



Smithsonian Institution

Smithsonian Institution Archives

Proceedings of the Board of Regents Meeting – January 15, 1969

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Arkansas Mid-America Center

Mr. Ripley reported that through the good offices of Senator Fulbright and Governor Winthrop Rockefeller, conversations were held last summer between officials of the Smithsonian and the representatives of various organizations in the State of Arkansas Economic Development District, Inc., (WCAEDD) concerned the possibility that the Smithsonian might establish a branch of some sort in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

On August 8, 1968, the West Central Arkansas Economic Development District, Inc. submitted a formal proposal, offering to build a building to Smithsonian specifications, for lease to the Smithsonian at one dollar a year for ninety-nine years, and to provide to the Smithsonian all funds necessary for the operation of the Center. The Smithsonian response to this proposal was the suggestion that the WCAEDD give the Smithsonian sufficient funds to conduct a preliminary study of the resources, needs, and interests of Hot Springs and the surrounding region, and of the possible Smithsonian activities that might be appropriate there. It was clearly understood that the undertaking of such a study would commit neither the Smithsonian nor the WCAEDD to any future actions. It was understood that the study might conclude with the recommendation that no such Mid-America Center be established, or that such a Center be established without Smithsonian participation, or that the Smithsonian should seriously consider establishing such a Center.

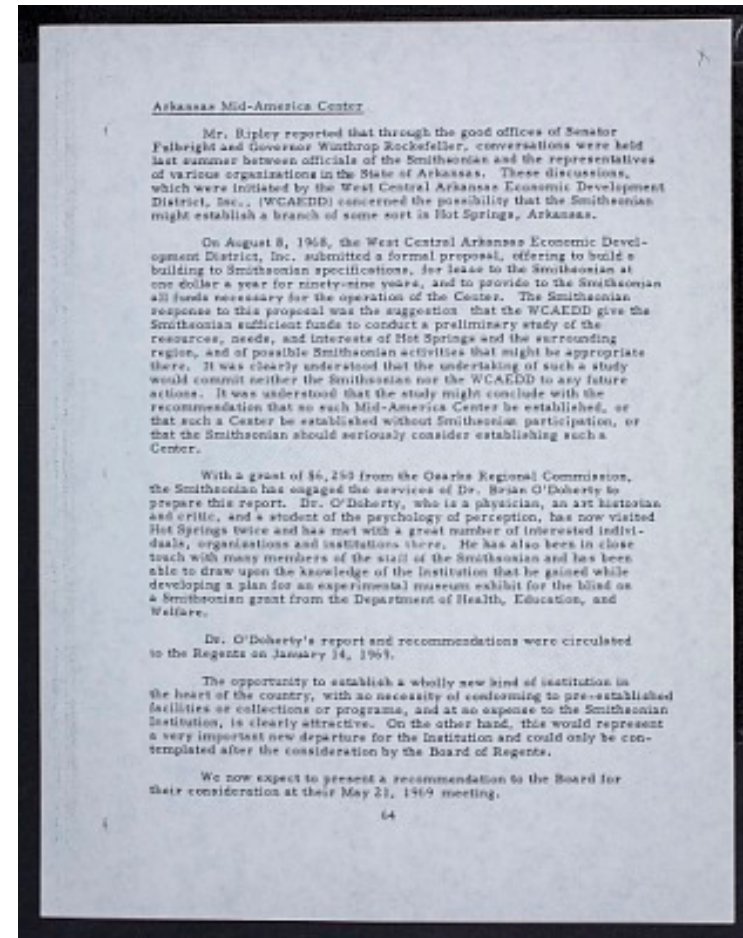
With a grant of \$6,250 from Ozarks Regional Commission, the Smithsonian has engaged the services of Dr. Brian O'Doherty to prepare this report. Dr. O'Doherty, who is a physician, an art historian and critic, and a student of the psychology of perception, has now visited Hot Springs twice and met with a great number of interested individuals, organizations and institutions there. He has also been in close touch with many members of the staff of the Smithsonian and has been able to draw upon the knowledge of the Institution that he gained while developing a plan for an experimental museum exhibit for the blind on a Smithsonian grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Dr. O'Doherty's report and recommendations were circulated to the Regents on January 14, 1969.

The opportunity to establish a wholly new kind of institution in the heart of the country, with no necessity of conforming to pre-established facilities or collections or programs, and at no expense to the Smithsonian Institution, is clearly attractive. On the other hand, this would represent a very important new departure for the Institution and could only be contemplated after the consideration by the Board of Regents.

We now expect to present a recommendation to the Board for their consideration at their May 21, 1969 meeting.

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The mission of the Smithsonian is the increase and diffusion of knowledge - shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research facilities. Become an active part of our mission through the Transcription Center. Together, we are discovering secrets hidden deep inside our collections that illuminate our history and our world.

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