drip line, in effect, “floats” any weight evenly across the joists to ensure that no root damage occurs from compression (Figures 1.65, 1.66, and 1.67).¹²⁶

The Survivor’s Tree not only survives but, through the extensive care of certified arborists, it is thriving today. Trees are also often planted as “living memorials” as a standard commemorative practice, marking a particular event or person because the symbolism of

¹²⁴ A “volunteer” is plant that grows from self-sown seed. *A Technical Glossary of Horticultural and Landscape Terminology*. (Washington D.C., Horticultural Research Institute Inc., 1971), p. 84.

¹²⁵ Personal conversation with Mark Bays. January 27, 2012.

¹²⁶ Lippert Bothers, the construction contractor, poured an additional two foot concrete base within the cistern, inserted a 16” diameter steel pipe upright within the concrete, and then set a form for the concrete pier around that steel pipe. This allowed the cistern to remain in place, and avoided having additional concrete poured within it, which could have furthered interfered with the existing root system within the cistern itself. Source: personal conversation with Mark Bays, January 27, 2012.

planting a tree is an essential act of optimism, hope, and investment in the future.¹²⁷ The memorial museum, well aware of the symbolic power of *that* particular American elm, has not only gone through considerable effort to provide it with the ideal environmental growing conditions, but has also taken the step of identifying its genetic sequence and cloning the tree.¹²⁸ These cloned saplings are available for purchase from American Forests, and were offered to the first one hundred visitors to the memorial museum on the 15th anniversary of the bombing (Figure 1.68).¹²⁹

The Survivor's Tree is an important symbol and it also serves as a useful way-finding device within the larger memorial grounds. In its relatively close proximity to North Robinson Ave, it acts as a natural destination for people dropping off visitors who may require some physical assistance visiting the rest of the site. The surrounding stone "arc" around the base of the tree also provides seating along its interior perimeter, offering welcome shade from a largely exposed and open commemorative site. The location at the base of the tree is a popular meeting point, and through my observations, it is a destination for groups to use as a gathering point either pre- or post-tour of the site and memorial museum. It also is a performance stage, the preferred location for small concert series that the memorial museum organizes for visitors (Figure 1.69). Furthermore, the inscription on the stone wall encircling the Survivor's Tree offers public thanks to those who came to the assistance of the city during its time of need: "To the courageous and caring who responded from near and far, we offer our eternal gratitude." This

¹²⁷ Landscape historian Marc Treib notes that "Humans imbue landscape with memory using several vehicles, and these reveal attitudes about making landscape significant... Our memories of the dead must be specific, as must our reflections upon them: their lives are ours." Marc Treib, "The Landscape of Loved Ones," in *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design*, ed. Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn. (Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 2001), pp. 82-83.

¹²⁸ The cloned saplings are available for purchase for \$39.95 (plus shipping and handling, and the appropriate taxes) from the American Forests website.

very public message of gratitude is visible throughout the majority of the outdoor memorial, and provides a constant reminder to visitors that the City did not endure the tragedy alone.

The other notable use of the Survivor's Tree location is that of being the preferred site for the National Day of Prayer ceremonies in downtown Oklahoma City. The event, sponsored by a number of downtown churches, occurs on the first Thursday of May of each year as a "nationwide call to spiritual awakening."¹³⁰ While overtly Christian, the original intention of the federal law signed by President Harry S. Truman in 1952 was that people of all faiths and creeds would mark the day in the appropriate manner to their own beliefs, the National Day of Prayer languished as a celebration until President Ronald Reagan revived it in 1988. While it might seem that a religious service held on what appears to be federally owned and controlled land contravenes the spirit of the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States, in fact the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is an entirely privately run, non-profit 403 (B) institution.

The location of the Survivor's Tree as the site for the National Day of Prayer is not just based on the affirmation of faith present within the text on the stone wall that surrounds the Survivor's Tree. The Executive Director of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, Kari Watkins, was listed as a speaker during the ceremony, specifically offering a "special prayer" for family and gave institutional consent to have the service located at the base of the Survivor's Tree.¹³¹ LaDonna Battle, who lost both parents in the bombing, gave the scripture reading during the service. Even the pamphlet that indicates the order of service represents the

¹³⁰ <http://nationaldayofprayer.org/> Accessed January 14, 2012. The Chairman for the organization is Shirley Dobson, wife of Dr. James Dobson, founder of the Christian organization, Focus on the Family. The organization's mission statement reads, "To cooperate with the Holy Spirit in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible by nurturing and defending the God-ordained institution of the family and promoting biblical truths worldwide." <http://nationaldayofprayer.org/about/leadership/shirley-dobson-chairman/>

¹³¹ Watkins was not actually in attendance for the service, due to a family illness, but instead sent the Director of Operations, Joanne Riley in her place. Riley confirmed that the service had the full institutional support of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. (Personal Notes, May 6, 2010.)

Survivor's Tree with in the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial (Figure 1.70). The cover image shows the Survivor's Tree sprouting from the congressional dome in Washington, D.C., complete with the tree being encircled by six people holding hands, their heads bowed in prayer.

This location for a religious service is not a coincidence, as the inscription etched into the stone cladding on the interior of the arc of the Survivor Tree area indicates the strong role that religious faith plays in the region—"The spirit of this city and this nation will not be defeated; our deeply rooted faith sustains us." Unlike the message that is inscribed on the external portion of the wall that is the "public" expression of thanks, this "private" message is apparently intended for the citizens and residents of the city itself.¹³² The message, as brief as it is, performs a number of powerful, rhetorical moves. The statement links Oklahoma City to the nation state and thus elevates the relative importance of the city; it associates the attack on the city with being equivalent to an attack on America and therefore appeals to a sense of patriotism with the unarticulated implication that the attack originated and was perpetrated by an outside other. The message's defiant tone asserts the longevity and persistence of the city and the country well into the future, but most importantly it links the continuance of the city and nation's "spirit" to "our deeply rooted faith." While the wording of the statement could be a general, secular appeal, where "spirit" is akin to a *volksgeist*—"a spirit of the people" and "deeply rooted faith" could refer to any number of elements, ranging from an inherent optimism in the future, a belief in the "Oklahoma Standard," or even trust in the promise of America, the most straight-forward interpretation acknowledges the inherent religious content of the statement.¹³³ Thus, the text that implies a monoculture of believers because while "our" is read as plural, the use of the singular

¹³² Visitors to the Memorial who read the statement also gain access to this "insider status" usually reserved for locals.

¹³³ The Oklahoma Standard refers to the generous response that the citizens of the State showed in the aftermath of the bombing.

“faith” implies that there is only one faith being discussed.¹³⁴ While it is not articulated what they, the city or the nation, will be defeated *by*, the specific location of the text provides the necessary context to provide a coherent meaning. It implies that the citizens of Oklahoma City and the United States of America will not be defeated by an act of terrorism because of their fundamental religious belief. Ultimately, the text strongly implies that the United States of America is an inherently Christian nation, and that the April 19 bombing was a test of its Christian faith. This representation occurs because of the way that the citizens of Oklahoma City imply a single shared religious faith, and then project it onto the nation itself. While, of course, there are a multitude of religious faiths within Oklahoma City ranging from evangelical and mainline Protestant traditions, Catholicism, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam (among others), the apparent necessity for religious unity and social authority for speaking in one voice trumps existing diversity and religious pluralism.¹³⁵ This assumption contradicts the other assertions made by the Memorial Foundation concerning the inherently democratic processes used to establish the memorial complex.

The Survivor’s Tree is a popular, civic destination. Linenthal refers to the tree as “a symbol of endurance so important to family members and survivors that they insisted (that it)... remain as part of the permanent memorial” and is nothing short of “a people’s memorial.”¹³⁶ However, Doss, despite places the social popularity not upon the tree, but rather upon what the tree represents—the larger cultural ideal of survival. She observes: “Themes of survival are present... at the Oklahoma City National Memorial, whose grounds include the Survivor Tree,

¹³⁴ This uniformity of religious faith and practice is reinforced by the Pew Research Center’s study entitled, *Religion and Public Life Project*, which polled residents of Oklahoma State concerning their religious identity. 84% of respondents self identified as being part of a Christian tradition, with 12% indicating that they had no religious affiliation. Source: <http://religions.pewforum.org/maps>. (Accessed February 10, 2014).

¹³⁵ Despite a wide range of religious beliefs held by the residents of Oklahoma City, the four most popular include Evangelical Protestantism (53%), mainline Protestantism (16%), Catholicism (12%) and “Unaffiliated” (also 12%). Source: <http://religions.pewforum.org/maps>. (Accessed April 15, 2014).

¹³⁶ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, pps. 164, 171.

an American elm that weathered the 1995 bombing and has since become a symbolic totem of endurance, albeit one that is now encased inside a stone fence.”¹³⁷ While Doss’s description of a stone fence is misleading, her assertion concerning survival as defining motif is insightful. While the difficulties in establishing such seemingly simple facts such as who constitutes a survivor are detailed elsewhere in this dissertation, the Survivor’s Tree provides an illuminating example for this phenomenon. In many ways, the Survivor’s Tree is the *ideal* form of survivor for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. The institution describes the tree in these terms; “The Survivor Tree, a 90+ year old American elm, bears witness to the violence of April 19, and now stands as a profound symbol of human resilience.”¹³⁸

Why would the tree receive this special institutional recognition, when there are so many human survivors whose life stories are worthy of the memorial complex accolades? The memorial complex bestows upon the tree uniquely human mental capacities such as reason, discernment and judgment — all of which are necessary for “bearing witness” and serving as a symbol of “human resilience.”¹³⁹ The tree is the *de facto* role model for all those who were similarly affected by the bombing, a sign that they too should take the tragedy and the trauma that they experienced on that day and use it to make them stronger. However it is not just the robust health that makes the Survivor’s Tree such an iconic figure of recovery, despite the anthropomorphism that the memorial foundation projects on the tree. Unlike its human counterparts, it is the tree’s inherent *silence* that makes it such a useful symbol.¹⁴⁰ Unlike the actual human survivors of the bombing, the tree has no complex or difficult history or narrative,

¹³⁷ Doss, *Memorial Mania*, p. 157.

¹³⁸ *Memorial & Museum Guide*.

¹³⁹ The concept of witnessing implies that one is not a biased observer, and is able to recount the events that occurred, and perhaps is even altered by the experience itself.

¹⁴⁰ The Survivor’s Tree is the other iconic image used by the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum (the first being the Gates of Time) for their promotional materials. Refer to Figures 1.72 – 1.75. It is also noteworthy to call attention on how the memorial foundation’s representations of the Survivor’s Tree have changed over time, moving it from a severely wounded condition, to a restored and revitalized one.

no political or personal agenda, and no voice. It cannot offer any alternative viewpoints to the triumphal narrative that the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum circumscribes, and does not dwell on its suffering, loss, or how it was undone by the blast.

Team 5's "Message"

Located on the northern side of the former Journal Records Building (now the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum), approximately thirty feet west from the centerline of the Survivor's Tree, is a spray painted message from one of the rescue teams that came to offer assistance in the rescue and recovery operations. The message reads:

“Team 5

4-19-95

We Search For the truth. We seek Justice. The Courts Require it. The Victims Cry for it.
And God Demands it!” (Figure 1.71).

The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Memorial did not sponsor the message, but no effort has been made to remove it from the façade of the building, granting it institutional legitimacy. On the surface, the statement appears to be a plea for justice, a call to find the perpetrators and hold them accountable for the carnage. This alone is unusual within the otherwise, highly manicured, pristine and tranquil environment of the outdoor memorial, as it is the only statement pointing to the tragedy's human agents. It is a remnant of graffiti (although it is not identified as such by the memorial institution), and as such, despite its noble purpose, it is visually jarring in this particular context. The planting of marigolds immediately below the statement further contrasts the difference between the message and the larger memorial.¹⁴¹ However, graffiti's

¹⁴¹ The text painted on the memorial museum is usually only referred to as “Team 5's message,” and a photograph of the message is sold as a postcard in the gift shop.

message is powerful and revealing. In the first line, “Team 5” establishes the identity of the author, while the following line provides the date of their message, “4-19-95.” The text, “We Search For the truth” is an odd beginning to the message, and for the reader who only sees the graffiti *after* touring the Museum, the authorship of the message is not clear. The line seems to imply “the search for the truth of what happened here.” This interpretation is supported by the next line, “we seek justice,” which adds a degree of specificity to their quest for the truth. The two lines operate in establishing that there is a responsible party for what occurred on site, and that party will be held accountable for their actions. The next three lines invoke the victims of the bombing, establishing a hierarchy to whom the perpetrators have to be held responsible, progressing from a community standard all the way through to a divine accounting of one’s actions. The text and the retribution it demands, can be explained as having been written in a moment of passion by those most aware of the horrific impact of the bomb’s destruction. However, even though the spray-painted text might have been a spontaneous act, it is also revealing. On the same day as the bombing, and despite having no forensic analysis, the author had little doubt that the explosion was not an accident. For the author of the Team 5 Message God would demand that the perpetrator of the crime be held responsible and accountable for their actions.

The Memory Fence

The Memory Fence was never intended to be part of the official Oklahoma City Memorial, nor was it a component part of the winning competition submission by the Butzer Design Partnership. It is an unremarkable 8 foot tall, chain link fence that was used to secure and limit access to the former Murrah Building site after the bombing, but it soon became an important civic destination for the community to congregate, leave messages and prayers, as well as other

tokens of love and sympathy, such as flowers, ribbons, candles, and teddy bears. Because of the widespread public recognition of the role that the fence played as a place of civic healing, The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum requested the Butzers to integrate the fence in their official, winning design. The original fence line ran northwards from the underground parking garage of the former Murrah building to Fifth Street, turned eastward until it intersected with N.W. Robinson Ave, and then turned South to be reconnected again to the remaining foundation wall of Murrah building which also connects to the parking garage (Figure 1.72). The Memory Fence, as it now exists, is considerably shorter than its predecessor, and is found on the outer western periphery of the memorial grounds bifurcated by the 9:03 Gate of Time. The fence now runs approximately 48' southward towards St. Joseph's Cathedral, and approximately 80' northwards towards the main entrance to the Museum. It has a concrete wall on its immediate eastern side allowing the spacing for the fence's support posts to be extended to be 12 feet on center.

What distinguishes the Memory Fence as a memorial is not its physical characteristics, but rather its social importance. The original fence line that extended around the former Murrah Federal Building was the default location for people to visit and leave messages of hope, grief and condolence, poems, prayers, teddy bears, flowers, and other personal mementos in the days, weeks, months and even years after the bombing. The security fence line was intended as a temporary measure, referring to it as a temporary memorial is not entirely accurate. What defines a memorial as permanent or temporary? It is a criterion that expresses not actual time, which would be measurable only in retrospect, but intention. The key to the longevity of a memorial is the amount of social respect and reverence that the memorial receives from a given population. This social reverence and social relevance can be much more volatile than the condition of its

physical form. Therefore, and unsurprisingly, there is no established definition of what to call these “temporary” memorials. Doss observes;

Some call them “vernacular memorials” to distinguish them as individual, handmade and localized, and kinds of commemoration. Some refer to them as “performative memorials” to emphasize their fundamentally active and social nature. Some refer to them as “spontaneous memorials” and “spontaneous shrines” to evoke their seemingly abrupt and unpremeditated appearance, and to reference their religious overtures. But any nomenclature does well to remember the mercurial nature of temporary memorials; they may originate as ephemeral forms and sites of commemoration, but as they are visited, photographed, and collected they enter into new taxonomic registers. Likewise, the formulaic and increasingly universalized terms of their production call into question their vernacular sensibility.¹⁴²

But referring to these temporary shrines as “formulaic” and also expressions of “universal production” seems reductionist. For Doss such displays are “highly orchestrated and self-conscious acts of mourning aimed at expressing, codifying, and ultimately managing grief.”¹⁴³ Perhaps one of the most frustrating aspects of this line of thinking is that disagreeing with it only further justifies it. While there may be social pressure to partake in the creation of and visitation to these types of memorials, there also has to be the potential to allow for actual shared civic grief and genuine sorrow. When Doss complains that temporary memorials are increasingly “formulaic” and continually display similar items of material culture that defines “their vernacular sensibility,” she fails to recognize that the lack of variety in the totems left are an expression of cultural aphasia when dealing with expressions of true grief. Instead, Doss is more concerned that the temporary memorials have become a stage of spectacle, where civic performances are displayed and witnessed. She refers to them as “mercurial” as this status can shift constantly, moving between grief and spectacle.¹⁴⁴ This shift usually occurs when the event

¹⁴² Doss, *Memorial Mania*, p. 67.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Doss uses the example of the overwhelming display of public grief when Princess Diana passed away, calling attention to the scale and massive volume (estimated as 15 thousand tons) of flowers left outside royal palaces in

is being captured and recorded, whether by members of the national media, or by amateur photographers, and given the ubiquitous presence of portable recording devices, this indeterminate status seems to increasingly be weighted towards a performance of spectacle.

Temporary memorials can also serve as populist antidotes to official or state-sanctioned memorials, offering the potential for spontaneous and vernacular memorials to offer a counter narrative to the official recollection of the event in question.¹⁴⁵ However, this is no longer the case with the Memory Fence. Its role as a site of counter memory shifted to one of officialdom when on October 26, 1998, a single day after the official groundbreaking ceremony for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, it was formally moved from the perimeter of the former Murrah Federal Building to its current location. At that moment, it was subsumed into the official memorial.¹⁴⁶ Linenthal describes one such instance of this counter memory at the Memory Fence:

...One of the interesting collections of popular memorial expression I examined at the Oklahoma City National Memorial archive consisted of materials left at the fence around the footprint of the Murrah Federal Building, site of the domestic terrorist attack on April 19, 1995. Several people told me that there was one piece of paper left on the fence that was simply too unbearable to house in the archive, although it did offer a horrific commentary on the murder of 168 people. It read, "Way to go, McVeigh."¹⁴⁷

While few people would readily admit to harboring such thoughts, and even fewer would be willing to share them in a public setting, this instance does highlight how the opportunity to counter the dominant narrative does exist within these kinds of temporary memorials, and

London, as an indication of not only widespread public grief, but also a variation of traditional or "official" commemorative practices.

¹⁴⁵ This concept is one of the key theses in James E. Young's work, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1993).

¹⁴⁶ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 164. The moving of the Memory Fence was marked by a separate ceremony and involved a parade.

¹⁴⁷ Edward T. Linenthal, "Postscript: A Grim Geography of Remembrance," in *Religion, Violence, Memory and Place*, ed. Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 237.

captures a spirit of defiance that would otherwise go unheard and unnoticed through official displays and celebrations.

The material culture used to express common sentiments of grief and sorrow presents a curatorial challenge. The Memory Fence as a location of resistance to the official narratives, or even express the larger socioeconomic and political forces present within America at the end of the twentieth century, when hanging from the fence are cheap t-shirts, postcards, plastic toys and flowers, and photographs (Figure 1.73). “Kitsch” is often the pejorative term used to describe the various contents of temporary memorials, and has been applied to the objects left on the Memory Fence. Walter Benjamin, in *The Arcades Project*, notes that kitsch erases the distinction between a utilitarian object and a work of art, drawing a disquieting parallel between the collection of art and collection of everyday objects. Benjamin states, “Collecting is a form of practical memory, and of all the profane manifestations of ‘nearness’ it is the most binding... We construct here an alarm clock that rouses the kitsch of the previous century to ‘assembly.’”¹⁴⁸ He later posits: “Kitsch...is nothing more than art with a 100 percent, absolute and instantaneous availability for consumption.”¹⁴⁹ However, embedded within the term “kitsch” are class expectations that dismiss the meanings that the objects are supposed to represent because of the observer’s cultural and economic distance from the object. Marita Sturken observes this class bias by noting how the popular reception of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s art installation entitled *The Gates* within Central Park was widely regarded as a more appropriate form of public engagement than the on-going memorial debate that was occurring at the former World Trade

¹⁴⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Prepared on the basis of the German Volume edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002.) p. 205.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 395.

Center site in lower Manhattan.¹⁵⁰ However, Sturken explains that the act of leaving mementos is an important aspect of civic pilgrimage and can be traced back to another popular, albeit permanent memorial. She states:

The small, individual acts of leaving objects, notes, or flowers for a person which may have been practiced outside the national arena for many decades at cemeteries and roadside shrines, became an aspect of national culture when visitors began to leave things at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a means of speaking to the dead. These gestures became a central part of the media coverage and coffee-table books generated by the memorial.¹⁵¹

The popularity of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial has continued not only the social practice of bringing mementos to a memorial, but also the institutional mission of preserving and archiving these materials for future generations. While the memorial complex in Oklahoma City does not archive all the materials left on the Memory Fence (unlike the rigorous collection policy and practice at the Field of Empty Chairs) staff are constantly scanning the Fence for unusual and valuable items to enter their collection.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced and described the individual elements that constitute the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial present at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. In the promotional materials and memorial guides concerning the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial, there is a palpable urgency in describing not only the memorial elements, but also the significance of the tragedy that occurred there. Thus, one pamphlet declares, "This memorial honors the victims, survivors, rescuers and all who were changed forever on April 19, 1995. It encompasses the now

¹⁵⁰ Sturken, *The Tourist of History*, p. 260. I believe that Sturken would fully acknowledge that the tradition of leaving mementos behind at important sacred sites has a much older, global reach as a fundamental religious practice in much of the world. Sturken would argue that the civic tradition of leaving such objects at memorials became widely popularized in the United States with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 105.

sacred soil where the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building once stood, capturing and preserving forever the place and events that changed the world.”¹⁵² The individual memorial components emphasize that while each of the elements is *unique*, together they combine to form a coherent commemorative landscape that in its whole is far greater than the mere sum of its parts. The resulting memorial is effective, offering not just a single commemorative gesture, but rather a series of individuated and separate areas that combine to form a memorial circuit that encourages visitors to explore the full extent of the civic yet sacred site. It is difficult not to experience the Memorial as a pastiche of distinct spaces.

The Memorial was intentionally designed to symbolically “freeze” time, to allow a visitor unfamiliar with the deadly turn of events to directly experience the Memorial in an eternal and everlasting minute of 9:02. Particular memorial elements align with the social groups most affected by the tragedy: the survivors, the children, the victims, and the rescuers. This recognition and allocation of space to individual groups who directly experienced the bombing can be understood as a kind of social power, one that provides a form of social deference based upon one’s own physical location at the time of the explosion. Visitors neglect the Survivor’s Wall because of its marginalized location, while the Survivor’s Tree has personified the triumph over tragedy. The social heart of the Memorial, the tree anthropomorphizes resilience and has become a model that sets a standard and an inspiration for other wounded survivors. The placement of the stylized glass and bronze chairs form a destination for loved ones to visit and leave mementos and messages, all of which will be catalogued and archived in perpetuity within the Memorial Museum. Visitors to the Memorial can leave behind their own tokens and messages on the Memory Fence for others to read. The objects left on the fence usually take the form of *kitsch*: ribbons, stuffed animals, angels, wreaths, etc, and provide a clear and immediate

¹⁵² Text from the *Memorial & Museum Guide*, “Outdoor Symbolic Memorial.”

expression of sorrow, regret and loss. Rarely do the objects require any form of mental interrogation or effort in establishing their context or purpose; instead they provide instantaneous emotional gratification through sentimentality. The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial ultimately operates as a therapeutic space specifically intended to soothe the traumatized by providing a quiet, meditative setting. The Memorial intentionally camouflages the wounds that the city sustained providing only a few glimpses of the lasting scars, preferring instead to highlight a careful narrative of civic restoration, recovery and renewal.

CHAPTER 2

THE URBAN HISTORY OF OKLAHOMA CITY

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a detailed examination of the history and conditions present at the founding of Oklahoma City during the Land Run of 1889. Tracing the urban development of the present day memorial site from the late nineteenth century through to today, I show that the construction of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was an attempt to stabilize and revitalize an area of downtown Oklahoma City that was suffering from urban blight and general disinvestment. I.M. Pei was hired in 1964 by a group of wealthy businessmen to provide a urban renewal development plan for the downtown core. Pei's plan was sweeping in both scope and audacity, clearing entire neighborhoods and destroying blocks of historic buildings. Unfortunately, the plan was implemented piecemeal, and an economic downturn in the early 1970's halted much of the planned redevelopment.

The condition of the downtown remained in a general state of disrepair until Ron Norick, a local small business owner, ran for Mayor in 1986. Through the creation of the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS), a one percent increase in the city's sales tax, Norick was able to generate enough revenue to address the city's crumbling infrastructure. However, by the time of the explosion in 1995, hardly any reconstruction had begun and Norick was beginning to face immense public scrutiny about the lack of progress. The destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building shifted attention away from political infighting and bureaucratic procedures, unified a citizenry, and provided an identity for a city who had long considered itself second rate at best.

The majority of the scholarship concerning the Oklahoma City Bombing addresses the memorial process and subsequent construction of the memorial and memorial museum as an effective response provided by civic officials for their suffering citizens. Edward Linenthal describes and celebrates the response as radically democratic. Marita Sturken approaches the memorial in Oklahoma City in terms of consumerism, while Erika Doss focuses on the affective quality of memorial mania. Paul Williams suggests that the pairing of a museum with a memorial serves a moral function. These treatments highlight the lives lost and the suffering of the innocent, and they place the victims and their families at the center of a process where civic reconstruction is equated with personal healing.

However, a larger, urban context informed this therapeutic reconstruction effort, one where the memorial site was not a sacred ground marking the location of a particular tragedy, but yet another instance of urban troubles that long predated the bombing and even the birth of the perpetrator, Timothy McVeigh. The void created by the controlled implosion of the former federal building, with its non-descript chain link security fencing, transformed the area into just another desolate downtown lot in desperate need of redevelopment. A city councilman lamented in 1986 that the failed efforts of urban renewal and revitalization within Oklahoma City over the preceding twenty years had effectively killed the economic and social heart of the city: “Downtown is dead, and we helped kill it. There is no major retail, no major attraction, and no place to eat.”¹

I argue that, while the incredible pressure to commemorate the tragedy and the rapid speed of the response publically fulfilled the needs of the victims’ families and the survivors, the domestic terror attack was also used politically to mitigate the longstanding disinvestment in the

¹ Oklahoma City Ward Alderman I.G. Purser, as described in *OKC: Second Time Around, A Renaissance Story* by Steven Lackmeyer and Jack Money, (Oklahoma City: Full Circle Press, 2006.) p. 102.

downtown core of the city. The 1995 explosion that cost 168 lives, decimated three buildings, and disrupted the normal life of the city for months, corrected an extended urban crisis in Oklahoma City, one that originated in its haphazard founding and organization, and continued through to the failed attempt by world renowned architect and planner I. M. Pei to rejuvenate the city's fabric for its centennial anniversary in 1989.

It was only after the citizens agreed, after four previous failed political attempts, to pass a one per cent sales tax to fund Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) that the city had the capital to start the strategic in-fill of vacant lots that it had cleared nearly thirty years prior under the name of urban renewal. The April 19th bombing occurred at a time when the citizenry was already displeased with the glacial pace of the transformation of the city's downtown, with no visible progress being made on any of the nine projects that were part of the MAPS program (MAPS refers to the Metropolitan Area Projects, a contentious 1% sales tax program introduced by "pro-business" Mayor Ron Norick as "an all out effort to turn the City around.")² While some narrated the bombing as "an unexpected challenge" to the continuing effort to rebuild the downtown, others saw the tragedy as an opportunity that could propel the city forward with its rebuilding efforts.

A critical component of the rapid, post-bombing reconstruction effort was that the necessary funding was already in place at an urban level and was soon to be augmented by both federal and state resources. Also, the long process of market research, urban planning, property acquisition, design phasing, and legal hurdles were all either addressed or coming to resolution when the attack occurred. The bombing unified the community, ended the petty squabbling over the

² Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 112.

MAPS program, rekindled civic pride, and secured “The Oklahoma Standard” as a much needed civic brand, one that Oklahoma City continues to market and capitalize upon today.

Oklahoma City was founded during the Land Run of 1889. Tracing the urban development of the present day memorial site from the late nineteenth century through to today, this chapter shows that the construction of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal building was an attempt to stabilize and revitalize an area of downtown Oklahoma City that was suffering from urban blight and general disinvestment. In 1964 a group of wealthy businessmen hired I.M. Pei to provide an urban renewal development plan for the downtown core. Pei's plan was sweeping in both scope and audacity, clearing entire neighborhoods and destroying blocks of historic buildings. However, the plan was implemented piecemeal, and an economic downturn in the early 1970's halted much of the planned redevelopment.

The condition of the downtown remained in a general state of disrepair until Ron Norick, a local small business owner, ran for mayor in 1986. Through the creation of the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS), which included a one percent increase in the city's sales tax, Norick was able to generate enough revenue to address the city's crumbling infrastructure. However, at the time of the explosion in 1995, hardly any reconstruction had begun and Norick had been criticized for the lack of progress. The destruction of the Federal Building shifted attention away from political infighting and bureaucratic procedures, and in an oddly beneficial way, it unified the citizenry, and provided an identity for a city that had long considered itself second rate.

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quality of memorial mania; and Paul Williams suggests that the pairing of a museum with a memorial serves a moral function. These treatments highlight the lives lost and the suffering of the innocent, and they place the victims and their families at the center of a process where civic reconstruction is equated with personal healing. However, a larger, urban context informed this therapeutic reconstruction effort, one where the memorial site was not a sacred ground marking the location of a particular tragedy, but yet another instance of urban troubles that long predated the bombing. The void created by the controlled implosion of the former Federal Building, with its non-descript chain link security fencing, could have transformed the area into just another desolate downtown lot in desperate need of redevelopment. But that is not what happened. While the pressure to commemorate the tragedy and the rapid speed of the response publically fulfilled the needs of the victims' families and the survivors, the domestic terror attack was also used politically to mitigate the longstanding disinvestment in the downtown. The 1995 explosion that cost 168 lives, decimated three buildings, and disrupted the normal life of the city for months ironically gave new life to the city corrected an extended urban crisis in Oklahoma City, one that originated in its haphazard founding and organization, and continued through to the failed attempt by world renowned architect and planner I. M. Pei to rejuvenate the city's fabric for its centennial anniversary in 1989.

It was only after the citizens agreed, after four previous failed political attempts, to pass a one per cent sales tax to fund Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) that the city had the capital to start the strategic in-fill of vacant lots that it had cleared nearly thirty years prior under the name of urban renewal. At the time of the April 19th bombing, the citizenry was already displeased with the glacial pace of the transformation of the city's downtown. While some saw the bombing

as “an unexpected challenge” to the continuing effort to rebuild the downtown, others saw that the tragedy gave an opportunity for propelling the city forward with its rebuilding efforts.³

A critical component of the rapid, post-bombing reconstruction was that the necessary funding was already in place at an urban level and was soon to be augmented by both federal and state resources. Also, the long process of market research, urban planning, property acquisition, design phasing, and legal hurdles had already been addressed or were coming to resolution when the attack occurred. The ironic result of the bombing was that it unified the community, ended the petty squabbling over the MAPS program, rekindled civic pride, and secured “The Oklahoma Standard” as a much needed civic brand, one that Oklahoma City continues to market and capitalize upon today.

The Transformation from Indian Territory to the State of Oklahoma

Numerous histories provide rich detail and document the specific, local flavor regarding the founding of Oklahoma City on April 22, 1889.⁴ The boosterism and oversimplification of the accounts imply that the city was built in a day. They also embrace Oklahoma’s nickname, “the Sooner State,” with pride as a positive moniker, when the historical reality behind that designation was pejorative. Popular histories also ignore how the area became known as “Indian

³ The term “an unexpected challenge” is used as a chapter title by Steve Lackmeyer and Jack Money in their work *OKC: Second Time Around: A Renaissance Story*, p. 131. The concept that the tragedy could be used to aid economic redevelopment is specifically noted in the document, *A Network of Hope: A Resource to Help* published by the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, which under the section entitled “Community Rebuilding” offers the bulleted point that “in every disaster there is also an opportunity.” (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, 2007), p. 15.

⁴ For background on Oklahoma, see Charles Robert Goins and Danney Goble’s *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma* (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 2006), Edward Everett Dale and Morris L. Wardell’s *History of Oklahoma* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1948) and the Workers of the Writer’s Program, *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942). These operate as basic primers regarding the history of the state. Murray R. Wickett’s *Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans and African Americans in Oklahoma 1865-1907* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2000) provides a clear history concerning the racial tensions and injustices that were inflicted during the period immediately following the conclusion of the civil war through to the end of the first decade of the new century.

Territory.” This was due to the forcible resettlement of five Native American tribes in a process eventually known as the Trail of Tears, and the 1866 federal government decision to erase nearly a century of treaties between the United States and the tribes. The best agricultural land of the entire territory was claimed by white settlers who founded Oklahoma City.⁵ This was different from Tulsa and other Oklahoman cities in that they were originally Indian encampments prior to the arrival of white settlers, Oklahoma City was never such a location.

One notable history of Oklahoma City was penned in 1890 by Irving “Bunky” Geffs. Geffs worked for the McMaster Publishing Company, which also operated one of the nascent town’s four newspapers, the *Oklahoma Gazette*, which later became *The Daily Oklahoman*. According to Geffs’s account, on the day of the Land Run on April 22, 1889, there were only seven permanent buildings standing in the area that would become Oklahoma City.⁶ The majority of hopeful settlers resided in temporary camps, with thousands of tents dotting the Oklahoma landscape. This image of a “tent city” is invoked by Geffs to suggest the indomitable, pioneering spirit of those who endured unimaginable hardships in hopes of making a better life for themselves and their families. President Benjamin Harrison, just three weeks into his presidency, had issued a decree that opened up two million acres of “unassigned lands” within Indian Territory, thus easing the tremendous political pressure to open the territory open to white settlers by promising free land to anyone willing to move, stake a claim, and make “notable

⁵ For further information concerning the forcible removal of the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and the Seminoles from their lands, please refer to A.J. Langguth’s *Driven West: Andrew Jackson and the Trail of Tears to the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010). The forfeiture of lands cost the Seminoles their entire land holdings, while the Choctaws and Chickasaws to lost their leased lands that they had diligently worked to grow cotton. Source: *The Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, eds. Charles Roberts Goins and Danny Goble, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), “Indian Territory, 1866-1889” by Michael D. Green, p. 98.

⁶ The majority of the buildings that predated the foundation of the City were a train depot, an adjacent “section house” (a combination of warehouse/mechanic shop/ living quarters for the employees of the railway), a Post Office, an unspecified “Government” Building, a home belonging to the railway agent, a boarding house, and an old stockade that was turned into a small office for a stagecoach company. Source: *The First Eight Months of Oklahoma* by Irving Geffs (Oklahoma City: McMaster Press, 1890) p. 5.

improvements” to the land.⁷ Geffs’ narrative of the events of April 22, 1889, is distinguished in part by its hyperbole:

A wild shout ascended from forty thousand throats and it was greater by far than the glad cry that had echoed across the Red Sea when the children of Israel were delivered from the host of Pharoh [sic]. The halted forces broke and rushed over into the land so long waited and hoped for — and lo, when the sun went down, the elysian fields, the high hills, the happy valleys, and the sylvan shades of Oklahoma — The Beautiful Land — teemed with joyous, civilized people — who were there to build homes, carve out fortunes, achieve fame, raise families, mingle together in the sorrows and joys and vanities of this life.⁸

Other firsthand accounts described a similar spectacle. William Willard Howard, writing for *Harper’s Weekly*, estimated that, by sunset on April 22, the population of nearby Guthrie approached some 10,000 and added “never before in the history of the West has so large a number of people been concentrated in one place in so short a time” and “the rush across the border at noon on the opening day must go down in history as one of the most noteworthy events of Western civilization.”⁹ He went on to claim that white settlement of the Indian Territory was a civilizing presence, and that on April 22, 1889, “the last barrier of savagery in the United States was broken down” (Figure 2.01).¹⁰

Given just thirty days warning, thousands of pioneers and fortune seekers waited impatiently at a designated starting line thirty miles away from the area that was surveyed to become Oklahoma City.¹¹ Despite the area being regularly patrolled by armed US Marshals on horseback guarding against over eager settlers and the threat of forfeiture of any lands gained

⁷ There was considerable pressure to settle these “unassigned lands” dating back to the early 1860’s, which only increased with the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862 that promised any man or single woman over the age of 21, 160 acres of land if they lived on the land for six months out of the year for a period of five years, and ensure that the land was improved by the establishment of a residence, and improvements to the land for agricultural purposes. Goins and Goble, *The Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, p. 124.

⁸ Geffs, *The First Eight Months*, p. 7.

⁹ William Willard Howard. “The Rush to Oklahoma,” *Harper’s Weekly* 33 (May 18, 1889) p. 391.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State*, compiled by the Worker’s of the Writers’ Program of the Worker Projects Administration in the State of Oklahoma, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942) p. 167.

through criminal or fraudulent means (robbery and claim jumping), so numerous were the accounts of people filing land claims within the survey office on site just fifteen minutes after the start of the opening of the land run, that the participants earned the nickname “Sooners,” those who entered the surveyed area “too soon” and claimed the best available lands for themselves. The term “eventually came to mean merely one who is alert, ambitious and enterprising, or one who gets up earlier than others, always takes the lead, and strives to triumph over obstacles.”¹² This is how Oklahomans understand themselves and so they now claim the nickname with a sense of pride.

The account of William Willard Howard in *Harper's Weekly* helps to round out the role of the “Sooners” during this time of settlement and land claim and conveys that many of these first land-grabbers were actually government officials:

Hundreds of boomers came into the southern part of Oklahoma from the Pottawotamie Indian county on the east and from the lands of the wild tribes of the west. As these portions of the border are not protected by soldiers, most of the boomers crossed the line long before the appointed time, and hid in the woods until Monday forenoon when they emerged from their hiding-places and boldly took up their claims. The best lots in Oklahoma City, like the valuable locations in Guthrie, were seized by the deputy United States Marshals. The actual home-seekers were compelled to take what was left.

The new citizens, however, seem to have as much faith in the future of their town as their neighbors in Guthrie. This is probably due to the fact that Oklahoma City has the most desirable town site in the northern part of the district. The comparative wealth of the two parts will not be definitely known until a practical test of the soil is made next year. Good judges of bad land declare that the county tributary to Oklahoma City will raise no better crops than the soil surrounding Guthrie. If this be true, *the outlook for Oklahoma City is certainly not brilliant.*

The original boomers who caused Oklahoma to be opened for settlement have much to be responsible for, not the last of which are the tears and cries of hungry children, who look for bread and see only the red sand shimmering in the heated air. Could the disgusted home-seekers have laid hands upon the late Captain David L. Payne, the original Oklahoma boomer, the blood-thirsty dispatches from Oklahoma in some of the daily newspapers would have had a foundation in one

¹² Ibid, p. 5.

instance at least. *If the projected monument to Captain Payne is ever built, the expense of it will not be borne by the men who went into Oklahoma on the twenty-second day of April.*¹³

Howard's bleak assessment of the land that became Oklahoma City offers a sobering counter-narrative to Bunky's Elysian fields. His account also includes descriptions of throngs of people leaving the city once they realized that the conditions were unfavorable: the soil was poor, and resources were limited.

Building the Modern City

Bunky's celebratory narrative of the origins and development of Oklahoma City continued with an account of building:

Work on buildings went rapidly forward and men who could not drive a nail in the ground secured employment as carpenters at good wages. The Streets assumed shape and many new business enterprises were established. To leave a familiar locality for a few hours was to never find it again, so rapidly did the face of the young city change [...].¹⁴

The work of building was carried on day and night and in two weeks more than one thousand buildings were enclosed. There would have been double this number had it not been for the fact that it was impossible to obtain lumber.¹⁵

The staggering and rapid development of Oklahoma City from its founding to the late 1950s is captured by a series of property insurance maps produced by the Sanborn-Perris Map Company of New York City (later known simply as the Sanborn Map Company). The maps were produced, maintained, and updated by local representatives acting on behalf of the parent company and were used to evaluate the estimated worth of buildings as well as to identify their intended uses. From detailed inspections and site visits, insurance rates were determined to reflect projected replacement costs and to ascertain the level of risk that the building's use had

¹³ Howard, "The Rush to Oklahoma," p. 394. (My emphasis.)

¹⁴ Geffs, *The First Eight Months*, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 19.

upon its chance of loss. This research extended into examining surrounding land uses, prevailing wind direction and, the amount of civic infrastructure present to aid in the prevention of physical and financial losses. (Sanborn Maps routinely described the number of men present on the payroll of a fire department, the kind of fire fighting equipment possessed, and, later, even the average water pressure rate of a city's fire hydrants, when present.)

This information, which includes the spatial relationship of the structure to the street and adjacent buildings, forms a treasure trove for modern researchers of the historical built environment. Since these maps were used to assess risk and to determine the approximate replacement value of a structure, material details of the buildings are also usually indicated. Estimated population information was provided on the master index, and in time, the infrastructure necessary to deliver water and treat sewage was also provided.

The frequency with which these maps were continually updated is significant, because they often provide detailed information that other surveys (such as the national population census) missed. For example, there were six separate and significant updates to the Sanborn maps for Oklahoma City spanning from 1894 to 1906. In that period of time, Oklahoma City grew in population from 7,000 (as indicated on the 1894, 1896, 1898 Sanborn Maps- Figures 2.02, 2.03, and 2.04) to 11,000 (1901 – Figure 2.05) to 28,000 (1904 – Figure 2.06) to an astonishing 40,000 (1906- Figure 2.07). Comparing that rapid population growth to the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth national censuses (1890, 1900, and 1910 respectively), the official population of Oklahoma City was 4,251 (1890), 10,037 (1900), and 64,205 (1910.)²⁰ Thus, while the Sanborn maps may well be lacking in official procedural compliance and rigor compared to the methodology of the national census, they provide a larger data set for comparison.³ Whereas the national census shows the decade between 1900 and 1910 to be a

period of rapid settlement and population growth, the Sanborn maps created over that same time frame provide much more detail, specifically indicating that the majority of the urban expansion and population growth occurred in just five years, between 1901 and 1906 (from 11,000 to 40,000.) There are, of course, tremendous spatial implications to such huge increases in population over a compressed timeframe, and the maps also indicate where growth was occurring within the city.

The spatial growth and urban evolution of Oklahoma City in its first twenty years was impressive, but the move of the State Capital from Guthrie to Oklahoma City in 1910 ensured continual growth far beyond the start of the twentieth century. While the shift of the State capital brought with it a multitude of state employees with their families, the shift of the political power to Oklahoma City spurred on and guaranteed its future economic growth.¹⁶ The city expanded geographically in all of the cardinal directions, with the northern section of the city generally acting as the primary residential area and tracts of land to the east functioning as the industrial section of the city, which was also an African American neighborhood.¹⁷ Development southward and westward was originally inhibited by the presence of the Canadian River, but the introduction of railway lines soon made these areas very attractive for industrial production and storage warehouses, and by the late 1910s, a number of bridges crossed the river, priming the area south of the downtown core for further development.

The introduction of streetcar rail lines in 1908 had a huge impact upon the urban territory, with one commentator declaring that the streetcars' presence "transformed the town from a compact walking village to a suburban city with neighborhoods popping up in former pastures

¹⁶ *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State*, p. 168.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

more than a mile from downtown.”¹⁸ The presence of an affordable and reliable public transportation system encouraged residential and retail development with department store chains such as Montgomery and Ward and Kerr’s opening stores just a few blocks away from the downtown core.¹⁹ The streetcar system, in conjunction with an expanded railway presence, was largely responsible for the urban and economic boom in 1913-14.²⁰

The city had established itself as the financial and manufacturing center for the state by the start of the First World War, driven mostly by the abundance of oil, coal, and metal found in the state.²¹ During the post-World War I period Oklahoma City benefited from renewed capital investment of capital in its urban infrastructure, a new interest in city planning, and the construction of a series of new architectural projects within the downtown core.²² The opulent building that would eventually house the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, Temple India Shrine was constructed during this prosperous period in 1923 and joined a host of other new construction projects in the city, such as the Skirvin Hotel, the Well Roberts Hotel, Southwest Bell Tower Building, and the Cotton Exchange Building.²³ Between 1920 and 1930, forty-one new buildings were constructed downtown, at a cost of more than exceeded 110 million dollars.²⁴ Eight months after October 29, 1929, crash of the New York stock market, *The Oklahoman* boasted of the incredible growth and economic development in the city as a way of

¹⁸ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, xi.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

²⁰ An increase of value of manufactured goods in Oklahoma City was recorded as increasing from \$7 million in 1908 to \$17 million in 1910, and over 200 small business buildings were constructed during the same period. Source: Sally Schwenk, *Downtown Oklahoma City Intensive Level Survey - Phase I Survey Report*, conducted on behalf of the Oklahoma Historical Commission project #08-607, prepared for the City of Oklahoma City, (Oklahoma City: Sally Schwenk & Associates, Inc., September 2009.) p. 44.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² The first, formal Master Plan for Oklahoma City was undertaken in 1920 by noted Saint Louis Landscape Architect, George E. Kessler. Kessler was known for his work with other master plans such as Denver, Kansas City and Dallas, Texas. Kessler’s design responsibilities were passed to planning engineer Sid Hare in 1923. Hare had worked extensively with Kessler on a number of previous projects in Kansas City and issued the first comprehensive master plan for Oklahoma City in 1928. (Schwenk, *Downtown Oklahoma City*, p. 41.)

²³ For more information concerning the Masonic Temple India Shrine, please refer to Chapter 5.

²⁴ *The Oklahoman*, June 29, 1930. p. 9.

both marking and attempting to mitigate the social and economic malaise of the national economic calamity (See Figure 2.08). Nevertheless, the national economic depression, compounded by the severe ecological and economic effects of the dustbowl in the 1930s, caused Oklahoma to lose most of the economic momentum to which it had been accustomed in the previous decades.

World War II, while greatly increasing the industrial output of the state, provided little economic benefit for the City because of the majority of the goods produced were for the concentrated war effort. While the 1950s brought a rise in the fortunes of many Oklahomans enjoying the benefits of the post-war boom, many prominent businessmen in Oklahoma City saw the downtown area as hopelessly outdated, worn, and neglected, with little new major construction in the area for thirty years. One man in particular, Dean A. McGee, the Chief Executive Officer and President of the oil giant Kerr-McGee, knew firsthand the difficulties from which the downtown was suffering. McGee was attempting to purchase land to construct a new skyscraper headquarters for his oil company, and he was finding it exceedingly difficult to work with City Hall. There were numerous small lots scattered throughout downtown that could be combined, but the owners refused to sell them at a fair price, even when the land sat empty or unimproved. The structures on them were often neglected and decrepit, with the owners operating as] absentee landlords.²⁵ In addition, the transformation of the Oklahoma City Boulevard system (Figure 2.09) into the new I-40 Federal Highway in 1958, and the meteoric rise in ownership of private automobiles led Oklahoma City to expand from 80 square miles to approximately 475 square miles by 1961.²⁶ In turn, the lure of the newly emerging typology of the suburban shopping center, located just minutes away from new residential neighborhoods,

²⁵ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 5.

drained customers and residents away from the downtown shopping district. Even Dean McGee was advised that, instead of constructing a new downtown office tower for Kerr-McGee, he should establish a corporate campus either in the suburbs or in another state entirely.²⁷ McGee rejected this. Instead, he and a small number of highly influential business leaders started looking around to other cities in America to see how they were rejuvenating their downtowns. The answer came in the form of a recent federal law that promoted reinvestment in urban cores through the application of “urban renewal.”²⁸

The urban blight within Oklahoma City was significant; according to one account in 1961, offered by then Planning Commissioner Paul Clowers, there were some 11,000 substandard homes within a wide swath of Oklahoma City, with the worst cases, some 1,883 homes, being structurally unsound and “completely dilapidated” and another 3,003 without the basic modern necessities of internal running water or toilets.²⁹ Many of these decrepit buildings were converted into short-term-lease tenement hotels for transients and were regarded as a ubiquitous eyesore and an unsavory presence within the downtown core. Despite the substandard living conditions, there were strong attitudes against urban renewal within the political leadership of the city. In 1959, Everett Curtis ran an unsuccessful bid to unseat Mayor Jim Norick on a platform that was staunchly against urban renewal. While in other parts of the country during the 1960s, resistance to urban renewal was part of a civil rights campaign to protect African-American neighborhoods, in Oklahoma City, the fundamental issue concerned the property rights of whites, whose cause Curtis championed. Not until 1962 did Oklahoma City

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 6.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 3. The other men with McGee included E. K. Gaylord, who owned the state’s largest newspaper, *The Oklahoman*; Harvey Everest and C.A. Vose, who represented the city’s largest two banks, *Liberty* and *First National*; and Ray Young, an entrepreneur who owned and operated a series of general merchandise stores throughout the city and the state. The last member of this group was Stanley Draper, the executive director of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce and life-long civic booster of the City.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 7.

have its own official Urban Renewal Agency, in large part due to the glacial legal proceedings brought against implementation of the law on a state level, and even then it was anemically funded. The agency listed its assets at the end of its first full year of existence as \$8.67 – the cost of a corporate seal that was purchased for the agency by the sitting commissioners themselves.³⁰

It wasn't until a private group of businessmen (McGee, Draper,] Gaylord], and Donald Kennedy (the President of Oklahoma Gas and Electric)) formed the Urban Action Foundation and hired an executive director, James Yielding, that *any* substantial progress on revitalizing the downtown occurred.³¹ The group commissioned architect and urban planner I. M. Pei to create a new vision for the downtown of Oklahoma City. Pei delivered a massive and radical master plan for the entire 528 acre downtown that called for huge swaths of the existing urban fabric to be demolished and removed. A new concept, that of the “superblock” was to be implemented within the downtown business district (Figure 2.10).³²

History of the Site

From 1889 through the late 1920s, the primary land use of the area that would contain the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum was residential, and the presence of multiple churches of varying denominations helps to indicate the residential character of the area. The site was always part of the city, not just physically within the original surveyed boundaries of 1889, but as the social and spiritual center in the lives of many of its citizens. A constructed “bird’s eye” view of Oklahoma City dating from ten months after settlement places two churches in the

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 13.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² *Ibid*. p. 1.

immediate proximity of the site (Figure 2.11).³³ Those two structures, a Roman Catholic church located on Fourth Street between North Robinson and Harvey Avenues and a Methodist church located near on the southwest corner of Fourth Street and North Robinson, both appear on the August 1894 Sanborn Map along with an additional Methodist church located on the southeast corner of Third Street, between North Robinson and Broadway. (This “additional” Methodist Church hosted the first dedicated Sunday School in Oklahoma City.) The concentration of religious buildings in the northern section of the city reflects the primarily residential character of that area.³⁴ Few other sections of Oklahoma City could boast a similar density of ecclesiastical buildings.³⁵ Religious expression always had a presence in the area. Just a few blocks from the eventual site of the memorial and museum was the location of the very first “prayer meeting” recorded in Oklahoma City, which took place on April 28, 1889, just six days after the city was officially founded.³⁶ By 1896, there were four churches within a two-block radius of the site, with two religiously affiliated schools.³⁷ The strong presence of religious institutions on and in the vicinity of the site persisted even after the Catholic Church moved one block west and one block south, with the former Roman Catholic Church located on Fourth Street converted into Saint Joseph’s School (an orphanage) (Figure 2.12). Saint Joseph’s School was in operation from

³³ The spatial boundaries that define the site are taken from the existing conditions of the extent of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, which extends from Sixth Street at the northernmost boundary to Fourth Street to the south, and from North Robinson to the east, through to Harvey Avenue that forms the western-most boundary. This is in effect, a “double block” when looking at the Historic Sanborn maps, as part of the consideration of the constructed memorial was the decision to close Fifth Street and incorporate that area into the memorial site.

³⁴ Geffs, *The First Eight Months*, p. 16.

³⁵ The northeastern area of Oklahoma City was the preferred area for new white, middle class neighborhoods, and the area continued to grow and expand as the city grew.

³⁶ Geffs, *The First Eight Months*, p. 16.

³⁷ An Episcopalian Church appearing mid-block on 2nd Ave between N. Harvey and N. Robinson Aves, a “Christian Church” (most likely a Disciples of Christ) at the corner of 3rd Street and N. Harvey, the Roman Catholic Church on site near the corner of 4th Street and N. Robinson, and the Methodist Church at the southwest corner of 4th and N. Robinson. The religious schools were located near their affiliated denomination, with the Methodist High School being located a block from the church near the Southeastern corner of 3rd Street and Broadway, and the St. Joseph School being located on the memorial site at the northwest corner of 5th Street and N. Harvey, directly behind the Catholic Church.

1896 until the late 1960s, and the building lasted until 1975, when the land was cleared for the construction of the new Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

The site of the future Memorial was impacted economically by its proximity to the railways. It was equidistant from two of the three major rail lines that converged upon Oklahoma City.³⁸ Located just three blocks north of the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company line that ran east/west through town between First and Second Avenues, it was also three blocks from the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad that ran north/south, providing the unofficial boundary to the city's eastern limits. Located at the northeast corner of North Robinson, A. Ketcham's Lumber Yard was less than a block away from the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company line, and the business took full advantage of its proximity in supplying lumber to a city desperate for building materials.³⁹ The Choctaw Coal and Railway Company was a capital investment and a commercial extension of the Choctaw Lumber and Coal Company, one of the largest timber and lumber companies in the region, which used its land holdings in the southeastern portion of the state to establish the railway as an affordable method of transporting cut timber to mills and milled lumber to market.⁴⁰ The railway soon was renamed the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf (CO&G), reflecting the new territory to which it had expanded, as it was the first railway in Oklahoma to span the entire state from east to west. Meanwhile the timber and lumber company became Dierks Lumber and Coal.⁴¹ This rail line would soon become connected to the larger, national railway of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (CRI&P) in 1903.⁴² The importance of the railways cannot be understated for the role that they played in the development of both the

³⁸ Taken from the 1901 Sanborn Map for Oklahoma City. The third major rail line was that of St. Louis and San Francisco, which was 14 blocks southward of the site.

⁴³ Geffs, *The First Eight Months*, p. 33. Geffs claims that the lumberyard did more business than any other establishment within the city.

⁴⁰ Goins and Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, p. 190.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 118.

⁴² *Ibid*.

city and the site. Railroads were the dominant mode of transportation westward, and they played a critical role in the westward expansion of materials goods and people lured by promises of free land, plentiful work, and a better future.

The Sanborn maps reveal incremental yet important changes in the area around the Memorial site.⁴³ With the installation of streetcars in the 1930s, the lure of white, middle class suburbs started to draw families away from the area, and, in turn, the departure of single families began to affect the neighborhood character of the site. Many of the larger homes were converted into apartment houses, as was the case with the Melrose Apartments, located at 215 West 5th Street. While advertisements in the *Daily Oklahoman* indicate that apartments were available for rent at that location as early as July 23, 1923, it was not until the middle of December 1930 that an intentionally designed apartment complex was completed one that contained over ninety units distributed among three buildings (Figure 2.13).

The Melrose Apartments were just one of a number of apartment buildings and short-term residency hotels that dotted the site. In total there were ten such structures (refer to Figure 2.14), and those ranged from named residency hotels — such as the Chastain, located on the northeast corner of N. Robinson and 5th Street, and the Wilmont, found mid-block on 4th Street between N. Robinson and N. Harvey — to unnamed apartment buildings, some of which were specified merely as “apartments and rooming.” The presence of these buildings indicates a transitory and mobile populace, people who either resided in the area until they could afford to move to a more hospitable and permanent housing situation, or who left the city entirely.

Tellingly, the number of churches in the area dropped significantly during the period between 1920 to 1955, declining by half, with only St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church (located on the

⁴³ The selected study site is the area that the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum now occupies, bounded by 6th Street to the north, N. Robinson to the east, 4th Street to the south and N. Harvey to its west, the site occupies two full city blocks.

corner of N.W. 4th Street and N. Harvey) and the First Methodist Church (at the corner of N.W. 4th Street and N. Robinson) existing at the time of the bombing.⁴⁴ The increasing presence of tenement hotels, a decline in property values, and the cramped, dated, and inadequate facilities of the downtown location of the Young Men's Christian Association (located at 125 N.W. 2nd Street and N. Robinson) led to the construction of a new YMCA at the corner of N.W. 5th Street and N. Robinson in 1951. On April 8, 1952, ten thousand people toured the newly constructed YMCA, one of the few examples of the emerging international style architecture within the state, let alone the city (Figure 2.15). The old YMCA facilities were quietly sold to Kerr-McGee in April 1956 for an undisclosed amount, thus paving the way for the construction of its new corporate headquarters.⁴⁵ The new YMCA facility received significant cosmetic damage from the 1995 explosion, but was still deemed structurally sound. However, because of the significant age of the building, the presence of asbestos throughout the structure, and the failure to modernize the building over time, the building was demolished in June 2001, despite the best attempts by a small but vocal group of architects and preservationists to save it. It is now a surface parking lot.

I. M. Pei's New Vision for Oklahoma City

I. M. Pei & Associates (Architects and Planners) in conjunction with Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc. (engineering and planning consultants), Carter & Burgess (engineers and planners) and Morton Hoffman and Company (urban and economic consultants) put forward an immensely bold, new master plan for the downtown core of Oklahoma City in late December

⁴⁴ There were significant changes to the number and location of the churches that were in the area, according to the 1896 Sandborn Map of Oklahoma City there were no fewer than *five* churches in an immediate two block radius of the site. Today, there are only two, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church located on the Southeastern corner of 4th Street and N. Harvey, and The First Methodist Church (which has removed its affiliation and refers to itself simply as "The First Church") located on the Southwestern corner of 4th Street and N. Robinson.)

⁴⁵ Campbell, Gene. "Old YMCA Sold to Kerr-McGee," *The Oklahoman*, April 27, 1956. No Section. p. 1.

1964. Their vision, summarized in an eight-page, richly illustrated booklet called “Downtown: The First 100 Years,” promoted a vision “for transforming downtown into a beautiful and functional center, one that will fulfill the city’s needs both now and into the future.”⁴⁶ The purpose of the booklet (and the multiple press conferences that followed its publication) was two-fold. First, it was to prime the residents of Oklahoma City to take a renewed and proactive interest in their otherwise failing downtown by having an internationally renowned architect show the value of what the city already possessed and how it could be improved. Second, it was to apply political pressure to both the city and the state to take advantage of existing federally funded programs to reinvest in the downtown. The city had been exceedingly slow in addressing the needs of the commercial and entrepreneurial interests in the core of the city for well over a decade, and the powerful chamber of commerce viewed city hall as adversaries, not advocates, for new economic growth and development.⁴⁷ Pei & Associates were not hired as consultants by the city, but rather were funded through a private agency established by a small but wealthy and powerful group of businessmen, who were dedicated to seeing the city not just survive, but flourish.⁴⁸

Pei & Associates’ plan for a new vision of downtown, like most urban renewal plans across the United States at the time, was an overly optimistic projection based upon continual and steady economic growth, an ever expanding population, and an innate faith in technological and scientific progress. That narrative concerning the power and inevitable progress of Oklahoma City as a whole was represented in a 35mm film paid for and produced by the Urban Action Foundation, Inc.⁴⁹ The film, entitled “A Tale of Two Cities,” used the ten foot by six foot,

⁴⁶ I. M. Pei, *Downtown — The First 100 Years*. (No publishing information provided) p. 1.

⁴⁷ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

\$60,000, architectural model produced by Pei & Associates (refer to Figure 2.16), to contrast the worn, existing fabric of downtown Oklahoma City with the possible “Oklahoma City of Tomorrow,” which is often shortened to “The City of Tomorrow.”⁵⁰ To the accompaniment of a garbled instrumental version of *America the Beautiful* and Petula Clark’s then hit song, “Downtown,” urban scenes of a neglected Oklahoma City are presented complete with shabby storefronts and broken apartment windows with curtains billowing in the wind. A baritone narrator reads a script that stands in stark contrast to the images being presented.⁵¹

Witness Oklahoma City. Capital of a state. Home to half a million people, and barely 75 years old. Oklahoma City has a proud heritage in art and music. It is the financial headquarters of the state. It’s vital economy includes growing industry, fine residential sections. It also contains the scenes that you are looking at. These are the scenes of a disease called blight, which like a deadly mold, has settled on our downtown and is killing it. The symptoms are obsolete structures, congested traffic, too little parking, worn out hotels and low grade businesses. Since fewer people come here anymore, and business costs are up, many business owners have thrown up their hands in disgust and moved out.⁵²

The thirteen-and-a-half-minute movie offers a diagnosis of the problems that have plagued the downtown, and promises a remedy. That the film’s rhetoric of “disease” compares the health of the urban fabric with that of a human body is clear. Three minutes into the movie, the narrator refers to the blight as a “malignant tumor” that must be eliminated from the downtown “before it spreads.”⁵³ The film promises: “this tumor can be removed through a dramatic renewal plan

⁵⁰ This term is the shortened title of Le Corbusier’s famous work, *The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning*, where he first advanced his architectural ideas, which were modified to become a foundational ideology behind urban renewal. Ebenezer Howard, the grandfather of modern city planning, also made reference to the “City of Tomorrow” with his canonical work, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.

⁵¹ It is difficult to determine whether the sound was intentionally “garbled” providing an audible clue that there is indeed something wrong with the current conditions within the downtown core, or, if the poor sound quality just reflects the age of the film itself.

⁵² Narration of the documentary transcript taken from Youtube, via link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kf0DrEGX7XI> accessed December 9th, 2013.

⁵³ *A Tale of Two Cities*- YouTube. It must be mentioned that a significant portion of the area deemed to be suffering from this “deadly” urban blight were primarily African-American neighborhoods, and that the language of stopping “blight from spreading” can be interpreted as thinly veiled fear mongering regarding desegregation.

designed to guarantee downtown rebirth.”⁵⁴ After a detailed examination of all the new architectural insertions being proposed in the master plan, the narrator returns to the metaphor of the health of a body:

A renewed downtown will tie the spreading sections of Oklahoma City together once more by providing a central core of fun and excitement. Crowded conditions and unsightly downtown scenes will be eliminated. The opportunities for a better job and a better standard of living will increase for each of us, simply because the heart of the city will beat faster, pumping even more vitality into every area.⁵⁵

Pei’s proposed plan was to be the surgical cure to the “tumor” of blight, but the scope of intervention was radical and out of scale. The two figures included within “Downtown— The First 100 Years,” make apparent the astonishing extent of the planned work (Figure 2.17 and Figure 2.18). The document tried to downplay the massive destruction of the downtown fabric, claiming that “[m]any existing buildings will be kept. Others will be torn down and replaced by new ones, richly varied in size, shape and purpose.”⁵⁶ While Pei called for this redevelopment to occur in a series of four sequential stages of demolition and reconstruction, spaced over almost an entire decade, the first and most ambitious stage encompasses almost entirely *half of all* the work specified, including the construction of a new convention center that could accommodate 15,000 visitors, two new hotels, seven new office high rises, two new high end department stores, a massive new sprawling urban shopping center complete with internal parking structures for shoppers, the replacement of the old dilapidated “Mummer’s Theater,” a state of the art movie theater, a huge urban garden based upon the Tivoli gardens in Copenhagen, a new civic bus depot and transit station, a new fire station, and six new structural parking decks.⁵⁷ The primary piece of this project was the construction of a new convention center, to reassert

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Pei, *Downtown*, p.1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Oklahoma City's importance as a convention destination in the years following World War II, when only Chicago and New York City were more popular.⁵⁸

The second phase of the master plan introduced different forms of housing back into the downtown and comprised approximately 15% of the total work specified by the master plan. The addition of numerous "low rise" apartment buildings was aimed at older residents, people who either already worked downtown and were looking to downsize from their existing homes or had grown tired of the long commuting times from their suburban homes to their downtown places of work. This demographic also tended to be wealthier and would most likely frequent establishments such as the Galleria Shopping Center and the numerous restaurants that would serve the convention center. Also proposed was a new government office building adjacent to the existing municipal offices found on Walker Avenue; through that insertion, a new municipal plaza would unify the two buildings and offer below ground parking to visitors to the offices. Its close proximity to the Galleria Shopping Center would also encourage office workers to purchase merchandise during their lunch breaks, or at the very least, to grab lunch at one of the restaurants within.

The third phase of development proposed by Pei & Associates, and the one that most directly influenced the site of the current memorial, introduced a new "Governmental Office Building" north of a proposed urban park. Also proposed within this a large urban park (which became the future site of the Memorial and Museum) was a large scaled water feature.⁵⁹ (Figures 2.19 and 2.20 The master plan transformed the area of and around the site from one known for its

⁵⁸ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 28. At the end of the 1940's Oklahoma City often had to decline hosting conventions, even though they had the necessary infrastructure to handle conferences that would bring between 6,000 to 10,000 people per event.

⁵⁹ Pei had sited the new governmental office building to the immediate north of where the Alfred P. Murrah Building was actually constructed, adjacent to the American General Building (which would become to be known as the Journal Records Building.)

low rent, tenement hotels, and short-term apartment buildings to one that offered all levels of government services. Pei acknowledged the disruption that his transformation would cause and, in turn, specified a new building to serve as “institutional housing” adjacent to the First Methodist Church, providing much needed housing options for those who would be most affected by the obliteration of the numerous affordable but substandard residences within the area. Pei also included the creation of a new parochial school to replace the orphanage and the nunnery that would be erased from the northwestern side of Fifth Street, between N. Robinson and N. Harvey.⁶⁰ That shift in usage, making the area a civic destination to receive governmental services, and a location for stable well-paying federal jobs was a natural fit given the existing presence of the federal office building, the expansive post office building, and the city library on the southwest corner of Sixth Street. Interestingly, Pei had intended for an urban park to be developed on the site; however, it remains unclear if the Butzers or any of the other of the entrants to the international memorial competition were aware of that intention when they submitted to the Oklahoma City International Memorial Competition in 1997.⁶¹

The fourth and final phase of the work specified the construction of three high-rise apartment buildings clustered within an expansive, park-like setting. (Figure 2.21) Contemporary critics of urban renewal will easily recognize the form of the high-rise apartment building surrounded by large tracts of “open space.” Whether the Robert Taylor Homes or Cabrini Green

⁶⁰ The parochial school would also still retain its religious affiliation, and is sited adjacent to St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic Cathedral, found on the northwestern corner of Fifth Street and N. Harvey.

⁶¹ For more information concerning the memorial competition, refer to chapter 3. I have made numerous requests to interview the architects, without receiving any acknowledgement. It is unlikely that the couple were aware of Pei’s proposal. The model of Pei & Associates was still forgotten and gathering dust in the basement storage room of the Oklahoma City Planning Department. *Downtown — The First 100 Years* was accessible in the City Library filed under local history (that’s where the version supplied here originated) however both Hans and Torrey were residing in Berlin, Germany at the time of the competition. The availability of this information occurring on line is also remote given the time and level of digital technology. There is however a remote possibility that Torrey, a native Oklahoman, and graduate of the architectural program at Oklahoma State University, knew of Pei’s plans for downtown, but no printed acknowledgement confirms this.

in Chicago, Pruitt-Igoe in Saint Louis, or the Marcy Projects in Brooklyn, the effects were the same: increased social isolation despite a higher population density, leading to an erosion of community spirit and increased crime.⁶² While not specifically identified as public housing in the brochure, the apartment towers in the Pei master plan possess all the hallmarks of higher density public housing projects, and Pei stated that “[s]ome construction will be financed privately, some with public funds, but all will fall within this framework for creating a healthy new center for all of Oklahoma.”⁶³

The massive demolition called for by the Pei plan began in earnest in 1967, once 32.5 million dollars was provided to Oklahoma City by the Federal Government. In a last ditch effort to avoid the destruction of the downtown, one property owner warned the Mayor and the City Council of the devastation that had plagued other urban renewal efforts across America. He and specifically identified Cleveland, where Pei had produced an urban renewal master plan that cleared 163 acres, and that left the the land empty for years.⁶⁴ Despite the warnings, the project proceeded in Oklahoma City unabated.

