

Fall
2021

LEGACIES

A History Journal for Dallas & North Central Texas

Challenges

Uncle Dick and The Common Herd
Donald Barthelme's Epic Design for the Hall of State
Dallas's Contribution to the Drive-In Theater
Gordon McLendon Doubles Down
What's in a Name?



\$7.50



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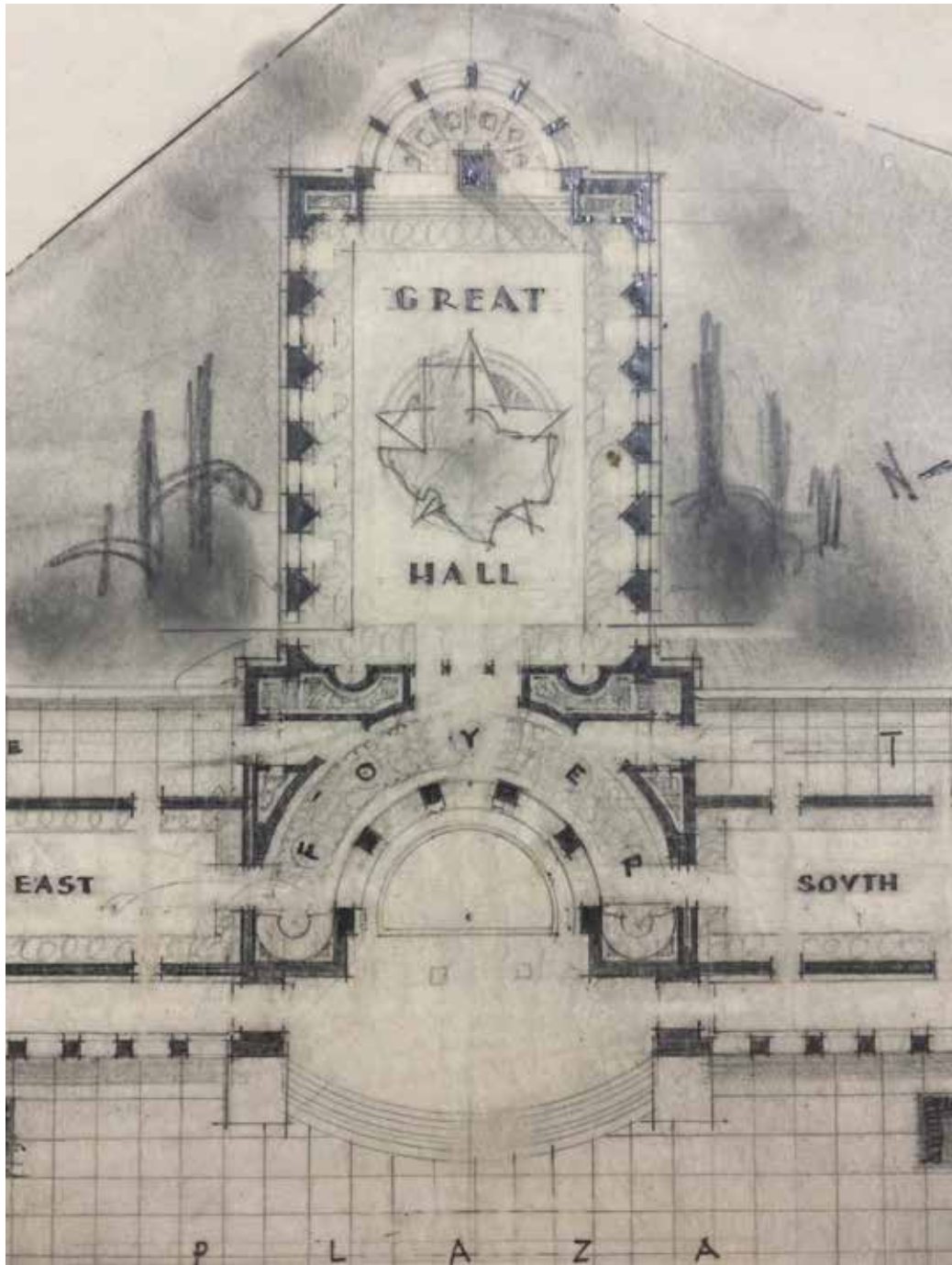
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All previous issues of *Legacies* from 1989 through 2018 are online at the University of North Texas Portal to Texas History. The address is: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/LHJNT>.



Donald Barthelme's original plan for the State of Texas Building had to be altered in a few respects because of budgetary and deadline constraints. This close-up of the Great Hall, for instance, depicts a semi-circular apse at the rear, which was later replaced by a straight wall that holds a three-dimensional gold star by the sculptor Joseph Renier depicting the six nations that governed Texas throughout its history. See "Donald Barthelme's Epic Design of the Hall of State," beginning on page 20.

Challenges have always been part of the human condition. How men and women have met those challenges is the basis for much historical research and writing. This issue of *Legacies* includes a variety of articles exploring this topic.

Richard Potts, generally called “Uncle Dick,” published a small magazine in Dallas in the early 1900s, espousing “free thinking” in matters of religion along with other generally unpopular causes. He was also a gadfly, continually running (unsuccessfully) for public office, staging practical jokes, and poking fun at elected officials. Steven Butler tells the story of this largely forgotten figure, a reminder of a time when diversity of opinion was less tolerated, but also a time that produced colorful individuals committed to their ideals and willing to challenge the authorities.

Designing the centerpiece of the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition at Fair Park—a building honoring the history of the state—was a commission eagerly sought by many architects. But it presented numerous challenges, including limited time and money, as well as the demands of the Board of Control in Austin, the body charged with overseeing the project. In the end, it fell to a young Houston architect, Donald Barthelme, to produce an acceptable design, which he did in record time. Willis Winters details the many steps involved in reaching the plans that eventually became what we know as the Hall of State.

How to capitalize on the growing popularity of motion pictures in the late 1930s was the challenge facing Dallas entrepreneurs William G. Underwood and Charles C. Ezell. They gambled on a brand-new concept, the drive-in theater, hoping to attract parents with limited budgets for entertainment and without child care. Finding suitable sites was one challenge; generally they needed to be on the outskirts of town, where land was cheaper and nearby neighbors wouldn’t be bothered by the traffic or noise the drive-ins might produce. But providing acceptable sound quality was the biggest challenge, one that took more

than a decade to solve. Nancy McCoy tells the story of Underwood and Ezell and their theaters, as well as the eventual demise of many of them as television offered new competition and steady development made the land on which the drive-ins sat too valuable to retain.

Dallas radio entrepreneur Gordon McLendon, already well known as “The Old Scotsman,” also invested in drive-in movie theaters in the late 1950s. Frank Jackson recounts how he tried to provide his own product by producing inexpensive horror films. Apparently the challenges of producing movies discouraged McLendon from pursuing this endeavor for long. But he did produce two classics of the genre, *The Killer Shrews* and *The Giant Gila Monster*. The colorful posters for these films offer a visual clue to the quality of these movies and the audiences to whom they were aimed.

How many history lovers have become curious about the story behind the namesake of a local street, building, or park? Candace Fountoulakis wondered about the origins of Barksdale Elementary School in Plano. Who was Barksdale? And why was a school named for him? Answering these challenging questions involved studying old maps, pioneer chronicles, deed records, and family memories. Her research indicates that the school was named for Ralph Barksdale, an early settler in the Peters Colony. And she discovered the remains of the original, one-room schoolhouse sheltered within a barn, which has been preserved in Plano.

Challenges don’t always meet with success. Messages like that of Uncle Dick fail to find a receptive audience. Fads like drive-in movie theaters pass. Attempts to produce genre films fail. But sometimes they succeed. The Hall of State remains one of the great public buildings in Texas. And thanks to research into the namesake of an elementary school, we know a little more about local history. The stories of such challenges, whether successfully met or not, enrich our understanding of the past.

—Michael V. Hazel

Uncle Dick and *The Common Herd*

BY STEVEN R. BUTLER

*“The sooner we forget all our gods, ghosts, angels, and hells, and consecrate ourselves at the altar of science and human reason the sooner we will be prepared for the coming of the Kingdom of Man.
Because Man indeed is God and Science is our Savior.”*

—Richard Potts, *The Common Herd*, March 1923

*I*f you lived in Dallas, Texas, during the first half of the twentieth century, chances are that even if you didn’t know Richard Potts personally, you knew his name, and whether or not you agreed with his stand on any one of dozens of controversial issues, you had to admit that “Uncle Dick,” as he was popularly known, was one of “Big D’s” most colorful characters.

In Dallas, Potts (whose surname rhymed with “oats”) first came to public attention in 1909, as publisher of *The Common Herd*, a slim, twenty-to-thirty-page quarterly magazine, identified on the cover as the “Only Freethought Publication in Texas,”¹ which was true after J. D. Shaw’s *The Searchlight* ceased publication in 1910.

For all intents and purposes, Richard Potts wasn’t just the publisher of *The Common Herd*: he *was* *The Common Herd*. Each issue included a “statement of ownership, management, circulation, etc.,” in which he was identified as editor, managing editor, business editor, and sole owner.² He was also the magazine’s principal, and often, its *only* contributor.

Most of the articles that Potts wrote were critical of religion. As an atheist or what was then known as a “freethinker,” Potts held that religion was the cause of much of the world’s enmity. He also opposed government corruption, the Ku Klux Klan, racial discrimination, and, ironically, religious intolerance. Less frequently, he wrote

The Common Herd

The New Religious Political Iconoclast

Have you seen it? If not it is your loss. It is different, unique, independent, but fair. It stands for truth and right and is the sworn enemy to frauds, dogmas, humbugs and foolishness in Church and State. The editor is a Radical of the Radicals. A monthly magazine which is a free-lance. One dollar a year, 10c a copy, is the price.

Send money, checks, drafts, money orders at once to the publisher,

312
JACKSON
STREET

R. POTTS Dallas
Tex.

The July Number Will Be Ready to Mail by June 20.

Shortly after moving to Dallas, Dick Potts advertised his quarterly magazine, *The Common Herd*, in local newspapers. He called it "The New Religious Political Iconoclast."

about health, politics, and economics. Occasionally, he threw in some poetry.

Considering that he'd been raised on an antebellum slave plantation, Potts's stand in favor of fair treatment and equal rights for African Americans was extraordinary. "I am a friend of the Negro," he boldly wrote, "and I do not care who knows it."³ He took an equally brave and principled stand against the Ku Klux Klan. His position regarding most other issues was likewise liberal or "radical," except Prohibition, which he supported.

Potts was born on November 4, 1854, in King George County, Virginia, where his father, Richard Potts, Sr., was a doctor and a minister, in addition to owning a plantation and nine slaves—whom his eldest son sympathetically remembered decades later in the pages of *The Common Herd*, where he gratefully acknowledged that it was their toil that had made it possible for him, as the privileged son of a planter, to attend the University of Virginia.⁴

In 1882, Potts came to Texas, where he settled at Gatesville, the seat of Coryell County. For two years, he clerked in a general store. In 1884, he quit so that he could take a trip to Colorado. Upon his return to Gatesville, he went into the general merchandise business with a partner who thereafter died, leaving Potts sole owner. In 1885 one of his brothers, Thornton C. Potts, went into business with him. Three years later, another brother, Robert O. Potts, became his new partner.

Decades later, Potts recalled how he took advantage of an opportunity provided by some extreme weather. The winter of 1886 or 1887, he recollected, "we had the coldest weather in Central Texas." The result, he said, was that cattle "died in herds." At that time, he added, "I was in the general merchandise business in partnership with my brother at Gatesville. Leaving my brother in charge of the store, I set up as a hide buyer. I bought more than twenty carloads of hides, taken from cattle that had died as result of the blizzard in



Potts encountered the Rev. J. B. Cranfill in Gatesville in the 1890s. A Baptist minister, Cranfill soon became prominent as editor and publisher of *The Baptist Standard*. He later encouraged Potts's son in his ministerial career.

Coryell County and adjacent counties, and I operated on a small scale in comparison with many other buyers there. I paid an average of \$1 a piece for hides and sold them for \$2 and went way yonder to the good in the venture.”⁵

In 1885, in McClellan County, Potts married a twice-widowed woman named Martha Ellen “Nellie” McGuire (née Wilson), who had two young daughters by her first husband. Unfortunately, the marriage was a short one. On May 16, 1886, just after giving birth to the couple's only child, Homer Guy Potts, Nellie died, leaving Potts as guardian of his stepdaughters.

In 1892, Potts remarried. His second wife was Katie Lee Hughes, a resident of Warren County, Missouri, where they were wed. Afterward, he brought his bride to live in Gatesville, where in

1893 she gave birth to the first of two daughters. Sadly, the girl died at age two. A second daughter, Alta Virginia, was born at Hillsboro, in 1897. The following year, her mother passed away, leaving Potts a widower again. Years later, in *The Common Herd*, Potts wrote bitterly about how prayer was unable to save the lives of both wives, as well as the life of his infant daughter.⁶

Until the 1890s, Potts was a devout Baptist. At Gatesville, he became acquainted with the Reverend J. B. Cranfill—editor of *The Gatesville Advance* and nemesis of freethinkers throughout the state. In 1925, Potts told a reporter that Cranfill was the first person he met upon arrival in Gatesville in 1882, and recalled also how the minister-editor frequently criticized him for allowing saloonkeepers to store beer in the ice-house he owned and operated, despite being a prohibitionist. In that same interview, he revealed how, after moving to Hillsboro, he became an atheist:

At Hillsboro, I became superintendent of the Sunday school of the First Baptist Church. In the course of my reflections on the Scriptures, I made the important discovery that there is, or was, no warrant in the Bible for belief in any such place as hell, and I proceeded gradually to give my class the benefit of the comforting discovery. In no long time I was hauled before the congregation to show cause why I should not be dealt with for heresy. Dr. A. P. Moore, the pastor, refused to cast the deciding vote, but instead recommended that the congregation pray over the matter and then give it fresh consideration. The Reverend Mr. Kimbrough of Dallas then came down to prosecute me at my second trial. This also resulted in a tie vote. Dr. Kimbrough moved an adjournment, and I went on as superintendent of the Sunday school. But the community was not so liberal as the congregation of the First Baptist Church. The good people entered into a sort of tacit boycott against me, and, losing out in a business way, I was obliged to leave the town.⁷

Although Potts did not actually leave Hillsboro until after the turn of the century, when his former fellow Christians ostracized him out of business, he became a traveling salesman in order to support himself and his children. Possibly due to the uncertain income and itinerant nature of his new livelihood, he sent his teenage son to live with a cousin in Tarrant County. Similarly, his daughter went to live with her maternal grandparents in Hillsboro. By this time, Potts was no longer the guardian of his step-daughters, who were married, with families of their own.

Whatever anyone may have thought about Potts and his opinions, no one could accuse him of lacking ambition. In April 1892, he sought but failed to win the nomination of the Democratic Party in his district for a seat in the state legislature, advocating, among other things, “a strenuous law against the six-shooter,” a stand that sharply contrasted with his opponent, who, much like present-day Republican lawmakers, “favored a lenient pistol law.”⁸

In 1902, unfazed by his lack of political success, Potts began promoting Prohibition in Hill County, an endeavor in which he had more luck. He also quit his sales job to organize a general life insurance company with seven other Hillsboro men, but two years later, he lost or resigned his position as general manager. His next job—sales representative for *The Fort Worth Record*—required him to take to the road again. For five years, until he finally settled in Dallas, he had no fixed abode. Around this time, despite having little or no farming experience, Potts, who sympathized with farmers’ ongoing struggle to earn a decent living, also tried to organize a statewide farmers’ union.

From 1904 to 1908, in his capacity as representative for *The Fort Worth Record*, Potts traveled extensively throughout East Texas. In 1904, at one small community, he was called upon to help out with the town’s Christmas festivities by officiating at the auction of a cake which, ironically, was sold to raise money for a new organ for the local Baptist church.

In July 1908, while residing at either Fort

Worth or Hillsboro, Potts published the very first issue of *The Common Herd*. In the preface, which was reproduced in its entirety in *The Fort Worth Record*, he revealed not only his anti-religious views but also his political stance. “I am a Bryan Democrat, all along the way,” he announced, which meant that he was in favor of “the free and unlimited coinage of both gold and silver at the legal ratio of sixteen-to-one.” In Texas politics, he was “a regular” who favored the re-election of Governor Tom Campbell “so that he may have an opportunity of perfecting the full rendition law.”⁹ (This was an act of the Texas state legislature, passed in 1907, that sought “to secure equality and uniformity in taxation and to secure the just rendition of all taxable property at its full value.”)¹⁰

In closing, Potts wrote, “the *Common Herd* shall be “a free-lance.” While “it is uncompromising, yet it will observe charity toward all.”¹¹ By his own account, he sold or gave away thousands of copies of the first issue.

By March 1909, apparently after quitting his job at *The Fort Worth Record*, Potts was living in Dallas, where he placed a notice in *The Dallas Morning News*, announcing that due to the “great pressure” that readers of the first issue had reportedly put on him “to have it [*The Common Herd*] published regularly,” he found himself “preparing No. 2 for the press.”¹²

When Potts came to Dallas, where he afterward resided for all but the last few months of his life, he was then nearly fifty-five-years-old. It seems, however, that he was an optimist who believed that it was never too late to try a new venture, or to change one’s mind. Despite declaring in the first issue of *The Common Herd* that he would never run for any public office, one paper reported that Potts was going to be a candidate for Governor of Texas in 1910, even though he had little chance of “warming the chair in Austin,” owing to his “inclination to lambast the churches and church people.”¹³ Although the paper may have been mistaken as to his plans, it was certainly right in regard to his chances. To date, no known atheist has ever been elected Governor of Texas.

From 1912 to about 1914, Potts continued



Potts shared the office of attorney George Clifton Edwards in the North Texas Building on Main Street.

to make his living by working as a traveling salesman, while rooming at a local hotel. During these years, he may have temporarily suspended publication of *The Common Herd*.

