



Facing east, The Guardian stands 261 feet, 9 and one-half inches above the red Oklahoma ground.



Photographs courtesy of (left) Oklahoma Department of Libraries (center) Hursley Photography • (right) Fred Marvel

from the size of a briefcase, to the size of a small sedan. The entire dome weighs approximately five million pounds.

Atop the State Capitol Dome stands a nearly 22-foot tall statue named “The Guardian.” This sculpture was the unanimous choice of the panel encumbered with the task of selecting from the several submissions made. The sculpture was created by former state senator Enoch Kelly Haney, a Five Civilized Tribes Master Artist. Haney, a full-blood Seminole-Muscogee Creek, said of the sculpture, “It is the most significant piece of work I’ve done in my art career. It was a pleasure and an honor to create The Guardian for the people of Oklahoma.” The sculpture was raised and installed during the Red Earth Festival June 7, 2002, with thousands in attendance.



Photograph courtesy—Hursley Photography

Carefully removing the Rotunda portrait of Sequoyah for safekeeping.

Specifically, decisions about whether or not to remove murals and paintings were difficult to make. Ultimately, the decision was made to leave the murals in place. After eight months of discussions among construction representatives, state officials, art conservation folks, and even the artist Charles Banks Wilson, the murals were enclosed during construction. According to one of the construction supervisors, Mr. Wilson said that he did two years of research and

Oklahoma’s art collection posed some difficulties during construction. Specifically,



Photograph courtesy—Charles Banks Wilson

Charles Banks Wilson completed painting of murals for Oklahoma Capitol Rotunda in 1974.

Because of the vastly different curvatures of the new high dome and the previous saucer dome, construction required replacing the old state seal with a new one (right).

took two years to paint the murals. When he finished, “I rolled them up like a canvas, slung them under my arm, walked up the steps, laid ‘em out on the floor, glued them down, and that’s what I did.” Wilson further elaborated, “you can take a hose to ‘em if you want to. They’re not that brittle, they’re not oil, they’ll bend, they’re flexible.” Finally, Wilson added, “I’m 82 years old, I painted them, and if you ding ‘em a little bit, don’t worry about it. I’ll crawl up there and fix ‘em.”

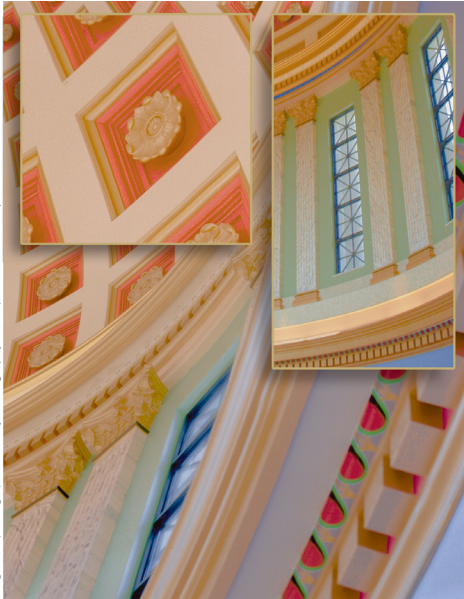
The state seal presented a different set of difficult is-



Photograph courtesy—Oklahoma Department of Libraries



Photograph courtesy—Hursley Photography



Background photograph—Hursley Photography—Inset photos—Okla. Dept. of Libraries

sues. Made to fit the saucer dome, the curved version did not fit the new high dome. The old seal was made with plaster “spokes” and the seal itself was made of plaster. Preservationists were intent on using the original seal, but it was too big. Way too big. The saucer dome was “flatter” than the new high dome. In addition, the plaster was nearly 90 years old. So a much more durable stained glass replica was eventually installed in the new high dome.

The color scheme for the interior of the dome was chosen to resemble the state wildflower, Indian Blanket (*gaillardia pulchella*).