Some construction projects were immediately undertaken; the 2.2 million dollar “Mummer’s Theater,” the 18.5 million dollar Liberty Bank Tower, the six million dollar Fidelity National Bank Tower, and the new, thirty-story corporate headquarters of Kerr-McGee, costing 20 million dollars, were all constructed as the first phase of the master plan.⁶⁵ The area of downtown, long derided as the city’s worst slum, was demolished for the imminent construction of the Myriad Convention Center, and soon the city received another federal payment of 55

⁶² Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto*. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000.) p. 21.

⁶³ Pei, *Downtown*, p. 1.

⁶⁴ The area came to be identified as “Hiroshima Flats,” a nickname that reflected racist rancor (and ignorance: Pei was of Chinese, not Japanese, origins.). Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 30.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

million dollars and matched it with 149 million that it had earmarked for the second phase of Pei's plan. However, by that time, there was a shift in the political leadership in Washington, with the Nixon Administration starting to dismantle many of the social programs that President Johnson had enacted. The increasingly controversial urban renewal program was subject to revised scrutiny, and as odd as it sounds given today's limited expectations of the federal government, the most significant change to the program was the implementation of oversight where a submittal from a city would be reviewed and evaluated, rather than being blindly rubberstamped for approval.

In addition, the dominant model of retail shopping had also shifted from downtown districts to suburban malls, making it increasingly difficult to have any retailers commit to the long term leases that were required in order to finance and construct the Galleria Shopping Center. The Galleria was the central and essential component of the entire concept to bring people back to the downtown. By 1974, the demolition of the urban fabric of Oklahoma City outpaced new construction. The citizens were becoming increasingly cynical about the lack of progress; poor communications from the city's Urban Renewal Authority irked City Hall and residents alike; and there was growing concern that tourists and visitors to the downtown area considered it "an empty ghost town."⁶⁶ A return visit by I. M. Pei in 1976 sponsored by the Metro Area Planners—a reconstituted, but still wealthy and highly influential offshoot of the original Urban Action Foundation—hoped to rekindle some public and political excitement for the sagging projects. Pei acknowledged the difficulties that the last twelve years had wrought upon the downtown but insisted, "This is the only way that you can develop an efficient redevelopment plan."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Others disagreed. The implementation and the administration of the federal program of urban renewal had created an organizational behemoth in Oklahoma City. The Urban Renewal Authority employed more than 125 people, had assets totaling in excess of 60 million dollars, and usurped even City Hall when it came to the planning, shaping, and construction of downtown.⁶⁸ Critics argued that this agency's organizational structure effectively placed the fate of the city within the hands of unelected—and, some City Council members argued, unaccountable—bureaucrats. While the federal legislation called for ultimate City Hall approval over the renewal and redevelopment efforts, once those plans were passed, the responsibilities of funding and management belonged to the agency, not to the city's government. The Director of the Urban Renewal Agency, James White, resigned in 1980 under relentless pressure resulting from construction delays and missed budget estimates.⁶⁹ Having led the organization for thirteen years, White was adamant that, despite some ongoing setbacks, urban renewal was an overwhelming success in Oklahoma City and the results were “unequaled anywhere in the nation” (Figures 2.22 and Figures 2.23).⁷⁰ To reinforce that point, White listed specifically within his resignation letter the numerous projects that the Oklahoma City Urban Renewal Authority had undertaken under his tenure as director, including a new 200 million dollar health facility just east of downtown, the rehabilitation of 2,000 inner city homes valued collectively at 13 million dollars, the new Myriad convention center, and numerous new skyscrapers that

⁶⁸ The Urban Renewal Authority in Oklahoma City was created like the majority of authorities across the United States, as a result of federal policy. The Federal Government, specifically the Department of Housing and Urban Development, did not release funding directly to the cities that had requested urban renewal projects, rather, HUD made funds available *only* to the city's Urban Renewal Authority. This was regarded as an essential movement to bring a local municipality in line with federal priorities. As one historian of urban planning noted, “The response to the Great Depression altered the structure of intergovernmental relations by bringing about a direct relationship between municipalities and the federal government. This dynamic was strengthened during the postwar era, when local political leaders were empowered with substantial resources to pursue revitalization policies in the face of urban decline.” Stacey A. Sutton, *Revitalization in the United States: Policies and Practices, Final Report*. (New York: Columbia University, 2008.) p. 22.

⁶⁹ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

altered the city's skyline.⁷¹

Many citizens were left with decidedly mixed feelings about the success of urban renewal within Oklahoma City; certainly many improvements were made, but the sheer scope of the removal of buildings that were still sound and the lasting voids that their demolition created rubbed many citizens and visitors the wrong way. On a visit to the city, Hiroshi Watanabe, the noted architectural critic, offered his thoughts: "I think that more concern for the city's history might have been shown. I can't say what quality or historical value the buildings had, but I understand that there is now a continuing effort to save what is left."⁷² When it was pointed out to him that I. M. Pei had performed the master plan that wrought such devastation to the downtown, Watanabe refused to criticize Pei or his work directly.⁷³

By the mid-1980s, Oklahoma City was suffering from a major economic downturn caused by the interrelated collapse of the oil, real estate, financial services, and aerospace industries. Those four had been the primary source of employment within the city. Rampant real estate speculation, fueled by the easy availability of capital from oil and natural gas companies whose profits were meteoric during the late 1970s' oil crisis, suddenly plummeted. In turn, local banks suffered runs of depositors anxious to withdraw their capital. One local financial institution, the Penn Square Bank, named after the suburban shopping mall on the outskirts of the city, suffered a \$217 million dollar run in the space of one week, causing the Federal Deposit Insurance Commission to intervene and shutter the bank. Penn Square Bank was the first financial institution to fail in Oklahoma since the Great Depression, and it was at the time the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Mary Jo Nelson, "Bricktown Project is Applauded, But Noted Architect Critical of the City's Downtown Buildings." *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 21, 1982. Archive ID: 94763 Accessed via: <http://newsok.com/> (December 20, 2013.)

⁷³ Watanabe's limited stylistic comments pertained to the Galleria Towers, a pair of office buildings designed by collaboration with Pei and Associates and Morris-Aubrey Architects of Dallas, Texas.

largest FIDC intervention since the agency came into existence.⁷⁴

The mayor of Oklahoma City at the time, Andy Coats, provided a stark and dire assessment of the financial and urban conditions of the city. Unemployment was rapidly increasing, tax revenues were falling, and the City was ranked as dead last in new business starts and the highest number of business failures per capita in the United States.⁷⁵ Coats attributed the woes to the city's poor self image. To an audience gathered in 1985 to hear his "State of the City" speech, Coates said:

Let's finish what we started. For good or ill, our city is going to be judged by the quality of our downtown. We have to complete this downtown area that we started, and we can do it in such a way to make things really exciting for us.⁷⁶

In an effort to stem the hemorrhaging of the city's budget caused by steep declines in tax revenues, Coats proposed a sweeping series of tax initiatives to be brought before the citizens of the city in the middle of June 1986. Dubbed "Six to Fix," the special election ballot called for a one percent increase in the city's sales tax rate to raise an estimated \$152,700,000 over the course of four years; a two to five percent increase in the hotel/motel tax rate; a series of *ad valorem* taxes to pay for two new police stations, and others to build a new fire station and repair existing firehouses within the city; the establishment of a new traffic control system and provision of road improvements; and to raise 38 million dollars to construct a "covered assembly center" (a sports arena).⁷⁷ The Chairman of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, Lee

⁷⁴ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 74. The federal government had to intervene on behalf of Penn Square Bank for 4.5 billion dollars, as its failure was threatening to bring down Continental Illinois, the nation's seventh largest bank. <http://www.fdic.gov/bank/historical/managing/history2-03.pdf> (Accessed Dec 21, 2013.)

⁷⁵ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 83. There were 2,834,000 business failures in Oklahoma in 1986, compared to 1,030,000 in 1985, and only 7,100 new business started in the same year. Source: National Data Book and Guide to the Sources, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1988, 108th edition, US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C. 1987.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Wayne Singletery, "Election Called Most Crucial in History." *The Daily Oklahoman*, June 15, 1986. No Section. p. 15.

Allen Smith, believed that the ballot initiative was “the most important election in the history of Oklahoma City,” and Mayor Coats was exceptionally blunt, stating that “this might be the last chance we have... If we don’t fix the city up and do the things that we need to do, we’ll educate our kids, and they’ll go to Dallas to get jobs.”⁷⁸ Despite Coats’s dire warning, and the lobbying efforts of multiple civic organizations, of the six ballot initiatives only the two funding police officers and fire stations passed. The origins of the subsequent Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) had its roots within this failed “Six to Fix” urban improvement legislation.

By the end of 1986, still stinging from citizens’ rejection of the special tax initiatives, and facing a worsening financial situation for the City, Mayor Coats chose to return to his law practice after only one term. Before leaving office, however, he identified a potential successor in a successful small business owner, Ron Norick. While, Norick was a newcomer to city politics, his father, Jim Norick, had served as mayor on two occasions.⁷⁹ Ron Norick understood the frustrations the citizens of the city were feeling towards their elected officials, and in turn, ran his campaign driving home his personal business experience, his pro business political platform, and highlight his political “outsider” status (Figure 2.24).⁸⁰

After taking office, Norick soon clashed with senior city administrators over their employee benefits. He was livid at City Manager Terry Childers’s recommendation of a 2.25% raise for every city employee, despite the looming possibility that some of those very jobs would have to be cut due to a serious budget shortfall.⁸¹ Drawing on his knowledge of the private sector, Norick complained bitterly about the city employees’ benefits, stating that they were

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Jim Norick served as mayor to Oklahoma City from 1959 through to 1963, and again from 1967 to 1971. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/N/NO008.html> (Accessed December 28, 2013.) It is of note that Jim Norick was also the potent of the Temple India Shrine, the Masonic Temple that now houses the memorial museum.

⁸⁰ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 104.

⁸¹ Wayne Singleterry, “Mayor Wants to Cut Fringe Benefits.” *The Oklahoman*, June 5, 1987, p. 6.

“way out of line with industry.”⁸² The gap between expected revenue and actual income was a difference of 5.8 million dollars, which threatened 3,900 city employee positions and would severely curtail a host of city services, including water and sewer expansion and upkeep, limit trash collection, increase deferred maintenance, close civic facilities, limit replacing the city’s older vehicles, and increase numerous fees and permit costs.⁸³

This financial bind came at a time when even the projects that were accomplished to fulfill Pei’s urbanist vision for the downtown were in need of significant renovations and repairs. The Myriad Convention Center, constructed to stimulate revenue, was being “shunned” by a host of organizers representing various large national conventions because of the poor condition of the facility. According to one editorial, “[the] exterior walls are dirty, the roof continues to leak, and there are cracks in the floor of the convention hall... 40 gallon buckets are used to catch water leaking from the ceiling after it rains.”⁸⁴ One particularly grim description of an event held at the convention center described a “gala dinner” where “guests had to hold umbrellas during their dinners to keep from getting wet.”⁸⁵ It wasn’t just the convention center that was dated and inadequate; the downtown had also lost over two thirds of its hotel rooms between 1967 and 1987, leaving just the Sheraton (with 800 rooms) remaining in business, but under a real threat of losing the franchise because of poor revenues.⁸⁶

Norick was frustrated with the state of the aging infrastructure of the city, but also at the citizen’s inability to see the city’s potential. Despite the city’s financial hardships, Norick saw that while people were willing to fund aging buildings and infrastructure, they were reluctant to

⁸² Wayne Singleterry, “Council Oks Pay Raises.” *The Oklahoman*, July 1, 1987. No Section. p. 3.

⁸³ Wayne Singleterry, “Council Faces Tough Task Considering \$189 Million Budget: 3,900 Jobs, Quality if Many City Services at Stake.” *The Oklahoman*, June 7, 1987. No Section. p. 16.

⁸⁴ Wayne Singleterry. “Improvements to Myriad Center Badly Needed, City Officials Say.” *The Oklahoman*, September 10, 1987, No Section. p. 12.

⁸⁵ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 119.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

build anything new.⁸⁷ The defeatist civic mentality was preventing the city from starting a number of initiatives that, if enacted, could greatly improve the quality of life for visitors, and conventioners, and also for residents. For example, when the city had failed to lure United Airlines to Oklahoma City as a central aircraft repair hub, it missed out on an estimated 8,000 new jobs.⁸⁸ This loss, added to a similar failure to attract an American Airlines repair facility and a federal government accounting center, made Norick realize that the city had a terrible image problem not just with visitors, but with its own citizens, many of whom “did not think that Oklahoma City was a good place to live.”⁸⁹

MAPS

In early January 1992, Mayor Norick quietly started to assemble senior city administrators, a few City Council members, and other key players to form what became known as the Metro Area Projects Task Force (MAPS), the activities of which were supported through the funds from the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, not the city. The purpose of MAPS was to reverse public perception and to transform Oklahoma City into a “major league city.”⁹⁰ In addition, Norick only informed the City Council of the committee well into the process and only then because it was “absolutely necessary.”⁹¹ The private meetings and the funding of the initial work was viewed by many as a violation of the State’s Open Meetings Act, which allowed meetings to occur behind closed doors only if the committee was purely advisory and had no decision-

⁸⁷ In January of 1989 a 150 million dollar bond issue was passed by the citizens to support the much needed repairs to the road and other existing civic infrastructure but they voted down a comparatively small 12.5 million project that would have created a series of new parks along the Canadian River, and a 25 million dollar initiative to construct a new downtown library. Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 105.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 106.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 110. The Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce sponsored a detailed survey to gather information concerning civic attitudes towards the city itself, one of the key results was that 65% of residents had an unfavorable view of the city.

⁹⁰ John Parker, “City Task Force Plans Discussion Sans Public Gaze.” *The Oklahoman*, November 6, 1992. p. 1.

⁹¹ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 112.

making authority.⁹² Complicating matters was the revelation that the Task Force was working with Rick Harrow, a Florida based sports consultant who was an adviser in the planning and creation of Joe Robbie Stadium, home of the Miami Dolphins, and who was supposedly hired neither by the City nor by the Task Force. Harrow was hoping to secure a future contract from either the Chamber of Commerce or an “unnamed private foundation.”⁹³ This arrangement allowed Harrow to skirt the state’s open public meetings law as he was operating solely in an “advising” capacity. Norick claimed that the purpose of private funding was to “keep down the public expense” rather than to avoid public scrutiny.⁹⁴ The public attention that this relationship garnered, and the implication for public oversight, caused the usually pro-business newspaper, *The Oklahoman*, to run an editorial entitled “Task Force Secrecy,” which stated:

There’s a bit of irony in secrecy surrounding the Metro Area Projects Task Force. The seven member group — including three elected officials — met secretly in November and plans another closed door session in December to discuss, among other things, how to involve the public in proposed multimillion dollar projects.⁹⁵

The editorial ends with a warning to the members of the task force, stating that “the longer officials wait to let the people in on the deliberations the more difficult it will be to build support.”⁹⁶

Norick was in a difficult situation. He knew that the city had a terrible image problem with its citizens which tainted many of the improvements that the city had slowly implemented. To involve the general public with a larger discussion about a broad and sweeping range of civic infrastructure improvements, at a time when they had a generally negative and defeatist attitude towards the city, seemed like a recipe for failure. When news of the task force’s private meetings

⁹² John Parker, “City Task Force Plans Discussion Sans Public Gaze.” *The Oklahoman*, November 6, 1992, No section, p. 1.

⁹³ John Parker, “Task Force Told How To Get Public Involved in Projects.” *The Oklahoman*, November 7, 1992, p. 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Editorial Staff, “Task Force Secrecy,” *The Oklahoman*, November 30, 1992. No Section. p. 8.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

was made public, Norick claimed that these meetings were solely for “brainstorming ideas” and that the privacy was to ensure that the members felt secure in openly and freely sharing their thoughts without fear of political fallout or self censorship. In the end, the Task Force was indeed the agency that hired Horrow, but it was not the organization that paid his consultant’s fees. Norick stated in a 1993 interview that while the Mayoral Task Force was operating as a committee of the whole when they secured his position, “(Horrow’s) undisclosed fee will be paid with private contributions through the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce.”⁹⁷ The unusual relationship cast doubts on what agency was actually funding Horrow and his role of coordinating the nine civic infrastructure projects that “could cost 200 million.”⁹⁸ Letters to the editor of *The Oklahoman*, criticized the proposed price tag of the massive downtown construction projects and questioning the wisdom of such an effort. One specifically drew a parallel between the failed I. M. Pei plan and the MAPS program:

Does this refrain sound familiar? “Let’s revitalize Downtown Oklahoma City.” We heard in it the 1960’s and 70’s under the heading of Urban Renewal, and the Pei Plan. It didn’t happen. The same speculation is now being made and is to be paid for with a one-cent city sales tax for five years... Thirty seven million dollars for dams and a canal in Bricktown which will supposedly attract businesses, seems to me to be the same myth that was hoped for when a downtown Galleria was promoted in years past. The private sector was not willing to invest in the necessary stores and shops to make it a reality.⁹⁹

Another more scathing letter proposed that tourism officials and employees should dress in “authentic native wear” and that “with a little more imagination, we might even put some rodeo corrals and tepees in [...] downtown sections and perhaps throw in some daily (staged)

⁹⁷ John Parker, “Hiring by Mayoral Task Force Faces Open Meeting Scrutiny: Attorney General’s Office Mulls Project Planners Naming Florida Consultant,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 1, 1993. No Section, p. 16.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* The actual total cost of the projects was over 364 million dollars. Steve Lackmeyer, “Extension Vote Forces Lesson in MAPS History,” *The Oklahoman*, November 15, 1998, pp. 4, 5, 6.

⁹⁹ Don Smith, Letter to the Editor, *The Daily Oklahoman*, December 11, 1993, p. 10.

gunfights.”¹⁰⁰ Given the level of civic skepticism and the numerous past failures of downtown revitalization efforts, it is little wonder that Norick wanted to build a robust support base among the political players and commercial agents within the city prior to *any* public announcement concerning the scope or cost of the initiative.

Finally, on September 15, 1993, after almost a year of behind the scenes planning, Norick unveiled the massive reconstruction campaign that was estimated to total 237 million dollars in civic infrastructure improvements spanning *nine* separate projects (Figure 2.25). The cost of the program would be paid for by a one-cent increase to the area’s sales tax that, if passed, would be in effect for five years only and was estimated to cover the entire cost of the program and include an estimated \$30 million in reserve.¹⁰¹ The nine projects included a new baseball stadium and an arena capable of housing a professional hockey or basketball team. This bid for the city to play a role in national sports was a key component of Norick’s strategy to change the city’s residents perceptions of themselves as provincial and, instead, to consider themselves as part of the “big leagues.” Renovations for the aging Civic Music Hall were proposed, as well as improvements to the State Fairgrounds, as were plans for a new 125,000 square foot downtown library/learning center. A new addition to the aging convention center would bring it to over a million square feet of total exhibition space.¹⁰² A proposal to dam a portion of the North Canadian River was included in an attempt to unify the other construction projects and make the river a civic asset rather than a liability¹⁰³ A San Antonio style “riverwalk” canal project was planned for the nearby Bricktown area in hopes of spurring the creation of an entertainment district of the city

¹⁰⁰ Joe Mayfield, Letter to the Editor, *The Daily Oklahoman*, December 11, 1993, p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 146.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 119.

¹⁰³ The river was often derided as “being the only river in the country that had to be mown three times a year.” Steve Lackmeyer and Jack Money, “Extension Vote Forces Lesson in MAPS History,” *The Oklahoman*, November 15, 1998. No Section. p. 4.

within easy walking distance of the downtown core. The last proposal was the introduction of a downtown transportation link that would provide access to all of these destinations. While the idea of a light rail had made significant progress, ultimately it was transformed into a motorized “trolley” because of budget constraints.

Norick knew from past experience that, if these projects were presented individually, only a handful would receive the necessary public support, so he compiled all of the projects into a single ballot initiative and called a special election to be held on December 14, 1993. The supporters of MAPS held multiple rallies to campaign for the initiative, with the largest being held in the downtown just days before the vote. The head football coach of the University of Oklahoma, Barry Switzer, spoke at the rally, playing up the campaign’s theme of being a “big league city,” stating that “the ball is on the one yard line” and that “let’s put this in the end zone [...] and then we will be number one in the twenty first century!”¹⁰⁴ The ballot initiative passed with fifty-four percent of the vote, and Norick announced to the gathered supporters, “Oklahoma City, welcome to the big leagues!”¹⁰⁵

Passage of MAPS was the major achievement in Norick’s political career. However, the initial euphoria from the electoral success was soon replaced with the sobering reality of trying to implement numerous complicated and expensive construction projects within an exceedingly short timeframe and under excessive public scrutiny. The city administrators now in charge of the program, City Manager Don Brown and Assistant City Manager Jim Thompson, recognized the monumental task ahead of them and quickly realized that their staff lacked the necessary expertise to see even one of the projects through, let alone *nine* of them operating concurrently. Reportedly, upon hearing the news of MAPS’ passage, Don Brown turned to his assistant and

¹⁰⁴ Steven Lackmeyer, “Tax Supporters Rally for City Projects Vote,” *The Oklahoman*, December 12, 1993. p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 129.

pointedly asked, “We have created a damn monster. Now what are we going to do with it?”¹⁰⁶

Norick, unaware of or indifferent to the concerns of his senior administrators, started making unrealistic public promises concerning projected timelines for the projects).¹⁰⁷ Because no environmental assessments, permitting, or cost surveys had been performed, the city found itself trying to negotiate with property owners who knew that, unless they agreed to sell their holdings to the city, another location would have to be secured, causing additional delays and cost overruns. By the time of the bombing in April 1995, the only real movement on *any* of the nine MAPS projects was the approval of construction permits (not any actual construction) to renovate the horse stalls at the State Fairgrounds.¹⁰⁸ Increased public skepticism concerning MAPS began in earnest in early February 1995 with the revelation that the costs of one of the projects, the canal that was to link the downtown to the planned entertainment district of Bricktown, had ballooned from the estimated 9 million dollars to over 15.4 million, and that *all* of the proposed projects were now expected to run well over the original estimates.¹⁰⁹ Particularly disheartening was the admission by the architects involved in the canal project that the original cost would “only cover the cost of a concrete hole in the ground.”¹¹⁰ Missing from the original estimates were such necessities such as sidewalks compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the cost of landscaping materials such as trees, seating opportunities such as benches along the route, and lighting for pedestrian safety.¹¹¹

These critical omissions were soon found in every single project estimate for the MAPS program, which also included such mistakes as not providing any design development,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁹ Charolette Aiken, “MAPS Canal Overflows Cost Mark,” *The Oklahoman*, February 3, 1995. Accessed via, www.newsok.com on January 23, 2014. Archive ID 600566.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

construction supervision or legal fees, or for renovation projects of the Convention Center and the Music Hall. No structural investigations or reports had been prepared, and while general “rules of thumb” were considered to estimate price per square foot, such calculations were based upon additional rooms being added, but not the cost of hallways that would connect the new areas, nor the additional restroom facilities that would also have to be installed to meet the State’s building code.¹¹² The revised estimate for all the identified projects was some 50 million dollars more than originally proposed just barely fourteen months prior – for a revised total of 285 million dollars, and by the time of the dedication of the last project constructed (the new city library/learning center) in the late summer 2004, the total bill for MAPS approached \$300 million.¹¹³

Bombing becomes Branding

The MAPS projects seemed doomed, but that changed after the bombing on April 19. Since mid February 1995, a relentless and critical press ran stories continually concerning unforeseen cost overruns, unsigned contracts, unpaid fees, and glacial progress of MAPS. Some members of the city council started to lobby for increased public oversight, and even the normally level-headed and optimistic mayor started to admonish the city staff publically for failing to secure a contract with the architectural design firm for the proposed baseball park, He had promised that construction would begin within 180 days of the passage of MAPS, but 16

¹¹² Steven Lackmeyer and Jack Money, “Extension Vote Forces Lesson in MAPS History,” *The Oklahoman*, November 15, 1998. No Section. p. 5.

¹¹³ The revised costs of all the MAPS projects was projected to be as high as \$364,674,670.00 in 1998, which was sixty-five *per cent* more expensive than originally purposed, and required an additional election to extend of the original date of when the one-cent sales tax. Steve Lackmeyer, “Extension Vote Forces Lesson in MAPS History.” *The Oklahoman*, November 15, 1998. No Section, p. 4. The actual final cost for all of the MAPS construction projects was 297.7 million dollars. (Source: www.okc.gov/maps/index.html- accessed on January 22, 2014.)

months had passed, and the city had little to show for the time and money spent.¹¹⁴

The baseball park was a particularly sore topic for Norick, not just because it was the project upon which he had staked his reputation, but also because it was supposed to provide the necessary momentum for the other MAPS projects. But it was the first major construction project in the city in almost two decades, and it suffered from inept administration. When the sealed construction bids were reviewed, the lowest was still seven million dollars *above* what the Task Force had budgeted, with other bids being almost double the original 21 million dollar budgeted figure.¹¹⁵ All of the bids were disqualified, and the city returned to their architectural consultants.

By the time that the international memorial competition was underway, none of the MAPS projects was under construction at the time of the 1995 bombing. City officials were well aware of the public perception of foot-dragging and ineptitude associated with MAPS. Given the loss of life and the seriousness of the event, they knew that the memorial needed to be handled quickly and professionally, and that it needed to involve the public. Robert Johnson, a prominent real estate attorney, was appointed to lead the memorial task force, which comprised 350 people. Johnson saw the effect that the bombing had on the community as an important opportunity: “There probably has never been a time, at least in my thirty year residency in Oklahoma City, when the full community has been as unified as it was subsequent to the bombing... And we want to continue that unity through completion of a memorial.”¹¹⁶ The memorial thus was subsumed within the larger urban renewal effort. City leaders, cognizant of the empty lots that plagued the downtown area for twenty years as a result of the Pei master plan, didn’t want to see

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 146.

¹¹⁶ May 20, 1995; *The Daily Oklahoman*, panel 2, “Planned Bombing Memorial.” Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 135. James Loftis, an architect who was a member of the original firm that designed the Murrah Building, is also quoted as saying, that “Oklahoma City might have seen ‘a second urban renewal’ in one blast.”

history repeat itself.

The bickering and finger pointing about delays to the MAPS projects ended with the bombing, whereupon the emphasis immediately shifted to the families and survivors. In the weeks of rescue and recovery following the bombing, the ideal of the “Oklahoma Standard” a phrase used to describe the overwhelming generosity and sense of appreciation that rescue teams from around the country experienced from the citizens of Oklahoma City, became a point of civic pride and identity. In the self-understanding of the city’s citizens, the Oklahoma Standard replaced Norick’s “Welcome to the Big Leagues” as the city’s un-official brand. Local memorialization efforts moved quickly. The federal government stepped in, not only through the FBI engaged in the criminal investigation, but also by making funds available to address the city’s immediate needs. In total, the federal government provided 79 million dollars, with forty million specifically earmarked for construction of a new downtown federal building. The remaining 39 million was dedicated to helping rebuild the community: for economic development (bringing new businesses into the downtown and to help business owners who had suffered damage to their property); for damage sustained by churches; and for civic infrastructure improvement efforts, including street paving projects, sidewalks, planting and street lighting.¹¹⁷ The cost of the Memorial Museum, together with the federal relief monies and the cost of rebuilding the Federal Building, totaled approximately 106 million dollars — one third of the entire MAPS program.

The dedication of the Memorial Museum in 2001 can be viewed as part of this long-term re-development effort. By that point, the baseball park, the State Fair Grounds, the Myriad Convention Center expansion and the Canal Walk were completed. The trolley was also running,

¹¹⁷ Lackmeyer and Money, *OKC: Second Time Around*, p. 137.

with the memorial as one of its destination points.¹¹⁸ Over the next three years, the remaining four projects, including the Civic Center Music Hall, the North Canadian River project, and the new urban Library Learning Center were all completed. Oklahoma City benefited economically not from the bombing but from the outpouring of resources that came to the city after the tragedy. Projects that had already been planned but that had stagnated due to mismanagement, naïve budgeting, and a lack of cooperation were reinvigorated. The city unified around a common cause, and earnest progress in rebuilding the downtown occurred.

Conclusion

The bombing had a profound effect on the urban fabric of the city and it galvanized the public at a crucial moment in the city's development. In a January 2012 interview about how Oklahoma City had weathered the recent financial crisis, Mike Cornett, the current mayor of Oklahoma City, focused on the city's conservative fiscal policies and the successful and effective imposition of a one-cent sales tax for their civic improvement projects (the MAPS program). "[W]e've built those projects debt-free," Cornett bragged.¹¹⁹ Cornett highlighted the advantageous position in which Oklahoma City found itself as the financial crisis of 2008 hit, having already reinvested in a considerable portion of the urban infrastructure and having dealt with deferred maintenance costs that plagued other American cities as state governments slashed budgets, severely limiting funding and capital improvement projects. Cornett boasted that Oklahoma City was determined to be the most entrepreneurial city in the country (according to

¹¹⁸ According to Kari Watkins, Executive Director of the OK City National Memorial and Museum, the memorial has become one of the top destinations for tourists and visitors to Oklahoma City (personal conversation, June 2008).

¹¹⁹ The interview was part of a series on the economic strains faced by cities after the 2008 financial crisis and produced by National Public Radio. "How Oklahoma City Avoided Economic Pitfalls." *Morning Edition*, broadcast date, January 19, 2012. 4:00 am. Length of interview: 4 minutes, 57 seconds.

the Kaufmann Foundation) and that they also had more start-ups than any other city *per capita*.¹²⁰ The mayor attributed the city's success to the past and current political leadership in Oklahoma City: "we've built up political capital in that we have done what we said we were going to do... we have explained to voters what that money would be used for, we have built those projects debt free, and then the taxation ended."¹²¹

What Mayor Cornett leaves out of his account is the lasting effects that the bombing had on the urban fabric of the city and its role in helping galvanize the public at a crucial moment. The bombing altered the public reception of the MAPS program, transforming it from a highly controversial and contentious tax increase to a valid and necessary investment in the city's future in the wake of tragedy. The bombing also allowed a substantial amount of federal and state funding to be secured, which in turn allowed the municipal government to conduct civic infrastructure repairs, ensured that existing businesses and services stayed in their downtown locations, provided capital for repair work that would not ordinarily be covered, and helped lobby new businesses to move to the downtown area. Mayor Cornett is justified in touting the achievements of Oklahoma City and the role that MAPS played in the reconstruction of the downtown core. However, the failure to acknowledge the role that the federal and state governments also played in helping to stabilize the local economy is disingenuous. To highlight political acumen and the spirit of entrepreneurialism of the city without acknowledging the terrible loss of life that is fundamentally intertwined with the timing and implementation of MAPS shifts our attention away from the grim realities of the site and its history and suppresses the tragic nature of the event itself.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

THE MEMORIAL PROCESS IN OKLAHOMA CITY

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an examination of the memorial process used by the Oklahoma City Memorial Task Force to establish the terms for the International Memorial Competition. One of the leading concerns was to provide those who were most affected by the explosion an opportunity to select the winning entry. Having family members of the victims and survivors serve as jurors was unusual, a variation from the traditional guidelines put forward by professional organizations such as the American Institute of Architects (AIA) whose procedures normally govern the conduct and terms of such events. This arrangement ultimately led to the dismissal of the memorial consultant, Paul Spreiregen who had expressed reservations about the role of families in the selection process.

This chapter also examines how the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum became a fully functioning unit of the National Park Service (NPS). One of the key conditions demanded by the citizens was that the memorial complex be part of the NPS in order to guarantee the highest level of professionalism in terms of maintenance, administrative control, and public oversight. Today, the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is an *affiliate* of the National Park Service, a privately operated, not for profit organization. It is the only entity in the country with that status.

An editorial entitled “As we always have” appeared just three days after the bombing in 1995, suggesting that a memorial be built in Oklahoma City to those killed, although search and rescue operations were still active. This chapter examines the events from June 1995, when Mayor Ron Norick called for the formation of the Oklahoma City Memorial Task Force, through to the fall of 1997, when Robert Johnson appeared before the 105th Congress, seeking to secure five million dollars to fund the construction of the memorial. In his testimony, he emphasized the uniqueness of the tragic event as well as the democratic nature of the memorial process in Oklahoma City:

We democratized the memorial process by making it open and inclusive. There have been no political, socio-economic or other barriers to participation. Most importantly, we have encouraged, solicited, and given great deference to participation by family members and survivors in all aspects of this memorial process. This memorial process has been transforming and has contributed to the healing of our city, our state, and our nation and, most importantly, to those most directly affected by the bombing. As one family member has said: “through the memorial process chaos has been transformed into hope and unity.”¹ (Emphasis added.)

In tracing the earliest stages of the memorial process in Oklahoma City, I interrogate Johnson’s claims. The pride in his speech in the “great deference” given to “family members and survivors in all aspects of this memorial process” was actually a source of controversy early on, one that led to the termination of the original architectural adviser for the memorial competition, Paul Spreiregen. At the heart of the controversy lay the question of *who* should decide the winning design for the memorial. This controversy is significant, and serves as an important case study for those in the design fields because it reveals a crisis in professional respect for designers, highlights the importance of professional codes, and raises questions about the role the public

¹ Robert M. Johnson’s Congressional Testimony for the 105th Congress for the Hearing before the Subcommittee concerning National Parks and Public Lands, in Washington D.C. on September 9, 1997 concerning passage of HR 1849. Serial No. 105-55 Full transcript available via <https://bulk.resource.org/gpo.gov/hearings/105h/45289.pdf> (Accessed July 5, 2013.)

plays within an architectural competition. It further indicates a trend in memorial culture that bears directly on designers, who are increasingly being expected to serve as civic healers for a traumatized populace.

This chapter explains how the memorial became an affiliate of the National Park Service (NPS), a process that was highly political. The association with NPS was an important part of how Oklahoma City asserted its national significance and historical relevance in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. The rushed and highly politicized process yielded a unique situation: The Oklahoma City National Memorial is the *only* private, non-profit organization that has affiliate status with the National Park Service to this day.

Paul Williams has remarked upon the global rush to commemorate atrocities through the establishment of not just a memorial, but also an accompanying museum.² This chapter shows how the rush to memorialize directly affected the terms of the Oklahoma City International Design Competition. In a compressed amount of time, the foundation conducted a public survey, surmised a list of necessary qualities for the memorial, including the desired emotional response of visitors, articulated a mission statement that included guiding principles for the memorial and held an international memorial competition. The role of public affect is determinative in this rushed process. As this dissertation discloses, the commemorative process in Oklahoma City was an extension of the immediate triage that occurred on site in the moments after the bombing. The result of that process was a memorial designed for a specifically therapeutic function.

² Williams, *Memorial Museums*, p. 8.

The Public and the Memorial Process: From Survey to Mission Statement

The formation of the Oklahoma City Memorial Task Force in June of 1995 was a massive undertaking, enrolling 350 people divided among eleven subcommittees, one of which was the Memorial Ideas Input Subcommittee. This subcommittee was charged with coordinating the memorial process, specifically, “so that all constituencies could participate in the process.”³ They were to “obtain extensive input from the victims’ families and the public about what the memorial should remember and what the visitors to it should feel, think and experience” and to develop a Memorial Mission Statement, to carry out the design solicitation process, and finally to recommend to the Mayor and the city council a “Memorial Plan” which was to include “citizen’s oversight during the construction of the Memorial.”⁴ The understanding was that “*the memorial process itself, if handled with sensitivity and inclusiveness, can be as enduring as the final memorial eventually created.*”⁵ This commitment to the necessity of public input and stakeholder inclusiveness was based upon the belief that “memorials which had the least social acceptance and most opposition appeared to be those which lacked significant citizen/constituent involvement in the overall commemorative process.”⁶

In August 1995, the sub-committee finalized a survey for the purposes of “gathering ideas and feelings about what the memorial should remember and represent.”⁷ The survey was

³ From the *Final Report of the Murrah Federal Building Memorial Task Force, Memorial Ideas Input Subcommittee*, dated March 1, 1996, signed by Ch-chairs Sydney Dobson, Polly Nichols, and Jimmy Goodman, p. 1.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2. (My emphasis.)

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 4. No reference is provided with regards to the memorial competitions that were used as evidence to arrive at this assertion, although the Memorial Ideas Input Subcommittee were well aware of the controversy that surrounded Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial entry as one of their contacts in the National Endowment for the Arts forwarded them the video documentary, *Maya Lin: A Strong, Clear Vision*, as an sober introduction to the difficulties of hosting a memorial competition. (Letter to Robert Johnson from Thomas Grooms, National Endowment for the Arts, dated September 21, 1995. Robert Johnson Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 299/4421, B2F1.)

created in a meeting on July 24, 1995 (just over 100 days after the explosion) where the members of the Memorial Ideas Input Sub-Committee listened to and solicited responses from family members and survivors, those “most deeply affected by the bombing.”⁸ The survey charts key demographic information such as a respondent’s zip code and age and asks, “When you are at the memorial what feeling(s) do you want to have?” As prompts, the survey then lists a number of emotional responses including: “pride, anger, fear, hope, solemn, courage, concerned, inspired, peaceful, healing, spiritual [sic],” and “other.” Similarly, the penultimate question of the survey inquires what the “memorial should be or do” and lists options such as “include the names and stories of the victims and the survivors,” “honor those who helped,” “be for the entire nation,” “show the bombing’s violence,” and/or “include a green space with trees and flowers.” (See Figure 3.00).⁹ In effect, the survey specified certain responses and in doing so moved the process in a decidedly affective direction. The result was a checklist of suggested memorial elements for a successful design.

The survey responses were due by February 15, 1996. Additionally, the committee hosted a series of community meetings between November 1995 and February 1996.¹⁰ Attendance at these meetings was lower than expected, with an average of 12 participants in attendance per

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4. The report specifies that the final survey was “essentially the same as the first draft” (5).

⁹ The identification of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial occurred within the “open ended” question of “other things the memorial should be or do.” Approximately ten percent of people who wrote in responses to this section identified “Wall/Vietnam Memorial” as a specific item. There were 938 surveys that had written responses to this prompt, 96 of which identified the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in some way shape or form. It should however be kept in mind that the Memorial Foundation received some 28,773 surveys, most of which left the indicated portion unanswered. Also, the indication of the Vietnam Memorial was the *fifth* most popular response, behind such items as “Sanctity, Positive, Healing & Inspiring” (19%), “Meditation/Rest Area/Benches” (16%), “Small/Simple/Understand” (16%), and “Strong Spiritual Element/Prayer” (12%). Source for all Memorial Survey response data, “Memorial Survey Results, Feb 29, 1996,” part of the *Final Report of the Memorial Ideas Input Subcommittee, Murrah Federal Building Task Force, March 1, 1996*. Oklahoma National Memorial and Museum Archive, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

¹⁰ “Community Meeting Subgroup,” *Final Report*, February 27, 1996, p. 1.

meeting.¹¹ The committee's report speculated about the possible reasons for low public attendance, citing a lack of interest about the memorial or a lack of knowledge about memorials in general.¹² They also suggested as a possible reason the "feeling of not being the right person to give input or not having the 'right' to do so."¹³ The larger populace regarded the memorial process as being primarily for the victims, and therefore downplayed, devalued or even silenced their own opinions concerning the memorial process. However because the process was tantamount to a public hearing concerning the future of the city, many citizens unwittingly forfeited their right to participate in the conversation. Some citizens regarded the bombing as the start of a new urban renaissance within Oklahoma City, which in the months and years after the bombing has redeveloped large amounts of urban and civic infrastructure such as the redevelopment of a new entertainment district in Bricktown, created a urban riverwalk, greatly expanded the pre-existing arts district (now including the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum) and was even able to attract a professional sports team, The Oklahoma City Thunder from the National Basketball Association.

In their final report, dated March 1, 1996 (submitted only two weeks after the submission deadline for the surveys), the Memorial Ideas Input Subcommittee summarized the responses they received through the survey and meetings. Their summary is offered as a series of eight bulleted points, most of which directly correspond with items on the survey in sections three and four (about the feelings and the function of the memorial). First, the memorial should commemorate the loss of victims *as individuals*:

¹¹ Attendance varied significantly throughout the seven public meetings held; ranging from having 27 participants at the first meeting held in the downtown core, to only 2 in the eastern portion of the city. In total, there were 84 participants. "Community Meetings Subgroup," *Final Report*. p.1.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹³ *Ibid*.

Visitors should learn their individual life stories, and leave the Memorial with a strong and clear sense of who they were/are – not just as names, but as individuals, and as our family members, loved ones, friends, neighbors and co-workers. The multicultural cross-section of those attacked should be acknowledged and recorded.¹⁴

Second, it should acknowledge and honor those who participated in the *rescue and recovery* operations. Some of those surveyed had indicated that they also wanted the “general citizen volunteers” who supported the rescue and recovery teams by providing food and shelter to be acknowledged and honored in the memorial.¹⁵ Third, the memorial should capture a sense of the *newfound unity* (city, state, national) that emerged in the aftermath of the bombing. Fourth, the report specified that the memorial should be *peaceful and serene*: “Visitors should be able to encounter a space where they have the opportunity to experience serenity and peacefulness and engage in reflection.”¹⁶ Fifth, the memorial should offer “something for the Children... there should be some component which relates to children on their level... They should feel and learn something which they will take away with them and remember for years to come.”¹⁷ The report went on to specify that there should be a “special place or space which is just ‘for’ the children.”¹⁸

Sixth, the memorial should have an *educational as well as a historical function* (my emphasis). The report stipulated:

There should be a component to the Memorial which teaches and records the important historical facts, and resulting observations, about these events; including, for example, information about the Murrah Federal Building, the individuals who died, the survivors, the bombing and its immediate aftermath, the magnitude of the attack on people and property, the response the area is in the immediate vicinity before and after the bombing – and puts it all in the context of the futility and senselessness of domestic terrorism – killing government servants – as a means of effecting political change in our nation. (Many thought this could be on a site separate from where the building was located.)

¹⁴ Murrah Federal Building Task Force, *Final Report*, March 1, 1996. p. 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

In terms of the feelings evoked by the memorial, the seventh bullet point emphasized that it should be *inspirational*. The report further suggested that visitors would “leave the Memorial personally inspired to live their lives in some meaningful way differently than they had intended before the visit.”¹⁹ The eighth point specified that the memorial should also be “spiritual, participatory and positive.”²⁰ The report went on to recommend that the memorial first and foremost needed to “be sensitive to those most directly affected by the bombing,” that it should be “enduring in its form and content” and “appropriate to the unique and special Oklahoma City community.” They also recommended that the eight themes identified through the survey should be incorporated into the final design. Finally, the report recommended that the “memorialization process continue to involve those most directly affected to the greatest extent feasible in all important aspects of the development, design, funding, construction and maintenance of the Memorial.”²¹

“We come here to remember”: preamble and prayer

The recommendations and details from the final report informed the content of a Mission Statement, which was unanimously adopted by the Advisory Committee of the Task Force on March 26, 1996.²² The Mission Statement begins with a preamble that can be read (and has functioned within the culture of the Memorial Foundation) as a prayer: “We come here to remember those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever. May all who leave here know the impact of violence. May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²² “Memorial Mission Statement” available via <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=10&catid=195>

and serenity.” The words impart a sense of both specificity (remembering *this* event that happened *here*) and the promise of a more general transformation. These lines are stated aloud at all public gatherings that the Memorial Foundation hosts, including marking anniversaries of the bombing, the “Awards of Hope” annual dinner and gala fundraiser, the start of the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon, and even weekly staff meetings within the memorial museum.²³ Their significance within the communal culture surrounding the memorial, extending back to the earliest days of the memorial process, justifies close attention to the wording.

The use of “we” imparts a sense of collectivity and unity of purpose. “Come here” provides a specificity of place – *here* – a unique destination, sacred territory made so through the loss of life. Even when the preamble is spoken aloud in a different location other than at the Memorial or the Museum, it refers back to downtown Oklahoma City and the site of the bombing. We come here to “remember” suggests an active, mental state of reflection and recall, not forecasting or daydreaming, but actively engaging the past within the present moment. The next line specifies what we are recalling, “those who were killed,” (the 168 victims), “those who survived” (individuals who were injured, and those who managed to escape unharmed), “and those changed forever,” allowing for the transformation and permanent alteration of one’s identity caused by the horrific attack. “May all who leave here know the impact of violence” articulates a sense of hope, that is, a lesson learned, but that lesson requires prior knowledge of the site’s violent legacy (a knowledge that is intentionally disguised and hidden in the actual constructed memorial). For many young adults, this is a location that is identified with a loss of life only through second hand lessons. The statement implies that the loss of life is still palpable, even after the debris has been cleared from the site. It is not clear that those who were not alive

²³ This observation is based both on personal experience as well as a conversation with Kari Watkins, Executive Director of the Memorial from June 2008.

at the time of the bombing have the same reaction to the site as those who remember the images that were broadcast worldwide.

The final line, “may this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity” places the intended therapeutic function of the memorial as primary - not as a memory cue or a device to assist in recalling the past, but instead, of offering “comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity,” all emotive characteristics. The last word, “serenity,” and the rhythm and meter of how the prayer is read aloud is reminiscent of the popular “Serenity Prayer,” which figures centrally in Alcoholics Anonymous and other AA-inspired groups: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, The courage to change the things I can, And wisdom to know the difference.”²⁴

Guiding Themes of the Mission Statement

The Mission Statement continues to describe the “context” of the bombing and the memorial process, followed by the articulation of “priorities” and “themes,” guiding principles that are meant to direct the memorial process as it unfolds. There is a dramatic quality to how the event is narrated, and yet no responsible agent is named nor is there any sense as to why the bombing occurred. The event is completely depoliticized. Instead, the text pivots to focus on the *responses* rather than the cause(s) of the attack, so that it becomes a celebration of “public servants and private citizens... as a testament to the sense of unity, compassion, even heroism that is characterized by the rescue and recovery following the bombing.” The description insists on a

²⁴ The prayer is traditionally attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr; an unattributed version is used at the start of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serenity_Prayer accessed August 4, 2013.)

sense of unity amidst diversity, as “people of all colors, ages, religions and political philosophies reached out in love.”²⁵

The Mission Statement articulates six “priorities,” several of which directly impacted the nature of the memorial design. First, “the Memorial shall honor and respect” the findings of the two sub-committees that had the most direct contact with the victims’ families and survivors, the Family Member and Survivor Liaison Committee and the Memorial Ideas Input Subcommittee. This insistence directly pertains to the controversy that emerged with the professional architectural adviser, Paul Speiregeren, which will be discussed below. Second, the memorial must “comply with two resolutions passed by the Memorial Advisory Committee.” The first resolution centered on the importance of the Survivor’s Tree, which must be included in any design. The second resolution concerned “an information center,” and must provide a location for victims’ biographical details and life stories to be told.²⁶ Third, it must acknowledge the site boundaries to be specified as the “Memorial Complex.” Fourth, it must respect the Murrah Building’s former footprint as “sacred ground.” Fifth, it must incorporate the names of victims “in a separate and distinct” manner from the names of those who survived the bombing. Finally, sixth, after the Memorial Complex has been completed

the entire facility [must] be designated as a National Monument to be operated and maintained by the National Parks Service. Such an arrangement is seen as the best way to ensure perpetual high-quality care for a Memorial Complex of *national and historic significance* [my emphasis].²⁷

The memorial’s status as part of the National Park Service also became a point of public tension and controversy and will be discussed later within this chapter.

²⁵ “Mission Statement,” included in *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p. 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

These ideas and principles from the Mission Statement were laid out in the competition booklet, “Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition,” issued in early November 1996. The booklet establishes the operating procedures and the parameters of the competition and articulates the desires of the client, in this case the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation. Advertised in *Art in America* and *Architecture* (Figures 3.01, 3.02), the competition required that design entries be submitted by March 11, 1997. The booklet promised that the finalists would be announced in April on the second anniversary of the bombing, and that the winning entry would be announced on July 3, the day before Independence Day.

The Memorial’s Mission Statement highlights seven critical themes of design engagement: remembrance, peace, spirituality and hope, cherished children, comfort, recognition, and learning. The language derives directly from the final report of the Memorial Ideas Input Subcommittee, which in turn was directly drawing from the memorial survey created in July 1995. For example, the survey specifies as one of the options that the memorial could include “a green space with trees and flowers.” This gets expanded through the idea of nature as a restorative agent in the language of the final report:

Visitors should be able to encounter a space where they have the opportunity to experience serenity and peacefulness and engage in reflection. Many suggested the use of natural elements such as trees, flowers, gardens, and water as a means of accomplishing this desired end.²⁸

The Mission Statement, under the theme of “Peace,” states that, “The Memorial Complex should provide a quiet, peaceful setting where visitors have opportunity for reflection. Many participants suggest using natural elements, such as trees, flowers, gardens or water, to create a serene atmosphere.”²⁹

²⁸ Murrah Federal Building Task Force, *Final Report*, p. 6.

²⁹ “Mission Statement,” *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p.11.

Another example of the prescriptive role of the memorial survey can be found in how the importance of individuals is emphasized within the Mission Statement. This is found under the theme of “Remembrance”: “Visitors to the Memorial Complex should develop an understanding of victims and survivors as individuals with many roles – family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors. The range of cultures, races and ages of those attacked should be evident.”³⁰ This directly paraphrases language from the final report.³¹ On the list provided in item four of the Memorial Survey, the first option stated that the memorial should “include the names and stories of victims and survivors.”

Not only is there direct continuity in language between the original survey and the competition booklet, but there is also an emotionally fraught tone in the booklet’s Executive Summary when it describes the bombing. It depicts the event as an attack on America that “shook our foundations, shocked the world and changed our lives forever. The blast... left Americans feeling the security within their shores had been destroyed.”³² It goes on to announce that “Oklahoma City reminded us that we are a great nation, capable of repelling terrorism and its insidious effects, capable of great compassion and selflessness.” This language reveals that there is no distance or reflection on the event itself as it seems to ignore that the perpetrators of the bombing were native born, American citizens, and instead depicts the threat as coming from beyond “their shores.”

The rest of the competition booklet provides the rules and regulations for the terms of the architectural competition, including key deadlines for submission of competition entries; the overall calendar for the competition, including the dates on which the finalists, and ultimately the

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Murrah Federal Building Task Force, *Final Report*, pp. 5-6. The final report refers to the “multicultural cross-section of those attacked.”

³² *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p. 5.

winner would be announced; contractual obligations required of the participants, finalists and winning team; and a description of prize monies, as well as an honorarium for further design development for the selected finalists. It also identifies the professional adviser and provides contact information should questions concerning the competition arise.³³ There are, however, some details included within the terms of the design booklet that vary significantly from other architectural competitions, and reflect the particular challenges that the Memorial Task Force faced in conducting the memorial competition.

Specifically, there was controversy over the definition of who would be deemed a “survivor.” At first glance, it would seem an easy matter to establish who qualifies as a survivor, noting that not all of those within the Alfred P. Murrah Building perished at the time of the attack. However, given the blast radius of the explosion, and that there were injuries and fatalities that occurred in other buildings (the Water Resource Board and the Athenian Restaurant), establishing the category of “survivor” became problematic. As Edward Linenthal has noted, survivor hierarchies assign a kind of social status, where the injured from the Murrah Building occupied the highest tier, followed by those fortunate enough to escape the building with no visible wounds, followed by those who were injured in the Water Resource Board and the Athenian Restaurant, the uninjured in those two buildings, and those who were working in buildings that sustained no damage at all.³⁴ One’s status as survivor mattered in part because it correlated with the (erroneous) belief that survivors were going to receive financial compensation. This hierarchy soon became highly contentious as it failed to account for the

³³ The booklet also includes sections on the hoped for “Memorial Center” (museum), proposing that it be located in the western portion of the Journal Record Building (21). This center was built and opened on Feb 19, 2001. It also proposed the establishment of “The Oklahoma City Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Violence and Terrorism,” which also came into existence but was not ultimately sustained. The competition adviser of record was Don Stastny, with the assistance of Helen Fried, and Paul Morris.

³⁴ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 197.

mental stress and trauma that was inflicted.³⁵ As a result, the competition booklet found it necessary to include a section entitled *Definition of “Survivors.”*³⁶

This controversy over the definition of survivor was relevant to the memorial competition because one of the mandates of the Mission Statement was that “the individual identities of the *survivors* should be represented on the site where the Murrah Building once stood and in a manner *separate, distinct* and *apart* from the tribute to those who died” (*my emphasis*).³⁷ Yet, the controversy over who constituted a survivor was not resolved by the time the memorial competition was held, and the design booklet offers the following disclaimer:

To clarify the definition of “Survivors,” the following subcommittee report is included as additional information to participants in the Design Competition. However, this report has not yet been fully processed for a proposed approval by the Foundation’s Advisory Committee. Upon approval, the Definition of Survivors will be provided to all competition participants.³⁸

The subcommittee report included in the design competition booklet establishes a “working” definition of who qualifies as a survivor: one is a survivor through the admittance to a hospital for treatment of a bodily injury sustained as a direct result of the explosion or, for those not injured, by their presence within a specified physical perimeter at the time of the attack. Competition participants were expected to observe the requirements of the competition (that “the individual identities of the *survivors* should be represented on the site”), yet the design booklet provides no hint of *how many* survivors there might actually be, and acknowledges that the very definition of who qualifies as a survivor was still to be determined. Any attempt to recognize the individual survivors through the use of sculpture would have been nearly impossible to achieve,

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p. 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

as the number of survivors has a direct bearing on how large of an area would be required or how much space would be claimed.

The design competition booklet also had a section with the heading “Urban Design Strategy.” It states that while the main focus of the design competition is that of establishing an architectural design for the memorial (that is, a design that acknowledges the tragic event and those affected by it), the memorial should also “be a symbol of rebirth, of physical healing, and of human understanding.”³⁹ While it is not surprising that the act of rebuilding, redevelopment and reconstruction is conceptually linked to that of individual healing, there is a certain awkwardness in how this is presented in the terms of the urban design strategy. The booklet states:

Historically, events have provided a cultural overlay that transcends physical parameters. Military actions, natural disasters, land claims, resource exploration, and legal determinations have had a profound effect on the physical evolution of our urban forms. Patterns that have existed for years are interrupted and realigned by events. And these events have been a major form determinant that give character and identities to our cities. The bombing and the Oklahoma City Memorial provide an opportunity to create a *place* that contributes to an appropriate and respectful environment, but also demonstrates how a city can heal itself physically, emotionally, and culturally.⁴⁰

The insistence that memorialization is tantamount to a healing process shifts attention away from the specifics of what happened and why (the perpetrators, their politics, etc.) and instead directs it toward an affirmation of *civic healing*. But how does an imagined memorial heal a city physically? Even after the memorial is constructed, how would this be achieved?

The text goes on to describe “The Memorial District” of downtown Oklahoma City:

Efforts should be made to attract appropriate development to support the Memorial District. Retail uses should be attracted that provide both resident and tourist services, respectful, yet unique to this district. *This district should represent the very best of the Oklahoma spirit*, should not be a “living” cemetery

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 16.

but should portray the Memorial Complex as the focus of activities, providing a physical environment that sets the tone for the Memorial experience.⁴¹

Here, civic healing is manifested in terms of economic development and uses thinly veiled strategies of urban renewal as critical components to fulfill the memorial process. While no immediate political or legal strategies are discussed in terms of implementing the “Memorial District” as the physical design of the memorial is still to be determined by the architectural competition, the implication is that existing non-conforming land uses that violate the “tone for the memorial experience” would be displaced or removed altogether via eminent domain to ensure that the area “represents the very best of the Oklahoma spirit.”⁴² Furthermore, any new businesses, services and residential developments would have to adhere to the appropriate emotional resonance that the memorial would dictate. As the next chapter shows, the need for “civic healing” which arose in the aftermath of the bombing can be historically contextualized as part of a more long-term concern over economic redevelopment in the downtown core.

Families and professionals: Who should decide on the memorial?

The composition, format and selection of jurors eligible for sitting on the committees that would be evaluating submissions and selecting an appropriate winner was not in accordance to the guidelines as set forth by the usual professional bodies governing architectural competitions. In this particular instance, the Memorial Task Force called for those most affected, the family members of those killed and the survivors of the bombing, to be the final judges in selecting the

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 16; (my emphasis).

⁴² The former owner of the Athenian Restaurant, Fotis Bareliotes, was approached by city council to sell what remained of his property so that the land could be secured for the memorial proposed from the architectural competition, for 1.2 million dollars, which was to be used to purchase a nearby property at 110 N. Robinson, and allow him sufficient funds to renovate the property. “A new life for the Athenian.” *The Oklahoman*, April 30, 1996, p. 3. This offer was withdrawn and the land was claimed for construction of the memorial complex. Eventually Bareliotes received one million dollars, not through the city council, but through “federal recovery money.” “New Athenian nearing completion,” *The Oklahoman*, June 23, 2001. C2.

winning entry to the competition. Part III, Section 5 of the American Institute of Architecture Document J332 (November 1976) which governed the procedures regarding architectural design competitions, comments upon the selection of architectural competition jury members, suggesting that “a majority of its members should be registered architects.”⁴³ In addition, the guidelines continue, “The lay members of a jury should not have taken part in drafting the program, in order to avoid their having preconceived opinions regarding the solutions and to assure their making an unbiased judgment.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, the independence and neutrality of a juror is highlighted in Part V of the *Guidelines for Architectural Competitions*, which states, “The position of the architectural juror is similar to that of a legal juror. Just as a legal juror must base a judgment only on what is admitted as evidence, so the architectural juror can consider only the information given in the program, supplemented by the professional adviser’s answers to enquiries, and entries.”⁴⁵

The architectural guidelines in effect at the time for the Oklahoma City Memorial Competition were revised and adopted in 1988, in an AIA document entitled *The Handbook of Architectural Design Competitions*.⁴⁶ While the language of objectivity that compares an architectural juror to that of a legal juror had been removed by this time, there was still significant concern regarding the impartiality and neutrality of jurors in architectural competitions. The document states:

...by accepting the position, jurors agree to abide by the rules and regulations of a competition. In effect they pledge they will... abide by the requirements of the competition program in evaluating the competition’s entries, and refrain from

⁴³ Paul D. Spreiregen, *Design Competitions*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1979, p. 247.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

interjecting considerations in addition to or contrary to those specifically described in the program.⁴⁷

According to the terms of the memorial competition in Oklahoma City, the initial stage of judging would be performed by the Design Evaluation Committee and would consist of ten members (nine voting members, and a nonvoting recorder). The selection of members to serve on the evaluation committee would largely be determined by the Mayor, Ron Norick, in consultation with the Memorial Foundation. The Competition Booklet stipulates:

- 9.1 Three (3) panelists appointed by the Mayor from the Families/Survivors group after receiving recommendations from the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation;
- 9.2 Six (6) design professional panelists approved by the Mayor after receiving recommendations from the Board of the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation; and
- 9.3 One (1) nonvoting recorder to be appointed by the Mayor after receiving recommendation from the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation.⁴⁸

The format and stipulation of a number of design professionals and a representation of engaged community members as the constitution of this committee was neither unreasonable nor unusual for an architectural competition, and the continuance of this jury to select the final winner in the memorial competition would have been a normal operating procedure for any architectural competition. The professional designers selected for this evaluation panel were architectural critic Robert Campbell (FAIA), landscape architect Richard (Rich) Haag (FASLA), co-founder of IDEO Bill Moggridge, architect and educator Adelé Naudé Santos (FAIA), architect Michael Pride-Wells (AIA) and Native American artist Juane Quick-to-See Smith. Three family members and survivors were selected: Polly Nichols, Toby Tompson and Richard Williams, with the non-

⁴⁷ *The Handbook of Architectural Design Competitions*, American Institute of Architects, available for download at http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/ek_members/documents/pdf/aiap072762.pdf, p. 20. (1988) (Accessed: July 19, 2013.)

⁴⁸ *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p. 31.

voting member also being a family member, Yvonne Maloan.⁴⁹ This evaluation panel was charged with the task of “analyzing and evaluating all complying entries” and selecting between three to five submissions to “be invited to participate in Stage II of this Design Competition.”⁵⁰ It was *not* to determine the winner of the design competition, as that was the specific charge for the Design Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee ultimately consisted of 15 members, of whom eight were family members/survivors. Of the seven “other” panelists, four came from the design professions, and three from the business/political arena of Oklahoma City. The professional designers were Laurie Beckleman, Vice President of the World Monuments Fund in New York City, Ignacio Bunster-Ossa (ASLA), Partner, Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Philadelphia, Douglas Hollis, artist and educator at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, and Lars Lerup, Dean of the Rice University School of Architecture. Representing the business and political interests were Luke R. Corbett, CEO Kerr-McGee Corporation, David R. Lopez, President, Southwest Bell, and Mayor Ron Norick. The survivors and family members were represented by John Cole (survivor- Social Security), Tom Hall (survivor- GSA), Dr. Paul Heath (survivor- Veterans Affairs), Jeannine Gist (family member- lost daughter Karen Gist Carr, who worked in the Army Recruiting Center), Calvin Moser (survivor), Cheryl Scroggins (family- lost her husband Lanny Scroggins, HUD), Philip Thompson (family – lost his mother, Virginia Thompson, who worked in the Federal Credit Union), and Bud K. Welch (family- lost his daughter, Julie Welch who worked in the Social Security office.) The non-voting members were

⁴⁹ The details of who served on the Design Evaluation Panel can be found in the *Oklahoma City Memorial: International Design Competition, Report of the Design Evaluation Panel*, p. 10.

⁵⁰ *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p. 26.

Crystal Radcliff, Project Manager, Oklahoma City Arts Council, and Kim Richie (survivor-Federal Credit Union).⁵¹

Unlike the Evaluation Committee that consisted of design professionals, the Selection Committee was composed primarily of family members of bombing victims and survivors of the bombing.⁵² It is was the latter jury's composition, of nonprofessionals as well as traumatized family members and survivors, that eventually led to the termination of the Memorial Task Force's competition adviser, Paul Spreiregen, who articulated his professional concerns about using such a lay jury to determine the winning entry to the design competition.

Paul D. Spreiregen was an obvious choice to put together the terms of the Memorial Task Force's design competition: he was the chairman of the American Institute of Architecture's committee on design competitions from 1977-1981, was part of the Competitions Advisory Group for the National Endowment for the Arts, and sat on the editorial board of *Competitions* magazine, which publicized design competitions. Spreiregen was the principal contributor to the *American Institute of Architects Handbook on Architectural Competitions* (1988) and wrote a comprehensive overview of architectural competitions, including their histories, methodologies, and procedures in his book, *Design Competitions* (1989). Furthermore, he had considerable practical experience, acting as the advisor to at least ten national competitions, including the National Peace Garden in Washington, D.C. (1989), the Kent State University May 4, 1970 Memorial in Kent, Ohio (1985-86) and, most notably, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Design Competition, Washington, D.C. (1980-81). The last of those seems to have been of particular interest to the Memorial Task Force, as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was the *only* memorial

⁵¹ The relationships of the jury members to their lost loved ones is described in the *Oklahoma City Memorial Design Competition, Report of Selection Committee*, p. 5.

⁵² *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, pp. 31-32.

specifically identified within its survey – specifically, when they asked the open-ended question, “Other things the memorial should be or do.”⁵³

Spreiregen was a talented architect, planner and designer, who had received multiple professional awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects and the American Planning Association; he also became a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1977.⁵⁴ He taught extensively when his private practice would allow, including at Harvard University, and the University of Pennsylvania. He also taught at the Boston Architectural Center, the University of Hawaii, Ball State University and Catholic University in Washington, D.C. When members of the Memorial Task Force performed its background check on Spreiregen, one former client remarked about his advising expertise stating:

He [Spreiregen] is absolutely a team player. He will advise his position and then when the team position is taken, he runs for the team. He commands the respect of world-class professionals, and [physical] plant people and also has the very good ability of taking lay people and bringing them up to speed on the technicalities involved...in three words he is *immersed*, *involved* and *detached*.⁵⁵

The use of these words to describe Spreiregen suggests professional abilities and interpersonal skills, but the inclusion of the last word, *detached*, is ironic given the criticism that was leveled against him, and the rationale behind his dismissal as the competition’s professional adviser. At the heart of the issue that led to Spreiregen’s firing was whether or not the Selection Committee should include such a significant number of non-designers, with family members and survivors

⁵³ Approximately ten percent of people who wrote responses in this section identified “Wall/Vietnam Memorial” as a specific item.

⁵⁴ Paul D. Spreiregen’s curriculum vitae. Robert Johnson Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive. 299/4421 B2F1.

⁵⁵ Original emphasis. William B. Cleary, in talking with Robert Taylor, a retired AT& T/Bell Lab Vice President, concerning Paul Spreiregen. From Robert M. Johnson Collection, entitled “Murrah Memorial Notes” Dated January 16, 1996. Bill Cleary, the original co-chair of the Design Solicitation Subcommittee, was a supporter of Spreiregen and resigned once it became clear that Robert Johnson had decided to terminate Spreiregen. Cleary resigned in a letter dated January 18, 1996. From Robert Johnson Collection. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive. 299/4421 B2F1.

of the bombing representing eight positions out of a possible fifteen.⁵⁶ Spreiregen's insistence that family members should not be the majority of members on the Selection Committee ran counter to the social privilege that the victim's families and survivors had throughout the commemorative process in Oklahoma City.

In a section entitled "Who owns the Process?" in *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*, Linenthal dedicates three pages to the dismissal of Paul Spreiregen.⁵⁷ Linenthal represents the conflict between Spreiregen and the Memorial Task Force as essentially a difference of opinion, portraying the Memorial Task Force, and Chairman Robert M. Johnson in particular, in a favorable light. The Task Force is described as the stalwart advocate of the wounded and traumatized community: "When I told family members that we [the Memorial Task Force] would adhere to the commitment we had with them [to ensure that family members and survivors would be integral to the selection of the winning entry to the design competition], they stood and gave us an ovation."⁵⁸ Spreiregen is portrayed as a dogmatic, New England elitist and outsider, who simply did not understand the culture and people of Oklahoma. Linenthal notes that Spreiregen was hired "on a trial basis" and implies a short duration of employment.⁵⁹

Spreiregen was hopeful that the Memorial Task Force would secure his expertise to act as the memorial competition adviser, stating:

I regard this as a one of the most significant memorial efforts in the nation's history. It deserves all the skill and dedication that can be mustered. I am honored to be asked to help. It is my hope that I will be asked to serve as the professional adviser for the competition, based upon the content of the operational plan. *Its overriding objective is excellence.*⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p 32.

