**Cade Thomas**

**project title: Digitalizing Photograph Archives**

**organization: Will Rogers Memorial Museum**

**contact person: Jennifer Holt**

**918.343.8124**

**jholt@willrogers.com**

**1720 West Will Rogers Blvd.**

**Claremore, OK 74017**

Cade Thomas

Honors Program Volunteering

Will Rogers Memorial Museum

**Project Proposal**

1. **Background Information**

I am Cade Thomas and I would like to volunteer my services to the Will Rogers Memorial Museum in Claremore, Oklahoma. At the museum, my duty would be digitizing the photograph archives. The person in charge of this project is the museum’s curator Jennifer Holt.

My role would be scanning the thousands of psychical photographs and movie stills from the life and career of Will Rogers over to a server for archival purposes. The reason for doing this project is to bring the Will Rogers Memorial Museum into the digital age and to have lasting copies of photographs with historical and cultural significance. My goals would be to aid in finishing the photographic project and continuing on to movie stills, from there I could work on archiving other information and even help in maintaining and/or creating lasting exhibits at the museum.

1. **Evidence of the Needs**

According to the *Oklahoma Today* magazine, Will Rogers is the most influential Oklahoman of the 20th century, topping the list of 50 people. Will Rogers starred in over 70 motion pictures and, at the time of his death, he was the highest-paid actor in Hollywood. Rogers was a notable figure around the world; furthermore, his political and social views are just as relevant today as they were when he said them. The need for a museum in his honor is necessary and it is even more necessary to bring it into today’s world. The curator of the Will Rogers Memorial Museum, herself, said that this project needed to be done over a decade ago but they just now got the equipment and software to do so. Many museums have or are currently in the process of digitizing their collections. Earlier this year, a section of the Smithsonian began showcasing thousands of artifacts they digitized online. It is necessary for the Will Rogers Memorial Museum to keep up with the times so that newer generations can understand the importance and impact that Will Rogers continues to have on the world.

1. **My Background & Involvement with the Organization**

Mrs. Holt said that I could not start until two weeks from now, because she had to organize and catch up on some items. After that, I would select some shifts to volunteer for. I would personally love to contribute to this great museum that had such an impact on me as a child. I remember as a kid going to the museum, whether if it was on a school field trip or with family, and was in awe of the life and legacy of “Oklahoma’s Favorite Son” Will Rogers. His humor still affects me today and I hope to achieve just a fraction of the reverence that Rogers received in his lifetime. From this experience, I would like to help the museum spread the beloved ideas and universal humor of Will Rogers to new generations of people. The story of Rogers deserves to continually be retold and passed down through the generations; he was a man that gave so much to the world and, thus, cannot be forgotten.

I love history. I love American politics. I love the entertainment industry. I love humor. I am an Oklahoman. I am a Cherokee. I am an American. Consequently, I have a strong connection to Will Rogers. I have studied different facets of history and find museums extremely interesting, to say the very least. I also feel deeply about American politics; however, I know politics can be quite insane in many ways. Furthermore, I am going into Communications to work on television and radio and plan on heavily integrating witty, Will Rogers-esque humor, because it is the best way to deal with any situation. There is not one single situation where humor would be bad. Not one. Not even a serious proposal paper. I have taken many computer classes and know more than the majority of my peers on how to navigate technology. In many ways, I think all of my background and skills will help me in my new role with the organization.

1. **Objectives**

My opportunities at the Will Rogers Memorial Museum are nearly boundless. This is a good first step to interning and even creating exhibits at the museum. In a lot of ways with this project bringing the museum into the digital age, I am on the ground floor helping with the next stage of the museum’s journey. The museum with benefit for having me as a volunteer because I am very good with computers, am very creative, and have a true respect for the icon we are commemorating. I look forward to working with the Will Rogers Memorial Museum, because both of us will grow from this endeavor.

1. **Time Log**

**Sunday, October 11, 2015** 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM [3.5 hours]

I scheduled this time beforehand with my supervisor, Jennifer Holt. I went into the office in the back of the museum and reported to her. She said that I would need a bit of training, however, it did not take long for me to understand how to do the process as I already have had much experience with computers and software. When working through the procedure, I realized that I could improve it and make it a faster process by splitting the two steps up. If I scan all the photos – instead of just one at a time – and then edited the properties, I could get more work done in less time. If I had any questions, I would simply ask Jennifer or the other intern. What I enjoyed the most was getting to see photographs of Will Rogers and his family, especially since some of the photographs only had one copy.

**Monday, October 12, 2015** 2:30 PM – 5:00 PM [2.5 hours]

Jennifer told me that there were volunteers almost every day of the week with the exception of Mondays and Wednesdays. She had said that they could work around our school schedules as well. On Sunday, I said I could work Monday and Wednesday after class. I got to the museum, reported to Jennifer, and met a fellow volunteer. I finished my first box of photographs and got a new box. This box was mostly exterior and interior shots of the Rogers home in Santa Monica. I learned a lot from the other volunteer and got to see many photographs of the beautiful landscape and rooms of Will Rogers’ Santa Monica house.

**Wednesday, October 14, 2015** 12:30 PM – 5:00 PM [4.5 hours]

My last class of the day was cancelled so I asked Jennifer if I could come earlier and she said that it would be great. She said she would be out of the office when I got there, but would be back shortly after. When I got to the office, I met another new volunteer. She was an older lady who was very sweet, but she had trouble with some of the steps in the procedure. I helped her out when she asked, and we both ended up learning a lot about it together. Jennifer returned, and later, I finished my second box. I learned a lot, especially since I was able to work on a different station than I was used to.

**Sunday, October 18, 2015** 10:30 AM – 5:00 PM [6.5 hours]

I decided to go in earlier than so I could get more work done without breaks. Again, I mostly worked on pictures that dealt with Will Rogers home in California. I got to see new pictures that I hadn’t seen before. I also noticed that I have gotten much faster and more productive as my volunteer work has continued.

**Monday, October 19, 2015** 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM [5 hours]

My last class was once again cancelled, because my teacher had a wedding to go to. So, instead of just wasting the hour, I decided to work on my volunteering. The lady that I worked with the previous Monday was gone because she was sick, so it was just me working alone on the photographs. I was working on scanning exterior pictures of the Santa Monica home when a man who has volunteered at the museum for years and has actually visited the Santa Monica home stopped to look at the pictures. He said that the smaller trees that lined the road to the house are huge now. It was very interesting to hear something new about the place that I only know from old black-and-white photographs. It was also very nice to meet the kind man.

**Wednesday, October 21, 2015** 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM [3 hours]

It was my final day volunteering and I actually was not working that long. I got to work with the lady that I worked with the previous Wednesday and help her out more. Jennifer showed me both of the collections vaults the museum has. I was able to see items to fragile or rare to have on main display. It was really cool to see these items that most do not get to see. One item was the clothes that Will had packed in his suitcase when his plane crashed. I stayed a bit over so that I could finish my last box. It was sad, however, I knew that I will be back.

1. **Conclusion**

I learned quite a lot from the experience I had at the museum. It was really cool to see so many things that the public does not get to see. But most importantly it was so great to help a great museum in bringing it to the modern age. I learned how to manage my time and have quality results. I was able to make my goal of five boxes of photographs, which is quite a bit given how much time I volunteered there and the average amount that people are able to do. In conclusion, I think both the museum and myself are better from my volunteering. I learned a lot about Will Rogers and many technical items that relate to my major. However, the greatest impact was that I wholeheartedly feel that I have left the Will Rogers Memorial Museum with a lasting impact and have aided them in their development into their next phase and into the modern world.

**Works Cited**

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