

Oklahoma City National Memorial

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History:

The Oklahoma City National Memorial exists because of events on April 19, 1995. It was early morning on that nice Spring day when the profound explosion pierced the Oklahoma City downtown air. When the dust settled and the initial shock slipped away, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, a United States Government complex, had been nearly destroyed. 168 people, 19 of them children, were killed. But the impact would be felt forever, and the shock could not be erased. 30 children would be orphaned by the tragedy, 219 more lost at least one parent. Timothy McVeigh would be executed for his horrible crime, and the citizens of Oklahoma City began to put their lives back together. One of the first steps in the recovery was erecting the Oklahoma City National Memorial, a stunningly emotional monument and memorial dedicated to remembering each and every soul taken that day. As stated at the Memorial, it stands to "offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity."

Oklahoma City National Memorial Design:

The Outdoor Symbolic Memorial design was selected in an international design competition that included 624 entries. It was designed by Butzer Design Partnership and is composed of several key concepts as follows.

The Gates of Time frame the moment of the bombing with one gate symbolizing the innocence of 9:01, the minute before the explosion, and the other 9:03, representing the healing that began immediately after.

The Field of Empty Chairs contains 168 bronze and stone chairs, some small in representation of the children and others large for the adults. They symbolize the absence felt for each life lost in the tragedy, each sitting upon a glass base with the etched name of a victim.

The Survivor Tree, Reflecting Pool, Rescuer's Orchard and **Children's Area** compose the other areas of the Memorial. The tree, an Elm, witnessed the violence and now symbolizes resilience while the reflecting pool is representative of healing calmness. The Rescuer's Orchard protects the grounds, and the Children's Area is a wall of painted tiles created by Oklahoma City children following the tragedy.

Weight of Grief, Strength of Peace:

The Oklahoma City National Memorial is the most important "essential" for every resident and visitor of our fine city. All other attractions or events pale in comparison to the powerful journey of this phenomenal museum and monument. If you have not yet been, it is critical for you to go. If you are new to the city, visit nothing else first. This one place represents the honor and strength as well as all of the pain of every person who remembers that historical day. You will likely grieve as you experience all the emotion involved, but you will never regret your visit. It puts everything else in this world into perspective and touches your heart in a way you probably haven't known before.