INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

Before presenting specific information on the proposed museum to be housed in the Clark School, it has seemed to be prudent to discuss what a museum is. We can begin with the definition that a museum is an institution which possesses collections of objects of artistic, historic, or scientific value. Preservation of these collections is clearly an important component of a museum's function, but it is not the end purpose.

Exhibition is the key to understanding a museum. A museum collects and chooses its materials and arranges them into exhibitions because it has something to say—it wishes to present an idea, a concept, a fact or some combination of these goals. It is a teaching institution, whose students are visitors and whose teachers are its collections, aided by the knowledge and skill found in the staff.

A museum is one distinct type of educational institution. Among the other types are libraries, classrooms, television and a host of others. All of these are devices for the transmission of information in some way or another, and each of them has its own strengths and weaknesses. Each efficiently transmits certain kinds of information or ideas in certain ways, and each becomes less efficient when it deals with other kinds of ideas and other means of communication.

Take a library as an example. Libraries have been designed to teach by the storage and retrieval of books, it does not work well for artwork, for experiments, for movies, specially equipped facilities are required, and the library is liable to complete failure when it is used for something it was not designed to do.

A museum shares this characteristic. It can do certain well, and it does other things less well and some badly. A museum is the best device our culture has developed for the transmission of ideas to large numbers of people through the exhibition of genuine objects. This is the museum's strength. This is what it does better than any other institution. The ability to use actual objects is fundamental to a museum, so much so that it is often omitted in discussions of museums.

Like the other kinds of institutions, the museum has both strengths and weaknesses; if it abandons its strong ability to exhibit objects and moves toward the province of some other institution, its success inexorably decreases. For example, it is perfectly possible to build a motion picture theater in a museum complex and have it work quite well in a number of ways. But when a museum tries to use motion pictures as a major method of exhibition in its galleries, trouble will begin. Movies require low lighting, difficult to achieve while still leaving light enough to see the artifacts. The soundtracks and other high noise levels distract other visitors from the study of the exhibits, people coming and going are distracting as well and most important of all, visitors become very uncomfortable standing on a tile floor in one place.
There is one aspect of a museum which is often overlooked. This is the degree of active research which is carried on, night and day, behind the scenes. If it is kept in mind that a museum is an educational institution, and that its business is to teach, the importance of this research becomes obvious.

It is widely accepted that the profitable study of History demands more than just a knowledge of what took place in the past. We have to combine the various things we know about the past (SYNTHESIS); discover what the combination means (ANALYSIS); and finally, explain it all for the visitor (INTERPRETATION). The range of topics for adequate interpretation of the Oak Lawn experience will be found in outline form as Appendix One.

The need for perspective, that is a certain long view, has more important overtones for a museum than for a teacher. A museum must deal with large groups of people for brief periods, there is a distinct limit on the amount of explanation it can present. Further, it is perceived as an institution, not a person, and thus speaks with a weight of authority that few persons have. This imposes an even greater obligation on the museum to painstaking research. In short, museum staff members need to be more certain of their ground than any other historical colleague.

All of this suggests a special sort of relationship between a museum and the community it serves. A museum tends to be the arbiter and teacher of a specialized and local form of history, and in serving its community it must be aware of its limitations as well as the advantages of the sort of an institution it is.
LOCATION OF CLARK SCHOOL

The Clark School is located on 105th Street, roughly situated from Lorel Avenue (5330 West) and Laramie Avenue (5200 West). The school is situated in a residential district with an irregular street grid. Direct access is available only from Long Avenue (5400 West), Laramie Avenue and 105th Street.

Vital factors in museum operations with regard to the physical location of the Clark School will be discussed separately. It should be mentioned that the irregular street grid will lead to confusion in finding the site for first-time visitors. Also an extensive signing program will be called for on all of the three access routes to lead visitors to the site.