From more than a decade, Potts lived at several different hotels or boarding houses in Dallas, which also served as the registered address of *The Common Herd*. Finally, in December 1923, he began using the law office of a fellow radical—a lawyer and social activist named George Clifton Edwards—on the fifth floor of the North Texas Building.

Edwards—a well-known Socialist who had run unsuccessfully for Governor of Texas, as well as Mayor of Dallas—and Richard Potts had much in common. Both were tolerant, open-minded men whose political views were then deemed radical. Among other things, both advocated fair treatment and equal rights for African Americans at a time and in a place where such views were unpopular, not just among the white working class, but also within the ranks of well-educated white professionals. In a city decidedly lacking in Liberals, it would have been far more surprising if Potts and Edwards had *not* been friends. There were only three noteworthy differences between them. One was that although Potts was politically left-of-center, he was not a Socialist. Another difference was their ages: Potts was twenty-four years older than Edwards. Finally, in terms of religion, Edwards was not an atheist. However, he was a Unitarian, which some might say is just about as close as one can get to atheism while still believing in God.

In 1925, Potts put out a revised and enlarged edition of a little book of poetry that he had first published a few years earlier. Entitled *Uncle Dick's Concordance*, the slender volume (68 pages including the covers) featured a caricature of the author on the cover. Selling for 50 cents, it was described as “A rhyming review of some familiar and unfamiliar history, doctrine, poetry, romance, and the tragedy of the Bible.”¹⁴

In addition to taking a critical stand against religion and other “foolishness”¹⁵ in *The Common*

Herd, Potts made a name for himself in Dallas as a municipal gadfly.

In October 1928, as “self-styled secretary general of the Royalist League of America,” Potts announced his plans for a Sunday afternoon mass meeting at the Dallas City Hall, where he and other speakers would expound upon “the benefits of a monarchial form of government.” If this announcement worried anyone, he “made it clear that the Royalist League’s attitude is to work for the establishment of a benevolent despotism solely by legal means.” The Royalists, he added, had no intention whatever of “overthrowing the existing Democratic-Republican form of government by violence.”¹⁶

Although Potts, who had a highly-developed sense of humor, afterward admitted that he had no actual desire to replace the United States government with a monarchy, the day after he had been given permission to use the City Hall auditorium, his permit was revoked by Arthur Reinhart, Commissioner of Public Properties. Until this time, only Communists had been denied use of the hall. After Potts formally renewed his application for use of the facility, city commissioners, meeting in executive session, initially voted to approve it, effectively overruling Reinhart. However, after an outspoken American Legion member pleaded with the commissioners to deny Potts the use of the hall, they reversed their earlier decision and deferred to Reinhart, who promptly announced that he would padlock the auditorium doors rather than allow *The Common Herd* editor to use it.

No sooner had Reinhart acted than the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Potts’ close personal friend, lawyer George Clifton Edwards, and a defense committee formed by the Dallas Bar, came to the feisty little editor’s aid. After Edwards filed a writ of mandamus in district court, the city commissioners were ordered to appear in court, to answer the charge that by denying Potts the use of the hall, they were, in effect, also denying him his constitutional right to freedom of speech. Only one of the commissioners,



George Clifton Edwards, a social activist, frequently defended Potts in court, citing his rights to free speech.

Barney Davis, who thought that Potts should be allowed to use the auditorium and characterized him as “a law-abiding, harmless individual” who had “a flair for writing poetry,” was not named in the writ.¹⁷

In a report of these events published in *The Dallas Morning News*, Reinhart admitted that the reason he objected to Pott using the hall was because he felt that there was “no room in America for people of that kind and their talk.” He suggested that Potts could just as easily give his speech on any street corner in Dallas or go to Russia. Recalling how the assassin of President William McKinley had reportedly been animated by a speech made by anarchist Emma Goldman, he said that he feared “we will do harm by allowing this meeting to be held.”¹⁸

Unfortunately for Potts, although Edwards made a compelling case in his favor, District Judge Towne Young denied the writ, saying that as Commissioner of Public Properties, Reinhardt

could exercise his discretion when approving or denying permits to use the City Hall auditorium. Undeterred, Potts said he hoped the commissioner would change his mind.

There is an interesting twist to this story. Not long after Potts was denied the use of the City Hall auditorium, Reinhart approved the application of a Socialist candidate for governor, Lee L. Rhodes, to use it for a campaign speech. When Potts heard the news, he declared that Reinhart was “now his favorite city official,” and boasted that his “own effort to uphold freedom of speech” was probably “instrumental in Commissioner Reinhart’s change of heart.” He also revealed that his application for a permit to discuss royalism in the auditorium at City Hall had actually been a hoax “to show [the commissioners] how foolish censorship can become.” Withdrawing his application for use of the hall, he said that while he would continue to always support the right to free speech, he had no further wish to embarrass

the commissioners, who had been so “lacking in common sense as to be taken in by this hoax.” He remarked that by taking his “proposal seriously,” they had reduced “censorship to absurdity.” They had also provided “overwhelming proof” of his argument, which was that “censorship such as you have set up is unwise and un-American.”¹⁹

In March 1929, Potts was in the spotlight again when the papers reported that he had entered the race for Mayor of Dallas as an independent. There were four other contenders: J. Waddy Tate, Temple H. Morrow, C. H. C. Anderson, and W. C. Everett, Jr.

As a mayoral candidate, Potts declared that he favored the implementation of a single tax (a tax on land only and not on the structures built on it), also known as the “Pittsburgh plan.” He also advocated taxing the churches. Unsurprisingly, he declared that he stood for free speech. At first, in light of his Royalist prank of 1928, a lot of people did not take him seriously, but in a field of five candidates, including the then-sitting mayor, he firmly believed he was “far and away the best equipped man running” for the job.²⁰

In a remarkably flattering portrait, *The Dallas Morning News* described Potts as “refreshing” and an “ardent reformer.” Describing his ongoing “advocacy of agnosticism,” the paper remarked that in order to do so, he “has made a thorough study of the Bible and has read widely in all other fields of human thought,” adding that “his conversation and writings reflect much of religious literature.”²¹

At the end of the first week of March, Potts withdrew from the race, owing to what he perceived as “apathy of the public to matters of vital importance in municipal government,” but he didn’t stay out for long. Responding to “the demands of hundreds of friends and fellow citizens,” he withdrew his withdrawal. A subsequent report in *The Dallas Morning News* said that when he “first entered the race” he had “drawn up a dignified and well-considered platform, which revealed a statesmanlike attitude toward the major problems confronting this community.” But now, Potts said, he realized “that I did not go far enough.” Declaring that he was just as able as any of the

other candidates to make “powerful promises,” he humorously assured the voters of Dallas that if elected, he would “not employ Siamese twins as policemen,” would “try to persuade the banks . . . to give free samples to customers,” and in order to save the city money on the construction of storm sewers, would “attempt to repeal the law of gravity” so that water would “not run down hill toward [the] Trinity River.” He also advocated “free meals for all prisoners in the city jail,” “free water and air at filling stations,” and “free mustard for all the hot dogs sold at White Rock.”²² This last item was clearly aimed at another independent candidate, J. Waddy Tate, who was popularly known as “the hot dog candidate” for the popular snacks that were a hallmark of his campaign rallies, and also on account of Tate’s advocacy of inexpensive amusements for the common folk at White Rock Lake and the land around it, which had recently become a city park.

It is safe to say that although Potts sincerely believed he would be a better mayor than any of the other candidates, he also never really expected to win, and he didn’t. When all the votes were tallied from the April 2 election, J. Waddy Tate had won overwhelmingly, with more than 9,000 votes. Potts came in fifth, with 58.

The very next day, displaying the mischievous sense of humor for which he was known, the failed candidate supplied the press with a list of his campaign donations, which consisted largely of the estimated value of the free publicity he’d received in the press, and also a list of expenses, which consisted of street car fare, postcards and stamps, two neckties, and a suit of clothes. After deducting the cost of these items from his actual campaign contributions of \$25.75, he had \$3.40 left, which he said would be spent on “tobacco, chewing gum, pie, cake, and stamps.”²³

Shortly after the dust had settled from the Dallas mayoral election, Potts was offered an entirely different sort of job: Pontiff of the Liberal Church of America, the headquarters of which were in Denver, Colorado. He declined because accepting meant that he would have to move away from Dallas, which he didn’t want to do.



In 1929 Potts ran for mayor of Dallas. A plank in his platform poked fun at one of his rivals, J. Waddy Tate, “the hot dog candidate.” Tate won the race, and Potts finished last.

The Liberal Church of America, of which Potts was made a bishop in 1928, had been founded some six years earlier by a Colorado free-thinker named Frank Hamilton Rice and other like-minded individuals. It was the only church in the United States “without theology, creed, or dogma.” It also eschewed edifices, parsonages, and Sunday schools. Later, the church was incorporated “with full power to function as a church and also as an educational institution, to ordain ministers and consecrate bishops, and to establish churches and schools and confer degrees.”²⁴ In reality, it was a small, little-known organization which in 1926 had barely 300 members and only three actual congregations—one in Denver, one in San Diego, California, and one in Seattle, Wash-

ington. Its basic principles were entirely secular, with no mention of any god or gods or prophets, or any of the other hallmarks of traditional churches. In short, it was just the sort of group that appealed to Richard Potts, who although reluctant to become head of the entire church, was happy to accept promotion to the position of cardinal in 1929 and also to establish a congregation at Dallas. Amazingly, considering the trouble he had in 1928, its convocation was held on Sunday, April 7, 1929, at the Dallas City Hall auditorium. Equally remarkable was that despite Prohibition, which ordinarily Potts supported, “the Bishop” sipped wine sixteen times “in memory of all the martyrs of the ages, who sincerely thought they lived and died for mankind,” but “no action” was

“taken by [federal] enforcement officials in the matter.”²⁵ Unfortunately, the number of people who showed up to see and hear the short, spectacle-wearing, tobacco-chewing bishop officiate on this occasion went unreported by the press.

On Saturday, February 1, 1930, a little more than three months after the stock market crash that signaled the beginning of the Great Depression, Potts was back at the City Hall auditorium, helping to organize a local Unemployment League, the goal of which was to “try to get work and food to the unemployed at a minimum cost.” Approximately 400 men showed up, 150 of whom were African-American. The very next day, the executive committee of the newly-formed league “drew up a politico and obtained permission to present it to the city commissioners at 11 o’clock Monday morning.” Potts was one of two men assigned to handle publicity for the group, the demands of which were “a survey of conditions, re-establishment of the municipal employment agency and cooperation of the commission with the league.”²⁶

Almost exactly two months later, Potts was again in the news, but this time for an entirely different reason—as a participant in the eighth annual gridiron dinner at the University Club, an event in which local politicians and other prominent local figures were, to use a modern term, good-naturedly “roasted,” *in absentia* this time, since none of them were present on the occasion. Following a satirical skit that made fun of the “Hot Dog Mayor,” J. Waddy Tate, and all the city commissioners, Potts continued the mockery by appearing as “King Richard I of Texas” in a humorous sketch entitled “We Want Royalties,” which was obviously inspired by his recently-perpetrated hoax. As the audience almost certainly laughed, “King Richard” proclaimed Texas to be a kingdom. Promising to repeal Prohibition, he also threatened to jail Governor Dan Moody “as soon as room can be found.”²⁷

In March 1931, in the same City Hall auditorium to which he had been refused entry as a “Royalist,” Potts lectured on Humanism and at-

tempted to organize a Humanist Society. It is not known if he was successful. Eight years earlier, Potts had organized a similar society, the Liberal Church of Humanity, which had its organizational meeting in April 1922 at the St. George Hotel, with Potts as Secretary-Treasurer. “The motto of the society,” reported *The Dallas Morning News*, “was taken from the words of the immortal Thomas Paine: ‘The world is my field and to do good is my religion.’”²⁸ It appears, however, that the society was short-lived. If Potts was successful in starting a new group in 1931, it’s likely that it suffered the same fate.

A month later, Potts unsuccessfully ran for office again, this time for a place on the City Council that replaced the Commission system adopted in 1907. Although he received only a single vote (no doubt his own), it may have given him some satisfaction to know that the outgoing mayor, J. Waddy Tate, likewise received only one vote.

In February 1932, celebrated dollar watchmaker Charles H. Ingersoll, an advocate of the single tax plan, came to Dallas to give a lecture. In its report on Ingersoll, *The Dallas Morning News* mentioned that while in town, Ingersoll had met with Potts, with whom he had been a fellow delegate to the 1924 Democratic Convention in Chicago. At that time, Potts had “complained about one of the Ingersoll watches to the maker.” The paper noted that when he returned to Dallas, he found that Ingersoll had sent him a replacement, which he still carried.²⁹

That same year (1932), Potts’ son, Homer Guy Potts, together with his family—a wife and two children—traveled to Dallas especially to see him. It may have been the first time that the two men had been in one another’s company in many years. Unfortunately, it was not an altogether happy reunion. Although Potts and his son had something in common—each had spent quite a lot of his adult life as a traveling insurance salesman—they differed on something that no doubt came as a shock to the older man. Calling it “a strange twist on the old Biblical story of the return of the prodigal son,” *The Dallas Morning News* reported

FUNNY BIBLE STORIES IN VERSE

THE COMMON HERD
SECOND SPECIAL EDITION

Volume X

JUNE 1925

Number 3

UNCLE DICK'S CONCORDANCE



UNCLE DICK

50 CENTS A COPY

RICHARD POTTS, Editor
DALLAS, TEXAS
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In 1925 Potts published a humorous poetry collection called *Uncle Dick's Concordance*, with a sketch of himself on the cover.

that “the Rev. H. G. Potts, a Baptist minister since his conversion a few months ago, returned home to Texas after many years wandering” in hopes of persuading his father to give up atheism and to “reverse the policy” of *The Common Herd* so that he “might take up an associate editorship.” Not surprisingly, the elder Potts refused.³⁰

“Being a preacher,” Potts told a reporter afterward, “my son suggested I change the policy of the magazine and its creed and that he would then join me and help make it a success. I objected to this and told him the magazine would die with me, and that as long as I lived, it would be published as now.”³¹

Disappointed by the failure of his mission, Homer Potts went to see the Reverend J. B. Cranfill, who had known the elder Potts during his early years in Texas, when both “were members of the Baptist Church in Gatesville.” Dr. Cranfill, who had moved to Dallas decades earlier to become general manager of *The Baptist Standard*, told the *News* that he had “advised Mr. Potts to go on to Fort Worth and enter our theological seminary there, and that was his decision when I talked with him last. I see no reason why he should not make a success in the ministry.”³²

That same year, Potts ran twice for public office. The first time was in the spring, when he announced that he would be campaigning for Congressman-at-large as a representative of the Liberal Church of America. Unsurprisingly, the single tax plan was the principal issue in his platform. Equally unsurprising, he lost.

In the fall, Potts ran for Vice-President of the United States on the National Secular Party ticket. Frank Zern, editor of *The Glenrio Tribune* in New Mexico and bishop in the Liberal Church, was the party’s presidential nominee. Although the ticket did receive some publicity in newspapers across the nation, the number of votes that Zern and Potts garnered in the 1932 election seems to have been lost to history. Almost needless to say, they were overwhelmingly defeated by New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who also

outdid sitting President Herbert Hoover in what was termed a “landslide” victory.

In August 1933, at a meeting in the City Hall auditorium, the then-seventy-five-year-old Potts and another well-known orator, Willard B. “Pitchfork” Smith, debated the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment, which since January 1920 had banned the manufacture, sale, and distribution of alcoholic beverages in the United States. Smith took the side of the so-called “wets,” while Potts, who had been a champion of Prohibition since the 1880s, spoke out against repeal.

“Pitchfork” and “Bishop Potts” were not only polar opposites in their positions on the issue, they were likewise unlike in appearance. “Measuring five feet seven inches,” Potts weighed in “at 125 pounds, spectacles included.” In stark contrast, “Pitchfork” Smith rose to a height of six foot, two-and-a-half inches and weighed “214 pounds with his socks on.”³³ A photograph that accompanied the article almost certainly led readers to compare the two men to the then-popular cartoon characters “Mutt and Jeff.”

The two men did have some things in common. Both were liberal magazine editors with similar political views (Smith’s publication, *The Pitchfork*, had given him his nickname) and both were colorful, well-known Dallas figures. Each was also the son of a minister (and in Potts’ case, the father of a minister as well).

Although the Smith-Potts debate was almost certainly an entertaining and informative event, in the end it had little or no effect on the success or failure of the Twenty-first Amendment, proposed by Congress in February 1933. On December 5 of that same year, it was ratified and the “Great Experiment” as some had termed it, was over.

In April 1934, at the age of seventy-nine, Potts tried again for a seat on the Dallas City Council. He received three write-in votes. Later that same year he debated E. M. Lane, a Socialist Party lecturer, at City Park, with Potts taking the position that the Single Tax, not Socialism, was the “only solution for the ills of capitalism.”³⁴

Whenever Potts wasn't busy running for public office, presiding over Liberal Church services, debating some opponent on the issues of the day, tweaking the noses of elected officials, or writing and editing *The Common Herd*, he submitted letters, intended for publication, not only to freethought publications such as *The Truth Seeker*, but also to mainstream papers like the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Dallas Times Herald*, which remarkably, in light of Potts' iconoclastic point-of-view, printed many (but not all) of them. A review of these letters reveals that Potts was a man with an opinion on nearly every subject that one could imagine, though he focused primarily on political or religious concerns. In 1935, the fiftieth anniversary of *The Dallas Morning News*, it was reported that Potts had not only been a *News* reader during that entire time, but also that he had "perhaps written more communications for the 'Letters from Readers' column of the *News* than any other living person."³⁵

At the age of eighty, Potts decided to make one more try for elective office by announcing his candidacy for the state House of Representatives seat which had been recently been made vacant by the resignation of Sarah T. Hughes, who had been appointed a State District Judge. "The single tax," reported *The Dallas Morning News*, "is the first plank in the platform of Potts," who also, noted the paper, "opposes all other taxes on property and products, favors giving women by constitutional amendment all the economic and political rights enjoyed by men, abolition of the poll tax for any purpose, repeal of prohibition and strict regulation of the liquor traffic, continuance of the pari-mutuel race horse betting law, a State old age pension not to exceed \$15 a month in conjunction with the Federal Government."³⁶

Although Potts's support for repeal of Prohibition two years after the demise of the Eighteenth Amendment might seem indicative of a decline in his mental capacities, the fact is that even though the United States government no longer had a ban on alcoholic beverages, the State of Texas still did, thanks to an amendment to the state constitution which had been approved by popular vote in



Following the death of Dick Potts in 1943, his body was taken to Hillsboro, where he was buried in the Ridge Park Cemetery. His gravesite is not at the foot of a tree, as he had requested.