⁵⁷ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 187.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 187.

⁶⁰ From fax from Paul Spreiregen to Mr. William Cleary and Mr. Robert Johnson dated November 30, 1995 in which Spreiregen proposes a professional fee of \$5,000.00 (plus direct expenses). Robert M. Johnston Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archives. 299/4421 B2F1 (my emphasis).

As Linenthal correctly noted, the Memorial Foundation was intent on having a “world-class memorial” and Spreiregen “represented an important step towards that goal.”⁶¹ Spreiregen took his professional responsibilities seriously and was ready to help deliver the quality memorial the foundation desired.

In a letter to William (Bill) Cleary on January 17, 1996 (the day before the letter of his dismissal was prepared), Spreiregen agreed to the terms that Robert Johnson and other committee members of the Memorial Task Force established (July 26, 1995) concerning the role of family members and survivors in the design evaluation and selection process. Spreiregen stated clearly, “In agreeing to accept the procedure which Bob [Robert M. Johnson] advanced I am committing myself to that process, and obligating myself to do all I can do to achieve success. I will do so, giving my best. However, I feel obligated to point out certain problems that may be encountered.”⁶²

Spreiregen had four main concerns. He noted that the act of judging competition submissions was a “demanding task, physically and mentally.”⁶³ This was a concern for family members, survivors, and the professional designers alike. This stress was compounded by the reality that, given the caliber of professionals that would be asked to serve and the pressures they would face from their firms, many of the professional jurors would be limited in the time they could commit to the memorial jury, and this further deepened his concern – “the scheduled pushes the professional jury to the limit.”⁶⁴ Second, he noted that there was no clear process for resolution of potential disagreement between design professionals and lay people. He points out

⁶¹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 187.

⁶² A letter to Bill Cleary from Paul Spreiregen accepting the Evaluation Committee and Selection Committee composition for the memorial competition. Dated Jan 17, 1996. Source: Robert M. Johnson Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archives, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 299/4421.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

“the possibility that there may be significant differences of view, possibly difficult to resolve, between the local panel and the professional panel.”⁶⁵ Given the extraordinary political and social capital that the family members and survivors were afforded and their own active and vocal, political organization, it was difficult for Spreiregen to foresee the family members and survivors negotiating any kind of acceptable agreement.⁶⁶ Third, with the division of the selection committees into two different groups, there was no guarantee that the Design Selection Committee would accept the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee. In turn, there was the possibility that the Design Selection Committee (again, consisting mostly of survivors and family members) would return to the original pool of submissions to select “their” own finalists and winner. No recourse for dealing with this possibility was included in the terms of the competition booklet. Lastly, once the winning entry was determined, the results of the competition had to be made quickly public. Spreiregen was concerned that this undertaking would come on the heels of a stressful and tiring process, which would further challenge the jurors and the memorial staff.⁶⁷ Summarizing his concerns, Spreiregen wrote:

We should be mindful that the plan places heavy demands on the professional jury, that there are two highly sensitive decision moments, and that we are obligating ourselves to a very demanding effort at the end. It is essential that our administrative structure be smooth and efficient. Equally essential is that the caliber of the local participants be very high.⁶⁸

Missing from Linenthal’s account is any discussion of the rules and regulations concerning architectural competitions that professional designers are bound to as an essential component of

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Some family members of the victims of the Oklahoma City Bombing held a press conference in June 1995 complaining that they were being ignored and shut out of the discussions concerning the memorial process. “Oklahoma City’s Measure of Grief; Blast Survivors, Victims’ Families Feud Over Planned Memorial.” *The Washington Post*. Lois Romano, Section A, p. 1. March 12, 1996.

⁶⁷ A letter to Bill Cleary from Paul Spreiregen accepting the Evaluation Committee and Selection Committee composition for the memorial competition. Dated Jan 17, 1996. Robert Johnson Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archives. 299/4421.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

their licensure and professional code of conduct. Spreiregen's concerns were not just a matter of opinion; they were in line with American Institute of Architects Code of Ethics and Bylaws. Using his connections with *Competitions*, Spreiregen penned a letter to the editor publically sharing his concerns with the Memorial Task Force's planned jury composition, a letter that Linenthal describes as "a parting shot."⁶⁹ Spreiregen wrote:

It is perfectly understandable that a high degree of participation has been guaranteed for grieving survivors. But such participation has its limits when a design competition is concerned. The veterans that sat on the steering committee which organized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Competition recognized this: it was assumed, for example, that design professionals on any jury panel would unduly defer to any veteran who might also be a member of that jury. The veterans therefore decided that it would not be a good idea for any of them to serve on that jury... There appears some kind of overriding concern in Oklahoma City that the Memorial will somehow serve as a salve to the survivors by enabling them to better deal with their grief. By the time that this memorial is completed most who have been touched by this tragedy will have dealt with their trauma. The memorial will be there for another purpose — to educate the young and old and act to reinforce a sense of community, if you will, the idea of rebirth. It is here that design excellence has its proper place — as a true sign of optimism and belief in the future for those who survived.⁷⁰

G. Stanley Collyer, Jr., the editor of *Competitions* and a member of the AIA Competitions Task Force, expressed similar concerns. In a letter to Jackie Jones, the Executive Director of the Arts Council of Oklahoma City and co-chair of the Design Solicitation Committee, Collyer questioned the composition of the evaluation and selection committees, the respective size of the committees and their unwieldy numbers. While sympathetic to the family members' and survivors' desire to participate, he cautioned:

A layperson is hardly equipped with the discerning eye of the trained professional: if Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam Memorial had been submitted to a committee of laypersons based solely on the presentation boards, her entry would never have made it into the final round, let alone been chosen as the winner. It took the best designers in the business to recognize the uniqueness of her concept. Moreover, what would be the position of such a committee if the

⁶⁹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 188.

⁷⁰ *Competitions*, (Spring 1996, Volume 6, No. 1. p. 2.)

professional jury rated the designs (this is the purview of any jury) and came up with a definite preference? The way in which the process of this competition is structured will go a long way towards determining who enters and who judges. Before spending hours at their drawing boards, many of our designers will take a close look at the process. If they believe the process to be flawed, some of our best designers will be missing.⁷¹

In fact, such under-representation from architects, landscape architects and other designers was the case in Oklahoma City. After examining all 624 submissions, I noted that few internationally or domestically known designers participated within the competition.⁷² There was a host of possible explanations for this, with the memorial competition terms providing only one possible reason. Architectural competitions are notorious within design offices as being works of speculation, with little chance of seeing any actual revenue come from them. In addition, in order to be retained as the architect of record (or landscape architect of record), participation within such a competition often forecloses any chance of professional work as most competitions prevent such participation as a possible conflict of interest.⁷³ There are a host of reasons why a firm or a designer might not participate in a particular competition other than the competition format. This was especially true in 1995 as the recession of 1992 had finally dissipated, and many firms simply may not have had the time to submit an entry. Location might have also played a critical role, with some designers questioning whether the Oklahoma City competition would carry enough cultural capital to further their own careers.

⁷¹ Letter from G. Stanley Collyer Jr. to Jackie Jones, Feb 20, 1996. It must be mentioned that the rationale for the letter is uncertain. No correspondence requesting Collyer's response was included in the archive, nor was a letter from Collyer requesting information from Ms. Jones. What was included with the letter was a brief draft response from Jackie Jones addressed to G. Stanley Collyer Jr. but faxed to Robert Johnson for his review. Robert Johnson Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive. 299/4421 B2F1.

⁷² Personal notes, May 2010.

⁷³ Often such conflict of interest clauses have a limited timeframe stipulated as part of the terms set forth in agreeing to serve as a jury member. The general concern is that jurors will not benefit financially in an immediate way from their roles, and that they must not have any financial investment in any of the firms or designers that do submit to the competitions that they are judging. Once a competition has been completed, and a winning entry named, such contracts usually such contracts become nullified, and jurors may offer their professional design services and expertise to the entities that sponsored the competition.

Spreiregen was fired from the competition project on January 18, 1996. In a faxed document seeking Robert Johnson's approval, Jackie Jones both highlights the necessity to keep the memorial competition on schedule and indicates the value of Spreiregen's operational guidelines for the competition. At the same time, the fax also identifies the necessary skill set for Spreiregen's replacement, including the importance of a "willingness to incorporate work done to date — public response surveys, outline of design process by Paul Spreiregen, organization of committee structure — into proposed strategies."⁷⁴ The final bullet point emphasizes the need for someone with the "ability to communicate (more listening than speaking) clearly with large groups, individuals, and the press."⁷⁵ The implication is that Spreiregen was tone deaf to the multiple conversations that he and Robert Johnson had concerning the role the family members and survivors would play within the process.

Linenthal quotes Spreiregen's termination letter from Johnson as a representation of the fundamental rift:

After considerable thought and deliberations, we have concluded that while you have an admirable reputation as a design competition adviser, we do not universally share the same philosophical approach to the design selection process as it relates to community involvement.⁷⁶

The following paragraph from Johnson's letter, which Linenthal does not cite, directly pertains to the reservations continually articulated by Spreiregen:

When the Task Force was appointed by Mayor Norick, we stated that the hallmarks of our memorial process would be listening and public participation. We also stated that the *healing effect and community ownership* of a memorial

⁷⁴ Fax from Jackie Jones to Robert M Johnson, entitled "Murrah Federal Building Memorial, Oklahoma City, OK." Dated Feb 2, 1996 17:11 The Robert Johnson Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archives. 299/4421 B2F1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 187.

developed with thorough and meaningful participation by those directly affected *was equally as important as the end physical result* (my emphasis).⁷⁷

The commitment to the memorial (and design) process as being *equal* to the actual physical result is a novel and radical development when considering the history of memorial competitions. Previously, such competitions were determined solely upon the artistic judgments of their professional jury and the quality of the work submitted. If the collection of submissions to a competition were deemed uninspired or unworthy, no winning submission would be selected, and no award would be named. Additionally, cases where a submission was selected as the winning entry, offered no guarantee that it would be constructed because of political reluctance, technological limitations, or burdensome financial cost. (Lawrence Halprin was selected in 1974 by the FDR Memorial Commission to construct a memorial to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on a 7.5 acre site located adjacent to the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C. However it was not dedicated until May 1997 because Congress continually failed to appropriate necessary funds).⁷⁸ In the case of Oklahoma City, it was clear that a memorial would be constructed because of the widespread political and social investment and that those most affected by the results of the explosion would be *essential* in selecting the winning entry.

The National Parks Service Controversy

The Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation has a unique affiliation and agreement with the National Park Service (NPS). The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is the *only* non-profit organization in the United States who benefits from NPS personnel offering

⁷⁷ Letter from Robert M. Johnson to Paul D. Spreiregen, terminating his contract with the Memorial Task Force. Dated January 18, 1996. Robert Johnston Collection. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archives. 299/4421 B2F1. (See Figure 3.03 for the letter in its entirety.)

⁷⁸ Source: <http://tclf.org/landscapes/franklin-delano-roosevelt-memorial> (accessed February 13, 2014.) For a detailed description of the FDR Memorial, refer to Phyllis Tuchman's excellent article, "The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial" in *Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places*. Published by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1986.

interpretive services off of federally owned or controlled land free of charge.⁷⁹ This agreement was entered into as a result of an untenable relationship between the NPS and the preceding entity to the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, the Oklahoma City Memorial Trust, regarding the operation and management of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.⁸⁰ The original agreement stated that the site would operate, for all effective purposes, as a *unit* of the National Park Service.⁸¹ The memorial complex would employ National Park Service representatives as staff offering their interpretative and managerial services to the visitors of the site, and the Secretary to the Department of the Interior would, in turn, sit upon the Memorial Trust's Board of Directors.⁸²

As the bombing was still fresh in the psyche of Oklahoma City and the State of Oklahoma, the Memorial Trust wanted to possess local control of the complex, and therefore ensure that the decision making authority ultimately resided in Oklahoma, not Washington, D.C. In order to agree to these terms, the NPS insisted that the Memorial Trust would be responsible for providing a comparable salary and the same benefits for park personnel employed on the site, and guarantee that the National Park Service employees at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum would receive the same rights and responsibilities as any other NPS employee within the National Park System. The agreement entered into between the Secretary of the Interior and the Oklahoma City National Memorial Trust in 1997 states that the National

⁷⁹ The original terms of the agreement had placed the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum as a full-fledged unit of the National Parks Service, despite the lack of the substantial and necessary research into the site including its natural history and cultural significance.

⁸⁰ Originally, the Oklahoma City Memorial Trust was a wholly owned Government corporation, not a non-profit organization. Public Law 105-58-Oct 9, 1997. 111 STAT. 1262, Sec 5. Available via <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-105publ58/pdf/PLAW-105publ58.pdf> (Accessed on December 30, 2011).

⁸¹ As per Public Law 105-58-Oct 9, 1997. 111 STAT. 1262, Sec. 4. Oklahoma City National Memorial (a) which reads, "In order to preserve for the benefit and inspiration of the People of the United States and the world, as a National Memorial certain lands located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, there is established *as a unit of the National Park System* the Oklahoma City National Memorial. The Memorial shall be administered by the Trust in cooperation with the Secretary and in accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535, 16 U.S.C. 1 et seq.), and the Act of August 21, 1935 (49 Stat. 666; 16 U.S.C. 461-467)" (My emphasis).

⁸² As per Public Law 105-58-Oct 9, 1997. 111 STAT. 1262, Sec. 5 (1) (B)

Park Service and its personnel would be utilized by the memorial for "technical assistance for the planning, preservation, maintenance, interpretation, curatorial management and general management as mutually agreed to by the Secretary and the Trust."⁸³

Perhaps the greatest issue was that the National Park Service was unable to perform a Special Resource Study (SRS), which is a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of the site in question to determine if it possesses natural or culturally significant resources, and an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the area. Failure to perform these two reports circumnavigated existing federal law, and also prevented the NPS from identifying community stakeholders, building consensus among those stakeholders, gauging long term public support for the memorial, and determining whether the memorial was a feasible addition to the National Park System. This "end run" around the NPS authority was mandated by Congress via Public Law 105-58, of the 105th Congress, and signed by the President. Section 6 (Authorities of the Trust) (b) (4) reads, "Federal laws and regulations governing procurement by Federal agencies shall not apply to the Trust, with the exceptions of laws and regulations related to Federal Government contracts governing working conditions, and civil rights provisions otherwise applicable thereto." This removes normal channels of public oversight of how the Trust spends the federal and state tax dollars that Congress allocated to the Trust. Additionally, Section 6 (g) essentially empowers the Trust to make any and all decisions concerning the memorial, with little input from the NPS itself. The clause reads:

Bylaws, Rules and Regulations —The Trust may adopt, amend, repeal, and enforce bylaws, rules and regulations governing the manner in which its business may be conducted and the powers vested in it may be exercised. The Trust is authorized, in consultation with the Secretary, to adopt and to enforce those rules and regulations that

⁸³ Chris Casteel, "Park Service Deal OK'd Bombing Memorial Management Spelled Out," *The Oklahoman*, September 18, 1997, p. 1.

are applicable to the operation of the National Park System and that may be necessary and appropriate to carry out its duties and responsibilities under this Act.⁸⁴

It was the wording of “in consultation with the Secretary” that made the staff of the NPS particularly nervous, as the wording remained unclear what “in consultation” actually meant, and where the ultimate decision making authority resided. A full copy of this law is included in the appendices.

This decision, however, was not without reservations felt by both parties. The NPS raised a number of questions specifically pertaining to the establishment, operation and management of the memorial complex that were not in accordance to existing National Park Service rules and regulations, including a lengthy series of research reports and cultural heritage assessment. Park service staff also expressed concern regarding the overly optimistic financial estimates and proposed funding structure that the Memorial Trust had in place.⁸⁵ The Memorial Trust had always envisioned the involvement of the National Park Service with the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial, in terms of offering their interpretative services but also in terms of what it meant symbolically, representing the sense that the Oklahoma City Bombing was an event whose significance was resonant on a national level. The involvement of the National Parks Service was a key priority in the international memorial competition booklet and was viewed by many in the City as a key guarantor to certify an expected level of excellence and professionalism in terms of the construction, management and operational oversight for the memorial complex. The booklet states:

Finally, it is the wish of the Memorial Task Force that, after completion of the Memorial and Memorial Complex, the entire facility be designated as a National Monument to be operated and maintained by the National Park Service. Such an

⁸⁴ Available for download at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-105publ58/pdf/PLAW-105publ58.pdf> (Accessed January 2, 2012.)

arrangement is seen as the best way to ensure perpetual high-quality care for a Memorial Complex of national and historic significance.⁸⁶

The Memorial Trust's concern regarding the role of the NPS was also financial in nature. In the mid-nineteen-nineties, the NPS was operating under a budgetary shortfall caused by numerous unfunded mandates imposed upon it by Congress, as a result of which the Memorial Trust was informed that if they wished to be a fully functioning National Park, they would be expected to shoulder a portion of those larger operational costs.⁸⁷ But the Trust was concerned that financial contributions donated specifically for the establishment and operation of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum would be absorbed by the NPS bureaucracy in Washington and redirected toward other park service obligations throughout the rest of the country. Originally estimated as \$198,000 per year by the National Park Service, by 2004 the actual cost of NPS personnel, as quoted by the Memorial Trust, approached three times that amount, totaling \$600,000 per annum.⁸⁸ Long-standing tensions between the National Park Service and the Memorial Trust finally reached a breaking point. Kari Watkins, the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Executive Director complained that, "The Park Service didn't really want us to be part of them at first. They said we weren't proven history, we weren't over 50 years old... Then when we became successful, they fought like hell to take us over."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Oklahoma City Memorial: An International Design Competition*, p. 10.

⁸⁷ "Memorial can't escape economy - Low attendance prompts request for federal assistance." Nick Trougakos, *The Daily Oklahoman*, Saturday, October 4, 2004, p. A1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* It was this very argument, that the public interest in the memorial museum would naturally wane over time, was made by the NPS back in 1997, and was why the National Park Service takes at least three years of performing background research including talking to various stakeholders before they will send a recommendation on to the Secretary of the Interior suggesting further investigation if warranted.

⁸⁹ Howard Witt, "Estrangement at the Memorial; 'I do not feel welcome anymore', says one parent whose daughter was among 168 killed in the '95 Oklahoma City terrorist bombing," *The Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 2004. (Accessed December 30, 2011). Kari Watkins reference to "being over 50 years old" concerns the stipulation that the National Park Service requires a site of historical significance to be over 50 years old in order to be considered as a historic site. This requirement is not meant to disregard sites that are under 50 years of age as being of no historical significance, or *unworthy* of the NPS efforts, only that for administrative purposes, the NPS would not produce a cultural management report for a site that has not met that time requirement. There were other burdensome regulations that the Oklahoma City National Memorial also found itself subject to as being a unit of the

Part of this tension was borne out of a significant drop in the number of visitors to both the memorial and the memorial museum. In 2001, 575,000 people toured the outdoor memorial and 285,000 paid to visit the memorial museum, but by 2003, attendance had dropped to 327,750 for the outdoor memorial, and 225,150 for the memorial museum.⁹⁰ This decline, coupled with increased operating costs, caused the Memorial Trust to seek and obtain an additional 1.6 million dollars of Congressional funding in 2003 to help meet the 3.3 million dollar annual budget.⁹¹ Eventually, the terms of the arrangement between the NPS and the Memorial Trust had to be reconsidered and renegotiated.⁹² In 2004, Public Law 108-199 was passed, which rescinded key sections of the original agreement, transformed the Oklahoma City Memorial Trust into the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, and effectively removed all connections between the Memorial Foundation and the NPS, except for the use of NPS personnel on site of the memorial to offer their interpretive services free of charge in perpetuity.⁹³ In addition, the revised terms of the law provided financial compensation to the newly formed Memorial Foundation for \$600,000.00 to be paid by the NPS for the past services that were rendered by National Park Service personnel, although paid for by the Memorial Trust.⁹⁴

This fundamental change of the memorial complex from public ownership and management to that of a private non-profit is unnoticeable on the memorial grounds. A visitor

NPS. For example, the Trust was required to file an operational plan how the NPS staff would combat a possible wildfire, despite it being located within the heart of a metropolitan center.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² The term “renegotiated” might be overly generous, as it appears that the members of the Memorial Trust and the executive director of the memorial complex directly lobbied Congress to support for this change. It appears that there was no direct negotiation with the National Park Service for the new terms of the current agreement that is now in effect.

⁹³ Not only did this law provide the use of six NPS personnel to the Memorial Foundation free of charge in perpetuity, the law stipulates that the National Park Service *reimburse* the Memorial Foundation for past payments concerning personnel, security and “other costs and services” related to the Oklahoma City National Memorial before the date of the enactment of this Act.” Public Law 108-199-Jan. 23, 2004. Sec. 544. Sec. 5. (g) 118 STAT. 349. Available via <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-108publ199/pdf/PLAW-108publ199.pdf> (accessed December 30, 2011.)

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

who toured the site in the early 2000's when the memorial and memorial museum were a unit of the NPS would be hard pressed to note any substantial difference if they toured the site today, easily still believing that the site continues to be subject to federal jurisdiction. The presence of uniformed National Park Service employees providing visitor services on the memorial grounds, the memorial's title — The Oklahoma City *National* Memorial and Museum — encourage the perception that this site is still federally owned land, operated by the National Park Service.⁹⁵ This perception is subtly reinforced by the close proximity of the site to the Federal Courthouse (and the operational underground parking lot under the Alfred P. Murrah Memorial Plaza that is immediately adjacent to the memorial).⁹⁶ The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum continues to be listed on the National Park Service's website as a national memorial, just like the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Missouri or the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Manteo, North Carolina (Figures 3.04, 3.05, 3.06 respectively).⁹⁷ The fundamental difference is that the memorial museum in Oklahoma City is a privately held, non-profit, corporation. In turn, the administration of the memorial museum can restrict or limit public access to the memorial and the memorial museum whenever they choose, with few legal or civil penalties or repercussions. The security for the memorial and the memorial museum is not provided by NPS personnel, or even the Oklahoma City Police Department, but rather by a local, private security firm.⁹⁸ In short, despite all appearances that the memorial is public space, akin to

⁹⁵ <http://www.nps.gov/okci/index.htm>

⁹⁶ The Federal Courthouse is less than a block away from the memorial and the court staff and other personnel use the former Murrah Federal Building Parking Garage that is immediately adjacent to the memorial itself. The Murrah Plaza Memorial is still Federally owned property, despite appearing as part of the larger Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum itself.

⁹⁷ National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/okci/index.htm> , <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/index.htm> , and <http://www.nps.gov/wrbr/index.htm> (accessed December 9, 2011).

⁹⁸ The NPS personnel, because of their continual presence on site of the memorial offer a certain degree of deterrent and surveillance, however they have no more authority to enquire about behavior or detain an individual than does the average citizen. The National Park Service rangers are not armed, but they do carry communication equipment to remain in contact with each other and their headquarters, located a block away off of the memorial grounds.

the other lands held within the National Park System, the memorial and the adjacent memorial museum operate as a *private*, non-profit, entity and does not guarantee any member of the general public an inherent right of use or access.

Originally intended to be an integral unit of the National Park Service, the Memorial Trust wished to have all the benefits and legitimacy of such an association, with none of the due diligence or oversight required by the National Park Service regulations. The Memorial Trust was able to circumnavigate federal regulations through Congressional assistance, and in turn, received a sizable percentage of public funds to construct what would eventually become a private institution. The memorial complex had its operational expenses repaid by an already cash-strapped National Parks Service while continuing to benefit from the interpretive services that the NPS is mandated to provide at the Memorial free of charge.

This situation exemplifies a larger tension within the memorial complex. A key paradox of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is that the Memorial Foundation and senior memorial staff wanted to offer their perspective of the deadly bombing as a *unique* occurrence that had *national* significance: the Oklahoma City Bombing was the deadliest act of terrorism within the United States at that time. Yet they also desired to be both *regional*, retaining their Oklahoma character, and *representational*, offering their new found expertise and advice to other communities in crisis.⁹⁹ The memorial foundation wanted to celebrate its localism, while also expanding its national and international reach because of how it responded to the attack.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Most directly through their self published guide, *A Network of Hope: A Resource to Help*, which offers a series of primary case studies (the Oklahoma City Bombing is one such example) to assist municipality leadership in handling both “man made” and natural disasters.

¹⁰⁰ One of the most prominent messages that the memorial museum instills is the concept of the “Oklahoma Standard,” an adage borne out of an observation that a visiting rescue worker made to the Governor. The rescue worker showed the governor his wallet, and the money therein and remarked that since he had been in Oklahoma he did not have to spend a single dollar on himself, that everything that he needed was provided to him, free of charge.

In a letter to Lee Allen Smith from Robert Johnson dated January 12, 2000, Johnson identifies the unique operating parameters of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum and specifically focuses how they (at the time) operated outside the traditional procedures of the National Park Service. Johnson states:

Unlike any other unit of the National Park System, The Oklahoma City National Memorial is not governed by the National Park Services, but rather a nine member Board of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Trust created by Congress. One of the members of the board is the designee of the Secretary of the Interior; namely the Director of the Rocky Mountain Region of the National Park Service. The other eight members were appointed by the President from a list of recommendations provided by the Governor of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Congressional delegation and the Mayor of the City of Oklahoma City.¹⁰¹

Johnson goes on to underscore how the memorial complex is funded:

The Oklahoma City National Memorial is also unique in that our business plan will not burden the tax payer with the annual cost of operations of the Memorial. The business plan is to operate the Memorial from entrance fees charged for the interactive learning museum component of the Memorial to be known as the Memorial Center and also from income from an endowment which will initially be seeded in the amount of \$5,000,000. Although the National Park Service will partially staff the operations of the Oklahoma City Memorial, we will reimburse the National Park Service for their staffing and other expenses. *Every National Park Superintendent in the country is watching our progress with great interest, because the model established by the Oklahoma City National Memorial may well lead to the partial privatization of National Parks throughout the country. We are hopeful that our efforts will leave a legacy of reducing the tax dollars required for the funding of National Parks.*¹⁰² (My emphasis).

Johnson, and other members of the Memorial Trust, believed that their unique approach might serve as a partial solution to the chronic underfunding of the various units of the National Park Service. What is particularly striking is Johnson's assumption that the "privatization" model that the Memorial Trust established could be implemented to remote sites famous for natural beauty and cultural significance, thus guaranteeing that the NPS would continue well in to the future.

¹⁰¹ Correspondence to Lee Allen Smith from Robert Johnson dated January 12, 2000. Robert Johnson Collection. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive. 299/4421 B2F1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The contentious memorial selection process in Oklahoma City and fraught relationship between the Memorial Trust and the National Parks Service both exemplify the political power that can be wielded by a wounded community in American culture at the end of the 20th century. It is difficult to say “no” to such a community, especially in the aftermath of a tragic event. As argued in the previous chapter, this desire to construct an urban memorial on the site of the former federal building aligned with a pre-existing focus on urban redevelopment and economic renewal for the city. As articulated within some educational materials put together by the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Foundation for high school students, this confluence of factors is celebrated as a form of community resilience:

Buildings, property, and medical services can all be assigned value; but, there is no way to put a value on the loss of human life. The pain and sorrow is immeasurable. However, Oklahomans vowed never to forget those lost in the Oklahoma City bombing or succumb to the fear of terrorism. With that promise and unyielding perseverance, along with local, state and federal support, Oklahoma City has become a stronger, more resilient, community. Oklahoma City continues to benefit from funds provided for restoration following the bombing.¹⁰³

Through a “politics of affect,” the grieving community in Oklahoma City got the memorial that it needed while the forces for redevelopment got the influx of cash required to propel forward their longstanding plans for urban revitalization.

¹⁰³ “Resilience: The Revitalization of Oklahoma City. The Financial and Economic Impact of the Oklahoma City Bombing.” See http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/uploads/documents/OKCNM_Resilience%20Revitalization%20OKC.pdf

CHAPTER 4
“MEMORY WORK”: THE FINALISTS IN
THE OKLAHOMA CITY INTERNATIONAL MEMORIAL COMPETITION

Chapter Summary

The purpose and the scope of this chapter is to examine closely and critically the four submissions selected as finalists other than that which ultimately won. I note their spatial organization, symbolic meanings, and commemorative strategies. A set of larger memorial typologies and themes emerge, providing insight into not only the cultural reception and understanding of the bombing, but also the dominant memorial design vocabulary used in America at the end of the twentieth century. In particular, the finalist submissions extend a specific lineage of commemorative design gestures and strategies including the use of artistic minimalism and formalism, references to nature as a restorative agent, and design elements appropriated from other successful and established memorials.

The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is an important instance of public commemoration undertaken and completed prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. While critics in the cultural and design fields often dismiss the Oklahoma City memorial as being provincial or parochial, the act that it memorializes looms in the American consciousness. Even among designers, the act seems to loom larger than the memorial monument. Designers as a whole are often secretive about their work, invoking the muse or creative genius as the source of their inspiration. At best, they will offer a glimpse into their design methodology or mention the precedence of other works that they were intrigued by or thought relevant for their design. In most contemporary instances however interviews with memorial designers focus upon the designer's reaction to "hearing of the news" of the tragedy or the moment that the designer considers the impact that the event has had on the lives of those affected.¹

The review and evaluation of the finalists in this chapter does not take a position on the Memorial Selection Committee's choice of the winning entry; it is not meant to praise, condemn, or justify the committee's selection. Rather, having already described and analyzed the memorial that was built, this chapter offers a detailed examination of the other chosen finalist submissions on the basis of their unique merits. The memorial design competition and the finalists' submissions are important examples of what James Young has called "memory work."² Memory work is the intentional labor that individuals have undertaken to mark, recognize or commemorate a particular event. Young, a scholar of Holocaust memorials who served on the

¹ In the case of the Oklahoma City memorial, Torrey Butzer mentioned her thought of the empty chairs around kitchen and dining room tables throughout the evening on April 19, 1997 after she heard the news of the bombing broadcast on the radio. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 218.

² James E. Young, "The Stages of Memory at Ground Zero," in *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place*. Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres (eds.) (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006.) p. 214.

World Trade Center selection jury, describes this memory work as it related to the World Trade Center Memorial Competition:

I believe that the World Trade Center Memorial began with the first flyers of lost loved ones, with the first candle light vigils at Union Square, with the candles lit in doorways of families who lost someone. It continued with the devastating pile of debris and search and rescue operations. It continued further with the cleanup and salvaging operations, the reconstruction of the site, the void at the heart of Ground Zero. It continued through the highly public arbitration of a new site design, and through the public process of the memorial competition. And it hasn't ended yet.³

What Young carefully and sensitively describes is the difficult transformation that occurs when private grief becomes public memory. Young believes that this is an ongoing and negotiated process that “includes both the built and unbuilt, the memory of loss and regeneration.”⁴ For Young, the memorial process is just that, a process of an unending continuum, open to constant interpretation and contestation over its significance, purpose, and message. Even after its completion, a memorial must continue to evolve and establish new meanings for subsequent generations that interact and experience it, for if only a single, unified “official meaning” is presented, this forecloses other interpretations, no matter how challenging or difficult they might be to experience or imagine. Again, in reference to the former World Trade Center Site, Young notes:

I would have us build into this site a worldview that allows for competing, even conflicting, agendas— and make this, too, part of our process. Rather than fretting about the appearance of disunity (all memorial processes are exercises in disunity, even as they strive to unify memory), we should make our questions and the public debate itself part of our memory-work. Memory is, after all, a process and is everlasting only when it remains a process and not a finished result. For just as memory is a negotiation between past and present, it is also a negotiation among

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

all the groups of people whose lives were affected by this event and how those lives will be shaped by what is built here.⁵

This allowance for “competing, even conflicting agendas” is neglected at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, where a considerable effort is undertaken by the institution to control the narrative of how the memorial should be experienced, the message that it contains, and ultimately, how the Oklahoma City Bombing should be remembered.⁶

The Finalists

We can learn a great deal about commemorative practices in America at the end of the twentieth century by analyzing the finalists selected by the professional design evaluation panel in the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial competition. The designs share certain features:

1. The designs rely upon the insertion of natural typologies such as forests, fields, groves, clearings, lawn, and ponds or pools of water, which are decidedly unnatural to the location. They provide a typology to the place even when they are not native to the region. They function as symbols and offer a sense of serenity and tranquility in an urban condition, which allows the memorial to ultimately operate as an urban park.

2. The designs are constituted by an amalgam of distinct spaces representing distinct constituencies (e.g. survivors, victims, children, rescuers). As Edward Linenthal noted in his history of this memorial, a certain “memorial hierarchy” emerged in the aftermath of the

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 216.

⁶ Particularly troubling is that throughout the memorial museum there are scant references to Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols, or Michael Fortier. While these absences can be explained away by not wanting to give undue or unwarranted attention to the perpetrators of this act of mass murder, by ignoring their role the memorial foundation ultimately depoliticizes the event, making it appear that the act was inevitable or even predictable. In a conversation with James Young, I mentioned the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum’s intentional editing out of Timothy McVeigh within the displays of the museum; he was aghast. He replied something to the effect of “You have to make every effort to include even the most difficult components of the tragic event, failure to do so results in a stilted and myopic rendering of history.” Personal conversation with James E. Young at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign on October 9, 2009.

bombing and the initial planning for a memorial.⁷ Those hierarchies were hotly contested and political, but a successful memorial design must find a way to incorporate and symbolize each group's role.

3. The careful treatment of children, not only as victims of the original event but as visitors to the memorial, is of paramount importance. Representing innocence, their safety and development must be ensured; in most instances this means that a specified "children's area" is placed as the furthest possible point from the site of loss of life. "Think of the children" is a mantra that operated throughout the memorial process in Oklahoma City.

4. Victims must be identified as individuals, usually through the inscription of a name on a wall or other object that serves as a destination point for visiting family and friends. Often these are the locations where memorial tokens are left, and a successful memorial provides a space for those objects. A vast material culture arises from grief, and a memorial institution must be prepared to deal with the numerous emotive objects. In addition, an etched name provides an opportunity for a visitor to take a memento away, proving that he or she has made the pilgrimage, whether that is understood as a personal duty or a civic one. This is the cultural consequence of Maya Lin's Wall, the success of which has made it the defining standard for memorials in American culture, including establishing the expectations of visitors for what they will find and how they will participate in the memorial space.

5. Wherever possible, the specific site of the loss of individual lives must be marked in some way within the design scheme e.g. within the footprint of the Murrah building or even through a mapping of the floors where victims were located at the moment of the blast, representation of the particular floor, as in the Butzers' design. Sometimes this degree of

⁷ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 195.

“memorial exactitude” is impossible, yet the sacred quality of the site must be captured, protected, and re-inscribed for future generations.

6. Successful designs offered a clear demarcation between the urban fabric and the “sacred territory” of the memorial site. They all temporarily provide a certain interaction at the urban scale through the introduction of a grand feature (e.g., a Staircase, Tilting Wall, Gates of Time, Footfalls, Reinforced Clearing). A formal construction indicates and instructs that something happened, in this space. It must be a landmark, a destination.

7. In turn, this grand scale intervention becomes the central icon of the memorial landscape, one that is easily identifiable, and becomes the focal point of the memorial as a brand. As icon, all nuance or detail is eliminated.

8. In a case such as Oklahoma City, where the event and the subsequent memorial become synonymous with the location, the memorial must present a sense of civic pride, often focusing on the response to the tragedy rather than the cause or perpetrator.

9. The memorial district is a space for civic theatre. Because the memorial space will ultimately serve as a site for civic engagement and spectacle, not for only anniversaries of the event but also for other civic events, such as marathons, Memorial Day or Fourth of July parades, a successful design must not only include spaces for large crowds but also, ideally, provide a stage, an area for an audience, and spaces that offer effective perspectives for broadcast media.

10. The majority of the designs rely upon non-threatening imagery and provide a space that is first and foremost *therapeutic*. The Design Evaluation Panel wished for the memorial

space to be restful and pleasant.⁸ As argued in the preceding chapter, this forecloses actual healing, instead offering only a form of mental triage: just enough assistance to get those affected “back on their feet” and to then take responsibility for seeking further help if they so choose.

There were five selected finalists to the Oklahoma City International Memorial Competition, with Hans and Torrey Butzer and their associate, Sven Berg, judged as the ultimate winners of the competition. (Refer to chapter 1 for a detailed analysis of the Memorial). The four other finalists, Hanno Weber & Associates based in Chicago, Illinois, Susan Herrington & Mark Stankard of Ames, Iowa, C. Brian Branstetter & J. Kyle Casper of Dallas, Texas, and B. James Rossant & Richard Scherr of New York City, and their respective designs, are all discussed and examined following.

Hanno Weber & Associates

The entry by Hanno Weber & Associates for the competition features a perfect circle, taking the form of a clearing within the introduced and densely planted sub-canopy “square” of an urban forest, offering a contemplative space as the memorial to the Oklahoma City bombing (Figures 4.01, 4.02, and 4.03). Within this clearing is another circle, a water feature that designers call a “well,” which indicates the place of the truck bomb in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building prior to detonation and serves as the water source for the reflective pool that approximates the footprint of the obliterated section of the building. This elevated reflecting pool, the “water table,” is a stylized semi-circle found at the southernmost section of the clearing and along with the well is the only indication of the event that occurred on the site (Figure 4.04). Across from the well is a large, sloping meadow, whose topography seems to place in stasis the

⁸ “The Report of the Design Evaluation Panel,” 2 of 11 pages. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive, Robert Johnson Collection, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive. 299/4421 B2F1.

expanding and rippling shockwave emanating from its historic epicenter. The ground that forms this meadow is carefully sculpted, yet little information concerning its planted surface is provided; the designers refer to it as both a “sloping lawn,” which would imply a simple turf surface, and a “peaceful meadow,” hinting at a potentially more complex and perhaps a more ecologically diverse planting plan than is indicated by the renderings.

The entire clearing is bounded by a thick protective wall which towers some sixteen feet above the lowest elevation point located adjacent to the reflecting pool. This wall, despite having at least four distinct points of entry to the “inner circle” of the clearing, separates visitors from the rest of the surrounding site, and completely removes them from the urban context which surrounds the memorial site, eliminating any outside distractions from “the unrestrained existing surrounding.”⁹ Furthermore, the wall acts as a datum line from which the sloping meadow’s elevational changes can be easily viewed and measured and provides guests to the memorial site with the opportunity to walk along its perimeter, functioning as an elevated promenade. The height of this walkway also provides direct access to both the Murrah Memorial Plaza, located at the southern end of the site, and an additional exit from the memorial museum to the immediate north. This additional point of egress into the memorial occurs at the terminus of the final exhibit within the imagined adjacent memorial museum, providing visitors with the option of returning to the ground floor of the museum so that they could exit *via* the gift shop, or to leave the museum by way of this elevated walkway to experience the memorial grounds immediately from this vantage point.

Atop this circular and elevated promenade are 168 densely planted columnar cypress trees. Interrupting the equally spaced trees is the American Elm (the Survivor’s Tree described in

⁹ Text is directly quoted from the Hanno Weber submission board. The full and complete text of this board, and the other four finalists can be found at the end of this chapter in the attached appendix.

chapter 1), whose placement within the circular planting of the cypresses attaches it to the ceremonial walk. Yet, because of the tree's distinct habit, it is an interloper that stands apart, underscoring the difference between the people who died and those who survived (Figure 4.05- *view from clearing towards the Survivor's Tree- second image down on the RHS of the Board*).¹⁰ This design gesture is effective in acknowledging how the tragedy altered people's lives; although some survived the attack, they, too, were profoundly imprinted by the experience. The trees are regarded by the designers as standing in silent service; they are "a diadem of sentinels" that are "the perennial custodians of hallowed ground."¹¹

External to the clearing, and on the other side of the thick retaining wall, is a constructed glade of sub-canopy hawthorns planted in a banding of above ground, concrete planters. This area outside the "sacred center" of the memorial would operate as the social heart for the commemorative institution. Given the plentiful shade provided and the use of the raised planters as places to sit within the site, the understory layer beneath the hawthorns provides a destination where people can gather and linger. The rectangular planters vary in length, allowing for numerous configurations for a variety of gatherings, easily accommodating grade school class visits as well as couples during their lunch hour. The spacing between the planters is regular and predictable, close enough to allow for conversations across the walkway when desired, and for privacy when it is not (Figure 4.06- *Bottom RHS Image on Board*). The densely planted hawthorns, when they reach maturity, would also screen the retaining wall and the enclosed clearing from passing scrutiny, and the effect of moving from the dappled shade under the hawthorns into the bright light of the sloping meadow would be powerful. Finally, the

¹⁰ Given the highly modified soil profile as detailed in chapter one concerning the Survivor's Tree, the tree would have most likely succumbed if this design was selected, as a significant part of the sub-terrain root system would have had to been cut to allow the circular retaining wall to be constructed.

¹¹ Design statement from the Hanno Weber & Associate's design submission to the competition.

streetscape adjacent to the memorial is augmented by an intensive beautification program, using black locust (*Robinia Pseudoacacia*) to line both sides of North Robinson and North Harvey Avenues. The resulting effort produces a heavily planted memorial site which, when mature, could be interpreted as an urban forest. The streetscape improvements further reinforce this idea of the forest and allow the traffic from the busy avenues to recede into the background.

Internal documents produced at the time of the competition and a report entitled “Oklahoma City Memorial: International Design Competition Report of Design Evaluation Panel,” describes the Hanno Weber & Associates submission as particularly strong. The report calls their submission:

A classic design, it takes into account both existing and imposed topography, provides an introspective experience and adds to the context of the place. The handling of the Survivor’s Tree, as part of, and yet separate from, the circle, creates a dialogue addressing those killed and those who survived. Beautifully drawn, the concept is the product of a designer/design team that considers context.¹²

This design is overtly and unapologetically symbolic. The designers rely on the shape of the designed elements to communicate and instill a particular meaning. In this case, the circular clearing suggests a symbolic power, with the designers referring to the shape as “a reaffirmation of the cosmos,” claiming that, “in all cultures the circle clearly conveys the setting apart, the defining of consecrated and uplifting domains.”¹³ While their submission is a bold, dramatic gesture, the symbolic meaning of the circle is simply overstated. The reliance on the form of the clearing to “embrace” a visitor seems trite and strangely out of place for this particular site.

While Hanno Weber & Associates indicate the place where the truck bomb was located on that fateful day, the designers do so through the insertion of yet another circle, this time taking the

¹² “Oklahoma City Memorial: International Design Competition Report of Design Evaluation Panel,” provided by the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum archive.

¹³ Statements are from the text of the Hanno Weber & Associate’s design submission to the Oklahoma City Memorial Competition.

form of a well and a water table – a well-like fountain – whose contents spill gently over its constructed edges.¹⁴ The way that the design team chose to render this particular element within the plan view of the submission is puzzling, as it does not indicate the presence of water (which the designers refer to as “the source of all life”), instead only showing the depth of the well as an open cylindrical void, complete with a shadow line, as if they were highlighting not only their intervention, but also the remnant of the bomb’s crater. That visual reference, and the designers’ claim that the circular form allows a visitor to come together to “share common experiences and spiritual concerns,” borders on the hyperbolic, as both the well and the clearing are represented by the same, fundamental round form (Figure 4.07). While it is odd that two separate locations — the well and the clearing — share the same form, conceptually it appears that the design team was attempting to unify the two locations and their respective purposes, in effect arguing that the destructive force of the bomb blast also created the necessity of a common gathering area and a call for communal action.

In the Hanno Weber proposal, there is a spatial relationship between the form used and the site’s history. The location of the well marks the detonation point of the truck bomb explosion and references the eight-foot deep, thirty-foot wide crater that remained immediately afterwards.¹⁵ Even so, the larger radius that encircles the detonation point of the truck bomb and constitutes the mythic clearing appears to be a misrepresentation simply because of its size. It is far too small to mark accurately the damage done to the urban core. The resulting shockwave from the truck bomb caused buildings to collapse a thousand feet from the epicenter and

¹⁴ The selected winning design by the Butzer Design Partnership makes no visual reference to the placement of the truck bomb on the memorial site, and in turn, that question is one of the “top ten” frequently asked questions that the National Park Service Employees encounter. Source; http://www.nps.gov/okci/faqs.htm#CP_JUMP_658886, accessed March 19, 2012.

¹⁵ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 7.

shattered windows three quarters of a mile away from the Murrah Building.¹⁶ While a reduction of the size of the blast radius is understandable to keep Hanno Weber & Associates' design firmly within the site's boundaries as determined by the terms of the competition, it nevertheless diminishes the perceived destructive power of the bomb and, in turn, cognitively subtracts from the tragedy. Their design gesture, regardless of the symbolic power it was said to possess, was insufficient to reflect the magnitude of tragedy that gripped the city. Numerous submissions to the competition shared that similar design strategy of a radial form to provide basic spatial structure.

The diminished representation of the radius may have been a necessary, programmed reality defined by the boundaries of the site in the competition brief; however it does call into question the use of a circle as the essential symbol for the memorial. That form, while dominant in plan view, is not as clearly legible when experienced in person on site. For example, the vignette of the well indicates the interior of the "sloping meadow" and provides little visual information to the visitors that they are present within this larger symbolic form (Figure 4.08). This is not an issue of inadequate illustration or representation; rather, it indicates the difficulty of making the visual translation of a form that can be clear in plan but lost when experiencing the designed space in actual space. The only visual reinforcement or noticeable trace of the circular form within the illustrations is that of the surrounding, towering wall that defines, fortifies and protects the internal space of the clearing.

The wall is used as a memory device, much akin to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, presenting the names of those lost because of the bombing (Figure 4.09) and providing a specific destination where families, friends, and loved ones can visit and remember a

¹⁶ Goins and Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, p. 222.

person who was lost. The wall allows for a degree of interactivity, encouraging visitors to touch the names of the deceased and, if they so choose, to make a paper and pencil rubbing of an etched name to take away as a souvenir. However this wall also undermines the other critical symbol referenced in plan view, that of the mythic clearing.

Robin Dripps, a professor of architecture at the University of Virginia, notes the importance of the circular clearing within architectural history. Citing the Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius Pollio's expansive work *De Architectura*, Dripps writes:

The clearing with its boundary is an ideal form as it takes on the archetypal nature of its foundation. Vitruvius therefore provides no topographical or otherwise contingent qualification. Under these circumstances the circle is appropriate, since its own geometrical foundation is so perfect: a radius is the only knowledge needed for its construction and its most obvious manifestation, the circumference is completely undifferentiated, offering total resistance to deformation. It seems obvious why this figure has been persistently used to represent the most important tasks in civilization.¹⁷

Dripps' rationale relies upon the mathematical simplicity and purity of construction of the form, but her explanation does little to reveal *why* the circle is so fundamentally linked to the idea of the clearing. For this task, we turn to the seventeenth-century Italian theorist Giambattista Vico and the nascent theory of social psychology in his work *The New Science* (1744).¹⁸ Vico argues, "Where divinity has been identified with the sky, or with the eternal geometry of the stars, or with the cosmic infinity, or with 'heaven,' the forests become monstrous, for they hide the prospect of god."¹⁹ In order to have a place for unhindered access to the sky, whether for purposes of divination from the alignment of the stars or other forms of augury, a break or clearing within the forests was needed. These places were not just spiritually significant

¹⁷ R. D. Dripps, *The First House: Myth, Paradigm and the Task of Architecture*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1999), p. 13.

¹⁸ This historical detective work provided by Robert Pogue Harrison, in his work *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.)

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

locations, but also as Robert Pogue Harrison argues, “the first tables of science.”²⁰ Harrison notes that, while it is difficult to conceive such arcane practices as a form of scientific enquiry today, at the heart of these rituals was an intellectual pursuit that was based upon observation and a (primitive) understanding of cause and effect. *Lucus*, as Harrison notes, is Latin for a host of meanings ranging from a sacred grove, a clearing within a forest, an eye, and a window, all based upon the core idea of the “letting in of light.”²¹ Here, the form of the eye, a circle, finds a relationship with a forest clearing and establishes the groundwork for how a clearing embodied the notion of contemplation.²² Harrison explains:

The master of technical skill, [the Roman God] Vulcan is the one who opens the eye. He sets fire to the forest in order to be able to see the direction of the lightning bolt, that is, to read the auspices. Fire itself came from this divine celestial source. Technology appropriated its uses for the purpose of deforestation. Hence technology too takes its origins from the sky...By burning out a clearing in the forest, Vulcan prepared the way for future science of enlightened times.²³

The meaning of the clearing as expressed by Harrison is a matter not merely of its shape or form, but also of its significance as a location of *enquiry*, a place of emergence from the darkness of the wild into the light of reason. This analogy is a powerful one, especially for the friends and family members of the victims who perished, survivors who are trying to make sense of the destructive and vicious attack. Yet, the space as it is represented hardly reinforces the idea of enquiry or the expanse of one’s literal or figurative horizons. Instead, the “sloping meadow” is bounded by a 16-foot wall that completely encircles this supposedly reflective and meditative space (Figure 4.10). The conceptual power of emerging from a dark forest into a clearing is conveyed primarily by relief – that finally a perspective can be gained, and just from the absence

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 10.

²² As Ralph Waldo Emerson suggested in the opening line of his 1841 essay, “Circles”: “The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end.”

²³ *Ibid*, p. 10.

of trees. Any conceptual or spatial comfort is erased by the presence of this encircling wall, as the experience of entering the sloping meadow is more akin to walking into a gladiatorial coliseum, than to arriving at a forest clearing. The sparse internal representation of the sloping meadow turns what should be a pleasant experience into one of fundamental uneasiness.

This meadow becomes a *de facto* stage for display and performance, as the surrounding wall supports observers who, like an audience at a theater, look down upon the people below. The ability to circumambulate along the top of the wall enriches the experience of the site for those detached from the list of the victim's names on the wall, but this elevational hierarchy generates a spectacle, one that regrettably turns private grief into a commodity for public consumption. Devotional acts that are supposed to help visitors to the memorial connect with those who were lost, such as the rubbing of names etched into the wall, are transformed from private acts of connection and remembrance into a public performance, one that can be photographed or recorded and subsequently broadcast.²⁴ There is therefore, a palpable shift from a subjective, individual moment to the objectification of that same act through its duplication and replication.

The renderings of this clearing suggest certain activities (Figures 4.13, 4.14, 4.15). This bounded and sacred space appears to be intended as a stroll garden, a place that requires a moving observer to experience the landscape as a series of events or interventions that are distinct from one another. In all of the illustrations except one (Figure 4.16), every figure is either standing or walking, taking photographs, or in conversation, yet, from the renderings provided by Hanno Weber & Associates, the landscape within the clearing completely reveals itself all at once. The only details that cannot be comprehended in a single glance and that would

²⁴ Memorial Museum itself engages in such selective representations, and has established its own Facebook and Twitter accounts (Figures 4.11, 4.12).

justify closer inspection are the names of the deceased etched into the retaining wall. In all of the illustrations, the ground plane is rendered mute and unremarkable, except for faint dotted lines to indicating the proposed topography. The implication of this is that the sloping meadow is not meant to be the primary focus of a visitor's attention; instead, the people who occupy the sacred ground are the spectacle to be witnessed. They become the primary figures within the landscape.

Hanno Webber represents active human figures rather than the passive spatial field, and it is a crucial step in decoding the intended uses of the series of spaces that the designers have planned. Furthermore, the representations reveal who is expected to visit the larger memorial landscape. Out of the four perspective illustrations provided by the design team to show the character and spatial organization of the component parts of their memorial design, three clearly indicate the presence of Cub Scouts.²⁵ The careful renderings of these boys, including accurate representation of their uniforms down to the placement of badges and knotted kerchiefs, suggests an *educational* component to their design. This educational component is not just focused upon teaching the specifics of the tragic event, but also offers a larger cultural statement concerning the communication of the ideals of American citizenship and the imparting of moral imperatives based upon a Judeo-Christian, hetero-normative value system.²⁶

The last and related component that also requires examination is the role that *nature* plays in the idea of memorialization and commemoration. Specifically, *all* the selected finalists (and numerous entries to the competition), frequently referred to and represented the natural world as being *restorative*. Nature, specifically in the form of a *garden*, possesses cultural associations with the idea of an unobtainable paradise, including the Garden of Eden, mythic Arcadia, and the

²⁵ Figure 4.17, the four illustrations can be found along the right hand side of the design board submission.

²⁶ What is potentially unsettling about the presence of the Cub Scouts in this design is that the convicted bombing perpetrator, Timothy McVeigh, was not just an active Boy Scout, but earned their highest achievement, that of an Eagle Scout. See Gore Vidal, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got To Be So Hated* (Thunder's Mouth Press/ Nation Books, New York: New York. 2002.), p. 83.

state of Utopia. Numerous submissions depicted the site as a vast and intricate garden, often to such a degree that the surrounding urban context and cityscape of the site was simply ignored or erased (Figure 4.18). As Kenneth Helphand observes in *Defiant Gardens*, “gardens promise ...hope over despair...life in the face of death” and gardening in environments that are usually associated with pain, suffering and inhumanity (*i.e.* prison camps, military front lines) is an act of defiant optimism.²⁷ The inherent fragility yet tenacity of the garden is found to be particularly appealing, and, as landscape historian John Dixon Hunt notes, “gives privilege to landscape architecture over other forms of memorialization.”²⁸ This “privileging” of the landscape over other forms of commemoration is not surprising as the landscape has the innate ability to recover from disturbances, whether natural or manmade, and presents itself as *healing* over time, providing us with an analogous condition, that our own human traumas and wounds will also fade and lessen in time. Yet, the landscape can also be deceptive, providing the illusion of restoration while still being fundamentally wounded. A forest that is recovering from a wildfire may seem to re-establish itself quickly through new sapling growth, however the biodiversity of the forest might take decades to fully recover. Other selected finalists also articulated this state of nature in their design submissions.

Herrington & Stankard Submission: “Footfalls Echo the Memory”

The competition entry by Susan Herrington & Mark Stankard, while very different the submission by Hanno Weber & Associates in terms of spatial organization from, uses similar cultural notions of nature as a basic symbolic design reference (Figure 4.19, 4.20, 4.21). A

²⁷ Kenneth L. Helphand, *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime*, (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2006.) p. 7.

²⁸ John Dixon Hunt, *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001.) p. 22.

common theme among the proposed designs, nature is above all else understood to be *restorative*. Unlike the Hanno Weber & Associates' entry, which operated within the dominant idea of the civilizing space of the clearing, the Herrington & Stankard submission utilizes the three idealized forms of nature, articulated by John Dixon Hunt as wilderness, the pastoral and the garden. These are expressed as large scale, broad rectangular striations moving northwards from the memorial museum to the former urban plaza of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The scheme places specific social activities within each of the three spaces: the Answering Wood, the 5th Street Lawn, and the "Footfalls" and Echo Wall. These conditions are arranged south to north, starting with the introduced forest that surrounds the former Journal Records building, then the open area of a field that has a decidedly suburban lawn feel to it. It also serves as the *de facto* stage of any civic displays or events (parades, plays, and other urban theater.) In the location of the former Murrah building, the designers proposed a grand staircase labeled as the Footfalls to reach the top of a former parking garage where they proposed a glass wall containing the etched names of the deceased, called the Echo Wall.

Closest to the memorial museum a thick urban forest, called the *Answering Wood*, was introduced. Focusing on children's cognitive and motor development through the insertion of two play gardens, the southernmost containing "19 trees of different varieties... planted to commemorate a child killed." Within this area is a wooded stroll garden that "provides a serene informal landscape of varying canopy trees, crushed stone pathways and plant covered mounds."²⁹ While the preoccupation with children and motor skill development might seem at odds within the memorialization function of the landscape, children were a deeply important

²⁹ Text contained on the Herrington & Stankard design competition board. The full text of all the selected finalist's submission to the International Design Competition are found with their design boards in the Figures for this chapter. (See Figures 4.51, 4.52, 4.53 & 4.54).

theme in the memorial. If one considers the amount of media attention paid to the children who died, most poignantly Baylee Almon, the deceased child cradled in the arms of the firefighter Chris Fields whose image was broadcast internationally and became the dominant icon for the bombing, the focus on children is understandable. The death of a community's children is regarded to be a loss of innocents and is therefore, not surprisingly, an important motif within memorialization culture. Herrington & Stankard propose an entirely separate building for memorializing the children, calling for the creation of a "Children's Memorial Center" in the northwest corner of the site (Figure 4.22) and immediately opposite the entrance to the former Journal Records Building.

The condition of being "in nature" is used by the designers to provide comfort to visitors to the memorial district, but the Answering Wood is specifically intended for those who were directly affected by the bombing. According to the text of their submission, "quotes from survivors will be located and etched into the stone edging of the paths that will also contain benches and lighting. The trees and flowering ground covers, and other plant material native to Oklahoma nurture and comfort our spirits."³⁰

Within this wooded area is the *Survivor's Preserve*, which "is the untouched ground approximately 50 feet in diameter that encircles the Survivor Tree" and which offers "an inspiration for all the different types of trees planted in the Answering Wood." In effect, the Survivor's Preserve is tantamount to a clearing, whose center is marked by the standing American elm, commonly known as the Survivor's Tree. The location of the reflective, meditative walk within the woods, and the placement of activities specifically designed to aid the "large motor and sensory motor" development of children where they can "play and interact with

³⁰ Text from Herrington & Stankard design submission.

natural things” evinces the desire for an Edenic return, from the harsh and brutal world of human sin to the pre-lapsarian condition of peace and tranquility. Nature, and specifically, the condition of *wilderness*, is not viewed as a threat or a challenge, but rather a sustaining and nurturing, even pedagogical, environment.

To the immediate south of the Answering Wood is the 5th Street Lawn (Figure 4.23), which occupies the entire length and width of the former roadbed that intersected Robinson Avenue to the east and Harvey Avenue to the west. Intended to function as a civic space, the 5th Street Lawn is described as “a sodded street [that] commemorates the professional and volunteer rescuers.” This “memorial lawn retains the presence of the street as an active place where spontaneous and planned outdoor events can take place.”³¹

The 5th Street Lawn represents what John Dixon Hunt describes as “second nature,” referring to the pastoral or productive landscape normally associated with agriculture, but which has also been adopted as part of a modern, suburban experience.³² This transformation is rooted in the eighteenth century grand estates, in which land once associated with agriculture is now used primarily as a place of leisure and recreation - the lawn becomes an assertion of class and privilege. In the context of the designers’ scheme, the lawn is a kind of stage for display, a place to see and be seen.

Another troubling component of this scheme is evident when one considers 5th Street itself. The privatization of a public city street fundamentally alters and ultimately diminishes the opportunities for occupation. De Certeau explains that a pedestrians’ walking is akin to language with both a preexisting language (the urban street network) and individual utterances that both

³¹ Text from Herrington & Stankard’s submission.

³² John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.) p. 62.

contribute to and depart from that language.³³ According to Michel de Certeau, “the act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered.”³⁴ These individual acts, de Certeau explains, are forms of personal appropriation of urban space that *resist* the operational concept of the city.³⁵ In other words, through the act of walking, an individual appropriates, ascribes, and alters the meaning of the city itself, providing an alternative narrative to the one that the city would normally construct. In this design, the street is turned from a potential text that could be inscribed on through the act of walking by numerous pedestrian/authors, into a singular destination determined by the city, in which the agency of the pedestrian is reduced under the gaze of a spectator.

The conversion of 5th Street from transportation infrastructure to a lawn not only interrupts pedestrians’ agency in how they occupy and mark their texts. It also disrupts and denies the surrounding streetscapes. A close examination of one of the key perspectives of the design (Figure 4.24- overall perspective looking east) reveals not only that the bounded section of 5th Street has been altered to become a place of leisure, complete with figures in a state of repose, but the drawing also illustrates that the 5th Street lawn forms an axis which extends to the distant

³³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Translated by Steven Rendall. (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1988.) p. 97. De Certeau remarks “The operation of walking, wandering, or ‘window shopping,’ that is the activity of passers-by, is transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line on the map. They allow us to grasp only a relic set in the nowhen of a surface of projection. Itself visible, it has the effect of making invisible the operation that made it possible. These fixations constitute procedures in forgetting. The trace that is left behind is substitute for the practice.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ De Certeau explains that the city, as a political concept has three necessary operational functions; “1. The production of its own space: rational organization must thus repress all the physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it. 2. The substitution of a nowhen, or of a synchronic system, for the indeterminable and stubborn resistances offered by traditions; univocal scientific strategies, made possible by the flattening out of all the data in a plane projection, must replace the tactics of users who take advantage of “opportunities” and who, through these trap-events, these lapses in visibility, reproduce the opacities of history everywhere. 3. Finally the creation of a *universal* and anonymous *subject* which is the city itself: it gradually becomes possible to attribute to it, as to its political model, Hobbes’ State, all the functions and predicates that were previously scattered and assigned to many different real subjects—groups, associations, or individuals.” p. 94.

eastern horizon line of the city.³⁶ The effect is to imply that the modified 5th Street Lawn is now part of a large civic promenade, extending down to the city's entertainment and conference district. The bird's eye perspective specifically omits any reference that might contradict this illusion. In fact, there is no pedestrian boulevard or promenade; rather, what lies to the immediate east is another street. No cars, trucks, buses, delivery vans, or any motorized traffic is indicated in the illustration. Instead, the designers carefully frame and render their drawing to imply that only pedestrians will inhabit this long, urban axis. The addition of street trees flanking the implied lawn to the immediate east further reinforces this axial condition, subtly encouraging the viewer to believe that the interruption of the sidewalks from the memorial site to the rest of the city encourages pedestrians to walk down the center of the space when, in fact, it still operates as a major traffic corridor. Also missing from their illustration is the critical traffic infrastructure of stoplights, street signs, and traffic bollards that also provide visual clues to the corridor within which the site is located. In addition, the designers represent the site as flat, ignoring the topographical slope that places the eastern end of the site at a significantly higher elevation than that of the western edge.³⁷

The third principal component of the Herrington & Stankard commemorative landscape was the Echo Wall, situated atop a grand "Footfalls" staircase, which allows visitors to access the top of the Alfred P. Murrah Memorial Plaza. This urban scaled staircase is akin to the Spanish Steps (Scalinata della Trinità dei Monti) in Rome, which grants visitors access from Piazza di Spagna to the Piazza Trinità dei Monti, providing visitors not only with a device to

³⁶ The illustration was also refined and included in Herrington & Stankard's revised finalist submission as well, although the viewing angle was slightly raised in the revised submission, providing a clearer "bird's eye" perspective.

³⁷ Some effort to re-grade the site is most likely present within the scheme, and the staggering of the Footfalls staircase at the eastern end is also an indication that the existing grade was being considered. However the illustrations of the site that they provided minimize the actual extent of re-grading efforts required.

span the elevational distance, but also allowing them to rest by sitting down on the generous treads of the steps. However, unlike the stairs in Rome, the Footfalls are hollow, with a vast steel superstructure hidden beneath their treads and risers. This was an intentional design choice, so that, as a person climbs the staircase to the Echo Wall, the footsteps will create a resonant sound. Unfortunately, the proposed stairs are more akin to a set of temporary bleachers pulled out from a gymnasium wall than an elegant and provocative staircase meant to stage the acts of pilgrimage.

The Echo Wall was obviously influenced by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. On their competition board, the designers described this memorial component as follows:

The Echo Wall is a series of structural glass panels situated atop the Footfalls to honor the 168 victims. The names of the victims are etched into the glass to correspond to the victim's approximate eye level. Similar to the Fence that now encompasses the site, near each name and situated between the glass panels is an object relating to the deceased. The objects will be selected by the family or friends of those killed. The base of the Echo Wall is a low granite surface (tokanoma) to place flowers, cards, and other items visitors wish to bring. Slots at each name in the Echo Wall will allow for the insertion of notes, roses, and other things brought.

A six foot wide stainless steel grate covers a gap running parallel to the Echo Wall. This fissure extends downward from the Echo Wall to the elevation of the current ground level. At night, lighting from this gap illuminates the Echo Wall. The Footfalls rest on a steel superstructure that allows air to flow through the stairs and the fissure. The existing Murrah Building wall will be left in its current condition.

Figure 4.25 reveals the influence of Maya Lin's design, although with a number of significant modifications. The most substantial is the use of structural glass rather than the highly polished black stone; both allow for a high degree of reflectivity, although the Echo Wall also has an inherent material translucency not present in Lin's work. The ability to leave behind mementoes or tokens is also a recognition of the unplanned social practice that occurs regularly at the

Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. and permits not only the leaving of objects, but also, because of the glass enclosure, provides the items with a small degree of protection from the elements.³⁸

One of the difficulties of providing a defined space for expressions of the material culture of grief is that there is no inherent institutional control concerning the nature or content of the items or the messages left behind. In many instances, such opportunities result in the leaving of mass-produced, cheap material goods that can best be described as *kitsch*.³⁹ According to Marita Sturken, the term *kitsch* “emerged as a description of an aesthetic that was seen as banal, trite, predictable, and in bad taste.”⁴⁰ *Kitsch* was a shortened form of *verkitschen*, or “to cheapen.” Thus while it did not yet have connotations of mass production, it did have an association with cheapness or lack of taste.⁴¹ Yet, providing a space for mementos and tokens also offers a possible venue for leaving messages that subvert the narrative commonly told and reinforced by grieving communities. Edward Linenthal describes one such occurrence at the memorial archive:

One of the interesting collections of popular memorial expression I examined at the Oklahoma City National Memorial archive consisted of materials left at the fence around the footprint of the Murrah Federal Building [...] Several people told me that there was one piece of paper left on the fence that was simply too unbearable to house in the archive, although it did offer a horrific commentary on the murder of 168 people. It read, “Way to go McVeigh.”⁴²

³⁸ Items left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. are collected at the end of each day and are processed and archived at the National Archive. A photographic exhibition of the range of objects left at the memorial can be found in the compelling work, *Offerings at the Wall: Artifacts from the Vietnam Veterans Collection*. (New York: Turner Publishing, 1995.) Joy Sather-Wagstaff’s doctoral dissertation, *Tragedies, Tourism and the Making of Commemorative Places* also provides a detailed account concerning the leaving and collection of material objects at memorial sites.

³⁹ For a detailed examination of tourist culture and the preoccupation of kitsch, see Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.18.

⁴¹ *Ibid*. For more information concerning the evolution of kitsch refer to Matei Calinescu’s “Kitsch and Modernity.” In *Five Faces of Modernity*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.) pp. 225-262.

⁴² Edward T. Linenthal, “Postscript: A Grim Geography of Remembrance,” in *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place*, Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres (eds.) (Bloomington & Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2006.), p. 237. As problematic and as difficult as the content of the note that Linenthal describes, what is more disturbing is the fact that such a note was never processed, documented or recorded within the very institution that is supposed to be the archive for all materials that relate to the Oklahoma City Bombing.

Linenthal's own reaction to this chilling detail is evident in the fact that he did not include it in his own scholarly monograph on Oklahoma City, but rather waited over five years and published it as part of a postscript to a collected work concerning the intersection of religion, violence, memory and place.

