

**Dallas Landmark Commission  
Landmark Nomination Form**

**1. Name**

**historic:** Fair Park

**and/or common:** Dallas State Fair and Exposition, Texas State Fair and Exposition

**date:** 1886-1937

**2. Location**

**address:** Northwest of Parry Avenue Avenue – 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Intersection

**location/neighborhood:** Bounded on north by Texas and Pacific Railroad R.O.W., to the south by Second Ave., on the west by Parry Avenue and east by Pennsylvania Ave.

**land survey:** Thomas Lagow Survey, Abstract No. 759      **tract size:** 180± ac.

**3. Current Zoning**

**current zoning:** Heavy Commercial and Historic Overlay No. 33

**4. Classification**

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

**5. Ownership**

**Current Owner:** City of Dallas

**Contact:** Willis Winters, Parks and Rec.

**Phone:** 214-670-4074

**Address:** 1500 Marilla, 6FN

**City:** Dallas      **State:** Texas      **Zip:** 75201

**6. Form Preparation**

**Date:** September 18, 2007

**Name & Title:** Susan A. Besser, Designation Committee Member

**Organization:** Designation Committee

**Contact:** Marcus Watson

**Phone:** 214-670-1497



## 12. Physical Description

Condition, check one:

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

unaltered

altered

Check one:

original site

moved(date \_\_\_\_\_)

*Describe present and original (if known) physical appearance. Include style(s) of architecture, current condition and relationship to surrounding fabric (structures, objects, etc). Elaborate on pertinent materials used and style(s) of architectural detailing, embellishments and site details.*

Fair Park, a National Historic Landmark District and National Register of Historic Places District is a distinctive collection of thirty architecturally significant buildings, most notably of the Art Deco style, built for the express purpose of the Texas Centennial Exposition of 1936, sited on a 277-acre tract in East Dallas.

The exposition buildings of Fair Park were conceived and designed as permanent structures in a unified whole transforming existing buildings and designing new buildings within the Art Deco, Art Moderne, Classical Modern—a development of Art Deco—and International styles with a regional southwestern vernacular in surroundings that have distinctive classical and romantic landscape features as embodied by the City Beautiful movement.

The City Beautiful movement an outgrowth of the Chicago World's Fair—classical Beaux Arts proponent Daniel Burnham's creation, began as a response to Americans' desire to demonstrate to the European countries our cultural and artistic sensibilities. The premise of the movement is that buildings are arranged to form a procession which pull the observer from "one specific point to another." Monumental buildings are sited to form "terminal vistas of converging diagonal axes" whereby principles of symmetry as well as less formalized groupings of buildings create an ordered environment.<sup>1</sup>

The City Beautiful methodology as envisioned by St. Louis landscape architect George Kessler's master plan of 1906 is evident within Fair Park—a beaux arts approach as espoused by Burnham with grand plazas and axial plans surrounding formal water features balanced with a pastoral setting of the picturesque landscape predilections of Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. featuring winding paths and naturalistic landscaping surrounding less formally sited buildings.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/page61.html>

<sup>2</sup> Larry Paul Fuller, ed., *The American Institute of Architects Guide to Dallas Architecture with Regional Highlights* (Dallas: Texas, Dallas Chapter, American Institute of Architects, 1999), 50.

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Sculpture and murals contribute to the site's significance. The murals enhance the planar quality of the buildings and balance the sense of monumentality by creating depth to the smooth surfaces. Furthermore, the murals and sculpture are commissions of noteworthy European and American artisans.

As noted by William L. McDonald in *Dallas Rediscovered*, "world fairs are the testing grounds for new ideas in building design."<sup>3</sup> Rather than the establishment of a new idiom such as the Century of Progress exposition which promulgated the International style or the building of an icon such as the Eiffel Tower of the Paris' Exposition Universelle of 1889, the overall design of Fair Park drew from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Moderne in Paris as well as the Century of Progress international style.<sup>4</sup>

The Centennial offered an opportunity for architects, underutilized and unemployed due to the Depression, to display their talents. George Dahl, who had been involved in the early planning stages and was the official Centennial architect, was responsible for the oversight of these architects and according to architectural historian, David Dillon "for melding the various design proposals into an architecturally coherent whole."<sup>5</sup> Within a span of ten months George Dahl assisted by Donald Nelson, who had worked on the Chicago Century of Progress, labored through the difficult and arduous process of reviewing and supervising everything from the renderings of architectural edifices to plans for hot dog stands.<sup>6</sup>

George Dahl, a local Dallas architect, had been involved in the embryonic stages of the Centennial submitting proposals and sketches which he later termed as "pure fantasy."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> William L. McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered: A Photographic Chronicle of Urban Expansion 1870-1925*, (Dallas, Texas: The Dallas Historical Society, 1978), 243.

<sup>4</sup> McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 243.

<sup>5</sup> Dillon, *Dallas Architecture*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 176-181.

<sup>7</sup> David Dillon, *Dallas Architecture 1936-1986* (Austin, Texas: Texas Monthly Press, Inc., 1985), 20.

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Nevertheless, Dahl's involvement in these early stages proved invaluable in obtaining the actual awarding of the contract and in persuading the Centennial Commission that Fair Park and its existing buildings would be an ideal site for the Centennial.<sup>8</sup> It was under Dahl's direct supervision that the complex and sweeping proposals set out by Paul Phillippe Cret, who Dahl had worked closely with at the University of Texas, were realized. Cret recommended incorporating the existing buildings into the overall scheme. Drawing from the Beaux Arts Classicism and reminiscent of previous World's Fairs such as the Columbian Exposition, Cret inspired by George Kessler's plans of 1906 proposed a Court of Honor to provide cohesiveness to the plan. Cret's master plan called for removing the stone pier porticos from the State Fair Exposition Building and Varied Industries Building and adding Art Deco facades. The renovated buildings would surround a proposed sunken garden and create a monumental plaza that terminated at the State of Texas building, now the Hall of State. From a practical standpoint incorporation of the 1905 exhibition buildings into the master plan expedited the construction process.

However, the most crucial building was outside of Dahl's control—the State of Texas. A great deal of controversy surrounded the design. Although a group of architects led by George Dahl submitted a design to the State Board of Control, the commission went to a group of architects known as 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 Broad, T. J. Galbraith, Arthur Thomas, Donald Barthelme and Adams and Adams. Donald Barthelme, a protégé of Paul Phillippe Cret served as the main architect with Cret acting as consultant.<sup>9</sup> Given the implications of this style—power, monumentality and tradition—and the positioning of the building within the site—the Classical Modern expression reflects authority and supremacy—a stance befitting the function of the building and nature of the State Board of Control. The end result is an edifice that has a more commanding presence due to the use of cut stone as the primary building material and restrained classicism so prevalent in government buildings of the 1930s

The transformed exhibition buildings and surrounding new structures melded the characteristics of Art Deco and Moderne such as the stepped facades and classical symmetry of Art Deco and the horizontality and machine aesthetic of the Moderne. Historian William L. McDonald notes that Art Deco was an excellent selection for the architectural style with “its

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<sup>8</sup>Kenneth B. Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas: Centennial '36* (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M, 1987), 55.

<sup>9</sup>Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 179.

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stark, planar monumentality against the expansive flatness of the North Texas plain and the unrelieved brilliance of the Southwestern sun.”<sup>10</sup> The Art Deco style demonstrated its appropriateness for this project as it allowed for artisan-architect collaborations and offered large expanses of smooth surfaces to showcase the murals that presents the historical pageantry of Texas.

### ART DECO

Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Moderne in Paris in 1925 is considered the birth of the Art Deco movement. Art Deco is distinguished by the sense of verticality and angular composition embellished with stylized decoration such as sunrise motifs, floriated chevron and lozenge patterns and stylized figure sculptures in polychromatic colorization or metals. Also known as the Zig-Zag Moderne this mode incorporated zig-zag motifs in surface decoration and building elements. Stepped or set-back facades as well as vertical focal points stress the geometric forms. Low relief stylized ornamentation characteristically surrounds entrances and windows.<sup>11</sup> The dynamics of machine-made forms juxtaposed with the planar quality of the Cubist movement typify this style.<sup>12</sup>

Disseminated during the depression era the appeal of this style lay in the frivolity of Art Deco forms as an antidote for the realities of the times.<sup>13</sup> Considered a modern style Art Deco was not based on historical architectural forms but was influenced by the Chinese and the archeological finds such as King Tutankhamun’s tomb in Egypt and the Mayan and Aztec ruins.<sup>14</sup> Landmark examples of this style such as the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building incorporated the machine aesthetic producing abstracted forms utilizing the characteristic stepped facades to solve the design dilemma of New York City’s zoning regulations of 1916.

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<sup>10</sup>McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 243.

<sup>11</sup> John J. G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition, 1981), 77.

<sup>12</sup>Dillon, *Dallas Architecture*, 24; Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 253.

<sup>13</sup>Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture*, 252.

<sup>14</sup>Mary Hollingsworth, *Architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Random House, 1995), 73.

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### MODERNE

Moderne is a variation of Art Deco characterized by smooth wall finishes and little applied decoration; dominated by a sense of horizontality and rounded edges. Horizontal bands of windows stress the linear quality. Industrial designers such as Raymond Loewy worked within this idiom designing appliances, automobiles and trains in the mode referred to as “streamlining” reflecting the functionality of ships and airplanes.<sup>15</sup>

### CLASSICAL MODERN

According to architectural historian Mary Hollingsworth, simplified classicism or Classical Modern as noted by Paul Phillippe Cret, suggested “modernity without abandoning basic traditions.”<sup>16</sup> Projecting power, monumentality, austerity, with an emphasis on geometric forms, this variation of Art Deco employed simplified architectural forms with Art Deco inspired ornamentation. This idiom was favored in governmental institutions such as post offices and state buildings as well as academic institutions.

### INTERNATIONAL STYLE

Hitchcock and Johnson initially used the term to describe the first International Exhibition of Modern Architecture exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932. The movement developed in landmark buildings such as Loos’ Steiner House in Vienna (1910) and architecture by Rietveld (Schroder House), Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. Hitchcock and Johnson surmised that in view of the fact that the support system relied on skeletal supports rather than masonry-bearing walls the interior space could be developed without the constraints of the load bearing walls and, therefore, the exterior shell could reflect the interior system. The International Style is characterized by asymmetrical balance, glass curtain walls and the lack of ornamentation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture*, 251; Hollingsworth, *Architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Hollingsworth, *Architecture of the 20th Century*, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Hollingsworth, *Architecture of the 20th Century*, 60. David P. Handlin, *American Architecture*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 202-203.