1919. In short, even after repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment, Texas remained completely "dry." Therefore, one of the big debates in Texas in 1935 was whether or not to repeal the 1919 state constitution amendment. This repeal passed and Texas reverted to the same "local option" status it had before 1919.

By 1941, Potts had become an inmate of the Strickland Sanitarium, a private home for the elderly on Ross Avenue, but he wasn't there long. In 1943, he was one of twelve elderly former occupants of the sanitarium that were tried in lunacy court, after county officials removed them from the Strickland Home when it was discovered that they were "underfed, full of body lice, and improperly cared for." Because none of the twelve had either sufficient funds or anyone willing to care for them, and also because there was no suit-

able public facility in Dallas County to which they could be transferred, the court decided to send them all to state hospitals for the insane—nine to Austin and three to Terrell. None of the affected persons, who were then being held at either the City Jail or Parkland Hospital, was present at the hearing.³⁷

At the trial, Potts's longtime friend, George Clifton Edwards, defended him, saying that "it was inappropriate for Potts to have to go to a hospital for the insane." Nevertheless, when asked if he was willing to take care of the elderly gentleman in return for the \$30 per month old-age pension to which each inmate was entitled, Edwards made no reply.³⁸

In the end, although he was not a Civil War veteran, Potts was sent to the Texas Confederate Home for Men in Austin, where on November 9, 1943, following an illness of ten days, he died. The following day, his body was taken to Hillsboro, where he was buried in the Ridge Park Cemetery. Remarkably, despite his notoriety, no obituary or news story appeared in *The Dallas Morning News*, the paper which had taken so much notice of him in life, although it did remember him three times in 1953, in the "Twenty-five Years Ago Today" column, and also in 1967, when "Dallas Yesterday" columnist Sam Acheson recalled the municipal election of 1929.³⁹

From all appearances, the old maxim "out of sight, out of mind" explains why no one publicly took note of Potts' passing, and also why he is today an obscure figure in the history of his adopted city. Perhaps it also explains why the old editor's gravesite does not resemble in the least what he imagined for himself in a short poem that he wrote for *The Common Herd*:

MY WILL.

"When I die, I want to be
Buried close to the foot of a tree.
So that the strength of me may flow
Into the tree and make it grow.
So that in days to come maybe,
I myself may be a tree."⁴⁰ **L**

NOTES

¹*The Common Herd*, Dallas, Texas (hereafter referred to as *TCH*), Vol. ix, no. 1 (June 1923): cover.

²*Ibid.*, inside front cover.

³Richard Potts, "The Negro," *TCH*, Vol. viii, no. 3 (December 1922): 9.

⁴*Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁵*The Dallas Morning News* (hereafter referred to as *DMN*), February 2, 1930.

⁶Richard Potts, "Wandering in the Past," *TCH*, Vol. viii, no. 4 (March 1923): 5.

⁷*DMN*, March 22, 1925.

⁸*Galveston Daily News*, Galveston, Texas, April 29, 1892.

⁹*Fort Worth Register and Record*, Fort Worth, Texas, September 20, 1908.

¹⁰*General Laws of the State of Texas Passed at the Regular Session of the Thirtieth Legislature* (Austin: 1907), 439.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*DMN*, March 7, 1909.

¹³*Omaha Breeze*, Omaha, Texas, September 1, 1909.

¹⁴Richard Potts, *Uncle Dick's Concordance* (Dallas, Texas: The Common Herd, 1925), title page.

¹⁵Richard Potts, "Fobbs and Furbelows," *TCH*, Vol. ix, no. 3) March 1924): 9.

¹⁶*DMN*, October 18, 1928.

¹⁷*DMN*, October 20, 1928.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*DMN*, October 23, 1928.

²⁰*DMN*, March 3, 1929.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*DMN*, March 15, 1929.

²³*Texas Mesquiter*, Mesquite, Texas, April 5, 1929.

²⁴United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies, 1926, Volume II, Separate Denominations* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 694-5.

²⁵*DMN*, April 6, 1929.

²⁶*DMN*, February 3, 1930.

²⁷*DMN*, April 2, 1930.

²⁸*DMN*, April 7, 1922.

²⁹*DMN*, February 4, 1932.

³⁰*DMN*, September 3, 1932.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³*DMN*, July 23, 1933.

³⁴*DMN*, May 20, 1934.

³⁵*DMN*, October 1, 1935.

³⁶*DMN*, February 19, 1935.

³⁷*DMN*, July 10, 1943.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*DMN*, May 11, October 17 & 19, 1953, and March 13, 1967.

⁴⁰Richard Potts, "My Will," *TCH*, Vol. ix, no. 3 (March 1924): 32.

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Donald Barthelme's Epic Design for the Hall of State

BY WILLIS C. WINTERS

*L*ate in the afternoon of Thursday, July 4, 1935, a 28-year-old architect working in Houston named Donald Barthelme received a phone call from Dallas. “Don, this is Mark Lemmon. We met last year in Galveston when I visited with you about pursuing work together with the Galveston School Board. I am currently involved with a group of architects in Dallas on a project for the State Board of Control at the Centennial Exposition next year. We need a chief designer for the State of Texas Building, and if you are interested in this position, I need you here in Dallas tomorrow.” Without asking for any details that might have prompted him to decline, and without hesitation, Barthelme accepted the job offer over the telephone and then drove to his employer’s house to tender his resignation. At the time, he was working for the great Houston architect John Staub.¹

Mark Lemmon was an equally prominent architect in Dallas who had a practice concentrated on educational, ecclesiastical, and government work throughout Texas. He was also presently a member of a consortium of ten Dallas architects that had banded together to secure a contract with the State Board of Control for the most important architectural commission of the era: the State of Texas Building that would be built at the upcoming world’s fair in Dallas. They called themselves the Texas Centennial Architects, Associated, a group that included some of the most successful and respected practitioners in the city: men like Hal Thomson—the John Staub of Dallas—who designed stately residences on Swiss Avenue and in Highland Park; Roscoe DeWitt, who, in an earlier partnership with Mark Lemmon during the 1920s created such cherished edifices as Sunset and Woodrow Wil-

son high schools and Highland Park Methodist Church; Marion Fooshee, whose firm Fooshee & Cheek was responsible for the Highland Park Village shopping center; Anton Korn, a prolific residential designer active in the Park Cities; as well as other well-known and respected architects that included Ralph Bryan, Walter Sharp, and Arthur Thomas. There was one additional firm not from Dallas that was the eleventh member of this illustrious architectural team. Adams & Adams of San Antonio was designated by the State as the Associate Architect, whose duty was “to perform services periodically designated by the owner.”² As the project developed, Adams & Adams became responsible for the interior furnishings and fixtures of the building, including coordinating the work of the numerous artists involved with the murals and sculpture. The project itself was designated as the State of Texas Building—later to be known as the Hall of State. It would become the grand architectural centerpiece of the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas.

When Donald Barthelme arrived in the city on July 5, the day following his phone conversation with Mark Lemmon, he took a six-block-long taxi ride from Union Station to the Construction Building, located at the southwest corner of Akard and Wood streets, where the Texas Centennial Architects had their offices on the sixth floor. It was a typically hot July day, and the office had no air conditioning. Barthelme was escorted into a conference room, where the Centennial architects had gathered to meet him and explain the somewhat desperate situation they had on their hands. Their contract with the State Board of Control had been approved on June 20. Mark Lemmon, Anton Korn, and Ralph Bryan were in charge of design for the Centennial Architects group and, over the previous two weeks, the three of them had supervised the preparation of four different design schemes for the State Building to present to the Board. However, each of these designs had been rejected. A *Dallas Morning News* article published on Saturday, July 6—“State Impatient at Delay on Centennial Structure”—de-

scribed the board chairman, Claude Teer, as being “unhappy” and another board member as being “downcast.” Hal Thomson, the president of the Texas Centennial Architects, was quoted in the article that preliminary sketches for a new design would be ready in a few days.³

There was much happening behind the scenes as well during this two-week period. George Dahl, the Dallas architect who was R. L. Thornton’s accomplished lieutenant in landing the central exposition for Dallas, and who had been appointed the Supervising Architect for the exposition, with the additional title of Technical Director for the Centennial Central Exposition Corporation, had already presented his own design for the State of Texas building to the Texas Centennial Commission and desperately wanted the commission for the most important single building of the entire exposition for himself.

Into this political and architectural maelstrom stepped Donald Barthelme, the young architect from Houston, who had little relevant experience and almost no completed work in his brief career following his graduation from the University of Pennsylvania in 1930. Who was this young man—still on the cusp of his career in architecture—and how prepared was he to accomplish where other experienced and respected architects preceding him had failed—to design what would perhaps be one of the most important structures to be built in Texas during the twentieth century?

Barthelme was born in Galveston in 1907. His father was in the lumber business, and his mother was later a member of the Galveston school board at the time Mark Lemmon originally met with him in 1934. He attended Rice University for two years between 1924 and 1926, when he was asked to withdraw, in his own words, for having “too much fun.” With the assistance of an acquaintance at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, he was able to enroll in the architecture school at the University of Pennsylvania, one of the top architecture programs in America at the time, heavily under the influence of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. He completed his studies and

graduated in 1930, married, and was fortunate during the early years of the Great Depression to land a job with the blue-blood Philadelphia architecture firm Zantzinger, Borie & Medari, who were actively working at the time on one of the big Depression-era public works projects—the new Justice Department Building, located in the federal triangle in Washington, D.C.⁴ Barthelme was employed as a junior designer on the Justice Building project and recalled “trying to design a new Greek (column) capital” for the structure’s exterior.⁵ The building showcased a comprehensive decorative arts program led by the New York sculptor C. Paul Jennewein and featured sculptural work throughout, with New Deal murals in the interior spaces.⁶ Aluminum details and mosaic work were lavished on the building, and although Barthelme had no direct involvement as a junior staff member with the art program, it represented a significant collaborative influence that he would have in his mind several years later in Dallas. The Department of Justice Building was completed in 1935, about the time of Mark Lemmon’s phone call to Barthelme.

The Influence of Paul Philippe Cret

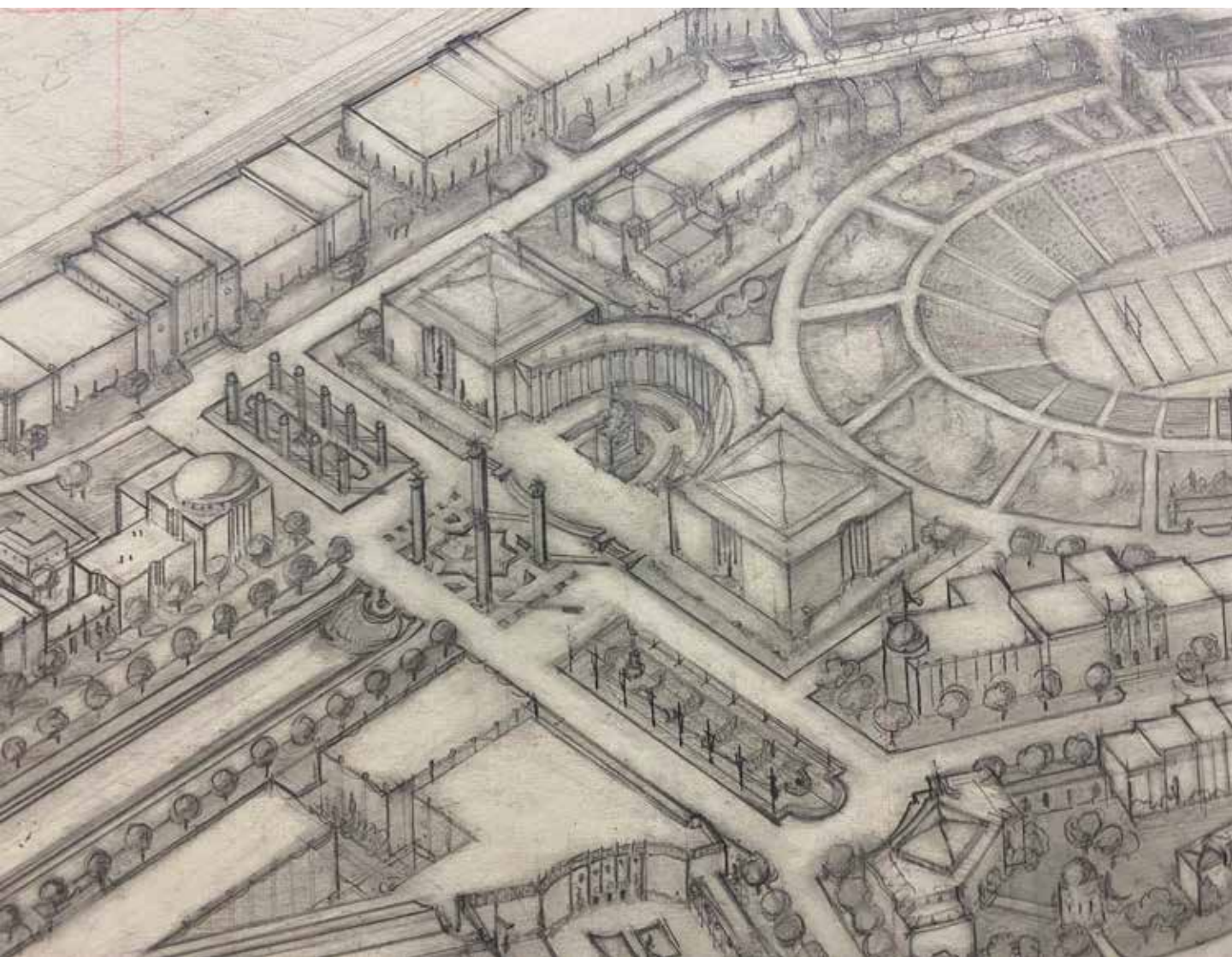
Donald Barthelme also worked for the eminent Philadelphia architect Paul Philippe Cret for two brief periods, before and after his employment at Zantzinger, Borie & Medari. Cret was one of the most influential forces in Philadelphia architecture in the early part of the twentieth century, having been recruited, as an accomplished student, from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris to join the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania as a professor of design in 1903. Following the First World War, when Cret was in his native France to serve in the military, he returned to the United States and engaged in an active architectural practice while resuming his teaching position at Penn. He was a frequent collaborator on important commissions with Zantzinger, Borie & Medari, and was also called upon to utilize his city planning skills as a consulting architect on several important campus planning projects,

including the University of Texas at Austin.⁷

Paul Cret thus exerted an indirect influence on a former student at Penn (it is not known if Barthelme actually had Cret as a design professor) who was also an employee in Cret’s architecture firm before he moved back to Texas. Cret also had a collaborative relationship with the Centennial Exposition’s Technical Director George Dahl, first in the design of buildings at the University of Texas campus during the mid-1930s and secondly as a consultant to the Centennial Exposition Corporation on the development of the exposition campus plan in early 1935.⁸ We will now consider these two potential influences on the design of the Hall of State.

Paul Cret authored a General Plan of Development for the University of Texas campus in 1933. It is a towering achievement in campus master planning in the United States, incorporating elements of a prior campus plan prepared by the Dallas architecture firm Herbert M. Greene, LaRoche & Dahl in 1928, as well as planning strategies embedded in Thomas Jefferson’s seminal plan for the University of Virginia, where the concept of a principal building (the Library) commanding the vista along a green axis (the “Lawn”) flanked by intermediate pavilions was the essential idea for both the Library tower and South Mall at U.T., as well as the Hall of State and its fundamental relationship to the Esplanade at the Centennial Exposition. Cret’s term as consulting architect at U.T. overlapped the tenure of Greene, LaRoche & Dahl as the official University Architect. Dahl’s firm was responsible for executing many of Cret’s designs for the U.T. campus, but more importantly, Dahl was personally involved with the evolution of Cret’s beaux-arts planning scheme in Austin, which featured a monumental library located on a large, elevated plaza that faced a carefully modulated pedestrian mall framed by six classroom buildings of identical massing and symmetrically disposed to either side.⁹

George Dahl’s admiration for this campus plan was ultimately manifested in the design of



George Dahl and Paul Cret jointly developed a preliminary site plan for the Centennial Exposition, which featured this early scheme for the State of Texas Building as the centerpiece of the composition.

the Esplanade of State, the architectural focal point of the Centennial Exposition in Dallas, where he created monumental Art Deco facades to form a 700-foot-long symmetrical mall modulated by six projecting porticos. Cret's six classroom buildings and Dahl's six porticos established similar visual frameworks for both the South Mall at U.T. and for the Esplanade at Fair Park, and accentuated the grand perspective leading up to analogous raised courts or plateaus fronting archi-

tectural monuments (Cret's Library at U.T. and the State of Texas Building at the Centennial) at both campuses.¹⁰

As the Centennial site plan was initially being developed in early 1935, Paul Cret received a postal telegram from Walter Cline, the exposition's general manager, inviting him to Dallas to "advise us on our plans for the exposition grounds." Cret arrived in Dallas on Wednesday, February 27, to meet with George Dahl and



TEXAS CENTENNIAL 1936

HERBERT M. GREENE - LAROCHE & DAHL
ARCHITECTS

Eugene Gilboe painted this rendering of a conceptual building for the State of Texas. It was utilized by George Dahl and R. L. Thornton in a presentation to the Texas Centennial Commission in September 1934, after which Dallas was awarded the designation as the official site of the 1936 Texas Centennial Central Exposition.