CENTRALLY LOCATED: This is one of the most important factors in the success of the museum. A museum should be located as near to the geographical center of a community as possible. The geographical center of Oak Lawn is 99th Street and 54th Avenue. The demographic center of Oak Lawn is nearer to 95th Street. The location of the Clark School will entail a loss in visitation due to its somewhat distant location, it is not convenient to all of Oak Lawn.

ON A WELL-TRAVELED ROUTE: This is important for several reasons. Firstly, in winter the most traveled routes in a community are the first to be plowed. They are also the ones which receive continuous care in salting, widening and so forth. During the rest of the year they are also swept more often, stand a better chance of speedy pothole repair, and are better patrolled. Although this is an important consideration, the location on (or very near) a highly utilized route provides for more visitation due to the number of people brought into the proximity of the museum daily. The Clark School is sufficiently isolated from 103rd Street to negate any advantage which might be gained from the traffic on that street. Its location on 105th Street would tend to indicate a low priority on street repair and plowing. This factor could be obviated by the full cooperation of the Public Works Department of the Village of Oak Lawn. On the whole, a loss in visitation will be experienced.

NEAR OTHER CULTURAL, HISTORIC AND TOURIST ATTRACTIONS: As in the above factor, proximity of potential visitors to the new museum is the crux. When a museum is located near other cultural attractions, in historic districts, near interesting architecture, persons who are drawn to any one of these points of interest will likely return to visit the others. They build upon one another by providing a higher percentage of interested persons in the area. This factor will not be available to a museum on the Clark School site.

ACCESSIBLE TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: This is especially important to the student and Senior Citizen visitor. The nearest transportation stop to the Clark School is 0.3 (3/10) mile at 103rd Street and 52nd
Avenue. This will potentially provide some hardships to the Senior Citizen, most especially in winter. There is no way to assure that the property owners between the Clark School and the transportation stop will co-operate by keeping their sidewalks ice and snow free. This is not a great factor in the total visitation to the museum complex, however, it might be possible to arrange for a rerouting of the buses to pass the museum complex at some future time.

NEAR FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION: This is one of the factors which has little or no effect on the visitation to the museum. This is solely for the protection of the collections. The nearest fire station to the Clark School is at 103rd Street and 52nd Avenue, when manned. This is most adequate. As there is but one police station in Oak Lawn, police patrol to the site is the determining factor – patrol which is now geared to a residential neighborhood. With the co-operation of the Village of Oak Lawn Police Department, half-hourly patrols could be instituted which would provide adequate protection to the museum in conjunction with security systems.

NEIGHBORABILITY: This term refers to the perception of the museum by its neighborhood. The museum can be expected to generate traffic and on some special occasions parking in the area may become congested. How the residences around the Clark School may react to these conditions is a cipher. In some cases the residents have welcomed such efforts, in other a vocal opposition has developed with parking restrictions, lowered speed limits and other changes by the governed seeking redress. As a general rule, business districts are more inclined to welcome a museum due to the increased opportunities for sales and are thus also inclined to overlook occasional inconveniences.

In summation, the Clark School physical location will provide some real loss in visitation. The initial loss after the opening may be as little, at current rates, as 20% and as great as 35%. During the next two years of operation the loss will climb to 25% to 35% and then level off. If some of the indicated co-operation is forthcoming during the period of the first three years, approximately 5% to 10% of the permanent loss can be regained. Thus visitation will be reduced only 15% to 25% with maximum effort.
THE CLARK SCHOOL BUILDING

The Clark School is on grade, slab construction. Internal walls are largely of cinderblock although the partition between Rooms 109 and 110 is an outside brick wall due to the addition added to the original school. Rooms 108, 109 and 110 are located in the interior core of the building adjoining the gymnasium. Room 110 contains about 874 square feet of which 83 square feet are currently unusable. Room 109 contains about 835 square feet of which 65 square feet are currently unusable. Room 108 contains about 768 square feet of which 65 square feet are currently unusable. Factors as to the suitability of the building for museum purposes will be discussed separately.

HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURALLY SIGNIFICANT: It is always best to house a museum in the proper setting. However, this is only desirable and not essential for museum purposes.

LARGE OPEN SPACES: Any building not specifically designed to house a museum will be deficient in this area. The average exhibition area is about 1,500 square feet in each gallery. The compartmented structure of the Clark School may easily be defeated by cutting through interior walls to provide free access to multiple rooms. This also makes security much easier.

ACCESSIBILITY AND HIGH VISIBILITY: This factor is most important for good visitation. A museum building should be instantly recognizable and easily reached. This is somewhat related to a significant building as above. Even the motorist just passing through should have the museum identify itself to him in a subliminal way. The Clark School suffers somewhat from the irregular street grid which surrounds it, but this is not insurmountable. It is less easy to help the person traveling on 105th Street distinguish between St. Linus (seen from the rear) and the Clark School for which he is looking. Similarly, the traveler on 103rd Street may become discouraged if he first visits St. Linus by mistake. There is no recommendation which we can make to improve this situation.

SUITABLE LAYOUT FOR MUSEUM PURPOSES: The Clark School has a suitable layout, in that there are no large pillars breaking up the spaces, enough room in the halls is provided and so forth. There is, due to the size of the rooms available, a distinct limit on the number of people who may be served at any given time. In Room 110, for example, if only wall hung exhibits were used and no cases or other intrusion made into the room, 97 visitors can be comfortably accommodated. With the addition of one double-sided case of 16 square feet, the number of visitors drops to 55 visitors. This is explained in Appendix Two.

SUFFICIENT WALL-SPACE, FEW WINDOWS: The Interior core of the Clark School is without windows and thus is perfect on that score. Some large amounts of wall space will have to be lost as exhibits cannot safely be hung above the heating and air-conditioning vents. Some wall space will also be lost to door openings to connect the rooms. Partitions can be installed which will allow heat and air circulation and safe-or as
as safe as exhibits can be, with the current pollution levels. This will once again decrease the number of visitors who can be accommodated.

SUFFICIENT DRY STORAGE AREA: Unless the Clark School should utilize 100% of its other space, this should present no problem. The amount of storage space should equal the square footage of exhibit space. In addition, a space for work on exhibits should be provided.

WIDE DOOR OPENINGS FROM HALLS FOR EVACUATION AND TRAFFIC: The average width of the doors to the proposed exhibit areas in the Clark School are 34 1/2 inches. This was designed, as are all modern school doors for one way traffic. This relatively narrow width also indicates a problem with the handicapped visitor. This will also create some problems with grants, since as a new operation, we must assure full compliance with Section 503. The doors can be widened.

NO LESS THAN TEN FOOT CEILINGS: This is to provide for adequate heat circulation and ventilations behind the cases and partitions. Ceilings in the Clark School are in the 9 to 9 1/2 foot range which makes them a little short, but acceptable. Some artifacts cannot be shown.

BASICALLY SOUND STRUCTURE: There is little question that the Clark School is sound. There would appear to be no major leaks in the roofing in the museum area.

STRONG FLOORS: To support the considerable weight of exhibits and visitors. Since the Clark School is slab construction, this is no problem.

ADEQUATE WIRING FROM OUTLETS FOR MUSEUM PURPOSES: No building not designed for museum purposes has enough outlets placed in the proper locations, at ceiling level as well as at floor level. This can be righted by new installations. The drain on power should also be investigated. The Clark School like most buildings today has fluorescent lighting, which is the worst sort for museum purposes. Incandescent track lighting should be installed in each room.

ADEQUATE PLUMBING, HEATING, INSULATION AND VENTILATION: The Clark School is more than adequate in these areas. There needs to be some work done to provide hand-rails in the washrooms for handicapped visitors and some Braille signing.