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The key buildings and monuments of the exposition exhibit the full array of their respective styles—the monumentality of the Classical Modern, the asymmetrical balance and glass curtain walls of the International, the verticality and angular composition of Art Deco and the horizontality and streamlining of the Moderne.

Parry Avenue Entrance

Style: Art Deco

Architects: Lang & Witchell, 1936

A central eighty-five foot high pylon defines the Parry Avenue as the main entrance into the Esplanade. Featuring carved relief and six gold-leafed metal medallions the pylon is crowned by a gold star representing the Lone Star of Texas. At the base is a sculpture frieze of a buffalo hunt and pioneer wagon train designed by Texas artist James Buchanan Winn, Jr. The entrance replaced the 1908 entry gate designed by James Flanders.

Esplanade of State

Style: Art Deco

Architect: George Dahl, 1936

The Esplanade is the most formal area within the park, providing a direct connection between the Parry Avenue entrance and the State of Texas Building now the Hall of State. George Kessler's landscape design plan of 1904 modeled after the City Beautiful Movement is realized in this axial plan whose centerpiece is the 700-foot long reflecting pool. Monumental Art Deco facades on either side accentuate the dramatic effect.

Decorative pylons with Pegasus relief designed by Pierre Bourdelle are at the southwestern end of the pool's fountain. The Court of Independence is considered as one space with the Esplanade. Within two 100' by 175' courtyards of the Court of Independence are six statues which represent the six flags over Texas—Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederacy, and the United States. Lawrence Tenny Stevens is responsible for three of these works. Of these three, the statue which represents Spain depicts a female figure holding a castle on her arm and a castaneta in the other hand. A band of seven stars gracing the head of a female form representing the Confederacy symbolizes Texas history as the seventh state to secede from the Union. The sculpture representing Texas features the recognizable icon of the Lone Star.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Texas Centennial Exposition Buildings (1936-1937), National Register Nomination, 1985.

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The corresponding statues by French sculptor Raoul Josset depict France, Mexico and the United States. France is shown with a fleur-de-lis across her chest and in her hand. The female form depicting Mexico's dominion features an eagle and snake, traditional symbols of Mexico. The United States statue features a shield on her chest and holds a laurel sprig.<sup>19</sup>

Every World's Fair has been defined by the architecture and public spaces such as the Court of Honor at the Columbian Exposition. The Esplanade with its Art Deco facades and allegorical sculptures serves as the character defining feature and creates an impressive entrance experience drawing the participants into the remarkable exhibition. In the evening, the illumination of the Esplanade with 24 searchlights heightened the fair-goers experience.

Chrysler/Transportation Building (Centennial Building)

Style: Romanesque, 1905, Renovation, Art Deco, 1936

Architects: Otto Lang (State Fair Exposition Building), 1905, George Dahl, renovation and addition, 1936, ArchiTexas, restoration, 1999

Dahl transformed the 1905 Romanesque tripartite edifice by adding monumental Art Deco facades and extending the building to twice the original length. The symmetrical arched entrances characterize the Art Deco movement displaying strong vertical lines and stepped rooflines. A decorative zig-zag band running along the parapet offers a decorative effect. Within the porticos are murals by Carlo Ciampiagla.

State of Texas Building (Hall of State Building)

Style: Classical Modern

Architects: Texas Centennial Architects, Donald Barthelme, Adams & Adams (interiors), 1936  
Thomas & Booziotis, renovation, 1987

The State of Texas Building, now the Hall of State, is in a style of simplified classicism, termed Classical Modern, a departure from the Art Deco of the exhibition buildings. Donald Barthelme, a protégé of Paul Phillippe Crett is credited with the design. The design reflects Cret's influence especially in regards to the Folger Shakespeare Library and Folger Memorial and Aisne-Marne Memorial with the austere smooth stone surfaces and double colonnade

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1.

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surmounted by an unenriched entablature.<sup>20</sup> The focal point of the Hall of State is a semi-circular exedra which defines the formal entrances. Fluted spandrels that surround the windows and bronze and plate glass entry doors which rise to a fluted cornice encased by flat stone walls of a stack bond pattern distinguish the entrance. The eleven-foot “Tejas Warrior” of bronze and gold leaf executed by Dallas sculptor Allie V. Tennant surmounts the entrance. Lateral wings of stack stone reflect the classic character as does the square columned colonnade with an entablature inscribed with the names of early Texas heroes.

The interiors designed by Adams and Adams hold numerous works of art. Within the Hall of Heroes are six bronze statues mounted on marble bases which depict Texas revolutionary heroes and are excellent examples of the work of Pompeo Coppini.<sup>21</sup> The Great Hall, a ninety-four foot by sixty-eight foot room, contains murals by Eugene Savage of New York assisted by Texas artists, Reveau Bassett and James Buchanan Winn, Jr. The murals portray Texas history beginning with 1519 and the development of cotton, grain, oil, lumber and agriculture.<sup>22</sup>

A bas-relief medallion in three shades of gold by Joseph E. Renier representing the six nations that held dominion over Texas is within the hall. The left wing of the Hall of State contains the east and west Texas rooms. West Texas room holds tile panels which depict the figures of a Comanche Indian and Mexican guitarist that typify this area. Also within this hall are Dorothy Austin’s wooden statue of a cowboy and murals by Texas artist Tom Lea Texas. The Sleeping Giants mural by Olin Travis located in the East Texas room depicts east Texas oil history.<sup>23</sup>

The right wing of the Hall of State contains the north and south Texas rooms. Texas craftsman Lynn Ford’s carved figures and door details of cotton and wheat embellish the North Texas room as does the fresco painting by Texas artist Arthur Starr Neindorf of cartoon character “Old Man Texas.” Within the South Texas room is a mural by James Owen Mahoney, Jr. of an allegorical figure symbolizing that region.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Fuller, ed., *The American Institute of Architects Guide*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Fair Park Historic District, Designation Report, City of Dallas Landmark Commission, 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

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Varied Industries Building, (Automobile Building)

Style: Romanesque, 1920; Renovation, Art Deco, 1936

Architects: Lang & Witchell, 1920; Renovation, Centennial Corporation, George Dahl, 1936

The original construction date is circa 1920. In creating the monumental plaza it was renovated in 1936 to correspond to the Transportation and Chrysler Buildings, but was, unfortunately, destroyed by fire in 1942. The present Automobile Building constructed in 1948 was renovated in 1986 to its present configuration.

Hall of Administration Building (Coliseum, Women's Museum)

Style: Romanesque, 1910; Art Deco, 1936

Architects: C. D. Hill 1910, George Dahl, renovation, 1936; F & S Partners and Wendy Joseph, renovation, 2000.

The State Fair Coliseum was considered to be a state of the art structure when constructed for horse shows in 1910. In 1936 the Coliseum was renovated by Dahl and became the Hall of Administration. He removed the front porticos and added the present Art Deco façade on the south elevation. The stepped façade frames an arched entry featuring a mural by Carlo Ciampaglia.

Continental Oil Hospitality House (DAR Building)

Style: Colonial Revival

Architect: M. C. Kleuser, 1936

In the 1920s and 1930s replicas of historic homes, in particular, those of famous Americans remained a popular architectural trend. Reflecting this tendency the DAR Building was designed after Mount Vernon.

U. S. Government Building (Tower Building, Federal Building; Electric Building)

Style: Art Deco

Architects: George Dahl, 1936; ArchiTexas, Restoration, 1999

The strong vertical element of a 179-foot high tower with stepped façade embellished with a gold-leafed eagle designed by Raoul Josset and executed by Jose Martin is accentuated by the curved façade of this Art Deco edifice. A Greek key sculptural frieze by Julian Garnsey defines the entry bays. Donald Nelson, assistant to George Dahl, whose federal building of the 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition has similar characteristics, is credited with this design.

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Agrarian

Consisting of agricultural and livestock buildings arranged with an urban character the agrarian sub-district forms a dramatic departure from the monumentality experienced in the more formal areas of the Fair Park.

The Foods Building/Agricultural Building (Embarcadero Building)

Style: Art Deco

Architect: Centennial Corporation, George Dahl, 1936; Good Fulton Farrell, Restoration, 2005.

Agriculture Building (Food and Fiber Building)

Style: Art Deco

Architects: Centennial Corporation; George Dahl, 1936; Good, Fulton Farrell, Restoration, 1999

Dominated by a colonnaded portico this building displays a strong horizontal line. With the Embarcadero Building, the matching porticos afford a view of the focal point of this area—a pylon.

Livestock Building No. 2 (Swine Building)

Style: International

Architect: George Dahl, 1936

A series of rectangular bays with wide overhanging eaves creates the experience of a façade with formal porticos providing a departure from typical barn facades.

Poultry (Poultry), date unknown

Style:

Architect: George Dahl

The coliseum burned in 1973 and was rebuilt to conform to the Centennial architecture.

Livestock Building No. 1 (Pan American Building)

Style: Art Deco

Architects: Unknown, c. 1929; George Dahl, 1936

An Art Deco façade fronts this collection of livestock buildings.

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Foods Building No. 2 (Creative Arts Pavilion)  
Architect: George Dahl, 1936

Maintenance Shops (Maintenance Building)

### East Parking

Fire, Police, Hospital, and WRR Building; Communications Building (State Fair Administration)  
Style: Art Deco vernacular  
Architects: Bertram C. Hill, 1936; George Mills, Renovation, 1994

Now the administrative offices for the State Fair of Texas, this small brick building housed vital city services.

### Cotton Bowl

The Cotton Bowl area is the oval-shaped space in the center of park.

Cotton Bowl (Fair Park Stadium)  
Style: Art Deco  
Architect: Mark Lemmon, 1930; George Dahl, renovation, 1936; Chappell, Stokes & Brenneke, engineers, additions, 1948, 1949; Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, addition, 1993

In its original configuration Fair Park Stadium had a seating capacity of 46,200. The single tier concrete bowl was located on the site of the 1886 racetracks infield. In 1948 and 1949 upper decks were added.<sup>25</sup>

### Civic Center

The character of the Civic Center is defined by a less formal arrangement of civic and museum buildings within a pastoral setting with a lagoon as the focal point.