The three "bands" of the Herrington & Stankard design symbolically reference what John Dixon Hunt has called the three states of nature: *wilderness*, *productive or agricultural land*, and the *garden*.⁴³ In the Herrington & Stankard entry, the "Answering Wood," while an introduced urban forest, plays the symbolic role of first nature (wilderness); the "5th Street Lawn" plays that of second nature (the productive landscape) and the "Footfalls" and "Echo Wall" play that of third nature, a garden. It is critical to note that this tripartite definition of nature is not just the identification of three separate and distinct land uses or typologies, nor, as Hunt maintains, is it an establishment of a functioning hierarchy that asserts the value of one over (or under) the other two. Instead, as Hunt opines, it is "meant to indicate [...] that a territory can be viewed in the light of how it has or has not been treated in space and in time."⁴⁴ The *garden*, as articulated by Hunt, is a location where a highly modified and controlled nature is rooted, intertwined, and expressed as a culmination of cultural production, where a society's values associated with *civility* and *class* are displayed.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most effective aspect of the Herrington & Stankard design is the entry's call for the creation of an inherently civic and social space, one that provides not only a place for individual reflection of loss (the Echo Wall) but also the ability for individuals to gather as a

⁴³ The conceptual framework of establishing three natures is one that John Dixon Hunt describes in his classic work, "*The Idea of the Garden and the Three Natures*," in his text *Greater Perfections*, pp. 33-34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 35.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 62. Hunt traces the cultural origins of the garden back to Roman villas, where their existence went "beyond what is required by the necessities or practice of agriculture or urban settlement."

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

collective. The insertion of an immense series of steps (the Footfalls) that bring the elevated plaza down to the grade of the former 5th Street transforms the street into a vast green field that operates as a stage for frisbees and frolic, picnics and parades. The introduced *tapis vert* (Figure 4.26) functions not only as an intermediary space between two other natures (wilderness and urbanity), but also operates as a *de facto* stage for civic spectacle, as does the space of the reflecting pool and the 168 chairs in the Butzer's winning design. In the Herrington & Stankard design, the stairs and the memorial wall take pride of place on the site of the Murrah Building, and yet, the activity on the lawn becomes the focal point, re-directing the spectator's gaze from the sacralized site of innocent lives lost (the land made sacred by spilled blood - a site of sacrifice) to an area associated with rescue and recovery and (pre-bombing) city commerce and transportation. Sitting on the stairs, visitors literally turn their backs to the Echo Wall and its inscribed list of names and toward the mundane and spontaneous or highly choreographed activity of a planned event.

Comments offered in the Memorial Selection Committee's report provide insight about why this design was not selected as the winning entry, specifically identifying the treatment of the Echo Wall as problematic:

Of concern was the portrayal of the technical qualities of the wall- i.e., when the structure used to resist wind force is inserted, will it still be a glass wall, or will it be a structural steel frame with glass inserted? ...The uniqueness of a "wall," and the proliferation of "wall memorials" since the Vietnam Memorial, is an issue in this design.⁴⁶

Concern about the structural integrity of the Echo Wall is a valid concern as the entire state, including Oklahoma City, is located in what has been dubbed "Tornado Alley," referring to the

⁴⁶ *Memorial Selection Committee Report*. Robert Johnson Collection. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive. 299/4421 B2F1.

multistate geographical area in which tornadoes commonly form.⁴⁷ The choice of glass as the key component material of the signature commemorative piece is questionable even if able to tolerate the appropriate wind loads. The Selection Committee comments reveal a presupposition that no such structure could tolerate such forces, and therefore questions the validity of the entire memorial design. More revealing however was the comment that concerned the “proliferation of wall memorials,” highlighting one of the essential challenges in the design practice of the professional practice of landscape architecture and architecture as it specifically relates to commemorative sites. On one hand, the recognition to other successful and popular memorials is essential in framing the expectations of a jury, and yet, the design must also be interpreted as being *unique* and *specific* to the particularities of the tragedy at hand.

C. Brian Branstetter & J. Kyle Casper’s Submission

C. Brian Branstetter & J. Kyle Casper of Dallas, Texas, submitted a design proposal that, like the Herrington & Stankard entry, reveals the fundamental paradigm shift that Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial had on memorialization practices in America, not only in terms of commemorative architecture but also within the sphere of public art (Figure 4.27, 4.28, 4.29). Unlike Herrington & Stankard, Branstetter & Casper did not appropriate Lin’s memorial wall as the central commemorative device for their entry, but instead highlighted the conceptual power and simplicity of minimalism in memorial design. Relying on the popular understanding of and familiarity with Lin’s design and the expectations of what a commemorative space can offer a visitor, the designers’ submission reads more akin to a Mondrian painting than a finalized

⁴⁷ The state of Oklahoma has been the location of more F5/EF5 tornadoes than any other state in the nation, having been struck by 13 of the most powerful tornadoes on record, the most recent occurring on May 20, 2013. <http://newsok.com/tornado-ranks-among-ef5-twisters-in-oklahoma-history/article/3834355> (Accessed May 29, 2013.)

proposal for a three-dimensional space created by the efforts of an international memorial competition (Figures 4.30 & 4.31).

Branstetter & Casper effectively bifurcate the site, with the insertion of a series of twelve concrete cubes in a taut line extending along the site's east/west axis. Each of these cubes is missing two of its sides (specifically, the eastern and western walls) to allow for pedestrian passage. The series of cubes thereby functions as an architectural promenade, where a visitor would traverse the memorial and experience a sequence of internal and external areas, demarcated by a regular alternation of light and shade. This submission is the only finalist that proposed the insertion of any kind of architectural or enclosed spaces as a form of memorial space.

The treatment of the entire site is formed through the establishment of this linear sequence, with the series of cubes – simply referred to in the scheme as the “Victims’ Memorial” – acting as the primary ordering device. The series establishes a Remembrance Court, described as the “hallowed ground of the former footprint of the Murrah Building,” in the southern sector of the site and a Memorial Lawn located on the northern half, which “spreads openly across the site, emphasizing the presence of the Survivor Tree and accommodating public gatherings.”⁴⁸ To the immediate north of the Victims’ Memorial, and adjacent to the series of concrete cubes are twelve small reflecting pools. While those were originally drawn with very thin bridges connecting them to the Memorial Lawn, in the design development stage, they were reconsidered, and modeled as possible entry points for pedestrians (Figure 4.32). For example, the presence of a human figure in the model (located at the second cube heading westward) signals the point of entry to the Victim’s Memorial through a narrow opening that separates the

⁴⁸ Text from submission. The Selection Committee (the final determining body) lauded how “The Memorial Court recognizes and respects the ‘sacred ground’ of the Murrah Building footprint.”

second cube from the third. This intentional disruption of foot traffic is the most puzzling aspect of the submission, as if the designers wanted to complicate and impede the exploration of the memorial site. In effect, the Victims' Memorial is established as the central spine not only through its location, but also through its function for pedestrian circulation. It is a device that must be visited not solely because of its symbolic commemorative function but also because it has been designed to operate as the major circulation path for the site itself. However, this intention and how it memorializes the victims of the Oklahoma City Bombing creates more problems than it solves.⁴⁹ Given that the location of the Victims' Memorial is central to the site, and that the majority of the foot traffic necessarily moves *through* the intervention itself, the internal space within the series of cubes is far too small to accommodate the numbers of people that attend the anniversary ceremonies.

In addition, the Victims' Memorial contains a commemorative strategy that further problematizes the effective handling of circulation within the larger memorial site. The designers, evidently inspired by site-specific artists such as Nancy Holt (Figure 4.33), have perforated the ceilings and the southern walls of these concrete cubes. The architects describe their design intention as a "celebration of life": at "noon on each victim's birth date, sunlight penetrates the openings of the memorial walls and illuminates the personal memorial. Each memorial is inscribed with the person's name, birth date, and personal messages from friends and family and contains personal and devotional belongings."⁵⁰ The designers utilize the chronological ordering device of the victims' dates of birth to determine the individual memorial location (including their inscribed name and messages) within the larger Victims' Memorial. The

⁴⁹ The separation of the site and the disruption of pedestrian traffic may have been akin to Richard Serra's intentions behind *Tilted Arc* (1981) at the Jacob Javits Federal Plaza in New York City.

⁵⁰ From text of the design board submission.

series of chapel-like spaces and the additions of the precise voids of the oculi are reminiscent of Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp, France (1954) (Figure 4.34).⁵¹

With the victims' birthdates providing an ordering device, the gesture reverses the cognitive power that the date of April 19, 1995 has for the victims' families and instead directs attention back onto the life of the victim, a celebration of existence. This is a common commemorative move that is often undertaken by family members of slain public figures or celebrities. For example, Yoko Ono insisted that, instead of marking the date that John Lennon was shot and killed on December 8, public ceremonies at the Strawberry Fields Memorial in New York's Central Park should occur on his birthday. Thus the memorial was dedicated to Lennon on what would have been his forty-fifth birthday, October 9, 1985.⁵² While exceedingly simple, focusing not on the day of loss but on birth has significant implications for the site. It is still highly likely that civic events will occur to commemorate the dates of large-scale tragedies such as September 11, 2001 or April 19, 1995 (and the subsequent need for areas for large crowds to gather), but the recognition of individual victims' birthdays would guarantee that the site would see smaller memorial services throughout the calendar year, requiring more intimate spaces than those necessitated by larger crowds. The design scheme by Branstetter & Casper acknowledges this necessity. They designed a memorial that would be occupied year round, and yet, it does not intertwine these kinds of civic and intimate spaces into a coherent and cohesive whole. Instead, the civic spaces of the Memorial Lawn and the Remembrance Court are bifurcated by a "spine" formed from the presence of the Reflecting Pools and Victims'

⁵¹ This is the only finalist that in the designers' descriptions draws upon explicitly religious language, referring to the "leaving of personal and *devotional* belongings" as well as referring to the Victims' Memorial as a *sanctuary* (my emphasis). These designers understood well the cultural and religious context of the memorial site: evangelical Christianity.

⁵² Robert J. Kruse II, "Imagining Strawberry Fields as a Place of Pilgrimage," *Area*, vol. 35, no 2. (June 2003), p. 157.

Memorials. While the collection of pools and memorials serves as an ordering device, and provides a rhythmic datum to the entire site, the inability to pass through the Victims' Memorial along a north/south axis is a fundamental flaw in this design.

While voids and gaps break up the continuity of the Victim's Memorial, to provide natural light to the interior of the memorial, these spaces almost beg to be widened to allow groups of visitors to pass through them, able to see their own image mirrored back to them in the adjacent Reflecting Pools, and then continue on towards the memorial museum. The current width of the openings and lack of handrails over the sections that subdivide the Reflecting Pool clearly indicate that the openings were never intended to provide a series of alternative pathways for moving across the site. This intentional blocking of pedestrian access is reminiscent of Richard Serra's controversial sculpture *Tilted Arc* (1981) which used to occupy the plaza in front of the Jacob Javits Federal Building in New York City.

Perhaps the harshest criticism that can be leveled against this submission lies not in the poor pedestrian circulation scheme, but in the reductionist translation of modern minimal art into memorial. The design shows a fundamental ignorance of the site's actual topography. Its treatment of the pre-existing area ignores the most basic elements of site, slope, and topography; the plantings are sparse. According to the designers, the memorial is meant to be about "relationships," and yet they ignore the most fundamental, complex and rich, and mutually dependent relationship of humans with the natural world. The absence of plantings means that there is no seasonal change, no growth, no renewal. Lacking complexity, diversity, and mystery, the memorial reveals itself all at once. The designers hoped, and insisted in the design description, that "the memorial must reveal emotion, hope, tragedy, memory, spirit and continuity. The dynamic human condition, though sometimes beset with overwhelming

difficulty, must continue to look towards life.”⁵³ Yet, with this design, the memorial is so sparse as to seem mute.

Abstract, including minimalist, memorials are compelling in a historical moment where there is a contest over the meanings of an event. Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial marked a significant shift away from the figurative and embodied form of (military) statuary to that of an abstract, simple, and elegant line. Part of the success of her design, however, is that it created an immersive environment and captured the sense of quagmire that the country continued to experience surrounding the memorialized event. Branstetter & Casper’s design likewise creates an immersive environment, yet it is ultimately Spartan, even harsh; the “chapels” are concrete rooms that will feel compressed if occupied and what is meant to be a space for personal expression of grief is part of a public thoroughfare. In late twentieth century American memorial culture, as noted in the previous chapter, comfort and contemplation are the supposed keys to a successful memorial in contemporary memorial culture. The Evaluation Committee commended the “zen-like” quality of Branstetter & Casper’s scheme but expressed concern that the design concept didn’t quite meet the tenets expressed in the mission statement: that the memorial would offer “comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity.”⁵⁴

James Rossant & Richard Scherr’s Submission

The submission by B. James Rossant & Richard Scherr (New York, NY) distinguishes itself for the sense of unease and tension of its major design intervention: a sixty-foot high, grey granite wall that tilts at an unnerving angle (Figure 4.35). Recapitulating the collapsing portion of the Federal Building, the wall, complete with seemingly *ad hoc* placed bronze supports, recalls the

⁵³ “Oklahoma City Memorial: International Design Competition Report of Design Evaluation Committee”, Robert Johnson Collection. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive. 299/4421 B2F1. p. 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

tension and dread in the immediate aftermath of the explosion, as people rushed to the downtown core wondering if their loved ones were alive or dead. The wall is inscribed with the names of the 168 who perished, while the names of the survivors appear on paving stones adjacent to the supports. To the immediate south of the leaning wall, the Murrah Building Memorial Pool is located in the footprint of the former Federal Building, although it is rendered with jagged and torn edges, as only the portion of the building that collapsed is represented by the pool. The leaning wall and the Memorial Pool are located near the center point of a space the designers call the *Processional Garden*, which marks the former location of 5th Street and reconnects to the existing urban grid at the eastern and western boundaries of the site. This garden contains “prairie plantings,” although no species of plants are mentioned specifically. To the northern side of the monumental wall stands the Survivor’s Tree in what the designers call the Memorial Commons; while little description is offered to clarify the content of that space, it is represented as an open lawn.⁵⁵ Moving westward from the Survivor’s Tree is the Field of Native Grasses, which approximately occupies the former footprint of the Athenian Restaurant; again, little formal description is provided. The Children’s Garden, which is described as “being located in a wooded grove,” lies to the immediate west of the Field of Native Grasses and contains “a maze like sequence of etched glass panels that portray the story and images [of the bombing.]”⁵⁶ Within this clearing is a “miniature version of the central monument,” which, while still 10’ tall, is meant to be played and climbed on by children. Lastly, the *People’s Memorial* is a relocated portion of the security fence, now known as the “Memory Fence,” which was originally established primarily as a security measure but which soon became the destination for offerings

⁵⁶ Text from Scherr & Rossant’s submission board to the memorial competition.

of comfort and hope. The People's Memorial is located in the northwest corner of the memorial site and defines a small courtyard to the main entrance of the former Journal Records Building.

The introduction of the massive, 60-foot-high, leaning wall is a powerful element that resonates both at the urban and human scale and manages to reproduce a sense of the unease that was palpable in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. This submission is noteworthy because it is the only one among the finalists that represents the site other than as a quiet, meditative place for solemn reflection. The monumental tilting wall appears to be held temporarily aloft by the bronze braces on the northern face of the wall. These supports are reminiscent of the wooden support beams that were used by rescue teams and civil engineers to prevent further structural failure of the standing parts of the Murrah Federal Building immediately following the explosion and during the rescue and recovery operations, and they therefore remind the visitor of the great unease of that time and the scale of the destruction that occurred (Figure 4.36).⁵⁷ The wall functions as a memory device that recalls the tragedy first and foremost at the scale of the building *itself*, then uses inscriptions and other commemorative strategies to recall those who were lost inside, or responded to give aid after the disaster.⁵⁸ While all the finalist submission proposed highlighting the sacred quality of the Federal Building's footprint (with varying degrees of success), the Rossant & Scherr submission was the only one that precisely indicated the *void* inflicted on the building (seen in plan view), marking and preserving the previous architectural space. The proposed design operates as a sort of memorial to the building itself as a civic destination and a place of work. The placement of this monumental wall in close proximity to the Memorial Pool traces and hints at the former presence of the building by providing a

⁵⁷ Matthew Driskill, *The Final Report: The City of Oklahoma City, April 19, 1995*. © 1996 by Haukon Associates, Global Information Resources, Inc. and Campaign Technologies, Inc. Compact disc.

⁵⁸ This use of a wall as a primary commemorative strategy separates itself from the criticism that the Evaluation Committee leveled against the Herrington & Stankard entry as in this particular instance it is not a derivative of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, but rather a representation of the Murrah Building itself.

glimpse of the volume of space it contained. The Murrah Building Memorial Pool marks the void created by the bomb blast, and no effort is made to reveal the entire footprint of the building. Representing absence is a common theme in contemporary memorials, but the demarcation of only the destroyed portion of the Federal Building as a reflecting pool is a provocative strategy as it places the representation of the building fragment at the forefront of what was lost.⁵⁹ While the survivors' harrowing tales prove that the primary factor determining why they lived while their co-workers perished was their physical location within the building, it is that loss of life which should be remembered, not the fragment of the building that collapsed. Unlike the World Trade Center in New York in 2001, the Murrah Federal Building was unremarkable in size or scale or by its building technology.⁶⁰ It was a drab example of the late 1970s bland architectural style of poured concrete and glass, virtually unknown to the world before the day of its destruction.

There is an ambiguity that could be read as a form of internal conflict present throughout their scheme. For instance, they describe the wall as being in a state of collapse *and* being raised which symbolizes “destabilization and more literally the falling of the building... The wall is inspired by the mythic American institution where neighbors joined together in a barn raising. The act of tilting up entire walls after a fire is comparable to the coming together of so many

⁵⁹ Refer to WTC competition submission, “Reflecting Absence”, and the desire to mark the North and South Towers building footprints in the Arad/Walker design.

⁶⁰ It should be noted that The World Trade Center Towers were never the darlings of the architectural world, with numerous architectural commentators and urban historians leveling harsh criticism against them. Lewis Mumford referred to them as “just glass and metal filing cabinets”, [<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/who-s-afraid-of-the-big-bad-buildings-how-new-yorkers-tried-to-stop-the-world-trade-center-a-785206.html>]. Noted architectural critic Wolf von Eckardt called them called them, “artless and dumb, without any relationship to anything, even each other,” and that they were a “fearless instrument of uricide.” See “New York’s Trade Center: World’s Tallest Fiasco” *Harper’s*, 232, no. 1392, May 1966, p. 94. Ada Louise Huxtable darkly prophesied in the *New York Times*, “The Trade Center towers could be the start of a new skyscraper age of the biggest tombstones in the world.” *New York Times*, May 29, 1966.

throughout the nation who gave their support to Oklahoma City after the tragedy.”⁶¹ The designers highlight this notion of collective labor and cooperation in the wake of tragedy through an illustration in the lower right hand corner of their board, which shows the process of raising a barn’s wall (Figure 4.37). While representing the spirit of cooperation and gratitude for the aid received by the people of Oklahoma City is one of the conditions set forth in the design guidelines for the competition, it seems out of place within the context of this submission. It seems unlikely that the paradoxical duality of collapse/construction would be obvious to the typical visitor, given the nature of the event remembered, the symbolism of destruction would eclipse that of reconstruction. Moreover, “barn raisings” are a geographical misquotation given that Oklahoma is a land of ranches, not dairy country. The attempt to mentally shift from collapse (tragedy) to construction (recovery) is, given the history of the site, a misguided gesture (this gesture, of rebuilding the lost building, was a common theme and strategy within the memorial competition boards (Figures 4.38, 4.39, 4.40).

Another strange contradiction occurs in the use of water. The designers included a reflecting pool, claiming that it “...[implies] that the explosion caused subterranean water, a healing substance, to seep through the ground to the surface, offering hope and renewed life (as inspired by Bergman’s *Virgin Spring* [1960] where at the site of a murdered daughter, a spring emanates from the grounds as a form of redemption.)”⁶² If the designers had merely referred to the water as a nourishing and vital condition for life, the metaphor would hold. However, *The Virgin Spring* reference was entirely inappropriate because in the film, the murdered girl was also raped before she was killed, and the rapists seek shelter at the farmhouse where they encounter the girl’s parents who are frantically searching for their missing child. Realizing that

⁶¹ Text from Rossant & Scherr’s submission board.

⁶² *Ibid.*

the men are those responsible for the daughter's death, the enraged father brutally kills them. The movie is about personal revenge, violence and retribution, and the philosophical problem of evil; it offers no possibility of redemption and forgiveness, no post-trauma healing.⁶³

A further element of concern also occurs in the Children's Garden. While the designers do not provide a clear illustration of what it would look like, their description provides enough information to question the wisdom behind the gesture. They state, "the children's monument is located in a wooded grove [...] at the center is a 10' high leaning wall with cut-out openings that can be climbed by the children, a miniature version of the central monument."⁶⁴ It is hard not to be dumbfounded by this component of their design scheme. First, including a scaled down replica of the central and monumental commemorative wall fundamentally diminishes the scale and importance of the memorial itself. Second, designated as a children's climbing structure, it dishonors the 168 victims.

Another problem with this scheme is that the designers confuse monumentality (scale and importance) with memorialization (commemorative recall and memory). The design ultimately only operates at the urban scale; the human scale is dwarfed by the giant spaces provided. While the design team may have intended this site to become a grand urban plaza, like the Piazza San Marco in Venice or Tiananmen Square in Beijing, other great urban spaces such as Paley Park in New York City or the Place Dauphine in Paris, could have provided a much better urban precedent because of their ability to provide smaller, more intimate spaces within a larger urban context. The addition of a seating area to the immediate west of the Survivor Tree helps, but it is ultimately poorly placed, allowing visitors only to look at the tree rather than feeling the benefit

⁶³ This statement runs exactly opposite of "a reversal of the original act from destruction to healing; and our defiance of violence" which the designer's mention as being as a central component of their theme.

⁶⁴ From text of Rossant & Scherr's submission board.

of its shade, or to enjoy the Field of Native Grasses immediately behind it. There are few opportunities for shade within this scheme, and, in turn, there is no compelling reason to sit and within the site. The bench does provide a service, as it acts as a boundary that attempts to mark the building footprint of the Athenian Building which was also heavily damaged in the bombing and was later imploded due to irreparable structural damage (Figure 4.41). The bosquet of trees that stands immediately west of the bench, within the Children's Garden, marks the Water Resource Building that once occupied that site but that also had to be demolished post bombing (Figure 4.42). But all of these spaces, presumably designed for gatherings, are insignificant and eclipsed by the massive size of the memorial structure.

The Rossant & Scherr design neglects the significant grade change from Robinson Avenue into the site, a vertical shift of at least eight feet in elevation. They may have intended to re-grade the site significantly, adding landfill to bring the pre-existing ground up to street level. I believe this to be the case: a flight of eight steps appears along one the design's western edge, where 5th street once lay. These stairs could assist in the regrading effort, however, with no east/west cross section, the designers' intentions for regrading the site are not completely clear. If this is the case, then the designers have ignored the request of the memorial committee to protect and utilize the American elm dubbed the "Survivor Tree." If the addition of new fill and an extensive re-grading effort was part of their memorial plan, then extraordinary measures would have been required to excavate the Survivor Tree from its current elevation, save the surrounding soil profile, protect the tree's existing root system, and carefully move it to a site where it would not be disturbed until it was re-planted on the same location, although at a higher, final elevation. Simply stated, this seems highly unlikely. That kind of technology or technique did not exist in the late 1990s, and, even today, such an ambitious project pushes the limits of what may be

feasible for transplanting fully mature trees. Given the selection committee's explicit instructions to protect the Survivor's Tree, either the designers either ignored the disparity in elevational grades, or they hoped that a compromise could be found if their design was selected as the winning entry.

Perhaps the most compelling and controversial component of this scheme is its use of tension in the representation of trauma. Unlike the meditative and tranquil spaces of other submissions, this design elicits a sense of unease. Through its indirect reference to violence in the landscape (the impact of the bombing on the building and the subsequent mass death), the Rossant & Scherr's design hints at the idea that there is a moral agent to be held responsible.⁶⁵ Designs that rely on pastoral and natural scenes for quiet, meditative environments remove the agency of the perpetrator of this act of mass murder, as well as the larger political context of that agent's decisions and acts. Yet, the comments offered by the Selection Committee make clear that the jurors who ultimately selected the Butzers' design as the winning entry were uncomfortable with the ambivalent and therefore ambiguous symbolism of the tilting wall:

The form of the water and the "raising wall" are powerful symbols of remembering both the devastation and rebirth. The Selection Committee discussed the effects of the raising wall realizing that the symbol of rebirth might also be read as a falling wall held up by temporary supports based on the recovery efforts at the Murrah Building. The Committee felt that the raising wall would require further development to properly convey its meaning to the visitor. The basic question was whether it would be symbolically understood or would it require interpretation? And should a memorial require interpretation?

Thus it seems that the Selection Committee's desire was to have a memorial where a visitor is *not* required to interpret actively, where the meanings are *neither* ambiguous *nor* multiple. For

⁶⁵ In fact, I would go so far as to argue that their initial design scheme centered on the idea of collapse and rupture given that the other elements of the design include the jagged edges of the reflecting pool, which serve to represent the collapsed portion of the Murrah building. Invoking the idea of a "barn raising" reads to me as an afterthought, an attempt to overlay a more positive meaning, drawing upon the pride Oklahomans took in the communal response during the recovery effort. The designers backed off of what would be a controversial proposal, and hedged their bets.

the committee, the ambiguity of this scheme actually mitigated its conceptual power. Moreover, it becomes clear when one reads the entirety of the Oklahoma City Memorial: International Design Competition Report of Design Evaluation Panel (dated March 1997 and discussed in detail in the previous chapter), with its summary of design evaluation issues, that there were overarching concerns about the representation of trauma implied in this and other designs.

Conclusion

On the second anniversary of the bombing, the five finalists to the International Memorial Competition were presented to the citizens of Oklahoma City (Figure 4.43). Formal introductions were offered from the podium, with the designers present on the stage situated in front of the ruins of the Murrah Building. The flag was flown at half-mast, and the Memory Fence stood in its original position, blocking access to the building's empty footprint.

The finalists' design boards had been placed on the Memory Fence amidst the various accumulated mementos and tributes, such as memory wreaths, photographs, t-shirts, stuffed animals, American flags, poems, and figurine angels (Figures 4.44, 4.45, 4.46, 4.47 and 4.48). At an appropriate moment, the designs were revealed (Figure 4.49), one at a time and each to its own round of applause. The designs were nestled and layered among the objects previously left on the fence so that they were physically framed by popular expressions of grief and remembrance. The Butzer's entry was placed above a sign that read, "WE SHALL NEVER FORGET WE WILL HEAL WE MAY NEVER UNDERSTAND – EEC/AGE 13." The upper-right hand corner of the design board was tucked *under* a floral wreath surrounding a photograph of one of the female victims of the bombing. Easily visible through the chain-link fence was the actual "sacred territory" of the bomb site.

This highly orchestrated scene was a vivid example of civic theatre, one that ultimately placed the design submissions in a populist and seemingly democratic framework open for public display and consumption. The design boards were treated as tributes and offerings akin to the teddy bears, flags and angels. While it achieved the effect of openness and transparency, it also erased the expertise of the design teams. Indeed, the submissions were viewed by the wounded community as expressions of heartfelt grief, on par with the devotional objects left at the fence, rather than as the carefully crafted efforts of professionals.

CHAPTER 5
EXPERIENCE AND RE-ENACTMENT
AT THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM IN OKLAHOMA CITY

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a description of the museum exhibits of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. Central to this chapter is the idea that the visitor to the Museum will experience and re-enact the trauma of the citizens of Oklahoma City on the morning of April 19, 1995. The manner in which these exhibits are ordered and their specific emotive content skirts explanation about why the bombing occurred, who the perpetrators were and the nature of their political motivations. Instead, the focus of the Museum is upon the response that the city, state and nation provided at the time of need. This shift in focus, placing attention upon responses rather than causes, depoliticizes the bombing.

Included within the appendix is a short but detailed history of the building that houses the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, and which charts how the building's use changed from a Masonic Temple, to an opulent theater, to the home for a daily business and legal newspaper to the purpose that it serves today.

In *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (2007), museum studies scholar Paul Williams traces the establishment of what he claims is a “new commemorative form”: the memorial museum.¹ A memorial museum combines the social practice of frequent visits to a memorial as a form of civic pilgrimage with the implicit social good of a museum’s educational mandate — one that presents a curator’s interpretation, contextualization, and narration of an event, object, or period for the benefit of the general public. Williams notes the contradiction embedded in the combining of memorial and museum:

A memorial is seen to be, if not apolitical, at least safe in the refuge of history. This is largely because we recognize that honor will accrue to most people – no matter their actual worldly deeds – simply because honest evaluation of the dead is normally seen as disrespectful. A history museum, by contrast, is presumed to be concerned with interpretation, contextualization, and critique. The coalescing of the two suggest that there is an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts.² (My emphasis.)

While the Museum acknowledges the loss of life of the 168 victims, it avoids offering an interpretation of, or even any specific information about, the larger political, social, economic, or cultural context of the bombing. Rather than offering a moral framework, the museum presents a highly chronologically and detailed re-telling of the bombing and the immediate after effects. The result is a highly affective space that allows visitors the opportunity to re-enact the trauma that the citizens of Oklahoma City experienced. The Museum honors and valorizes the 168 victims of the bombing, but it fails to offer any substantial advice on how to prevent such devastating actions from occurring in the future. Instead, the Museum inscribes its own form of trauma upon the visitor by offering a reconstructed “experience” of the bombing and a highly

¹ Williams, *Memorial Museums*, p. 8.

² *Ibid.*

detailed chronological account of the passage of time. In her treatment of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, Sturken explains:

While the Memorial Center [the Museum] is clearly effective for many survivors, it is most obviously aimed at those who did not experience the bombing. The Center's pedagogical intent in explaining the meanings of the bombing and the ways that people in Oklahoma City responded is aimed at the unknowing, those who, one could say have no personal memory of the bombing. Yet, the Memorial Center is not simply an exhibit that tells the story of the bombing and its aftermath; it attempts to create an experience of it. As such it uses forms of *reenactment* with the intent that such forms will create empathy, if not shocked concern, among the center's visitors.³ (*My emphasis*)

For Sturken, this reenactment places the visitor to the Museum in the role of a citizen of Oklahoma City, fundamentally innocent and unprepared for the violence that is about to occur. In addition to the reenactment, great care is taken to celebrate the common, everyday nature of the people of Oklahoma City, people just going about their everyday routines unaware of the trauma that is about to unfold. As I will show, the climax of this constructed narrative in the Museum lies within the space called the Gallery of Honor, which confronts the guest with the faces of the 168 people killed.

The *Memorial & Museum Guide*, given to each visitor upon entering the museum,, encourages visitors to "Visit the Memorial. Experience the Museum." (Figure 5.00)⁴ The text continues, explaining the connection between the Museum and the Memorial:

The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial is a place of quiet reflection. The Memorial Museum is a place of *amazing transformation*. Each offers a unique insight into the events of April 19, 1995, but to truly experience this place of honor and hope, we strongly encourage you to visit both. In fact, the outdoor grounds will be more meaningful and memorable *after* experiencing the entire story of the bombing as presented in the Museum.⁵

³ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, p. 118.

⁴ *Memorial & Museum Guide*. Pamphlet produced by the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum. (No date provided.)

⁵ *Ibid*, (my emphasis).

Visitors are encouraged (and expected) to visit the museum component of the memorial complex prior to their journey through the outdoor memorial as a form of civic pilgrimage, to pay their respects to those lost in the bombing. The museum is to be not just visited but experienced, and while the promise of an “amazing transformation” is offered, it is not clear what form that transformation will take or how it will occur, only that it will make the memorial “more meaningful and memorable.”⁶

The museum is open daily, Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 6 pm, and Sunday from noon to 6 pm, with admission tickets available for purchase until 5 pm. The cost for admission to the museum is nominal, from \$10.00 to \$12.00 per person, depending on age. There is no charge to visit the outdoor memorial, which is “open” twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, although the National Park Service Personnel are available to answer visitors questions only from 9 am to 5:30 pm daily.⁷

The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is a self-described “interactive learning experience” that “takes you on a chronological self guided tour through the story of April 19th 1995 and the days, weeks, and years that followed the bombing of Oklahoma City’s Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.”⁸ The museum complex occupies 30,000 square feet divided among five floors within the western section of the Journal Records Building, although the majority of the museum’s collection on public display is located only on the third and second floors.⁹ The fourth floor houses the executive administrative offices of the memorial museum, while the basement contains the museum’s archives, storage, and administrative offices for the

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Source: <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=4&catid=52> (accessed September 19, 2013.)

⁸ The description of the Memorial Museum is taken directly from the *Memorial & Museum Guide*, which functions as the *de facto* map that allows visitors to tour the museum.

⁹ <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=1&catid=193> (Accessed September 19, 2013.)

two archivists on staff, as well as a break room and much of the necessary infrastructure for the building pertaining to HVAC, electricity, and water and plumbing. The main entrance to the museum is located near the northwest corner at the intersection of Harvey Avenue and N.W. Sixth Street (Figure 5.01).¹⁰

The spatial organization and arrangement of the memorial museum and its exhibits reflect contemporary trends in both museum and memorial practices.¹¹ The physical layout of exhibit space within the memorial museum makes overt gestures to a literary model of narration, specifically identifying “chapters” of the Oklahoma City bombing that are both distinct and linear in progression. Unlike other museums, such as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum, or the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the internal ordering of the exhibition spaces at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is defined to be experienced in a specific chronological order. Instead of allowing visitors to wander the contents of its exhibits, a clearly defined, linear, and accumulative “path” is provided. This technique of the unidirectional circulation of visitors was borrowed from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., which implemented a strategy of providing a detailed and chronological account of the Holocaust through intentional spatial means. For the Holocaust Museum, the narrative is expressed in a series of distinct periods of time that demarcate the stages of the horrific event.¹² The exhibit designers from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum were

¹⁰ There is a strict, “no photography” rule present within the museum, which is enforced by the volunteers that are present on each floor of the museum. Given the dependence upon ticket sales for a large working portion of their operational revenue, such a policy and its enforcement, is not surprising.

¹¹ For the most topical research on this subject matter, refer to Zahava D. Doering and Andrew J. Pekarik’s article “Assessment of Informal Education in Holocaust Museums” (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution, May 1996.)

¹² They include: “Nazi Assault” 1933 – 1939 located on the fourth floor (although it forms the first exhibit that a visitor experiences), “The Final Solution” 1940 – 1945 on the third floor, “The Last Chapter,” the Hall of Remembrance, and the Wexner Learning Center on the second floor, and the Hall of Witness, Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story, the Museum Shop and a “passes kiosk” (entrance is free of charge, although they are for specific times to prevent crowding throughout the exhibit spaces) are on the first floor. As per, *Museum Accessibility*

heavily involved in assisting the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation with the spatial presentation of its specific narrative.¹³ The memorial museum in Oklahoma draws the connection between the museum and narration in its publication entitled *A Museum Walking Tour*:

Like a book, the Museum is divided into chapters. Each section tells a part of the unfolding drama that began just as most settled into the workday. Many consider the unexpected attack a benchmark in American History. If terrorism could happen in Oklahoma, it could happen anywhere. One step inside this award-winning Museum and the past becomes present.¹⁴

This paragraph performs a number of interrelated operations, all of which hint at a larger, institutional mandate and purpose. The statement indicates that a particular chronological sequential *must* be experienced in order to understand the museum fully, as the story is “unfolding” in each successive exhibit. As a “benchmark in American History,” the museum implies that there is a fundamental patriotic obligation to witness the event; failure to do so implies a disregard for the country’s history and therefore a general disregard for the country itself. Lastly, “Oklahoma” becomes a conceptual representation of, or a placeholder for, the “rest” of America, implying that the state was immune or at the very least, far removed from terrorist actions, while other states were, and continue to be, desired targets, vulnerable to such deadly attacks. The desired effect is one of a sense of threat.

Guide, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, available for download via <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20060306-accessibility-guide.pdf> (Figure 5.02) (Accessed September 24, 2013.)

¹³ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 232. This subject was also confirmed by a personal conversation with Kari Watkins, the Executive Director of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum in June 2008.

¹⁴ *A Museum Walking Tour*. p. 4.

The Museum

The ground floor, which the Memorial & Museum Guide refers as “the lobby level,” functions primarily as a place for ticket sales and a gathering area for tour groups. As a visitor enters the memorial museum, the first five lines of the institution’s mission statement are visible on the far northern wall, the text etched out of highly polished and reflective marble (Figure 5.03):

We come here to remember those who were killed,
Those who survived and those changed forever.
May all who leave here know the impact of violence.
May this memorial offer comfort,
Strength, peace, hope, and serenity.¹⁵

Adjacent to the wording of the mission statement and just to the right is the institutional recognition of the museum’s financial donors. Using the collective and inclusive terminology of a *circle*, nine different levels of support are recognized. The highest is the Circle of Honor, for donations of one million dollars or more, and it includes government bodies: the City of Oklahoma, the State of Oklahoma, and the U.S. Congress. The energy exploration company Kerr-McGee Corporation is the sole, private corporation represented within this level of benefaction. The Circle of Life (\$999,999 to \$500,000) has only one donor, The Presbyterian Health Foundation, which owns and operates a number of hospitals within the city and the state. The Circle of Remembrance (\$499,999 to \$250,000) lists a number of well-known corporations including the Ford Motor Company, NationsBank, Southwestern Bell Telephone (now AT&T), and the Sonic Corporation (of Sonic fast food restaurants). The other corresponding levels of support borrow directly from the wording of the memorial foundation’s mission statement, with

¹⁵ The text, while the first lines of the memorial museums’ mission statement, is routinely uttered at the start of any official meeting or event that the memorial museum sponsors or hosts, with the executive director noting that the coda is often read “like a prayer.” Meeting with Kari Watkins, Executive Director of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, June 2008. For a detailed analysis of the text that constitutes the mission statement, please refer to Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

the Circle of Serenity (\$249,999 to \$100,000), the Circle of Hope (\$99,999 to \$50,000), the Circle of Peace (\$49,999 to \$25,000), the Circle of Strength (\$24,999 to \$10,000), and the Circle of Comfort (\$9,999 to \$5000). The lowest level of financial support to the memorial foundation recognized (and the most populated one) consists of the Circle of Giving, for donations ranging from \$4,999 and under. Despite the fact that the City, State and Congress provided significant funds for the establishment of the Memorial and Museum, a constant refrain from the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is the claim that they do not rely upon any form of governmental funding, relying solely on their endowment and private donations, entry fees, fund raisers (such as the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon and their annual “Awards of Hope” gala dinner), and sales from the “memorial store” for their operational budget.¹⁶ In a recent fundraising appeal, the Memorial Museum claimed that the annual cost to operate both the memorial and the museum, and provide their services and outreach is \$3,452,695, with the museum claiming \$1,587,695 of that total.¹⁷

As visitors step from the elevator that has carried them from the ground floor lobby to the start of the exhibit on the third floor, they are greeted with a long, non-descript hallway on a slight angle lined with large photographs (approximately 24” x 36”) that show a host of men and women at various forms of work. Most of these images are of blue-collar workers (nurses, teachers, bank tellers, power company linemen, mechanics, etc.), and the “everyday” character of this space is reinforced by a series of quiet yet audible statements and sounds that highlight the common daily routines of Americans at work. A woman asks a coworker for a file, the sound of a typist on a computer keyboard clicks away, a group discussion concerning an upcoming sales

¹⁶ During the partial shut down of the federal government, the memorial museum proudly declares that it is “Open for Business!” on the homepage of its website. Refer to Figure 5.04 Source: <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org> (Accessed October 12, 2013.)

¹⁷ 9:03 Fund, “Preserving the Legacy” mailer. (Figure 5.05)

meeting is overheard, a fax machine starts to engage. Those sounds are ever present and easily dismissed as background noise unless a visitor spends more than five or six minutes in the hallway or nearby and hears the looped recording begin again.¹⁸ Even the décor of the hallway feels like it belongs in a suburban office park, with a few planters containing plastic plants carefully placed as not to distract from the photos of people going about their everyday professions. The purpose of this area is to center and ground the visitor in a familiar setting and thereby to set the tone that this day is “like any other.” The only unusual characteristic is that of the angle of the hallway which creates the perception that the corridor is longer than it really is, as the width between the two walls slowly and imperceptible decreases (Figure 5.06). Visible in plan view, it is barely noticeable while actually standing in the hallway. The result is a feeling of compression as the visitor walks the corridor.

“Chapter One: Background on Terrorism”

On the third floor, the first “official” display that a visitor encounters is the “Chapter One: Background on Terrorism.” This title is only present within the *Memorial & Museum Guide*, and appears to specifically address the content of a room located off of the main hallway. Within that small circular room there are three, interactive computer stations, where a guest can read the following text:

In the decade before the Oklahoma City bombing (1985-1995) the American perception of terrorism was simple: terrorists were foreign: terrorism happened in big cities and other countries. Americans were wrong. In reality, between 1985 and 1995 there were over 50 terrorist acts in more than 15 states. But most U.S. citizens could name only one — the World Trade Center Bombing in 1993.¹⁹

¹⁸ The everyday “soundtrack” is audible within “Chapter 1: Background on Terrorism,” where I was using the provided “interactive computer” to research a terrorist incident in Urbana on November 19, 1992. It was only because I was in the display room for an extended period of time that I noticed the repetition of the sounds used in the projection.

¹⁹ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 7.

The visitor is presented with two images – one entitled “Perception of Terrorism in the United States 1985 – 1995” (Figure 5.07), which indicates only the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing in New York City, and the other called “Actual Terrorism in the United States 1985-1995” (Figure 5.08), which shows the locations of what the Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified as a terrorist incident. Approximately forty events are indicated.

The purpose of this is two-fold. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum asserts that terrorism was in fact occurring on a national level and with greater frequency than was generally perceived by the American public. This reframing of “perception versus reality” alleviates any possible shame that the city may have felt in being the target for the terrorist attack, intimating that the city just happened to be the location chosen by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols because it possessed an easily accessible federal building. The message the museum conveys is that the terrible bombing could have happened in any American city. And yet, until September 11, 2001, the bombing in Oklahoma City was the single deadliest terrorist attack to occur within the United States.²⁰ Thus the memorial museum faced a conundrum in how to represent that horrific event. Should the memorial museum focus efforts on documenting the rise of terrorism in America, indicating that Oklahoma City is representative of a larger trend, or should they focus on the uniqueness of the terrible event, of those lost, and how it was the deadliest act of domestic terrorism that America had yet experienced?

Close examination of the other events listed in “Actual Terrorism in the United States 1985-1995” is arresting. By cross-referencing the forty-two incidents that the Oklahoma City National Museum and Memorial lists against the historical record that the Federal Bureau of

²⁰ *Terrorism 2002-2005*, (Washington D.C., United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2006), p. 31.

Investigation is required by law to keep, oversights and omissions emerge.²¹ Of the forty-two incidents, nineteen do not appear within the chronological summary supplied by the FBI. Of the remaining twenty-four incidents, only six resulted in injuries or fatalities. Of those six incidents, spanning a ten-year time frame, there were a total of nine deaths and 1071 injured as a result of terrorist incidents in the United States. The FBI has identified two separate terrorist groups responsible for the majority of these deaths and injuries. The Jewish Defense League, labeled as a terrorist group by the FBI in 2001, was found to be behind four of those six incidents, which resulted in the deaths of two people, and the injury of twenty-six others; “International Islamist extremists” were responsible for the February 26, 1993, World Trade Center Bombing in New York City that killed six and injured 1,042 others.²²

The purpose of the displays “Perception of Terrorism in the United States 1985-1995” and “Actual Terrorism in the United States 1985-1995” is to suggest that terrorism was a real and present danger there long before the Oklahoma City bombing, and it was not found only in “big cities or in other countries.”²³ Terrorism had occurred in at least fifteen states, in small cities and in rural areas all across America.

However, closer examination of the terrorist incidents that are highlighted by the Museum tells a different story, one in which the perception of terrorism by the American people

²¹ The FBI’s role in responding, investigating and documenting international and domestic terrorism was a series of congressional acts including, The Comprehensive Control Crime act of 1984, The Act to Combat International Terrorism (also of 1984), The Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Anti-Terrorism Act of 1986. The source for the historical data concerning domestic terrorism is from The United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation Counter Terrorism Unit’s Report, *Terrorism 2002-2005*, which contains *Chronological Summary of Terrorist Incidents in the United States, 1980-2005*.

²² *Ibid*, p. 63. In the last incident mentioned by the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum that caused a fatality was performed by Rashid Baz in 1994. Baz was found guilty for the killing of sixteen year old Ari Halberstam, and injuring three other passengers after he shot at a van carrying Halberstam and his passengers on the Brooklyn Bridge. In 1999 a Justice Department Investigation suggested that Baz should be charged with terrorism, as Halberstam and his passengers were Hasidic Jews; however, a second investigation by the Justice Department in 2000 determined that Baz acted alone, and no charges of terrorism were ever filed against him. It is unclear why this crime was listed on the FBI chronological summary of terrorist incidents.

²³ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 6.

aligns closely with the reality of terrorist incidents. For example, five of the six incidents that resulted in death or injury occurred within a forty-five mile radius of New York City.²⁴ It is also difficult to equate the “eco-terrorist” incident in Santa Cruz, California, where two utility poles were cut down and power to the city disrupted for four hours, as comparable to the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center.²⁵ Members of law enforcement would argue that their role is *not* to assign any kind of moral assessment — that role is strictly reserved for the courts — and that their specific role is to record and investigate crimes. When they determine that such incidents are motivated by a particular political ideology that relies on violence (or the threat of violence) regardless of consequences, then those incidents qualify as terrorism.

One of the consequences of the bombing as it relates to how the Museum framed the event was the realization that the city would long be associated with domestic terrorism. This shameful label was viewed as a lingering threat to the economic viability of Oklahoma’s downtown area and an indelible stain on the city’s reputation. Despite an overwhelming response of public sympathy on a national and international level towards the citizens of Oklahoma City, there was an on-going, quiet concern on behalf of political, civic, and business leaders that the economic impact of the bombing would radiate far beyond the damaged buildings and the loss of life. The image of the city was at stake. Mayor Ron Norick and Governor Frank Keating, in a letter to Congressional Representative Frank Lucas, stated, “The negative image created by the bombing may result in further disinvestment in an area which was already suffering from deterioration and blight. This process needs to be reversed as quickly as possible.”²⁶ My analysis

²⁴ With the remaining incident occurring in Santa Anna, California, while perhaps not qualifying as a “big city,” it is hardly a rural or isolated community.

²⁵ *Terrorism 2002-2005*, p. 63.

²⁶ As reported in *The Daily Oklahoman*, “\$ 45 Million Requested for Repairs Mayor Makes Plea For Federal Funds” by Charolette Aiken, News Section, p. 1, Saturday May 27, 1995. I show in Chapter 2 that this civic concern was successfully met, with many commentators remarking on the renaissance of the greater downtown area.

shows that the Museum’s narrative successfully addresses this problem by celebrating what comes to be known as the “Oklahoma Standard,” the bravery and generosity of the people of Oklahoma City.

A Guided Experience

Despite the exhibit’s title, and the description offered within the *Memorial & Museum Guide* that states “discover the history of the neighborhood in and around the Murrah Building,” the focus of the guide’s chapter titled “History of the Site” is the personal history of Alfred Paul Murrah, the federal judge for whom the building was named, and the architectural history of the Federal Building.²⁷ (Figure 5.09 for a photo of Judge Murrah.) Designed by Wendell Locke, of the local architectural firm Locke, Wright and Associates, the nine-story federal building cost 14.5 million in 1977.²⁸ In the exhibit, no discussion or images are provided to explain what occupied the site prior to the construction of the Federal Building; in effect, the urban site is presented as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, upon which the building was constructed.

The exhibit consists mostly of photographs of the Federal Building, along with a few photographs of the art works that were produced to be on display within the building as part of a federally sponsored, public art campaign. The building is not lauded as a great work of architecture (although in 1983 the building was listed as one of Oklahoma City’s “Ten Best” buildings by the American Institute of Architects). Instead, the mundane qualities of the building are highlighted.²⁹ The exhibit states, “although its [the federal building’s] profile was prominent

²⁷ Murrah was nominated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 8, 1937 to sit on the U.S. District Court, Western District of Oklahoma. At age 32, he was the youngest judge to be appointed to the federal bench. <http://www.fjc.gov/servlet/nGetInfo?jid=1727&cid=999&ctype=na&instate=na> (Accessed, September 27, 2011.)

²⁸ Source: <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=1&catid=193> (Accessed, September 27, 2011.)

²⁹ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p.11.

on the Oklahoma City skyline, the brown concrete building was simply a place for more than 500 people – normal people performing normal jobs.”³⁰ This insistence on normalcy reinforces the notion of *commonality* — that the day was like any other, people were busy in their usual daily routines, and that tomorrow was predictable as being much like today. It situates the visitors to the museum within the familiar context of being at work themselves, and thereby asks them to identify with the citizens of Oklahoma City.³¹

The slight compression of space created by the narrowing of the hallway, combined with a ninety degree turn and the necessity of opening a pair of double doors to enter the exhibit, indicates that this room is fundamentally different from the two preceding exhibit chapters. The space looks like a meeting room, with a large triangular conference table emerging out of the wall opposite the entryway. On the table is a large microphone attached to a cassette recorder, suggesting that this room may be used for legal depositions or testimony. Above the table, and running the majority of the length of the wall, are a series of frosted glass panels that further reinforce the feeling of an office environment. The glass wall is approximately six feet tall, and twenty-five feet wide. Surrounding the triangular portion of the table, a series of nondescript office chairs are found. On the wall opposite the conference table are a series of low benches, capable of seating up to approximately thirty people. These are for the museum’s visitors. To the right of this series of benches, on the far wall, is another set of double doors.

As the room starts to fill with museum patrons, they are invited by a volunteer to have a seat, with the benches usually filling first. The last patrons entering the room are offered a chair at the triangular “wedge” of a conference table. If there are not enough patrons to fill the room, museum visitors wait no longer than just a few minutes before the volunteer activates the

³⁰ Personal notes from “Chapter 2- History of the Site.”

³¹ This of course assumes a particular middle class perspective, where work is focused around the primarily mental labor of an office experience rather than the use of physical labor.

prepared audio-visual display. The room darkens, as lights recessed in the ceiling cast a spotlight upon the tape recorder on the conference table. A tape recording of a female voice begins, “This is Wednesday, April 19, 1995 and this is application 95-501 for a ground water permit.”³² For the next two minutes the gathered audience hears the voice offer instructions that explain the bureaucratic process of the Water Resource Board. Mr. Roy Wikle has applied for an application to pump, bottle, and sell groundwater from his property. His surrounding neighbors, upon hearing of Wikle’s plans of using the water from the aquifer for commercial purposes, have brought the matter to the Water Resources Board for an injunction.³³

The hearing proceeds, with Lou Klaver continuing her explanation of the process of how the interested parties will be notified of the ruling of the Board. Klaver states, “With regards to this proceeding, basically there are four elements that I have to... ah... ah...receive information regarding [low deep rumbling lasting approximately 12 seconds]... Everybody get out of here... NOW... Watch for the electricity lines! Watch the lines! Watch the lines!”³⁴

The hearing is shattered by the sound of an immense, deep and long lasting rumble — within the museum’s room there is an intense flash of light timed immediately preceding the audio of the rumble, illuminating for a fraction of a second 168 photographs of the victims of the bombing located within the frosted glass panels. The effect is startling, as the room then immediately goes pitch black. The combination of the flash of bright light, timed with the room going dark, causes the images of the dead to linger for a few seconds on the retina as a ghostly afterimage. While visitors sit in the darkness, the audiotape continues to play, filling the silent room with a panicked Klaver yelling, “Everybody get out of here...NOW...” Time seems to slow

³² The voice heard is of Cynthia Lou Klaver, State of Oklahoma Water Resources Board Hearing Examiner.

³³ The recording of the hearing, complete with the sound of the explosion and the immediate chaos that results, can be hear at <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/mcveigh/1.html> (Accessed September 25, 2013.)

³⁴ *Ibid.* <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/mcveigh/1.html>

down, and the next forty three seconds of chaos captured on the tape seem protracted as the audience sits in stunned silence in the darkness of the room. There is an audible click – as if someone was turning off the cassette recorder to retrieve the tape within, and with that click the 168 images are once again lit. This time, however, the backlighting of the photographs increases over a few seconds, as if slowly introducing the gathered audience to the deceased (Figure 5.10).³⁵ The photos are lit for approximately two minutes prior to the opening of the doors to the right of the conference room, allowing the visitors to continue on to the next chapter of the museum. In my observations, it was a rare to hear a conversation or comment as people depart the room. They are silent.

The description that the *Memorial & Museum Guide* provides urges visitor to “leave the confusion inside the Oklahoma Water Resources Board meeting to experience the chaos outside.”³⁶ The spatial layout of this room, its shape, and the placement of large, unusually shaped exhibit displays (which appear as if fragments) disorient the visitor, and no clear line of egress is visible as one enters the room. Audio from a television is heard faintly, but the source is not immediately apparent and the words and sounds uttered are barely audible at this distance. Large photographs showing the aftermath of the destructive force act as both physical and visual barriers throughout the room. Within these “fragmented barriers” are smaller exhibit spaces presenting personal items – a worn keychain, mangled eyeglasses, a pair of dusty shoes – as if they had been simply picked up from a debris field and placed there for their rightful owner to collect. As the visitor navigates through the room, searching for a possible exit, the sound from the television starts to become recognizable: a news broadcast with narration from a helicopter traffic reporter is announcing that there has been a huge explosion in the downtown area, causing

³⁵ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 92.

³⁶ From *Memorial & Museum Guide*, Chapter 3B – Confusion. (*My emphasis*)

the façade of the Alfred P. Murrah Building to collapse (Figure 5.11). The images taken at 9:13 am from that traffic helicopter were the first images broadcast to the world of the damage, and although the reporter states that he is not sure of the cause of the blast, “a good third of the building is gone, and there are numerous piles of debris on the ground on fire, and there are multiple injuries.”³⁷

The use of modulated sound and the muffled audio in this room is effective and follows the various descriptions that survivors made when recalling the moments immediately after the explosion.³⁸ Those who had experienced the blast speculated variously as to the cause: an earthquake, an exploding boiler, an airplane crashing into the building, a tornado, and even an atomic blast.³⁹ Despite that variety, most of the survivors also described an oppressive and haunting “eerie silence” that fell over the area.⁴⁰

The Guide does not help clarify the conceptual difference between Chapters 3 and 4, stating “experience the first frantic minutes after the bombing through the detailed artifact cases, murals and computer kiosks.”⁴¹ This room is similar to the preceding one, with large photographs of the damage caused by the bombing again on display as exhibits and obstacles. Given their placement through both chapters it is difficult to ascertain the general shape of the rooms, as they feel much more fragmented and irregular than they appear within the museum guide (See Figures 5.12 and 5.13). A wide range of recovered objects form the material content of these displays; they include stopped watches and clocks that read 9:02, broken coffee mugs, shattered computer screens and damaged keyboards, smashed telephones, twisted umbrellas, and reams of loose papers from disheveled filing cabinets. These objects are intermixed with

³⁷ Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6fnXFdMnN8>. (Accessed October 3, 2013.)

³⁸ Personal notes from “Chapter 3B.”

³⁹ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 26.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ From the *Memorial & Museum Guide*, Chapter 4A – Chaos.

concrete rubble, broken glass, and scorched paperwork, and provide a glimpse of what the immediate experience was like in and around the Murrah Building in the minutes and hours after the explosion (Figure 5.14). To show the randomness of the devastation, the curators also used enlarged evidential photographs taken by first responders immediately after the bombing. A full coffee pot sits completely undamaged on a heavily dented and askew metal filing cabinet just feet away from the collapsed floor of the building. A framed photograph is undisturbed, glass still intact, hanging on a wall whose door was torn off by the force of the explosion, with long shards of metal shrapnel embedded just inches away. This exhibiting of objects that narrowly avoided damage in the midst of utter “chaos” is an effective transition into the next chapter that details the survivors’ experiences.

“Survivor Experiences”

As visitors move into the next exhibit space, two interactive computer stations are present to the immediate left and right along the north and south walls. These stations provide a searchable video database where a visitor can select the name of a survivor to watch a short excerpt of their recollections of what happened to them on that day. The stories told in this room, through both video recordings (there are numerous television monitors throughout this exhibit, complete with audio, each telling a different survivor’s story) and written narratives, are compelling and heart wrenching. Most of them detail feelings of shock, denial, and disbelief following the bombing. One narrative, told by Florence Rogers, the President of the Federal Employees Credit Union, is haunting. Rogers describes having a weekly Wednesday morning meeting with her employees in the Credit Union’s conference room and watching in horror as the floor underneath them gave

way. “The eight girls with me literally disappeared.”⁴² As the explosion’s shockwave rippled across the Murrah Building’s northern façade, the floor joists were lifted upwards, sheared from the force of the explosion, and promptly failed. In the milliseconds after the explosion, the building’s floors started to collapse, as their joists were no longer attached to anything. Roger’s describes blinking her eyes because of a flash of bright light, and when she opened them a moment later she saw her friends and co-workers disappear in a cloud of dust and debris. After the immediate shock passed, Rogers found herself on a small “island” – her chair on a joist that was still intact and connected to the frame of the building, allowing her to escape the building relatively unharmed. The other eight employees at the meeting were killed. Rogers donated the dress she was wearing and her Credit Union nametag to the memorial museum, now on display next to the text of her harrowing tale.

Nancy Ingram, in her testimonial, remarks, “I thought about — of all things — about my shoes. I love shoes and I love to buy shoes. The ones that I had on that day were hot pink... now I wondered if they were still on my feet. There was no way to know because I couldn’t feel my feet.”⁴³ Ingram was buried deep within the debris field of the collapsed building. As survivors within the building started searching for others, one person yelled, “We can’t find you.” To which Ingram cried, “You are walking on our faces.”⁴⁴ The stories told within the exhibit dedicated to “Survivors Experiences” are visceral and articulate the deep trauma experienced. Many stories describe terrible and lasting physical pain, numerous surgeries, and intense physical therapy. One narrative describes how a man kept discovering glass slowly working its way out of his scalp years after the explosion. Other narratives describe psychological damage from the explosion, including deep depression, suicidal thoughts, and development of substance

⁴² *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 37.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Story told by Patti Hall, Survivor, in *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 46.

dependencies, although those narratives are not as common as ones that describe physical wounding. One woman who lost her infant son talks about the uncontrollable and deep sobbing that gripped her months after the attack, prompted by her accidentally breaking a drinking glass. She saw the glass shards and associated them with the glittering streets of Oklahoma City, post bombing. Some accounts claim that glass fell like a heavy rain for ten minutes after the blast.⁴⁵

This combination of testimony and witnessing, using texts and video testimonials to narrate personal stories and “relive the moment” is particularly effective and affective. The written descriptions allow a reader an entrée into the mindset of a person whose normal daily perspective is suddenly and radically altered; it places a primacy on comprehension, and internalizes events so the reader understands them. Watching survivors talk about their harrowing experiences, on the other hand, is emotionally draining. The combination of the content of their stories and their articulations — hesitations, word choices, and intonations — appeals not to our intellect but to our emotions.⁴⁶ Given the sheer quantity of both forms of testimony, it is difficult to leave the exhibit without internalizing one or two of the narratives. It is exhausting, not only from the emotional impact of the numerous survivor testimonies, but also mentally, as it is difficult to concentrate on any one survivor’s testimony and to filter it from the cacophony of personal voices, frequently in emotional pain.⁴⁷

The smallest exhibit in the memorial museum, tucked away in the southeastern corner of the larger chapter entitled “Survivor Experiences,” represents the earliest stages of the criminal investigation and is easily over looked. The exhibit’s remote placement is intentional, out of

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 29.

⁴⁶ For a detailed account on how speech acts can inform and alter how we interpret traumatic events, refer to Lawrence Langer and his ground-breaking work, *Holocaust Testimonies*.

⁴⁷ This sense of exhaustion may have been heightened by the fact that when I experienced this particular exhibit, there were few other people in the chapter with me, and in turn, the audio levels that might have been appropriate if the room had numerous visitors seemed too loud for the actual number of museum patrons present.

deference to survivors who stated that they did not want the crime or the perpetrators of the attack to receive more attention than their lost loved ones.⁴⁸ The exhibit is easily missed or “skipped,” and it does not include critical information required for understanding the subsequent exhibits.⁴⁹ The content of much of the display presents the monumental task that the local police and Federal Bureau of Investigation undertook to bring those responsible for the attack to justice. The first police officers who responded to the initial reports of the blast detected the distinctive smell of ammonium nitrate, the key ingredient in industrial fertilizer, which can be mixed with a source of ignition to form a powerful explosive.⁵⁰ Given the lingering aroma, the physical damage to the building, and the thirty foot wide, eight foot deep crater adjacent to the façade of the Federal building, the investigators instantly knew that they were dealing with an intentional bombing and, therefore, a crime scene. Given the power of the explosion, the crime scene spanned entire blocks of the city, with debris (including crucial evidence) landing on rooftops, embedded in walls, and internally penetrating walls in adjacent buildings. The exhibit focuses on fragments of the Ryder rental truck, including the truck’s chassis that was blown into the adjacent parking lot, and the truck’s axle found some 300 feet away from the detonation point, a crucial piece of evidence that linked the truck to Timothy McVeigh.⁵¹

Another smaller exhibit within the memorial museum displays the world’s reaction to the news of the Oklahoma City Bombing. The museum’s pamphlet invites visitors to “Step into the fast-paced media environment that shows news footage and special bulletins from around the globe about the bombing.” There is a sense of the area as a rapidly responding center of news.

⁴⁸ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 240.

⁴⁹ This display is one of the first physical indications that the content of the museum is not primarily focused upon Timothy McVeigh or Terry Nichols, the mass murder that they committed, or their political motivations, rather the focus of the memorial museum focuses almost entirely on the *responses* to the attack.

⁵⁰ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 47.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 61.

The exhibit space is a circular room with a series of televisions embedded into the wall equally spaced apart. Above the televisions are a series of oversized front pages from newspapers from around the world, showing the wounded federal building and announcing the attack in various languages. In addition, interspersed between the newspaper's front pages, are large, analog clocks with the names of several internationally known cities (New York, Tel Aviv, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Paris) set to their host city's appropriate international time zone. The television screens flicker the news coverage of April 19, 1995, from around the world – London (The BBC), Atlanta (CNN), and Beijing (China Central Television or CCTV), just to name a few.

The worldwide focus on Oklahoma City caught many local citizens off guard; they were not prepared for the amount of press scrutiny that the event garnered, nor for the speed with which the press corps operated. One account places no fewer than 100 television crews and four-dozen satellite trucks on site by the morning of the 20th of April.⁵² Soon citizens of the city had the uncanny experience of seeing broadcast images of their downtown and interviews with city and state representatives being conducted not by the local press, but by the national news anchors, such as Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, Connie Chung, and Peter Jennings.⁵³ The press presence also caused logistical headaches for the rescue operations and criminal investigations, and the press often broadcasted speculation and misinformation as news. Well before the physical evidence was fully collected from the crime scene downtown, members of the press were connecting the bombing to “Middle Eastern extremists,” drawing a specific connection to the October 23, 1983, bombing in Beirut that killed 221 American servicemen (most of whom

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 50.

⁵³ It was during an interview with a local fireman that Connie Chung appeared overly hostile, asking pointed logistical questions about the availability of rescue equipment in the hours after the bombing to a rank and file fireman, who was visibly shaken by what he had seen in the remains of the former Federal Building. Media critics have pointed to that moment as the interview that cost Chung her co-anchor of the CBS evening News.

were Marines).⁵⁴ Similarly, reports of multiple bombs being placed within the building were also broadcast, again with no evidence; however, such reports caused rescue crews to withdraw their personnel and police to cordon off the building repeatedly until members of the bomb squad inspected the building's remains. The mere mention of a specific need (such as industrial equipment or flashlight batteries) on the broadcast news resulted in an overwhelming material response and bogged down the logistics of the rescue operations.⁵⁵

The "World Reaction" exhibit is focused upon global news coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing, but the display is marked by a certain naiveté concerning the news media. Certainly, the story that a United States Federal Building suffered from a massive explosion, with numerous injuries and casualties, is newsworthy. The added possibility that it was a terrorist attack only reinforces the event as being worthy of press coverage and grabs the attention of international news organizations, as suddenly the United States is cast as being vulnerable to such militant political actions. Yet, the coverage provided within the context of the museum's exhibits seems to struggle under the weight of the press attention almost as if the city was coming to terms with its unfortunate new celebrity. On one hand, the "Front Page" headlines from around the world are treated as if the city had finally appeared on an international stage, somehow justifying it as an international metropolitan area, yet the cause of this celebrity is a deep and wounding tragedy that has "changed forever" the lives of many of its citizens. The result is a conflicted sense of significance, an ambivalence about their newfound notoriety.

⁵⁴ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 18.

⁵⁵ The generosity of the Oklahoman people is celebrated within the museum, referred to as "The Oklahoman Standard," the museum highlights personal stories that include having rescue workers remarking that they did not have to pay for a single thing when they were in the City involved with rescue operations. Donations of food, clothing, equipment, blood and money poured into the Churches and the American Red Cross. The Oklahoman Standard is further discussed in the next "chapter" of the memorial museum, "Rescue and Recovery."

The contents of the “Chapter 5B: Rescue and Recovery” exhibit are emotionally difficult to experience, as a perspective shift occurs from that of the survivors of the attack to that of family members nervously waiting for news regarding their missing loved ones. Also included are moving, emotional accounts provided by first responders to the disaster site. The objects that form part of the exhibit range from hand drawn signs calling for help from people trapped on the upper floors of the Murrah Building to a simple pocket knife and small piece of rope that were used to amputate the crushed leg of Daina Bradley.⁵⁶ The last survivor to be removed from the building was a fifteen-year old girl who was rescued late in the evening on April 19.

The narratives also presented within the exhibit are inherently emotional, affective, and painful to read. One describes a father frantically visiting a number of hospitals and emergency trauma centers looking for his six-month old son, the relief that he immediately feels when he realizes that one deceased infant is not his son, and the overwhelming guilt that sweeps over him for feeling that relief, recognizing that the deceased infant is *someone else’s son*.⁵⁷ Another comments on the event by invoking the perspective of a child; police officer Don Browning describes how a child approached him and his trained rescue dog:

This little girl came up to us and was talking with us, and she petted Gunny [the search and rescue dog]. Her father explained to us that she was supposed to be in the daycare that morning. She took Gunny by the cheeks, looked him straight in the eye and said “Mr. Police Dog, will you find my friends?”⁵⁸

The exhibit’s largest display emphasizes the heroic efforts of the first responders, with a wall of firefighters’ helmets, signed by the firefighters who wore them during their rescue efforts. They represent numerous fire departments and rescue teams from throughout the central southwest and around the country. The site conditions faced by the search and rescue operations

⁵⁶ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 47.