Centennial executives, and over the next several days the two architects drafted a preliminary site plan for the exposition that employed three major strategies. The plan established the framework of the Esplanade, which would be flanked by two large exhibition buildings; it designated an area of the fairgrounds as a permanent cultural center organized around a small lake; and finally, it established a large agricultural and livestock district (the first such district at any world's fair). Cret presented the plan to the exposition's executive committee on Saturday, March 2, explaining that "the focus of the whole composition is the Centennial monument and the State of Texas Building." The planning scheme developed by Dahl and Cret featured the State Building at the northeastern terminus of the Esplanade. It consisted of a semicircular colonnade flanked by two square pavilions—one for education, the other for natural resources—each with a shallow pyramidal roof. In the center of the plaza, within the curving colonnade, was the proposed Centennial monument. Cret went on to explain that a monumental entrance to the football stadium, which was located directly behind the State Building site, could be accomplished by passing through the colonnade.¹¹ In the master plan, the Court of Honor in front of this building ensemble featured four tall pylons flanked by fountains with shorter pylons and flagpoles to each side.

Although this was the first instance of a design idea for the State of Texas Building shown on a conceptual site plan for the exposition, there was an even earlier scheme for this structure, which was illustrated in one of six majestic color renderings Dahl and his artist Eugene Gilboe had prepared for the Dallas presentation to the Texas Centennial Commission on September 6, 1934. This highly conceptual design also featured a curving colonnade that connected two flanking pavilions, except that it also had a large hall at its center that was topped by a cylindrical tower with a gold Lone Star crown. Dahl revised the original design scheme that he developed with

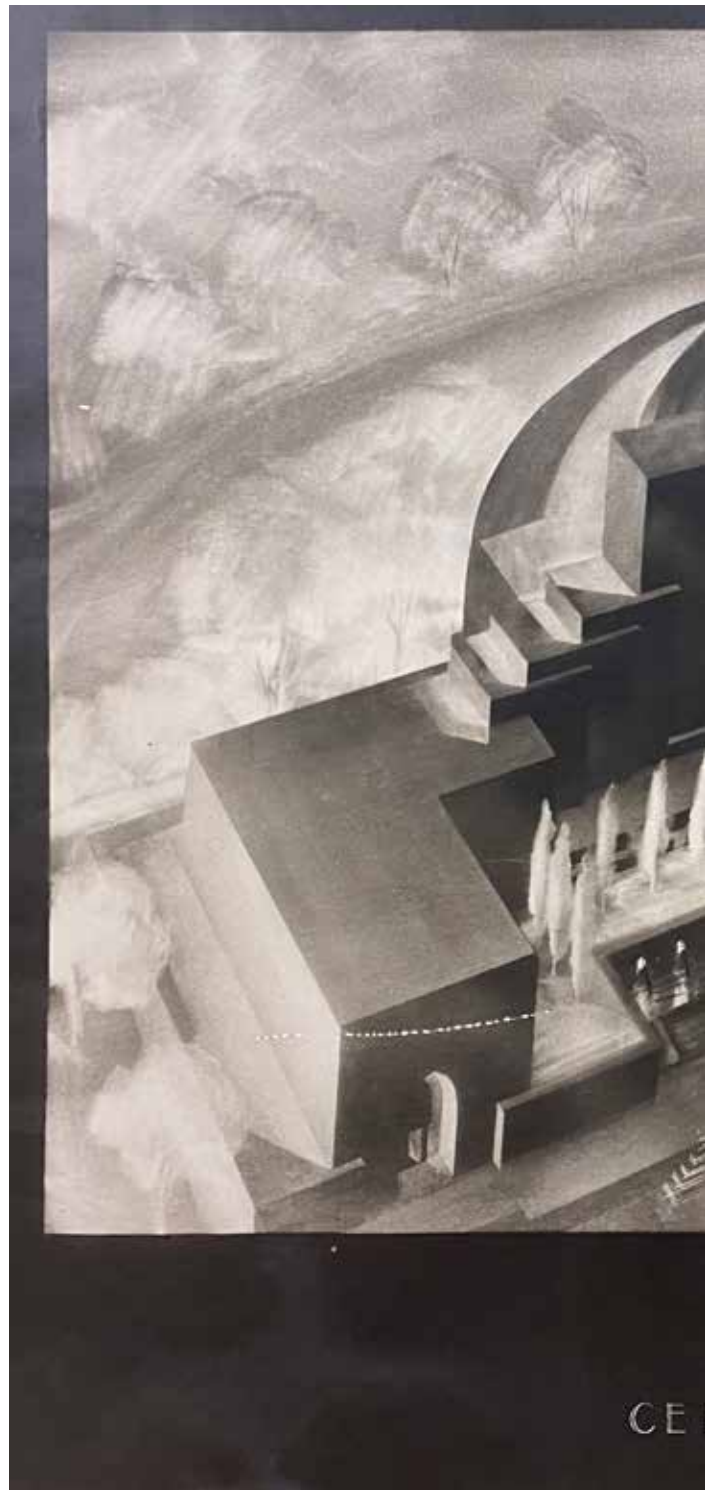
Paul Cret several times beginning in April 1935. The first iteration is illustrated in a perspective drawn in pencil showing a low, curved building and front colonnade flanked by two side wings, or halls. A tall rectangular tower—the Centennial monument—was the centerpiece of this composition.

George Dahl's Plan for the Hall of State

The Texas Centennial Commission, which had been established in 1934 by the Second Session of the 43rd Legislature to oversee the Texas Centennial celebrations, formally met in Dallas on Friday, May 17, 1935, with representatives of the State Board of Control and board members of the Texas Centennial Central Exposition Corporation. Commission members present in Dallas included Lieutenant Governor Walter Woodul (Commission chairman), Speaker of the House Coke Stevenson, former Governor Pat Neff, Karl Hoblitzelle, and John Hulen. Walter Kline, the exposition's general manager, made a plea that the state's budgeted appropriation of \$1,200,000 be dedicated in its entirety to the State Building and not diluted by other smaller projects at the exposition (such as a proposed dormitory). George Dahl later presented to the Board the master plan for the exposition, including his design for the State of Texas Building. The day ended with a tour of Fair Park. Dahl's presentation must have gone exceptionally well because the next day—Saturday, May 18—he formally extended employment offers to twelve architects and engineers to join his Centennial design staff. They would begin work immediately on the State Building and the two major exhibit halls on the Esplanade.¹²

Dahl's final design proposal for the Hall of State was illustrated in a *Dallas Morning News* article published on Sunday, June 16, 1935.¹³ The dramatic black and white aerial rendering showed a huge building complex that stretched 450 feet along the Court of Honor. It was similar in plan to his previous scheme, except the monumental tower had been eliminated, and the

central concave portion was substantially taller than the two side halls. The colonnade, with its slender square columns, was terminated on each end by solid masses that stepped down in four increments to the lower halls. The massing and overall formal modernistic character of Dahl's final design reflected the similarly monumental façade of the Cincinnati Union Terminal, which was completed in March 1933. Paul Philippe Cret was the consulting architect for this striking edifice, and one can imagine that George Dahl was well-acquainted with it by means of recent architecture journals. The gushing *Morning News* article on Dahl's design proclaimed the proposed State Building to be "Majestic in proportion, but simple in line and detail, Grecian in inspiration, tempered by the Latin-American influence." Dahl evidently concocted an architectural program (the list of rooms with their functions and sizes) for the structure and named several of the various spaces and components of his design, including the "Court of State," the 50-foot-high "Colonnade of Independence," the "Hall of the Republic," and the "Hall of State." This may be the first instance where the phrase "Hall of State" was used in connection with the project—at least in print. The design developed by Dahl and aided by Donald Nelson (recently recruited from the 1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago to join Dahl's staff as his chief designer) was approved by both the Exposition Corporation and by the Texas Centennial Commission. To complicate matters, on Friday, June 14, the *News* reported that the State Board of Control had "engaged ten Dallas architects to make detailed plans" for the building designed by George Dahl. Chairman Claude Teer instructed these architects to be prepared to call for bids no later than August 15—only two short months away!¹⁴ The contract between the State Board of Control and the Texas Centennial Architects, Associated





George Dahl's final design scheme for the Hall of State was approved by the Texas Centennial Commission in June 1935.



Once the Texas Centennial Architects usurped the responsibility from George Dahl for the design of the Hall of State, they produced four schemes to present to the State Board of Control. The first of these – Scheme A, shown here – was a Spanish Revival design with a tall, domed tower.

was approved later that week, on June 20. The ten Dallas architects immediately went to work to undermine Dahl’s approved design for the State Building and to substitute their own in its place.

Alternate Schemes

The Dallas Morning News documented in a series of articles the subterfuge employed by the Centennial Architects between Monday, June 24, and Wednesday night, July 3. On June 24, Hal Thomson, Roscoe DeWitt, Anton Korn, and Ralph Bryan presented revised sketches for the State Building to the State Board of Control in Austin. The design incorporated “slight changes from (Dahl’s) original drawings.” The architects and board members agreed that Dahl’s original plans had to be “slightly shaved” to bring costs within the State’s \$1,000,000 budgeted appropriation for the building (an additional \$200,000 was allocated to furnishings and artwork). The following Saturday, June 29, the Centennial Architects presented four new design schemes for

the Hall of State to Dallas Mayor George Sergeant, R. L. Thornton, and John Singleton, Chief of the Centennial Division for the State Board of Control. George Dahl apparently was not present. The differences in the designs presented, according to the *News*’ recap of the meeting, “were in the substitution of straight lines for the curved lines in Mr. Dahl’s sketch, which (the) architects said would cut the costs of construction so that the building would come within the \$1,000,000 (construction budget).”¹⁶

Three of the four design schemes prepared by the Texas Centennial Architects fortunately still exist and are in the collection of the Dallas Historical Society. According to Donald Barthelme, the schemes were likely prepared by Ralph Bryan, who led this design effort for the Texas Centennial Architects. The first, Scheme A, shows a Spanish Colonial Revival building elevation with a grandiose arched entry portal and a domed tower. On each side of this central block are low wings with arched arcades that contain

the program elements of the building, including the Halls of 1836 and 1936, and four smaller regional rooms. Schemes C and D bore strong resemblance to George Dahl's original scheme, which was criticized by the Centennial Architects as being too expensive due to its curvilinear design—the very essence of what they themselves were now showing to the Board of Control. The only difference was that the architectural program for the State Building had been expanded to encompass not only the Halls of 1836 and 1936, but also the four regional rooms and a large space called “The Great Hall of Texas.” In Scheme C the two smaller halls were aligned along the main axis of the building, to make the building appear longer facing the Court of Honor and the Esplanade. In this scheme, the Great Hall of Texas was aligned with these two halls, on the back side of the semi-circular regional rooms and the Colonnade of Texas Heroes. In Scheme D, the three halls were roughly the same size and were arranged around the semicircular Colonnade of Texas Heroes perpendicular to their approximate positions in Scheme C. The Halls of 1836 and 1936 jutted forward from the building toward the Esplanade while the Great Hall protruded outward to the rear from behind the Colonnade.¹⁷

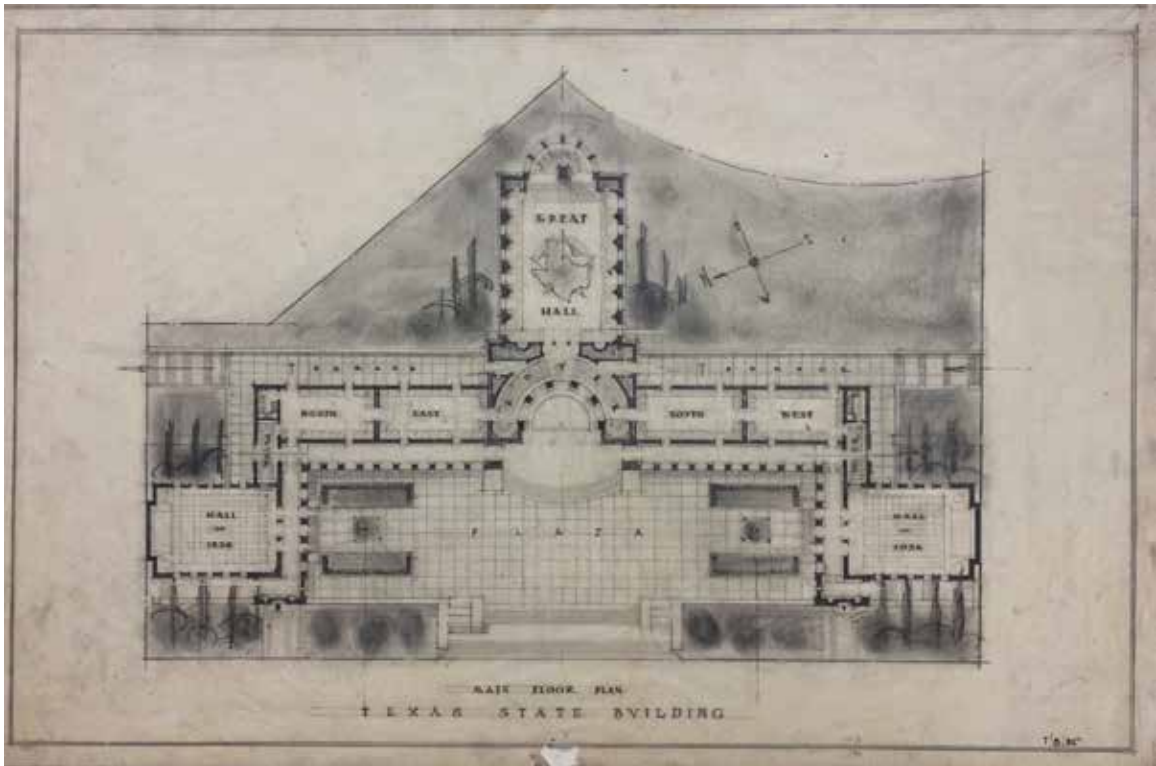
Despite claims in several *News* articles that the State Board of Control favored one of the new design schemes, this evidently was not the case. On the evening of Wednesday, July 3, a tense meeting was held at exposition headquarters in the recently renovated Hall of Administration (formerly, the State Fair Livestock Coliseum) on the Centennial grounds. In attendance were the Centennial's Supervising Architect George Dahl and members of the Texas Centennial Architects. It was significantly agreed that all previous schemes for the Hall of State would be “rejected” and that the Centennial Architects would move forward with a new design.¹⁸ A dismayed George Dahl washed his hands of the project at this point and turned his full attention to the remainder of the exposition and its myriad demands, opportunities, and glories. The opening day for the expo-

sition—June 6, 1936—was now 337 days away. As for the construction contracts being let on August 15, as originally planned, there was now no chance this could occur by that date.

Barthelme's Design

Donald Barthelme received his phone call from Mark Lemmon on Thursday, July 4, and he was in Dallas the following day, ready to begin his new job as the chief designer for the Texas Centennial Architects, Associated. He went to work immediately with a half-dozen architects assisting him.¹⁹ He utilized the same architectural program that had been incorporated into the previous schemes. On Sunday afternoon, July 7, Barthelme presented his new design to managing director Walter Cline, Arthur Kramer, and George Dahl, all with the Exposition Corporation. The three men endorsed the scheme and Hal Thomson, president of the Centennial Architects, announced to the media that a new plan would be ready “in a day or two” to present to the Board of Control. He also declared the State of Texas Building could easily be completed by the opening day of the exposition on June 6, 1936—now 334 days away.²⁰ The design presentation occurred in Austin on Tuesday, July 9, after which the revised scheme was unanimously adopted by the Board.²¹ Only two drawings (dated 7/8/35)—both in the collection of the Dallas Historical Society—were prepared by Donald Barthelme for this presentation: a sumptuous building elevation and the main floor plan—both drawn in pencil and charcoal on vellum, at a very small scale. On Saturday, July 20, the Board approved final revisions to Barthelme's design, which was described by the Centennial Architects in a *Morning News* article as “contemporary, with sufficient flavoring in the color, texture and the details to give it a distinctly Southwestern character.”²²

Fifteen days after arriving in Dallas on the overnight train from Houston, Donald Barthelme had apparently accomplished the impossible. He had successfully navigated through the turmoil and politics of the architectural commission for



Barthelme’s design for the Great Hall of Texas featured a semicircular apse that protruded from the back wall of the building. His scheme for a free-standing stone disc depicting 300 years of Texas history would have been placed in this apse.

the design of the Hall of State and had effectively synthesized a new design that was approved by the Texas Centennial Central Exposition Corporation and the Texas Centennial Commission, and officially adopted by the State Board of Control. His design incorporated many features of the previous schemes prepared by Dahl and Ralph Bryan. As described in the *Morning News*, the main highlight was a “stately center niche, rising 80 feet and housing the semicircular grand foyer.” On either side were long wings containing the regional rooms, two on the left and two on the right. On the extreme ends of the structure, and facing into a broad, raised plaza, were two exhibition rooms—the Hall of 1836 and the Hall of 1936. In front of these rooms and halls was a continuous colonnade allowing exterior covered passage from one end of the building to the other, from which visitors could enjoy a dazzling view of the Esplanade. The key interior space in the building was the

Great Hall of Texas, which was entered by way of a processional sequence that originated at the main entry doors in the center niche and across the semicircular Grand Foyer, which would later become known as the Hall of Heroes. An auditorium was located underneath the Great Hall, on the basement level. In Barthelme’s plan, the Great Hall featured a rounded apse at the far end, with “an heroic symbolic figure of Texas” silhouetted against tall stained glass windows.²³

With Donald Barthelme’s design formally accepted by the State Board of Control, activities in the Texas Centennial Architects’ organization shifted into high gear. They decided to hire additional architects to focus on the detailed design of the various major components of the building. Clarence Winger—36 years old—was brought in from Charlottesville, Virginia, to oversee the Hall of 1836. He was a graduate of the University of Virginia and had worked in New York City for

several notable firms, including McKim, Meade & White. In January 1936, Wenger delivered a public lecture on mural decoration to the Dallas Art Association. George Rustay—31 years old—had an architecture degree from Penn State and was practicing in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania when he received a call from George Dahl. He was the author of an authoritative book on Mexican houses (which would have appealed to Dahl) and had recently been married in Houston. His design assignment was the Hall of 1936. A third architect—Jorge Hernandez—was imported from New York City and was assigned the design of the four regional rooms. Ralph Merrill—29 years old—was a graduate of the University of Illinois and studied at the Chicago Art Institute. He was already a member of the Centennial Architects staff and was placed in charge of the Auditorium. Finally, Donald Barthelme himself retained the choice responsibilities for the exterior of the State Building and the two primary interior spaces: the Hall of Heroes (as it would eventually be called) and the Great Hall of Texas. These five designers would work many late nights during the fall of 1935 under the supervision of Ralph Bryan.²⁴

The Great Hall commanded Barthelme's particular attention. He was concerned that the room should have an appropriate and commanding focal point at its far end, which would also be the symbolic terminus for the entire processional axis of the exposition that originated at the Parry Avenue entry gates, continued along the Esplanade of State and across the Court of Honor, up the stone steps to the center niche of the State Building and its entrance, through the Hall of Heroes and along the final length of the Great Hall. The architect proposed a massive, free-standing stone disc—30 feet in diameter—that would be carved in bas-relief to depict 300 years of Texas history. Barthelme's studies and sketches were admired by the Centennial Architects and the design team and the conversation quickly turned to identifying a prominent artist to execute Barthelme's concept.