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<sup>25</sup>Fuller, ed., *The American Institute of Architects Guide*, 53.

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Museum of Natural History

Style: Neo-Classical

Architects: Mark Lemmon, C. H. Griesenbeck, 1936; John Danna Needham-McCaffrey, Renovation, 1988

This restrained Neo-Classic limestone-clad building exhibits minimal details such as the fluted pilasters with shell-motif capitals flanking the three-bay entry. In 1988 Needham-McCaffrey architects' conversion of the basement to administration included landscaped terraces by Mesa Design Group.<sup>26</sup>

Aquarium (Dallas Aquarium at Fair Park)

Style: Moderne and Art Deco

Architects: Fooshee and Cheek; Hal Thomson; Flint & Broad, 1936; Booziotis & Co., addition, 1993

A raised pavilion and loggia graced with slender zig-zag columns form the approach to the Dallas Aquarium. With elements of Moderne and Zig-Zag Moderne, a stepped roofline and intricate brick detailing relieve the austere quality.

Christian Science Monitor Pavilion, Aquarium, (Education Annex) 1936

Museum of Fine (Arts Science Place I and IMAX Theater)

Style: Neo-Classical

Architects: DeWitt & Washburn; Herbert M. Greene, LaRoche & Dahl; Ralph Bryan; Henry Coke Knight; Paul Philippe Cret, 1936; Roscoe DeWitt, addition, 1963; Corgan Associates, renovation as Science Place, 1985; Corgan Associates, IMAX Theater addition, 1996

The centerpiece of the cultural district, a domed roof covers the exterior of the cream limestone and shellstone edifice.

Museum of Domestic Arts (Science Place)

Style:

Architects: Anton Korn, 1936; J. Pitziner; Emil Fretz, Addition

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 53.

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Horticulture (Texas Discovery Gardens)

Architects: Arthur E. Thomas, McKleuser; Pratt, Box & Henderson, Addition, 1971; Good, Fulton & Farrell, Renovation, 1990;AAE, Inc., Renovation, 1999

The 1971 addition dictates the minimalist style that typified the late 1960s and 1970s.

Band Shell (Fair Park Band Shell)

Style: Art Deco

Architects: W. Scott Dunne; Christensen & Christensen, 1936; Christensen & Christensen, Addition, 1941

Scott Dunne, known for his theater architecture is credited with this Art Moderne structure—the practical nature of the concentric arches which form the bandshell and are reminiscent of the Hollywood Bowl enhance the acoustics and serve as a design element in keeping with the Art Deco/Moderne of Fair Park.

Fair Park Coliseum

Style:

Architects: Harper & Kemp, 1959

Morten Milling Industry Building (Old Mill Inn)

Style: Eclectic

Architect: Conkranty, 1936

This building of fieldstone with heavy timber detailing housed a modern experimental flour mill.

Auditorium (General Motors Company, Fair Park Music Hall)

Style: Spanish Colonial Revival

Architects: Lang and Witchell, 1925; Peterman & Peterman, renovation, 1936; Jarvis Putty Jarvis, Renovation and Expansion, 1972

The original architects, Lang and Witchell, submitted this winning entry in a limited design competition. Spanish Colonial Revival characteristics such as square towers with dome roofs on the north side and octagonal towers on the east and west elevations typify this style. Enriched window surrounds and corbels embellish this edifice. Minimal alterations were made to the interior to accommodate the General Motors Exhibit for the Centennial. A design inspired by the octagonal towers and sympathetic to the original was added in 1972.

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The Magnolia Lounge (Margo Jones Theater)

Style: International

Architect: William Lescaze, 1936; Thomas & Booziotis, Restoration, 1987

This extreme departure from the Art Deco of the exhibition buildings illustrates the characteristics of the International with its cantilevered decks, floating planes and slender piers. William Lescaze, Swiss-born New Yorker, and a participant in Johnson & Hitchcock's Museum of Modern Art exhibition of 1932, submitted this design which when initially proposed was considered too modernistic.<sup>27</sup>

Hall of Religion (Sesquicentennial Headquarters)

Style: Art Deco

Architects: Centennial Corporation, George Dahl, Donald Nelson and Staff, 1936

Sponsored by the Lone Star Gas Company, this building housed exhibits for religious bodies. The building no longer in its original form, due to partial demolition, serves as the information center.

Globe Theater

The Globe Theater modeled after the Globe Theater of the London Elizabethan era was the venue for Shakespearean plays during Centennial is an extant structure of the Centennial period.

Innovative technology and the opportunity to showcase products was the essence of Expositions, especially in home design and materials. The Centennial of 1936 featured four model homes. The Portland Cement House, designed by Austin architect Bubi Jessen is the only model home in its original site. According to architectural historian Willis Winters, a home nearly identical to the Portland Cement Home is in the Oak Cliff area.

The Contemporary Home, by Dallas architects DeWitt & Washburn, and designed by Donald Barthelme is a two-story floor plan with large expanses of openings afforded by the inventive use of pipe for framing members. Planned for extreme weather conditions of the southwest this home featured new advancements such as aluminum paint to reflect heat and reduce

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<sup>27</sup> Fuller, ed., *The American Institute of Architects Guide*, 53; *Dallas Morning News*, 30 January 1936.

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temperature and fenestration which augmented heating and cooling.<sup>28</sup> This home was moved offsite to Gaston Avenue after the Centennial and has been extensively remodeled.

The third of these homes, the Masonite Home designed by Ralph H. Cameron, San Antonio architect, reflected a departure in typical plans of this period. The floor plan of this one-story home has a two-story entrance hall, a terrace off the living room and a deck above the front garage.<sup>29</sup> This home was sold and moved offsite after the Centennial. The owners remodeled the home extensively, and although massing and form are evident the home bears little resemblance to the original.

The Southern Yellow Pine Home a one story, gable roof building was designed by Goodwin & Tatum architects. This model home, as was the Contemporary Home, was designed to foster comfort amid extreme southwestern weather conditions.<sup>30</sup> Pine was used extensively in the Southern Pine Home. This home was moved offsite to Kinmore and has been minimally altered.

There are numerous sculptures throughout the park. One of the most notable is the Captain Sydney Smith Memorial Fountain executed in 1916 by Dallas artist Clyde Giltner Chandler of four female figures cast in granite and bronze and symbolizing the distinctive topography of Texas—mountain, prairie, gulf and gulf clouds.<sup>31</sup>

The Midway structures, no longer extant, continued the Art Deco/Art Moderne architectural motif. Structures such as the S. S. Normandie “replica,” an example of “streamlining,” as well as other Art Deco structures were arranged in a linear fashion creating a narrow street scene in the manner of entertainment venues in large cities.

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<sup>28</sup> “Contemporary House for Use of Southwesterners to be Dedicated Sunday,” *Dallas Morning News*, 5 July 1936, Section III, 9.

<sup>29</sup> “100,000 Visit Masonite Home at Centennial,” *Dallas Morning News*, 9 August 1936, Section III, 1-2.

<sup>30</sup> “Southern Pine Home at Fair Popular,” *Dallas Morning News*, 19 July 1936, Section III, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Fair Park Historic District, Designation Report, 28.

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Key exhibition buildings no longer extant are the Petroleum Oil Building designed by George Dahl for the Humble Hall of Texas history exhibit during the Centennial in the Art Deco style and located at the northern axial terminus of the Court of Honor; the Ford Motor Company Building designed by Albert Kahn for technical exhibits located in the south axial terminus and featured a semi-circular stepped façade and stepped roofline; the Texas Company Building located in the Civic Center and oriented to the Midway as an Art Deco Building with a seventy-five foot tower with the familiar Texaco logo; Gulf Oil Building designed by Donald Nelson formerly located at the terminus of the Midway—a one story building housing the radio studios with a semi-circular façade with zigzag applied decoration. The National Cash Register Company provided a one-story building topped with a over-scaled cash register that exhibited hourly attendance at the Centennial.

The Hall of Negro Life, the first major exhibition of African Americans at a world's fair, designed by George Dahl, was an Art Deco L-shaped one-story building with stepped roofline and façade embellished with a large seal by Raoul Josset above the entrance portraying a figure with broken chains. The building was oriented to the north next to the Globe Theatre and east of the General Motors exhibit. Murals by Harlem Renaissance artist, Aaron Douglas, depicted the history of African-Americans. Two of the murals are in museums—"Aspiration" is in the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco and "In Bondage" is in the collections of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.<sup>32</sup> An amphitheater seating 2,000 for African-American drama and music performances was located behind the building. This building was demolished prior to the Pan-American Exposition.

The architecture of the Centennial—termed Modern-Classic by George Dahl—reflected the Art Deco/Art Moderne in a vernacular interpretation relevant to its setting with its subdued southwestern tonal quality against the Texas sky. This outstanding collection of Art Deco buildings within the City Beautiful urban planning model is the realized vision of a city on the move expressing an architectural spirit befitting the City of Dallas and the great State of Texas.

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<sup>32</sup> <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA03/staples/Douglas/bondage.html>; <http://www.sfgov.org/site/fansf-page.asp?id>  
September 18, 2007

### **13. Historical Significance**

*Statement of historical and cultural significance. Include: cultural influences, special events and important personages, influences on neighborhood, on the city, etc.*

Fair Park is a vital aspect to Dallas' prominence as a cultural and commercial center in Texas. The history of Fair Park illustrates the transformation of a local fair to the State Fair and then, ultimately, to the Centennial which drew millions of visitors and brought enormous financial benefits to Dallas as a testament to the strength of boosterism. The metamorphosis of the State Fair to Texas Centennial is about the promotion of the City of Dallas.<sup>33</sup>

County and local fairs have a long tradition of social, economic and agricultural discourse. For the town boosters the fair is an avenue for commerce and advancement of the community in the marketplace. For the city dwellers, ranchers and farmers, the fair has always been a place to see and be seen—a place to see the handiwork of a year's labor in a homemade quilt, a place to view the prize bull, a place to visit with neighbors and catch up on the latest news. The fair is an opportunity to be transported from the doldrums of everyday life. From the practical point of view fairs, especially before the advent of mass communication, have been a resource for dissemination of agricultural technology. At the fair a farmer could see first hand the tractor with rubber tires or how the cotton gin would benefit his production.