⁵⁷ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 53.

were treacherous. In the immediate aftermath of the bombing, a nurse, Rebecca Anderson, who had rushed to the site, was struck by a piece of falling debris. Initially rejecting any medical attention, she instructed other rescuers to attend the other injured, but soon collapsed.⁵⁹ Anderson was the member of the rescue operation who died, and she is included among the 168 commemorated, both within the Memorial Museum and the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial.⁶⁰

The exhibit draws upon reports from visiting rescue personnel who describe “the Oklahoma Standard,” the overwhelming generosity that the citizens of Oklahoma showed to them. “The Oklahoma Standard,” is reiterated and emphasized within the exhibit. With “Chapter 5B: Rescue and Recovery,” the tone of the sequence of exhibits begins to shift from one of shock and devastation to one that affirms and celebrates the bravery of rescuers as well as the generous spirit of the people of Oklahoma.

The last exhibit on the third floor, and one of the largest, details the anxiety experienced by family members and loved ones in the days that followed the bombing. Although the last survivor was pulled out from the debris of the Murrah Building on the same day as the bombing, families of the missing continued to hope that their loved ones had somehow managed to survive. The exhibit explains that the rescue teams’ search dogs soon became depressed and refused to conduct operations until their handlers actively hid themselves in the debris, so that the dogs could find someone, *anyone*, alive in the rubble.⁶¹ The exhibit also chronicles the national response to the news of the bombing, and how many Americans sent letters, cards, and notes to any elected official that they saw as related to the city or the rescue operations being

⁵⁹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 47.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Her family donated her heart, liver, kidneys, and eyes to other wounded survivors of the bombing. Unlike the vast most of the victims of the bombing, Anderson consciously placed her own personal safety in jeopardy in order to assist the wounded.

⁶¹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 12

conducted.⁶² The exhibit captures a nation in mourning and includes various editorial cartoons that express the depth of the nation's grief. Also noted within the exhibit is the significant decline in the metropolitan crime rate, dropping to almost zero.⁶³ The description of this chapter within the museum guide offers a positive spin: "Learn more about the rescue and recovery operations, USAR teams, the Family Assistance Center, and the Oklahoman Standard. Experience a national outpouring of care and concern through cards and letters. Finally, feel the impact of special ceremonies marking the end of the rescue and recovery efforts."⁶⁴

Missing from the museum's account of this trying time are references to the increasingly frayed nerves and overwhelming stress that families and friends were showing at the slow progress of the search and rescue teams, as well as the raw anger and deep frustration from not gaining any new, verifiable information concerning their loved ones. One such account provided by Linenthal describes a well-intentioned but significant misstep in how family members were treated after the bombing. Ray Blakeney, the director of operations of Oklahoma's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, set up an off-site meeting point (known as the Family Assistance Center) at the First Christian Church, roughly a mile away from the Murrah Building, for family members and others desperately searching for missing people. Needing people who were trained in how to handle the actively grieving, Blakeney turned to Tom Demuth, a mass casualty disaster coordinator certified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) who was also the president of the Oklahoma Funeral Director's Association. Within hours, twenty-five funeral directors were at the First Christian Church, working with family members to fill out

⁶² The overwhelming majority of cards, letters and notes were sent to Mayor Ron Norick, but the Chief of Police as well as the Fire Chief. Those messages now reside in the Archives of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.

⁶³ In a personal conversation with a senior museum administrator, June 2008, that person remarked to me, "it was like the bombing was a huge social enema for the city, that got rid of all the undesirables, at least for a few weeks."

⁶⁴ *Memorial & Museum Guide*.

missing person reports and gather identification materials. However, many family members who arrived at the church hoping and praying to hear good news were distraught and furious to be met by a funeral director, as though the missing friends or relatives were counted as deceased.⁶⁵ Sensitive to this, the funeral directors soon removed their identifying name badges as they continued to offer assistance.

As visitors leave “Chapter 6: Watching and Waiting,” they are led down a flight of stairs to the next series of displays on the second floor. Visitors with limited mobility, and those accompanying them, can take the adjacent elevator to the next level rather than taking the stairs.

Entering the gallery from the south, a visitor is greeted with an immersive and emotionally powerful display (Figure 5.15). The strong oval shape of the room provides a 360-degree display space that completely surrounds the visitor with photographs of the 168 killed in the bombing. Embedded within the oval room are a series of eleven alcoves, in which series of sixteen acrylic boxes are placed in a vertical grid of four rows and columns, each containing an image of the deceased at the back of the box, foregrounded by an object of significance to the person lost.⁶⁶ These boxes extend out from the wall approximately six inches, but since they are placed within a series of alcoves, they extend perhaps just an inch out from their surrounding pillars. The areas that are not recessed in the room, the “pillars” of the gallery, are the display locations reserved for the young children that were killed. The children’s acrylic boxes are similar in size and scale as those for the adults; however, since they are not displayed in a recessed area of the room, the effect is that the children’s memory boxes extended out from the wall, as if they are directly, physically confronting a visitor. The only gaps or voids in the display

⁶⁵ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 83.

⁶⁶ The objects (if any) within the acrylic box were solicited by the memorial museum, the institution asking family members to locate and donate an object that has a special meaning or significance for their loved one. A discussion of these objects occurs soon within this section.

occur at the southern (the entrance) and eastern (the exit) ends of the room. The effect is dramatic and powerful, as, for the first time in the museum, a visitor can have an uneasy feeling that he or she is no longer the observer of the exhibits, but rather the observed. This uneasy feeling of being watched is especially pronounced if a visitor is alone in the gallery. The gallery becomes akin to a theater in the round, where the living are no longer the audience, but rather the living actors witnessed by the dead, staring in silent judgment. The faces of the dead show the diversity of those lost, in terms of age, racial or ethnic identity, and socio-economic class. The photos are an effective way of displaying the human loss to the community – that those killed were not just faceless, federal bureaucrats or “collateral damage” but a representative sample of the citizens of Oklahoma City, with shared hopes, dreams, and aspirations. This space is the affective epicenter of the entire Museum.

Within each one of the transparent acrylic boxes, almost without exception, are small objects that represent the loves, pastimes, or hobbies of the person who was killed, and the objects on display are as varied as those who were lost. There is a series of “miniaturized” objects concerning favorite sports, including a fishing rod, a golf club, and a football. Hobbies are represented: a harmonica, a deck of playing cards, a recipe for a favorite dish, a pin-cushion complete with a threaded needle. There are objects from popular culture; a “Star Trek” emblem, Mickey Mouse, Simba from the *Lion King*, Raggedy Ann and Andy. Other boxes offer symbols of comfort. Baby pacifiers and a rattle are particularly difficult to examine; the faces behind those objects are those of infants. There are objects that define the deceased were in terms of role and identity: a husband through his wedding band, a law enforcement agent through his official ATF badge. Other objects are almost opaque in their allusion: a miniature can of hairspray, a tube of red lipstick, a monogrammed towel. One of the items, a credit card, is presented in front

of a photo of a young African American woman. I read the “meaning” of the object as an indication of her love of shopping, only to find out that she was the first person in her family to qualify for an unsecured line of credit via a credit card.⁶⁷ For her, the credit card did not represent consumption, but rather thrift, hard work, and moving up the economic ladder into the middle class. There are numerous items signifying religious faith, such as a copy of the New Testament, a rosary, prayer cards, a small crucifix on a gold chain, a magnet with a Bible verse, and miniature statues of angels.

There are eight empty memory boxes. Perhaps the family resisted the request of the memorial museum, refusing the daunting task of trying to summarize a loved one’s life within a single, small object. Or, perhaps there was no family to contact about fulfilling the request. I wondered how many families felt pressure to select an object to represent their loved one out of fear that an empty box might communicate that the person who died was not loved or missed. As one family member stated in referring to the museum’s request for an object that “represented” her mother: “I didn’t put anything in her box at the Memorial... I wanted an empty box to represent the emptiness in our lives because my mother is no longer with us.”⁶⁸ In a discussion in June 2008, Jo-Ann Riley voiced her anger that a number of local trophy manufacturers had approached grieving family members once they learned of the memorial museum’s request for these *mementos mori*, promising to manufacture—for a price--unique objects that represented a number of interests of their loved one. There are only a few of these “sculptural trophies” within the gallery of honor, and they take the shape of either a number – for example, the sports team number with which the person played in high school or college – or the victim’s name, combined with inscriptions of favorite activities, sayings, Bible verses, song lyrics, etc.

⁶⁷ Personal conversation with a mother, who spoke at the museum during Friday lunch series, June 2008.

⁶⁸ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 74.

Located within four of the clear acrylic memory boxes are “collectable” ceramic figurines from a Carthage, Missouri, company called *Precious Moments* (Figure 5.16). Upon hearing of the bombing, and seeing the iconographic photo of firefighter Chris Fields and the infant Baylee Almon (Figure 5.17), the founder and artist of the company, Samuel J. Butcher, set about designing a tribute figurine, the sales revenue of which he intended to donate to the relief effort within the city. The result was the creation of a prototype statue that he submitted (and later donated) to the memorial museum for their review as a potential fundraiser (Figure 5.18).⁶⁹ In its pathos, the statuette sanitizes the gritty reality of the iconic, Pulitzer prize-winning photograph. The statue of the fireman holds what appears to be a sleeping infant, complete with swaddling blanket, her body and face free of the dust and blood that covered the real Baylee Almon. A single tear that trickles down from the fireman’s oversized and remarkably dilated left eye is the only indication of a possible tragic outcome regarding the peaceful child that he is holding. At his feet is scattered debris, including the child’s playthings: a wounded teddy bear (who also emotes grief through a single tear) and an oversized baby’s rattle. Both items show traces of dust and dirt, as does the lower half of the fireman’s coat, as if the smoke and other dangers faced were contained within a discreet and limited zone two feet above the floor. The title on the statue offers an imperative to “Remember the Children – Oklahoma City 1995.” While indeed nineteen children were killed that day, so were 149 adults. The moral command that urges a viewer to remember is undercut by the saccharine sentimentality. When Aren Almon protested the use of images of her dead child, Butcher shelved the project, although, he noted, “people still beg us to make the figurine.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 159.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Many of the items within the memory boxes can be considered simply *kitsch*: “banal, trite, predictable and in bad taste.”⁷¹ As Marita Sturken has suggested, use of the term *kitsch* in relation to mass produced objects left at sites of tragedy is nuanced and problematic. She notes, “In the context of postmodern culture, understanding *kitsch* means moving beyond simple definitions of high and low [taste] precisely because of the way that *kitsch* objects can move in and out of concepts of authenticity.”⁷² Thus, a commoditized, mass-produced, “stuffed” Mickey Mouse left as a token of sympathy at the outside memory fence has a different meaning than an identical Mickey Mouse that resides within a child’s memory box at the Gallery of Honor, since *that* Mickey Mouse in the memory box was *his* favorite stuffed animal. The creation of objects never known or touched by a victim seems to be closest to the meaning of *kitsch*, even if they were one of a kind. Sturken observes, “The challenge to understanding how *kitsch* operates today is to see the range of responses that it produces, to consider how it can encourage both a prepackaged sentimental response and playful engagement, simultaneously and to varying degrees, with history, innocence, and irony.”⁷³ The presumed playfulness and irony don’t fit within the context of the memorial museum. The loss of life was too large, and the pain suffered too deep, to view this site with any other perspective than that of a tragedy. But that perspective belies the very power of *kitsch*, which implies a universal and shared sentimentality. Sturken is correct when she notes the reductionist effect of such objects of mass material culture on sites of mass violence: “the effect is inevitably one that reduces political complexity to simplified notions of tragedy.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ Calinesu, Matei. “Kitsch and Modernity,” pp. 225- 62. As quoted by Sturken, *Tourists of History*, p. 19.

⁷² Sturken, *Tourists of History*, p. 21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

The request for photographs and personal objects that would be displayed in perpetuity within the Gallery of Honor came from the co-chair of the Memorial Center Committee, Jeannie Gist, who had also lost a daughter in the bombing.⁷⁵ The *Memorial & Museum Guide*'s description of the room underscores the role that the families played in selecting the objects, inviting visitors into an intimate circle of grief. The *Guide* reads, "Honor the lives of the 168 who were killed. Here in the Museum's most beautiful room, the families display personal photographs and artifacts of their loved ones. Interactive computers provide their personal stories."

The memorial museum is not just tolerant of this sentimental activity; it encourages and reifies it through its own production of kitsch (Figures 5.19 and 5.20). The Memorial Store sells keepsakes of various objects and images that are associated with both the Memorial and the Museum. This commercial activity provides an additional revenue stream separate from the price of admission, and has a worldwide reach as visitors to the Memorial Museum's website can also purchase items online. As Marita Sturken has observed:

The objects produced for the Oklahoma City National Memorial, such as a teddy bear, a cute and cuddly object that is embroidered with an image of the "survivor tree" of the memorial, conveys a sense of comfort. That comfort cannot speak to cause; rather, it encourages visitors to feel sadness for the loss of lives in a way that discourages any discussion of the context in which those lives were lost. What makes this object kitsch is precisely its message that this sentiment is shared, and that it is adequate. Kitsch is thus a central aspect of comfort culture.⁷⁶

Sturken here touches upon several important points that are central to my argument. By noting that "comfort cannot speak to cause," Sturken identifies how the affective aspect of the museum is directly connected to the depoliticizing result: in relaying the narrative of the event, it erases the complexities of what caused the event in the first place. In turn,

⁷⁵ Letter dated September 28, 1999 signed by Jeannie Gist, Box 293, "Memorial Process. Memorial Center Opening." Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive.

⁷⁶ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, pp. 23-24.

this de-politicization prevents an examination and precludes discussion. Visitors are invited to feel, but not to think about or critically engage the event. The particular form of kitsch that is found in the Gallery of Honor, as well as that produced by the Memorial Foundation, is tied to children's popular culture. Given the loss of life of nineteen children, this becomes a natural opportunity for the insistence that we "think of the children" and of nothing else.

As a visitor examines these affective and emotionally charged "relics" placed within the memory boxes, the sound of bagpipes playing "Amazing Grace" can be heard drifting in from the next exhibit space, entitled "Funerals and Mourning." This audible and distinctive sound augments the already palpable, emotive force of the Gallery of Honor. One of the senior museum administrators mentioned that she was present when a self-described Wiccan objected to hearing the song, confronting her that it was an inherently Christian song, and that he felt his religious freedom was being suppressed. She explained that the majority of those killed were Christian, and suggested that if he felt offended and oppressed, then he was simply free leave the room and move on to the next exhibit.⁷⁷

In "Chapter 7B: Funerals and Mourning," bagpipes play "Amazing Grace" in a continual audio loop, and video testimonials by family members recalling their experiences dealing with their final goodbyes to a lost loved one are shown on numerous televisions throughout the room. The displays recount that a new challenge was faced by those in Oklahoma City in the weeks following the bombing: given the large number of people killed, and the relatively small population of Oklahoma City in relation to other American cities (444,417 in 1995), a significant percentage of the population knew more than one person killed, and they sometimes had to make

⁷⁷ Personal conversation at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, June 2008.

choices about which funerals to attend.⁷⁸ A survivor's narrative present within this area reads, "You'd just wake up every morning and read the obituaries and figure out which funeral you were going to go [to]."⁷⁹ The Museum's pamphlet instructs visitors to experience the loss through reading and hearing about the funerals of the bombing victims.⁸⁰ The fragility of life and the finality of death are reinforced, through the distraught faces of those left behind. Included within this display are images from the civic memorial service held on April 23, 1995, at the State Fair Arena and attended by the President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, and other important dignitaries, such as Attorney General Janet Reno and the Reverend Jessie Jackson, Jr. The service was officiated by the Rev. Billy Graham, and 19,000 people attended, filling the stadium to capacity.⁸¹ As a visitor departs from this area, it is easy to overlook the exhibit to the immediate right that focuses on the progress of the criminal investigation.

Tucked into a small corner, this exhibit details the wrangling of McVeigh's and Nichols' legal defense teams, and their efforts to have a single legal trial with the two men as co-defendants (ultimately, and much to the relief of many within Oklahoma, they were tried separately.)⁸² However, as the majority of this exhibit displays, McVeigh's attorney was successful in having the venue of the legal proceedings moved outside the State of Oklahoma, out of concern that his client would be unable to receive a fair trial. The trial was moved to Denver, Colorado, outraging most of the family members of the deceased, because of the burden

⁷⁸ <http://archives.hud.gov/reports/plan/ok/okcityok.html> (Accessed September 30, 2013.)

⁷⁹ Germaine Johnston, Survivor, as accounted in *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 75.

⁸⁰ As described in *Memorial & Museum Guide*.

⁸¹ "9:02 April 19, 1995 — The Official Record of the Oklahoma City Bombing," *Oklahoma Today*, (Oklahoma City, 2000.), p. 31.

⁸² The concern was that if the two men were tried as co-defendants, they could imply that the other was the "mastermind" behind the attack, and that a jury would have a difficult, if not impossible time to access the responsible party's guilt beyond a shadow of a doubt.

of travel costs and lost work and time now placed on them if they wished to attend the trial.⁸³

The tone of this exhibit is somber but generally respectful, not out of deference to the perpetrators but rather to the American legal system. While the decision to move the trial out of state upset many, the exhibit calls for the necessity for fairness and equality of all before the eyes of the law. The combination of the difficult news of having the trial moved, added to a statement endorsing the legal system at a time when some of the citizens of Oklahoma City were claiming that the accused had more legal protections than the victims, might explain its physical location within the museum.⁸⁴

One of the noteworthy considerations when a visitor walks through the memorial museum is how much interplay the unnumbered “investigation” exhibits have in keeping the visitor apprised of the criminal and legal developments occurring in relationship to the “official chapter narratives” that record the explosion, the confusion and chaos, the rescue and recovery operations, the survivors’ experiences, and the prolonged period of waiting to hear whether or not a loved one is still alive. This largely dispassionate legal narrative stands in stark contrast to the personal testimonies that are compelling, moving, painful, and overwhelming. That contrast, and the intentional framing of the legal proceedings as coldly rational, is necessary in order to validate the legal system itself - making the issue a matter of considered justice, not one of enraged or bloodthirsty revenge.⁸⁵

⁸³ There were also a host of logistical and legal headaches that will be soon detailed in the next exhibit including the forfeiture of the ability to offer a victim’s impact statement if a victim actually attended the trial, as well as (at that time at least) legal restrictions of television cameras within the courtroom, this foreclosing the possibility of having the trial broadcast back to those in Oklahoma City who were unable to travel to Denver.

⁸⁴ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, pp. 104-105.

⁸⁵ Nichols’ second trial, this time within the state of Oklahoma in 2004, might qualify to some as revenge. Already found guilty of the deaths of seven federal law enforcement officers, and serving seven consecutive life sentences in Federal prison, Nichols was put on trial in Oklahoma for the deaths the other 161 victims, costing the state and additional three million dollars. Sturken, *Tourists of History*, p. 161.

While there are many moments when a visitor to the memorial museum is treated to a particular social, cultural, and political perspective of life within Oklahoma, none is more revealing than the one that appears within “Chapter 8: Impact.” The dominant images of this exhibit are from the large-scale series of photographs that record the controlled implosion of the remnant of the Murrah Building in the early morning on May 23, 1995 — finally allowing for the recovery of three missing casualties who were thought to be located in a treacherous (and therefore unreachable) portion of the sub-basement of the building.⁸⁶ While the damaged building was a symbol of the tragedy, the obliteration and removal of which helped remedy a general sense of public shame, the family stories presented within the exhibit narrate the specific consequences of their individual loss and are personal and profound. “I wasn’t a couple anymore” and “I drove right straight to the cemetery and that’s where I spent my first anniversary” are just two excerpts from the survivor testimonies presented, which detail people coming to terms with the scope of their loss.⁸⁷ In conjunction with such statements, a series of large-scale calendars adorns a portion of the wall of the exhibit, each month indicating the birthdates of those who were killed, to once again reinforce the loss of life, reclaim the dates that made the victims human, and restate the wounding inflicted upon the citizens of the city. However, this accounting of personal loss a year after the bombing does not register as the key component of the museum’s display; rather, the legislative efforts undertaken by a small group of victim’s families are the thrust of the exhibit.

A key component that appears dislocated from the rest of the exhibit’s introspective tone, speaks to the political leanings and cultural conservatism of the State as a whole. As visitors turn

⁸⁶ The human remains were indeed located where the search and rescue teams had estimated where they were, and the remains were retrieved post implosion. Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 86.

⁸⁷ The quotes are from Donna Weaver, who lost her husband Mike, and Lyle Cousins, who lost his wife, Kim, in the attack, from *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 79.

a corner in the display area, they are confronted with a magnetometer (a walk through “metal detector”).⁸⁸ The metal detector is non-functioning, but it does act as a threshold that must be passed through in order to see the rest of the museum’s exhibits. It is much like the famous “rail car” within the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, but unlike that controversial exhibit, which powerfully places a visitor within the physical presence of a device that dehumanized and transported people to concentration camps, the metal detector has now become a common fixture within a host of civic buildings, including local courthouses and, increasingly, public schools. The emotive power of the placement of the metal detector is not confrontational, but rather puzzling: one wonders why it occurs so far into the exhibit itself.

The exhibit then highlights how a group of family members who lost loved ones in the bombing became politically involved and actively lobbied congress to change the federal law concerning *habeas corpus* and the rights of criminals to appeal their sentences.⁸⁹ The exhibit praises the families who, “unlike McVeigh,” used the existing methods of political representation to effect legislative change, highlighting them as excellent examples of engaged, democratically minded citizens. While statements from families were used to both justify *and* block the proposed legislation, only the supportive efforts of family members are highlighted within the exhibit. For instance, Senator Orrin Hatch quoted from a letter sent from Alice Maroney-

Denison, whose father died in the bombing: "I need your support in passing *Habeas* reform. The

⁸⁸ The presence of the metal detector is also puzzling, as although it is highlighted as a “security necessity” after the bombing, the museum’s exhibit does not specify *why* its presence is necessitated by the events of the bombing itself. Under the guise of “safety and security” a host of legal measures were enacted increasing security and surveillance that pointed to Oklahoma City as a possible result if they were not enacted, even though the content of such laws had little relationship to the factual details of the event of April 19, 1995. In this instance, a metal detector at the main entrance of the Federal Building would not have prevented McVeigh from detonating the truck bomb. Other security implications, such as shutting down a section of Pennsylvania Avenue located in front of the White House, and the addition of reinforced traffic bollards at either end of the closed street draw upon the tragedy as a sobering experience that could have been prevented.

⁸⁹ This effort for reform was highlighted by the ongoing legal case of Roger Stafford, who was found guilty of murdering nine people in a killing spree in the summer of 1978. He used the law to stall his date of execution for 17 years, until the AEDPA passed. Stafford was executed on July 1, 1996 by lethal injection. Photo source, “9:02 April 19, 1995 — The Official Record of the Oklahoma City Bombing,” *Oklahoma Today*, (Oklahoma City, 2000.) p. 91.

murderers who committed this crime should be executed as soon as possible, not in 15-20 years. My father will not get to live another 15-20 years so why should the convicted?"⁹⁰ In contrast, Representative Helen Chenoweth quoted from a letter from Bud Welch, whose daughter was killed: "We have actually learned what is contained in this massive bill, we know that the last thing our family wants... is for this legislation... so crippling of Americans' constitutional liberties to be passed in our daughter's name and memory."⁹¹ The *Habeus* Corpus Reform Act was passed as Public Law no. 104-132 "The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996" (AEDPA) on April 24, 1996 five days after the first anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing. It was clear that the Bombing was in the minds of the legislators in passing the law.⁹²

This new found political power of some family members was neither short lived nor limited in scope. Many were furious with the decision to move the trial of Timothy McVeigh from Oklahoma City to Denver, and to make matters worse, the presiding judge issued a ruling that that prevented the broadcast of the trial to Oklahoma City via closed circuit television.⁹³ Family members and survivors visited Congress in Washington and lobbied to have the federal law altered, which it quickly was. In fact, some family members and survivors were constantly contacting their political representatives at the federal level; they had Congress alter the 1990 Victims Rights and Restitution Act with the Victim Allocation Clarification Act of 1997, which allowed them both to attend the legal trial of McVeigh and Nichols and to offer victim impact

⁹⁰ "The Failure of Words: Habeas Corpus Reform, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, and When a Judgment of Conviction Becomes Final for the Purposes of 28 U.S.C. 2255(1), by Benjamin Orye III, *William and Mary Law Review*, Volume 44, Issue 1, p. 452.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Some legal commentators point to the debacle of the O.J. Simpson trial where presiding Judge, Lance Ito, allowed television cameras into the courtroom, and unwittingly turned the legal proceedings into a three-ring media circus. When considering Judge Richard P. Matsch, one reporter commented. "Lance Ito he's not." "Richard Matsch has a Firm Grip of his Gavel in the Oklahoma City Bombing Trial," *Washington Post*, Monday, May 12, 1997, p. B01. (Available via : <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/oklahoma/stories/judge.htm>, Accessed October 3, 2013.)

statements against the defendants.⁹⁴ It also has to be noted that, until 1997, victims of crime had no legal standing before the court, preventing them from any kind of legal recourse or remedy to fight these rulings issued by the judge; the families and survivors had to rely upon their elected representatives as they had no other option.⁹⁵

“Chapter 9: Remembrance and Rebuilding” is one of the few areas whose title and content have changed since the Museum opened. In the *Memorial & Museum Guide*, the area is now titled “Chapter 9: Behind the Scene: The OK Bomb Investigation” and encourages visitors to “See the evidence used to piece together the case against the conspirators, including crime scene photos, parts of the rental truck, evidentiary boards from the McVeigh and Nichols trials and accounts from FBI agents involved in the investigation.”⁹⁶ Originally intended to equate the rebuilding and reconstruction as a conceptual parallel with individual healing, the exhibit space was altered to accommodate the wealth of evidence that the museum received after the legal trials of McVeigh and Nichols were complete. While the vast majority of the materials are stored within the museum’s storage area in the basement, key pieces of evidence are now on display in the room, including a police photograph of McVeigh’s unregistered firearm, and the three speeding tickets issued to McVeigh by a police officer on April 19, 1995, on Interstate I-35. The exhibit is dominated by what executive director Kari Watkins has referred to as the museum’s “prize possession,” the axle of the Ryder truck that McVeigh used to house and transport the homemade explosive device into the downtown area of Oklahoma City.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 106.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Memorial & Museum Guide*.

⁹⁷ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, p. 122.

There are only two locations in the entire museum where an image of McVeigh can be found, and they are here.⁹⁸ The first instance is an initial police sketch of “John Doe #1.” Based upon a detailed description of an eyewitness, the police sketch bears a significant resemblance to McVeigh (Figure 5.21). The other image of McVeigh is the booking photograph taken after State Patrol officer Charlie Hanger arrested him on Interstate 35 north of Oklahoma City for driving without valid license plates and for possessing a concealed and loaded handgun without a permit.⁹⁹ Both of these images are off the main pedestrian flow of the exhibit space, with the booking photograph of McVeigh tucked into the western corner along the northern wall of the “chapter,” and the police sketch of McVeigh nearby on the same wall, facing southward.

Located within the center of the room, surrounded by a low, perimeter fence, is the axle from the Ryder truck. The presence of the low “fencing” prevents visitors from being able to touch the axle and causes a disruption in the most direct line of pedestrian flow into the next chapter. The majority of this exhibit focuses on the “state of the art” forensic science and police work that combined to link Timothy McVeigh to the rental truck. The axle was found in the immediate aftermath of the bombing, as it landed in front of the Regency Towers, a high-rise apartment building located west of the Federal Building and some 300’ away from where the truck was parked. Using the vehicle identification number present on the axle, police were able to trace the truck back to Junction City, Kansas, and through further investigation to get a physical description of “John Doe #1” /McVeigh.¹⁰⁰ The visual graphics and explanatory description of this investigative process borrow much from the popular CBS television show *Crime Scene Investigators (C.S.I.)* using fonts, graphics, and visualization techniques similar to

⁹⁸ There are only three images within the entire memorial museum where McVeigh is clearly identified.

⁹⁹ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

those that have defined and explained the science behind the show.¹⁰¹ While the visualization techniques for the exhibit are directly lifted from television, the use of science within the actual legal proceeding was scant; traditional police work provided the evidence that would ultimately convict McVeigh and Nichols.

The placement of this exhibit requires visitors to pass through the space in order to proceed through the museum, although they can limit the amount of exposure to a minimal component of the exhibit if they so desire. In addition, the images of McVeigh are easily avoided, placed within the periphery of the display itself. This was a conscious decision, as in deference to the family members of the dead, the curators did not want to highlight the perpetrators.¹⁰²

The change in content and scope of the exhibit space from “Remembrance and Rebuilding” to the current exhibition about the criminal investigation was a significant choice, especially when considering the effect that the memorial museum itself might have upon the rebuilding efforts within Oklahoma City. To focus attention upon the rebuilding efforts so soon, not only after the bombing but also at the opening of the memorial museum, seemed premature and indeterminate. The willingness to vary the content of the exhibits in a current highly chronological and scripted museum space is an indication of the potential service that the memorial museum might serve in the future. Perhaps a future iteration of the museum’s exhibits will provide greater insight to the political, social, cultural, and economic influences and motivations behind the bombing, and thus offer the opportunity for visitors to engage in a debate concerning the troublesome and difficult issues surrounding terrorism (including domestic terrorism) and national security.

¹⁰¹ For instance, the exhibit’s designers used a “zoomed in” perspective that indicates the V.I.N. (Vehicle Identification Number) within a photograph that shows the remnant of the truck’s axle.

¹⁰² This input from family members was in the form of a memorial museum survey.

The Reconstructed Damaged Area

The *Memorial & Museum Guide* describes the “Damaged Area” as a place within the building intentionally preserved “as it was” in the immediate moments after the bombing: “Just beyond Chapter 9, the damaged area is a section of the Journal Records Building that has been preserved – kept as it was on that fateful morning – so you can see, first-hand, the devastation caused by the blast.”¹⁰³ Indeed, a visitor can stand behind the floor-to-ceiling glass wall and peer into the devastated room, complete with dismembered office furniture, twisted filing cabinets, fallen concrete debris, and a thick coating of dust, and imagine the chaos of trying to flee the room after the explosion tore apart the section. However, despite what the guide states, the visitor is not gazing upon the actual damage caused by the blast, but rather a careful reconstruction of the damage. In another publication that the memorial museum offers, *A Museum Walking Tour*, describes the “Damaged Area” as follows:

A portion of the Journal Records Building which faced the Murrah Building was sectioned off and preserved just as it was immediately after the explosion. A restoration team built a false wall around the damaged area to protect it from unwanted debris during construction of the Museum. The team worked from old photographs to ensure the area looked as historically accurate as possible. The damaged area was a men’s restroom. There was also an adjoining closet. Looking beyond the splintered wood and twisted beams, attention is drawn to two windows. Outside visitors can see the peaceful Reflecting Pool and the enduring Survivor Tree. They are images of hope and restoration.¹⁰⁴

That this area would be “sectioned off and preserved just as it was immediately after the explosion” suggests that, even at a time of chaos and destruction, someone had already recognized the potential value that this area had as a display. However, multiple contradictions are contained within the paragraph. If efforts such as erecting a false wall to “protect it from

¹⁰³ *Memorial & Museum Guide*.

¹⁰⁴ *A Museum Walking Tour*, p. 87.

unwanted debris” were necessary, why was a restoration team brought in to make it look “historically accurate?” Furthermore the area is identified as a men’s restroom, but there is no trace of urinals, toilets, sinks and other expected furnishing that indicate that particular use. Furthermore, the presence of other items within this damaged area clearly erases the indicated use of the room – such things as a typewriter, filing cabinets, and medical reference files. If a restoration team was indeed invested in making the display as historically accurate as possible – “working from old photographs.” However, this is a *faux ruin*, an artificial remnant carefully crafted to represent the disaster not how it was but how the museum wanted it to be.

The Wall of Justice

Located in the last hallway before the final “chapter” is the “Wall of Justice.” This exhibit consists of a series of enlarged front pages of newspapers from around the country that catalogue the developments within the Timothy McVeigh legal trial, and it culminates in a collection of headlines that declare the guilty verdict.¹⁰⁵ The location and placement of this collection posed a problem for the museum. It wanted to depict the outcome of the ongoing “secondary story” of the criminal investigation and legal proceedings against McVeigh, but, out of respect to the wishes of the families who lost loved ones, it also had to avoid elevating McVeigh above his victims. The result is the ambivalent placement of a collection of materials that summarizes five weeks of complicated legal proceedings via a series of triumphal headlines and does so awkwardly in the context of a short hallway.

This is a departure from other museums and memory institutions that aim to educate a visitor concerning the subject matter upon which they have based their collection. Within the

¹⁰⁵ The most prominent being that of the June 3rd, 1997 edition of *USA Today* that simply declares, “McVeigh Guilty! Jury to decide whether to impose the death penalty.” By Kevin Johnson and Richard Willing, News Section, p. 1A.

Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no such educational function is clearly defined or delineated. While many exhibits powerfully document the events and responses to the bombing, no exhibit explains the underlying *cause* of the bombing. There is no discussion of the political views of Timothy McVeigh or Terry Nichols, nor is there reference to the Branch Davidians and the botched joint raid on them in Waco by the FBI and the ATF on April 19, 1993.¹⁰⁶ Therein lies a difficulty for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. Unlike the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which clearly presents the rise of National Socialism both within Germany and the rest of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, there is no such antecedent for Oklahoma City. There was no larger criminal investigation into either the rise of right wing paramilitary militia groups or the supposed ties that McVeigh had with White Supremacists.¹⁰⁷ Instead, what was investigated and ultimately proven in a court of law, was that McVeigh was responsible for the planning, construction, and detonation of an explosive device powerful enough to be considered “a weapon of mass destruction” at the Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, killing eight federal employees.¹⁰⁸ In a strange twist, because the federal justice system superseded the State’s courts McVeigh was never charged nor tried for the other 160 other deaths, whereas Terry Nichols was put on trial after the federal courts had already found him guilty of conspiracy to conduct mass murder.

¹⁰⁶ Unlike the Oklahoma City Memorial, the Branch Davidians erected a small memorial to those killed in the April 19, 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City even though the bombing happened two years after their own tragedy. See Figure 5.22)

¹⁰⁷ Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ McVeigh was found guilty on all 11 charges brought against him, eight of them concerned the deaths of the Federal employees, and the remaining three charges were on conspiracy charges against the Federal Government. Source: *USA Today*, June 3, 1997. “McVeigh Guilty: Jury to Decide Whether to Apply the Death Penalty.” By Kevin Johnson and Richard Willing. 1A. A specific breakdown of the charges can be found at <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mcveigh/mcveighindictment.html> (Accessed September 30, 2013) and include conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction, the use of a weapon of mass destruction, destruction by explosives, the remaining counts are for the eight victims who were federal employees- three secret service agents, two drug enforcement agents, two customs officers, and an employee of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

It is not surprising that the memorial museum relies upon a series of obsessively chronological details to tell the story of what happened without offering explanation about the motivation for the bombing. As Paul Williams notes within his work, “A key symptom of trauma involves the way one’s mind is unable to edit and place an event within a coherent mental, textural or historical context.”¹⁰⁹ The context at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is very constricted, and refuses to place the events in a context larger than the city. It relies instead on the very specific legal developments as an objective timeline that grounds and provides a conceptual order to the otherwise traumatized narrative of the city.

“Chapter 10: Hope”

The last chapter of the narrative structure within the memorial museum is simply entitled “Hope.” The museum pamphlet describes the space as:

Experience the rebuilding of our community through milestones and anniversary celebrations. Various symbols of hope are highlighted, and you can listen to closing thoughts from those who lost the most on April 19th, 1995. Sign the registry, or share your own thoughts at the Reflection Station as you view some of the other messages left by other visitors.

The exhibits within this room are examples of the “good” that came out of the terrible event. From the ceiling hang some 10,000 hand-folded origami paper cranes sent from school children and adults in Japan. Selected letters, cards, and artistic testimonials highlighting the fact that the citizens of Oklahoma City were in the thoughts and prayers of Americans both at home and abroad, and from citizens from around the world, are on display. One exhibit specifically underscores the renewed sense of patriotism and political unity present not just in Oklahoma City but throughout America at the time. Interactive computer stations, where visitors can hear uplifting video testimonies from survivors and victims’ families, are also present. From the

¹⁰⁹ Williams, *Memorial Museums*, p. 75.

numerous selections that I chose, these narratives were consistently optimistic. While almost all of them acknowledged a form of reluctant transformation caused by the bombing, their stories had the soothing effect of reassurance that the future will be better, with some individuals also speaking of a renewed religious faith.

Near the end of the exhibit, close to the exit, stands a segment of the “memory fence” that was originally placed around the perimeter of the nearly destroyed Murrah Building, complete with various tokens and supportive messages to the people of Oklahoma City from visitors from around the country and the world. The placement of this segment of the memory fence serves as a reminder to the visitor to visit the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial, and the individual component areas contained therein. To the immediate right of the memory fence is a large window overlooking the outdoor memorial. The view from this window looks across the Reflecting Pool to the Field of Empty Chairs, encouraging visitors to explore the outdoor memorial. Immediately in front of the window is a low padded bench that could seat two comfortably, allowing them to gaze out onto the carefully framed memorial landscape.

A computer station is provided as a “reflection station” to allow a visitor to write their impressions and thoughts at the conclusion of the museum’s exhibits. In effect, it is a “digital guest book” that provides a record of who attended the museum, documents visitors’ reflections, and allows them (if desired) to send an email to a friend or family member from the museum’s facilities. At the time of the museum’s dedication, such digital interaction would have seemed novel and somewhat “cutting edge.” However, with the rapid advances concerning information technology and the ubiquity of “smart phones,” this aspect of the museum now seems dated. Given how personal most of the curated narratives seem, with family members and survivors

expressing themselves in their own words, reading typed comments by visitors feels impersonal and cold.

Children's Area and Classroom

Departing the last chapter (Hope), visitors are guided to a children's play area through a serpentine carpet of pennies inlaid within the floor and then sealed with a transparent coating. The museum guide refers to this installation as "a trail of 27,000 pennies, symbolizing the money raised across America by children to help build the Memorial."¹¹⁰ The assumption is clearly that children will constitute part of the audience. But how can this be reconciled with the horror that is chronicled in the exhibits? Although the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum suggests that children be at least 11 years old to visit their museum, there is no suggested minimum age for visiting the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.¹¹¹ The anticipated presence of children also has a notable effect upon the kinds of visuals that are displayed throughout: There are no images of bodies and few images of wounded people.

The purpose of the Children's Area is one of active play, where children can dress up using provided, child-sized uniforms of firefighters, police, and medical personnel (emergency medical technicians, as well as both doctors and nurses). This act of children embodying the first responders by donning the various professional uniforms is an affirmation of the children's interest and, in turn, encourages them to think of and act out their own ideas of civic responsibility. In addition, this play becomes an integral component of modeling a possible future career.

¹¹⁰ *Memorial & Museum Guide*, "Children's Area & Classroom."

¹¹¹ Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/information/plan-a-visit> (Accessed October 8, 2013.)

Virtual Archives

Located immediately before the Special Exhibit Gallery is a single computer station that is identified as the “virtual archives” and which provides an inquisitive visitor with access to a limited number of items held with the museum’s archives. Included in this computerized archive, and accessed under the name of “Drawing what we feel,” are examples of notes, drawings, and messages of regret, sorrow, and hope created by children from around the world and sent to Oklahoma City. Visitors (assumed to be children) can also draw what they are feeling and send their drawings to whomever they wish via email. Akin to the outdoor Children’s Area mentioned in Chapter One, this station provides parents with the opportunity to see what the “take away” lessons were for their children, what images captured their attention and imagination, or to measure emotional or cognitive responses that their children had to the museum’s exhibits. It allows the parents to further question their children about the moral lessons they learned and provides an opportunity to talk about a difficult subject matter (death) in an environment separate from their own home life. Sharing drawings produced by a child also asserts the fulfillment of an implied civic duty, that a parent took the time to take his or her child to the memorial museum.

Special Exhibit Hall: Reporting Terrorism

Despite the guide’s indication that the Special Exhibit Hall provides a location for “rotating exhibits, related to Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum,” there has only been one exhibit, entitled “Reporting Terrorism,” on display since the museum opened in 2001.¹¹²

According to the memorial museum’s website,

¹¹² While small changes and adjustments have been made since the memorial museum’s opening, the title and the majority of the content of *Reporting Terrorism* has been on display for the last twelve years. To quote Kenneth Hudson, “A museum exhibition that remains unaltered for as long as five years and still retains its power to attract and to stimulate is remarkable fortunate.” Kenneth Hudson, “The Museum Refuses to Stand Still.” *Museum International*, (UNESCO, Paris), No. 197 (Vol. 50, No. 1, 1998). p. 44

Reporting Terrorism takes visitors into the newsroom following the Oklahoma City Bombing to help them *understand the challenges of covering an event unprecedented in American History*. Further *insight into how media has evolved since 9/11 and beyond* and a look into the continued transformation of *how acts of terrorism are covered and conveyed to audiences* are also highlighted in this special exhibit.¹¹³ [original emphasis]

A series of television monitors placed throughout the room broadcast commentaries by well-known, national news celebrities concerning their personal experiences in covering the bombing in Oklahoma City. Throughout the room there are large glass display cases that document much of the material culture of journalism, including such items as reporters' notebooks and memo pads, bulky cell phones, camera crew equipment (cameras, microphones), and even enlarged photographs of media "scrums," press conferences with Oklahoma government officials swamped by huge groups of reporters, photographers, and camera crews.

Some reflective and introspective moments provided by the interviews with news personalities touch on some of the difficult issues the memorial museum wants to address. For instance, Connie Chung (co-host of the CBS Evening News in 1995) spoke of the reservations she had in broadcasting information that had quickly (and erroneously) linked the bombing to Middle Eastern terrorists. She claimed that she was under considerable pressure to air the "information" quickly, in hopes of assisting police to locate and interview suspects. The problem was, however, that there were no accompanying physical descriptions of the supposed Middle Eastern terrorists, resulting in numerous false leads and the harassment of anyone remotely appeared Middle Eastern. Other interviews provided within the exhibit focus upon reporters' personal experiences and reflections while they were covering the Oklahoma City bombing and the bond that they felt with the place and its people, again highlighting and reinforcing the "Oklahoma Standard." The presence of the artifacts of reporting does not offer a visitor insight

¹¹³ <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=5&catid=89&id=137> (Accessed October 10, 2013.)

into the moral dilemmas that the website describes, yet they make up the majority of the contents of the exhibit. The displays do not offer a glimpse into the “evolution of reporting since 9/11,” and there is no examination of how new communication technologies have created new modes of reporting (including the use of smart phones, Twitter feeds, and YouTube video uploads) from “citizen journalists,” who simply provide either photographic or video evidence of what happened. Nor is there any discussion of how these new modes of reporting are both incredibly problematic and ripe for governmental manipulation and censure. The exhibit presents the media as another series of noble “everyday heroes” who are “just doing their (difficult) job.” There is no larger examination of the forces that influence which stories are covered and which ones are not. Furthermore, when ethical reporting issues are presented to a visitor, they are framed in an overly simplistic and reductionist way that pits the “public’s right to know” against “fear of causing a public panic” or of “interfering with ongoing police investigations.” This approach inevitably tips the scale toward keeping the general public in the proverbial dark when it comes to issues of reporting not just on acts of terrorism but the constant surveillance of the American people ostensibly in order to keep them safe.

Conclusion

Museums have been criticized as mere storehouses of the past, filled with artifacts of the dead, preserving a distant past, with little or no social utility for the needs of the present. As Adorno reminds us, the German word for museum “describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying... Museum and Mausoleum are connected by more than just phonetic association.”¹¹⁴ The emergence of the memorial museum in contemporary culture, a global phenomenon

¹¹⁴ Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 175.

documented by Paul Williams, suggests a new brand of institution. As Kenneth Hudson, the former Director of the European Museum Forum keenly observed:

The most fundamental change that has affected museums during the half century since ICOM (International Council of Museums) was set up is now the almost universal conviction that they exist in order to serve the public. The old style museum felt itself under no such obligation. It existed, it had a building, it had collections and a staff to look after them. It was reasonably and adequately financed, and its visitors, usually not numerous, came to look, to wonder, and to admire what was set before them. They were in no sense partners in the enterprise. *The museum's prime responsibility was to its collections, not its visitors.*¹¹⁵

Hudson suggests four underlying reasons for this shift in prioritization away from the museum's collection and toward its visitors (he actually calls them "customers"): first, an increased social expectation that governments will provide for its citizens and, in turn, the realization on the part of governments that they must control their financial spending with political expediency; second, an increase in disposable income since World War II and the desire to spend those monies on leisure activities and entertainment; third, an increase in professionalism, including the rise of certification and specialized degrees, of those who work in museums; and, lastly, the rapid expansion of "independent" or "private" museums, meaning those that do not receive any governmental financial support.¹¹⁶ But Hudson concludes with an optimistic outlook on the future of museums, suggesting a new social accountability for civic engagement:

...there can be no harm in suggesting that the most important change of all is one that is only just beginning, an attempt to make museums part of the living culture of their time, and in this way to cease to regard members of the public as passive observers of exhibitions that have supposedly been created for their benefit. Such a change in attitude involves regarding what have hitherto been thought of as museums much less as treasure-houses and *much more as centers of activity and discussion, where the past and the present are inextricably mixed.*¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Hudson, "The Museum Refuses to Stand Still." *Museum International* 50:1 (1998), p. 43 (*my emphasis*).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50 (*my emphasis*).

As I have attempted to show in this chapter, the museum in Oklahoma City does indeed emphasize the experience of the visitor over the status of the objects put on display. Yet, this shift to the visitor focuses on the necessity of offering an experiential re-enactment for the price of the admission ticket. As Marita Sturken has observed, this is part and parcel of the “Disneyfication” of museum culture.¹¹⁸ Oklahoma City took many lessons from the designers and curators of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and applied them to the new context. However, as I have also highlighted throughout this chapter, the net effect is a spatial experience that silences critical engagement with the remembered event and does not invite conversation.

Re-enactment is the recapitulation of the past back into the present, and it is necessary in a culture that actively forgets. As J. B. Jackson noted in an essay about ruins, history is not a continuity of events, but rather an implicit “dramatic discontinuity — a kind of cosmic drama” that allows us to perceive and interpret history for our particular purposes.¹¹⁹ He explains:

First there is the golden age, the time of harmonious beginnings. Then ensues a period when the old days are forgotten and the golden age falls into neglect. Finally there comes a time when we rediscover and seek to restore the world around us to something like its former glory. But there has to be a period of neglect, there has to be a discontinuity; it is religiously and artistically essential. That is what I mean when I refer to the necessity for ruins: *ruins provide the incentive for restoration*, and a return to origins.¹²⁰ [*my emphasis*]

However, what soon becomes problematic is when the time between event and rediscovery is so compressed that there is *no neglect*, where “ruins” are intentionally created to offer an immediate and current interpretation of the past, such that the desire to

¹¹⁸ Sturken notes that “Re-enactment is now a primary strategy in museum exhibitions, . . . that are attempting to incorporate interactive and sensory media into their educational forms in order to appeal to viewers who have been schooled on Disneyland modes of entertainment.” *Tourists of History*, p. 120.

¹¹⁹ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *The Necessity of Ruins*. (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980.), p. 102.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 101-102.

“return to origins” becomes a calculated political maneuver, not a stance that took time to evolve. This is the case in Oklahoma City, where the call for a memorial came days after the bombing, creating a sense of urgency that, as this dissertation argues, directly influenced the design process and built memorial. The result of the rush to memorialize was an outdoor, symbolic memorial that, among other things, functions primarily as a therapeutic space for a still traumatized community. The memorial operates as a conceptual freezing of time, the establishment of 9:02 a.m. as an everlasting minute. The museum, in turn, operates to invoke trauma through re-enactment (a simulacrum of April 19, 1995, that is therefore a milder version), structuring an environment that deters examination of causes out of a permanent deference to the victims. The “sacred objects” of the Gallery of Honor as well as those distributed throughout the exhibits have power by virtue of being authentic: here are the smashed glasses, sounds of the voices of people at the disrupted meeting of the Water Resources Board on April 19, the axle of the Ryder truck. The faux ruin enhances the experience, helping set the stage for the spectacle. Visitors are told to “experience the museum” and promised an “amazing transformation.” The memorial, in turn, offers the needed antidote to the recreated trauma: the serenity of a pastoral landscape.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation analyzes the commemorative process at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, from the immediate aftermath of the bombing through an international architectural competition and finally to the establishment of both the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial and the Memorial Museum. It describes some of the controversies that arose during the commemorative process, including the role of family members in the final jury for the design competition and the insistence by the Memorial Foundation that the memorial be part of the National Park Service. Both of these raise serious questions about the role of the public in the creation of national monuments and the privatization of public space and public memory. I have also examined the final submissions in the competition and found several shared traits that reveal trends in memorial culture in America at the end of the twentieth century. Foremost among these traits is the use of nature to provide a peaceful and tranquil setting that is regarded as a restorative element. Four of the five finalists (including the winning entry) relied upon natural themes and were overtly therapeutic in the framing of their design intentions. Therapy was deemed necessary since, given the compressed timeframe, the commemorative process in Oklahoma City was in many ways an extension of the triage efforts that occurred in the days following the bombing. Unlike other major design competitions, at Oklahoma a memorial survey, consisting of a questionnaire and checklist, became the default guidelines and terms of the memorial competition. Moreover, the privileged role of victims and family members determined many of the elements of the built memorial—bringing the therapeutic aspect of the process to the foreground—with the result that the design is a pastiche of interventions, each representing a different social group: children, victims, rescuers, survivors.

The dissertation also chronicles the urban history of the site, in order to understand the memorial as not only a response to the trauma of the bombing, but also a response to a city that had already suffered economically and socially for decades. Since the mid-1950s city leaders believed that they had to renew the downtown core to guarantee economic progress and tried to find ways of doing so. I.M. Pei's new master plan for the city entailed the destruction and removal of a large portion of the already built environment of the downtown to allow for space for new construction. However, the demolition outpaced the reconstructive efforts, leaving numerous empty lots where businesses used to be, with lamentable results. Contentious political battles through the 1970s and the collapse of oil prices in the early 1980s created a severe economic downturn in the city. Therefore, when bombing occurred in 1995, it provided a rallying point that unified otherwise disparate political camps and made it possible for the city to collect needed funds for urban reconstruction. The result is a downtown core that now features a new ballpark, an entertainment district complete with a new river walk, an updated and expanded convention center, and a new library among other new civic infrastructure projects. The Memorial Foundation takes pride in the fact that the memorial is the primary destination point for tourists visiting the now revitalized city. As I have argued in this dissertation, the bombing and the "Oklahoma Standard" provided a "brand" for the city at a crucial moment in its history, an identity in which the citizens could take immense pride.

But monuments not only affect their community at the time of their construction; they also endure through time. What does the memorial complex in Oklahoma City mean after 9/11? It is no longer the site of the worst terrorist attack in the United States. However, when plans were formed to create a memorial at the site of the World Trade Center bombing in New York City, the Memorial Foundation was able to capitalize on their hard-earned expertise and served

as advisors to that equally anguished project. In 2007, for communities that have experienced a disaster, they published a guide of “best practices”, entitled *A Network of Hope: A Resource to Help*. The guide draws upon research into several cases studies, including both man-made disasters (Oklahoma City in 1995 and the New York World Trade Center in 2001) and natural disasters (Hurricane Hugo in 1989, Hurricane Andrew in 1992, the Midwest Floods of 1993 and the Northridge Earthquake in 1994). The guide underscores the importance of rebuilding after a traumatic event and offers three “universal” truths, “regardless of the circumstances of either the source of the incident or the magnitude” of the event.¹²¹ First, that a memorial can help communities heal after traumatic events. Second, that “memorializing after man-made trauma has two major components: remembrance and creation of a positive from a negative, often through education and identification of hope.” Finally, that the process is complex.¹²² This section of the guide further juxtaposes the processes used in Oklahoma City and in New York and celebrates the efforts to include as many voices and constituencies as possible. Such a juxtaposition elevates Oklahoma City’s status and importance in the history of memorialization in America.

Just as the call for memorial ideas was made in Oklahoma City via a newspaper editorial just days after the explosion, the *New York Times* ran a piece entitled, “From Rubble, Ideas for Rebirth” by Deborah Soloman, on September 30, 2001 where she interviewed famous architects such as Richard Meier, James Turrell, Robert Stern, David Childs and others to solicit their ideas on how the site of the former World Trade Center should be treated.¹²³ However, unlike *The Oklahoman*’s “As We Always Have” editorial that specifically called for a memorial to be

¹²¹ *A Network of Hope: A Resource to Help* (Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation, 2007) pp. 1-2.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 76.

¹²³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/30/arts/art-architecture-from-the-rubble-ideas-for-rebirth.html> (Accessed February 28, 2014.)

constructed, Soloman focuses on the tensions that were *already* present in New York between the desire to memorialize through reconstruction and the urge to leave the site as a break in the otherwise architecturally dense downtown. She states, “The conflicting opinions about what should be done in Lower Manhattan might be viewed, at least partly, as a clash between the solid and the void, between new buildings and no buildings, between a desire to reach into the future and an opposing desire to mourn, to recall, to hold a vigil that never ends.”¹²⁴ So while the marked need to memorialize was present in both urban centers soon after the tragedies struck, *how* the site would be treated was radically different in each case. Give the prominent role that victims’ families and survivors played in Oklahoma City, the option of not constructing a memorial was highly unlikely and does not seem to have been considered. Given the history of ill-conceived city “renovation” efforts, having yet another empty lot in downtown Oklahoma City seemed intolerable.

“In our day, the impulse to memorialize tragedy is instantaneous,” Michael Kimmelman remarked in an article in the *New York Times* that appeared in January, 2002.¹²⁵ He continued:

It is as if the memorial were a quick fix for whatever bad happens and a way to move on. The moving on is crucial. So is the coming together in a sometimes uneasily diverse society, through a presumptive communal or national bereavement, which the monument embodies.¹²⁶

Citing Maya Lin’s Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., Peter Eisenman’s proposed (and now built) Holocaust Memorial in Berlin and the memorial in Oklahoma City, Kimmelman noted that minimalism has “become the unofficial language of memorial art.”¹²⁷ He further observed that it is “therapeutic, redemptive and educational.”¹²⁸ Minimalism offers the necessary

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Michael Kimmelman, “Out of Minimalism, Monuments to Memory,” *New York Times*, January 13, 2002.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

aesthetic in the context of a contentious and fractured society. Kimmelman concludes his article with these words: “Minimalist abstraction, with its allegorical pliancy, turns out to function in a memorial context as the best available mirror for the modern world aware of its own constantly changing sense of history.”¹²⁹ I have found this to have been the case in Oklahoma City: how the rush to memorialize yielded a certain type of memorial— minimalist in its aesthetic, therapeutic in its function *and* apolitical in its narration of the event.

By the time of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial had already set the standard for a successful memorial. The Vietnam Veterans is the *only* memorial specifically identified in the survey responses solicited by the Oklahoma City Memorial Trust. As I have mentioned above, for the open-ended question about “what the memorial should be or do,” ten per cent of the respondents named the Vietnam Memorial.¹³⁰ It and the Oklahoma City Memorial are both minimalistic in terms of their aesthetic, and both rely on bodily engagement of the visitor with the site. The two memorials identify those killed through the inscription of their individual names, and objects are left as tokens of remembrance at both sites. However, Maya Lin’s design was a radical break from previous memorial strategies. Unlike traditional war memorials, it was not a figurative evocation of the “masculine” traits of strength, bravery, or valor nor did it occupy strategically and symbolically significant elevated terrain. Instead, it is submerged into the earth – like a grave – and a visitor has the uneasy feeling of sinking into a war with ever mounting casualties as time marches on. Paradoxically, its minimalism makes it emotionally and even politically expressive. Hans and Torrey Butzers’ design, by contrast, memorializes not soldiers but 168 people going about their

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ The Memorial Survey, Murrah Federal Building Memorial Task Force, March 1, 1996. 57 respondents identified Lin’s memorial, although through the manner in which the data was tabulated, it is not clear the intended role that the memorial resonated with the respondent.

everyday lives. The minimalism at the Oklahoma City memorial functions in two ways. The use of nature helps create a therapeutic space, but the minimalism also circumvents any engagement with the political nature of the bombing and its supposed purpose intended by the perpetrators. The apolitical nature of the memorial distracts from the fundamental cause that motivated Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols – the botched raid by the U.S. government on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, in 1993.

In his 2003 afterword to the revised and updated publication of *Shadowed Ground*, Kenneth Foote specifically addresses the memorial in Oklahoma City and suggests that it will serve as a precedent for New York City:¹³¹

My one worry about the Oklahoma City Memorial, as well as about plans for the World Trade Center site, is that the debates are almost too hurried. In the rush to sanctify these sites, discussion has focused almost exclusively on honoring the victims and has not generated the same searching debates that inspired the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Kent State Memorial, or the Lorraine Motel Civil Rights Museum. The Oklahoma City Memorial has not yet inspired sustained discussion of the role of radical, reactionary, and anti-government groups in American society, past or present. Perhaps debate over 9/11 will be different, but the rhetoric of war, martyrdom and victimhood has dominated discussion so far. There are times when communities move too fast to achieve “closure” – an illusionary pop-culture notion – at the expense of a broader, more sustained debate about terrorism and globalization. One of the key points about major national and international traumas is that not all grief can be resolved; closure is a deceptive word because major tragedies can reverberate through society for generations.¹³²

Foote’s comments imply that at a future date the needed examination of these domestic hate groups might occur, and that the memorial complex in Oklahoma City could inspire such a discussion. But I have argued here that the Memorial as designed is incapable of offering such a commentary. The only option for such scrutiny could occur within a revision of the Memorial Museum’s exhibits but given the role that family members continue to play as a conscience committee for approval of exhibits, such interrogation seems highly unlikely. Perhaps, such a

¹³¹ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, p. 341.

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 345.

revision will occur only when the family members themselves pass in the years and decades to come.

As James Young has observed about memorials and memorialization, a constructed memorial forecloses active engagement with the historical specifics that are being commemorated. In turn, he would rather have on-going discussion and debate about what is being memorialized within a society as that keeps the past from being blindly accepted. But such a debate also has to make space for difficult and even controversial viewpoints because if memorialization is to speak to many individuals, it should not yield a singular narrative. Young prefers 1,000 years of memorial competitions rather than a single constructed memorial, because the intentional mental and physical labor of what he terms “memory work” actively engages the past and provides a conceptual space for all perspectives, political alignments, and ideologies, including those that might resist memorialization.¹³³ Without this necessary, active, and often contentious engagement with the past, memorials can suppress important aspects of the lived experience of an event, in effect erasing the very meanings that the memorial was intended to represent.

¹³³ James E. Young, “Germany’s Holocaust Memorial Problem — and Mine.” *At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2000) p. 191.

APPENDIX:
HISTORY OF THE JOURNAL RECORDS BUILDING

The history of the building that would come to house the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, its offices, and the memorial archives, reflects the history of Oklahoma City more broadly, a period marked by intensive, short bursts of rapid financial and physical expansion, followed by an extended duration of economic stagnation and social malaise. Located on the northern periphery of Northwest Sixth Street, between Harvey Avenue to its west and Robinson Avenue to its east, the Journal Records Building houses the administrative offices, research archive, and exhibition spaces of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.¹³⁴ Named after its last occupant (a printing company which published a business and legal newspaper), the building is a six-story, neoclassical influenced structure 260 feet long by 140 feet wide, the main entrance of which is located on the shorter dimension facing Robinson Avenue.¹³⁵ (Refer to Figure 5.23). It was originally constructed in 1923 by a coalition of Oklahoma City Masonic Lodges who recognized the advantage of pooling their resources to construct a shared meeting hall and who were also interested in developing a building that could generate revenue from the leasing of the spaces it for other private and civic functions.¹³⁶ To that end, the building, called the India Shrine Temple, included a huge auditorium capable of seating

¹³⁴ The building's name, the "Journal Records Building" refers to the name of a widely circulating legal and business newspaper that was printed within the building.

(<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/J/JO024.html> Accessed September 13, 2013.)

¹³⁵ National Register of Historic Places Inventory & Nomination form for the India Temple Shrine / Law Journal Record Building. Prepared by Dr. Bob L. Blackburn, Oklahoma County Historical Society, submitted August, 14, 1979. Available at <http://www.ocgi.okstate.edu/shpo/nhrpdfs/80003286.pdf> (Accessed September 3, 2013.)

¹³⁶ Gene McKilreg, *The Masonic History of The Murrah Building Bombing Memorial Museum*. (Self Published.) Date not specified, p. 8. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archives.

over two thousand people (Figure 5.24), with a \$30,000 pipe organ (complete with 3000 pipes) and a stage that spanned 44 feet by 80 feet, making it the second largest auditorium in the West.¹³⁷ In addition to the massive auditorium, a smaller theater that could seat 700 people was also present within the building for use when the main stage was not warranted (Figure 5.25).¹³⁸ A host of other rooms specifically designed for entertainment were present within the building, including a grand ballroom, two banquet halls (including accompanying kitchens), a billiards room, and numerous “general recreation” rooms, all in addition to meeting rooms for lodge gatherings and offices for masonic officers. These recreation rooms, as well as the masonic meeting hall, were located in the eastern section of the building, while the large auditorium space (which would ultimately become the offices and exhibit spaces of Oklahoma National Memorial Museum) were located in the western section of the building. (This internal division of space is noticeable in the historic photographs of the exterior of the building, as the auditorium only had windows on the fifth floor for added ventilation; see Figure 5.26).

Designed by a prolific and well-respected local architect, Solomon Andrew Layton, of the firm Layton, Hicks and Forsythe, initial estimates of the cost of construction of the building were under \$500,000, despite the opulent materials proposed and detailed craftsmanship required.¹³⁹ Given that the patrons were Masonic Lodges, various architectural motifs from ancient history were specified, with individual rooms and hallways designed as if they were

¹³⁷ Theater details are taken from the building’s nomination form for application to the National Register of Historic Places submitted in 1978. The Journal Records Building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. (National Register of Historic Places Inventory & Nomination form for the India Temple Shrine / Law Journal Record Building. Prepared by Dr. Bob L. Blackburn, Oklahoma County Historical Society, submitted August, 14, 1979.) Available at <http://www.ocgi.okstate.edu/shpo/nhrpdfs/80003286.pdf> (Accessed September 3, 2013.)

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Solomon Layton was the principal architect for over a hundred buildings constructed in Oklahoma City, including the Skirvin Hotel one of the first multistory hotels in Oklahoma City, The Oklahoma County Courthouse, and the Oklahoma State Capitol. Source: <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/L/LA036.html> (Accessed: September 15, 2013.)

directly lifted from Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine temples (Figure 5.27).¹⁴⁰ The half-million dollar estimate had to be revised on three separate occasions between the initial planning stages in 1919 and completion in 1923 because of the rapid inflation in both material and labor costs. The final cost of construction of the India Shrine Temple totaled \$1,050,000.00.¹⁴¹ The startling price tag would have been even higher if changes to the construction materials specified for the southern and western facades had not occurred, altering them from the expensive cut limestone to a more mundane and affordable brick façade. The more opulent construction materials, such as stately cut limestone, were used for the sides of the buildings with the most public visibility (Sixth Street and Robinson Avenue) at the time of construction (Figure 5.28). By all accounts, the new building was magnificent. It took full advantage of recent technological inventions and building techniques, such as the elevator, forced air circulation for ventilation, and structural steel and reinforced concrete to provide larger interior spatial volumes without visible means of support. Within four years, however, it became clear that the Masons had over extended themselves financially on their new Temple.

While the dedication of the building received much fanfare within the city, the increased financial burden placed on the Masonic Lodges because of the inadvertent doubling of construction costs was staggering. Despite attracting two other lodges (and their dues paying members), a second mortgage had to be obtained even before the first official masonic gathering occurred on October 23, 1923. In 1927 the executive committee of the lodges voted and accepted taking on two additional mortgages in order to pay off their current debts and bonds, a move that was to save them some \$20,000 in interest alone.¹⁴² In 1928, to further help offset their debt, the Masons established a five year lease agreement with a local entrepreneur who represented Mid-

¹⁴⁰ National Register of Historic Places Inventory & Nomination form.

¹⁴¹ McKilreg, *The Masonic History*, p. 3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 5.

West Entertainment Company (the company was to become widely known as Warner Brothers) to rent the auditorium for \$12,500 per year, with the condition that the masons had the right to use it twelve days a year. However, with the stock market crash of October 29, 1929, any hope of getting out of the debt of was lost. In just two months, the membership in the largest of masonic lodges (The India Shrine Temple) declined by almost ten percent (482 members) and with that the annual individual dues of \$5.00 per member.¹⁴³ By March 1930, entire floors of the building were up for lease. On September 4, 1931, the property was foreclosed on, and turned over to the original lender, but there was so little demand for office space during the Great Depression, the bank offered to lease small portions back to the Masonic Lodges. The lodges themselves, rapidly losing members by the month, initially refused this offer, and infighting broke out amongst the various chapters. However, given that the India Shrine had sold its original building to assist in paying for the new construction, they agreed to rent back part of what was once their opulent headquarters. By 1936, membership in the India Shrine had dropped from 5,616 members in 1929 to 3,415 – a 40% decline in paid memberships, the primary source of revenue for the lodge.¹⁴⁴ The last masonic gathering at the building was held on March 5, 1937.¹⁴⁵

The building sat empty and unused from 1937 until 1950, when it was purchased at a Sheriff's auction for \$201,000.00 to become the corporate headquarters of the Home State Life Insurance Company. In 1952, the company converted the old 3000-person theater into two floors of office space.¹⁴⁶ In 1978, Oklahoma City's daily business newspaper, The Journal Record, relocated to the building, and the building was renamed accordingly. The newspaper was the primary occupant of the building until the bombing on April 19, 1995, and is described in the

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ National Register of Historic Places Inventory & Nomination form 1979.

National Register of Historic Places as being “the foremost chronicler of business and legal news in Oklahoma, this newspaper significantly contributed to the economic growth of the city and the state.”¹⁴⁷ The destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah Building also caused a significant amount of damage to the Journal Records Building. The newspaper had to seek an alternative office space and was temporarily housed at the University of Central Oklahoma, but the disruption proved too much for the owner, Dan Hogan, and he sold the newspaper on May 10, 1995, to Dolan Media.¹⁴⁸ The building sat empty and mostly untouched for the next four years, until it was purchased from Oklahoma City by the Memorial Foundation at a cost of \$ 2.4 million dollars.¹⁴⁹ The city had purchased the building from James P. Dolan in 1997 for \$ 2 million, and used funds provided by the Federal Bombing Relief Fund supplied by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Oklahoma State Archives, available via, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/J/JO024.html> (Accessed September 3, 2013.)

¹⁴⁹ “Memorial Funding,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 14, 1998. City News. p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ Emily Graham, “OKC prepares to buy Journal Records Building,” October 1, 1997. *The Journal Record*. p. 1.

FIGURES



Figure 1.00 —Aerial view of Oklahoma City. The area bounded by the red rectangle is the two city blocks that were combined to form the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum. (Image via Google Maps.)



Figure. 1.01—Aerial View of The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum. Visible within the upper right hand side of the red rectangle is the former Journal Records Building which now serves as the memorial museum. The Murrah Memorial Plaza, located at the bottom half of the rectangle, is not technically part of the official memorial. (Image via Google Maps.)