The great American sculptor Gutzon Borglum, then at work on Mount Rushmore, was brought to Dallas to meet with Barthelme and discuss the potential commission for the architect's massive stone disc. Over lunch at the Adolphus Hotel, the sculptor told the architect it would take him two years to research the historical content for the work, in order to prepare sketches of the stone carvings—much less execute the design. The two met again the following day in a room at the Baker Hotel, which was across the street from the offices of the Centennial Architects. After a full day and evening of negotiations Barthelme and Borglum failed to come to an agreement on how the sculpture could be completed and installed in time for the exposition. Following this episode, the art commissions—not only in the Great Hall, but within the entire State of Texas Building—were handled and coordinated by Adams & Adams of San Antonio, the Associate Architect for the project. They engaged the New York sculptor Joseph Renier, whose three-dimensional gold star depicting the six nations that governed Texas throughout its history now adorns the main wall of the Great Hall and serves as the room's stunning focal point. After his failed negotiations with Gutzon Borglum, Barthelme was not allowed to have contact with any other of the artists executing work inside the State of Texas Building.²⁵

Throughout the fall of 1935 the Centennial Architects struggled to meet the deadlines for letting and receiving bids that were imposed by John Singleton, Chief of the Centennial Division of the Board of Control. During this time, Barthelme continued to refine the building's exterior. His final design again reflected the influence of his former employer Paul Philippe Cret, whose Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. and, more particularly, his Aisne-Marne Memorial in France—both completed in 1932—demonstrated the dignity, proportions and simple details employed by Barthelme in his final design of the colonnade of the State of Texas Building.



In the Great Hall of Texas, Barthelme placed columns in front of the two giant oil murals by the New York artist Eugene Savage.

Eight Months to Opening Day

The State Building's foundation work was finally advertised for bid on September 15, and, after the award of the contract by the Board, the formal groundbreaking occurred on Saturday, October 12, prior to the football game in the Fair Park stadium between the University of Texas and Oklahoma University—238 days to the exposition's opening day. The final construction drawings, in the collection of the Dallas Historical Society, are dated November 11, 1935. Bids for the building were eventually opened in Austin on December 19, and the Board of Control awarded the construction contract to P. O'B. Montgomery of Dallas on December 28. Unfortunately, to bring the project within the budget, the Halls of

1836 and 1936 were deleted from the contract.²⁶ One hundred sixty-one days remained to the opening day of the Texas Centennial Exposition.

With the omission of the two halls from the bid, not only were Clarence Wenger and George Rustay let go from the Centennial Architects staff, but Jorge Hernandez, who was in charge of the design of the regional rooms, was terminated as well. The burden of completing the design of these four rooms was placed back on Donald Barthelme, who worked on the terrazzo floor patterns, paneling, tile patterns in the West Texas Room, wood carvings on the doors of the East Texas Room and other critical architectural details. In the Great Hall, he "enjoyed putting columns in front of (Eugene Savage's) murals." He

also designed the five pair of bronze doors in the center niche as well as the bas-relief sculpture at the very top of the frieze within the niche, a piece carved by the Dallas sculptor Henry Lee Gibson. Barthelme lamented that this bas-relief detracted from the stunning Tejas Warrior sculpture created by the Dallas artist Allie Tennant, which was situated below it in the niche, above the building's central entry doors.²⁷

As the building began rising slowly from the elevated plateau at the top of the Esplanade, the Centennial publicity staff began sending out captioned construction progress photos to newspapers across Texas and America. On February 4, 1936, the *San Antonio Express* published an aerial photograph of the Esplanade that showed the concrete foundations for the two side wings, with excavation still underway in the center under the Auditorium and Great Hall. On April 9, photos were published in newspapers across the country (including the Wichita, Kansas *Beacon*; the Plymouth, Indiana *Pilot*; the Glasgow, Kentucky *News*; and the Monmouth, New Jersey *Review*) that showed the steel framework for the building more-or-less complete, with limestone on the side wings. The caption read, "Working day and night in three 8-hour shifts, workmen have completed stonework on both wings of the \$1,200,000 Hall of State at the Texas Centennial Exposition, which opens in Dallas June 6. Triple-shift schedule will be maintained for another month, at least, to put the big building far ahead of schedule." But there was no catching up to a schedule that was hopelessly unachievable from the first day of construction. On May 1—only 37 days to the opening—national newspapers published a rendering of the building, including the Halls of 1836 and 1936, which had been deleted from the project six months previous. On June 6, 1936, the opening day of the Texas Centennial Exposition, the exterior of the glorious Hall of State was miraculously complete, and its limestone walls were glowing brilliantly in the warm Texas sun. Centennial visitors hardly noticed that

the plaza in front of the building was a mound of dirt.

Interior artwork, under the direction of Eugene Savage of New York, was executed by a team of muralist painters from around the state. The murals in the West and East Texas rooms located in the building's left wing, and the North and South Texas rooms in the right wing, were completed in late July and August. Allie Tennant's sublime Tejas Indian had been cast at a foundry in New York and shipped to Dallas for installation in the Niche of Heroes during the week of July 25. Pompeo Coppini's bronze sculptures of Austin, Houston, Lamar, Travis, Fannin and Rusk were placed on pedestals in the Hall of Heroes. Savage's two massive oil murals in the Great Hall of Texas, partially concealed behind Barthelme's limestone columns, also received their finishing touches in August.

Completion and Praise

Despite a labor strike by five mechanical trades unions that halted work less than a week before the opening, the Hall of State was finally dedicated on September 5, 1936—three months after the opening of the exposition. Governor Allred proclaimed the day as the "Hall of State Ceremonial Day" and urged all State departments to close so employees could visit the exposition. During his remarks delivered as the principal speaker at the dedication, former Governor Pat Neff made his now legendary proclamation that the Hall of State was "the Westminster Abbey of the New World." *The Dallas Morning News* celebrated the event with an eight-column-wide headline and panoramic photograph of the building. At the bottom of the front page was a small photo of the building's first visitor, Edwin Chamberlain—a 78-year-old San Antonio banker—being escorted through the building by Claude Teer, chairman of the State Board of Control.²⁸

Newspaper accounts lavished effusive praise on the completed structure. An article in the *Morning News*—"Texas Hall of State Lasting Mon-



Two months prior to the opening day of the Texas Centennial Exposition, the structural steel frame for the Hall of State was mostly complete and limestone was being placed on the exterior walls of the two side wings.

ument to Great Empire”—avowed “This superb architectural monument to the past and present greatness of Texas is a source of pride to millions of sons and daughters of the State.”²⁹ On September 20, the *News* published the first of ten articles and a poem on the Hall of State that ran for eleven consecutive days. The articles were entries in a “Hall of State” contest conducted among members of the *News* reporting staff. The first two articles published had tied for first place, and their titles reflected the writers’ reverence and awe for the building: “Majesty of State Hall Makes Visitors Instinctively Remove Their Hats and Lower Voices” and “Massive, Spacious Edifice, Hall of State, Adequately Reflects Texas’ Greatness.” In the contest article published on September 26, writer Aaron Birdwell Griffing proclaimed the Hall of State as a “Showy Texas Shrine” that was the architectural gem of the Centennial. Inside, Griffing noted that the “beauty and glory of the

Parthenon . . . appear to hover over the majestic State hall.” He was also the first writer to notice the names of the State’s “outstanding early builders,” which were carved around the top of the building’s exterior walls.³⁰

Toward the end of Donald Barthelme’s employment with the Texas Centennial Architects, his boss Ralph Bryan looked over his shoulder at the drafting table and said, “Don, it’s a damn shame that your name isn’t on the building.” Bryan was referring to the fact that the building dedication plaques listed only the names of the ten members of the Texas Centennial Architects and Adams & Adams from San Antonio. As an employee of the Centennial Architects, Barthelme could not expect his name to be on the plaque, even though he was the building’s chief designer and had saved the bacon of his employers. Barthelme smugly replied to Bryan, “Well, now, Ralph, don’t worry about that. Just go out and look at the building. . . . I’ve



The Hall of State was finally dedicated and opened to the public on September 6, 1936 – two months after the opening day of the exposition.

got my name on (it) all right.”³¹ Five months earlier, on February 14, 1936, Donald Barthelme had discreetly revised the exterior elevation drawing of the State Building to include the names of the “heroes of Texas” so that the first letter of each name, starting at the front left-hand corner of the frieze that went around the top of the building, almost spelled out Barthelme’s last name: Burluson...Archer...Rusk...Travis...Hogg...E-l-lis...Lamar...Milam...and-Burnet. Unfortunately, there was not another hero whose last name began with an “E,” so Barthelme selected the closest letter—a “B,” to visually approximate the spelling. These were the very names carved into the frieze around the top of the building which were noted by Aaron Griffing in his *News* article on September 26. And this is how Donald Barthelme engraved his name for eternity onto his epic design of the Texas Hall of State. **L**

This article is based, in part, on an oral narrative provided to the Dallas Historical Society by Donald Barthelme in March 1984. Drawings, records, clippings and photographs in the collections of the Dallas Historical Society and the Lorenzo D. Zavala State Library and Archives, and other sources, were also utilized in the preparation of this article.

NOTES

¹Donald Barthelme, Oral history narrative, March 1984, Dallas Historical Society.

²Contract and agreement with the Texas Centennial Architects, Associated, June 20, 1935, Texas State Board of Control, Records, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

³*The Dallas Morning News* (hereafter cited as *DMN*), July 6, 1936.

⁴As a side note, another young architect also working in the Zantinger office on this same project was an immigrant named Louis Kahn, who later in his career would be

acclaimed as one of the greatest architects of the twentieth century.

⁵Barthelme narrative.

⁶Pamela Scott and Antoinette J. Lee, *Buildings of the District of Columbia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 174-5.

⁷Sandra L. Tatman, "Paul Philippe Cret," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project. <http://www.philadelphia-buildings.org> (accessed June 15, 2021).

⁸Willis Winters, "Planning the Centennial," *Texas Architect*, May-June 1999, 54-61.

⁹Roxanne Kuter Williamson, "A History of the Campus and Buildings of the University of Texas with Emphasis on the Sources for the Architectural Styles" (paper, University of Texas at Austin, 1965), 28-32.

¹⁰Winters, "Planning the Centennial," 58-9.

¹¹"Building Plan Adopted by Officials for Centennial," *DMN*, March 3, 1935.

¹²"State Asked for Single, Huge Centennial Structure," *DMN*, May 19, 1935.

¹³"Dominating Hall of State to Reflect Southwestern Art," *DMN*, June 16, 1935.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵"Plan of State Fair Building Shown Board," *DMN*, June 25, 1935.

¹⁶"Architects Offer Different Design For Hall of State,"

DMN, June 30, 1935.

¹⁷The three schemes in the collection of the Dallas Historical Society consist of building elevations, floor plans and/or perspective drawings. Scheme B is missing from the collection.

¹⁸"Architects Junk Prepared Design For Hall of State," *DMN*, July 4, 1935.

¹⁹Barthelme narrative.

²⁰"New Plans Drafted For Hall of State Up to Texas Board," *DMN*, July 8, 1935.

²¹Minutes, State Board of Control, July 9, 1935, Texas State Board of Control, Records. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

²²"Use Texas Stone," *DMN*, July 21, 1935.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Barthelme narrative.

²⁵Barthelme narrative.

²⁶Minutes, State Board of Control, December 28, 1935.

²⁷Barthelme narrative.

²⁸*DMN*, September 6, 1936.

²⁹*DMN*, June 7, 1936.

³⁰"Inspiration to Future Ages Seen in Showy Texas Shrine, Focal Point of Centennial," *DMN*, September 26, 1936.

³¹Barthelme narrative.



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Dallas's Contribution to the Drive-In Theater

BY NANCY MCCOY

*T*he drive-in theater has been the subject of many books and articles, including a book by Don and Susan Sanders titled *The American Drive-In Movie Theatre*, which provides a national overview of the institution but with a little extra attention paid to Dallas, the authors' home town. Dallas, it turns out, was also home to the two men that developed the drive-in theater concept in Texas and influenced the genre nationwide.

Theater in Dallas dates to the late 19th century, when the first legitimate theater building, the Field's Theatre, opened in 1873 on Main Street.¹ Eventually live theater and variety shows known as vaudeville could be found throughout Dallas in purpose-built buildings, within amusement parks, casinos, tents, and open-air spaces. Perhaps the first films in Dallas were seen at the nickelodeon known as the Dixie, which opened in 1905.² As film became more popular, some theaters were converted to "pictures only," while others, such as The Queen Theatre, built in 1913 with 900 seats,

were specifically built for movies. Dallas-based theater businesses such as Karl Hoblitzelle's Interstate Amusement Company, later the Interstate Orpheum-Keith Circuit, built theaters like the Majestic Theater—the first, the second, and the third and current building on Elm Street, constructed in 1921, for both film and vaudeville shows. One year prior to the Majestic, Interstate began to build movie theaters, a genre the company would dominate in Texas for the next thirty years.

The popularity of motion pictures led to Dallas's place as a regional film distribution center for Texas and neighboring states. Film distribution businesses, also known as film exchanges, performed like a lending library for films. Movie theater operators could preview and rent films, taking them back to their theaters to show them, then return to Dallas to exchange them for another film. Starting in the late 1920s, the film exchange industry congregated on the southeastern

May 16, 1933.

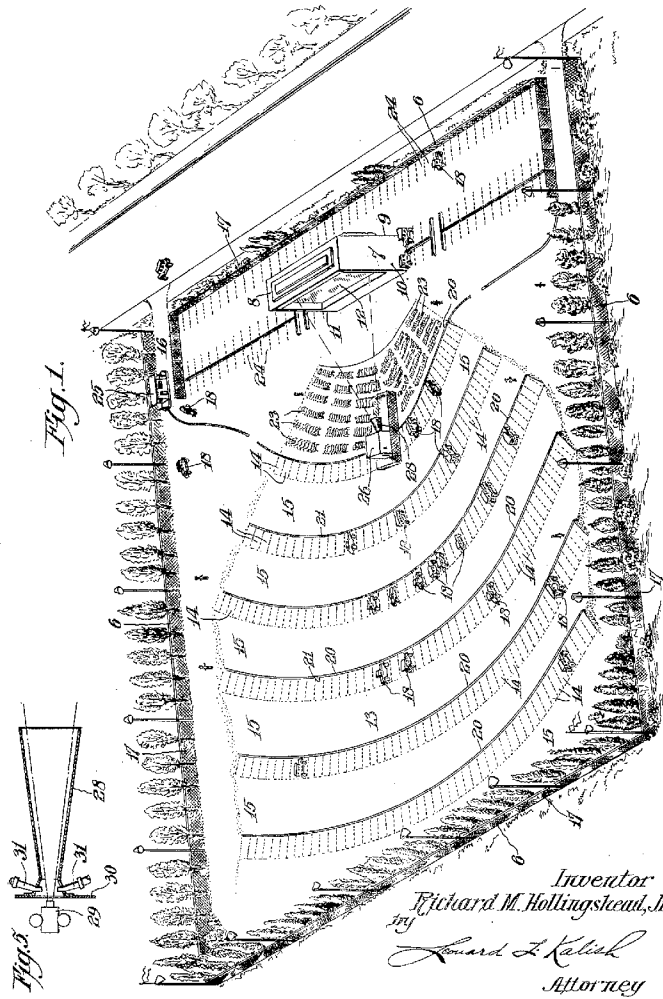
R. M. HOLLINGSHEAD, JR

1,909,537

DRIVE-IN THEATER

Filed Aug. 6, 1932

3 Sheets-Sheet 1



Hollingshead's patent was approved but wasn't defensible once the drive-in theater gained popularity.

edge of downtown. All the major film distribution companies such as Republic Pictures and Paramount Pictures were there, as well as theater development entities like Hoblitzelle and Robb and Rowley Theaters. Also in supply were many theater support businesses selling popcorn machines, seating and the like, and an architect who would become well known for both his movie theaters and his drive-in theaters, Jack Corgan. Likewise, William George Underwood and Claude Clinton Ezell, the two men who would develop the drive-in theater in Texas, started in the movie theater and film distribution business with offices in the center of it all.

