

Rice turns 100

by Dave Schafer

A hundred years ago, mules and men built an educational institution on a swath of undeveloped prairie land in Harris County. There were no roads or infrastructure when they dug into the ground.

That little school grew into a leader in research, a home for intellectuals and the pride of the city of Houston. This year, that school, Rice University, is throwing a big centennial celebration, and Houston is invited to join the fun.

"This is an important year for the university," said Kathleen Boyd, centennial director. "We'll celebrate the past and think about the next 100 years."

The university's regular events will be bigger and better than ever – "on centennial steroids," Boyd said. The homecoming and reunion events, usually held

in November, have been moved up as part of the centennial week festivities October 10-17, and other mostly free special events will be held around the birthday, as well as exhibits planted throughout the campus and city.

"From its founding, Rice University has been an institution devoted to making a meaningful impact on the world," said Rice President David Leebron. "This October, we will commemorate Rice's centennial and celebrate the remarkable journey that has transformed Rice from a bold little institute on the edge of the prairie to a global, comprehensive university on the cutting edge of education and research."

"We hope Houstonians will be just as excited as we are about this historic occasion, because Rice University and the city of Houston grew up together. Such local landmarks as the Texas

Medical Center, the Museum District, Hermann Park and NASA have connections to Rice, as does the emergence of the fields of space science and nanotechnology. The Centennial Celebration promises to be one of the most vibrant events ever held here, and we will be rolling out the red carpet for all our guests, whether they be from the Rice family, our Houston community or the other side of the globe."

The university has been dressed up with 100 banners that highlight significant moments in its history. April 11-15, the university will open its doors to the community for UnConvention,



which will feature tours, the annual Engineering Design Showcase, tennis matches, faculty and students performing at the Shepherd School of Music, and more.

"That's a campus-wide open house," Boyd said. "We'll showcase a broad-brush stroke of all that goes on at Rice."

The centennial fundraising campaign launched in 2008 with a goal of raising \$1 billion by June 30, 2013. As of mid January, they were at \$756 million, Boyd said. Donors can give at <http://giving.rice.edu/>.

Boyd, who graduated from Rice in 1980 with a double major in economics and managerial studies, doesn't work on the fundraising campaign. She's overseeing the celebration and commemoration and focused on the "lasting contributions" that are an important part of the centennial events. The lasting contributions include 10 books that are being released through-



out the year, public art around campus, and a lecture series.

The lecturers will be announced in the next couple of months, Boyd said. Chief Justice John Roberts has already been confirmed as the lecturer at the Tudor Fieldhouse on October 17. The other lecturers will be visionaries from a variety of industries, including health, energy and education, and the humanities.

"We looked at the most important issues of our day and found visionaries in those areas," Boyd said.

"From an academic standpoint, the centennial is a terrific opportunity for the faculty and students, not just those from Rice but from all over, to think about the future of the university in the public culture and the world. And to think about universities' broader impact in a global world," said Caroline Levander, vice provost for interdisciplinary initiatives, Carlson professor in the humanities and English professor. "The questions that so many top-tier universities have are: What will the next 100 years bring? What are the intellectual opportunities?

How do we make the world a better place in the face of some really daunting challenges culturally, with human rights, with the environment?"

On February 27 and 28, scholars will be discussing the future of the research university in a global age at the De Lange Conference, which is open to the public, and the theme of the 2011-2012 Scientia lecture series is "Rice: A Century of Change." There is one lecture in that series in each of February, March and April.

Some of the events around the birthday will be open to the public, although audience size might be limited because the venues have small capacity, Boyd said. Rice alums, families, friends, staff and faculty will have first dibs on the free tickets.

While the typical homecoming and reunion festivities usually draw about 3,000 alumni to campus, Boyd expects about 5,000 this year.

At the university's opening ceremonies 100 years ago, Edgar Odell Lovett, the first president, laid out a vision for the university that still points its



In recognition of the university's centennial, Rice will be selling small metal centennial lapel pins (about three-fourths of an inch tall) in the campus bookstore.

direction and that will form the blueprint as the university plots its course for the next 100 years. That address was published in *The Meaning of the New Institution*, which was updated and rereleased for the centennial.

A statue of Odell Lovett by world-renowned sculpture Bruce Wolfe will be unveiled at Keck Hall on October 13.

The university was chartered with money left by businessman William Marsh Rice. The terms of the charter required that work on the new institute would begin after his death.

On September 23, 1900, Rice was chloroformed to death by his valet, Charlie Jones, who had conspired with a lawyer, Albert Patrick, to murder the aging millionaire and claim his estate using a forged will. Jones testified against Patrick in return for immunity, and Patrick was convicted of the murder. Citing doubts about the evidence, the governor of New York pardoned Patrick in 1912, the same year classes began at the Rice Institute with 77 students and a dozen faculty.

Now, everyone can tell his (or her) Rice story, even those who didn't go to Rice, as part of the Centennial Story Project. By visiting <http://centennial.rice.edu/stories/> they can upload a photo of themselves flashing the owl symbol with their hands, a short video explaining what the university means to them, or tell a reason to celebrate Rice.

"Rice is not only a serious place; it's a quirky place too. We tried to have some fun things show that, as well," Boyd said.

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