



JESSE OWENS MEMORIAL PARK & MUSEUM

*Museum*

**Construction  
Dedication & Official  
Opening by the  
Jesse Owens Family  
1998**



Museum construction begins.





Honor Guard flag ceremony at museum dedication.



1936 Torch Replica burning beneath the flags outside the museum.



Lunch being served to the Owens' family and guests.





**Museum dedication luncheon.**



# Jesse Owens Museum Dedication Speech

By  
Gloria Hemphill

Good afternoon! I bring you greetings on behalf of my mother, sisters, our husbands, the grandchildren and great grandchildren. Although none of us were born in Oakville or Lawrence County, we hope that you will accept us as members of this wonderful community.

The family of Jesse Owens wishes to thank Therman White for his vision when he purchased the land for the park and asked James Pinion for his leadership in developing their vision. Our family feels this museum is the celebration of a champion who was a master of the spirit as well as the mechanics of the sport. He showed extraordinary love for this family and friends. His achievements have shown us all the promise of America. His faith in America inspired countless others to do their best for themselves and their country.

We hope that you and your families, friends and neighbors will come to the park and museum often to laugh, play, learn and enjoy life in this great country of ours.



Steve Oden with Joe Wheeler Electric CO-OP presenting a plaque to U.S. Representative Tom Bevil (not shown) for his efforts in securing a \$500,000 grant for the Museum.



Gloria Hemphill (Jesse's oldest daughter) speaking on behalf of the Owens family at the Museum dedication.



James Pinion dedicating the Museum.



Ruth Owens cutting the ribbon to officially open the Museum to the public.





Ruth Owens cutting ribbon to open Museum.



Sylvester Owens talking to his sister-in-law, Ruth Owens (far right).



Ruth Owens with daughters Gloria Hemphill and Beverly Praytor along with James Pinion watch and discuss video of Jesse.



Ruth Owens with daughter Gloria Hemphill along with Lisa Campie and James Pinion admiring photos inside the museum.



Ruth Owens with daughter Gloria Hemphill along with Lisa Campie and James Pinion admiring photos inside the museum





News media coverage of museum dedication.



Channel 31 in Huntsville, Alabama, interviews Malcolm Hemphil, Jesse Owens' son-in-law.



Owens daughter Beverly Praytor interviewed by *The Birmingham News* as the Owens family enjoy the museum.





Ruth Owens with Lisa Campie from Design Display.



Henry Buchanan (left) and James Pinion after the Museum dedication.

Nine years ago, here in rural Lawrence County, a dream was born. The dream was to take 17.5 acres of land that had just been purchased, and develop a living memorial to Jesse Owens at his birthplace.. The dreamers wanted to honor and perpetuate the memory of Owens athletic and humanitarian achievements.

This museum dedication ceremony today marks the accomplishment of that dream. However, when dreams are accomplished, other dreams fill their place. And that dream is to complete the Park by building an Olympic size track. We have confidence that given time and effort, that too will become a reality. The park now consists of 30 acres. More dreams will be born and more races run to accomplish future dreams.

The many individuals who assisted in fulfilling the dreams thus far are all winners and today we are all proud.

- We are proud..that Jesse Owens was born in Oakville, Law. Co. AL
- We are proud...that through this effort we have had the privilege to come to know the Jesse Owens Family.
- We are proud... that the family is with us today to share our joy in opening this museum.

And lastly, to use words similar to those of the late Martin Luther King.... We are proud... that we can finally say.... Home at Last.. Home at Last.... Thank God Almighty..... Jesse Owens is Back Home at Last!!!!

*James Lewis*



Ruth Owens hugs James Pinion as they share a special moment of joy and accomplishment over the museum.