

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Texas Centennial Exposition Buildings (1936-37)

and/or common Fair Park (Site of Texas State Fairs 1886-date)

**2. Location**

street & number northeast of Parry Avenue - 2nd Avenue intersection not for publication

city, town Dallas vicinity of

state Texas code county Dallas code

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Dallas

street & number 1500 Marilla

city, town Dallas vicinity of state Texas 75202

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dallas County Clerk

street & number 500 Main

city, town Dallas state Texas 75202

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

city, town 420 state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved <input type="checkbox"/> date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### SUMMARY

Fair Park houses some 30 structures that date from the Texas Centennial Exposition of 1936 and its continuation, the Greater Texas Pan American Exposition of the following year. The site has been used for the State Fair since 1886; several of the buildings were built for the fair and altered to correspond with the Centennial architecture. The site is still used as the site for the Fair, and some of the buildings have since been altered to accommodate this use. A few structures have burned or been demolished. A few new ones have been erected. The Park, overall however, strikingly reflects the Exposition era. This extends to the landscape plan of the Exposition, which is also generally intact.

Buildings and features relating to the character of the district (numbered and lettered according to the accompanying map) are described below.

### THE ESPLANADE OF STATE

This area of the Park contains the Esplanade of State and adjacent buildings as listed. In area, this is the largest portion of the Park and was the primary focus of the Exposition.

### Parry Avenue Entrance Gates and Pylon (1)(1936)

The Parry Avenue entrance features carved reliefs and six gold-leafed metal medallions. A central 85'-high pylon designed by George Dahl is topped with a gold star representing the Lone Star of Texas. At the base is a sculpture frieze of a buffalo hunt and a pioneer wagon train designed by Texas artist James Buchanan Winn, Jr. The monumental scale of the pylon frames the entrance to the Esplanade, an imposing and beautiful vista. Lower gates stand to either side of the pylon. This entrance replaced an entry gate and building designed by James Flanders about 1900.

### The Esplanade of State (A-C) (1936)

The Deco-style Esplanade of State, the most formal axis within the Park, provides a direct connection between the Parry Avenue entrance and the State of Texas Building. This axis is on a southwest-northeast direction. The axis is comprised of three areas: the Grand Plaza (A) (the entrance), the Esplanade proper (B), and the Court of Honor (C), the plaza in front of the State of Texas Building. The Esplanade of State leads from the main entrance to the State of Texas Building; its centerpiece is the reflecting pool, 100' by 700' long.

At the southwestern end of the pool's fountain are decorative pylons designed by Pierre Bourdelle. On each side of the pool are two 100'-by-175' courtyards dedicated to the regions of Texas. Featured in the courtyards are statues which symbolize the six governments that have ruled over Texas--Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederacy, and the United States.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify)
				Recreation
<b>Specific dates</b> 1936-37	<b>Builder Architect</b> George L. Dahl <u>et al.</u>			(Exposition site)
				(football)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

SUMMARY

The Texas Centennial Exposition was not only a celebration of Texas independence, but also of Texas and Western culture. The 1936-37 Exposition was also a festival of architecture, which embraced the then-new International style of architecture. Traditionally, worlds fairs are the testing grounds for new ideas in building design; Dallas and its Exposition architects chose to reflect the style of the Exposition Des Arts Decoratifs in Paris in 1925. They were also influenced by the recently completed "Century of Progress" in Chicago (1933-34), where the International style of architecture was prominently displayed.

The significance of Fair Park extends beyond the architectural theme of the remaining buildings. Fair Park is one of the largest intact groupings of Exposition buildings remaining in the United States. Most World's Fairs or Exposition grounds in the United States have been demolished, except for one or two exceptional buildings. However, many of the original 1936 buildings and open spaces remain today from the Texas Centennial Exposition, even though several were constructed as "temporary" structures.

