



Introducing “Object Theaters” at the Cottage Court Museum

The Cottage Court Museum is still evolving, but last summer’s many visitors let us know that it is already fun, charmingly rustic, fascinating, and thought-provoking. The on-site volunteer tour guides quickly learned that people generally haven’t thought much about all the changes occurring as a result of the advent of automobiles and auto-tourism, and our humble little museum surprised, educated, and drew much praise and many, many smiles.

We hope this summer to complete two Object Theaters, the next very exciting interpretive elements from the Master Interpretation Plan for the site.

So, what is Object Theater? Object Theater is a historical interpretation technique that delivers a scripted audio presentation and highlights selected artifacts using focused theatrical lighting and static museum figures.

Imagine coming to the door of a Cottage Court guest room, triggering an infrared sensor that starts audio and lights, and immediately being greeted by none other than the builder of the oldest original-condition motor court, Clyde Eslick! He’ll tell you a bit about the room he’s standing in, about what life was like in Grand Lake, in say 1915, and share some of his favorite items in the room and some of his favorite stories. Clyde was noted for his affable, genuinely friendly charm, and you’ll feel a bit like a tourist coming into town back in the day as Clyde chats with you for four to six minutes.

Early-on in the planning for this second Grand Lake museum, the amazing volunteer committee chose to emphasize and enhance the unique rustic qualities of the Cottage Court, to deliver information in a way that engages the visitor without the “hard” technologies now common in other museums. Clyde Eslick will not speak to his visitors from a TV or computer screen, but will seem to be “there”, simple and a bit old fashioned, but very effective. A static, museum quality figure authentically rendered to “be” Clyde Eslick as a young man in 1915 will be in Guest Room Two, near Lake Avenue, in a space restored to its 1915 condition. In Guest Room Four, near the site’s parking lot at the north end, Clyde will appear older as he shares his stories in the space restored to its “modernized” 1940 condition.

Having two separate Object Theaters in the museum is important. There are very different things to talk about in each of these two rooms; the period between 1915, when the Cottage Court was constructed, and 1962, when it no longer operated as a business, was packed with area and national events that forever changed our lives.

Also, as we learned last summer, visitors can cross the lawns at the Cottage Court Museum site from three directions – off Lake Avenue, off Vine Street, and from Grand Avenue. Sometimes it’s impossible for the tour guide to catch everyone to welcome them in person, so we’ll soon be able to let Clyde do it! Folks who are just “stopping by” as they enter at Lake Avenue will feel as welcome, and suddenly interested, as those who come from the parking lot.

This is an expensive project of course, costing \$50,000 for design, fabrication and installation. We hope you are able to help us add this exciting interpretation to the museum, and add your name to the display of those who brought it to life!