The State Fair embodies all aspects—social, economic and agricultural—but with the added facet of competition with other cities for economic tourism. According to Daniel Boorstin, “the circumstances of American life in the upstart cities of the West produced a lively competitive spirit. The characteristic and most fertile competition,” says Boorstin, “was a competition among communities.”<sup>34</sup> Boosters such as W. H. Gaston held a vision of what Dallas could be and understood that the attainment of the goal was to make Dallas more competitive. Individualism and community spirit went hand in hand. What benefited the entrepreneur also benefited the community. The Dallas County Agricultural and Mechanical Association sponsored the first fair in 1859 choosing a site that would ultimately be the location of the intersection of the Texas & Pacific and Houston & Texas Central Railroad lines. With scarce amenities the first fair managed to attract over 2,000 visitors. The promoters of the first fair broke even providing the incentive to continue. An added inducement to continue the fair was that it offered farmers and ranchers the opportunity to inspect and purchase the latest

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<sup>33</sup> William L. McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered: A Photographic Chronicle of Urban Expansion 1870-1925*, (Dallas, Texas: The Dallas Historical Society, 1978), 231.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience*, (New York: Random House, 1965), 122-123.

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innovations in farm implements. Bolstered by the success of the first year, a second fair was held attracting over 10,000 people.<sup>35</sup> The Civil War and its aftermath precluded subsequent fairs until 1868. The fair of that year and the following year were not financially successful resulting in the loss of sponsorship by the Association.<sup>36</sup> There was one particularly noteworthy aspect of the 1869 fair. W. H. Gaston asked for authorization to plant a cotton crop in a field adjoining the fairgrounds. This afforded fair visitors the opportunity to view cotton grown and harvested.<sup>37</sup>

According to Ralph Waldo Emerson “Railroad iron is a magician’s rod in its power to evoke the sleeping energies of .”<sup>38</sup> Railroad transportation was critical to Dallas’ prosperity but would also benefit the growth of Dallas as a State Fair location. A city untouched by the railroads was not only outside of the economic mainstream of America but was outside of the cultural mainstream as well. The State Fair afforded Dallas its cultural Mecca.

Dallas leadership, such as W. H. Gaston, understood that in order to prosper, especially with the lack of adequate river transportation, the railroads were critical to its survival. The impetus for a railroad hub began in 1866 with public meeting overseen by John Neely Bryan.<sup>39</sup> In 1871 with news that the Houston & Texas Central Railway line would have bypassed the Courthouse, the businessmen of Dallas contributed \$5,000 and a right-of-way through Gaston’s property. Dallas achieved a major victory when the first wood-burning locomotive with eight freight cars pulled into Dallas on July 16, 1872 to the cheering of 5,000 people.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 232.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ralph W. Widener, Jr., *William Henry Gaston: A Builder of Dallas* (Dallas: Historical Publishing Company, 1977), 18.

<sup>38</sup> John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 25.

<sup>39</sup> McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

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With the success of the H&TC line, Dallas pursued the east-west line of the Texas and Pacific Railroad. Originally the route would have followed the 32nd parallel and would have bypassed the city. With some legal maneuvering by Dallas legislator and former mayor, John W. Lane, it was proposed that the railroad pass within one mile of Browder Springs (Old City Park). The timing of this proposal was serendipitous as the T & P engineers were not aware of the Browder Springs proximity to Dallas. A two-year adjournment of the Texas legislature precluded the potential for a counter to Lane's proposal. This afforded Dallas the opportunity to become a railroad crossroads for the Southwest. In December of 1872 Gaston sold the right of way through his property to the Texas and Pacific Railway and donated ten acres for a depot where H&TC and T&P intersected.<sup>41</sup> The railroads had come to Dallas and the Texas & Pacific line would ultimately become the northern border of the Fair Park. The railway system provided the means for transportation to the fair for both local and regional residents and, ultimately, would foster the growth of the regional fair to more prominence as the location for the Texas State Fair.

In 1870 the North Texas Agricultural, Mechanical and Blood Stock Association was formed, electing Gaston president. The next slated fair was to be held in 1871 but was postponed as the fairgrounds site had been donated for the train depot. Gaston relocated the Fair to East Dallas near Moon Lake (present site of Baylor Hospital). There was little time to prepare for the Fair and, consequently, the celebration for the arrival of the Texas & Pacific Railroad to Dallas in July of 1872 eclipsed the Fair. The exhibitions of that year offered little beyond the local agricultural events. The following year was a disaster due to the financial panic even though much forethought went into the planning. The region was still recovering from the effects of the panic and did not hold the fair until 1876. The *Centennial History of Parks* noted that the fair of 1876 concentrated on "the promotion of the industrial interest" a distinct shift from agriculture. This was due to transportation and distribution innovations brought on by the coming of the railroads. The addition of a horse racing track and barrooms and billiard halls constructed beneath the grandstands lent a festive character to the fair. Attendance in six days

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<sup>41</sup> Deed to Texas & Pacific Railroad by W. H. Gaston, December 1872; McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 19.

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was over 30,000 and the following year was equally successful. <sup>42</sup>In the *Dallas Morning News* on January 1, 1886 was an article entitled “The Exposition Embryo.” According to the *News* “prominent citizens” met at the Merchant’s Exchange on December 31, 1885 to discuss the “merits of the project.” At the outset the business and civic leaders involved in forming the Fair & Exposition Company (as it was initially known) were undisclosed. “Among the classes most directly interested in the project,” as the *News* reported “are the hotel men, land agents, agricultural implement companies and railroads.”<sup>43</sup>

In an article by the *News* January 31, 1886, Colonel J. B. Simpson was interviewed regarding the exposition project. The reporter leads into the interview saying that Simpson, Schneider, T. J. Marsalis, Bower, J. S. Armstrong and W. H. Gaston have expressed interest in a State Fair for the fall of 1886. Simpson is quoted as saying “Dallas is starting on a boom now and this fair will increase it to well nigh measureless proportion.”<sup>44</sup> When queried as to whether the grounds had been selected Simpson stated that John N. Simpson’s land, previously used as the Fairgrounds had been offered, however, prospects for purchase of permanent fairgrounds were in the works.

Two considerations were paramount in the planning of the State Fair—the site of the fairgrounds and the vision of the Fair beyond the regional scope. The scale of the State Fair would be on a par with the St. Joe Fair in St. Louis, the largest west of the Mississippi and the State Fair in Louisville. These were considered interstate exhibitions—and would be the models for the State Fair. The fair would be timed so that stock breeders and “racing men” could exhibit. Inter-state volunteer military encampments were proposed as a means to attract visitors, borrowing on the success of these ventures in Louisville, Philadelphia, Mobile and New Orleans.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Harry Jebson, Robert M. Newton and Patricia R. Hogan, “The Centennial History of Parks, Texas Park System 1876-1976,” Unpublished report prepared for City of Dallas, Department of Park Administration, Landscape Architecture and horticulture; in cooperation with the Department of History, Texas Tech University, 1976; 134; quoted in McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 236.

<sup>43</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 1 January 1886, 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 31 January 1886, 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 11 February 1886, 8, 13 March 1886, 8.

The location of the fairgrounds was vital to the success of the Fair. In an interview by the *News*, J. S. Armstrong stressed that the grounds must be contiguous to a railroad and near the “heart of the city.”<sup>46</sup> His concerns were echoed by Simpson and Blankenship. In the same article T. J. Marsalis added that he had been involved in planning with the Fair Association in Louisville. “My experience there,” says Marsalis, “teaches that transportation is the great desideratum, not alone for visitors, but for the speedy, convenient and cheap laying down at the grounds of exhibits, especially in the machinery and agricultural implement line of exhibits.”<sup>47</sup> Marsalis comments underscore the significance of railroad transportation to the success of the State Fair.

Two properties, both on railroad lines were under serious consideration. The first, property owned by John Cole, located in North Dallas, consisted of 90 acres and was located on the Houston & Texas Central line at a price of \$6,000. This property was favored by the implement men. The second property owned by three individuals, Mr. Doran, Mr. Thevenet and Judge Samuel Robertson was presented as an option. The property, favored by Dallas business and civic leaders, was within 600 yards of the previous fairgrounds and bordered the Texas & Pacific Railroad. In anticipation of the fairgrounds property selection W. H. Gaston, a local banker and founder of East Dallas, in four separate transactions purchased 120 acres of land in three separate parcels from these individuals and sold forty acres forming an eighty-acre tract.<sup>48</sup>

On March 25 Gaston presented the eighty-acre tract for \$14,000. The *Dallas Morning News* reported that the directory were in accord on the location of the grounds. In reality there had been considerable dissension within the Association ostensibly on the suitability of location, but generated by disparate interests of the retailers and bankers of Dallas and the agriculture implement dealers.<sup>49</sup>

The implement dealers argued that the Gaston property was unsuitable for the display of their equipment, calling the property “hog wallow.” Given their considerable economic enterprises, Dun’s Commercial Agency reported sales of machinery & agricultural implements at \$5,000,000 in 1885. The loss of the implement men to the State Fair would be significant. Prior to the purchase the property had been deemed appropriate for race track purposes. T. J.

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<sup>46</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 13, March 1886, 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 18 April 1886, 10.

<sup>49</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 18 April 1886, 10; McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 236.

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Marsalis of the Association offered that the black waxy character of the soil could be “plowed and harrowed and rolled,” and although the Association offered to plank the grounds to provide a display area for the equipment the implement men were not persuaded by this offer.<sup>50</sup>

Gaston was intent on the transaction being carried through as evidenced by his letter to the Association of April 15, 1886. There was a belief by the implement dealers, in particular, C. A. Keating, that a syndicate was behind the Gaston property transaction.<sup>51</sup> In response to criticism on the choice of the site Gaston stated that the Association could be relieved of the obligation if they reimbursed Gaston his investment, as well as his associate, J. T. Trezevant, incorrectly reported in the *News* as Thevenet. This would absolve the Association of their agreement and Gaston would retain ownership of the property.<sup>52</sup> The Association voted to accept the Gaston property.