Fair Park is also significant in terms of urban design, open space design, and artwork and sculpture. The Exposition architecture expressed monumentality in design, but this was reinforced by the open spaces and landscaping that the buildings were sited around. The grounds were planned on two landscape design themes: a Beaux Arts theme that involved grand plazas and vistas that intersected or were terminated by major buildings, and a pastoral theme that used winding paths, random landscaping, and building siting to create a very informal atmosphere. The majority of these open spaces, both formal and informal, exist today in one of America's most well-planned parks. Four major open space areas (and their buildings) still remain: Esplanade of State (Grand Plaza--Esplanade of State--Texas Court of Honor); Agrarian Parkway and The Chute; Federal Concourse (Federal Concourse--Constitution Place--Stadium Plaza); and the Lagoon and Centennial Drive. These spaces combine to create a series of monumental spaces, formal vistas, landscaping, and pastoral images unparalleled in a planned park in Texas and the Southwest.

The sculptures, murals, and other artwork remaining from the Exposition are also significant. Often intended to be "temporary" artwork, they reinforced the monumentality of the buildings and the open space design in Fair Park. Many of the artists studied in Paris; their work remains in exterior spaces as sculpture and murals, and inside many of the buildings in the Park.<sup>1</sup>

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 277

Quadrangle name Dallas

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

**UTM References**

A 

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7	1	0	5	7	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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7	0	9	9	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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7	0	9	2	2	0
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3	6	2	9	3	7	0
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E 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification**

The Exposition site is bounded on the north by the Texas and Pacific Railroad, to the south by Second Avenue, on the west by Parry Avenue and the east by Pennsylvania Avenue.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

Stephen G. Snyder, Park Ranger; Revised by James H. Charleton, Historian,  
name/title History Division, National Park Service

organization Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park date November 12, 1985;  
December 24, 1985

street & number P.O. Box 329 telephone (512) 868-7128

city or town Johnson City state Texas 78636

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date \_\_\_\_\_

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Three of the statues are the work of Laurence Tenney Stevens. In one, Spain carries a castle in one arm and castanets in the other hand. The second features a woman representing the Confederacy. She has a band of seven stars around her head, symbolic of the time, at the start of the Civil War, when Texas was the seventh State to secede from the Union. The Texas sculpture has a Lone Star above her head.

Centennial Building (Transportation/Chrysler Building) (4)(1905; 1936)

Now known as the Centennial Building, this Spanish Romanesque building by architect James Flanders was modernized and enlarged in an Art Deco style for the Centennial Exposition. It bounds the northwest side of the Esplanade of State. The porticos were added, providing places for statues and cement fresco murals, and the original Esplanade facade was renovated.

The Centennial Building retains the artwork created for the Exposition. Along the facade above each entrance are raised cement frescoes, known as cameo reliefs, by Pierre Bourdelle. Representing different modes of transportation, they are "Speed" (Man and Angel), for air transportation; "Locomotive" (Man and Eagle), for rail; "Streamline" (Cougar and Bison), for land; and "Man Taming Wild Horse," for water.

Daughters of the American Revolution Building (Continental Oil Hospitality House)  
(3) (1936)

Now used as the Daughters of the American Revolution House, this 2-story house in Southern Colonial Plantation style features a 2-story front porch supported by six columns and a balustraded deck over the porch. The architect was W.R. Brown.

Maintenance Building (Hall of Administration) (2) (1910)

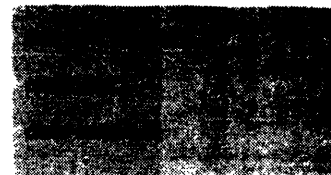
Originally constructed by architect James Flanders as the State Fair Coliseum, this Spanish Romanesque style building was renamed and remodeled in Art Deco style for the Centennial Exposition. It is to the left or northwest of the Parry Avenue Entrance Gates. It is presently used for maintenance equipment and storage and is now known as the Maintenance Building. During the Exposition, this building housed the Centennial Corporation offices. The Exposition's architectural staff also maintained its office in this building.

Automobile Building (6) (1948)

This eclectic-style building, on the southeast side of the Esplanade, faces the Centennial Building across the Esplanade of State. It replaced the Electric, Communications, and Varied Industries exhibit buildings which burned in the 1940s. Portions of its facade (at entries) are painted to match the color of the original surrounding buildings. The engineers for its construction were Bill Cobb and Ed Wilson.