TRUCK LOADING DOCK: While no essential to museum operations, the doors and truck docks provide much useful aid in taking in artifacts and special exhibits. The lack of this facility does not impaire the use of the Clark School for museum purposes.

ADEQUATE PARKING FOR STAFF AND MAXIMUM NUMBER FOR VISITORS: With the Clark School being used as a multiple use facility, this may be a problem. One should set aside one space for each staff member and one space for each two visitors which can be comfortably kept within the museum complex. This is in addition to any parking which will be used.
by other building activities. Federal law also provides that no less than two parking spaces or 10% of all parking spaces (whichever is the greater) nearest the entrance used by the handicapped shall be reserved and designated "Handicapped Parking Only" with the appropriate signs with the wheelchair symbol. This 10% should be excluded from any planning or projected parking for museum purposes.

AESTHETICS: The museum area should be one which can be relatively quiet, it should suggest a studious and thoughtful atmosphere. With the Clark School in active use for diverse recreational uses, both the noise and attitude of the occupants of the building will undoubtedly cause problems from time to time. Careful scheduling of these activities and isolation from them by either physical or psychological barriers is to be recommended.

In summation, the Clark School building is adequate for museum purposes in many respects. There does exist the possibility of conflict with the recreational activities scheduled for the building and some parking and other service problems. The Clark School will probably not be able as currently proposed to service more than 100 visitors at any one time, and perhaps less. There is some need for reconstruction of some details, but this is within the realm of normal remodeling.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the normal course in the opening of a museum for there to be a great deal of interest shown during the first year. Attendance will decline for the next two years until a plateau of visitation is achieved. On the average, three new history museums open in the United States each week, naturally in different areas. Of these three new museums, two will not survive five years. Of the remaining one museum founded each week, 45% will not proceed beyond the "junk shop" stage—that is to say a collection of odds and ends heaped together with no apparent plan or knowledge to be transmitted. Like the resale shop, one will find cases with china from many different eras put together only because they are china. Visitors do not often return to these.

An additional 25% will become "mausoleums", whether their exhibits be good or bad they will never change. Their program is never re-examined. Visitors do not return to these either. When they survive, it is through the dedication of a small group of well-wishers (often a single family) who see that it is funded somehow.

The remaining museums excel and serve their communities well. A good collection may take years to amass, so that if one cannot have the actual musket used by a pioneer to stand off the Indians, they can have as exact an original specimen as possible. These excellent museums have a story to tell, a story which is never finished. Visitors return to these and not just from interest in the changing special - or traveling - exhibits they feature. They bring their out-of-town guests to visit the museum out of personal pride.

It is our opinion, that with a pledge to make available, as much space as is ultimately required on an as needed basis, the Clark School building will make an adequate museum. This will also require that the needs of the museum be ultimate in any consideration of facility use. A sufficient amount of time must be allotted for the amassing of a superior collection. A sufficient amount of time must be allotted to active research on the community history.

It is unfortunate to lose visitors for any reason. The current location of the Society, the Cook Avenue School, is far more conducive for the establishment of the kind of Institution that Oak Lawn deserves and to get the complete public support that is necessary to make it so. However, this is not to say that a superior program cannot be mounted in the Clark School, this is only to say that programs could be larger and would be larger; would be more convenient with a renovation of the Cook Avenue School.

Without some lengthy discussions with the Park District, it is difficult to know how the success of the museum will be adjudged. One can tabulate visitor counts as a measure of success. One can judge the excellence of the collection and presentation, even if no one ever
visits the museum. Before any final recommendation can be made, it will be necessary for the Park District to inform the Society what it expects from a museum. For the Society's part, we are committed to achieving excellence in both collections and presentation. We would wish to give the museum every advantage in drawing visitors to further disseminate the information about Oak Lawn which we are every day acquiring. This process might take as much as five years or longer, but we are committed to it.