Ultimately, implement dealers withdrew their support to form the Texas State Fair. Historian Steven Butler in “The Troubled Birth of the State Fair of Texas,” reiterates the writings of Sam Acheson and William McDonald in his clarification of this division. A natural rivalry existed between the implement men and the business and civic leaders. This was based partially on ideological differences. The implement men, in particular, C. A. Keating, represented the growing Farmer’s Revolt in Texas. Conversely, business and civic leaders represented the conservative element. Both parties had vested interests in Dallas—business and civic leaders in South and East Dallas—the agricultural implement contingent in North Dallas. Butler surmises that the implement men “felt the Fair was their idea in the first place and they resented losing control over it.”<sup>53</sup>

Governor Roberts presided over the grand opening of the Texas State Fair on October 25, 1886. “Improvement—improvement in producing the greatest values in everything,” states Roberts” with the least labor and expense—is now the order of the day, and all Texas is alive to it.”<sup>54</sup> As would be expected, the machinery and implements display dominated the exhibits. The Dallas State Fair opened the following day with Mayor John Henry Brown presiding over

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 18 April 1886, 1; Steven Butler, “The Troubled Birth of the State Fair of Texas,” <http://www.watermelon-kid.com/places/Fair Park/fp-history/essays/birth.htm>.

<sup>52</sup> Butler, “The Troubled Birth of the State Fair of Texas.”

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 26 October 1886, 2.

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the festivities. Not to be outdone by the implement men their fair featured a Machinery Hall that exhibited “traction engines, hay presses, saw mills and other monster evidences of man’s genius.”<sup>55</sup> The Exposition Hall, designed by James E. Flanders for the Dallas State Fair covered 200 feet by 300 feet with a roof supported by half-circle arches of 75 foot span. According to Flanders, the Exposition Building was “the biggest thing of the times in an architectural way...”<sup>56</sup> Displays of art both “ladies’ decorative and high art” were featured at both fairs with a lengthy description of the fine art of the Dallas State Fair by the *News*.<sup>57</sup> Horse racing was a major attraction at both fairs. The closing of the Dallas State Fair October 6 was celebrated with a flourish of pyrotechnic displays honoring the state flag of Texas and the Trinity River.

“The Lesson of the Fairs,” a *News* article which appeared shortly after the Fairs closed stresses the importance of eliminating the differences of these factions. This view no doubt shared by numerous Dallas residents was echoed by John M. Claiborne of Galveston. His article commends the fair exhibits and transformation of Dallas from a backwoods town to “the appearance of a well-tilled pleasure garden.”<sup>58</sup> Praising the exhibitions Claiborne observes that the Texas State Fair excelled in the display of state products while the Dallas State Fair was remarkable for the industry and art exhibitions. Notably, Claiborne expressed regret that the Dallas citizenry did not unite to form one Fair.<sup>59</sup> This chronicle closes with the good news that the Fairs were combined on February 9, 1887, taking the name of Texas State and Dallas Exposition with the location to be the site of the Dallas State Fair in East Dallas. The Texas State Fair property was bordered by what is presently McKinney, Fitzhugh, Cole and Haskell Avenues.<sup>60</sup> The improvements made to the Cole Farm marked the beginning of North Dallas real estate expansion into residential property.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 25 October 1886, 5.

<sup>56</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 15 November 1925.

<sup>57</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 30 October 1886, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 9 November 1886, 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Ted Dealey, *Diaper Days of Dallas* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 20.

<sup>61</sup> Larry Paul Fuller, ed., *The American Institute of Architects Guide*, 57.

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On February 11, 1887, the fairgrounds property was deeded to the Texas State Fair and Exposition for \$125,000.<sup>62</sup> Additional property was purchased on the west and north boundaries increasing the grounds to 123 acres.<sup>63</sup> The Association looked to expand exhibit space for machinery and manufactured goods with the goal to surpass expositions across the United States. The additions to the Exposition Building included turreted ends on the front facade and were described as a “model of architectural beauty.” The Machinery Hall was expanded to cover an area of 107,000 square feet.<sup>64</sup> The success of the 1887 fair was attested in articles of the *News* in which a fairgoer from Tennessee observes “I feel no hesitancy in asserting that no single agency has ever done so much for Texas as this fair enterprise will in time prove to have accomplished.”<sup>65</sup> The *Galveston News* “pronounced” the Fair “a complete and transcendent success,” offering that there is no equal to this Fair in the South and Southwest.<sup>66</sup> Prior to the transfer of the fairgrounds to the City of Dallas in 1904, the site experienced numerous changes as well as financial challenges. On September 21, 1891, a fire of unknown origin broke out in the stables of the fairgrounds killing 17 horses and destroying 402 stalls.<sup>67</sup> The stables were rebuilt. Underscoring the importance of horse racing to the revenue of the Fair in 1895 a new “Privilege Row” serving horse racing aficionados with booths 800 feet long was built near the grandstand.<sup>68</sup> In that same year two thousand feet of sewer pipe was connected to Exposition Hall, Music Hall the grand stands and the newly added house of public comfort.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Deed, Vol. 89, Page 64, Dallas State Fair & Exposition Association to Texas State Fair & Dallas Exposition, recorded December 9, 1887.

<sup>63</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 3 July 1887, 4.

<sup>64</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 11 September 1887, 2.

<sup>65</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 2 November 1887, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 8 November 1887, 5.

<sup>67</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 22 September 1891, 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 27 October 1893, 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 19 August 1895, 12.

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Despite the financial panic of 1893 the Fair experienced a small profit in 1893 and a profitable year in 1894 owing to the fact of Texas's quicker recovery from the depression. However, in a newspaper article of January 18, 1897, a full text report was published ostensibly summarizing the history of the fair and the monetary rewards. Up to that time 1,000,000 visitors had attended the fair with an entry fee of \$3. "We have the magnificent sum of \$3,000,000 parceled out among the citizens of Dallas, and parceled alike to him who has been content, with folded hands to profit by his neighbors work as well as to him who has given both time and money to foster this enterprise."<sup>70</sup> This article spoke to the indebtedness of the fair stressing the necessity for the community to support the fair financially and the importance of its continuance because all of Dallas benefits.

There were several notable events that took place during this period. The 32nd anniversary of Emancipation Day (Juneteenth) was celebrated in 1897 at the fairgrounds. The celebration began with a parade led by a brass band at Five Points.<sup>71</sup> "The colored brother is in possession," reported the *News* noting an attendance of 10,000 men, women and children. The article continues "fakers and privilege men were present in great force and building and their spielers filled the building and immediate vicinity with discordant noises and grating sounds."<sup>72</sup> This unfortunate incident underscores the discrimination that characterized treatment of the black community in Dallas.

Williams Jennings Bryan, presidential hopeful and future Secretary of State spoke at the race track grandstand on October 3, 1899.<sup>73</sup> Professor Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee, Alabama lectured October 8, 1900 at "Colored People's Day" at the Fair. Washington spoke to the manner in which the colored person can elevate his life and race using the illustration of how a colored man with a college education and school of technology came to own a profitable business. He did not seek "position which other brains and other hands had created, but used his knowledge of the sciences and mathematics in creating a bootblack establishment."<sup>74</sup> Washington was simply reinforcing his ideology of compromise and accommodation.

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<sup>70</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 8 January 1897, 8.

<sup>71</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 19 June 1897, 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 20 June 1897, 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 3 October 1899, 3.

<sup>74</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 9 October 1900, 10.

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In October of 1900 Buffalo Bill Cody accompanied by Annie Oakley thrilled audiences with their shooting exhibitions and riding displays held in a tent on the fairgrounds racetrack infield. The popularity of this Wild West Show is attested by the fact that 5,000 people were turned away.<sup>75</sup> An exhibition of automobiles powered by steam, electricity and gasoline took place in the infield January 1, 1902. The electric machines were not built for speed notes the *News*. A runoff was held between the gasoline and steam machines with the steam machine winning in a finishing time of 6:19½.<sup>76</sup>

The Confederate Reunion of 1902 was held on the fairgrounds in April of that year with approximately 7,000 veterans in attendance. Veterans were feted with parades and speeches and celebrated the closing day with a buffalo dinner.<sup>77</sup>

The Fair faced financial ruin when a disastrous fire destroyed the Exposition and Music Hall July 20, 1902, with the loss estimated at \$75,000 coupled with the legislative ban on horse track betting in April of 1903.<sup>78</sup> The Association stated that an offer which would handle the indebtedness, but “will forever discontinue this Fair as far as the City of Dallas at least is concerned” had been tendered.<sup>79</sup> In a strategic move to rescue the Fair the stockholders offered the City of Dallas the fairgrounds consisting of 117 acres with improvements for \$125,000, \$80,000 of which would be paid to stockholders and \$45,000 to be appropriated for the erection of a “modern fire proof building suitable for exposition and auditorium purposes.”<sup>80</sup> This \$45,000 was deposited with the City Treasurer with an additional \$30,000 contributed by the newly organized Fair Association.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 12 October 1900, 10.

<sup>76</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 2 January 1902, 10. Steven Butler, [www.watermelon-kid](http://www.watermelon-kid)

<sup>77</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 22 April 1902, 2, *Dallas Morning News*, 25 April 1902, 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 21 July 1902, 3; *Dallas Morning News*, 2 April 1903, 3.

<sup>79</sup> An Offer of Sale to City of Dallas by the Stockholders of Texas State Fair, Dallas, Texas, January 25, 1904. Original City of Dallas Archives.

<sup>80</sup> An Offer of Sale. Report Presented by Mayor; Transfer Fairgrounds, October 11, 1904.

<sup>81</sup> Report Council Chambers, October 11, 1904. Original City of Dallas Archives.

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With the transition of the Fairgrounds the City began to make changes to replace the Exposition Building—Otto H. Lang’s plans were accepted by the City—a fireproof building of concrete and steel 125 x 150 feet able to seat 4,500 people.<sup>82</sup> Comprised of three gable roofed wings the impressive façade enhanced by a tripartite entrance portico formed the basis of the Chrysler Building of the 1936 Centennial.