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The three matching statues flanking the north side were done by Raoul Josset and survive from 1936. They are 20' high and mounted on 12' pedestals. France has a fleur-de-lis on her chest and grapes in her hand. The traditional eagle and snake are features of the statue of Mexico. The United States has a shield on her chest and holds a laurel sprig.

Old Mill Inn (Morten Milling Industry Building) (7) (1936)

This building behind, or south, of the Automobile Building, when built for the Centennial Exposition, housed a modern experimental flour mill. It is presently known as Old Mill Inn and houses a restaurant. It is a rough-stone structure with towers and gables, in a 19th-century domestic eclectic style.

Hall of State (State of Texas Building)(5)(1936)

Now known as the Hall of State, this structure, at the head of the Esplanade, is regarded as an excellent example of Art Deco architecture and was the showpiece of the Centennial Exposition. It features a large curved central mass with lower rectangular wings.

The Centennial Corporation Architects (George Dahl and staff, including Donald Nelson) prepared the design and construction documents for this building, only to have the Board of Control (a State agency established to oversee the entire Centennial effort) select another group of architects to begin again. This group of architects was called the Centennial Architects, Associated, and included H. B. Thomason, Dewitt and Washburn, Fooshee and Cheek, Walter P. Sharp, Ralph Bryan, Anton Korn, Mark Lemmon, Flint and Brass, T. J. Galbraith, Arthur Thomas, Donald Barthelme of Houston, and Adams and Adams of San Antonio. Donald Barthelme was the principal designer for the project, and Adams and Adams were the interior designers. The building was only partially completed in time for the Centennial Exposition opening.

It houses many pieces of art, including statues, friezes, murals, medallions, and stenciled ceilings. The building is dedicated to the State of Texas and her heroes.

Above the entrance is a carved sculpture by Harry Lee Bigson. In relief, a female figure which represents Texas kneels behind the Texas flag. Below, the owl of wisdom holds the key to progress and prosperity. In the background are branches from the State tree, the pecan.

Focusing attention on the entrance is an heroic bronze and gold-leaf statue of an Indian, which stands on a dais 20' high. This "Tejas Warrior" by Dallas sculptor Allie V. Tennant is 11' tall. The figure acts as a terminus for the bronze floors at the entrance. The inner wall of the niche is faced with ceramic tiles of deep blue and orange.

Inside the size and drama of the art is overwhelming. In the Hall of Heroes, on marble pedestals, are six heroic-sized bronze statues of great figures of the Texas Revolution. These statues by Pompeo Coppini are considered to be the finest examples of his work.

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Above and along the walls is a frieze that records the battles of the Texas Revolution. The Hall of Heroes opens onto the Great Hall, which is 94' long, 68' wide, and 46' high. Murals span the north and south walls. They depict Texas history beginning in 1519 and ending with figures representing the arts and the development of the cotton, grain, oil, lumber, and agricultural industries. The murals, by Eugene Savage of New York, with the assistance by Reveau Bassett and James Buchanan Winn, Jr., both of Texas, were the largest murals in the world at the time they were painted.

A magnificent medallion representing the six nations that have ruled Texas is mounted on the far wall of the hall. Designed by Joseph E. Renier, the medallion, 25' in diameter, is a bas-relief in three tones of gold.

The floor and steps of the Hall are of verde antique marble from Vermont. The white inlay strips and mosaics of Texas fauna in the floor are of San Saba stone from central Texas. The hand-stenciled ceiling in an Aztec motif is the work of George Davidson.

The left wing of the Hall of State contains the East and West Texas rooms. Tile panels depict such West Texas figures as a Comanche Indian and a Mexican guitarist. Dallas artist Dorothy Austin's wooden statue of a cowboy stands in a niche. Murals by Texas artist Tom Lea contain a Texas cowboy surrounded by cattle and horsemen. The mural on the opposite wall is "Three West Texas Folks in a Wagon."

The East Texas room contains the "Sleeping Giants" mural by Olin Travis, which depicts East Texas before and after the discovery of oil.