Figure 1.02 — Plan of the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum. The Murray Plaza, while an ideal viewing platform into the memorial, is not an actual part of the memorial itself, as the elevated plaza contains an underground parking lot that is still in operation to the adjacent Federal Courthouse. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum.)



Figure 1.03 —Image of base plan provided to registered participants of the 1996 Oklahoma City International Design Competition. The Murrah Federal Building, and the damage inflicted upon it, is visible in the middle of the aerial photograph. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum.)



Figure 1.04 — The Memorial Foundation has incorporated the image of the Gates of Time into a number of their publications, including the small “favicon” represented here at the upper left hand side of the image on their website. (Image taken from the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum website. [Accessed January 12, 2013.]



Figure 1.05 — The invitation to, and the program for, the 2010 Reflections of Hope Award Dinner uses the 9:03 Gate of Time as their dominant iconographic symbol, with the Survivor’s Tree barely visible behind the image of the Gate.



Figure.1.06 — The Reflection of Hope Award is an etched miniature replica of the 9:03 Gate of Time. The award "... honors a living person or currently-active organization whose conduct exemplifies in an extraordinary fashion two core beliefs of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation: that hope can survive and blossom amidst the tragedy and chaos of political violence and that, even in environments marred by such violence, peaceful, nonviolent approaches provide the best answers to human problems." (Image source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7Tt1Y3DAYs> Accessed January 27, 2013.)



Figure 1.07 — The 9:01 Gate of Time, looking westward across the Reflecting Pool to the 9:03 Gate of Time and the rest of the city. The mission statement of the memorial foundation is visible on the facing surface.



Figure 1.08 — The 9:03 Gate of Time taken from the corner of 5th Street N.W. and N. Harvey Ave, looking south eastward. The mission statement for the memorial foundation is also visible on this Gate.



Figure 1.09 — The 9:01 Gate of Time, looking eastward across the Reflecting Pool. The significant change in elevation, from the base of the 9:01 Gate to street level of N. Robinson behind it, is significant.



Figure 1.10 — The 9:03 Gate of Time, looking westward from across the Reflecting Pool.



Figure 1.11 — The general contractors, The Lippert Brothers, erected an adjustable working platform that surrounded each Gate of Time during the construction process. This platform was established for safety reasons, as well as to increase the mobility and efficiency for the construction crew. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum.)



Figure 1.12 — Even on an overcast and grey day, the Gates of Time, when first installed, appeared to be radiant and golden.



Figure 1.13 — At the time of installation, the Gates of Time had a golden sheen from the copper that had yet to oxidize through exposure to the air and moisture present.



Figure 1.14 —The copper present within the metal cladding on the Gates patinaed after being exposed to the elements, changing from the warm golden hue of to that of a darker bronze.



Figure 1.15 — The spacing present between the metal panels that wrap the Gate of Time appears to be consistently equal during the light of day.



Figure 1.16 — However, as the memorial's lights activate, the spacing between each of the panels is revealed to increase as they approach the pinnacle of each gate.



Figure 1.17 — Perhaps the best vantage point to view the entire Field of Empty Chairs is from the Alfred P. Murrah Memorial Plaza.



Figure 1.18 — Standing at street level looking into the memorial grounds, the 9:01 Gate of Time effectively “frames” the view.

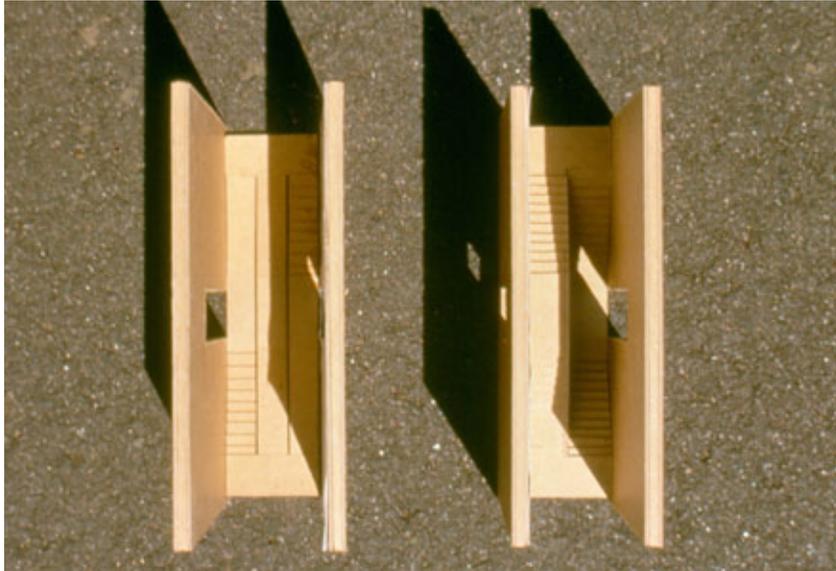


Figure 1.19 — Models by the Butzer Design Partnership that explores how to compensate for the elevational changes present at the either end of the memorial grounds. The model on the left is for the 9:03 Gate, and one the right, the 9:01 Gate of Time. Note that on the left hand side of each of the models would be the adjacent street level. (The model on the right (the 9:01 Gate) should be rotated 180 degrees to represent their actual placement within the memorial grounds.



Figure 1.20 — The space of transition within the 9:03 Gate of Time possesses a ramp structure, allowing those with physical limitations easier access to the memorial grounds than via the 9:01 Gate to the east.



Figure 1.21 — The Field of Empty Chairs operate as a collection of individual altars where items of remembrance are left, as well as a specific location to offer prayers to, and for, the deceased.



Figure 1.22 — The 9:01 Gate of Time, located on the eastern section of the memorial grounds, is used as the entry point for the anniversary service by the collected dignitaries, family members of those killed and survivors of the April 19, 1995 bombing. After the ceremony, they depart the memorial grounds using the 9:03 Gate.

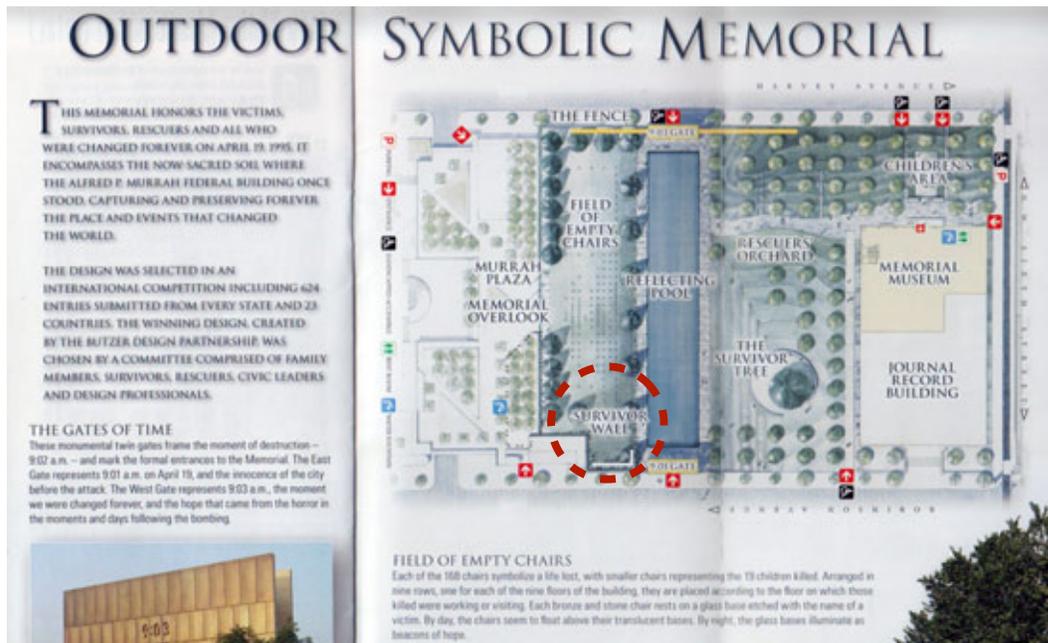


Figure 1.23 — The *Memorial & Museum Guide* fails to acknowledge the presence of a concrete sidewalk that allows access to the Survivor’s Wall. This sidewalk is clearly visible in Figure 1.22 (the point of egress is directly in front of the bagpiper.) The need to represent this walkway is particularly important for people with limited mobility.



Figure 1.24 — Statement from the Survivor Definition Committee (dated March 5, 1997) stipulates the physical location required in order for a person to claim the term “survivor” to the Oklahoma City bombing. The larger grey boundary allows for anyone who resided or worked within that zone to be identified within the museum as a survivor, even if they were NOT physically present at the time of the explosion. The smaller black boundary allows a person to be identified both within the memorial and the museum only if they were physically present within the zone at 9:02 am on April 19, 1995. In addition, anyone who was admitted to hospital and held for treatment can also be identified as a survivor in the museum and the memorial if they so choose.

(Source: Robert Johnson archive, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.)

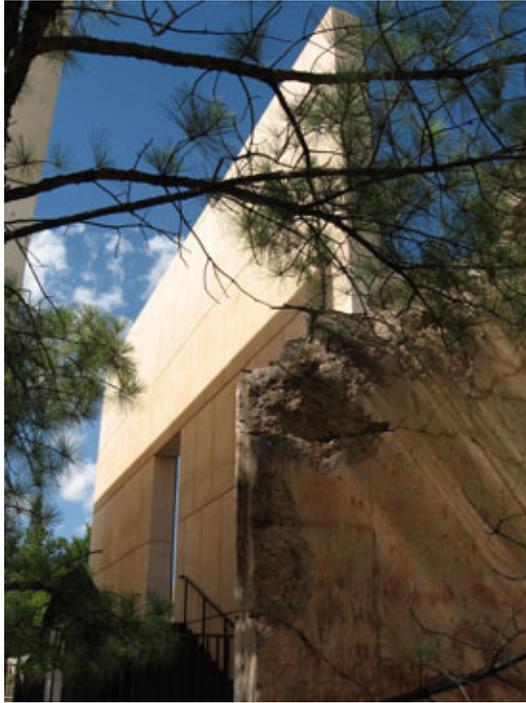


Figure 1.25 (Left) — One of the few remaining visual indications of the damage that the explosion caused on site are the remnants of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building's foundation. In this image, the broken concrete and exposed rebar present in the original building's footing stand in stark contrast to the smooth finished concrete within the 9:01 Gate of Time.

Figure 1.26 (Below) — The Survivor's Wall uses the recovered granite of the destroyed Federal Building as a series of tablets that list the names of the people who were within a narrow geographical area at the time of the explosion. Unfortunately, because of the southwestern aspect of where the tablets were placed, the relentless Oklahoma sun has bleached out the names inscribed to the point of illegibility.





Figure 1.27 — There were three pregnant women killed as a result of the bombing. These women, and their unborn children, are commemorated through the act of inscribing their names on the glass base of a memorial chair.



Figure 1.28 — The memorial ceremony provides a chance to reinforce social ties created with those offering assistance after the bombing.



Figure 1.29 — There are nineteen memorial chairs to represent the deaths of the children. These chairs are at three quarter scale of the dimensions used to represent the adults who perished in the explosion.



Figure 1.30 — This image of Chris Fields cradling the lifeless body of Balyee Almon became the dominant representation of the Oklahoma City Bombing, and was on numerous front pages of newspapers, as well as the cover of *Time* magazine.

Photograph by Charles Porter.



Figure 1.31 (Left) — Balyee Almon's memorial chair.

Figure 1.32 (Below) — Dimensions of the adult's memorial chairs. (Source: Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, *Teacher Lesson Plan: A Unit of Mathematics*, page 12.)

CHAIR DIMENSIONS



TOTAL

Height	57 inches total
Width	15.5 inches
Depth	15.5 inches
Depth	1 inch (<i>bronze back</i>)

BASE

Height	21.5 inches
Width	15.5 inches
Depth	15.5 inches
Depth	14.5 inches (<i>seat</i>)

SLIT IN CHAIR BACK

Height	24 inches
Width	3 inches

GRANITE SEAT

Square dimensions:	
14 X 14 square inches	
Thickness	1 inch thick

BRONZE LIP AROUND SEAT

Height	2 inches
Thickness	1/4 inch thick



Figure 1.33 — The bronze seat back extends to form the metallic frame that forms the lip for the granite seat to be inserted on top of the glass base.

Figure 1.34 — The openings present within the memorial chairs mimics the openings present within the Gates of Time, especially when the reflected opening is considered. (See Figure 1.35)





Figure 1.35 (Left) — The elongated, opening within the Gates of Time and the pool's reflection of that opening are similar to the dimensions of the narrow rectangular gap present within the backs of the memorial chairs.

Figure 1.36 — The memorial chairs are normally decorated after the civic annual ceremony marking the anniversary of the bombing. Large industrial “zip ties” are provided by the museum staff to help secure the objects to the individual chairs without harming the finish of the chairs themselves. These objects are left on the chairs for approximately two days before they are collected, indexed and archived within the memorial museum by the archive's staff.





Figure 1.37 (Left) — The majority of objects left at the children's chairs take the form of stuffed animals and other items associated with childhood.

Figure 1.38 — The series of low retaining walls present on the northern section of the site from the Reflecting Pool to the Survivor's Tree provides seating for both large groups and smaller gatherings of people.





Figure 1.39 — The series of low retaining walls provide seating to the visitors to the memorial complex.



Figure 1.40 — Even at dusk, people still use the retaining walls as seating.



Figure 1.41 —The retaining walls adjacent to the Survivor’s Tree are almost at full capacity as seating during the fifteenth anniversary memorial service. The Field of Empty Chairs are clearly visible from this vantage point.



Figure 1.42 — During the anniversary ceremony, volunteers passed out small, portable and foldable cushions to make the hard surface a bit more bearable. The photo above is a close up of the “memorial” cushion distributed.



Figure 1.43 (Left) — During the time that I spent at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, I only witnessed a single occurrence of someone actually sitting on one of the memorial chairs, shown here.

Figure 1.44 — It is not uncommon to see family members pose for photographs with their loved one's memorial chair. This intentional posing is often not just done to record the day for themselves or for extended family, but for the gathered press and other interested photographers.





Figure 1.45 — Family members adjacent to a decorated memorial chair.

Figure 1.46 — The Reflecting Pool forms an ordering device that symbolically divides the realm of the dead (the Field of Empty Chairs) from the world of the living (The Survivor's Tree.) The Reflecting Pool also marks the location of the former 5th Street which was removed in order to construct the memorial grounds.





Figure 1.47 — A popular photograph is to capture people as they walk past the opening to the 9:03 Gate of Time, making them appear to be walking on the surface of the water.



Figure 1.48 — Part of the daily maintenance of the Reflecting Pool requires that its surface be swept, revealing the shallowness of the water.



Figure 1.49 (Left) — Another photo of the required maintenance providing a visual indication of the depth of the pool.

Figure 1.50 (Below) — The pumping mechanism for the Reflecting Pool is located at the Base of the 9:01 Gate of Time, and while the construction crews did their best to disguise the access point to the equipment, the strong circular form shown gives a clear indication of where the service point is located.





Figure 1.51 — The tolerances for the pool are so tight that the presence of even the smallest of debris can cause the water to spill over onto the walkway.

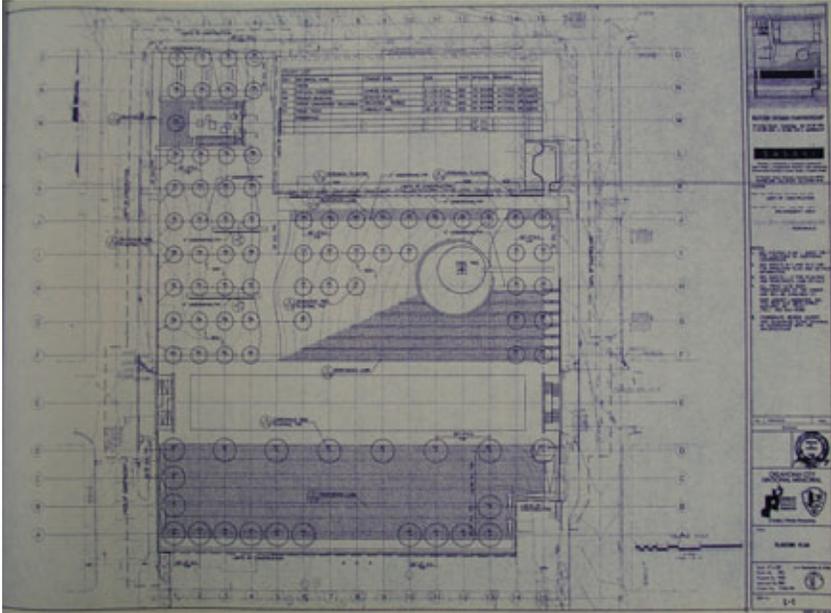


Figure 1.52 — The planting plan for the memorial grounds provided by the landscape architects of record for the project, Sasaki Associates of Watertown, MA.



Figure 1.53 — The cut dimensional sandstone walkway connects the entrance of the memorial museum to the rest of the memorial grounds.



Figure 1.54 (Left) —The Rescuer's Orchard uses the spatial dimensions usually found within productive landscapes, however, the caliper size of the trees were too undersized to have the area be experienced as an orchard.



Figure 1.55 — Within the Rescuer’s Orchard there are opportunities to also sit and quietly observe the memorial grounds.

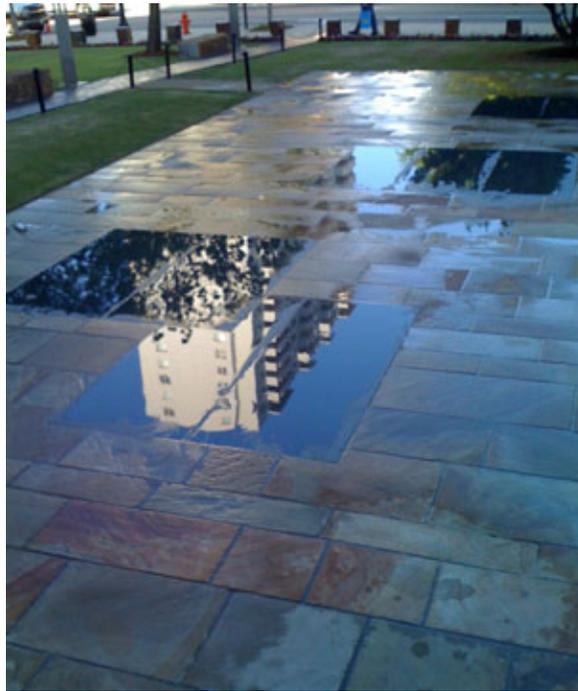


Figure 1.56 (Left) —The Children’s Area is located immediately in front of the entrance to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. A series of large, slate “blackboards” have been inserted into the ground plane and mortared into place. These blackboards provide a creative outlet for children (and others) to draw, write and otherwise represent what they are feeling and thinking.



Figure 1.57 (Left) — Often the children's expressions and creativity range from just the indication that they were present on the site, through the writing of their name and date, to the expressions of sorrow and sadness.

Figure 1.58 (Right) — Part of the daily maintenance that occurs within the Children's Area is the power washing of the children's artistic expressions, providing room for the next day's visitors.



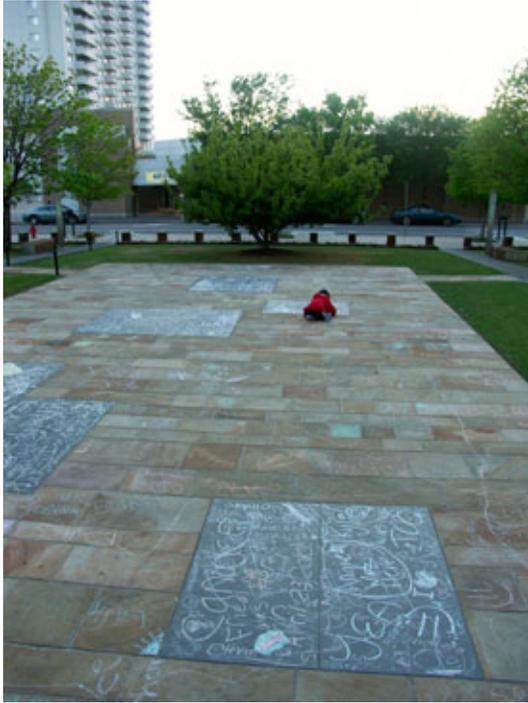


Figure 1.59 (Left) — Children often use the entire paved surface for their artistic expressions, filling not just the provided “blackboards” but writing in chalk throughout the entire site.

Figure 1.60 (Right) — The entrance to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is located directly past the Children’s Area. Shown in this image is the slight indentation of the Children’s Area in relationship to the Museum’s entrance.

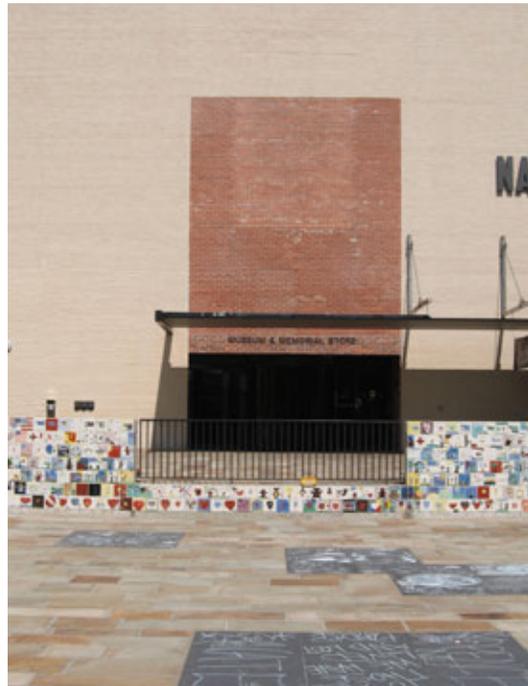




Figure 1.61 (Left) — Messages in the Children’s Area are often religious in tone, either directly quoting scripture, or through the use of Christian symbology.



Figure 1.62 (Below) — In addition to religious expressions, patriotic imagery also is commonplace, using such symbols as the “Stars and Stripes” and other nationalistic symbols. Often these two sentiments combine, as also displayed here, stating “God Bless America.”



Figure 1.63 —The American elm now known as the “Survivor’s Tree” was severely wounded not just by the explosion, but also through years of neglect. (Source: Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.)



Figure 1.64 (Above) — The insertion of the concrete piers that form the grid structure surrounding the base of the tree became a critical structural component necessary to assist the restoration of the tree’s overall health, and extend the lifespan of the elm. (Source: The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.)

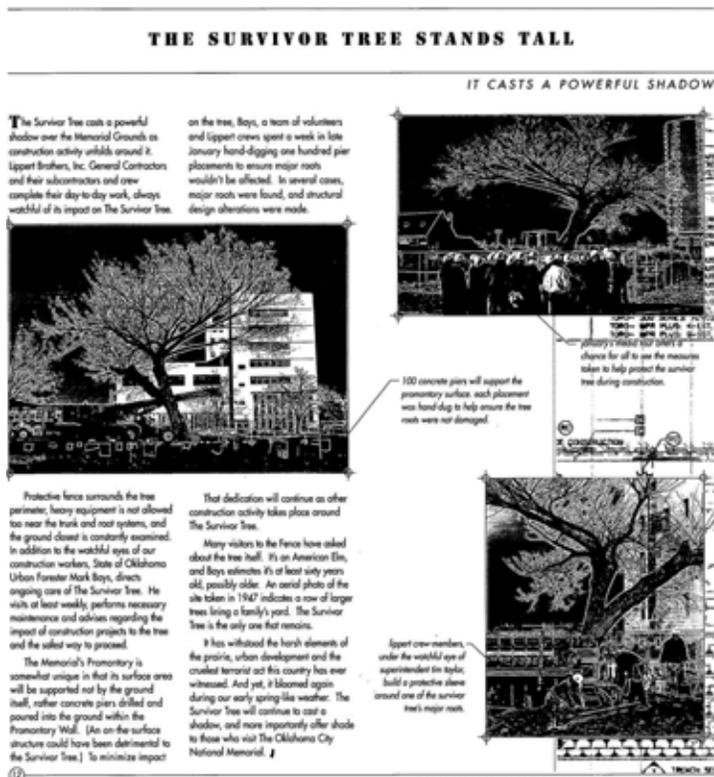


Figure 1.65 (Left) — An article detailing the careful investigation of root placement and the insertion of the one hundred concrete piers to ensure that the weight of the paving material and pedestrian traffic was distributed over the surface of the plaza, and not directly on the elm's root system itself.

(Source: *The Blueprint for Making the Oklahoma City National Memorial*, 1999, page 12, published by the Memorial Foundation.)



Figure 1.66 —The concrete piers surrounding the elm are set, and the joists to distribute the weight are in place.



Figure 1.67 — A mason is installing the paving material on top of the supported surface. The joists run north/south and are partially visible at the right hand side of this image. (Source: The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.)



Figure 1.68 — The Boy Scouts of America provided genetic clones of the Survivor's Tree free of charge to the first one hundred visitors at the Memorial Museum's entrance on the fifteenth anniversary of the Oklahoma City Bombing. Clones were also available for purchase from the American Forest's website.



Figure 1.69 — The Survivor's Tree is a popular destination for school groups and church choirs to perform, as the tree provides some of the only shade on site.

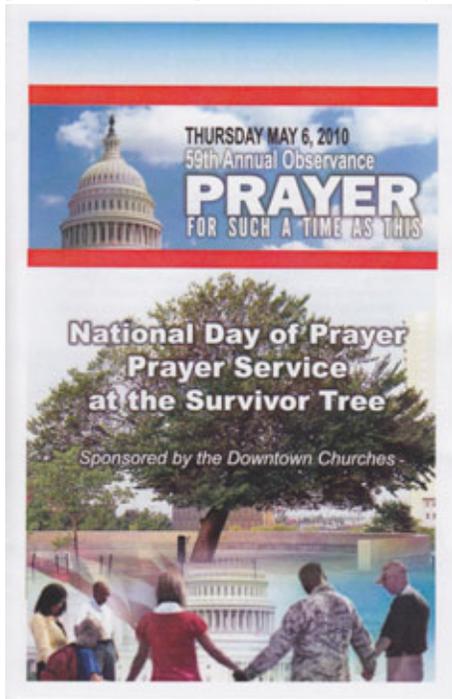


Figure 1.70 (Left) — The cover of the pamphlet for the National Day of Prayer indicates the importance of the Survivor's Tree as a symbol of recovery and restoration.

Despite all appearances that the memorial complex is a publicly owned and operated civic space, the memorial complex is actually a privately run not-for-profit charitable organization.

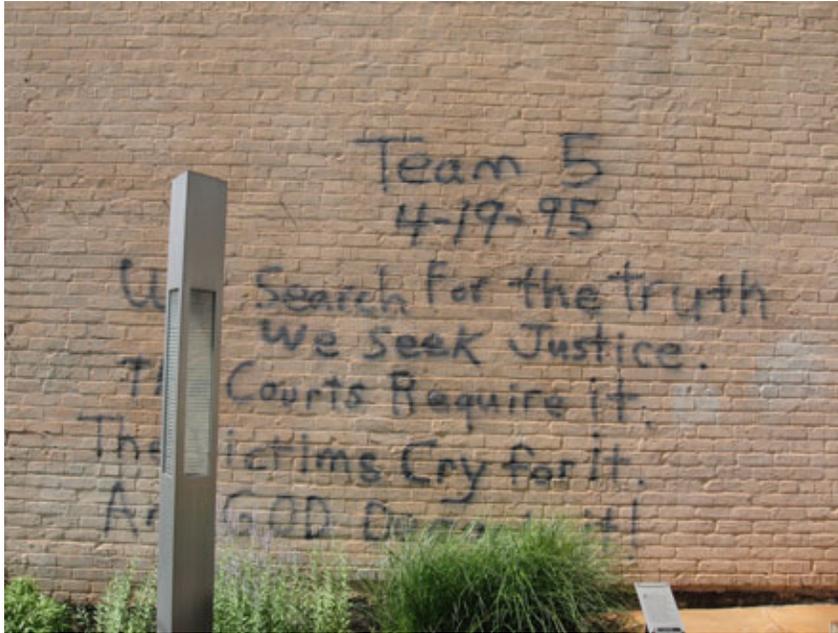


Figure 1.71 —Team 5's "message" demanding justice for the victims of the bombing.



Figure 1.72 (Left) — The 9:03 Gate of Time as experienced as part of the pedestrian sidewalk along N. Harvey Street. (Photo taken looking north.)

The concrete wall to the immediate right of the photo is the foundation of the Murrah Memorial Plaza, which contains the still active underground parking lot that serves the nearby Federal Court. The Memory Fence continues to the end of the foundation wall, although it also slowly recedes in height.



Figure 1.73 — Items left at the Memory Fence at the southwestern side of the 9:03 Gate of Time.

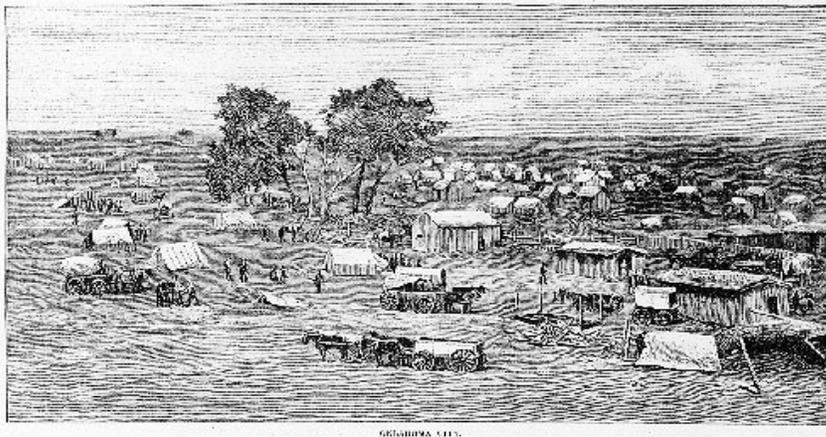


Figure 2.01 — Etching of Oklahoma City that appeared accompanying William Willard Howard’s article, “The Rush to Oklahoma,” in *Harper’s Weekly* 33, (May 18, 1889), pp. 391-94.

The image shown appeared on p. 393.



Figure 2.02 — The title page to the 1894 Sanborn - Perris Map for Oklahoma City. The population information for the city can be located directly under the date indicated in the title block.

The map indicates a population of 8,500.

The red rectangle identifies the location of what is now the site for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.

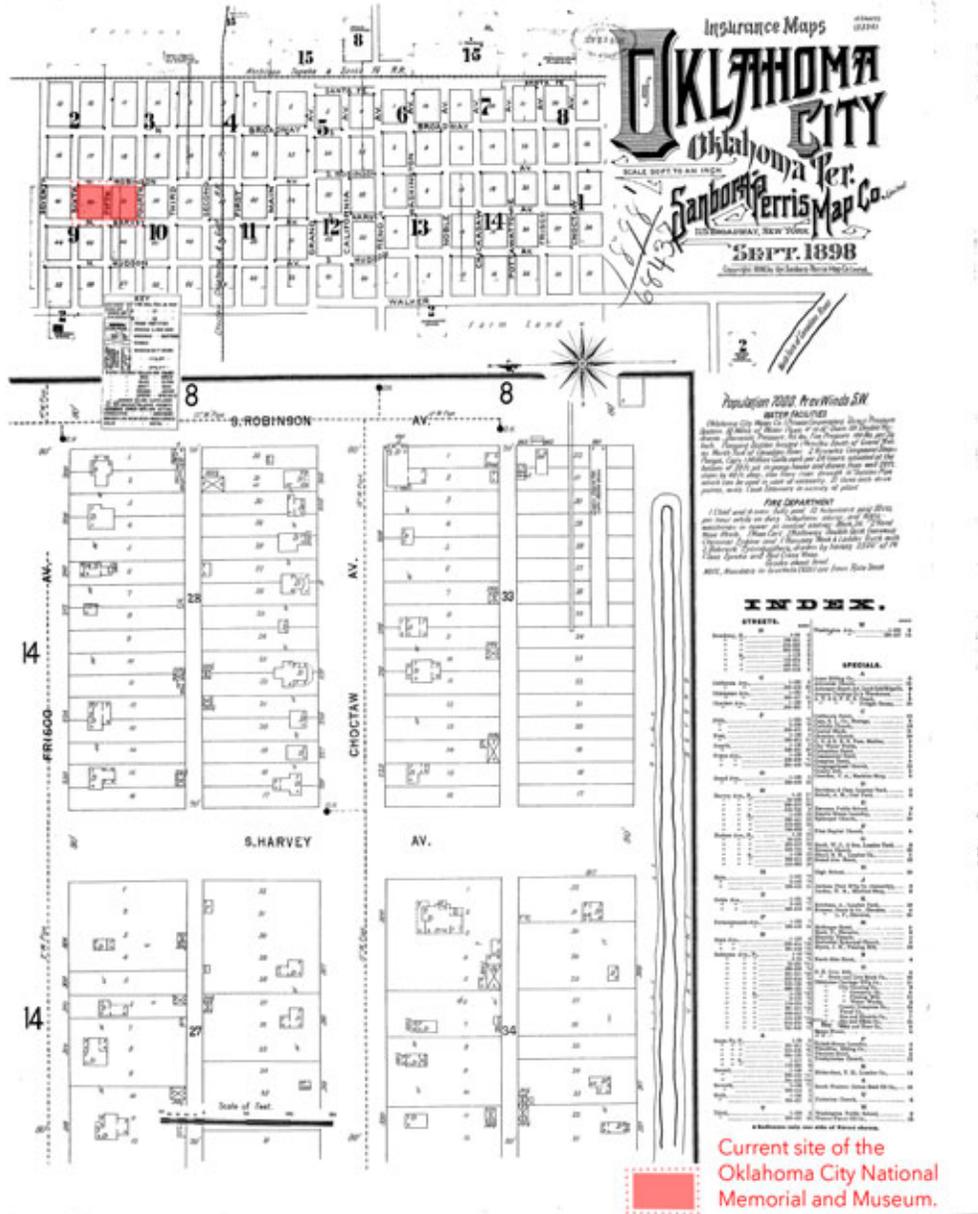


Figure 2.04 — The title page to the 1898 Sanborn-Perris Map for Oklahoma City. The population indicated by the map had remained constant, still holding at a total of 7,000.

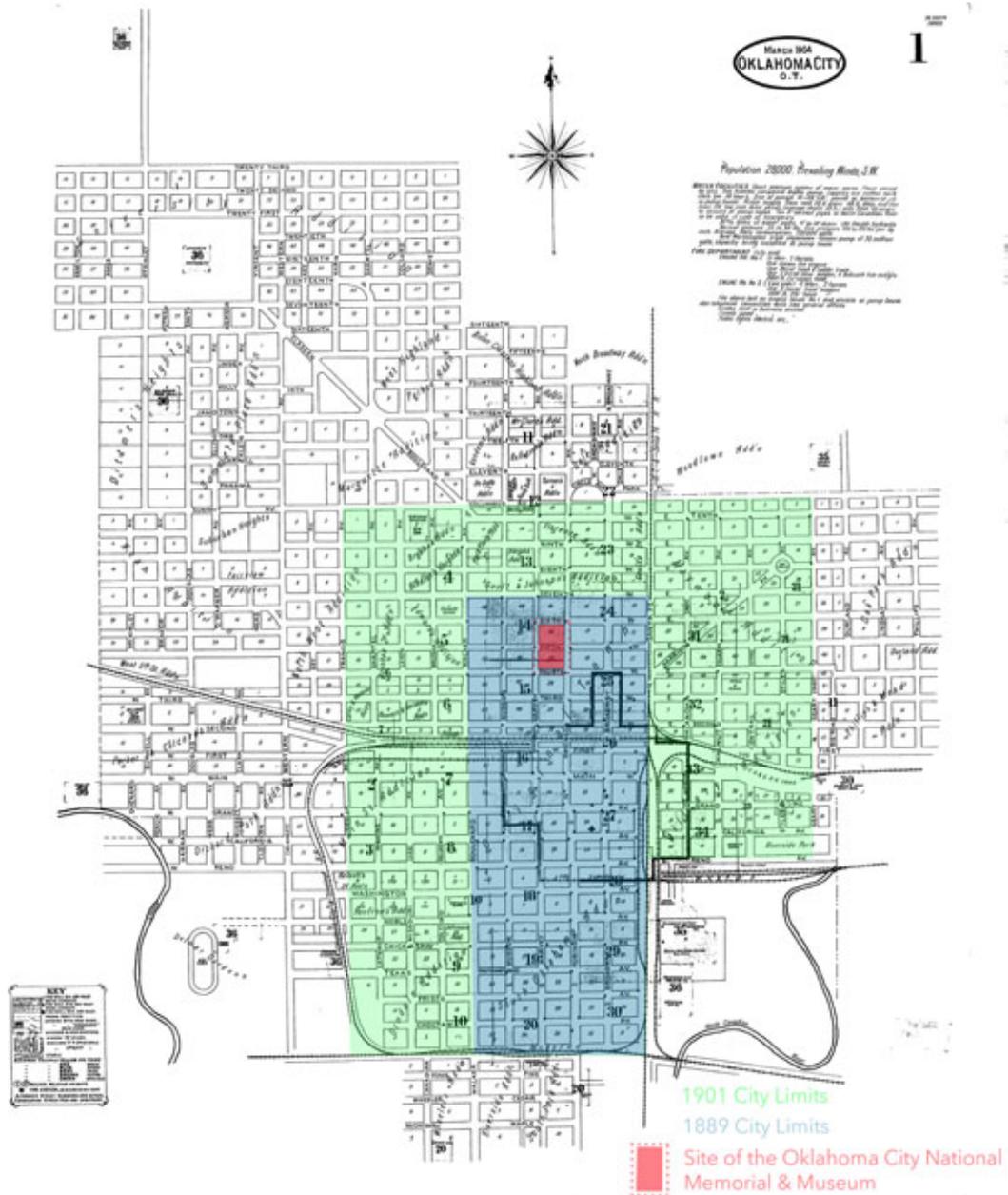


Figure 2.06 — The title page to the 1904 Sanborn-Perris Map for Oklahoma City. The population indicated by the map had rapidly increased to a total of 28,000 people. The teal colored area indicates the extent of the original geographic area of the city as it was established in 1889, with the light green area being the limits of the city in 1901.

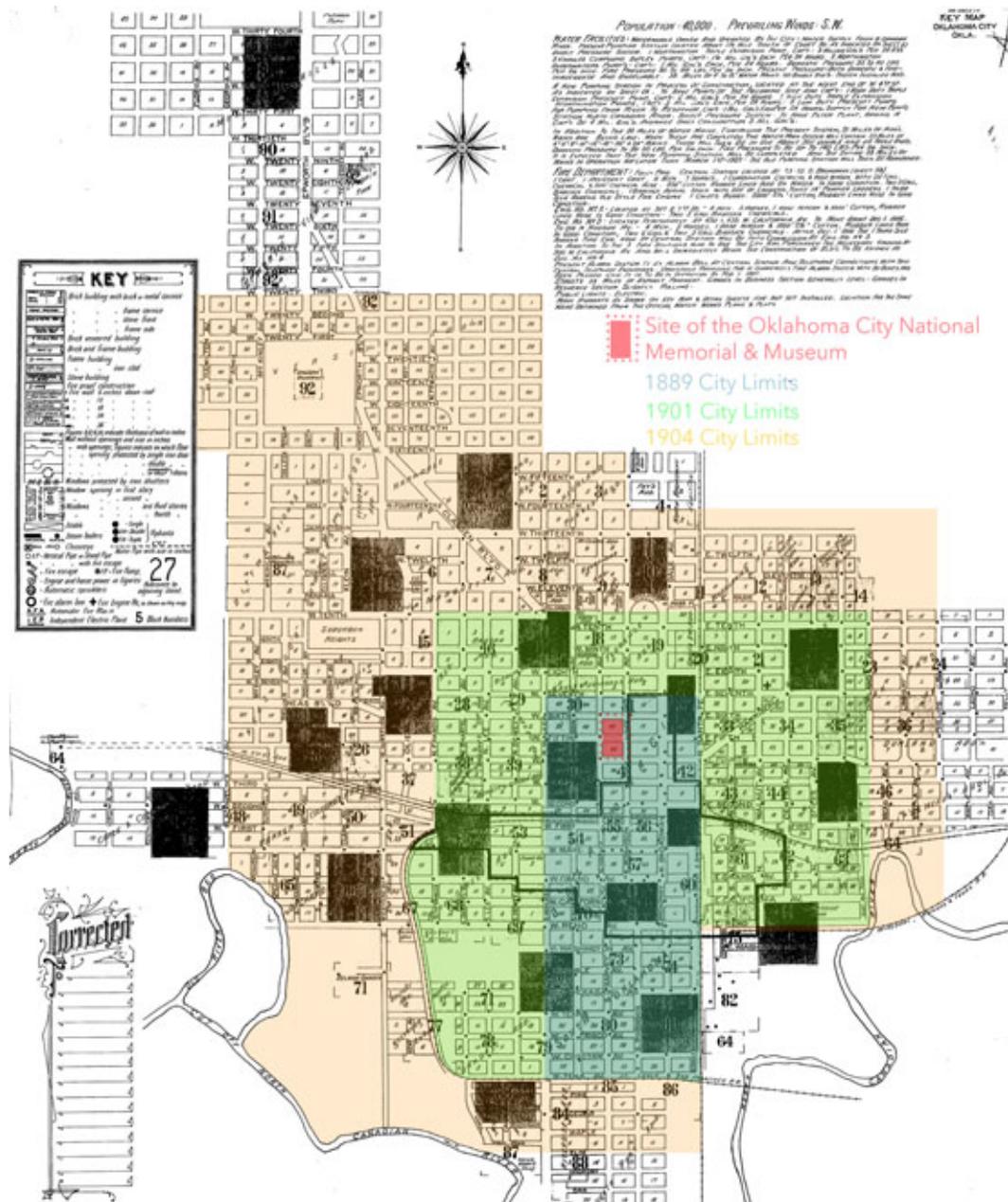


Figure 2.07 — The title page to the 1906 Sanborn-Perris Map for Oklahoma City. The population had now reached a total of 40,000 people. The teal colored area indicates the extent of the original geographic area of the city as it was established in 1889, with the light green area being the limits of the city in 1901 and the light tan indicating the city's geographic boundaries in 1904.



Figure 2.08 — To try and counteract the overwhelming sense of economic malaise brought on by the stock market crash of 1929, the *Oklahoman* published the above page highlighting the significant number of buildings constructed, and their total cost of construction. (Source: *The Oklahoman*, June 29, 1930, page 55).

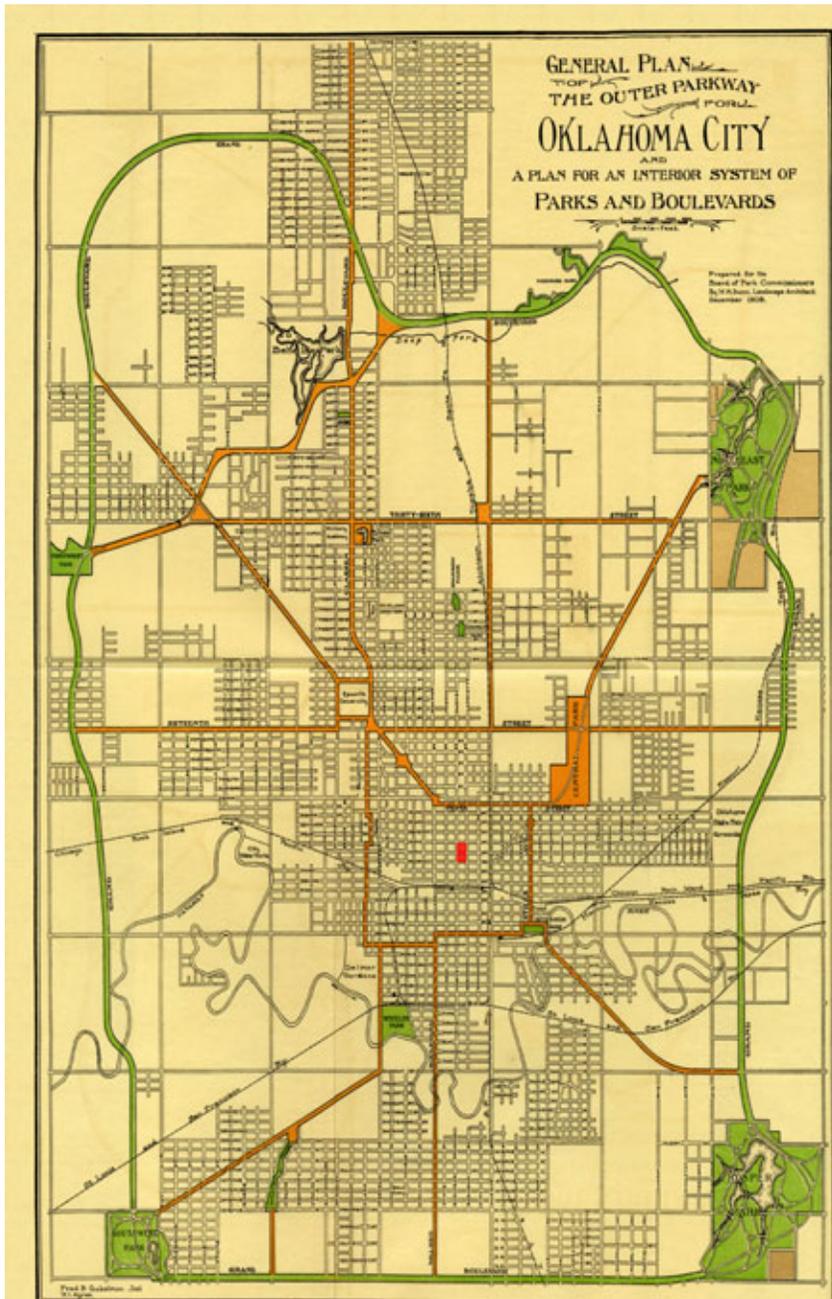


Figure 2.09 — The 1909 Park and Boulevard plan for Oklahoma City by Kansas City based landscape architect W. H. Dunn. The boulevards constructed because of this plan were transformed into freeways in the mid 1950's. (For instance, Classen Boulevard was transformed into a four lane highway in 1952).

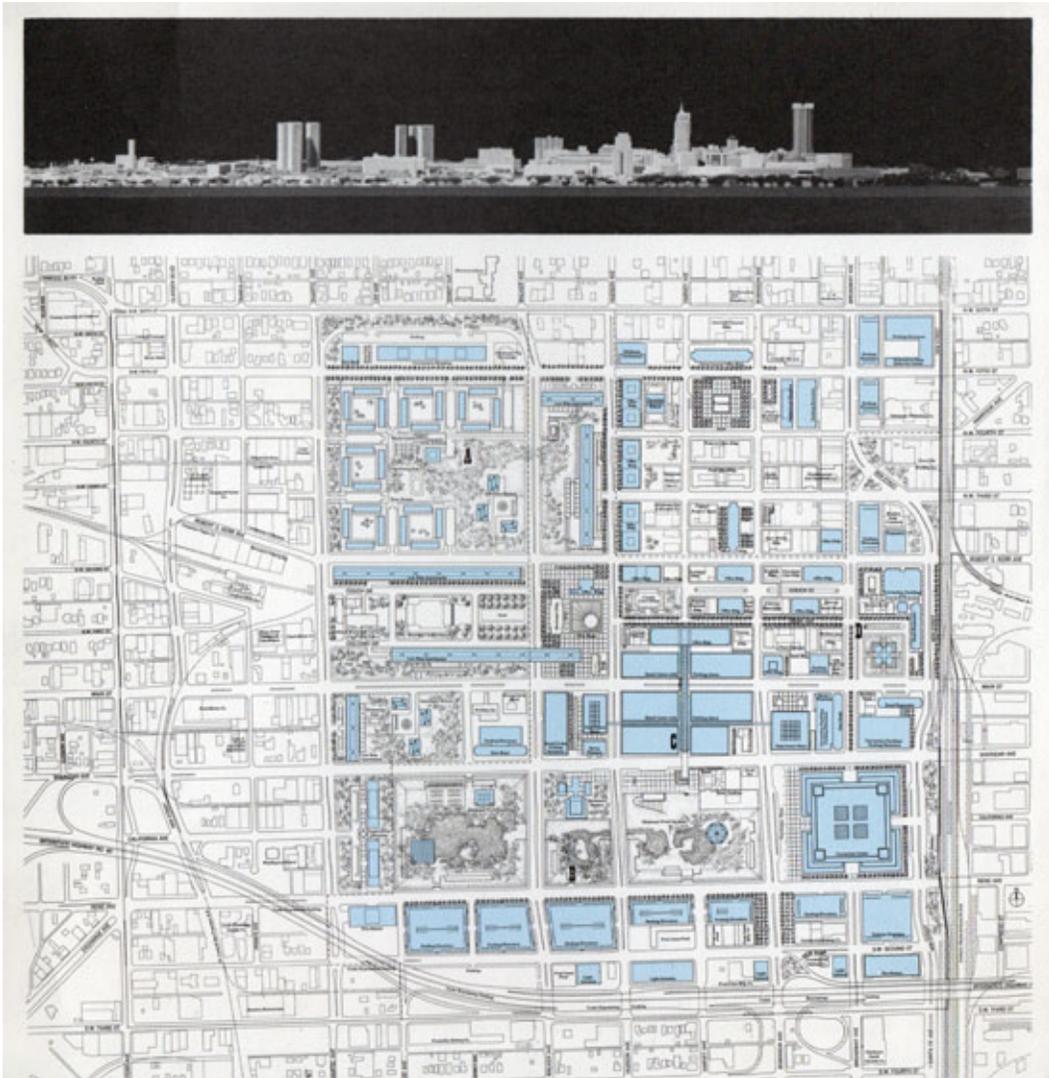


Figure 2.10 — The 1964 Urban Renewal Plan, proposed by I. M. Pei and Associates. Areas in light blue are part of Pei's proposed new construction agenda and established a new scale of urban fabric for the city, that of the "superblock." The largest of these areas was to house the proposed convention center, directly adjacent to a large series of constructed parks based upon the civic gardens found in Copenhagen. The plan provides a clear example of the vastly different scale of the proposed new construction, with the difference to the scale of the existing neighborhoods and city block size evident to the left hand side of the drawing, rendered as black outlines to existing buildings.

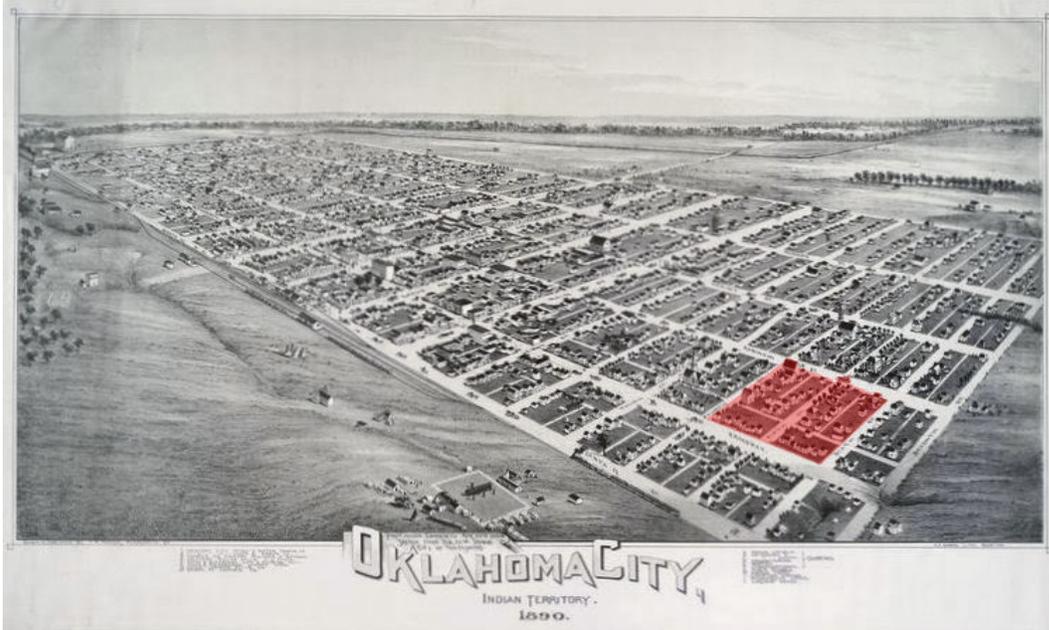
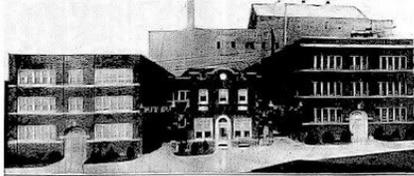


Figure 2.11 — An illustration providing a bird's eye view into Oklahoma City approximately ten months after the city's founding. The red coloration marks the future location of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. (Image Source: https://www.ok.gov/okhistory/store/app/item_description.php?item=311 accessed on October 21, 2013.)



Figure 2.12 — Photograph of Saint Joseph's residential school located on the corner of N.W. 5th Street and Harvey Ave. in Downtown Oklahoma City. (Image Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, Ref. 20681.6).

Announcing the Opening of
Oklahoma's Newest and Finest
Apartments
THE MELROSE
215-219-221 West 5th Street



Photographed by "That Man Stone"

Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Johnson
Today, Sunday, December 14th
Invite the Public to Visit and Inspect
THE NEW MELROSE
APARTMENTS
Today, Sunday, December 14th
2 to 5 P. M.

A Trip Thru the Melrose

Oklahoma City's newest and finest apartment house is open today for public inspection. This new edifice is also the largest. The general architectural style is that of modern Spanish, and is built of reddish brown brick, furnished by the UNITED BRICK CO. There are 91 apartments, all done to five rooms, equipped with the latest improvements that modern methods can afford. The rates on these well equipped apartments are within the reach of all—ranging from \$45 to \$59 a month with all bills paid.

One should not forget, too, that these apartments are at 215 to 221 West 5th, ideally located within easy walking distance of the center of the city. The super structure was designed, furnished and erected complete by J. B. KLEIN IRON & FOUNDRY CO. The floor-pan construction consists in general of a structural steel skeleton of steel columns supporting a floor system of steel beams and steel joists. Ribbed metal lath spans between the joists on both top and bottom to support the concrete floor and plaster ceiling. In addition to the strength and security afforded by structural steel, this type of construction particularly adapts itself to apartment buildings, due to its economy, its fire-retaining qualities, its small space requirements, and its rapidity for erection.

After the steel was erected, L. E. MERKEE was called upon to do the concrete work for the Melrose.

The plastering on this job deserves its due credit. It was done by W. J. THASHER, who finished the job on time, with a wonderful finish of the walls and ceilings.

All lumber was furnished by F. D. BEARLY LUMBER CO. Southwestern Electric Co. 423 West 9th—2-2591 That Man Stone Commercial Photographer & C. Lace Curtain Laundry 1129 N. Harvey—4-844 United Brick Co. 3-1422

The inside of the apartments are trimmed in red oak. The signs of this company, "Service With Every Stick" can easily be seen in this building.

Cook pots were used by W. H. ALEXANDER for the spray work, also for the brush and decorating work.

One of the most outstanding features of the apartments is that of McQuay-Copper Con-



MR. J. W. JOHNSON
Owner
Melrose Apartments
215-221 West 5th
Johnson Apartments
211 West 4th
Dartless Apartments
213 West 4th

cooled Radiators. These radiators were furnished by the FEDERAL STEAM SPECIALTIES CO. Other supplies used in the building were American Radiator Company's Ideal, Automatic Gas Fired Boilers and Servo Vapor System of Steam Heating—all these materials were installed by HELSEL PLUMBING CO.

Before going further, we should tell you about the well equipped kitchens which were designed and installed by MURPHY DOOR BELD CO. One need not even take one step in the well arranged kitchen—just reach. There, within an arm's length, is your stove, your sink.

The refrigerator was installed by W. C. DANCE. A person planning on either building or renting should be sure to include this very comfortable and necessary equipment. Just call and they will be glad to have their engineer plan your kitchen.

The electrical work and engineering of the Melrose was executed by the SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COMPANY. The fixtures are arranged to take care of every gaspico-socket for the iron, the vacuum, and the reading lamp.

The shades and draperies in the apartments were furnished by RORABAUGH-BROWN DRY GOODS COMPANY. The drapes are well suited to every apartment. Special attention was given the shade and glass curtains to assure the most light and sunshine.

The furniture in these apartments was selected through Hixson's Furniture Co. at SIGMON FURNITURE COMPANY. Great care was taken in selecting furniture best suited for each apartment, giving each room the atmosphere of a real home. A visit to the Melrose today will prove the comfort and pleasure of its guests has been the main objective in the furnishing of this apartment.

For eleven years the KINGS LAUNDRY has had the pleasure of rendering its services to J. W. Johnson. The laundry for the new Melrose will also be as the long list of well satisfied clientele of this company.

H. Alexander Painter and Decorator Cook Paint Co. 116 West Second L. E. McKee Everything in Cement Work Thrasher, Plaster Contractor T. Kennedy, Plasterer—Phone 4-2448

Korabaugh-Brown Dry Goods Co. 2-1231

Figure 2.13 — Advertisement announcing the opening of three new apartment buildings, located mid block on N.W. 4th Street between Robinson and Harvey Avenues in Downtown Oklahoma City. Also note the presence of the State Home Life Building in the immediate background. (Image Source: *The Oklahoman*, December 14, 1930, p. 27).



Figure 2.14 — A photo composite that overlays the 1950 Sanborn Insurance map for Oklahoma City with an aerial image of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum from Google Earth. The site of the memorial complex is bounded by the red dotted line, and the use of short term housing and apartment buildings is indicated by the tan coloration applied to the Sandborn map. There were at least ten tenement homes present within the current memorial site, and many others within the a single block radius. The location of the Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic School is also clearly identified at the corner of N.W. 4th and N. Harvey Ave. (Original Image sources, 1922-1950 Sanborn Map for Oklahoma City and Google Earth).



Figure 2.15 — The YMCA constructed in 1952 on the corner of N Robinson Ave and N.W. 5th Street served as one of the few examples of the International Style of architecture within Oklahoma City. (Image Source: *The Adams Latest Edition of Greater Oklahoma City and Vicinity Street Guide*, 1962, p 37).



Figure 2.16 — The display that I.M. Pei & Associates established to highlight “The City of Tomorrow” — a radically transformed downtown Oklahoma City. (Image source: *OKC Second Time Around: A Renaissance Story*, by Steve Lackmeyer & Jack Money, Full Circle Press, 2006, p.11).



Figure 2.17 — An aerial photograph documenting the fine urban texture of the existing downtown Oklahoma City. Pei used this image to argue that the life on the street of the existing area was chaotic, confusing, and antiquated. (Source: *Oklahoma City 1889-1989*, “Downtown: The First 100 Years,” I.M. Pei Associates, December, 1964, p. 5).



Figure 2.18 — A photograph of the model Pei & Associates created to show their vision for a renewed downtown. Much of the existing urban fabric is cleared to make for multistory high rises, which are surrounded by a series of parks. A new convention center is established as well a new shopping district. (Source: *Oklahoma City 1889-1989*, “Downtown: The First 100 Years,” I.M. Pei Associates, December, 1964, p. 5).

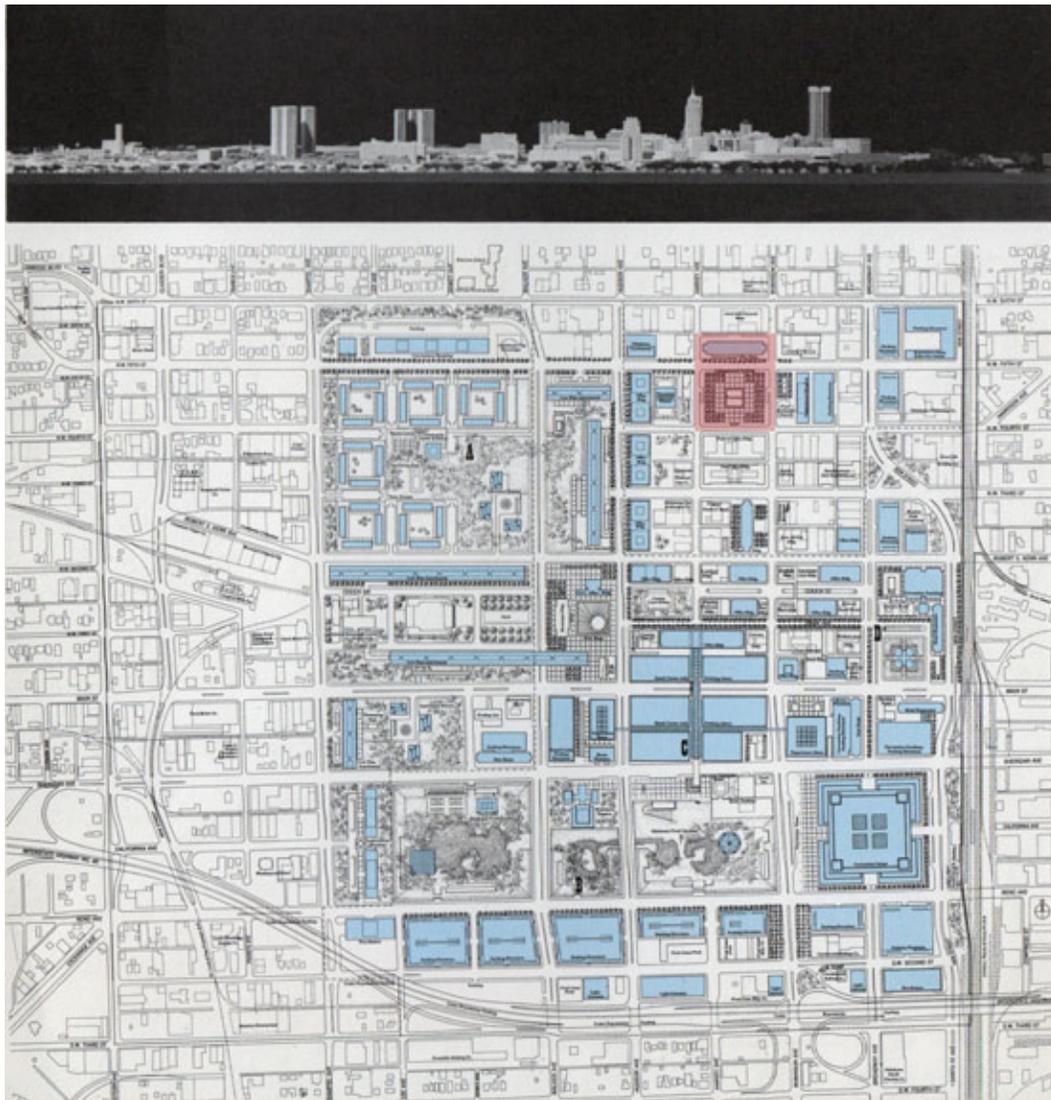


Figure 2.19 — The above master plan proposed for Oklahoma City also called for the establishment of a new government services area, complete with a new federal administrative building as well as a large, urban scaled plaza (highlighted here in red). The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was constructed *mostly* according to this plan, although the Murrah building was constructed closer to the existing Federal Courthouse located to the immediate south and the urban plaza was never constructed. Pei specified that this component of urban renewal would remove the dated and problematic housing stock that took the form of short term apartments and tenement homes, and replace them with a work destination for highly educated, well paid, government servants. (Source: *Oklahoma City 1889-1989*, “Downtown: The First 100 Years,” I.M. Pei Associates, December 1964, p. 1).



Figure 2.20 — The model is the built expression of Pei's master plan (shown preceding). Pei specified the construction of a new federal building along with a civic plaza (shown here in red) adjacent to the Journal Records Building / State Home Life Building. The Murrah Federal Building was constructed a block closer to the Federal Courthouse, and had a smaller scaled plaza that met N.W. 6th Street. (Image Source: Personal photograph of the I.M. Pei Model on display within the Myriad Convention Center May, 2010).



Figure 2.21 (Left) — A perspective of the new high rise apartments that Pei & Associates were advocating as part of their vision for a renewed downtown Oklahoma City.

(Source: *Downtown: The First 100 Years*, I.M. Pei Associates, December, 1964, p. 2).



Figure 2.22 — View into downtown Oklahoma City, looking north in the mid 1960's. (The red overlay indicates location of the State Home Life Building). Image shows the insertion of the I-40 Interstate into the urban fabric. (Source: http://s8.photobucket.com/user/DougLoudenback/media/maps/vintage/i40location_coc.jpg.html).



Figure 2.23 (Left) — An aerial photograph looking northward in 1980. The red overlay marks the presence of the Murrah Federal Building. Construction of the new Myriad convention center is complete, but it has drastically altered the scale of the downtown core. Myriad Gardens is nothing but an empty lot. (Source: *OKC Second Time Around: A Renaissance Story*, by Steve Lackmeyer & Jack Money, Full Circle Press, 2006, p. 70).

Paid Political Advertisement

Paid Political Advertisement

“...the major issue in this Mayor’s race is who can keep the jobs we have, create a climate for business expansion and recruit new industry.

A businessman can.”

*Ron Norick, Businessman
Mayoral Candidate*

Ron Norick has spent 25 years building a successful business that provides jobs for over 425 families. He understands what it takes to make a payroll...to be a good corporate citizen...to “give” back to his community.

“I feel it’s time for a businessman to step forward and commit full-time to serving the people, by working to solve the City’s problems.”

Because he’s developed a strong management team in his business, Ron can devote full-time to the Mayor’s job ...full-time to running Oklahoma City like a business.

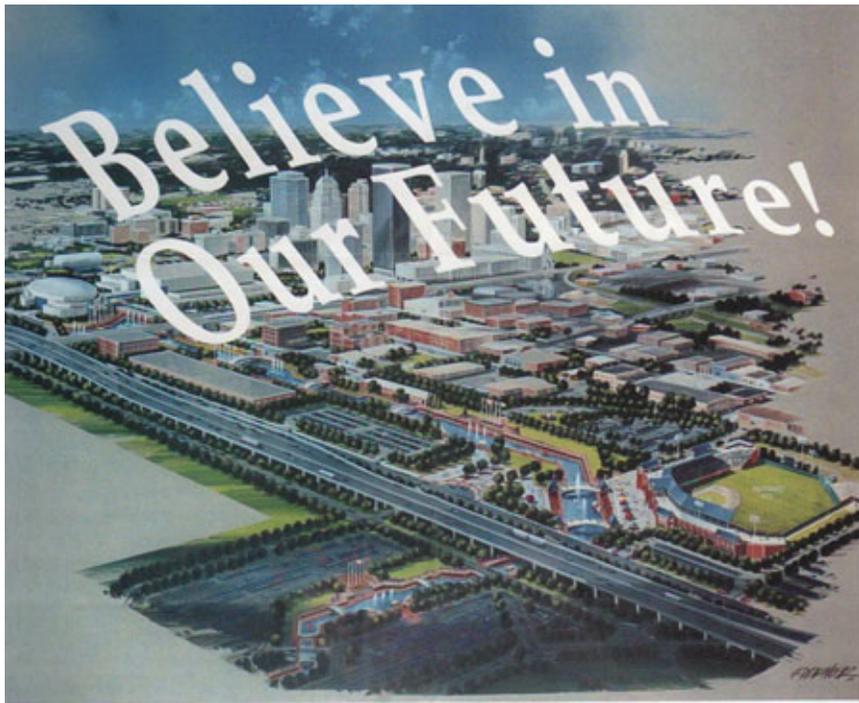
“As a businessman, not a politician, I can offer a new perspective to many of the issues we face.”