We are also committed to a program of special exhibitions from the Smithsonian Institution and other museums. This is not to replace the local history exhibits, but rather to encourage return visitation to witness the changing face of the exhibits of local history. It is our opinion that the exhibits finally offered should run the gamut from the formation of the earth to 1960. We believe that an outlet must be provided for the visitor to purchase books and other items with a real connection to the history of Oak Lawn and its vicinity. We believe that a textbook from the museum must be developed for use in the local schools of Oak Lawn and that a course in local history be instituted.

All of these things are within the realm of possibility in the Clark School. They will be more difficult to achieve with the location of the school, they will require the expending of more resources to compensate for the location. Some others of the disadvantages may be remedied with only the co-operation of other taxing bodies.

One final recommendation is that the site for the museum, where ever it might be, must be permanent, barring only the construction of a building specifically for the purpose in what would seem to be a better location than any chosen. For the necessary growth of public support, it is essential that an idea of a perpetual institution be maintained in the public mind. This is another disadvantage to the Clark School location as there is only a three year commitment to the Park District at this time, and even that agreement can be voided.

It is our hope that the members of the Park District Board of Commissioners will be able to take this report and reflect upon it. Then any questions about the report can be answered. It is further hoped that the two appendices to this report will provide the Park District Board with the tools to gauge the undertaking upon which we will be jointly embarking.
APPENDIX ONE

I. THE NATURAL SETTING
   1. Location
   2. Climate
   3. Soil
   4. Plants
   5. Animals
   6. Minerals

II. PREHISTORIC AND EARLY HISTORIC INHABITANTS
   1. Native American Cultures
   2. Native American Sites

III. EXPLORATION
   1. Purpose of the exploration
   2. By whom, at what time of the year
   3. Difficulties: climate, personalities, equipment failure
   4. Routes followed
   5. Means of transportation
   6. Types of equipment

IV. THE FIRST EUROPEAN-AMERICAN SETTLERS
   1. Who were they? Where did they come from? Why?
   2. Conditions which made the area desirable as a home
   3. Biographical sketches of outstanding pioneers

V. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
   1. Transportation, trade communications
   2. Agriculture
   3. Manufacturing
4. Maritime activities
5. Extractive Industries

Present-day economic base

VI. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
1. Original form of government
2. Changes in charters, boundaries, status
3. Prominent officials
4. Rise and fall of political parties
5. Degree of efficiency and honesty, financial policy
6. Relation of government to other institutions
7. Civic services
8. Civic reform movements

VII. RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT
1. Early religious life
2. Development of major denominations
3. Minor groups
4. Interdenominational relations
5. Moral attitudes and their relationship to law

VIII. POPULATION HISTORY
1. Birth and death rates
2. Growth or decline of total population
3. Migrations

IX. THE FAMILY
1. Courtship, marriage, divorce
2. Moral standards
3. Personal and property rights of spouses
4. Birth rates, status of children
5. Special phases of family life

X. EDUCATION
  1. The first schools
  2. Church and private schools
  3. Public schools
  4. Higher education
  5. Adult education
  6. General influence of schools in the community

XI. NEWSPAPERS, PERIODICALS, LIBRARIES, RADIO, TELEVISION
  1. Early newspapers
  2. Discontinued newspapers
  3. Present newspapers
  4. Periodicals
  5. Libraries
  6. Radio stations
  7. Television stations

XII. SOCIAL AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS
  1. Origin and growth of each
  2. Purpose and special field of activity
  3. Relation to whole community

XIII. OTHER CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
  1. Household arts
  2. Minor arts
  3. Fine arts
4. Literature
5. Professional groups and schools
6. The stage
7. Museums

XIV. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
1. Local inventors
2. Technological development in factories
3. Original work in pure science
4. Scientific institutions and groups

XV. LAW
1. Civil law
2. Criminal law
3. Court organization and procedures
4. The legal profession

XVI. SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND REFORM
1. Poverty and poor relief
2. Crime and punishment
3. Drunkenness and drug addiction
4. Prostitution
5. Slavery
6. Handicapped
7. Health and disease
8. Social reform movements