The south wing of the Hall of State contains the North and South Texas rooms. The North Texas room contains carved figures and door details by Texas craftsman Lynn Ford that represent cotton and wheat.

A large fresco painting by Texas artist Arthur Starr Niendorff represents a cartoon character, "Old Man Texas," the only fresco painting created for the Exposition because of the difficult process which involved painting directly on wet plaster.

The South Texas room features the mural work of James Owen Mahoney, Jr., with allegorical figures symbolizing the region.

Margo Jones Theater (Magnolia Lounge)(8)(1936)

Built by the Magnolia Petroleum Company (Mobil), this low building, facing the Grand Entrance Vista, provided for the comfort of the Exposition visitor. Designed by William Lescaze, a Swiss-born New York architect, this was the first Dallas building, and possibly the first in Texas, of the "new" International style, a style of which Lescaze was a leading proponent during this era. It is interesting to note that of the limited coverage of the Texas Centennial Exposition in the Maise Architectural Periodicals, it is the Magnolia Lounge that is mentioned the most.

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Currently known as the Margo Jones Theater, the building houses a 100-seat theater-in-the-round, which is not used.

Sesquicentennial Headquarters (Hall of Religion) (9)(1936)

This Art Deco building was built for the Lone Star Gas Company, and used for exhibits by various religious groups. It was partially demolished after the Exposition. The remnant houses the State Fair Information Center and the offices of the Greater Dallas Sesquicentennial Committee.

Fair Park Music Hall (Auditorium)(10)(1925)

Fair Park Music Hall is situated in the southwest corner of Fair Park. Used as an auditorium for the Exposition, this Spanish Romanesque building, by architects Lang and Witchell, underwent minor interior changes to prepare it for use by General Motors for an auditorium and exposition space during the Centennial Exposition. Renovation and expansion in 1972 were performed by Jarvis Putty Jarvis.

THE AGRARIAN PARKWAY (D)

This area, northeast of the Hall of State, is comprised of exhibition buildings. It has a different scale from the remainder of the park. The feel is more urban--of walking down a city street which bristles with activity rather than being in a formal setting. This area has one focal point, or landmark, the tower at the slight angle in the street. The facades of the buildings provide a unified design element.

Embarcadero Building (Foods Building/Agricultural Building)(12)(date unknown)

Now known as the Embarcadero and the Creative Arts and Show Place Theater Building. This building was either built or remodeled for the Centennial Exposition, in the Southwestern style.

Food and Fiber Building (Poultry Building)(11)(date unknown)

Now known as the Texas Food and Fiber Building. Its history and style are similar to those of the Embarcadero Building.

Pan American Building (Livestock Building 1)(13)(1917)

Now known as the Pan American Building, or the Goat and Sheep Building, this building was renovated in 1930.

Swine Building (Livestock Building 2)(14)(date unknown)

Its style and history parallel those of the Embarcadero and Food and Fiber Buildings.



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City Communications Building (Fire, Police, and Hospital Building) (29)(1936)

This Deco-style building by architect Bertram C. Hill today contains police and fire substations which serve the fairgrounds, and WRR-AM, a city-owned radio station.

THE LAGOON (J) AND CENTENNIAL DRIVE

This area of the Park is the most informally planned, with buildings carefully located in almost a sprawling manner around the Lagoon, the pivot point for the museums. The character of this area is relaxed compared to the other urban spaces within the Park.

Dallas Museum of Fine Arts (20)(1936)

The Dallas Museum of Fine Arts is due south of the Lagoon. This Moderne building was designed by architects Dewitt and Washburn, H. M. Greene, H. D. Knight, LaRoche and Dahl, and Ralph Betan.

Band Shell (Open-air Amphitheater) (21)(1936)

The reinforced concrete Band Shell resembles the Hollywood Bowl and features "streamline" pylons. The stage will accommodate a 150-piece band or 200 performers, while the amphitheater has a seating capacity of 5,000. The Band Shell is southeast of the Lagoon. The architects were W. Scott Dunne, and Christensen and Christensen.

Science Place (Museum of Domestic Arts) (25)(1936)

Formerly called the Health and Science Museum, it is now known as the Science Place and Planetarium. It also houses WRR-FM. It is on the north side of Centennial Drive near the eastern edge of the Park.