W. G. Underwood was born in Chicago in 1876 and came to Dallas in 1917 as a salesman for a custom tailoring firm. He soon invested in several theaters in Dallas, Amarillo, and Fort Worth. In Dallas he owned and operated the Crystal Theatre, one of the first theaters built exclusively for film and considered one of the most elaborately decorated theaters in town, which opened in 1913.³ In addition to his theater holdings and active engagement in the theater community as a co-founder of the Variety Club, Underwood held positions with several film production and distribution entities. During this period, theater operators were at the mercy of the film production and distribution companies who would only give their first-run movies to their affiliated movie theaters. Until a lawsuit settled an anti-trust claim, theater owners held close relationships with the film industry. For Underwood, that included positions or holdings with Hoblitzelle's Interstate Circuit, Liberty Films, Specialty Films, Republic Films, Robb & Rowley Theaters Inc., and others.

C. C. Ezell came to the theater industry from a completely different background, having been born in the small town of Mexia, Texas, in 1882. As a young man, Ezell joined the Wallace Brothers Circus, where he became a trapeze artist. He started showing motion pictures on his own and eventually moved to New Orleans where he opened the Bass Film Company, a firm that purchased films outright and then rented them

to theaters, a precursor of film exchanges. After working for Warner Brothers in New York, Ezell moved to Dallas to join Underwood and the Republic Theater Corporation in 1935. Soon after, the two men started their drive-in collaboration under the name of "Underwood and Ezell," also known as U&E, and they purchased the franchise for the "Drive-in Theatre" in Texas.

The franchise was purchased from "Park-in Theatres Inc.," a company established by Richard M. Hollingshead, Jr. Hollingshead's idea was to enable people who might not otherwise go to the movies to do so in the privacy and convenience of their own cars, without the need for dressing up, getting a baby sitter, or finding a parking space. By placing cars in rows and on an incline, called "ramps," he devised a way for hundreds of cars to have visibility to one large screen. The sound system initially consisted of a single loud speaker, manufactured by the RCA Victor Company, which was described as being able to direct sound to each car.

Hollingshead opened the world's first Park-in Theatre on June 6, 1933, near Camden, New Jersey. A week later, he realized a missed opportunity and opened a concession that sold beer and other items. Hollingshead received a patent for his idea on June 1, 1933, just days before the opening. He then began selling franchises nationwide. Unfortunately for the inventor, the patent was often ignored, leading Hollingshead to enter into multiple lawsuits to defend it. After ten years of litigation, including an appeal to the United States Supreme Court that was not heard, the concept of ramping the earth was determined by the courts to be non-patentable. But not before Hollingshead sold a franchise to Underwood and Ezell.

Before the two men started to build under the franchise, three other drive-in theaters had already been built in Texas, two under the franchise from Park-in Theatres Inc. The first drive-in theater in Texas and the third nationally was created by an architect in Houston, Louis Peter Josserand, who obtained his own patent the same year Hol-

lingshead did. A Columbia University and Texas A&M University graduate, Josseland designed and built his theater facing the bay in Galveston in 1934. With similarities to Hollingshead's Park-in, this model theater was built for short reel film, not as a feature film venue. The location on the beach meant that patrons, usually children, could swim out and behind the screen and then walk right in without paying. But there was a bigger problem with the beach front location—the theater washed away in a hurricane only twenty days after it was completed.

The state's next theater, considered to be the sixteenth in the world, was built in 1939 in Corpus Christi using the Park-in Theatre franchise. Another theater was built in El Paso, also in 1939, for a total of two Park-in Theatre franchises in Texas, in the same year Underwood and Ezell purchased the franchise to cover the entire state. As soon as they purchased the franchise, Underwood and Ezell started defending it. In April 1940, the men placed a recurring ad in the *Corpus Christi Caller Times* with the headline "WARNING" and the following statement: "Sale of Franchises for erection and opening in Texas of Drive-In Theatres under patent no. 1909537 was established and the franchise to build drive-in theaters in Texas was obtained from Hollingshead. This is to advise that W.G. Underwood and Claude C. Ezell are the exclusive holder in Texas, with the exception of El Paso and Corpus Christi. For Park-In Theatres Inc."⁶

On the home front, the two men both built new houses in an emerging neighborhood known as Preston Hollow, outside of the city limits. They purchased adjoining lots at the corner of Meadowbrook Drive and Park Lane and hired an architect who had just won a competition to design a model home for the neighborhood, Charles Stevens Dilbeck. Dilbeck would go on to build many other houses, often in the Texas Ranch Style he claimed to have invented, and would earn his reputation as one of the city's most prolific, romantic, and sought-after residential architects. Underwood's house was complet-

ed in late 1939 or early 1940, followed by Ezell's house about a year later, and both homes survive today.

While their houses were under construction, Underwood and Ezell began building their first drive-in theaters, but not in their home town—yet. Perhaps to use other cities as a testing ground, U&E built theaters in Houston and San Antonio instead. U&E opened its first theater in Houston, on July 7, 1940. Simply named the Drive-in Theatre, it served 400 cars. The name later changed to the South Main Drive-in; apparently the men were not expecting to build more than one theater in any given city. Their second theater opened on October 23 of the same year in San Antonio, again called simply the "Drive-in Theatre." Located on the outskirts of town, along Fredericksburg Road, the name later changed to the Fredericksburg Road Drive-in Theatre. The design of this early drive-in is stark, with a simple painted wall adorned by a single star and neon lights arranged in a pattern down the sides of the two towers that support the screen. The construction is of concrete, poured in lifts, which architect Jack Corgan described as a method he chose to employ in the early drive-ins because contractors were afraid to bid on this new building type. He chose this method of building because it was familiar to contractors in rural areas. As Corgan explained, "We built a lot of towers the same way as grain elevators using the slip form method. We would pour concrete into a slip that was about six feet in height. And then we would add another on top of that. That's how it went from the ground up." It has not been documented that Corgan designed these early theaters for U&E, but it is likely that he did. Corgan worked with Dilbeck briefly before starting his own office in 1938, the same year he received his license to practice. He quickly became known for his theater design work and by the time he retired in 1980 would have seventy-five drive-ins to his credit in addition to having established his namesake firm, Corgan, now a leading international architectural firm.

The following year, 1941, the men launched



When Dallas's first drive-in, the N. W. Hi-Way Drive-In, opened in 1940, it was outside the city limits. But by the date of this aerial photo in 1955, development surrounded it. Northwest Highway is at the bottom of the image, with Hillcrest Road at the right.

two more drive-in theaters, this time in Dallas. As with their other locations, they chose sites just on the edge of town where they would be less likely to cause a traffic jam while customers lined up at the entrance and waited to pay. In Jack Corgan's words: "Ideally, a piece of property for a drive-in was fifteen acres or more shaped like a rectangle. Our goal was to have enough space for thirty to forty cars without backing up the traffic on the main road or having an at-fault driver causing damages." Another reason to choose land outside of town was to purchase it at a lower cost, given the large parcel required to park hundreds of cars. The somewhat remote location also helped avoid an inherent problem with drive-in theaters—the problem of the sound, which could become a nuisance to nearby residents.

Dallas's first drive-in was located at the intersection of Hillcrest and Northwest Highway, just three miles from their homes. Cleverly named the N.W. Hi-Way Drive-in Theatre, it opened

on June 20, 1941. Both men were there to greet their new customers at the opening, which nearly filled the 450-car theater. With less tact than we are accustomed to today, Underwood is quoted in *The Dallas Morning News*, describing the new theater's benefits as follows: "80 percent of people who attend drive-in theaters are non-theater goers. These include people with children and no one to leave them with, semi-invalids, cripples and corpulent individuals who find it embarrassing to attend the regulation theaters. At the drive-in there is no necessity to get out of the car, an attendant meets you at the gate, takes your money and buys your tickets, while another wipes your windshields. A third pilots the car to a space on one of the ramps."¹¹

Two weeks later, the Chalk Hill Drive-in Theatre on the Fort Worth Turnpike, now Fort Worth Avenue, near Cockrell Hill Road opened on July 4, 1941. Fourteen days after that, the Bowie Boulevard Drive-in Theatre in Fort Worth



The Bowie Boulevard Drive-in was the first in Fort Worth. Like the N.W. Hi-Way Drive-in in Dallas, it was built of poured-in-place concrete with minimal decoration. Note the “Lights Out” sign at the right—it was too dark to drive in the theater unattended. The decoration was enhanced at night with neon light.

opened, later renamed the Boulevard Drive-in. At the Bowie Boulevard Drive-in, the ticket booth allowed two cars to enter at one time. Here you paid thirty cents for adults, ten cents for children, and “no charge for cars,” as advertised in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* on opening day. For this, patrons got an Abbott and Costello feature, Walt Disney cartoons, and Universal News, plus a windshield washing. The sign calling for “lights out” explains why an attendant would need to pilot your car to a space on a ramp.

These early theaters were not without kinks that would need to be worked out. One of the problems that plagued drive-in operators was the inability to get first or even second-run movies from the film studios that tended to see the drive-in as a second-rate venue. Drive-in operators also contended with cold weather and lack of heating, and short exhibit periods in the summer when the second feature did not start until 10 P.M. The heat in the summer was also a dilemma, requiring car windows to be open, which in turn meant mosquitoes. To keep the insects at bay, theater operators would regularly fog with DDT—at least until that chemical was banned thirty years later.¹³ Setting aside the small matter of poisoning customers with a carcinogen, sound was the number one problem of the early drive-in theater. The original method of a single speaker serving the entire audience was soon understood to be problematic for neighbors. That system was abandoned in favor of several smaller speakers that could be distributed around the site for more even coverage at a lower volume, but that system still did not contain the sound. Thus was born the not-so-ingenuous “in-ground” sound system, which was marketed as “sound in the ground” and was invented by Hollingshead. This system, utilized by U&E in its later theaters, involved placing the speakers in the ground, covered by metal gratings. Two cars shared one speaker. This was an improvement over a single or multiple speakers, but still not a good solution. Car windows had to be left open to hear the sound. Later, each car had its own in-ground speaker but the sound had

to come up through the floor boards. While an improvement, the sound was still audible outside the confines of the theater’s enclosing walls.

In the early 1940s, RCA began perfecting a speaker that could be brought into each car through a crack in the window, but it would take another five years for this to become readily available. U&E began installing them as early as March 1945, before the end of the war. All theaters built in and after 1946 would utilize this speaker system until the 1970s, when the car radio offered an even better alternative. Unfortunately for Underwood and Ezell, the solution to the sound problem came just a little too late for them to avoid the wrath of fifteen angry Preston Hollow neighbors, who in 1944 sued U&E for “an intrusion on the plaintiff’s rights of quiet and peaceful enjoyment of their property.”

The last of the pre-war U&E theaters were the Austin Drive-in and the Rio Grande Valley Drive-in in Alamo for a total of seven theaters. With the Corpus Christi theater, Texas had eight drive-in theaters as the United States entered into World War II. The fate of the reported El Paso theater is unknown. According to Kerry Segrave, the most reliable statistic as to the number of drive-ins in the United States in 1942 is ninety-five theaters spread over twenty-seven states, with Ohio hosting the largest number with eleven drive-ins. By the end of the war in 1945, there was one more for a total of ninety-six. In 1946 that figure rose by six theaters to 102 and in 1947 there were 155. About a decade later, by 1958, the number of drive-ins peaked at 4,063.¹⁵

After the war, U&E began modernizing their theaters with the new speaker system and the latest screen technology. They also made some changes to the design of the structures. While their earliest theaters were likely designed by architect Jack Corgan, the post-war drive-ins were definitely Corgan’s designs.¹⁶ An example of a post-war theater designed by Corgan is the Pike Drive-in Theatre, in Fort Worth, built in 1947. The fan-shaped plan and use of ramps had not changed much but the back side of the screen,



W. G. Underwood, of the firm Underwood and Ezell that built most of the early drive-in movie theaters in Texas, points to the buried loudspeaker designed to carry sound right to cars' running boards at the new Bowie Boulevard Drive-In Theatre in 1941. Providing good sound quality was a challenge in the early drive-ins.

which acted as a simple sign in the early designs, now had more architectural detail and incorporated one giant picture frame for a mural. The use of murals within the picture frame was an innovation typically found at U&E theaters. The mural subject matter tended to reflect the type of movies U&E had access to initially but later evolved to reflect the community they served. At the Pike, an “animated mural” featured a Western theme with a camp fire. Here, flashing neon of various colors would give the illusion of movement, making the fire appear as though it were flaming.

Although U&E managed to protect their franchise investment initially, after the war, U&E was no longer the sole drive-in theater developer in Texas. Jack Corgan would design many of these drive-ins, incorporating openings into the concrete walls as found at the Pike and Circle Drive-in theaters and eventually using open web steel framing for the towers and sheet metal for the screen wall material, which resulted in a lighter and more economical solution.

Along with changes in the design of the the-

aters came new amenities meant to attract patrons during a time of increasing competition. The concession was always an important component, as Hollingshead had learned on day two of operating his first Park-in Theatre. Side-car service became standard at a time when drive-in restaurants were also popular, and indoor service was also available at some theaters. U&E may have introduced the idea of a playground on the drive-in grounds as early as 1944, a concept that caught on nationally and was commonly found in drive-ins across the United States after the war.¹⁷ Other amenities included in-car heaters and bottle warmers to help mothers with all of those post-war babies! With increasing competition from other drive-in developers, U&E continued to evolve the genre by introducing not only more amenities but by expanding the purpose of the theater. Ezell's background in the circus would come into play after W. G. Underwood died in 1948 and Ezell continued in the business as Claude Ezell & Associates. He sold and then re-purchased a number of drive-ins and indoor theaters, including thirty drive-ins in 1958.¹⁸ Ezell came to see the drive-



The Pike Theater, which opened in 1947, is an example of the post-war era theater featuring murals that were “animated” by neon light.

in as more than a way to see a movie. He wanted to appeal to families day and night where parents could entertain their children, feed them, and then let them sleep in the back of the car while the adults enjoyed a movie. He referred to the drive-in as a babysitter. Advertising in 1949 for U&E’s Buckner and Charro theaters refers to an “entertainment wonderland.” Ezell would eventually return to his circus background with the inclusion of circus animals and a clown’s face as the replacement for the earlier animated murals. The Buckner Boulevard and Chalk Hill drive-ins even offered a cage full of monkeys, billed as “Monkey Village” in 1949. If the monkeys were not novel enough, other attractions found in Dallas drive-in theaters included washaterias (apparently a “wash-while you watch” concept), dance floors, train rides, and even swimming pools and mini-golf courses.¹⁹ The 1950s brought larger drive-ins with more attractions. The Cow Town Drive-in on Jacksboro Highway in Fort Worth, for example, served 950 cars. The Cinderella Drive-

in on S. Lamar in Dallas offered helicopter rides when it opened in 1954 at a cost of \$3.50 for a five-minute ride. These more extreme offerings were evidence of the competition among theaters which reached their highest numbers in 1958.

In the early 1960s Texas had more drive-in theaters than any other state in the nation, with 475 theaters; forty-three of those were located in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. But increasingly the drive-in had a hard time competing with indoor theaters, including the multi-plex that could offer many more showings, better movies, and air-conditioning. Even as the drive-in developed a multi-plex model, other factors such as high gas prices and the VCR in the 1970s caused people to watch movies at home. However, the biggest problem for the survival of the drive-in was not the competition but the value of land. Once the land on which the drive-in sat became surrounded by new suburban development, the higher land value would lead to its sale for more lucrative purposes, such as shopping centers. Such



During Ezell’s ownership in the late 1950s, many of the U&E theaters like the Buckner Blvd. Drive-in received updated murals with a circus theme. This clown’s face was ironically the last mural for many of the theaters as they deteriorated or were sold for land value.

was the fate of the N.W. Hi-Way Drive-in, which sold in 1965 with less than thirteen acres of land for \$1.5 million. By 1979, there were 268 drive-ins.²⁰ By the 1980s, “the end” was in sight. **L**

NOTES

¹Troy D. Sherrod, *Historic Dallas Theatres* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 10.

²Harry Rucker, “Film Row from Vaudeville to the VCR,” *Legacies: a History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 22.

³The Crystal Theatre’s interior was demolished after the theater closed in 1928. McCrory’s Department Stores bought out its lease and operated there, eventually being replaced by a W. T. Grant’s store. On September 21, 2014, this building and two others were demolished on a Sunday afternoon during a football game, to the surprise and dismay of Dallas’ historic preservation community. That demolition led to the city’s demolition delay ordinance.

⁴Kerry Segrave, *Drive-in Theaters: A History from Their Inception in 1933* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1992) 1.

⁵Ibid, 17.

⁶Notice, *The Corpus Christi Caller Times*, April 25, 1940, 19.

⁷Nancy McCoy, City of Dallas Designation Report for W. G. Underwood Residence, 2014.

⁸<https://corgan.com/story/drive-theater-design>, accessed May 23, 2021.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹“Northwest Highway Drive-In to Open Tuesday Rain or Stars,” *The Dallas Morning News* (hereafter cited as *DMN*), June 14, 1941.

¹²Bowie Boulevard Drive-In Theatre Opens,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, November 27, 1943.

¹³Don and Susan Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie Theatre* (New York: Crestline, 2013), 42; Don and Susan Sanders, “Starlit Skies and Memories,” *Legacies: a History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas*, Vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 50–54.

¹⁴“Drive-In Theater Sued by Residents of Preston Hollow,” *DMN*, September 7, 1944.

¹⁵Segrave, *Drive-in Theaters*, 202.

¹⁶The documentation of Jack Corgan’s work is incomplete; the architectural firm provided a limited list of drive-ins and a limited selection of images. The statement that Jack Corgan definitively designed many of the post-war U&E theaters comes from looking at the Corgan-provided images and comparing them to U&E theaters across the state of Texas and noting distinct similarities or exact copies in the designs. It is very likely that Corgan designed all of the U&E theaters, but this statement cannot be confirmed.

¹⁷Segrave, *Drive-in Theaters*, 43.

¹⁸“Ezell Buys 30 Drive-ins,” *DMN*, June 27, 1958.

¹⁹“Claude Ezelle and Associates,” *DMN*, August 4, 1952.