The Administration Building to be dedicated at the State Fair of 1906, designed by H. A. Overbeck, featured pedestrian turnstiles surmounted by three arches flanked by towers. Plans included a pavilion which would serve as a depot for railway lines.<sup>83</sup> The genesis of the landscape ideologies began in 1906 when George Kessler, nationally renown landscape architect, an advocate of the City Beautiful Movement who had recently completed work on the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and Kansas City’s plan, a masterpiece of boulevards and picturesque settings with fountains and sculpture, proposed that municipal and Federal buildings should be arranged “as to make a handsome picture.”<sup>84</sup> Kessler considered every aspect of the fairgrounds such as bridges, concrete walks, terracing, drainage, fountains, lakes and reclamation of land with the first of his innovations sunken gardens realized that Fall.<sup>85</sup> Influenced by amusement parks such as Coney Island and midways of the Chicago World’s Fair and Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 the state fair directors installed Shoot the Chutes, at a cost of \$12,000, and a figure eight and carousel for an additional \$18,000.<sup>86</sup>

Improvements to the facilities continued illustrating the importance of the State Fair project to Dallas. James Flanders, architect of the 1886 Exposition Building, presented a plan for the main entrance constructed of Burnet gray granite dominated by obelisks set on eleven foot square bases. Completed in 1908 the project cost \$6,000.<sup>87</sup> The Textile & Fines Arts Building of a neo-classic style and suggestive of the Chicago World’s Fair buildings was unveiled in

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<sup>82</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 8 January 1905, 4; In 1905 Lang formed a partnership with Frank O. Witchell. In 1935 their firm designed Gaston Park Auditorium for the Centennial. *Dallas Morning News* 19 October 1947, Section 4, 1.

<sup>83</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 6 May 1906, 8.

<sup>84</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 13 May 1906, 12.

<sup>85</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 13 May 1906, 5.

<sup>86</sup> McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 240; *Dallas Morning News*, 24 June 1906, 5.

<sup>87</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 27 November 1907, 4; 22 May 1908, 2.

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1908.<sup>88</sup> Owing to the popularity of the legendary San Antonio battle, a replica of the Alamo sponsored by the *Dallas Morning News* was dedicated October 16, 1909.<sup>89</sup> The next major project, the Coliseum designed by C. D. Hill Company was described by the *News* in great detail noting that the effect makes the building “as light as the eye can stand.”<sup>90</sup> State of the art acoustics contributed to the building’s attributes. The year 1925 ushered in the beloved Auditorium with “The Student Prince” as the opening play. This edifice designed by Lang & Witchell in the Mission Revival mode at a cost of \$300,000 was envisioned as a state of the art setting for opera and theatrical venues.<sup>91</sup>

In March of 1910, North Texans witnessed the attempts of Otto Brodie to pilot a Curtiss aeroplane on the fairgrounds racetrack infield. Due to severe wind conditions, Brodie’s valiant display did not meet expectations of the spectators—many demanded a refund. The event, however, did mark the beginning of aviation in North Texas.<sup>92</sup>

Fair Park is a microcosm of the social history of African Americans of Dallas and the nation. Festivities such as Juneteenth and the coming of Booker T. Washington to Dallas in the nineteenth century have been noted, as well as slanted reporting in the newspaper and records of heckling. These celebrations were but a respite from the day to day realities of discrimination and segregation. The Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s cast a great shadow over the south and southwest. Acknowledged for their own distinct methods of harassment to ethnic groups such as African-Americans and Jews, the Klan flourished during this period. County government politics were dominated by the KKK. Ku Klux Klan day at the 1924 Fair drew members from Oklahoma and Texas in full regalia traveling in delegations on train and automobiles accompanied by brass bands. On that inauspicious day the Klan initiated 5,631 members while 25,000 people filled the grandstand.<sup>93</sup> As we look to the Centennial, African Americans continued to experience successes followed by setbacks.

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<sup>88</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 25 March 1908, 14; 11 October 1908, 6.

<sup>89</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 6 October 1909, 14.

<sup>90</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 2 October 1910, 7.

<sup>91</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 11 October 1925, Section 5, 14.

<sup>92</sup> Steven Butler, Dallas First Aeroplane Flight, [www.watermelon-kid](http://www.watermelon-kid)

<sup>93</sup> Darwin Payne, Michael V. Hazel, Photo Editor, *Dynamic Dallas; An Illustrated History*, (Carlsbad: Heritage Media Corporation, 2002), 84.

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Earlier suggestions for a Centennial had been offered by the veterans of San Jacinto in an 1886 meeting in Dallas and by Governor James Stephen Hogg in a 1903 speech. The momentum for a Centennial began in earnest at a meeting of the Tenth District Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of America in Corsicana, November 5, 1923, inspired by the oratory of Theodore H. Price of Price, McCormick & Company in which he proposed a far-reaching advertising campaign for Texas that would capture the imagination of the world. Kenneth Ragsdale, historian, reasons that the audience of advertisers was the perfect group to perpetuate “the Texas myth of bigness and magnitude.”<sup>94</sup> Price was proposing the exposition be held in 1924—the hundred anniversary of the issuance of land rites to Anglo settlers of Mexican Texas. To test the waters of the potential for the success of an Exposition the Texas Centennial Survey Committee formed from the Advertising Club & Texas Press Association mailed 10,000 questionnaires to residents of the state. The positive response to this mailing as well as a host of telegrams and letters helped to fuel the momentum. Larry Martin, advertising manager of Corsicana Sun, sensing the urgency of maintaining this motivation met with the TCSAS on January 8, 1924. The result of that meeting was an endorsement by Governor Pat M. Neff.<sup>95</sup> A proclamation delivered by Governor Neff asked for “great centennial feats of art, history and industry, not only to show Texas to Texans, but invite the world to be our guests, that people everywhere may know that Texas is as great in achievement as in area.”<sup>96</sup>

Neff concludes his address with an invitation to “loyal Texans” to convene in Austin on February 12, 1924.<sup>97</sup> The meeting in the Senate Chambers was attended by 2,000 people. The result of this meeting was not only a stirring of patriotism but a continuation of the boosterism that had propelled the origins of the State Fair of Texas. The date of the Centennial was proposed to be held in 1936 the hundredth anniversary of Texas’ independence from Mexico. The Texas Centennial Governing Board of the One Hundred was established as a result of this meeting—comprised of delegates from throughout the state. According to Ragsdale the board consisted of the wealthy and powerful of Texas.

Over the ensuing ten years the Centennial project experienced successes and setbacks. In particular Jesse Holman Jones of Houston—a respected financier and philanthropist—

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<sup>94</sup>Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 6.

<sup>96</sup> Governors Proclamation, Jones Papers, quoted in Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 7.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

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was the initial selection as director general. Upon his acceptance in this position Jones stated “in Texas the sentiment is that our history is so rich and colorful and interesting and romantic that I believe we can hold a Centennial that will attract the admiration and attention of the world.”<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, what appeared to be a promising choice became a disappointment. Initially selected in 1925 Jones demonstrated a pattern of procrastination and lack of direction for three years. In March of 1928 in an address in Fort Worth he veered from a vision of a world class exposition noting that “it is not possible to hold an exposition or Centennial in Dallas County that the people of Harris County will take enough interest in, and that may be reversed and applied to any other section of the state.”<sup>99</sup> Rather he felt that the whole of Texas should be involved with historical parks, shrines and reenactments. An expanded State Fair of Texas in Dallas was part of his proposal. During the next three years the project remained at a standstill. In February 14, 1930, Jones in a letter to State Senator Sam E. Bateman expressed concern that the centennial could be accomplished as “conditions are changing so rapidly that what would be appropriate today may not be appropriate a few years hence.”<sup>100</sup>

The Centennial project remained dormant until 1931 when Senator Margaret Neal, member of the Governing Board of One Hundred, under the administration of Governor Ross S. Sterling introduced legislation, Senate Bill 106, to form a Texas Centennial Committee. The committee was charged with researching United States expositions beginning with the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial and presenting the data to the Forty-Third Legislature.<sup>101</sup>

Throughout the proceedings, it had become self-evident that the State of Texas had no measure in place for funding of projects such as the Centennial. Once gain, Senator Neal came to the forefront to propose legislation to authorize funding of statewide expositions. Adopted in May of 1931 the bill, regrettably, provided for a referendum on the ballot for Texas to choose to have a Centennial. Nonetheless, measures were being taken to move the project forward. The following December the Texas Centennial Committee met in Austin. Jesse Jones who had held the position of director general of the Governing Board of One

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<sup>98</sup> *Commemorating A Hundred Years of Texas History*, Dallas (?) Publicity Committee, Texas Centennial Commission, 1934, 8.

<sup>99</sup> Reprint of address delivered to Fort Worth Exchange Club, March 31, 1928, Jones Papers, quoted in Ragsdale, 15, “*The Year America Discovered Texas.*”

<sup>100</sup> Jones to Bateman, February 14, 1930, Jones Papers, quoted in Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 18.

<sup>101</sup> Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 20-21.

retired from the post. Cullen F. Thomas, Dallas lawyer, was appointed to serve until 1933.<sup>102</sup>

The most daunting aspect of Senator Neal's bill, Senate Joint Resolution No. 28, was the acceptance of the constitutional amendment by the Texas voters. Members of the Texas Press Association formed a committee led by Lowry Martin of the Corsicana Sun and comprised of members of the Advertising Clubs of Texas, Texas Daily Press League and Progressive Texans.<sup>103</sup> This organization rallied to gain support with newspaper campaigns, speakers' bureaus to promote the Centennial, a school essay contest—"Why Vote for the Texas Centennial," and highway billboards. An editorial, "Do Texans Really Revere Their Past," by Peter Molyneaux of the Texas Weekly elicited a plea for support of this amendment. Given the severe economic straits of the nation, passage of the amendment had much to overcome. Organized opposition threatened to derail passage of the amendment. On November 8, 1932, the amendment did pass but with a slim margin—277,147 to 217,964.<sup>104</sup>

Faced with growing unemployment, poor cotton crops and prices and rural foreclosures more pressing issues dominated the concerns of then Governor Miriam A. Ferguson. In a special session on January 29, 1934 the concerns were alleviating unemployment and protection from unwarranted foreclosures.<sup>105</sup> Given this climate Senate Bill No. 23 seemed unlikely to gain notice, let alone pass. Led by Senator Neal, the bill's champion, it passed nearly unanimously although through not with controversy. The bill provided for the 1936 date of the Centennial, authorized the formation of the Texas Centennial Advisory Board and \$100,000 to finance the committee work. Most importantly for Dallas, the bill provided for the Centennial to be held in the city that provided the largest financial incentive.<sup>106</sup>

A joint meeting of the Texas Centennial Commission and the Texas Centennial Advisory Board, comprised of members of each of the 254 counties met in August at the Driskill Hotel in Austin on June 6, 1934. Primarily organizational the members elected officers and created an executive committee comprised of the Advisory Board and 31 members selected from state

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 20-22.