The Cotton Bowl (15)(1930)

Originally a single-tier stadium, the upper tiers were added in 1948-49.

Women's Building (17)(1954)

This structure, by architects Harrell and Gibbs, is built on the site and is approximately in the same location as the Ford Motor Company Building of 1936.

Museum of Natural History (18)(1936)

This Moderne structure by architects Clyde Griesenbeck, Mark Lemmon, Frank Kean, and John Danna is to the southwest of the Lagoon. The Museum of Natural History visually tells the history of the State of Texas since the dinosaur.

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The architects were Anton Korn and J. A. Pitzinger. The WRR-FM station is housed in a brick addition built about 1974, which does not match the fieldstone of the original portion. The architect of the addition was Emil Fretz.

Garden Center (Horticulture Building)(23)(1936)

Now known as the Garden Center, this building due east of the Band Shell, near the southeast corner of the Park, has been significantly altered through remodellings and additions. Architects Arthur E. Thomas and M.C. Kleuser built it. It was remodeled in 1958 and a solarium addition, by Pratt, Box, and Henderson, was put up in 1971.

Model Home (24)(1936)

Three model homes were built by local contractors for the Centennial. One remains in the southeast corner of the Park, and is currently used for storage. Also in the area was the Portland Cement House, which was the winning competition entry of residential buildings. This latter building has been demolished.

Aquarium (26)(1936)

This Deco building by architects H. B. Thomason, Lester Flint (of Flint and Broad), and Forshee and Cheek is northeast of the Lagoon. James B. Cheek was the architect of the 1964 addition, built in the style of the existing building.

Police Building (Christian Science Monitor Building)(27)(1936)

This Moderne building is now the police station for the Fairgrounds.

THE FEDERAL AREA

This area of the Park contains the Federal Building with adjacent plazas and other buildings.

Plazas (1936)

There are three plazas associated with the U.S. Government Building. The first, Federal Concourse (F), at the south end of the Texas Court of Honor, is the only vehicular plaza designed for ceremony in the complex.

Constitution Place (G) lies between the U.S. Government Building and the Women's Building (on the site of the 1936 Ford Motor Company Building). The original plaza (1935) was much narrower, with green scale (grass) between the plaza and the buildings, creating a pleasant exterior space.

Stadium Plaza (H) forms a grand plaza culminating the entry to the Cotton Bowl. Constitution Place opens from Stadium Plaza.

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Tower Building (U.S. Government Building) (16)(1936)

The Tower Building, adjacent to the Texas Hall of State on the southeast, was the only Federal Government exhibit building at the Centennial Exposition. Its great tower dominated the Exposition site. This building is now used by the State Fair of Texas Association as administrative offices and a reception area for dignitaries.

It features a gold-leafed eagle at the top of the tower, designed by Raoul Josset and executed by Dallas artist Jose Martin. The sculptured frieze around the exterior is the work of Julian Garnsey. The scenes on the right and left of the main entrance depict Texas history from 1540 to 1836, as well as various industries. The structure features some excellent Art Deco interiors, complete with a grouping of original lobby furniture designed by Herman Miller.

INTRUSIONS

Non-conforming intrusions detracting from integrity of the district:

Cattle Barn 1 (31)

Horse Barn 1 (31)

Livestock Pavilion (31)

Cattle Barn (31)

Coliseum (30)

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The physical description of the structures within the Dallas Fair Park has been freely adapted from that appearing in "Fair Park Historic District: Designation Report" for the City of Dallas, 1984 (unpublished). The report was corroborated by on-site inspection of the facilities during a tour of the Park by Historian Stephen Snyder on September 11, 1985.