**NORICK
FOR MAYOR**

Figure 2.24 — A political advertisement for Ron Norick, specifically identifying himself as a problem solving businessman rather than as a dithering and corrupt politician. (Norick’s father served as both as a city councilor and mayor in the late 1950’s.)

(Source: *The Oklahoman*, March 8, 1987, page 47).



An architect's rendering of what Oklahoma City would look like as a result of our five vote. Shows, left to right, are the Mental Correction Center and Arena, The Bricktown Canal and the new baseball park.

Compete or Retreat?

The election on December 14th is the most important in recent memory because it's a referendum on the future of Oklahoma City. Do we compete with other cities for new businesses and jobs by investing in new and remodeled facilities for education, recreation, tourism, sports and the arts - or do we just stop trying?

This year alone, more than 50 cities are improving their public facilities with renovation, expansion and new construction. That makes the competition tough.

Will we compete, or will we retreat?

Let's compete! Let's Believe in Our Future!

The Need To Compete

Dozens of cities are competing right now. San Antonio has become one of the country's leading tourist centers by building new arenas and convention facilities and creating the famous Riverwalk. Indianapolis won the competition for the new United Airlines facility and continues to attract new business because of its first-rate public facilities.

Oklahoma City is unable to be a strong competitor for tourism, convention and recreation dollars and for new business and industry because our facilities are old and inadequate.

Every national expert says for a city to be able to compete for new jobs and businesses it must have first-class public facilities.

The Plan

We will vote December 14th on the future of Oklahoma City! The Metropolitan Area Projects, or MAPS proposal, developed with the help of citizens and community groups, provides \$238 million to build or renovate our city's public facilities.

The plan will be paid for by a temporary, one-cent sales tax. The tax is absolutely limited to 5 years and absolutely earmarked for the projects we will vote on.

Everyone age 65 or older will qualify for a refund of the sales tax paid on purchases of up to \$3,200. A Citizens Oversight Committee will supervise spending on the projects on a pay-as-we-go basis. There won't be any debt for taxpayers!

Vote Yes, Tuesday, Dec. 14!

Figure 2.25 — Political advertisement that uses the imagery of a restored downtown core, complete with urban river walk, a new baseball stadium, and entertainment district as an argument to impose a limited time, one cent sales tax that would be used to fund much needed infrastructure reconstruction projects throughout the downtown core. (Source: *OKC Second Time Around: A Renaissance Story*, by Steve Lackmeyer & Jack Money, Full Circle Press, 2006, p. 122).

MEMORIAL SURVEY

Murrah Federal Building Memorial Task Force

Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norick formed a volunteer task force of citizens to develop an appropriate memorial regarding the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing on April 19, 1995. The first step is to find out what we want the memorial to represent. This survey is one of the ways to get your thoughts, feelings and ideas to the Memorial Task Force. Please make copies of this survey and encourage your family, friends and coworkers to share their ideas.

1. What is your zip code? Please write all 5 numbers. _____

2. What is your age? Please check your age bracket.

Under 12 25 - 34 55 - 64
 12 - 17 35 - 44 65 - 74
 18 - 24 45 - 54 75+

3. When you are at the memorial what feeling(s) do you want to have? Please check one or more.

Pride Solemn Peaceful
 Anger Courage Healing
 Fear Concerned Spiritual
 Hope Inspired Other: _____

4. Please check one or more. The memorial should:

- Include the names and stories of victims and survivors.
- Honor those who helped.
- Not be limited to the Murrah Federal Building site.
- Include an interpretative center/museum to educate people about the event.
- Be for the whole nation.
- Include something for the children.
- Show the bombing's violence.
- Describe the community, state and national unity.
- Have scenes showing before, during and after the bombing.
- Include a green space with trees and flowers.
- Show the world-wide response.

Other things the memorial should be or do:

Please mail your completed survey(s) and any additional comments and suggestions as soon as possible and no later than Feb. 15, 1996. Your tax-deductible donation may be mailed to the Murrah Memorial Fund.

POST OFFICE BOX 18390 / OKLAHOMA CITY, OK / 73154-0390 / PHONE: (405) 236-8400

Figure 3.00 — Scan of memorial survey used to solicit public input regarding the proposed memorial planned to commemorate the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in downtown Oklahoma City. Source: Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum Archive.

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM**

STUDIO PROGRAM

The twenty students participating each year are engaged in a variety of art practices including painting, sculpture, film and video making, photography, performance and various forms of interdisciplinary work. They are provided with studio space in the program's loft in downtown Manhattan.

CURATORIAL AND CRITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Ten students are accepted each year as Helena Rubinstein Fellows. The Curatorial Studies students organize an exhibition working under the supervision of the Whitney's curators and the program's faculty. Critical Studies students engage in individual research projects under the guidance of a professional art historian or critic.

The program's regular and visiting faculty consists of Ron Clark, Renee Green, Yvonne Rainer, Mary Kelly, Hal Foster, Benjamin Buchloh, Laura Mulvey, David Diaz and Isaac Julien. They are available to meet individually with all members of the program to discuss their work or general theoretical and historical questions. All students participate in weekly seminars with artists, art historians, and critics and a weekly reading seminar in cultural theory and criticism led by the program's faculty.

Application deadline: April 1.
For information:
Whitney Museum Independent Study Program
384 Broadway, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10013
(212) 431-1737

We come here to remember
those who were killed, those who survived, and those
changed forever.

Excerpt from Mission Statement

In response to the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation is honored to sponsor the

**Oklahoma City Memorial:
An International Design Competition**

Participation in this two-stage design competition is open to all individuals and teams. To register, please send a written letter requesting the competition materials and a \$ 25.00 non-refundable registration fee.

Make the check or money order to: Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation.

Mail to: International Design Competition, Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, 420 North Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102.

Competition materials mailed to registrants include: regulations, mission statement, selection process, schedule, site description and other pertinent information. Registration is open through February 10, 1997.

For more registration information, please phone 1.800.491.3822
Oklahoma City area residents phone 405.748.0515

Would You Like to Find the
One Supplier for All Your
**Printmaking
Supplies?**



- ETCHING** Grounds, Acids, Plates, Tools, Trays, Blankets, & Burnishers.
- BLOCK PRINT** Linoleum, Wood Blocks, Brayers, Cutting Tools.
- LITHOGRAPHIC** Gums, Asphaltum, Tusche, Scraper Bars, Caborundum Grits, & Levigators, Rollers.
- LITHO STONES**
- INKS** We make our own fine inks.
- PAPERS** All types for the printmaker.

Catalog on Request

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& INK COMPANY**

728 N. Yale, P.O. Box 27, Villa Park, IL 60181
1-800-465-7382

ANDERSON RANCH ARTS CENTER

1997 Summer Painting Program

Karen Carson
"Inside to Outer Space: Illusion and Bar Relief"
July 21-August 1



- Hilary Cooper
- Jeanette Patis
- Sloan
- Nancy Friese
- Susan Leopold
- Andrew Spence
- Allen Smith
- David Tru
- Cathy Hunt
- Karen Carson
- Fran Myers
- Clarence Morgan
- Arlene
- Burke-Morgan
- Roy Dowell
- Charmaine Locke
- Roberto Juarez

Karen Carson, Serolevich, enamel on vinyl, 1994

ANDERSON RANCH ARTS CENTER
P.O. Box 5598, Snowmass Village, Colorado 81615,
970/923-5181, Fax: 970/923-3871. Call for our free catalogue.

Figure 3.01 — Scan of advertisement announcing the international design competition in *Art in America*. (Upper right hand corner of page.)

Raynor Garage Doors

Send for details on our SureTest™ Fire Protection system. *Circle No. 96*

Rejuvenation Lamp

Request our free catalog of lighting products. *Circle No. 16*

Roppe Corporation

Get the facts on Gerflex and Taraflex sheet vinyl products. *Circle No. 118*

Schlage Lock Co.

Contact us for more information on our L-Series. *Circle No. 92*

Siedle Communications

Get the details about Siedle Video—new concept, new price. *Circle No. 102*

Simpson Strong-Tie

Contact us for a catalog or answers to connector design questions. *Circle No. 48*

Sloan Valve

Send for details on Optima Plus™ EBF-85 battery-powered fiber-optic faucet. *Circle No. 88*

Spacesaver Corp.

Send for details on our high density mobile systems. *Circle Nos. 2,4,6,8,10,12*

SPI Lighting

Send for details on Echo indirect asymmetric lighting. *Circle No. 62*

Spring City Electrical Mfg.

Send for details on all of our lighting products. *Circle No. 126*

Stylemark, Inc.

Send for information on our Registered Product Specification Manual. *Circle No. 38*

Subaru of America.

Get the facts on our new 1997 Outback™. *Circle No. 142*

3M Specialty Chemicals.

Learn more about our TacFast Carpet System. *Circle No. 134*

Titus

Send for more information on our TAF-R diffuser. *Circle No. 110*

Truebro, Inc.

Before you specify another job, order our free Specification Guide today. *Circle No. 140*

USG Interiors

Get the facts on Sheetrock™ First Coat. *Circle No. 120*

USG Interiors

Send for complete details on new premixed Firecode Compound. *Circle No. 156*

Versico Inc.

Get our free booklet, "Commercial Roofs: A Guide For The '90s". *Circle No. 90*

Vistawall Arch. Products.

Get the details on our concealed ventilation systems. *Circle No. 148*

Von Duprin Inc.

Get information on our door exit hardware. *Circle No. 74*

Wausau Tile.

Find out more about the industry's finest complete paving and roofing systems. *Circle No. 154*

Weather Shield Mfg. Co.

Find out more about our Value R10 premier glazing option. *Circle No. 104*

Weyerhaeuser Door Div.

Send for information on our fire-rated architectural doors. *Circle No. 106*

Wood Products Promo Council

Get our brochure and learn more about the advantages of wood. *Circle No. 22*

We come here to remember
those who were killed, those who survived, and those changed forever.
May all those who leave here know the impact of violence.
May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity.

Excerpt from Mission Statement

In response to the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation is proud to sponsor the

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An International Design Competition**

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420 North Robinson Avenue
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102

Competition materials mailed to registrants include: regulations, mission statement, selection process, schedule, site description and other pertinent information.

Registration is open through February 10, 1997.

For more registration information, please phone 1.800.491.3822.
Oklahoma City area residents phone 405.748.0515.

Figure 3.02 — Scan of announcement for the international design competition in *Architecture* magazine.

Murrah Federal Building
Memorial Task Force

January 18, 1996

VIA TELECOPY
202-337-2887

Paul D. Spreiregen
Architect Planner
2215 Observatory Place, NW
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Paul:

Thank you for the very instructive report prepared pursuant to our letter agreement of November 30, 1996. Payment of your fee and expenses will be made by the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, but I would appreciate you forwarding your statement to Rowland Denman at the Task Force address shown below. Rowland will promptly arrange for payment.

After considerable thought and painful deliberations, we have concluded that while you have an admirable reputation as a design competition advisor, we do not universally share the same philosophical approach to the design selection process as it relates to community involvement. Without belaboring the point, our appreciation for your efforts in preparing the commissioned operational plan and respect for you requires the following further explanation.

When the Task Force was appointed by Mayor Norick, we stated that the hallmarks of our memorialization process would be listening and public participation. We also stated that the healing effect and community ownership of a memorial developed with thorough and meaningful participation by those directly affected was equally as important as the end physical result. Such philosophy is set forth in the July 26, 1995 Minutes of the Orientation Meeting of the Task Force, a copy of which was given to you during our November 16 meeting in Washington. I also attempted during such meeting to stress that the design selection process must be consistent with such thesis, i.e. every aspect of such process must be inclusive of public participation.

POST OFFICE BOX 18390 / OKLAHOMA CITY, OK / 73154-0390 / PHONE: (405) 236-8400

Chairman
Robert M. Johnson

Vice-Chairman
Karen Luke

Executive Director
Rowland Denman

Subcommittee Co-Chairs

Archives
Anita Arnold
Tom Topferzer

Budget
Linda Lambert
John Rex

Design Solicitation
William B. Cleary
Beth Tolbert

Government Liaison
Terry Childers
Thomas J. McDaniel

Memorial Ideas Input
Sydney Dobson
Jimmy Goodman
William O. Johnstone

Public Fund Raising
Ann Alspaugh
Osgie Rainbolt
Lee Allan Smith

Public & Private Grants
Jean Gurnerson
G. Rainey Williams, Jr.

Public Relations
Jeanette Gamba
Sam Armstrong Lopez

Victim's Families/ Survivors
Kim Jones-Shelton
Phillip Thompson
Toby Thompson

Administrative Director
Phyllis Stough

Figure 3.03 — Scan of letter sent by the Chairman of the Murrah Building Memorial Task Force Robert M. Johnson to Paul D. Spreiregen, memorial competition advisor, informing him of his termination of professional responsibilities. (Oklahoma City Memorial and Museum. Robert Johnson Collection). The entire content of the three page letter is provided.

In my November 30, 1995 letter authorizing you to proceed with the preparation of an operational plan, I stated:

“As we discussed in Washington, we would prefer that the details of the design competition be developed in sufficient time to enable us to submit such proposed plan to the Advisory Committee at the meeting scheduled for January 16, 1996 at 5:00 p.m. One of the early issues to be visited should be the structure and composition of the evaluation panel and selection committee. In particular, I believe it is critical that we assure the representation of the victims’ families and survivors in such selection process.”

In a later telephone conversation I reiterated the foregoing, and you replied that you understood our need and that the desired representation would be a part of the plan presented to us. Because of the above described efforts to stress to you the importance to us of the community participation in every stage of the selection process, I was very surprised that your recommendation to the Design Solicitation Subcommittee at the January 9 meeting was that the selection should be made by an all professional jury. I also was surprised to hear that you believe that having members of the community on such jury would be too large a burden on the professionals. After suggesting to you that I was unprepared for your recommendation, such meeting was concluded by agreeing that we would discuss the matter further upon your arrival on the following day.

On Wednesday, January 10, Bill Cleary, Rowland Denman, Jimmy Goodman and I met with you for approximately 2 hours prior to the Coordinating Meeting. During such meeting, you restated your opinions that an all professional jury should make the selection and that including community members on such panel was not workable. After considerable discussion, we arrived at a compromise recommendation to be presented to the Coordinating Committee consisting of a nine member Evaluation Panel (3 members of the families/survivors and 6 professional members) to recommend and provide evaluations of a minimum of three finalists to a fifteen member Selection Committee (8 members of the families/survivors and 7 additional community members) which would select the winning design. At the end of such meeting, you were asked to restate our compromise approach, and I then placed such approach in writing for distribution to the Coordinating Committee.

The Coordinating Committee received and approved the foregoing recommendation at its meeting on January 10.

Following our dinner with you on January 10, we attended a meeting of representatives of the Families/Survivors Subcommittee for the purpose of presenting a report on the selection process recommendation of the Coordinating Committee to be made to the Advisory Committee. The above described approach

Figure 3.03 (cont.)

was presented to and discussed by the families and survivors. After such meeting, you stated to Karen Luke and Rowland Denman that you had further reflected on the compromise approach and that only an all professional jury making the selection would be manageable.

At my meeting with you on Thursday morning, January 11, I inquired regarding your comfort with the planned selection process. You responded that it would not be manageable. After considerable discussion, you inquired as to whether I would be comfortable going forward with you if the process was carried out as outlined to the Coordinating Committee. You suggested that if the three family/survivor members of the Evaluation Panel viewed the exhibit of designs first, the professional members could arrive on Sunday and be prepared to meet with the other three members on Thursday or Friday. I responded that such procedure would not be viewed as inclusive and that I needed some time to determine my comfort level in light of our different philosophical approaches regarding the importance of the community participation in the selection process.

Paul, we have never doubted for a moment your expertise in the design competition arena. Rowland, Karen, many other members of the Task Force and I simply feel that while your approach would be perfectly appropriate for many projects, it is not perceived by us as the memorialization process which is right for the Oklahoma City community under these circumstances. Although you have stated in your January 17 letter to Bill Cleary that you would be agreeable to committing yourself to the selection process adopted by the Coordinating Committee, your comments in that letter, and your repeated statements described above that such process is not manageable, reflect that it would be very difficult for you to make it a success when you do not truly believe in such process.

This decision has been a very difficult one for all concerned, particularly in view of the acknowledged fact that none of us can say with certainty that our judgment is always correct. We are simply attempting to exercise our best collective judgment to fulfill our fiduciary obligations to the public we are serving as volunteers.

Hopefully, we will have a project of a different type in the future on which we can have the pleasure of working with you.

Very truly yours,



Robert M. Johnson

Figure 3.03 (cont.)

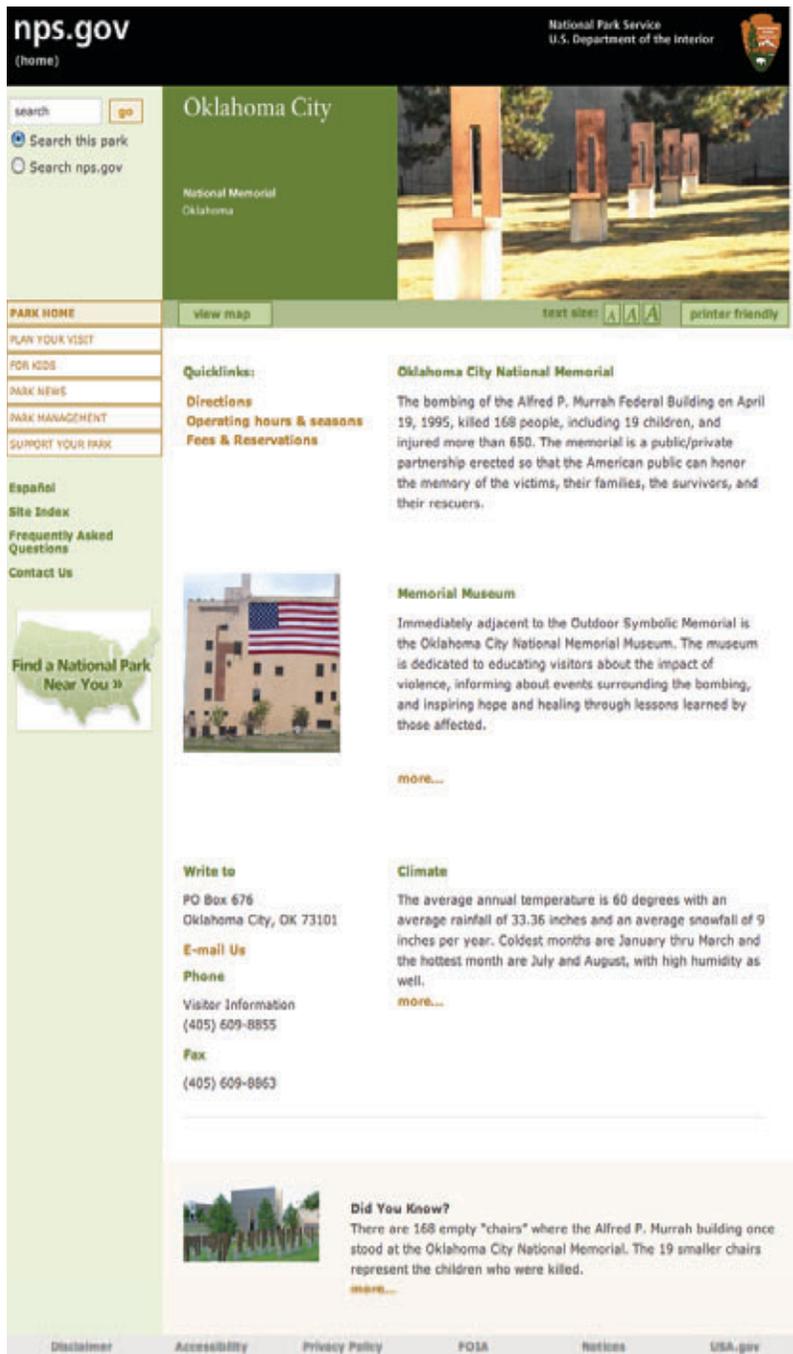


Figure 3.04 — The National Park Service web site for the Oklahoma City National Memorial. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is the only *affiliate* of the National Park Service. The memorial and museum operate as an independent, not for profit 501 (c) charitable organization, and enjoys the donated interpretative services of National Park Service personnel. Despite appearances, the memorial site is a privately owned and operated foundation.

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St. Louis, Missouri

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Write to
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial
11 N. 4th Street

Gateway to the West
The Gateway Arch reflects St. Louis' role in the Westward Expansion of the United States during the nineteenth century. The park is a memorial to Thomas Jefferson's role in opening the West, to the pioneers who helped shape its history, and to Dred Scott who sued for his freedom in the Old Courthouse.

Gateway Arch and the Museum of Westward Expansion
All visitors must pass through a secure checkpoint into the Visitor Center. Please allow extra time to enter.
Thomas Jefferson's vision of the spread of freedom and democracy from "sea to shining sea" inspired Eero Saarinen's masterpiece of modern design. The 630 foot stainless steel Gateway Arch reflects St. Louis' role as the gateway to the West.
Visitors to the Gateway Arch can tour the **Museum of Westward Expansion**, **ride the tram to the top**, and watch the movies *Lewis and Clark: Great Journey West* and *Monument to the Dream*.

Old Courthouse
Visitors to the Old Courthouse can tour restored courtrooms and history galleries, as well as learn about the Dred Scott trial and other significant cases that took place in the building.

Upcoming Events and Programs
Click here to learn more about events and programs presented by Jefferson National Expansion Memorial staff and partners throughout the year.

Climate
Summers are often hot and humid, with average temperatures in the high 80 or 90 degrees Fahrenheit; autumn and spring are mild and pleasant; winters are rarely

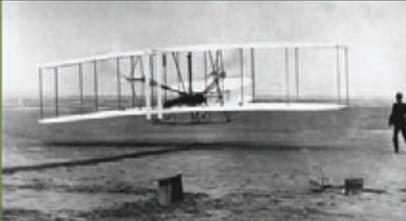
Figure 3.05 — The National Park Service web site for the Jefferson Expansion Memorial located in Saint Louis, Missouri. The site operates as a full unit of the NPS, and is funded primarily through the United States Congress.

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Wright Brothers
National Memorial
North Carolina



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Soaring 100

Hurricane Irene Recovery
The Park is currently open.
For Hurricane Irene impacts to the outer banks, visit www.darenc.com
They Taught the World to Fly!
Wind, sand, and a dream of flight brought Wilbur and Orville Wright to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina where, after four years of experimentation, they achieved the first successful airplane flights in 1903. With courage and perseverance, these self-taught engineers relied on teamwork and application of the scientific process. What they achieved changed our world forever.

Learn More About National Parks!
Wright Brothers National Memorial is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.
[more](#)

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Wright Brothers National Memorial
1401 National Park Drive
Manteo, North Carolina 27954
E-mail Us
Phone
Visitor Information
(252) 441-7430
Fax
(252) 473-2505

Climate
Wind is an everyday occurrence on the Outer Banks and can range from gentle southwest breezes to strong northeast storm winds. Local weather changes rapidly and can be very unpredictable. Summer days are usually warm and humid and are often broken by fast-moving but severe thunderstorms. Winter temperatures are usually cool, though the wind can make them bitterly cold. Spring and Fall days can vary a great deal between these two extremes. Mosquitoes can be a significant problem throughout the warm weather months. Clothing should be seasonal, but have extra gear available for wind and rain.

Figure 3.06 — The National Park Service web site for the Wright Brothers National Memorial located at Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina. The National Memorial operates as a full unit of the NPS, and is primarily funded through the United States Congress.

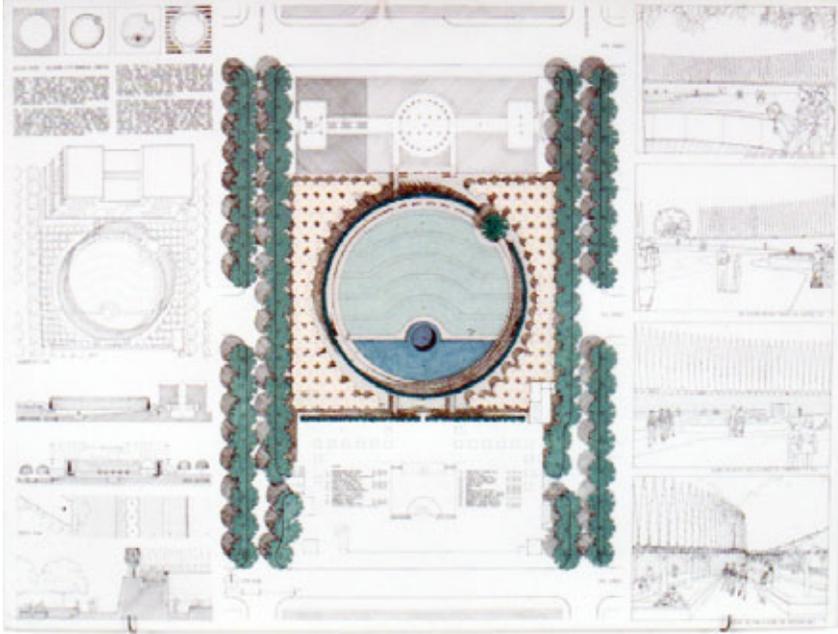


Figure 4.00 — Hanno Weber & Associate's entry into the Oklahoma City International Memorial Competition.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

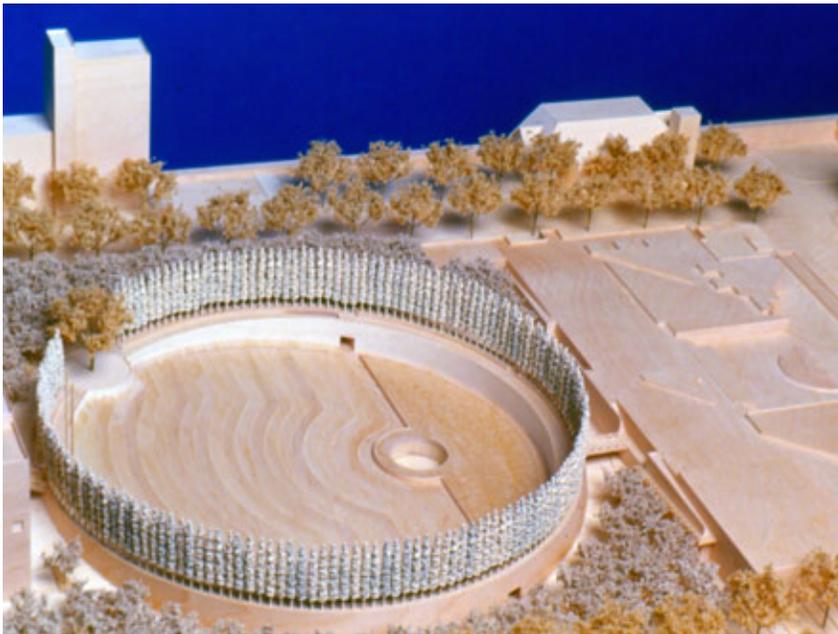


Figure 4.01 — The constructed model of Hanno Weber & Associate's design.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.02 — Hanno Weber & Associates with their submission to the Oklahoma City International Memorial Competition.

Michael Maher (Left)
Kathleen Hess (Center)
Hanno Weber (Right)

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

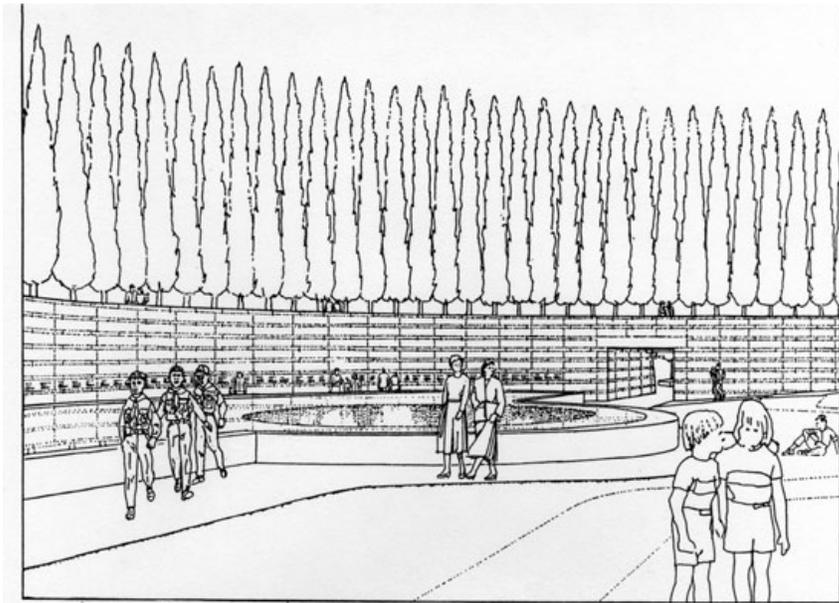


Figure 4.03 — The “water table” featured in the center of the illustration marks the point of detonation of the truck bomb on April 19, 1995.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

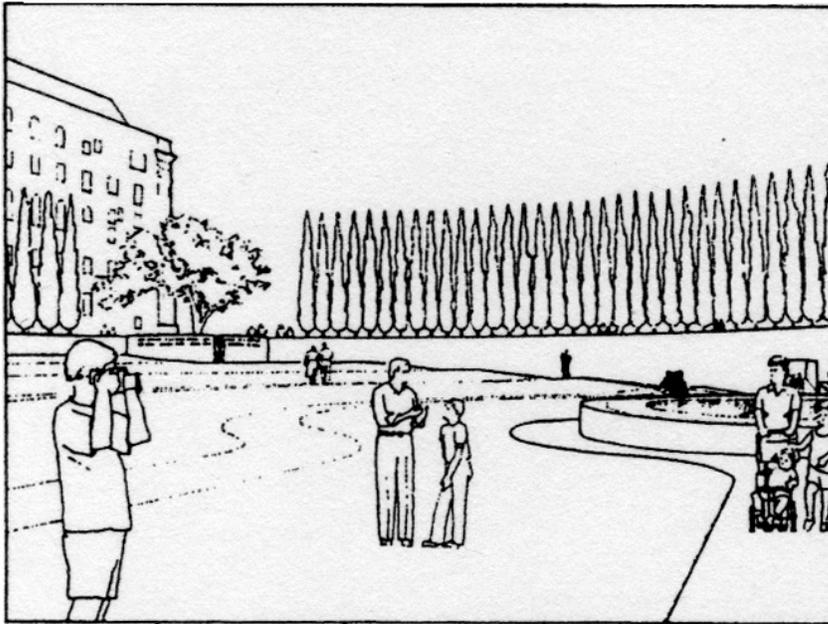


Figure 4.04 — A 168 columnar cypress trees are planted in a taut ring around the established clearing, one tree for each person killed in the attack. Included within that circle is the Survivor's Tree, an American Elm, which has come to represent the resiliency of the citizens of Oklahoma City. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

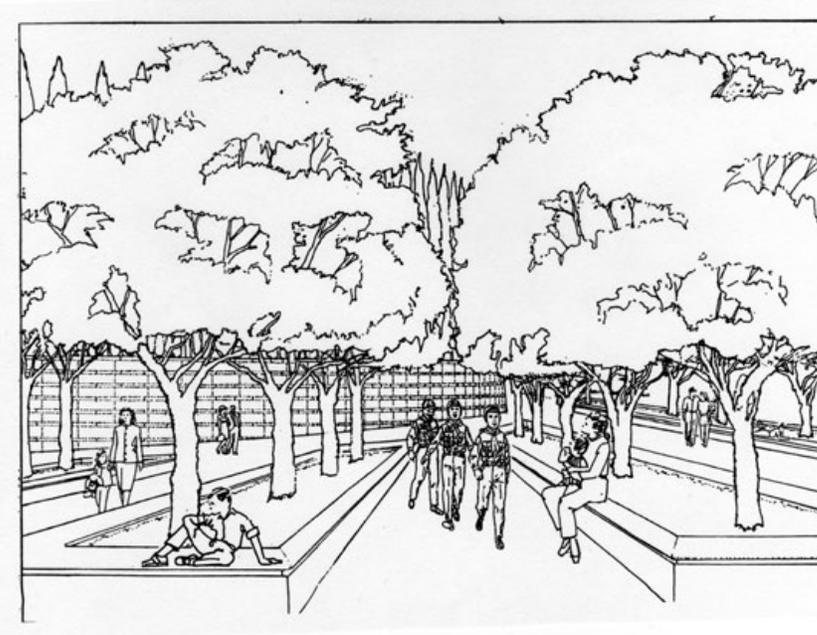


Figure 4.05 — The spacing between the raised planters allows for pedestrian circulation, while also providing a smaller scale space to allow for conversations to occur.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

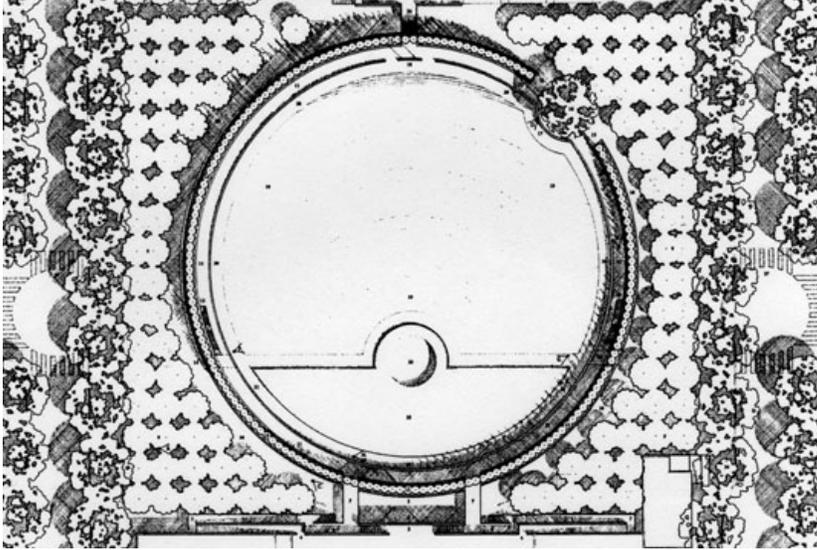


Figure 4.06 — The “water table” is represented as a circle located within an other, larger circle of the clearing.

What is of interest is that this “water table” is rendered not as a reflecting pool, or body of water, but rather as a void.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

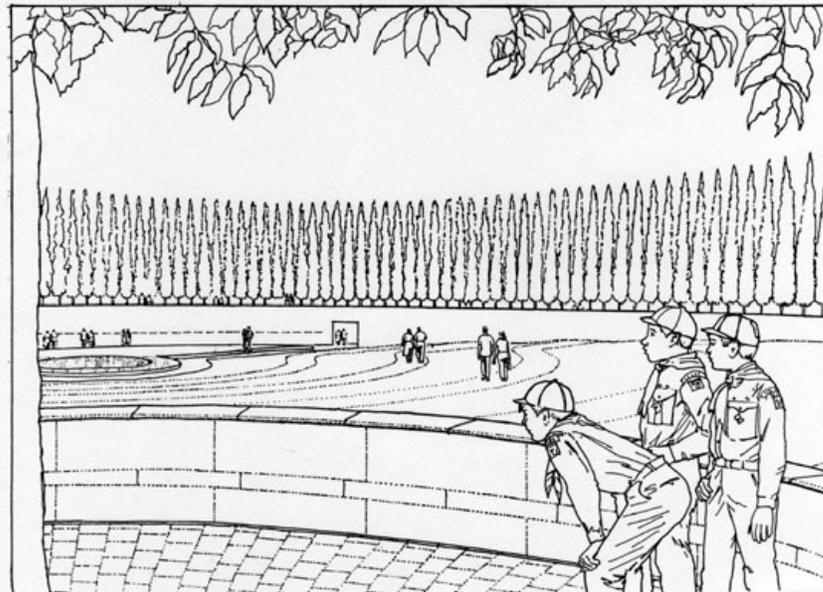


Figure 4.07 — Image of Cub Scouts looking at the sloping meadow and the water table contained within the space.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

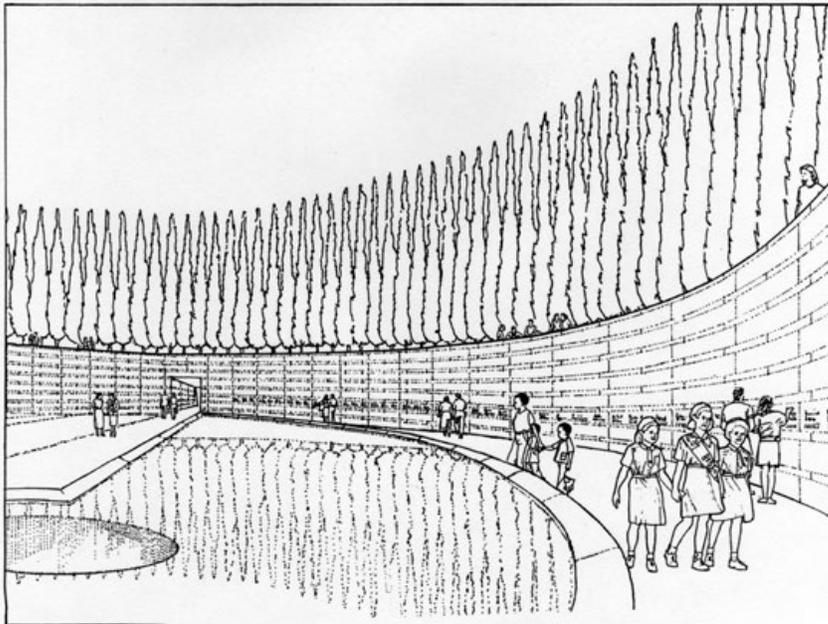


Figure 4.08 — The names of those lost are inscribed onto the stone retaining wall that forms the boundary of the clearing. This strategy is very similar to the one that Maya Lin used in her winning submission to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Competition held in 1980. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

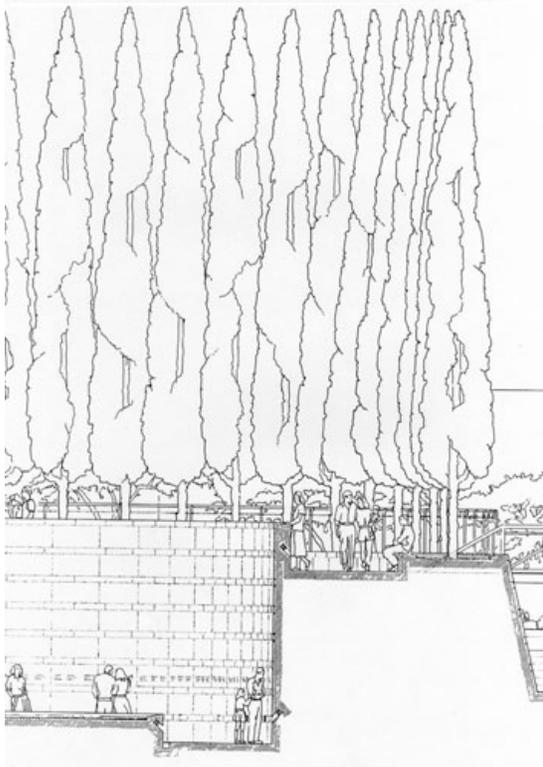


Figure 4.09 — This section provides a clear indication of the elevational change proposed. At the lowest point of the sloping meadow (located behind the water table) there is a sixteen foot change in elevation.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.10 — The Oklahoma City National Memorial uses social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to distribute information regarding the latest happenings at the memorial museum.



Figure 4.11 — The use of social media is often used by the memorial museum to provide links to additional media coverage that shows how the institution itself is continually relevant in the decades following the bombing. The HBO tweet is reference to a number of the participants of the Boston Marathon who were unable to complete the 2013 race because of the bombings. In turn, the organizers of the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon (the single biggest annual fund raiser for the memorial museum) extended invitations to those runners to participate in their marathon for free.

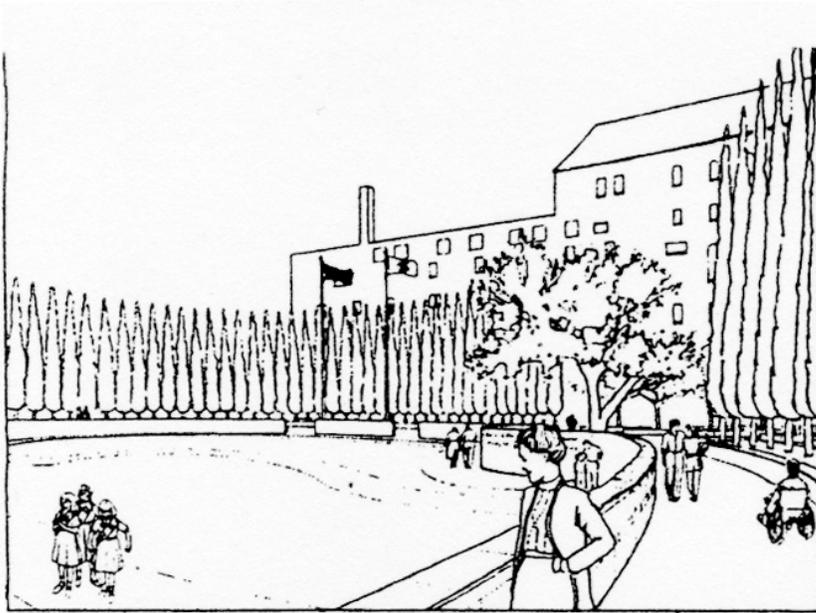


Figure 4.12 — Most of the renderings of the clearing show people strolling through the clearing, or performing a rubbing of a loved one's name. The elevational change present within the design makes the clearing a space subject to constant observation and scrutiny. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

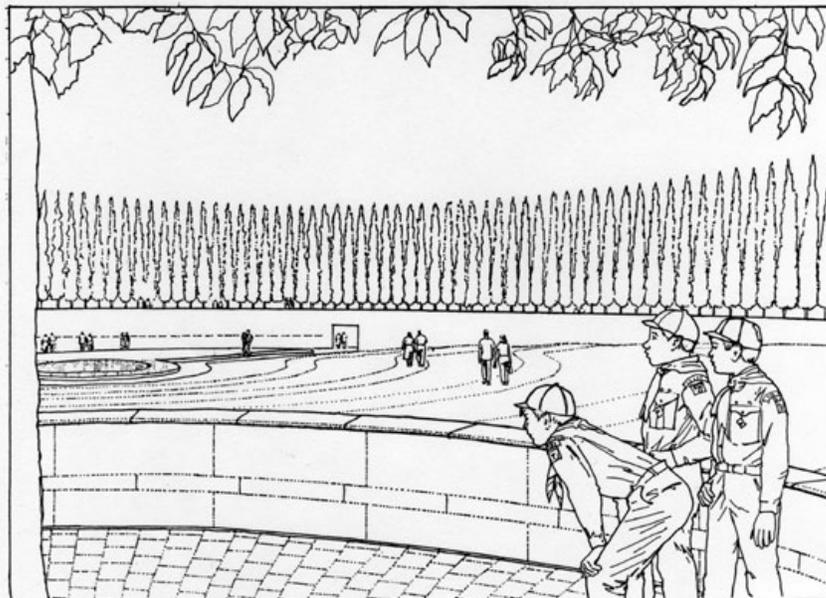


Figure 4.13 — The people who populate the clearing are shown in constant motion. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

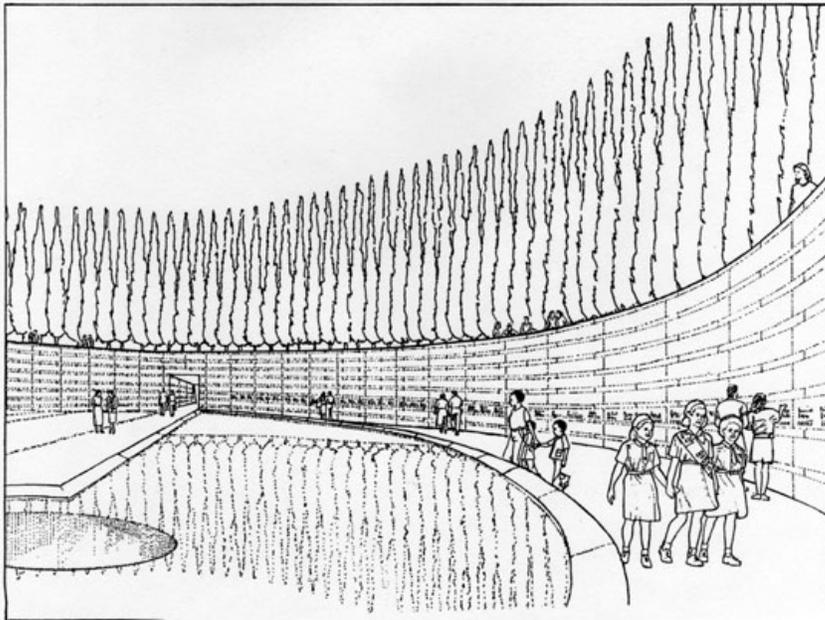


Figure 4.14 — The emphasis of how this reflective meadow is used by the figures is one of constant movement; no places to sit are indicated.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

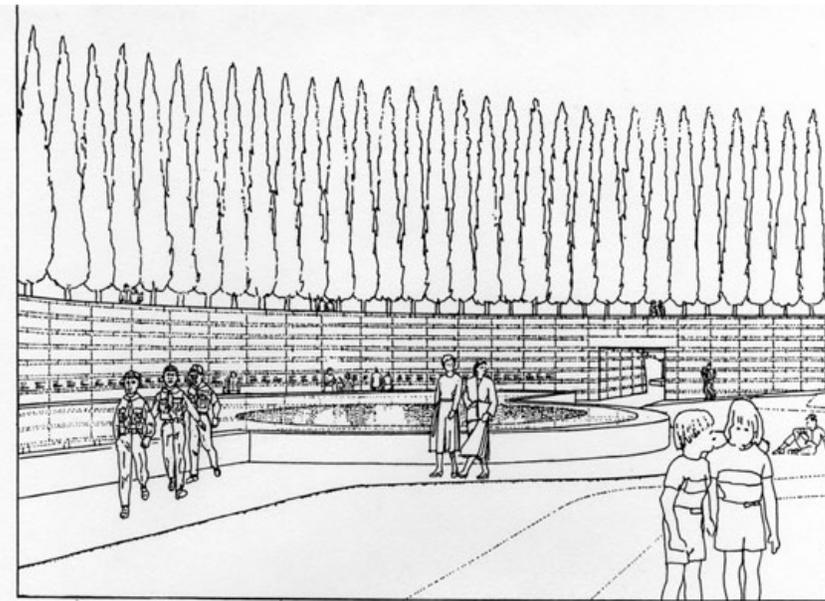


Figure 4.15 — Only in this representation is there a figure in repose within the clearing, with the man sitting one arm resting on his knee, located to the top right of the two young children who occupy the foreground.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

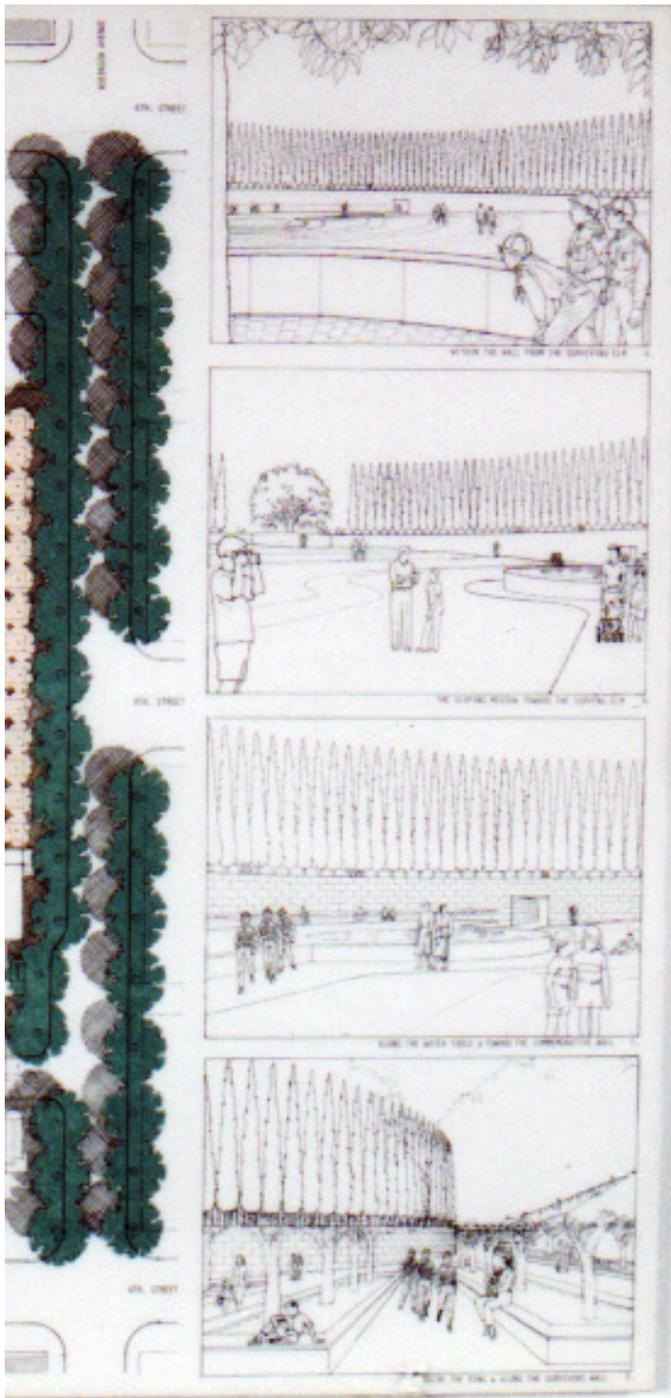


Figure 4.16 — The indication of Cub Scouts as a civic organization is clearly present in three of the four vignettes provided within the Hanno Weber Submission.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

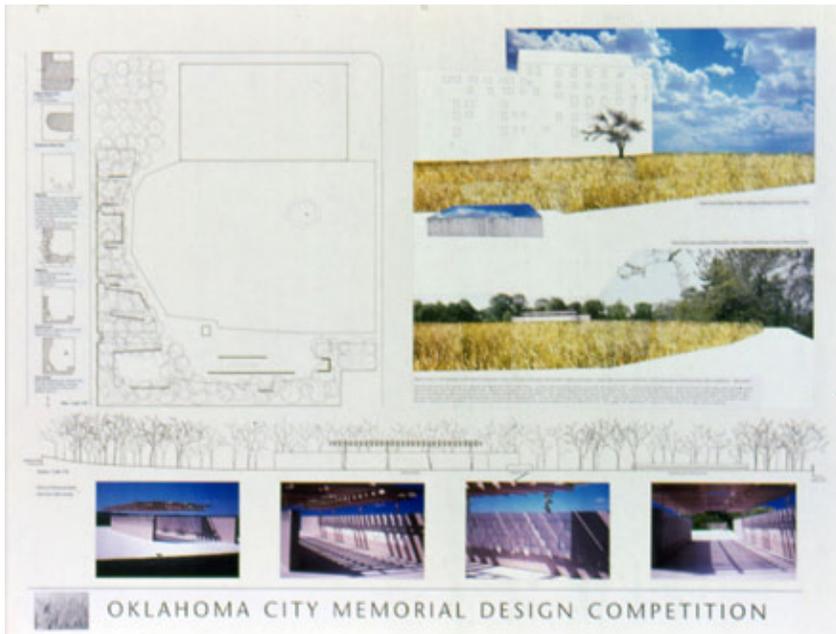


Figure 4.17 — Two sample submissions that represent the memorial grounds as either a garden or in a “natural state” which erases the urban context of the surrounding city.

(Top Image Submission # 1492, Bottom Image Submission # 1405. Images Courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



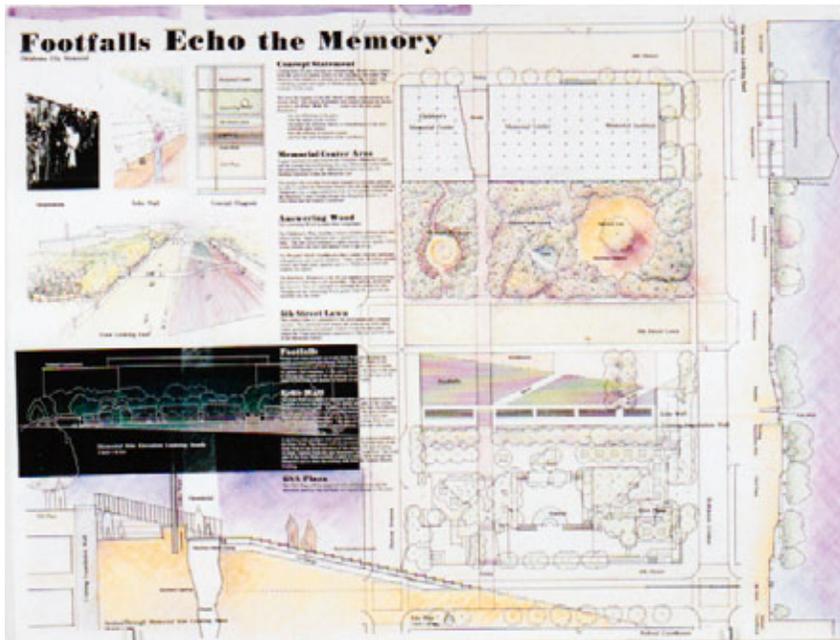


Figure 4.18 — Susan Herrington & Mark Stankard's entry to the design competition, "Footfalls Echo the Memory."

(Image Courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

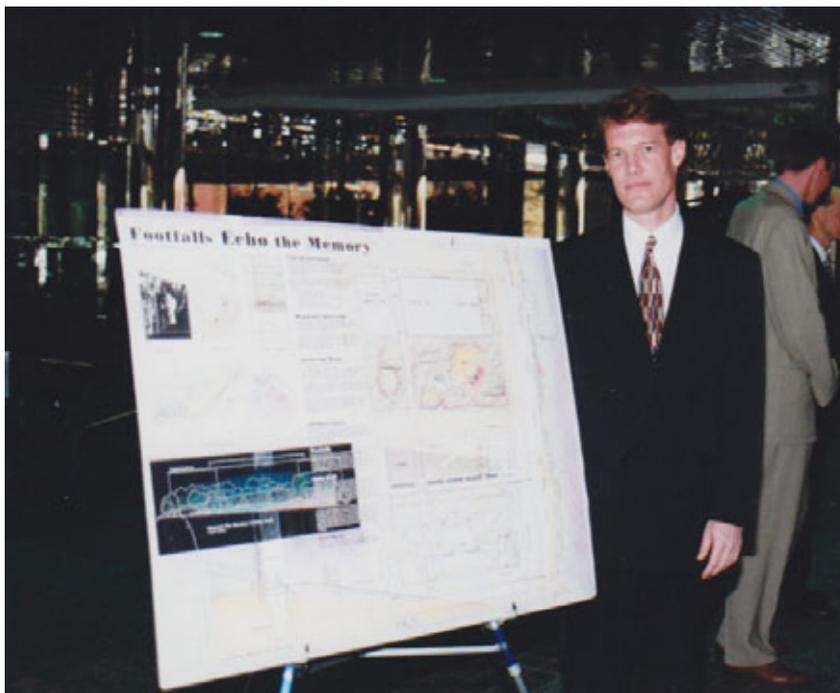


Figure 4.19 — Susan Herrington was unable to attend this gathering. Pictured is Mark Stankard, her design partner.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.20 — The model of “Footfalls Echo the Memory” submission. Notice that there is a thin and almost transparent glass wall at the top of the stairs upon which the names of the victims would be etched.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

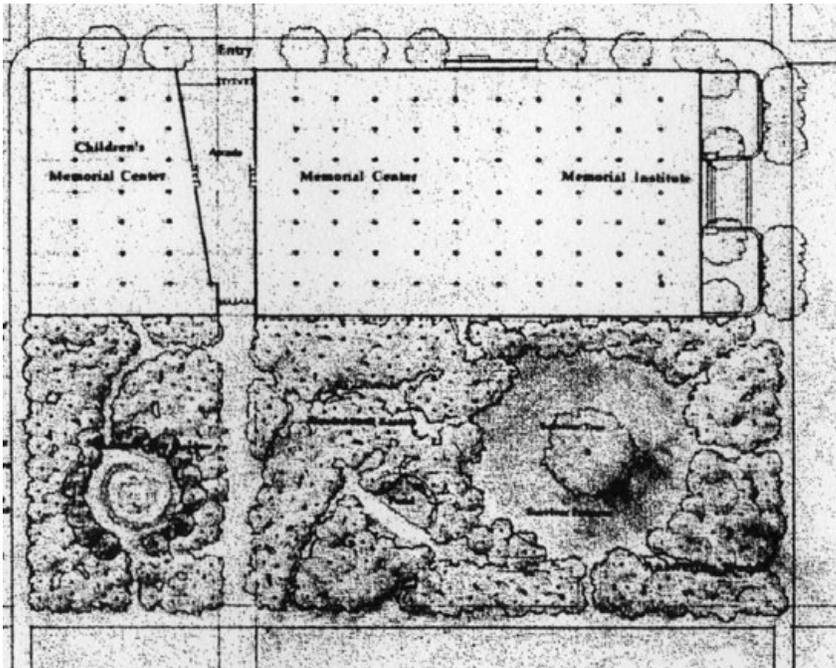


Figure 4.21 — This submission proposed an entirely separate memorial center to present the bombing in a manner that would be appropriate for children, allowing the “adult” memorial center to be considerably more graphic in tone and purpose. The “Answering Wood” is represented as a forest, including a clearing, south of the building.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.)

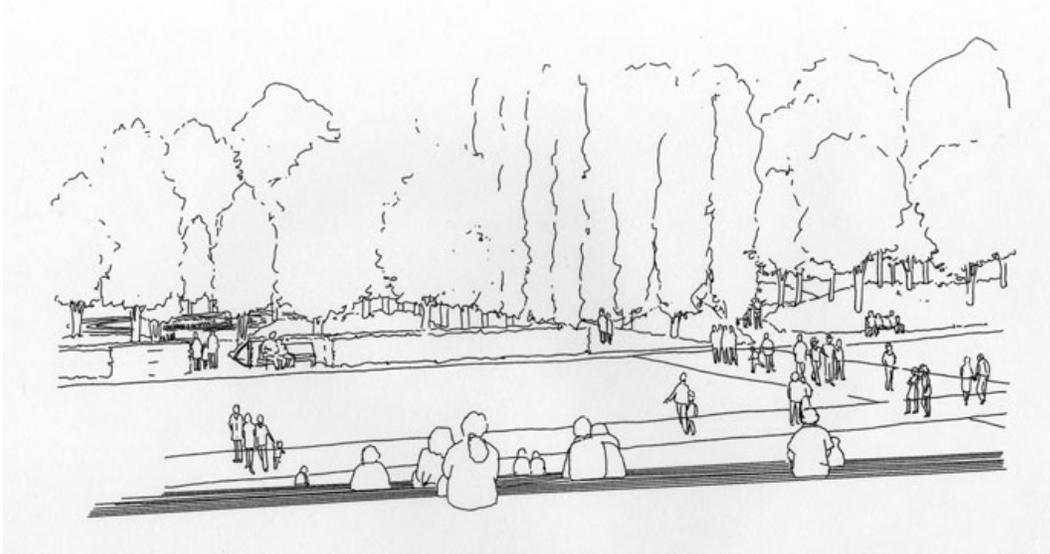


Figure 4.22 — View from The Footfalls on to the 5th Street Lawn.
 (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

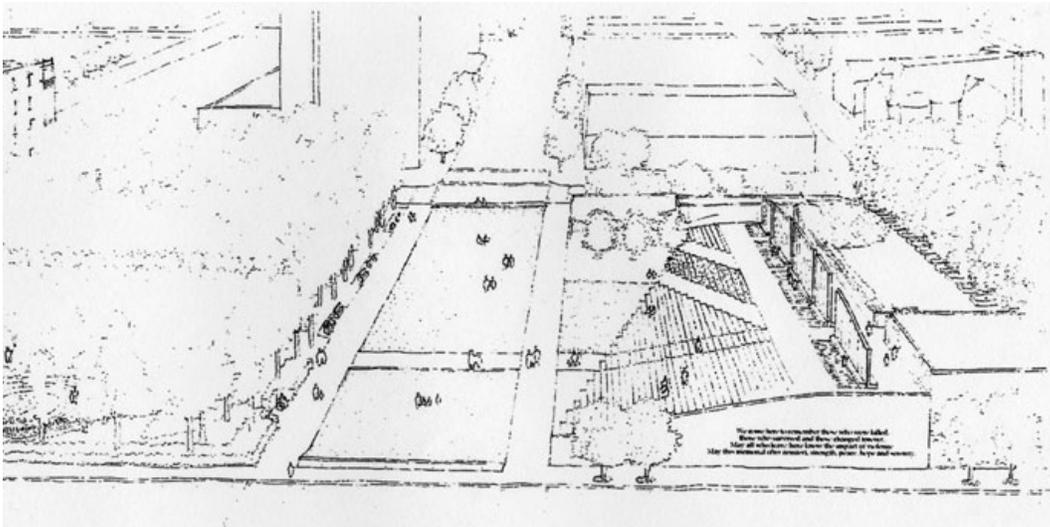


Figure 4.23 —The 5th Street Lawn (center) provides a location for civic performance and spectacle, to be observed from the large, urban scaled staircase (the Footfalls) leading to the glass memorial (the Echo Wall) located atop of the Murrah memorial plaza. The Answering Wood is located to the left of the 5th Street Lawn and offers a visitor of walking through an urban forest as they enter or exit the memorial center.
 (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

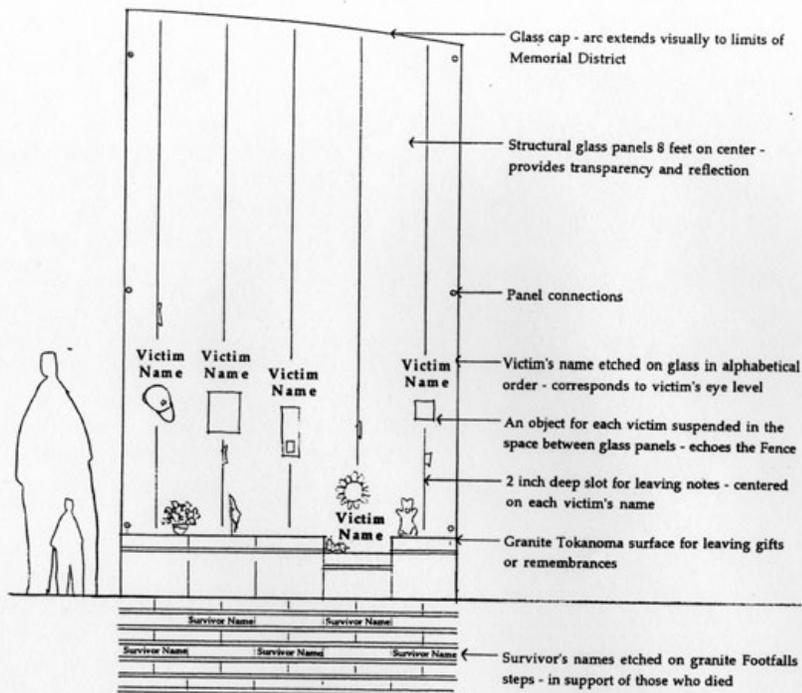
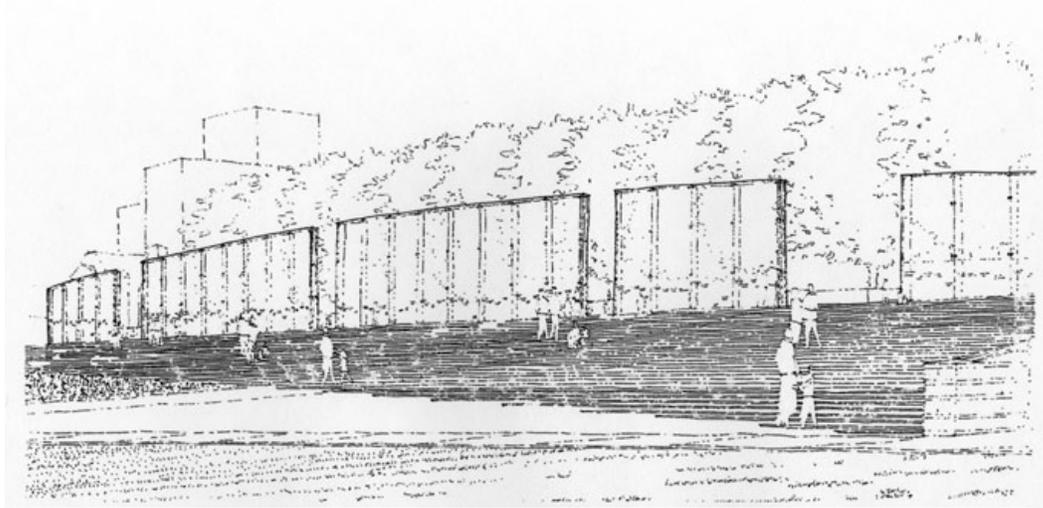


Figure 4.24 — The Echo Wall at the top of the “Footfalls.” (Top) and initial construction details (Above). (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

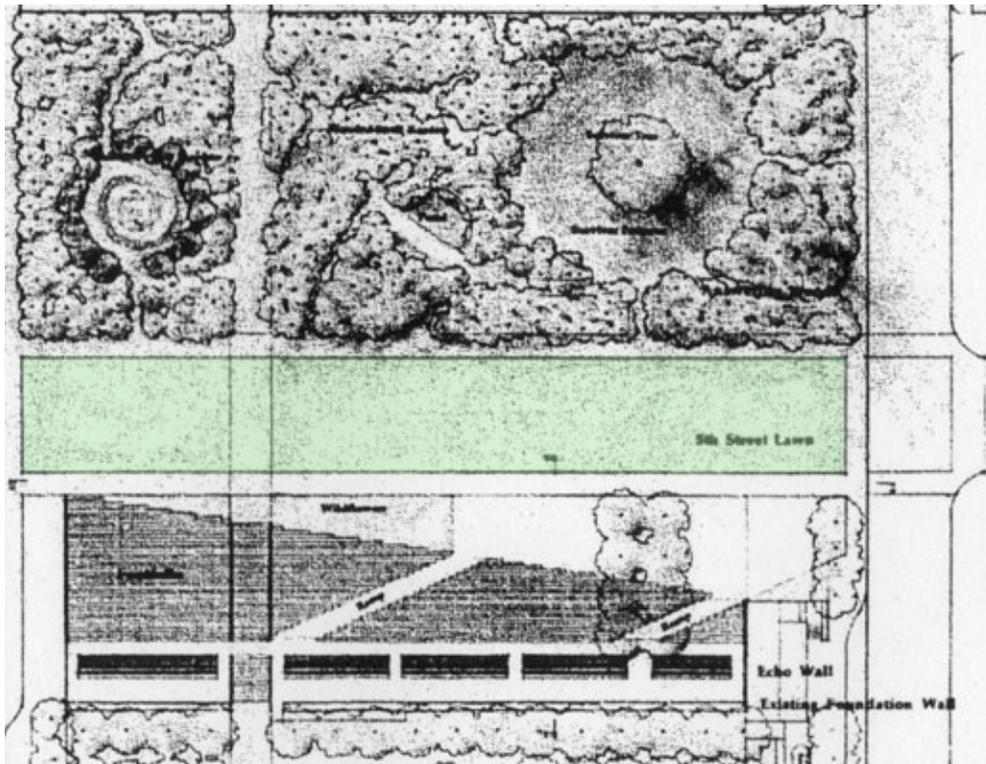


Figure 4.25 — The 5th Street Lawn (shown in green) separates the Answering Wood from the Footfalls and the Echo Wall. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

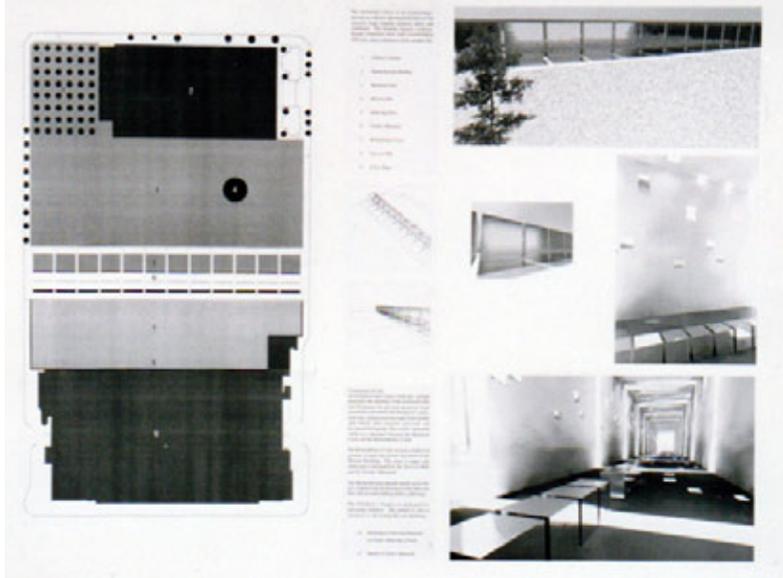


Figure 4.26 — Brian Branstetter & Kyle Casper's submission to the design competition.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.27 -

Branstetter &
Casper's model.