<sup>103</sup> *Commemorating a Hundred Years of Texas History*, 12.

<sup>104</sup> Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 24-29.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 33.

senatorial districts. Continued statewide support and participation remained critical to success

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of the Centennial.<sup>107</sup> In this regard the publicity committee of the Centennial Commission formulated the slogan “Think...Talk...Write...Texas Centennial in 1936.”<sup>108</sup>

In anticipation of an intense campaign for the Centennial, an op-ed piece appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* March 23, 1934. Taking the position that the centrality of Dallas location is a considerable benefit, the *News* acknowledges:

Historically Dallas has no valid claim. On that ground, either Houston or San Antonio would have a better right to the exposition, with the odds in favor of the Alamo City—old when its large urban rivals were young or unborn.<sup>109</sup>

Reiterating that guidelines of the legislature stated that the city offering the largest financial contribution would be the site of the exposition, the piece concludes with the idea that “North Texas might see an obvious advantage in pooling its resources...as a joint enterprise of its two large neighbors.”<sup>110</sup> The presumption is that Dallas partner with Fort Worth.

Dallas Chamber of Commerce’s President, R. L. Thornton expressed confidence that Dallas would be awarded the contract.<sup>111</sup> In a meeting held at the Crystal Ballroom of the Baker Hotel Dallas business and civic leaders unanimously adopted recommendation to proceed with the campaign with the recommendation of an eight million dollar bid. Citing the success of the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, Thornton admitted that Chicago leadership had “cold-bloodedly” financed the Exposition but had recovered significantly from their fiscal crisis.<sup>112</sup> In a move to postpone the bids, Houston asked for a delay until the Texas State Legislature determined the state’s financial contribution. Judge Clarence Wharton of Houston expressed concern that arranging financing for the Centennial could take several months Thornton was adamant in his opposition to a delay stating “we can’t afford to lose one hour

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 35-40.

<sup>108</sup> Wallace C. Chariton, *Texas Centennial, The Parade of an Empire* (Plano, Texas: Privately printed, 1969), 8.

<sup>109</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 23 March 1934, Section II, 2.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 8 June 1934, Section II, 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 4 August 1934, Section II. 1.

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through further delay in designation of the city...”<sup>113</sup> In this respect Thornton was correct. Time was of the essence. The Centennial was a scant sixteen months away.

Thornton outlined Dallas’ proposal for the Centennial Committee on September 6, 1934. Thornton, assisted by Nathan Adams and Fred F. Florence, addressed the committee offering Dallas’ benefits—a large population with formidable purchasing power and considerable manufacturing and financial enterprises, the proven success of 46 years experience with the State Fair, hub of all forms of transportation, as well as the established Fair Park. Local architect George Dahl presented renderings with his vision of the Exposition. Prior to meeting the Commission had been ushered through Fair Park by Dahl where he explained how the plant would be revised to accommodate the Centennial.<sup>114</sup>

Houston, San Antonio and Fort Worth were also vying for the Centennial. In order to gain more knowledge of Houston’s proposal Thornton and Dahl decided to follow the entourage. Houston’s presentation was highlighted by a visit to San Jacinto where Judge Wharton proceeded to describe the Battle and was interrupted by a swarm of gallinippers, large grasshoppers, where he is said to have accused Thornton and Dahl of bringing those “gallinippers.” This essentially, according to Dahl, “broke up the meeting.”<sup>115</sup>

The entourage continued to San Antonio for the final presentation beginning with a breakfast meeting and tours of historical sites such as the Alamo and the Governor’s Palace. According to historian Kenneth Ragsdale word of a headline published by *Dallas Morning News* declaring “Dallas Bid Wins Centennial, Claim Campaign Leaders” reached the officials. The San Antonio contingent felt that they had been blindsided, that a decision had been made without considering their presentation and Mayor Quinn expressed disdain that the highest bidder would win the competition. Chairman Cullen Thomas defended the committee’s position of locating the site in the city best able to meet the requirements of the provisions.<sup>116</sup>

On September 9, 1934, the committee announced the winner—Dallas with a bid of \$7,791,000.

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<sup>113</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 26 August 1934, Section II, 1.

<sup>114</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 7 September 1934, Section II, 1.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with George H. Dahl, Dallas, Texas, April 6, 1978; quoted in Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*.

<sup>116</sup> Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 57-58.

Houston had submitted a bid of \$6,507,000 and San Antonio a bid of \$4,835,000. Fort Worth

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who had originally intended to present a proposal, withdrew from the competition.

Having resolved the issue of which city would host the Centennial, the formidable task ahead was passage of legislation for appropriation of the state funding. The issue of increasing unemployment demonstrated by the 267,000 families receiving aid was the dominating factor of Governor Miriam Ferguson's last legislative session. At this time local African-American A. Maceo Smith, head of Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce and business teacher at Booker T. Washington, collaborated with industrial arts teacher John L. Blount to offer their support for state funding of the Centennial. In return African-Americans would be represented at the Centennial. Despite a stirring oratory presented by Smith in support of the exhibit, the appropriation issue stalemated. Historian Robert W. Rydell notes that the African-Americans and whites had attained a sense of unity. This was short lived as competition for a seat in the legislature became apparent. The sentiment was that if an African-American was elected Dallas would lose the Centennial.<sup>117</sup> The African-Americans proposed black attorney A. S. Wells for this post. Pressure placed on the black community by Dallas businesses to remove Wells from the ballot did not, however, dissuade them. Ragsdale recounts this scenario in an interview with Smith. Sentiment was high, "to get nigger out of the race...their condition was that if we pulled him out, they could assure us that we'd get our money to put on the exhibit."<sup>118</sup> African-Americans ignored the threat and Wells ran unsuccessfully for the seat. As a result, the black community lost white support for the exhibit.<sup>119</sup>

Undaunted, Smith contacted Eugene Kinckle Jones, Advisor on Negro Affairs to Secretary of Commerce Daniel Roper. The Roosevelt administration, in particular Eleanor, was concerned about the predicament of African-Americans. This administration reasoned that the prospect of an African-American exhibit would ensure loyalty in the Democratic Party and perhaps stem the possibility of violence towards "American institutions." The expectations of Jones and the Negro Advisory Committee were of compromise and accommodation as exhibited by Booker T. Washington in his "Atlanta Compromise." This tacit agreement was known as the "Dallas Compromise."<sup>120</sup> Although, the exhibit did not change the "social pattern of the South," it is

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<sup>117</sup>Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 171-172.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with A. Maceo Smith, Dallas, Texas November 3, 1977; quoted in Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 71.

<sup>119</sup> Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 172.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-176.

significant as the “first” African-American exhibition celebrating their accomplishments at a world-class exposition.<sup>121</sup>

The black community was awarded \$100,000 of the \$3,000,000 federal appropriation for the Centennial. The Dallas Morning News noted that “the first world’s fair to recognize the work of the negro race in the advancement of America on a large scale” was dedicated on Juneteenth, anniversary of their emancipation day.<sup>122</sup> African-American artist, Aaron Douglas, painted murals for the Hall of Negro Life portraying the history of African-Americans. In addition to the Douglas murals, the exhibition housed a collection of African-American painting sculpture and graphic art valued at \$75,000 sponsored by the Harmon Foundation of New York City. An outdoor amphitheater provided the venue for performances of drama and music by African-American performers. Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia submitted contributions to the Hall of Negro Life where visitors learned about such endeavors as African-American universities, cultural achievements in music and art, and the Civilian Conservation Corps for African Americans. The exhibit proved enlightening for the white race with approximately 60 percent of the 400,000 in attendance being white Anglo-Saxon. However, due to the tenor of the times the presence of this impressive exhibition did not forestall the difficulties of African-Americans in finding accommodations as well as discrimination while on the fairgrounds. Most disappointing was the treatment of the black community by fair officials and the newspapers. The ultimate disappointment was the demolition of the Hall of Negro Life in preparation for the Greater Texas and Pan American Exposition.<sup>123</sup>

With the passage of the necessary legislation by Federal and State authorities R. L. Thornton, Nathan Adams and Fred F. Florence set about to make the Centennial a reality. Civic leaders such as Jean Baptiste Adoue, Jr., president of the National Bank of Commerce; John W. Carpenter, president of the Dallas Power and Light Company; and Karl Hoblitzell, president of Interstate Circuit, Inc. worked with the Dallas Triumvirate.

In March of 1935 Paul P. Cret, who had worked on the University of Texas at Austin architectural plans with Dahl and prominent international architect of Philadelphia, was contracted by the Centennial Corporation to formulate a master plan for the Exposition. In

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<sup>121</sup> Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, 305.

<sup>122</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 7 June 1936.

<sup>123</sup> Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 175-180

addition to the construction of new exhibit buildings the plans called for a monumental plaza at the west entrance on the periphery and remodeling the general exhibit building and transportation building while adding an Art Deco façade all enhanced by a sunken garden. Terminating at a cross axis plaza would be the State Centennial building.<sup>124</sup>

Local architect, George Dahl, who had been involved with the Centennial in the early planning stages, according to architecture critic, David Dillon, was charged with “melding the various design proposals into an architecturally coherent whole.”<sup>125</sup>

George Dahl, who received his undergraduate degree in architecture from the University of Minnesota and his master’s from Harvard University, acted as Centennial Architect. Dahl’s credentials included a two-year study in the American Academy in Rome and as a member of the architectural firm of Greene, La Roche and Dahl of Los Angeles. Dahl assembled an impressive staff to assist him in implementing the master plan such as Donald S. Nelson, a graduate of MIT, as supervisor of his technical staff; the engineering firm of Myers, Noyes and Forrest; and the landscaping firm of Hare and Hare of Kansas City.<sup>126</sup> Previous expositions had failed to open on the official celebration day. With Dahl’s diligence and the dedication of his staff and cadre of architects, the Exposition, exception for the Hall of State, was completed in time for the June 6, 1936 opening.