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History

The idea of a Texas Centennial is generally attributed to Governor James S. Hogg, when in 1903, he expressed the hope for a fitting observance of the State's first 100 years. This need was again addressed on November 6, 1923, when Theodore H. Price, a New York editor attending the meeting of the Tenth District Associated Advertising Club of America at Corsicana, Texas, proposed that Texas should have a gigantic celebration between 1936 and 1945. The notion took hold and, by 1934, \$100,000 had been appropriated by the State to finance the initial Centennial effort, and two committees, the Centennial Advisors Board and the Texas Centennial Commission, had been set up to oversee its development.<sup>2</sup>

The location of the Centennial became the next problem to solve. Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas were obvious contenders. R. L. Thornton, the president of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, led the effort to get "Big D" selected as the site. His proposal offered the Commission a site that met their minimum 200-acre requirement. Additionally, the citizens of Dallas approved municipal bonds valued at \$3 million for construction of museums and exhibition halls. Dallas was selected by the Commission.<sup>3</sup> A corporation was organized to operate the Exposition with Fred F. Florence as president, Nathan Adams as chairman of the board, and R. L. Thornton, vice-chairman of the board, in recognition of his previous work on the project.<sup>4</sup>

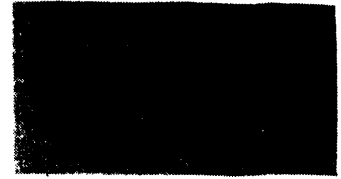
The existing state fairgrounds were expanded to almost 300 acres for the Exposition. Most of the structures were built under direction of the George L. Dahl and Paul Cret, a consulting architect from Philadelphia. As "Centennial Architect," Dahl was responsible for the design of the buildings and the Exposition grounds. This was not a new task for Dahl, for he had been active in the previous five years, working with supporters of the city to ensure that Dallas would host the 1936 exposition. Dahl had completed preliminary concepts for the planning and architecture of the Exposition grounds even before Dallas' selection as the host city.

George Dahl, the Centennial's principal architect, received his undergraduate degree in architecture from the University of Minnesota and a Master's Degree from the Graduate School of Architecture at Harvard in 1922. As a result of exceptional work at Harvard, Dahl received the Nelson Robinson, Jr., traveling fellowship. From his 18 months of study in Europe, he wrote Portals, Doorways and Windows of France (1925).<sup>6</sup> During World War II he designed shops, warehouses, and repair depots for the War Department. His firm designed the Dallas Morning News building; nineteen buildings on the University of Texas campus at Austin, including the Texas Memorial Stadium; and the Texas Centennial Exposition.<sup>7</sup>

Dahl had the responsibility of renovating the existing fairground buildings, designing the Federal Building, and coordinating the design of the remaining buildings by other teams of architects. The office of "Centennial Architect" was also responsible for the

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design of the Exposition grounds, which included open spaces and landscaping, sculptures, artwork, exterior site elements (pylons, seating, lighting, and signage) and the extensive exterior nighttime lighting performances. Dahl was aided considerably in the design of the grounds by Donald E. Nelson, a member of the staff.

Dahl's concept for the design theme of the Exposition was "southwestern" in that it would "... exemplify the color, romance, and grandeur that had marked the development of Texas and the great Southwest. The Romance of Spain and Mexico, combined with the culture of the old South." This regional flavor, intermingled with modern concepts, was the basic design style for the renovation of existing structures and the design of new buildings. The architectural motif of the Texas Centennial Exposition buildings was modern in its disposition of large, unadorned, and unbroken masses; geometric crispness; and bold color. In many ways it was a fortunate choice of style because it was aesthetically pleasing in the contrast of its stark monumentality against the expansive flatness of North Texas and the brightness of the Southwestern sun. Today this style of architecture is referred to as Art Deco, for its roots in the 1925 Paris exposition.

On June 6, 1936, the Centennial opened. "The Empire on Parade" extolled Texans' accomplishments in agriculture, livestock, and industry.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the serious exhibits, the giant cash register of the National Cash Register Corporation tallied each day's attendance. There was a scale model of the Alamo and a replica of the "Jersey Lily," the courtroom of the renowned Judge Roy Bean, the "Law West of the Pecos."<sup>9</sup>

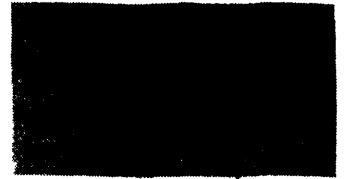
The Midway, with its controversial "Streets of Paris," offered nude females. The City of Dallas was forced, after civic outrage, to require minimal attire on the beauties. Other popular attractions were Robert Ripley's Oditorium, "Believe It or Not," with its collection of strange people and articles, and the Little America Exhibit, set up by Adm. Richard E. Byrd to resemble his base camp in Antarctica.<sup>10</sup> The Centennial closed for the season on November 29 -- but renamed the Greater Texas and Pan American Exposition continued in 1937, from June 12 to October 31.