²⁰Segrave, *Drive-in Theaters*, 178.

Gordon McLendon Doubles Down

BY FRANK JACKSON

Gordon McLendon's main claim to fame was radio. A member of the Class of 1942 at Yale, he had dropped out of Harvard Law School when the opportunity arose to buy a Palestine radio station (KNET—still broadcasting today under those call letters). Eventually, McLendon's Liberty Broadcasting System peaked at 458 radio stations (KLIF in Dallas was one of the most prominent), comprising the second largest network in the country. His innovations involving baseball broadcasting, Top 40 radio, traffic reports, editorials, easy-listening format, jingles, and mobile broadcasts, among other endeavors, resulted in his posthumous induction into the Radio Hall of Fame in 1994. But McLendon was not just a one-medium magnate.

McLendon owned forty-two movie theaters in Texas and the Southeast, including a number of movie theaters in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Most were drive-ins. In Dallas County, he owned the Apollo Twin in Garland, the Astro in Oak Cliff, The King and Buckner Boulevard in East Dallas, the Century 5, the Downs, and the East Main in Grand Prairie. Having seen the types of movies audiences favored at his drive-ins, he apparently figured he could produce movies that would be a good fit for his theaters. At the same time he was engaging in land speculation. Drive-in theaters were located on a city's outskirts, where land was relatively cheap. In a growing city like Dallas, however, it was just a matter of time before the growth reached those outskirts, resulting in a big uptick in the value of his properties.

In the pre-TV era, many people went to the movies regularly no matter what was playing. That was no longer the case. By the late 50s, TV's penetration was nationwide, and movies theaters had to offer product that wasn't available on the tube.



Local radio broadcaster Gordon McLendon produced two classic horror films in 1959, targeted to the teenage audience that patronized drive-in movie theaters, a number of which he owned.

One approach was the big-budget extravaganza on a wide screen, whether Cinerama, VistaVision, or Cinemascope.

A movie that found favor with the public might have an extended stay at a hardtop (no multiplexes in those days), thus tying up a screen

for months at a time, whether in its downtown first-run, or a secondary run at the “nabes” or neighborhood theaters.

The B movie was another story. Some theaters, known as grindhouses, specialized in them, but most ended up at drive-in theaters. Since

teens congregated at drive-in theaters, most B movies were marketed toward them. McLendon realized he could churn out low-budget movies for this audience with relatively little risk. Booking was assured at his drive-ins, and if a distributor wanted to pick up the movie and market it elsewhere, so much the better.

Typically, B movies had shorter running times than A movies. They were almost always shown as double features. So in 1959, McLendon jumped in with both feet and produced two movies, which would be exhibited on the same bill.

McLendon began production with a budget of \$138,000 for *The Giant Gila Monster* and \$123,000 for *The Killer Shrews*. He signed Ray Kellogg (not to be confused with a character actor of the same name) to direct both features (he also wrote the original story for *The Giant Gila Monster*) around Lake Dallas (now known as Lake Lewisville). Much of the footage was shot at McLendon's Cielo ranch nearby. For the most part, the same personnel were used in the key roles behind the camera (e.g., Jay Simms as screenwriter, Wilfred Cline as cinematographer, and Aaron Stell as editor), but no actors were called on for double duty.

One of the prevalent trends of B movies in the 50s was gigantism. Horror and science fiction movie scriptwriters gave their monsters a healthy dose of growth hormone. The first, and arguably the best, such movie, was *Them!* a 1954 feature about giant ants in Los Angeles.

Well, you didn't have to be an entomologist to be aware of all the other insects out there just waiting to be giant-sized. No stone was left unturned by B movie producers in search of insect species. They included *The Deadly Mantis* terrorizing Washington and New York in 1957. The same year saw giant grasshoppers attacking Chicago in *Beginning of the End*. Giant wasps followed in *Monster From Green Hell* in 1958. Giant arachnids had their day in *Tarantula* (1956), *The Black Scorpion* (1957), and *Earth vs. the Spider* (1958). *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) fea-

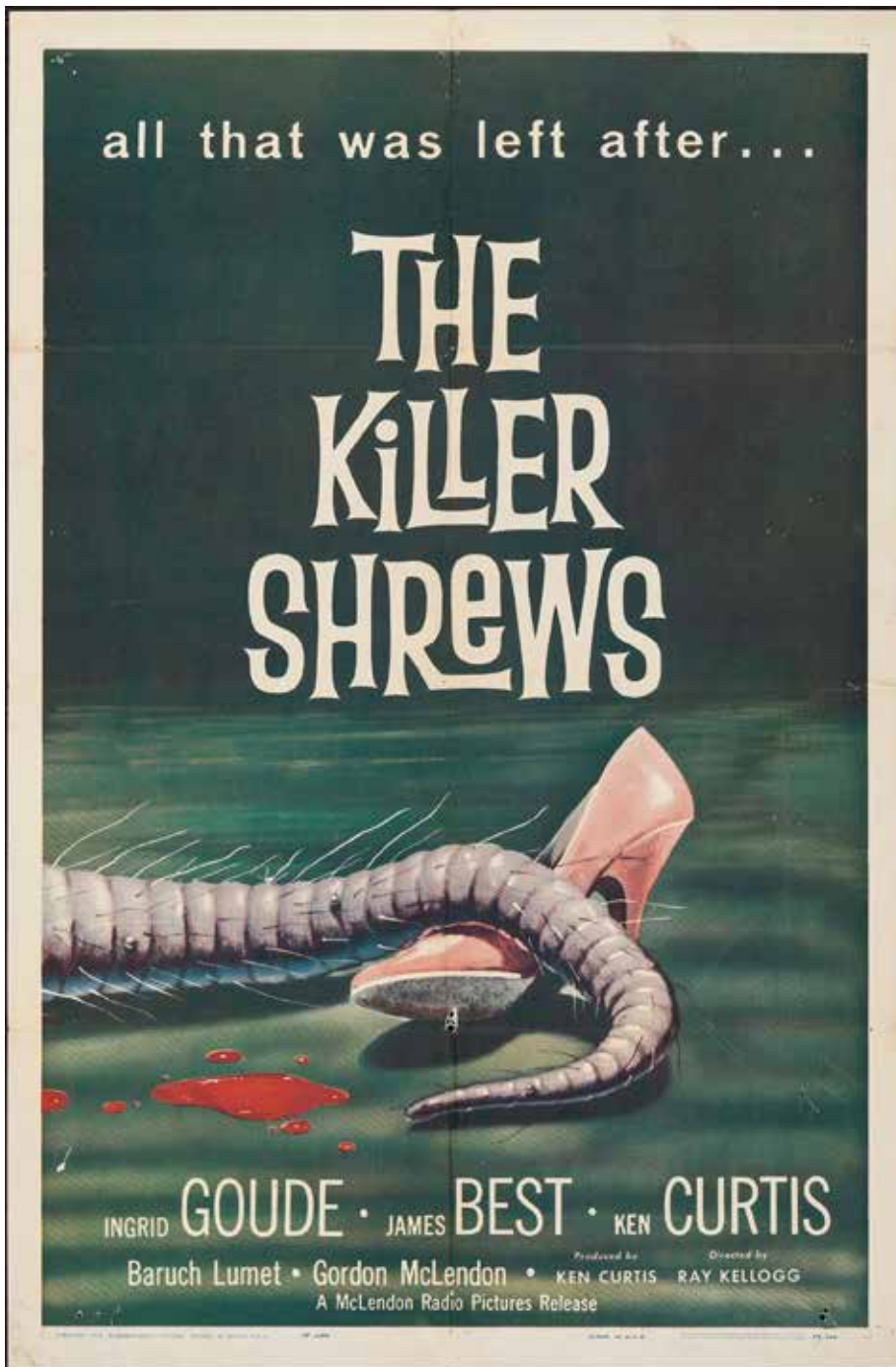
tured a normal-size spider that appeared gigantic to the diminutive protagonist. *Beginning of the End* and *Earth vs. the Spider* were both the work of Bert I. Gordon, whose initials and regular forays into gigantism earned him the nickname of Mr. B.I.G.

Along the way, we also had a giant octopus (*It Came From Beneath the Sea*, 1955), crabs (*The Attack of the Crab Monsters*, 1957), leeches (*Attack of the Giant Leeches*, 1959), and even human beings (*Cyclops*, 1957) and *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957) and its sequel, *War of the Colossal Beast* (1958). All three were the handiwork of Mr. B.I.G. And for good measure, we also had *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman* (1958). Not that the cause of all this gigantism was that important for the narratives, but in the atomic age, mutation via nuclear radiation was the usual suspect.

When Gordon McLendon became a producer, there were still plenty of species out there just waiting to be augmented. So what species to pick without busting the budget? Well, how about the shrew, a tiny nocturnal mammal? And so was born a litter of *The Killer Shrews*, though the provenance of the species was in dispute. The film's opening narration (by Gordon McLendon) informs us that "first in Alaska and then invading steadily southward, there were reports of a new species, the giant killer shrews." Yet the film shows us that the giant shrews were the result of a genetic experiment gone wrong on a remote island in the Gulf of Mexico. Not that it matters.

Thanks to more narration by McLendon, we learn that the shrew "must eat his own body weight every few hours, or starve. And the shrew devours everything; bones, flesh, marrow – everything." Given the enhanced size of the creatures, humans are not at the top of the food chain on the island.

So shrews were the species of choice for gigantism, but how to do the special effects as cheaply as possible? Trick photography is, well, tricky and often expensive. On the other hand, so is building an army of giant mobile shrews. The solution was to disguise coonhounds with coats



The Killer Shrews featured Ken Curtis and James Best, both of whom later enjoyed success in television series. Years later, it was nominated for a Golden Turkey Award in the Worst Rodent Movie of All Time category.

of shag carpeting. Saber-toothed puppets were used for close-ups of the shrews' heads. The result was a serious handicap in audience suspension of disbelief. According to authors Harry and Michael Medved in *The Golden Turkey Awards*, "the result is definitely flea-bitten."

Somehow the actors managed to keep a straight face. The cast included one familiar face and one who would become familiar in subsequent years. Ken Curtis (also a co-producer) was a character actor in numerous westerns (he was John Ford's son-in-law) and a former lead singer in the Sons of the Pioneers. He is best remembered for the role of Festus, Marshal Matt Dillon's sidekick through 11 seasons and 304 episodes of the TV series *Gunsmoke*.

As for James Best, his best days were ahead of him. During the 1950s he compiled a lengthy list of credits, mostly supporting roles in westerns, both in movies and TV (eventually he appeared in more than 600 television shows and 83 feature films). Like Ken Curtis, he discovered his signature role in a television series. As Sheriff Rosco P. Coltrane, he appeared in *The Dukes of Hazzard* from 1979 to 1985. Best died at age 88 in 2015, but he lives on in cyberspace. In fact, his estate is still earning money, as plenty of Best-related merchandise is available at jamesbest.com.

Whether as a vanity project or a cost-cutting measure, Gordon McLendon cast himself as a scientist in the movie. To his credit, he acquitted himself well in an admittedly minor role (spoiler alert: he dies halfway through the movie).

The female lead (in fact, the only woman in the movie) was Ingrid Goude, Miss Sweden of 1956. Beauty queens breaking into the movies via small parts or B movies has been something of a Hollywood tradition, as the participants are eager to start their acting careers, are willing to work cheap to get a credit or two, and bring some PR pizzazz to the production.

The great casting mystery is how did Baruch Lumet, a renowned actor in Yiddish Theater in New York, get into this B movie as the head scientist?

If you haven't heard of Baruch Lumet, you may be familiar with his son, Sidney Lumet, who enjoyed a fifty-year career as a film director, starting in 1957 with *12 Angry Men*, continuing through *The Pawnbroker*, *Serpico*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Network*, and many others, culminating in 2007 with *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*.

In his day, Baruch Lumet was as eminent in his field as his son was in American cinema. Born in Warsaw on September 16, 1898, he immigrated to the United States in 1922. So what brought him to Dallas? From 1953 to 1960, Baruch Lumet was the director of the Dallas Institute of Performing Arts and the Knox Street Theater. He owned the theater and lived in East Dallas at 4616 Cole. Also, he was a friend of Gordon McLendon.

Among Lumet's students was Jayne Mansfield (a/k/a Vera Jayne Peers), who graduated from Highland Park High School in 1950 and performed in *Death of a Salesman* at the Knox Street Theater in October of 1953. Lumet set up Mansfield's first screen test at Paramount in April 1954, when she did a scene as Joan of Arc.

Lumet's other students included Tobe Hooper, who went down in history as director of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, among other horror films. Another was Elmore (Rip) Torn, who amassed a long list of stage, screen, and TV credits dating from 1956.

Before serving as a venue for live drama, the Knox Street Theater (now a Pottery Barn) was a 571-seat movie theater at 3212 Knox Street (Knox and Cole). Originally known as the Ronile, the theater opened in 1922 with a silent version of *Tarzan the Ape Man*.

Baruch Lumet's film appearances were few, but he did appear in two of his son's films (*The Pawnbroker* and *The Group*) and had one notorious turn as an aged rabbi with a very strange fetish in Woody Allen's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask* in 1972.

While overgrown shrews were something new on the screen, the same could not be said of oversized reptiles. In fact, giant reptile movies were almost a separate genre. *The Beast From*



Like *The Killer Shrews*, *The Giant Gila Monster* went on to enjoy a certain cult status, eventually becoming available in various tape and digital formats.

20,000 Fathoms was released in 1953, followed by *The Giant Behemoth* in 1954. Both were essentially resurrected dinosaurs. That same year Japan produced the original *Godzilla*. In 1956 they came up with *Rodan*, a giant pterodactyl. But the gila monster was an untapped resource. The fact that the word “monster” was included in the name of the creature was perhaps the deal clincher. The very name “gila monster” was made for drive-in movie marquees. In the film, however, the gila monster was actually portrayed by a Mexican beaded lizard, admittedly a close relative of the gila monster.

Like *The Killer Shrews*, the film begins with a narrator (McLendon again) informing us that “It is in these lonely areas of the dark impenetrable forest [and you thought gila monsters were desert creatures] and dark shadows that the gila monster still lives. How large the dreaded gila monster grows, no man can say.” Later in the film there is a halfhearted attempt to explain the lizard’s gigantism. It has to do with a change of diet affecting the pituitary gland. There are even reports of giant creatures in Russia and Tanganyika.

The plot concerns said monster menacing a small town where teenagers are the main characters and hot rods are the vehicles of choice. Surely McLendon was aware that drive-in screens had been graced with *Hot Rod Girl* (1956), *Hot Rod Rumble* (1957), and *Hot Rod Gang* (1958), and someone needed to carry on the tradition in 1959, though a title like *Hot Rods vs. the Giant Gila Monster* might have been a bridge too far. The hot rod hero, Chase Winstead, however, was hardly a delinquent, as he hustled jobs to support his widowed mother and crippled sister. When the gila monster attacks a teen dance (a “platter party”) taking place at a barn, it meets its demise. Chase sacrifices his hot rod by loading it with four quarts of nitroglycerin and sending it speeding into the monster.

The special effects essentially consist of the Mexican beaded lizard wreaking havoc on miniatures (e.g., a toy train and cars). Consequently, the scenes have a sort of home movie charm to them.

Unlike *The Killer Shrews*, the *Giant Gila Monster* had a lackluster cast. Some moviegoers might have recognized the town drunk, played by Shug Fisher, yet another former member of the Sons of the Pioneers. The sheriff was played by Fred Graham, who had done bit parts and stunt work in numerous films throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Desmond Dhooge, who played a hitchhiker, had parts in other local low-budget films and even got a small part in an A movie, *Paper Moon*, in 1973. McLendon’s first wife, Gay, played the mother of one of the teenage girls. As in *The Killer Shrews*, a European beauty queen was employed. Lisa Simone, a former Miss France, played one of the teenagers. Ken Knox, a KLIF DJ, portrayed Steamroller Smith, a DJ from station KILT. The call letters, a nod to McLendon’s nickname of the Old Scotchman, were also the call letters of his Houston station.

While a number of B movies have gone down the memory hole, some have achieved cult status and a form of immortality on YouTube and DVDs. *The Killer Shrews* and *The Giant Gila Monster* are among them. The two movies were the first directorial efforts for Kellogg, who had been the resident special effects wizard for 20th Century Fox throughout the 1950s. Ironically, the cheesy special effects of his two movies for McLendon are the most salient features of the films. Kellogg also served as a cameraman during World War II and shot a lot of the documentary footage of the Nuremberg trials.

Ironically, given the low budget of *The Giant Gila Monster* and its intended drive-in audience, the film had its Dallas premiere at the Majestic Theater on June 25, 1959. At the time, the Majestic was the flagship theater of the Interstate Circuit, which also included the Inwood, the Esquire, the Forest, the Lakewood, and the Circle in Dallas, as well as the Campus in Denton.

The double feature did so well at McLendon’s drive-ins it was picked up for national distribution. The box office take, though lucrative, was relatively short-lived. Culturally, however, the films have passed the test of time. Both films re-

ceived the ultimate tribute: a roasting on Mystery Science Theater 3000. In the Golden Turkey awards, *The Killer Shrews* was nominated in the category of Worst Rodent Movie of All Time (it lost to *Food of the Gods*, a 1976 Mr. B.I.G. adaptation of an H.G. Wells tale). Another tribute, so to speak, was the belated sequel, *Return of the Killer Shrews*, with James Best reprising his original role, in 2012. That 53-year gap between original and sequel just might be a cinematic record.

The Killer Shrews and *The Giant Gila Monster* were the alpha and omega of McLendon's foray into the world of low-budget horror/science fiction, but they were not his last movies. In 1960 he produced a third low-budget movie, *My Dog Buddy*, also with Ken Curtis and directed by Ray Kellogg. The canine was of normal size and was not bedizened in carpet remnants. Kellogg, by the

way, went on to direct *The Green Berets* with John Wayne in 1968.