XVII. RECREATION
1. Utilitarian recreation
2. Indoor games
3. Outdoor sports
4. Vacations
5. Immigrant contributions
6. See also literature, libraries, theatres, movies, radio, television

XVIII. FOLKLORE

1. Superstitions
2. Local beliefs about births, deaths, weddings, funerals
3. Ghosts, haunted houses, charms
4. Star-gazing, strange and unaccounted-for happenings
5. Eccentric characters
6. Spite fences, churches, schools, towns
7. Odd decisions made by flipping a coin
8. Irreverent, odd and interesting jingles on tombstones
9. Odd and obsolete punishments and ordinances
10. Local sayings, maxims, proverbs, ballads
11. Dialect and words peculiar to the neighborhood
12. Local sports, feasts and fairs
APPENDIX TWQ

The smaller an area a museum has to work with, the less visitors can be comfortably served. There is a great deal of space which cannot be utilized because of the need to allow the visitor to see the exhibits without unduly tiring themselves. This is why the average museum gallery is about 1,500 square feet at the smallest and may range upwards of 3,000.

One of the determining factors in a museum is the way the human head moves. Much of what transpires in a museum requires visual contact with artifacts and labels. (See Figure 1) A person can comfortably look at an object that is on a line of 30 degrees above the natural line of sight and an object that is on a line of 40 degrees below the line of sight. The lower an object is, the farther away we must stand to look at it. The higher an object is, the nearer we can stand to it, so long as we are adults and it is not over 6 feet. The reverse is true for most children.

![FIGURE 1 VIEWING LIMITS](image)

To put it another way, if you wish to see the Wrigley Building, you must stand across the street. If you wish to look at another person's face, you may stand as closely as you wish (so long as they are about your own height). If you wish to look at your baseboard without stooping over or bending down, you must stand away from it.

The optimum viewing height for an exhibit module, case or any wall or partition-hung object is no less than 2 feet six inches from the floor level and no higher than 6 feet 3 inches from floor level. (See Figure 2) If panels and other objects are hung at these levels they can be seen with the most economy of space. In passing, it might be well to note that the eye level of the average chairbound person is approximately the same as the average six year old child.

Another factor in the comfortable viewing of exhibits is the "nine foot rule". That is, that a visitor is the most comfortable when standing in the middle of an area nine feet square. There is also a lesser
Figure 2 shows where an average man, woman, and six year old child must stand to view an exhibit case 45 inches high, mounted 2 feet 6 inches from the floor. The man must stand 4 feet 3 inches away; the woman must stand 3 feet 8.5 inches away; and the child 5 feet 4 inches away.

Figure 3 on the next page shows how a combination of these factors can decrease the number of visitors able to be comfortably and safely served within the museum at one time. This is important in several regards. The exhibition "Suiting Everyone," which we have received from the Smithsonian Institution requires 150 running feet. There should be an additional 26 running feet for spacing. This would require a room without doors, windows, radiators and the like, of 44 feet on a side. Does the number of visitors seem improbable? On the busiest day in our one room in the Cook Avenue School, 135 visitors were logged in 3 hours, or a new visitor entered every 1 minute 30 seconds, at the peak over 90 visitors were present simultaneously.
FIGURE 3 Shows an exhibit area of 720 square feet. The square grid in the center depicts the area necessary for the maximum number of visitors (35) to view wall-mounted exhibit panels. The white space depicts the farthest distance a visitor must stand away to view the exhibit panels. The diamond grid depicts the farthest distance a visitor must stand away to view an added 16 foot square exhibit module. It can now be seen that only 20 visitors may be accommodated. 10 visitors may see both exhibits (sides B) simply by turning 180°. The remaining 10 (sides A) must stand alternately against the wall and the exhibit module to see both.