The Site Before and After the Exposition

The use of the Centennial site for the Dallas State Fair began in 1886, with the chartering of the Dallas State Fair and Exposition. In 1904, 2 years after a fire destroyed a number of buildings on the site and the Texas legislature ended horse racing, the owners, in financial difficulties, exchanged the deed to the fairgrounds with the City of Dallas for money to pay off their debts. The City converted the horsetrack on the ground to an automobile racing track and built new entrance gates and an administration building. Construction continued through 1936, including the (first) full-time public museum in Dallas (1908) and the Textile and Fine Arts Building. The Cotton Bowl was built on the racetrack site in 1930.<sup>11</sup>

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The Texas Centennial Exposition grounds continues to be the site of the annual Texas State Fair. Some of the buildings have been adapted for that use. The Hall of State, Museum of Natural History, Museum of Fine Arts, Science Place, Garden Center, and Aquarium are used as museums. The Music Hall, now known as Fair Park Music Hall, is used as a theater. In preparation for the Texas Sesquicentennial in 1986 and, with an awareness of the historic significance of the site, the City of Dallas has committed itself to the restoration of the park. The Automobile Building is receiving a facade in the style of the Centennial, and its porticos are being constructed to match those that were on the Electric, Communications, and Varied Industries buildings. Walkways and other buildings are also being restored.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>City of Dallas, "Fair Park Historic District: Designation Report" (1984), pp. 17-18. This report was the principal source used in preparation of the statement of significance.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>George L. Dahl, Portals, Doorways and Windows of France (New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Co., Inc., 1925).

<sup>7</sup>George L. Dahl, Selected Work, George L. Dahl, Architects-Engineers (Dallas, undated), pp. 8, 11, 31, 32, 39, and 40.

<sup>8</sup>City of Dallas, op. cit., p. 15.

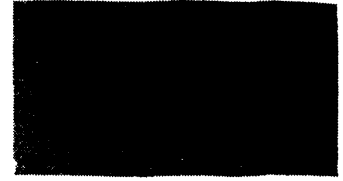
<sup>9</sup>Wallace O. Chariton, Texas Centennial: The Parade of an Empire (Wallace Chariton, 1979), pp. 92, 94.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>11</sup>City of Dallas, op. cit., (1984) pp. 8-9.

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Proposed Boundaries: Fair Park  
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MEKOPPE ST