(Image courtesy of
the Oklahoma City
National Memorial
and Museum
Archive).

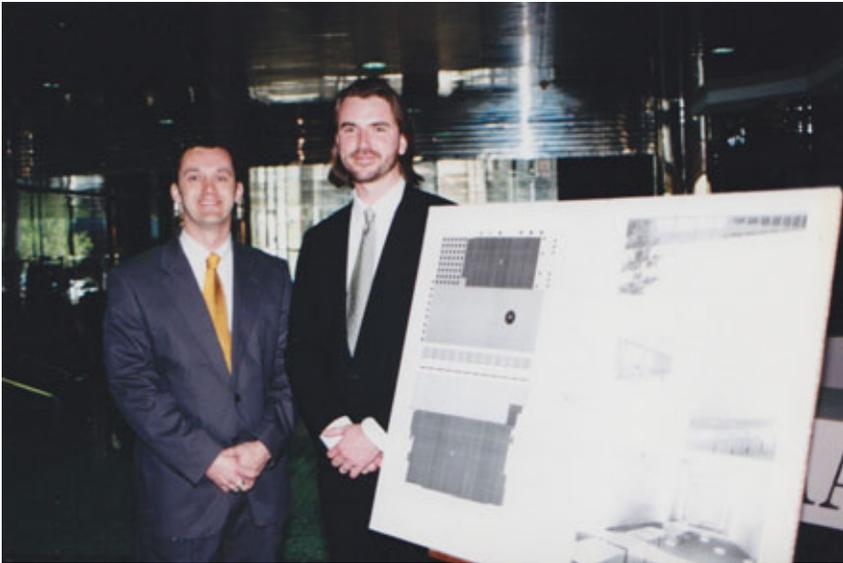


Figure 4.28 — Brian
Branstetter & Kyle
Casper with their
entry.

(Image courtesy of
the Oklahoma City
National Memorial
and Museum).

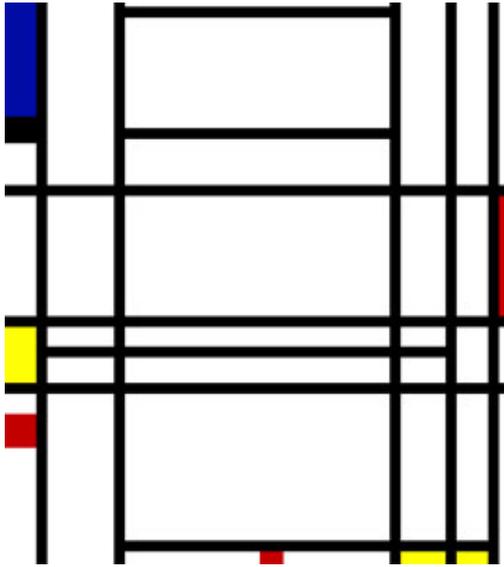


Figure 4.29 — (Left) Piet Mondrian, Composition No. 10, 1939-42. Oil on Canvas, 80 x 73 cm (left)

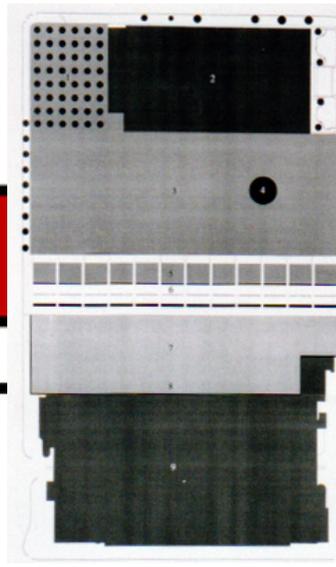


Figure 4.30 — (Right) Portion of Brian Branstetter's & Kyle Casper's submission (right).

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

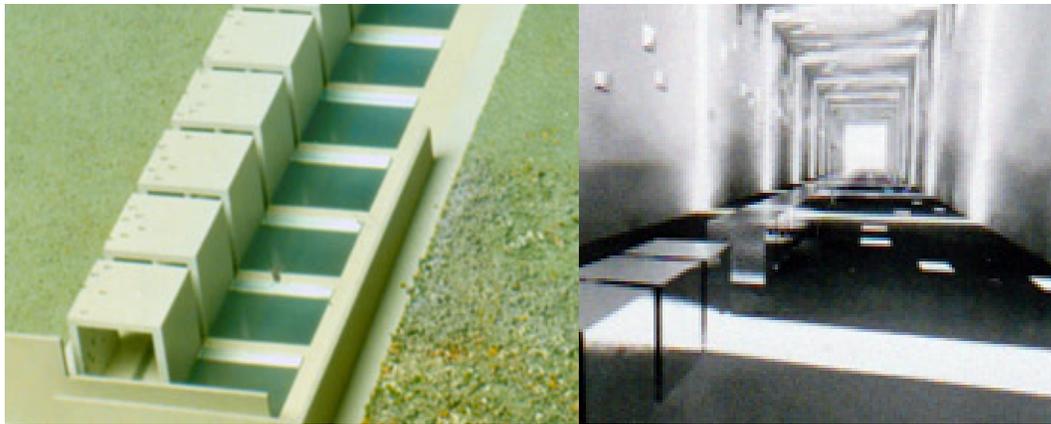


Figure 4.31 — While originally drawn as thin conceptual bridges in the original submission, these thin connections became actual bridges providing pedestrian access to the series of interventions on site, as show in this selection of a figure walking towards one of the memorial “chapels.” (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.32 — Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* (1973-1976). The design submitted by Brian Branstetter and Kyle Casper is reminiscent of Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels*, which are aligned to the angle of the rising and setting sun on the day of the solstices. Each tunnel possesses a series of holes which correspond to a different stellar constellation, which then is represented on the interior of each tunnel, and constantly moves as the sun tracks across the sky. The design submitted by Branstetter and Casper would have illuminated the name of a victim of the bombing on the respective day of their birth.

(Above left image is from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sun_Tunnel.jpg, taken by Calvin Chu, and the above right image is from, *Land and Environmental Art*, edited by Jeffrey Kastner (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), p. 89.



Figure 4.33 — Notre Dame du Haut, Le Corbusier, (1954). In terms of an architectural precedence for the submission, Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France has an obvious presence, most notably the windows inserted into the southern wall of the chapel. The use of the term "sanctuary" within the text of the competition entry was the only explicit reference to a religious space in all of the selected finalists.

(Above left image is from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Notre_Dame_du_Haut_2_-_Ronchamp.jpg and the above right image is from, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ronchamp_012.jpg.)

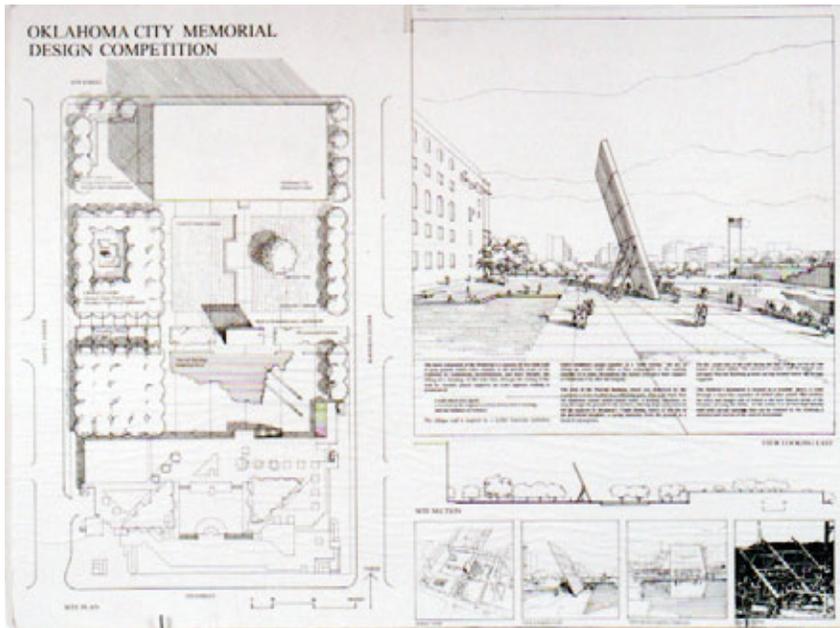


Figure 4.34 — James Rossant & Richard Scherr's submission, complete with a 60 foot tall, "tilting wall."

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

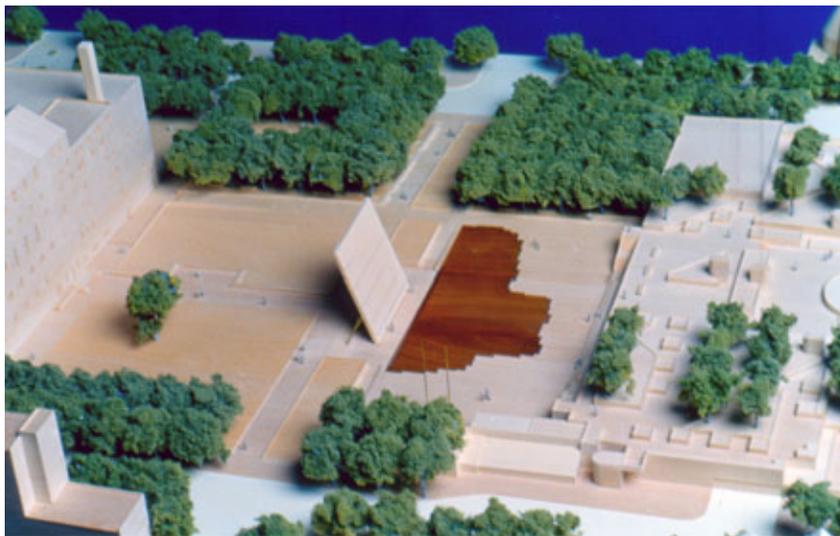


Figure 4.35 — James Rossant & Richard Scherr's model, with the "tilting wall" acting as a central feature. Also notice the marking of the collapsed section of the Alfred P. Murrah Building through the use of a reflection pool, here indicated by a darker stained wood. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

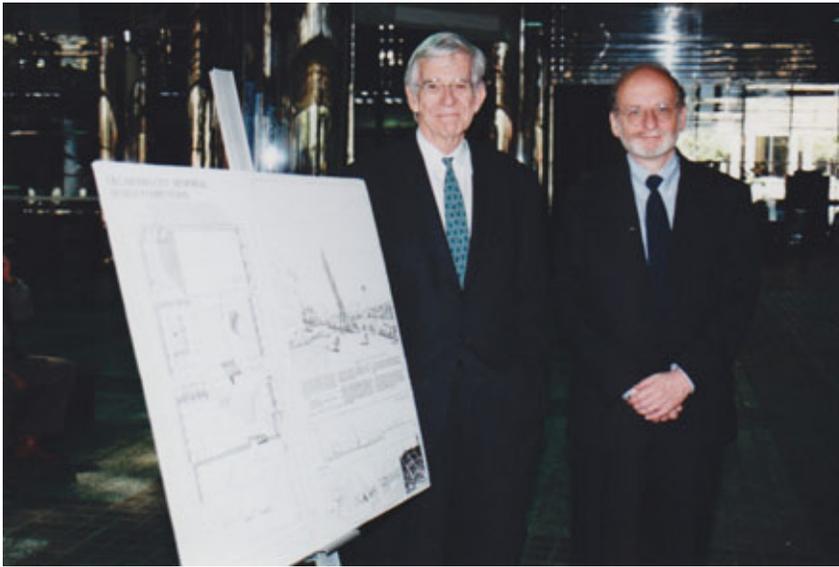


Figure 4.36 — James Rossant (on the left) and Richard Scherr (right) with their submission.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

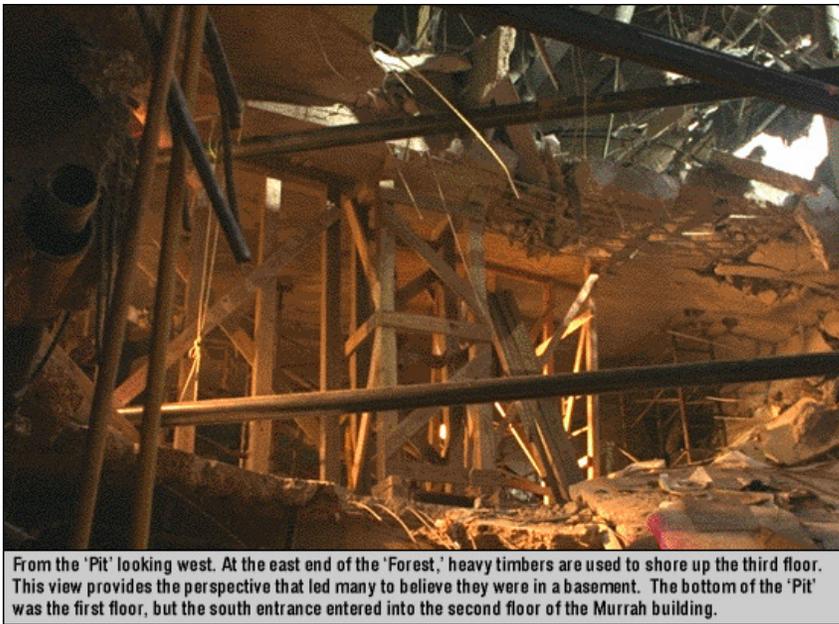


Figure 4.37 — Image of the temporary supports used to support the third floor during search and rescue and recovery operations in the former Federal Building.

Image Source, *The Final Report*, The City of Oklahoma City. April 19, 1995. Compact Disk. Produced by Haukon Associates, Global Information Resources, Inc. and Campaign Technologies Inc. (1996).

From the 'Pit' looking west. At the east end of the 'Forest,' heavy timbers are used to shore up the third floor. This view provides the perspective that led many to believe they were in a basement. The bottom of the 'Pit' was the first floor, but the south entrance entered into the second floor of the Murrah building.

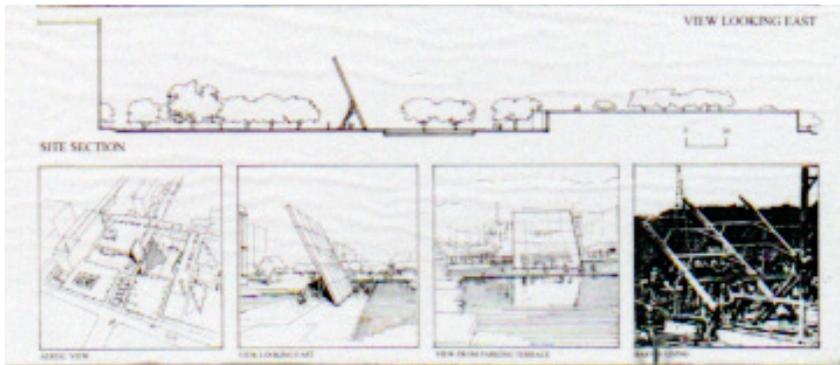


Figure 4.38 — Close up selection of Rossant & Scherr's submission indicating the massive leaning wall, and the reference to a barn raising located at the bottom right. (Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

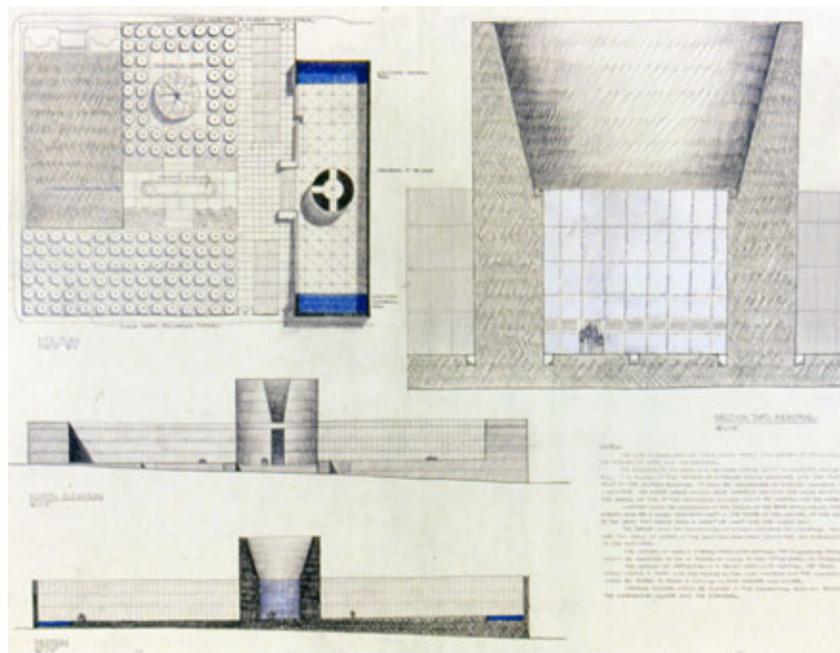


Figure 4.39 — Competition Entry # 1299 by Bluden, Barclay & Robbie Associates. This scheme reconstructs the former federal building's entrance on its former footprint. While the reconstruction is a stylized representation, the architectural details, such as the manner in which glass and concrete are assembled, provide enough visual cues to link the former building with this smaller gateway into sacred territory.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.40 — Competition Entry # 1238 by Bob Cornell, Harold Rogers, and Thomas Rangy. This scheme reconstructs not only an identical representation of the former federal building, but also the damage that was inflicted. In effect this submission tries to not only rebuild the building but also construct a ruin to the building as well.



Figure 4.41 — Competition Entry # 1699 by Leos Heder and Mags Harries. This submission envisions the future of the site firmly rooted as an architectural ruin. Although the former federal building was completely demolished and hauled away from site, many submissions saw the image of the wounded federal building as an iconic image that needed to be reintroduced into the site.



Looking north from the Alfred P. Murrah building. The roof and front of the Water Resources Board and Athenian buildings are visible, as well as the west end of the parking lot.

Figure 4.42 — Rossant & Scherr mark the presence of the two *other* buildings that were damaged and removed from the site. The building was a popular restaurant frequented by staff who worked in the federal building. Image Source, *The Final Report*, The City of Oklahoma City. April 19, 1995. Compact Disk. Produced by Haukon Associates, Global Information Resources, Inc. and Campaign Technologies Inc. (1996). Image #511.



From the Regency Towers apartments looking east on 5th Street. The Murrah building and surrounding structures stand alone while bomb squad personnel determine if there was indeed another explosive device. The Water Resources Board, Athenian building, Journal Record building (with a portion of the roof missing) and the YMCA surround the parking lot containing the burned out shells of dozens of vehicles.

Figure 4.43 — The Water Resource Board was also demolished. Rossant & Scherr's scheme marked the footprint through the introduction of a dense bosquet of trees. Image Source, *The Final Report*, The City of Oklahoma City. April 19, 1995. Compact Disk. Produced by Haukon Associates, Global Information Resources, Inc. and Campaign Technologies Inc. (1996). Image # 123.



Figure 4.44 — On April 19, 1997 the five selected finalists, and their designs, were introduced to the citizens of Oklahoma City.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.45 — Hanno Weber & Associates' submission.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.46 —
Susan Herrington &
Mark Stankard's
submission.

(Image courtesy of
the Oklahoma City
National Memorial
and Museum).



Figure 4.47 — Brian
Branstetter &
Kyle Casper's
Submission.

(Image courtesy of
the Oklahoma City
National Memorial
and Museum).



Figure 4.48 — James Rossant & Richard Scherr's submission.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.49 — Hans and Torrey Butzer's (with Sven Berg) submission.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



Figure 4.50 — The revealing of the Butzer Design Partnership's submission.

(Image courtesy of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

Figure 4.51 — Text from Hanno Weber & Associates Submission.

“The most powerful and universally shared human symbol is the Circle. A reaffirmation of the cosmos – here on earth – circles engender realms that surround us and bring us together to share a common experiences and spiritual concerns. The form also conveys in all cultures the setting apart, the defining and delimiting of consecrated, uplifting dominions.

In this design proposal, a thick wall encircles a contemplative setting and removes visitors from the unrestrained existing surrounding context, the wall coping in turn becomes a circumambulating path bordered by 168 columnar cypresses, accompanying the surviving elm, creating a diadem of sentinels as the perennial custodians of hallowed ground.

Within the wall, the space is claimed by a sloping lawn. A peaceful meadow for reflection focusing on a water table occupies the circular segment preempting most of the Murrah Building footprint. Water – the source of all life – is allowed to trickle into a well located at the epicenter of the bomb blast; on the surrounding background wall are incorporated the names of those who died.

Outside the wall, a bosque of hawthorns in linear planters mediates the consecrated precinct to the site topography. Sidewalks are lined by black locusts. Access to the wall circle is provided at grade next to the surviving elm. While bridges connect the path to the Memorial Center and to ramps and stairs link the GSA Plaza, the names of survivors are incorporated on new cladding on the north wall of the GSA garage.”

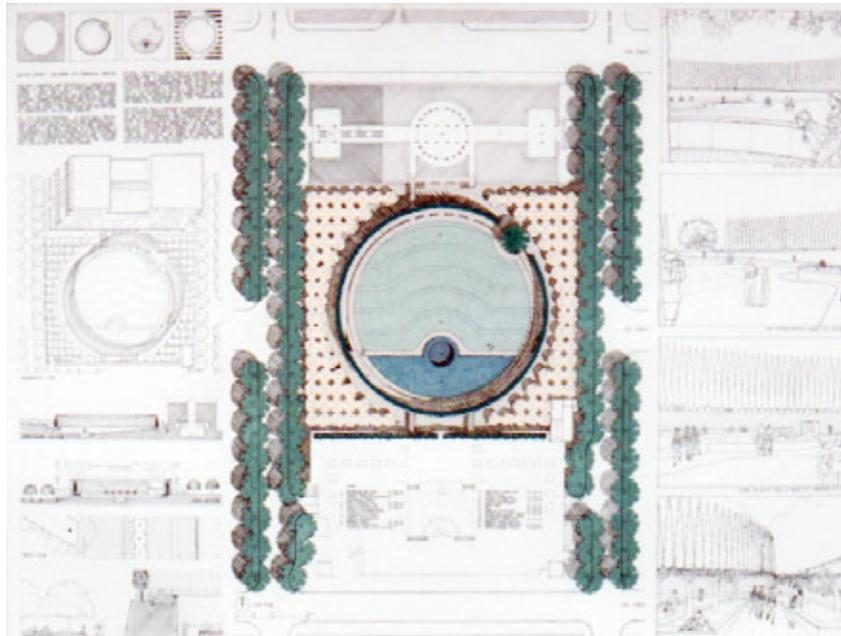


Figure 4.52 — Text from Herrington & Stankard’s “Footfalls Echo the Memory” submission.

“Coming here we pass through the Answering Wood where quotes from the survivors appear etched on the surface of the walks. The Survivor Tree stands in a clearing as a resilient sign of hope. The comforting sounds and sights of children playing are a daily reminder of this hope.

We cross the expanse of the 5th Street Lawn commemorating the rescue effort. The granite Footfalls offer ascent through to the sacred ground of the Echo Wall. We stand over the steel grate threshold to see our reflection in the glass:
read the names of the victims
place a remembrance on the tokanoma
touch the glass surface
hear the echoing of remnant sounds
and feel the inert dampness of the void below.”

“The Survivor Preserve is the untouched ground approximately 50 feet in diameter that encircles the Survivor’s Tree. The blooming of the Survivor’s Tree is an inspiration for all the different types of trees planted in the Answering Wood. Throughout the Wood quotes from survivors are inscribed into the walks. The Survivor Tree will be illuminated at night with ground level up lighting.”

“The northern part of the Children’s Play Garden is the active entrance area for the large motor and sensory motor activities. A grassy mound and stepping stones evoke curiosity. It also provides a landmark and lookout for children. A water rill running from a child sized fountain can be followed throughout the garden. Play props from the garden (leaves, twigs) can be floated down the rill.”

“The southern part of the Children’s Play garden is designed for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Nineteen trees of different varieties are planted to commemorate a child killed. The tree circle embraces a spiral sensory-motor garden where young children can play and interact with natural things. The spiral is created using non-toxic, hardy shrubs and perennials of varying texture and color. The height (2 feet) of these plants will allow for adult supervision, but will create mystery for small children.”

“The Wooded Stroll Garden provides a serene informal landscape of varying canopy trees, crushed stone pathways, and plant covered mounds. Quotes from survivors will be collected and etched into the stone edging of the paths that will also contain benches and lighting. The trees and flowering ground covers, and other plant material native to Oklahoma nurture and comfort our spirits. Flowering ground covers are chosen to bloom in mid-April.”



Figure 4.53 — Text from Brian Branstetter & Kyle Casper's submission.

“CELEBRATION OF LIFE:

The Memorial's focus is on relationships. Serving as a device, the Memorial must reveal emotion, hope, tragedy, memory, spirit and continuity. The dynamic human condition, though sometimes beset with overwhelming difficulty, must continue to look towards life.

At 12 noon on each victim's birth date, sunlight penetrates the openings of the memorial walls and illuminates the personal memorial. Each memorial is inscribed with the person's name, birth date, and personal messages from friends and family and contains personal and devotional belongings. The Victim's Memorial stands as a sanctuary between the Memorial Lawn and the Remembrance Court.

The Remembrance Court, treated as hallowed ground, occupies the former foot print of the Murrah Building. The court is empty and silent and is surrounded by the Survivor's Wall, and the Victim's Memorial.

The Memorial Lawn spreads openly across the site, emphasizing the presence of the Survivor's Tree and accommodating public gatherings.

The Children's Garden is dedicated to educating children. The garden is also a transition to the Journal Records Building.”

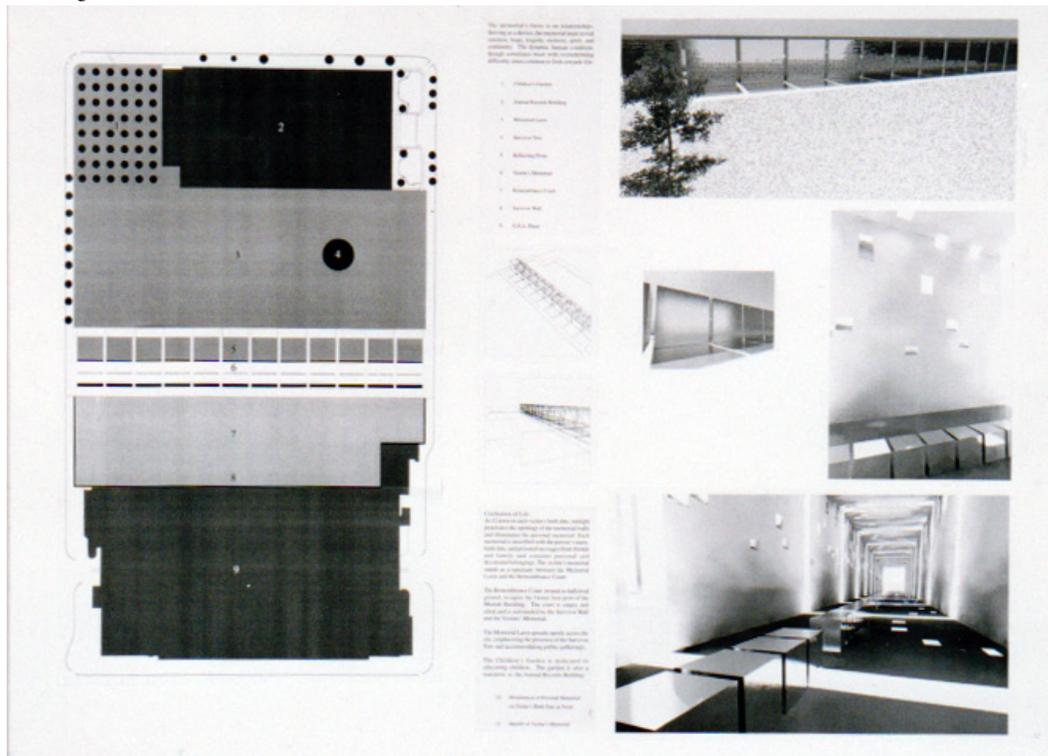
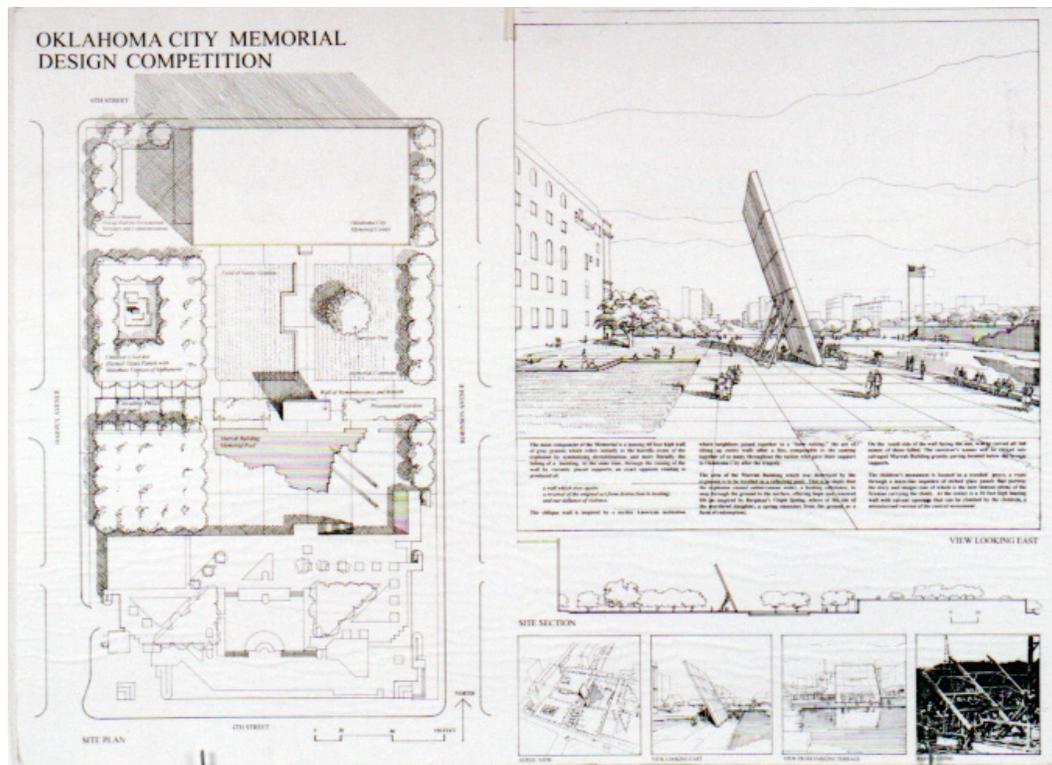


Figure 4.54 — Text from James Rossant & Richard Scherr’s submission.

“The main component of the memorial is a leaning 60 foot high wall of gray granite which refers initially to the horrific event of the explosion by symbolizing destabilization and more literally, the falling of a building. At the same time, through the raising of the wall by variably placed supports, an exact opposite reading of: a wall which rises again; a reversal of the original act from destruction to healing; and our defiance of violence.

The oblique wall is inspired by the mythic American institution where neighbors joined together in a “barn raising.” The act of tilting up entire walls after a fire, is comparable to the coming together of so many throughout the nation who gave their support to Oklahoma City after the tragedy. The area of the Murrah building which was destroyed by the explosion is to be recalled in a reflecting pool. This is to imply that the explosion caused subterranean water, a healing substance, to seep through the ground to the surface, offering hope and renewed life (as inspired by Bergman’s Virgin Spring, where at the site of a murdered daughter, a spring emanates from the grounds as a form of redemption.)

On the south side of the wall facing the sun, will be carved all 168 names of those killed. Survivor’s names will be carved into salvaged Murrah Building granite paving located below the bronze supports. The children’s monument is located in a wooded grove, a route through a maze-like sequence of etched glass panels that portray the story and images. At the center is a 10 high leaning wall with cut-out openings that can be climbed by the children, a miniature version of the central monument.”



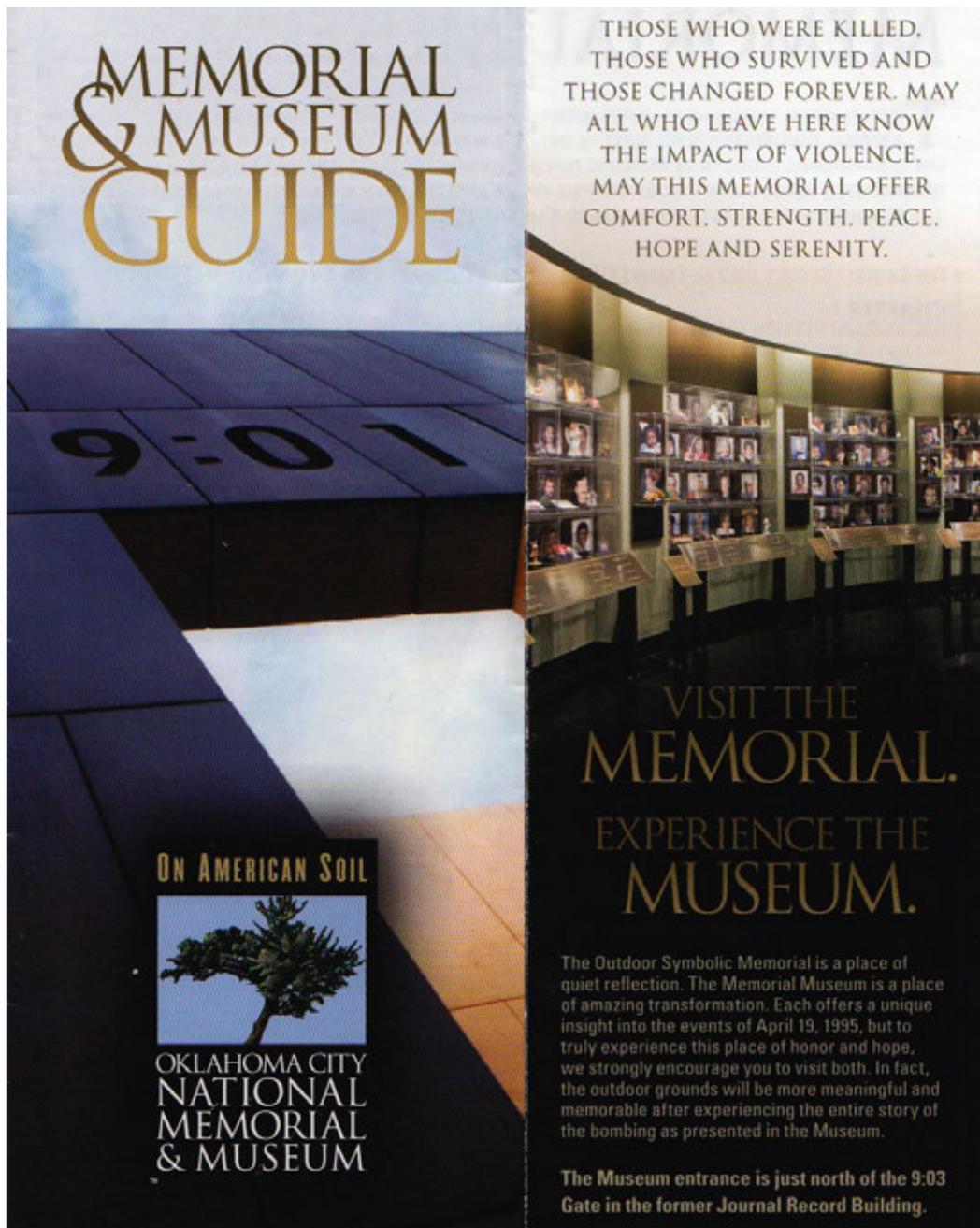


Figure 5.00 — Scan of *Memorial & Museum Guide*. The guide promises that the museum “is a place of amazing transformation.” (Source: *Memorial & Museum Guide*, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).



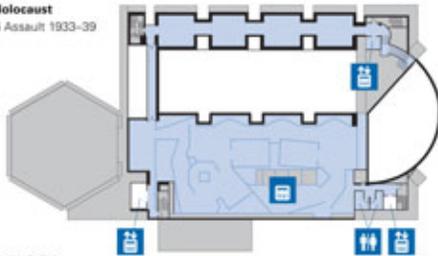
Figure 5.01 — The entrance to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.
(Source: Personal Photograph).

MUSEUM FLOOR PLAN

FOURTH FLOOR

Permanent Exhibition
Begins here

- The Holocaust
 - Nazi Assault 1933-39



THIRD FLOOR

Permanent Exhibition
Continues

- The Holocaust
 - "Final Solution" 1940-45

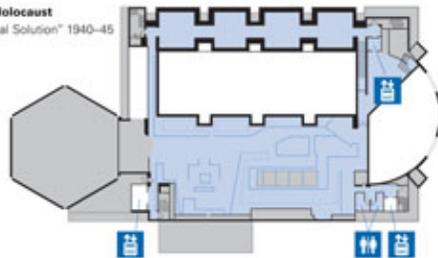


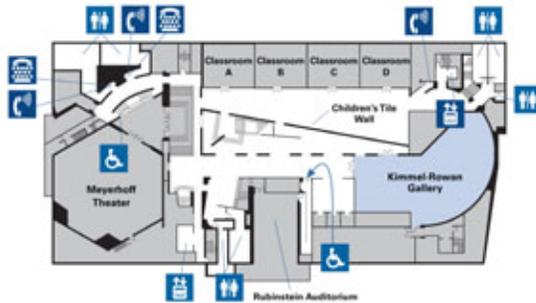
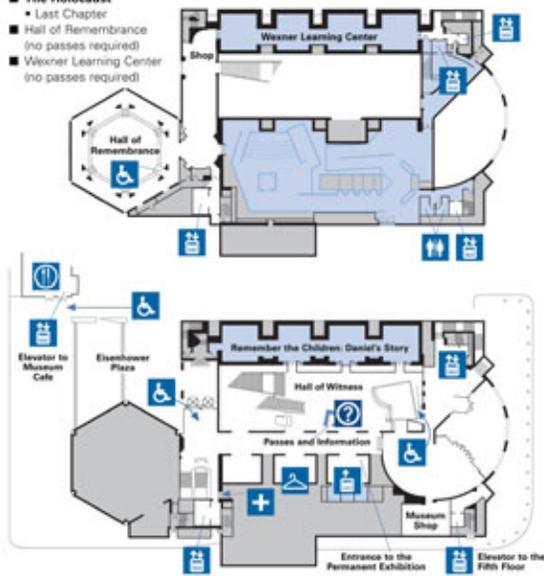
Figure 5.02 — The floor plan to the National Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C. that establishes a time line for a visitor's spatial experience of the memorial museum. As a visitor walks through the display spaces, they experience a orderly chronological sequence that details the rise of National Socialism within Germany, and Hitler's rise to power.

(Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. <http://www.ushmm.org/information/plan-a-visit/museum-accessibility-guide>. Accessed Sept. 24, 2013).

SECOND FLOOR

Permanent Exhibition Concludes

- **The Holocaust**
 - Last Chapter
- Hall of Remembrance (no passes required)
- Wexner Learning Center (no passes required)



◀ **FIRST FLOOR**

- Will Pass and Information Desk
- Entrance elevator to the Permanent Exhibition
- Exhibition **The Holocaust** (passes required)
- Remember the Children: Daniel's Story** (no passes required)
- Museum Shop
- Elevator to Library, Archives, and Photographic Reference Collection (Fifth Floor)
- Access to Eisenhower Plaza and Museum Cafe

▲ **LOWER LEVEL**

- Meyerhoff Theater
- Rubinstein Auditorium
- Kimmel-Rowan Gallery (no passes required)
- Gonda Education Center (Classrooms A-D)
- Children's Tile Wall

■ **Exhibition Areas**

This publication has been made possible through the generosity of an anonymous donor.

Figure 5.02 (cont.) — The floor plan to the National Holocaust Memorial in Washington, D. C. establishes a time line for a visitor's spatial experience as they walk through the museum's exhibits.

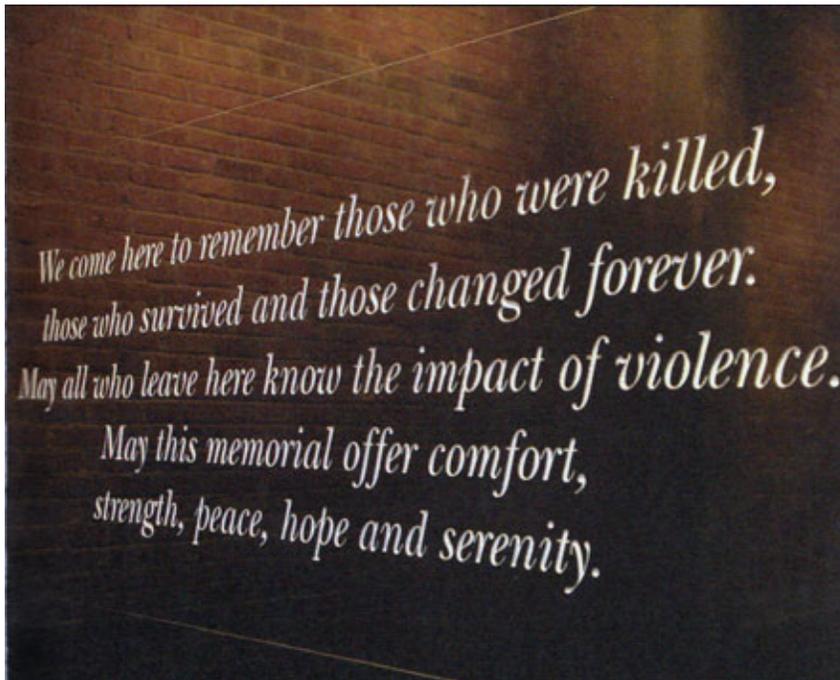


Figure 5.03 — The mission statement for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum is one of the first displays that a visitor experiences as they enter the memorial museum.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 1).



Figure 5.04 — The web site for the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum highlighted its financial independence from the federal government in the fall of 2013, as shown from this image capture.

(Source: The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum web site, <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org> Accessed, October 4, 2013.



Figure 5.05 — The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum recently established the “9:03 Fund” to “preserve and beautify” the lasting legacy of the bombing. (Source: *9:03 Fund: Preserving the Legacy*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, 2013 Funding Request Mailer).



Figure 5.05 (cont.)
— Within the mailer, a detailed cost analysis is provided for the museum component, stating that the annual operation cost totals \$1,587,695.

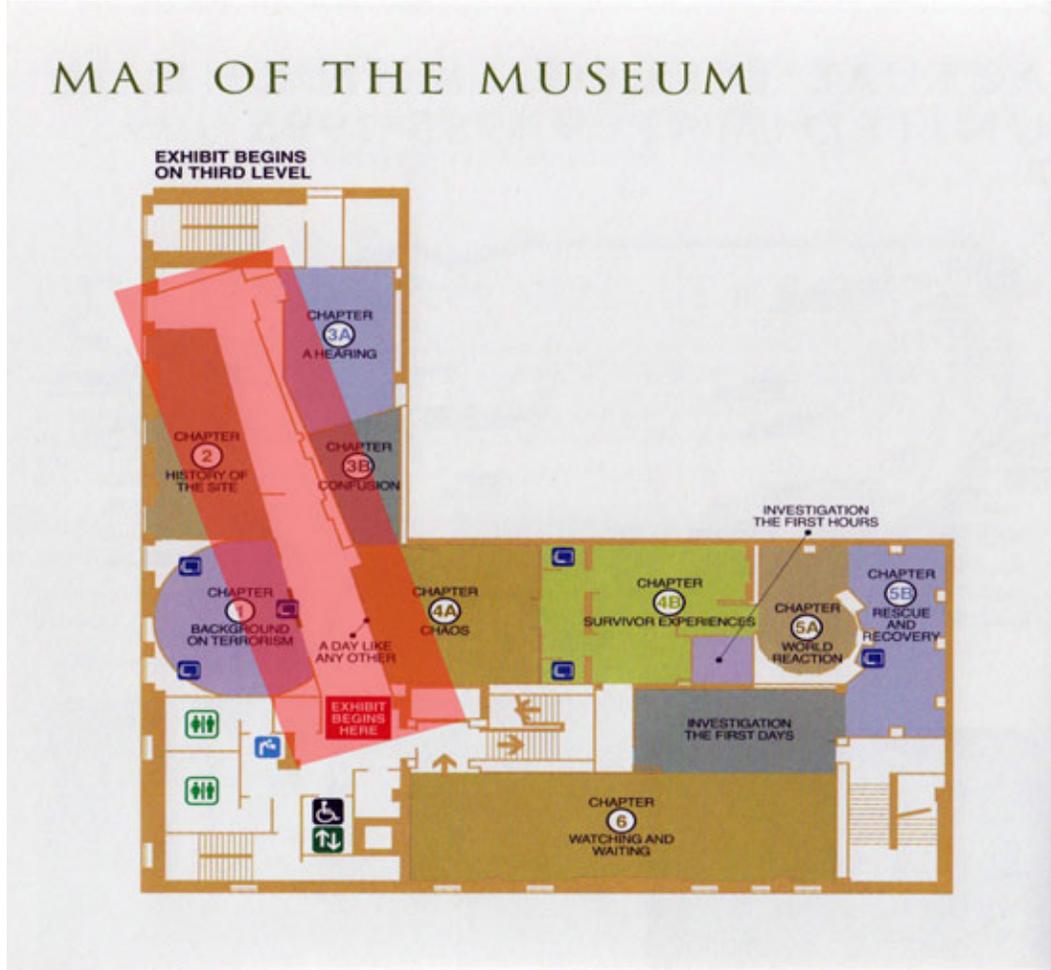


Figure 5.06 — The floor plan elongates the spatial experience of a visitor by rotating the angle of orientation of the hallway. (Indicated in red). This angle also creates a series of disorienting spaces within Chapter 3B - *Confusion* and Chapter 4A - *Chaos*.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 9).

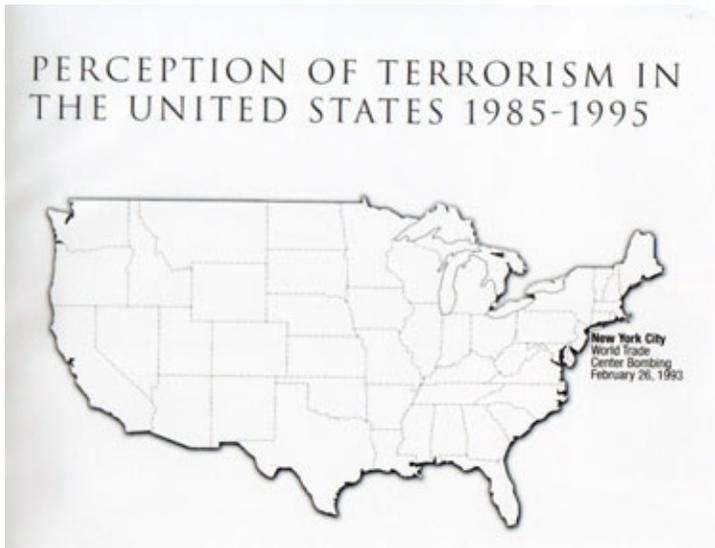


Figure 5.07 — The first official exhibit that a visitor encounters concerns the perception of terrorism within the United States from 1985 to 1995. The memorial museum wanted to counter the perception that there were few incidents of terrorism within the United States in the ten years leading up to the bombing.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 7).

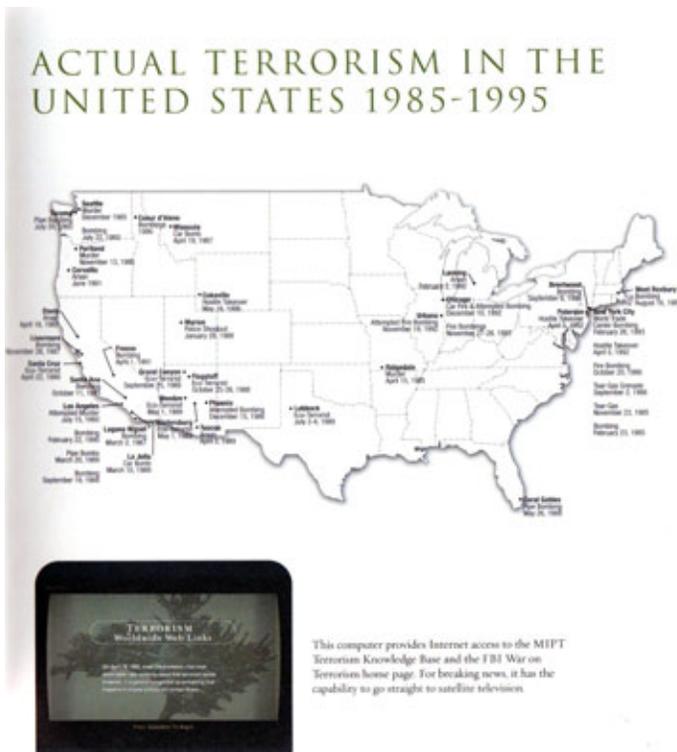


Figure 5.08 — The memorial museum achieved this through the citation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's statistics concerning events that the FBI had specified as acts of Terrorism. This use of the FBI statistics provides evidence that the incidents of terror attacks were much more frequent, and occurred throughout the nation.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 8).



Figure 5.09 — Alfred P. Murrah, Federal Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, 1940 - 1970.

(Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, 21412. M466.6. The Barney Hillerman Collection, Photographs Box 9. The Judge Murrah ACCT.

Accessed via, <https://okhistory.cuadra.com/starweb3/l.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb3#?>, September 14, 2013).



Figure 5.10 — The architectural rendering of the recreated Water Resource Board Hearing Room within the memorial Museum. The images of the 168 people killed are not always visible as shown here, but are instead backlit after the tape recording that captures the sound of the explosion is played.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 92).



Figure 5.11 — The image above, taken from a helicopter, shows the portion of the building subject to the structural collapse caused by the explosion, and the remaining portion of the building.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 19).



Figure 5.12 — The shape of the floor plan (left) for Chapters 3B - *Confusion* and 4A- *Chaos* assists in presenting the visitor with a sense of disorientation, partially from the jagged and odd shape of the exhibit room itself.

(Source: *Memorial & Museum Guide*, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

Figure 5.13 — The displays (below) that fill the fore mentioned exhibit spaces also augment this uneasy and disoriented feeling, by preventing a clear line of sight to the next exhibit space, physically confronting the visitor with images from the immediate aftermath of the explosion.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 29).





Figure 5.14 — A large portion of the first exhibits that a visitor experiences consist of the everyday material culture, sanctified and elevated to a status of relic because of their owner's death.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 35).

The displays (below) that fill the fore mentioned exhibit spaces also augment this uneasy and disoriented feeling, by preventing a clear line of sight to the next exhibit space, physically confronting the visitor with images in the immediate aftermath of the explosion.

(Source: *9:03 Fund: Preserving the Legacy*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, 2013 Funding Request Mailer).



“And he liked being around sheep,
especially petting baby lambs.”

— Description of victim Blake Ryan Kennedy (from *Oklahoma Today*)

CHAPTER 7- GALLERY OF HONOR

This gallery is an exhibit of lives lost – a multifaceted portrait of one number with 168 faces. These are the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Family members were asked to provide a photograph and an item from their loved one's life to be placed in a shadow box. Each photograph carries a diverse palette of consequences. A child practices her spelling words alone, a husband is joined at breakfast only by the newspaper, a mother never sees her daughter walk down the aisle.

There can be no box large enough to contain the life that should be there instead.

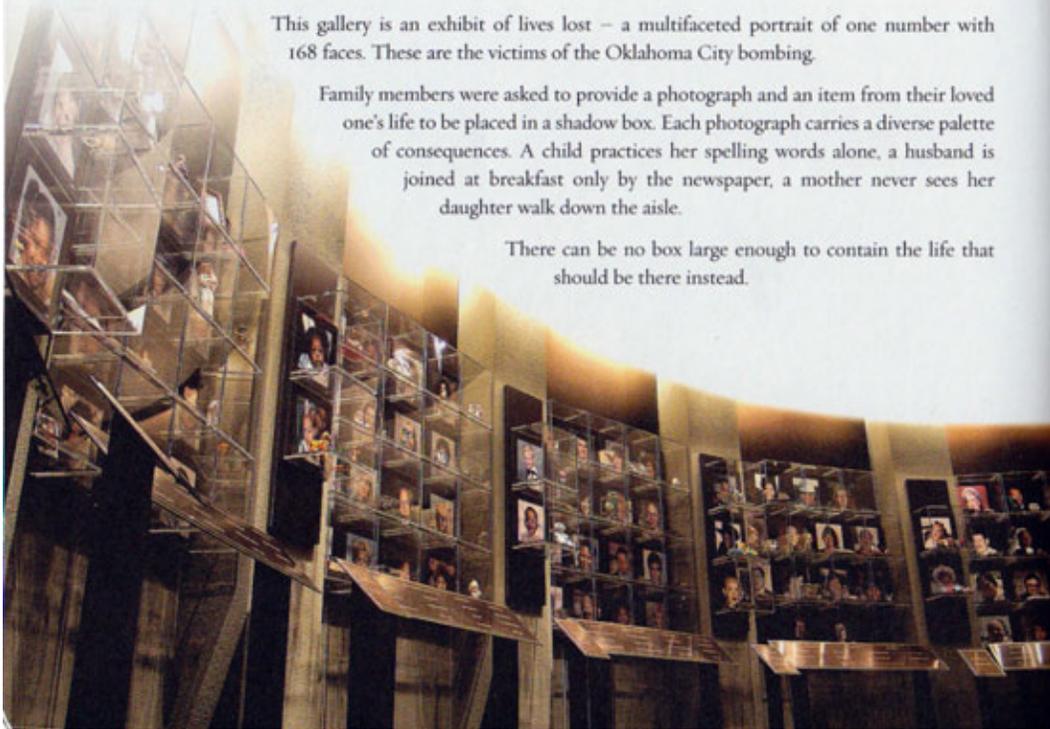


Figure 5.15 — The Gallery of Honor attempts to document the lives of the 168 people killed in the April 19, 1995 bombing, through the use of a photograph as a backdrop to a family selected and donated object requested by the memorial foundation that “represented” their loved one.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, p. 71).



Figure 5.16 — The home page for the Precious Moments Figurine Company, based in Carthage Missouri.

(Source: <http://www.preciousmoments.com/?atrkid=VIADW2B186C04-2614593779-k-precious%20moments-33330041099-e-g-m-1t1&gclid=CNvxipW1jr0CFchFMgoduzsAtg> Accessed, October 2, 2013).



Figure 5.17 — The now iconic image of firefighter Chris Fields checking for vital signs in the lifeless body of infant Baylee Almon. The photograph won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Spot News Photography. (<http://www.pulitzer.org/citation/1996-Spot-News-Photography>). Photograph by Charles Porter IV.

(Source: *Newsweek*, May 1, 1995).



Figure 5.18 — The Precious Moments Figurine Company offered to produce a collectable figurine of the famous photograph taken by Charles Porter IV, providing the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation a large scale prototype. Originally intended to assist the Memorial Foundation as a fund raiser, the foundation politely declined the company's offer. The playhouse to the immediate left of the prototype was the children's outdoor playhouse at the day care facility within the Murrah building. (Source: Personal Photograph).



Figure 5.19 — The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum has a physical store within the museum as well as an online store.

(Source: <http://store.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org>, Accessed October 2, 2013).

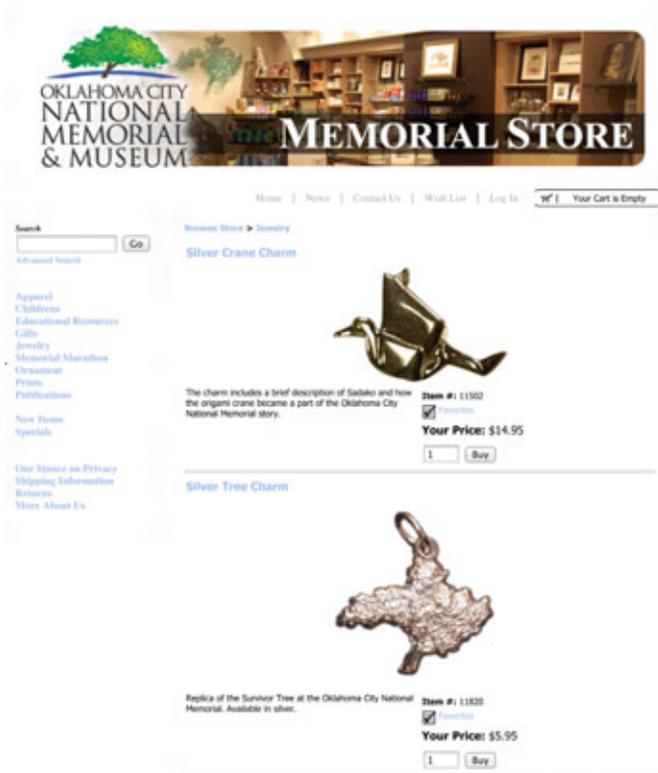


Figure 5.20 — The opportunity to purchase mementos such as post cards, fridge magnets and charms for charm bracelets assists the Memorial Foundation with their financial obligations and responsibilities.

(Source: <http://store.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org>, Accessed October 2, 2013).



Figure 5.21 — The police sketch and the accompanying booking photograph taken by the State Highway Patrol are the only instances of Timothy McVeigh's image appearing within the memorial complex.

(Source: *A Museum Walking Tour*. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, no publisher specified, April 2006, pp. 63-64).

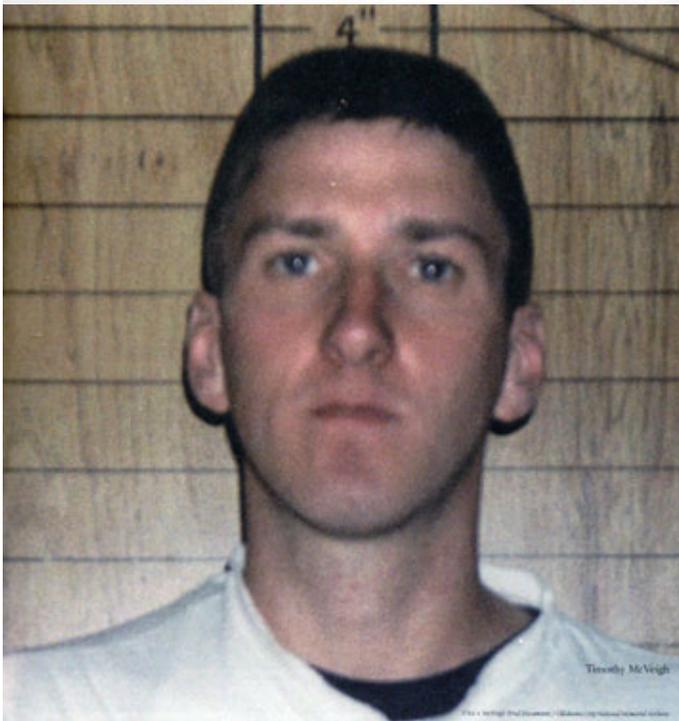




Figure 5.22 — The Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas established a small memorial to the victims of the Oklahoma City Bombing.

(Source: Personal Photograph).



Figure 5.23 — The Indian Shrine Temple, located at 621 N. Robinson, Oklahoma City, April 1941. (Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, 21412. M397.11. Barney Hillerman Collection. - Photographs. - Box 6. <https://okhistory.cuadra.com/starweb3/1.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb3>).

Accessed October 4, 2013.



Figure 5.24 — The large auditorium located within the Masonic Shrine provided enough seating for 2,000 people. Photograph date unknown. (Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, 21412.M21.4. Barney Hillerman Collection. - Photographs. - Box 2. Auditorium, Indian Shrine, Masonic Temple. <https://okhistory.cuadra.com/starweb3/l.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb3>). Accessed October 4, 2013.

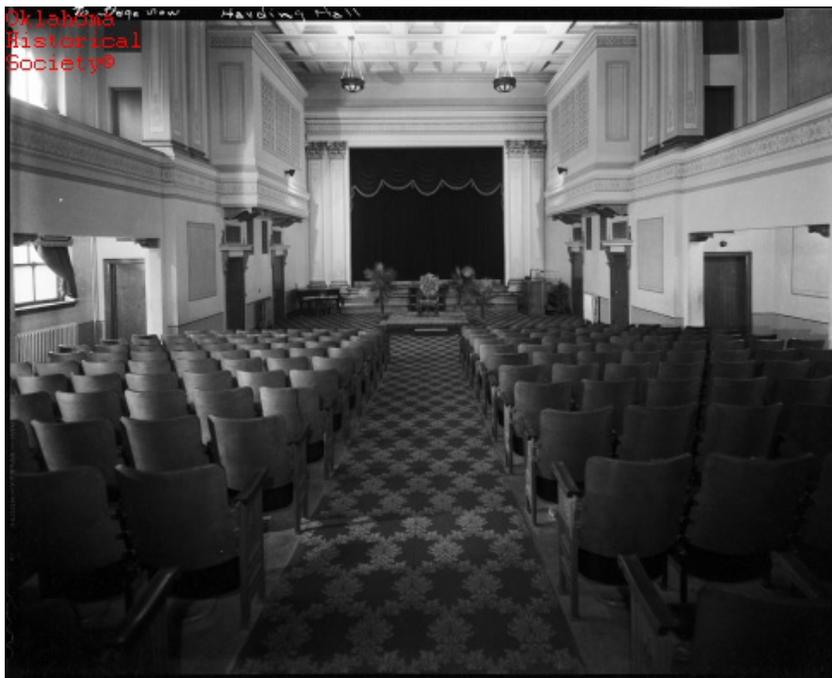


Figure 5.25 — Harding Hall sat 700 when the larger auditorium was not needed. (Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, 21412.M21.2. Barney Hillerman Collection. - Photographs. - Box 2. Masonic Temple. <https://okhistory.cuadra.com/starweb3/l.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb3>). Accessed October 4, 2013.

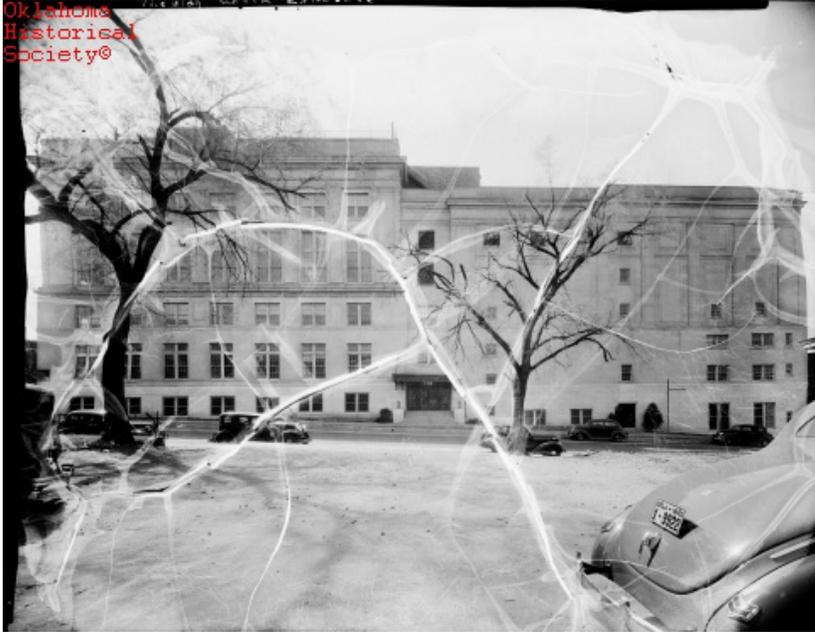


Figure 5.26 — The Indian Shrine Temple at 621 N. Robinson, looking at the building's northern facade. The 2,000 person auditorium is to the right of the entrance way appearing in the center of the building, occupying the second to fourth floors. (Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, 21412.M21.3. Barney Hillerman Collection. - Photographs. - Box 2 <https://okhistory.cuadra.com/starweb3/l.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb3>). Accessed October 4, 2013.



Figure 5.27 — The “Altar Commandry Room” or *council room* at the Indian Shrine Temple at 621 N. Robinson, with a number of architectural styles appropriated for its creation.

(Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, 21412.M21.1. Barney Hillerman Collection. - Photographs. - Box 2 <https://okhistory.cuadra.com/starweb3/l.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb3>). Accessed October 4, 2013.



Figure 5.28 — Postcard indicating the “new” Masonic Temple (The Indian Shrine Temple) within Oklahoma City, located at 621 N. Robinson Ave.

(Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society, 19425-2. Georgia Historical Quarterly Collection. - Photographs. - Box 1. Towns- Oklahoma City. <https://okhistory.cuadra.com/starweb3/l.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb3>). Accessed October 4, 2013).

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