

# Lawrence to place Jesse Owens historical marker

**By Tom Smith**  
REGIONAL BUREAU CHIEF

OAKVILLE - Hoyt Cagle said it's important that people know about the rich history of Lawrence County.

"That's one reason we began the program to place historical markers throughout the county," said Cagle, chairman of the Lawrence County Historical Commission's Historic Sites Committee.

He said the first marker was placed at the Oakville Indian Mounds.

Sunday afternoon, the second one will be placed at the entrance to the Jesse Owens Memorial Park and Museum.

The event is open to the public.

"He was an international hero and the most famous person born in Lawrence County," Cagle said. "He put north Alaba-

ma on the map for all times. I think it's only fitting that we place a historic marker up at the park."

Owens was born near the park Sept. 12, 1913. He moved with his family to Cleveland when he was 9.

He attended Ohio State University, where he was recognized for his outstanding efforts in track.

In 1936, as a member of the U.S. Olympics team, Owens gained national and international fame.

During the Summer Olympics in Berlin, Owens won four gold medals.

The marker, which will be placed at the entrance of the park, weighs 200 pounds and is 4 feet by 4 feet.

An inscription contains a brief biography of Owens and some of his accomplishments.

The marker was purchased by the Lawrence County Historical Committee and will be presented to the Owens park and museum board during the ceremony.

"Jesse Owens did a lot for our country and brought a lot of recognition to Lawrence County," said Dr. Robert Rhyne Jr., president of the county's historic commission. "It's hard for us to say thank you enough to him and his family for what he did.

"We thought it was only fitting that a historical marker be placed at the park."

Therman White, a member of the Owens park and museum board, said the board had been discussing erecting a historical marker.

"But due to financial restraints, we haven't been able to," White said. "Then the historical commission came to us with this idea. We're very appreciative of this gift and everything they do for the county."

The Jesse Owens Memorial Park and Museum sits on a 30-acre tract at the intersection of Lawrence 187 and Lawrence 203, near Owens' birthplace.

The park contains a museum filled with memorabilia from Owens' career. A replica of his birthplace sits on a hillside near the museum, which overlooks a softball field and basketball court. Plans call for the development of a running track in the park.

Between the museum and the house is a bronze statue of Owens with the Olympic rings.

The park and museum were part of history four years ago when the Olympic Torch paid a visit to the facility on its journey to the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta.

White said it's only fitting the historical marker is unveiled while the 2000 Summer Olympics is under way in Australia.



DANIEL GILES/TimesDaily

**Two oil paintings unveiled Friday at Jesse Owens Memorial Park were donated by Atlantic Richfield Co. for Owens' contributions to the ARCO Jesse Owens Games, a 1964-94 national track and field program for inner-city youth.**