FLETCHER ST

TEXAS & PACIFIC RR

EAST GRAND AVE

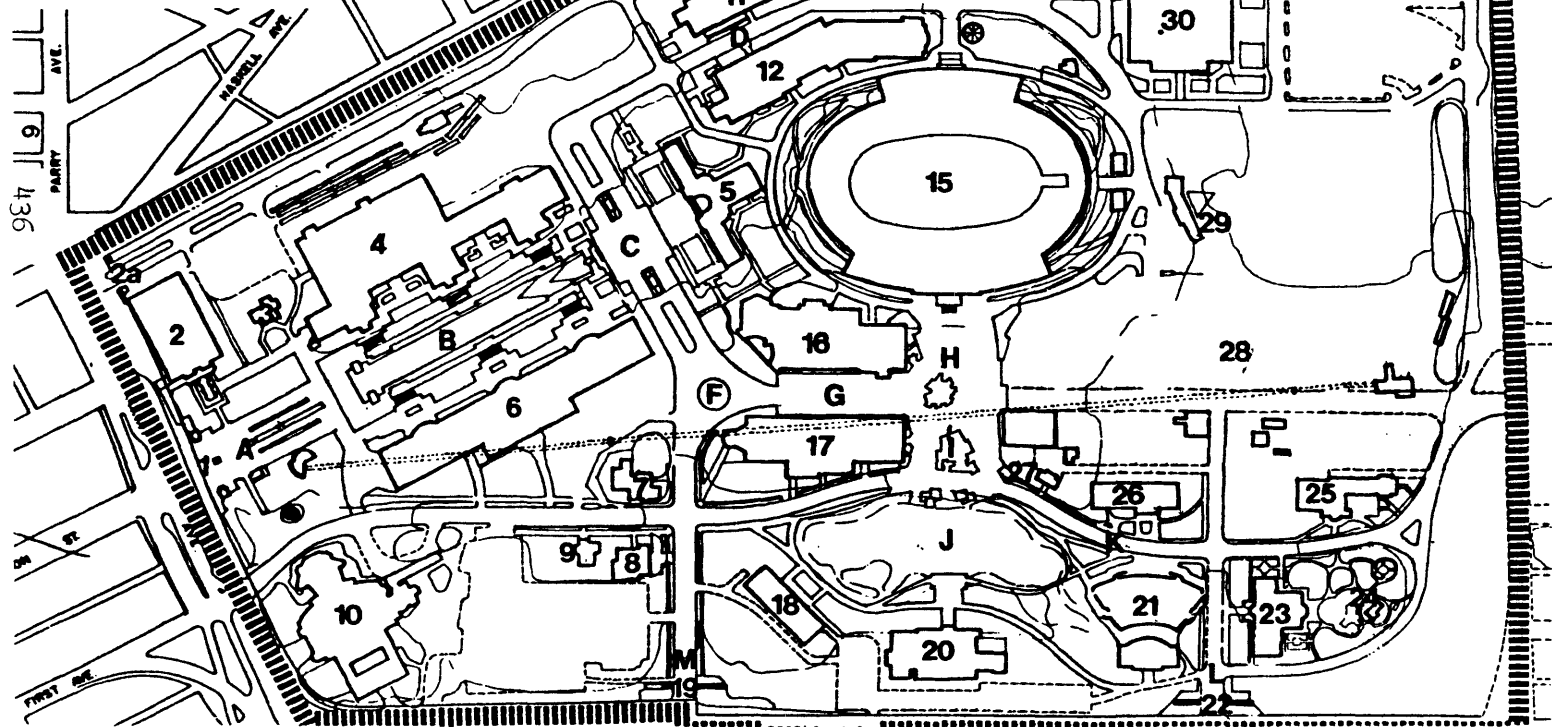
PARRELL AVE

PARRY AVE

FIRST ST

1. Parry Avenue Entrance Gates
2. Maintenance Building (Administration Building)
- 2a. Washington Avenue Entrance Gates
3. D.A.R. Building (Continental Oil Building)
4. Centennial Building (Transportation/Chrysler Building)
5. Hall of State (State of Texas Building)
6. Automobile Building
7. Old Mill Inn (Morten Milling Company Building)
8. Margo Jones Theater (Magnolia Lounge)
9. Sesquicentennial Headquarters (Hall of Religion)
10. Music Hall
11. Food & Fiber Building (Agriculture Building)
12. Embarcadero Building (Foods Building)
13. Agriculture Building (Pan American Building)
14. Livestock Building #2
15. Cotton Bowl
16. Tower Building (U.S. Government Building)
17. Women's Building
18. Museum of Natural History
19. Grand Avenue Entrance Gates
20. Dallas Museum of Fine Arts
21. Band Shell
22. M. L. King Entrance Gates
23. Garden Center
24. Model House
25. Science Place
26. Aquarium
27. Police Building (Christian Science Monitor Building)
28. Midway
29. Communications Building (Fire, Police & Hospital Building)
30. Coliseum
31. Agriculture & Livestock Complex

- A. Grand Plaza
- B. Esplanade of State
- C. Texas Court of Honor
- D. Agrarian Parkway
- E. The Chute
- F. Federal Concourse
- G. Constitution Place
- H. Stadium Plaza
- J. Reagan Plaza
- K. Lagoon
- L. Centennial Drive
- M. M. L. K. Entrance Vista



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