A three mile parade viewed by 350,000 marked the opening of the Exposition. After the ceremonial unlocking of the exposition gates with a jeweled key, Secretary Daniel Roper, representing President Roosevelt announced “Texas welcomes the world.” According to historian Kenneth Ragsdale in his interview with Art Linkletter the official ribbon cutting ceremony which would have been activated by wireless communication from around the world had to be augmented manually when the cutting device malfunctioned.<sup>127</sup>

The throngs of attendees were welcomed with a host of flags representing the United States, countries that had ruled Texas in its days as a territory, and the flags of the forty-eight states.

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<sup>124</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 3 March 1935, Section II, 1.

<sup>125</sup> *Dallas Journal*, 3 March 1935; Dillon, *Dallas Architecture*, 15.

<sup>126</sup> Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Dallas*, 92-93.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-232.

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The technical displays of illumination were a hallmark of the Exposition flooding the buildings with light. Colored floodlights, estimated at over 4,000, and twenty-four searchlights which “pierced the night sky” combined with concealed neon lighting to create a setting that astonished those in attendance.<sup>128</sup> This phenomenal lighting display created the setting for an aerial show by attack and pursuit squadrons. Just as the 1886 State Fair experienced competition from north Dallas, Dallas’s neighbor to the west—Fort Worth chose to create the Frontier Centennial Exposition orchestrated by Billy Rose and backed by Amon Carter. With entertainment as its focus Rose showcased Paul Whiteman’s band and Sally Rand’s Nude Ranch.<sup>129</sup> Billy Rose’s Casa Manana drew throngs from the Dallas Centennial. Dallas countered by offering celebrities such as Robert Taylor, Bob Burns and Ginger Rogers and holding special cities days. Both cities made separate deals with the Liquor Control Board.<sup>130</sup>

The Texas Centennial of 1936 marked a new era for Dallas. The City of Dallas led by boosters such as R. L. Thornton staged a magnificent festival inviting the world to view Texas in a new light.

The history of Fair Park is tantamount to the history of Dallas. The dawning of the railroad industry in Dallas gave the city the opportunity to take on the State Fair and, ultimately, the Centennial. Boosters such as W. H. Gaston and R. L. Thornton understood the necessity of railroads, financial institutions, cultural institutions, such as fairs and expositions, and how the intertwining of these elements forms a thriving city. Boosters such as Gaston and Thornton understood the overlapping interests of businessmen such as themselves and the general population of Dallas. Thornton’s booster attitude was exemplified by his aphorism: “As long as a city is moving and doing—keeping busy—that city is going to continue to grow. Let’s keep the dirt flyin.”<sup>131</sup>

The history of Fair Park parallels the struggles of marginalized populations such as the African-Americans. The history of Fair Park illustrating the post Civil War politics of

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<sup>128</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, 7 June 1936, Section VIII, 4.

<sup>129</sup> Darwin Payne, editor, *Big D: Triumphs & Troubles in An American Supercity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, revised addition (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 2000), 193.

<sup>130</sup> Rumbley, *The Unauthorized History of Dallas, Texas*, 80-81.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

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discrimination, the Jim Crow era and Ku Klux Klan activities. Within the history of Fair Park is the African-Americans' remarkable, short-lived achievement in the 1936 Centennial.

From an economic standpoint World's Fairs brought more jobs into an area than government programs notes historian Robert W. Rydell.<sup>132</sup> Dallas was no exception. The Dallas area contained 11,000 welfare recipients as well as thousands on a subsistence wage. The Centennial was responsible for employing 15,000, a huge boost to Dallas economy.<sup>133</sup> There are, however, the realities of Expositions economics. When the decision is made to pursue an event such as the Centennial, civic leaders acknowledge that the event itself may not be profitable. In the case of the Texas Centennial the losses totaled \$2,888,852.00. Business and civic leaders such as R. L. Thornton understood that with any venture such as the Centennial financial supporters may sacrifice short term investments for the potential of long-standing economic gains.<sup>134</sup>

In 1886 at the conclusion of the State Fair newspaper columnist, John M. Claiborne of Galveston, commented on the transformation of Dallas from a backwoods town to "the appearance of a well-tilled pleasure garden." To the throngs of visitors who experienced the Centennial, misconceptions of Dallas as a cowpoke haven gave way to a changed perception. Dallas became to the outside world a city that demonstrated its ability to adapt and incorporate current architectural idioms and urban planning philosophy creating not just a "well-tilled pleasure garden" but a setting that brought the world to its stage. The ultimate result would be the impetus for Dallas' growth as a metropolitan city.

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<sup>132</sup> Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 2.

<sup>133</sup> Dillon, *Dallas Architecture*, 25.

<sup>134</sup> Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 294.

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## ***15. Attachments***

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| <i>District or Site Map</i>            | <i>Additional descriptive material</i> |
| <i>Site Plan</i>                       | <i>Footnotes</i>                       |
| <i>Photos (historic &amp; current)</i> | <i>Other: <u>Architects</u></i>        |

### APPENDIX A

Parry Avenue Entrance

Architects: Lang & Witchell, 1936

State of Texas Building, (Hall of State)

Architects: Texas Centennial Architects, Donald Barthelme, Adams & Adams (interiors), 1936  
Thomas & Booziotis, renovation, 1987

Transportation Building, Chrysler Building (Centennial Building)

Architects: Otto Lang (State Fair Exposition Building), 1905, George Dahl, renovation and addition, 1936, ArchiTexas, restoration, 1999

Varied Industries Building (Automobile Building)

Architects: Lang & Witchell, 1920; Renovation, Centennial Corporation, George Dahl, 1936

Hall of Administration Building (Coliseum, Women's Museum)

Architects: C. D. Hill 1910, George Dahl, renovation, 1936

Continental Oil Hospitality House (DAR Building)

Architect: M. C. Kleuser, 1936

U. S. Government Building (Tower Building, Federal Building; Electric Building)

Architects: George Dahl, 1936; ArchiTexas, Restoration, 1999

The Foods Building/Agricultural Building (Embarcadero Building)

Architect: George Dahl, 1936

Agriculture Building (Food and Fiber Building)

Architects: George Dahl, 1936; Good, Fulton & Farrell, Restoration, 1999

Livestock Building No. 2 (Swine Building)

Architect: George Dahl, 1936

Foods Building No. 2 (Creative Arts Pavilion)

Architect: George Dahl, 1936

Maintenance Shops (Maintenance Building)

Poultry Building (Poultry), date unknown

Architect: George Dahl, 1936

Livestock Building No. 1 (Pan American Building)

Architects: Unknown, c. 1929; George Dahl, 1936

Fire, Police, Hospital, and WRR Building (Communications Building, State Fair Administration)

Architects: Bertram C. Hill, 1936; George Mills, Renovation, 1994

Cotton Bowl (Fair Park Stadium)

Architect: Mark Lemmon, 1930; George Dahl, renovation, 1936; Chappell, Stokes & Brenneke, engineers, additions, 1948, 1949; Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, addition, 1993

Dallas Museum of Natural History, 1936

Architects: Mark Lemmon, C. H. Griesenbeck, 1936; John Danna Needham-McCaffrey, Renovation, 1988

Aquarium (Dallas Aquarium at Fair Park)

Architects: Fooshee and Cheek; Hal Thomson; Flint & Broad, 1936; Booziotis & Co., addition, 1993

Education Annex (Christian Science Monitor Pavilion, Aquarium), 1936

Museum of Fine Arts (Science Place I and IMAX Theater), 1936

Architects: DeWitt & Washburn; Herbert M. Greene, LaRoche & Dahl; Ralph Bryan; Henry Coke Knight; Paul Philippe Cret, 1936; Roscoe DeWitt, addition, 1963; Corgan Associates, renovation as Science Place, 1985; Corgan Associates, IMAX Theater addition, 1996

Museum of Domestic Arts (Science Place)

Architects: Anton Korn, 1936; J. Pitziner; Emil Fretz, Addition

Horticulture (Texas Discovery Gardens)

Architects: Arthur E. Thomas, McKleuser; Pratt, Box & Henderson, Addition, 1971; Good, Fulton & Farrell, Renovation, 1990; AAE, Inc., Renovation, 1999

Band Shell (Fair Park Band Shell)

Architects: W. Scott Dunne; Christensen & Christensen, 1936; Christensen & Christensen, Addition, 1941

Fair Park Coliseum

Architects: Harper& Kemp, 1959

Morten Milling Industry Building (Old Mill Inn)

Architect: Conkranty, 1936

Auditorium (Fair Park Music Hall, General Motors Company)

Architects: Lang and Witchell, 1925; Renovation: Peterman & Peterman, 1936;

Renovation and Expansion, Jarvis Putty Jarvis, 1972

The Magnolia Lounge (Margo Jones Theater)

Architect: William Lescaze, 1936

Hall of Religion (Sesquicentennial Headquarters)

Architects: Centennial Corporation, George Dahl, Donald Nelson and Staff, 1936

## **16. Designation Criteria**

**x History, heritage and culture:**

*Represents the historical development, ethnic heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or country.*

**x Historic event:** *Location of or association with the site of a significant historic event.*

**x Significant persons:**

*Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, state, or country.*

**x Architecture:** *Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, landscape design, method of construction, exceptional craftsmanship, architectural innovation, or contains details which represent folk or ethnic art.*

**x Architect or master builder:**

*Represents the work of an architect, designer or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or country.*

**x Historic context:** *Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites, or areas which are eligible for preservation based on historic, cultural, or architectural characteristics.*

**x Unique visual feature:** *Unique location of singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city that is a source of pride or cultural significance.*

**Archeological:** *Archeological or paleontological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.*

**x National and state recognition:**

*Eligible of or designated as a National Historic Landmark, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, American Civil Engineering Landmark, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.*

**x Historic education:** *Represents an era of architectural, social, or economic history that allows an understanding of how the place or area was used by past generations.*

**17. Recommendation**

*The Designation Committee requests the Landmark Commission to deem this nominated landmark meritorious of designation as outlined in Chapter 51 and Chapter 51A, Dallas Development Code.*

*Further, the Designation Committee endorses the Preservation Criteria, policy recommendations and landmark boundary as presented by the Department of Planning and Development.*

*Date:*

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*Chair  
Designation Committee*

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*Chair  
Designation Committee*

*Historic Preservation Planner*