Curiously, McLendon's fourth and final venture into producing was *Victory*, a 1981 soccer film directed by John Huston, and starring Sylvester Stallone, Michael Caine, Max von Sydow, and soccer star Pele. With a budget of \$10 million, this was the outlier in the McLendon canon.

If McLendon had never produced a movie, his legacy would be secure. Still, it is interesting to note that while his radio network is no more and his sonorous voice has been stilled, movie buffs today can still watch *The Killer Shrews* and *The Giant Gila Monster*. Generations yet unborn will also be able to see these classics of drive-in cinema in one medium or another. **L**

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What's in a Name?

BY CANDACE FOUNTOULAKIS

*B*arksdale Elementary School on Midway Road in western Plano opened in 1996 as part of the Plano Independent School District. According to the school's website at pisd.com, it was named after a one-room school built in the White Rock Creek area in 1860. The school's history synopsis states that "even longtime Plano residents cannot remember the original source of the name." This intriguing mystery set me on a mission to try and identify the person behind the Barksdale name.

The original school moved several times before closing in 1940, as confirmed by multiple sources.¹ When the old school closed, alumnus Clifton Haggard bought the structure and moved it again, while preserving its architectural elements. The one-room school is also described in a publication of selections from the George Pearis Brown² papers as well as a scrapbook put together in 1986 by the Retired Teachers Association. The scrapbook was a project undertaken during the celebration all across Texas for the state's

Sesquicentennial and is a collection of personal correspondence and descriptions of what were called the Common Schools of Collin County. It includes selections from noted historian George P. Brown, and newspaper columns from McKinney historians Helen Gibbard Hall and Capt. Roy Hall.³ The scrapbook was used by Heather Brown in her research for *The One Room School in Collin County* and is held in the collection of the Collin County History Museum in McKinney, Texas. I also made a trip to the museum to go through the scrapbook in person.

Researching other books about Collin and Denton County history led me to the most likely candidate as the source of the school's name, Ralph H. Barksdale (1782-1860). An early agent employed by the Peters Colony in the 1840s, Barksdale came to Texas at the direction of William S. Peters, founder of the Texan Emigration and Land Company out of Louisville, Kentucky. Peters Colony eventually included more than a dozen counties in North Texas, including Collin



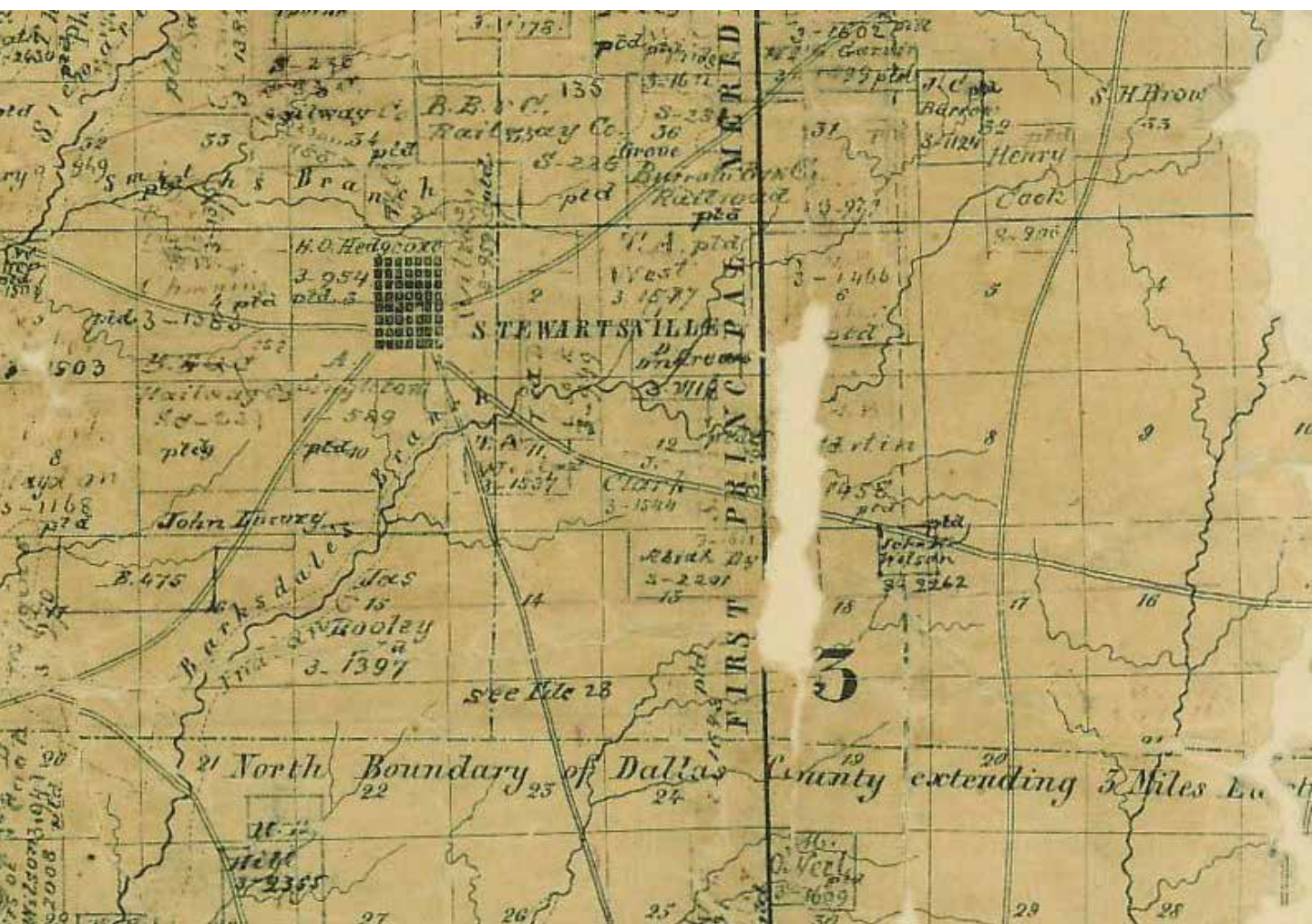
Barksdale Elementary School opened in 1996 on Midway Road as part of the Plano Independent School District. Its name recalls an earlier school built in the 19th century that closed in 1940.

and Denton. The Colony's tangled history is covered in detail by Seymour Connor in his book *The Peters Colony of Texas*, published in 1959.⁴ That book includes details on Ralph Barksdale's work for the Colony and lists the settlers he recognized as colonists in North Texas. *The Portal to Texas History*, one of the most comprehensive online sources of primary materials, gives a clearer picture of Barksdale's personal history through newspaper accounts, maps, and probate cases. Piecing together these fragments of information, the story of Ralph H. Barksdale dovetails nicely with the formation of a community of the same name and a one-room school house which still exists today.

Ralph H. Barksdale was born in 1782 in Albemarle County, Virginia, to parents Jonathan and Lucy Rogers Barksdale. He was still in that coun-

ty in 1820 according to the census of that year, residing near one of his brothers, Nathan.⁵ Other records reflect that a Ralph Barksdale fought in the War of 1812, alongside Nathan, both from Albemarle County.⁶ Another military record lists a Ralph Barksdale who fought in the Cherokee War in a company from Tennessee.⁷ More than once, Ralph is given the title "Major" in correspondence, but whether that was earned in military service has not yet been ascertained.⁸

Exactly when Ralph departed from Virginia is not known, but he may have headed to Kentucky shortly before departing for the frontier of Texas as an employee of the Peters Colony. Connor explained that Barksdale was not only an agent for the Colony but also a colonist. Barksdale's correspondence with the Republic of Texas is well documented through his reports of both



This detail from an 1852 map shows a creek named “Barksdale Branch” running south of the community of Stewartville, north of the Dallas/Collin county line.

July and December of 1844 sent to Anson Jones, later to become the last president of the Republic. The reports enumerated 381 settlers in the Colony from Barksdale’s surveys of the area.

Peters Colony went through many legal and legislative upheavals in an attempt to attract and keep colonists, and the newspapers of the time reflect the anxious courting of immigrants to the Republic. *The Northern Standard*, published in Clarksville, Texas, described the pioneers heading west after crossing the Red River in 1844.⁹ Barksdale is listed in the 1846 substitute census as living in the Dallas area, then still called the

Trinity Colony. Entries from 1847 in the diary of Dallas area pioneer Isaac Webb mention R. Barksdale moving his “plunder up home.”¹⁰ C. A. Bridges’ book, *History of Denton, Texas From Its Beginning to 1960* describes “. . . the first settlement in the county was started in 1843 and was called the Bridges Settlement. Agents of the Peters Company then moved their main office from near Farmers Branch in Dallas County to the new Denton County settlement on what was called Office Creek, just a short distance north of the present town of Hebron.”¹¹ This might shed some light on why Barksdale relocated as de-

scribed by Webb. Barksdale owned land just west of the newly designated Stewartsville where the Colony offices were moved.

A survey of 320 acres in Denton County appears on early maps of that county with Barksdale's name on it, near the confluence of several creeks which drain into the Elm Fork of the Trinity River.¹² Barksdale's Creek¹³ is also mentioned by several noted historians as lying near the modern community of Hebron, now a part of Carrollton, Texas.¹⁴ In her history of Elm Fork Settlements, Georgia Ogle repeats the assumption that the creek or branch which feeds into the Elm fork of the Trinity was probably named for agent Barksdale.¹⁵

Ralph H. Barksdale received 320 acres from the State of Texas in 1850 for his work with the Colony. He was witnessed by the agent of the Texan Emigration & Land Co., Thomas Ward, as a single man, which meant he was due a half section. The survey named for him was surrounded by other early settlers such as Chowning, Young, and Baccus. Those pioneers' stories include an incident described by historian Steven R. Butler in his account of "The Life and Times of Preston Witt."¹⁶ Butler references events also described by noted historians John Henry Brown and E. F. Bates. They all record an incident in 1846 involving raiding Indian parties and settlers "... along Barksdale's Creek, near the present line of Dallas and Denton Counties." All of the accounts state that the theft of horses started the whole episode. Members of pioneer families banded together as "Minute Men" and pursued a roving band of Indians. This incident was credited with the change of the name of the creek from Barksdale's to "Indian Creek." The creek feeds into the Elm Fork of the Trinity River from the east in the area now known as Arbor Hills Nature Preserve in far western Plano.

In 1853 Ralph Barksdale was notified by the *Richmond* (VA) *Enquirer* of his father's death and the portion of the estate due him.¹⁷ Ralph's sister had married George Kinsolving, and he served as executor of Jonathan Barksdale's estate. Less than

eight years later, it was Ralph's estate that was in a newspaper. The *Dallas Herald* published an Administrator's Notice stating that the probate court of Dallas would hear claims to Ralph's estate.¹⁸ Ralph H. Barksdale died in Dallas on September 23, 1860. His 48-page probate file is online at *The Portal to Texas History* and features a wealth of handwritten records including his last will and testament. Ralph never married and left his estate to his sisters, one of whom apparently came to Dallas and settled the claims. Her name was Mrs. Eliza Wilson, and her signature appears among the probate papers.¹⁹

Ralph H. Barksdale was the only person with that surname whose survey occurs in the vicinity of the area known as Barksdale, called such long after the creek name was changed.²⁰ The community included homesteads along the edges of Collin, Dallas, and Denton counties. Newspapers refer to the community²¹ and later histories refer to it as part of the Bridges community now enveloped by the Denton County town of The Colony.²² Even as late as the 1940s, the creek was called Barksdale by long-time residents.

A story published in 1949, compiled in a scrapbook by Carrollton seventh graders, gave the account of "A Modern Sherlock Holmes." John Henley Morgan wrote about his 500-acre stock farm known as "Tor Hill" located near Hebron. A marauding wolf was being hunted by a hired man with dogs "up and down Barksdale Creek."²³ These accounts support the idea that Ralph Barksdale was the person behind the name of the community and of the school begun in 1860.

The deed records of Denton County contain the details about land changing hands from Ralph Barksdale to another early settler by the name of Elisha Chinn. Chinn bought Barksdale's land in Denton County in 1854 when Ralph was 72 years old, and turned around and sold part of it to Charles M. Fox.²⁴ Elisha Chinn also purchased land in Collin County along White Rock Creek out of the Samuel Noblit survey and sold part of that to the same Charles M. Fox and his brother



In 1862 Clinton Shepard Haggard and his wife, Nannie Kate, acquired a house built by brothers Charles and Julian Cox on land, part of which had belonged to Ralph Barksdale.

Julian. The Fox brothers built a large house on the property and sold it to Clinton Shepard Haggard in 1862.²⁵

Clinton Shepard Haggard was the head of a large family including son John W. (1865-1937). John wrote a description of the Barksdale school in 1931,²⁶ and it was his nephew, Clifton Haggard, who bought and relocated the Barksdale school in 1940. The school's beginnings coincide with the early settlement of the area known as White Rock in southwest Collin County, now part of the city of Plano. That area included the Noblit survey which abuts the survey of J. McCants, described as the location of the original school in John's summary.

Haggard described the Barksdale school in his correspondence to George P. Brown as being "located about 8 miles west of Plano near McCants Springs. . . ." and was built about 1860. The

school was a "frame house about 16 x 20 feet, plank benches with ordinary plain plank backs, but no desks in front." He went on to say that the school "was later moved about 2 miles north west on west side of White Rock, on the Dallas and Preston Road. . . ." and that a school was maintained there "at the present time (1931)."

The Barksdale school as described by Heather M. Brown is an interesting tale of rural life. Her book includes students' memories and memorabilia, from interviews, photographs, and even report cards. The school was known for its blackboards, backless benches, and use as a social venue, including church services. A local band, The Wells Brothers, played there frequently during celebrations, held during Christmas and on other significant dates. Students walked to school or, as in the case of Barksdale student Mary Carpenter, they rode horseback. Alvin Mitchell was one of



Clinton Haggard, C. S. Haggard's nephew, moved the one-room Barksdale School building to his property about 1942, two years after Plano I.S.D. closed it. He converted it for use as a barn.



Portions of the frame Barksdale School remain inside a large barn that has been restored.



In 2018 the Fox-Haggard house was relocated adjacent to the red barn enclosing remnants of the Barksdale School. Crops planted around it afford passersby on Parkwood Blvd. a glimpse into the area's farming past.

the boys who trapped skunks to pay for a gift for his former Barksdale teacher at Christmas time. Fifty-eight years later, Mitchell still referred to his teacher as “Ms. Morgan” during interviews of the two for Heather Brown’s book.


The school was moved a few times in its long history, but it changed teachers almost annually. Some of those instructors were related to the Haggards. Jennie Bishop (who later married Henry Baccus) taught at Barksdale, as did her niece Lena Bishop (the future Mrs. Pearson). Jennie was a cousin of William Preston Bishop, who married Emma Haggard. Emma was a daughter of C. S. and N. K. Haggard.²⁷ Many of these in-

dividuals found their final resting place in Baccus Cemetery along Bishop Road in west Plano.

As shown on a Collin County soil map of 1936, the school was located along what is now Yearly Road, at the time surrounded by unincorporated farm land.²⁸ Clifton Haggard relocated the one-room school house about 1942, according to Clifton’s son Rutledge, sometime after the Plano Independent School District consolidated and closed it for good.²⁹ The school had been located on his land, so Clifton Haggard purchased the building, moved it north, and converted its use to a barn.³⁰ The barn still holds the one-room school and has been recently renovated with

board and batten siding. The Fox Haggard house has now joined the barn on the property as its next-door neighbor.

The house, built in 1861 by brothers Charles M. and Julian K. Fox, was relocated in 2018 to a new foundation beside the barn/schoolhouse. Both structures sit on Haggard land in Plano along Parkwood Boulevard and have fresh coats of historically appropriate paints. Sherwin Williams' "Rookwood Red" covers the barn, with doors and window trim on the house painted to match. The milo crop grown this year around the house and barn gave passersby a glimpse into Plano's farming past.

The mystery surrounding the namesake of Barksdale School seems to be solved. Ralph H. Barksdale, agent for the Peters Colony, is likely the person behind the name of a creek, its early community, and one-room school. Modern Barksdale Elementary is a large brick structure, with all the amenities afforded by the Plano Independent School District. It is a far cry from the 1860 structure described by John Haggard. Although founded 136 years apart, the two schools are linked in history. Old Barksdale still stands, now surrounded by red barn walls and flanked by the house of Clint and Nannie Kate Haggard. If only walls could talk! 

NOTES

¹Those sources include Heather M. Brown, *The One Room School in Collin County* (Plano: Heritage Farmstead Museum, 1999).

²*Collin County in Pioneer Times: Selections from the George Pearis Brown Papers* (Collin County Historical Society, 1985).

³Retired Teachers Association, "Texas Sesquicentennial Scrapbook of the Common Schools of Collin County" (McKinney, TX: Collin County History Museum, 1986).

⁴Seymour V. Connor, *The Peters Colony of Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1959).

⁵1790 and 1820 census, for Albemarle County, VA, (ancestry.com).

⁶List of veterans of the War of 1812 (ancestry.com).

⁷List of participants in the Cherokee War, Albemarle County, VA {ancestry.com}.

⁸Connor, *The Peters Colony of Texas*, 35.

⁹*Northern Standard* (Clarksville), July 6 1843, as cited in Susanne Starling, *Land is the Cry! Warren Angus Ferris, Pioneer Texas Surveyor and Founder of Dallas County* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1998), 134.

¹⁰Day Book and Diary of Isaac Webb, 1802-1849, Special Collections, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

¹¹C. A. Bridges, *History of Denton, Texas From Its Beginning to 1960* (Waco, TX: Texian Press 1978).

¹²Connor, *The Peters Colony of Texas*, 182: "Ralph H. Barksdale came to the Colony in 1842 as the agent for the Company. He reported his residence in 1844 on White Rock Creek in old Nacogdoches County. [Dallas County established 1846] In 1850 he appeared before Thomas William Ward in Collin County, claiming land as a single man. He received Fannin Third Class Certificate No. 944, which patented in Denton County."

¹³<https://s3.glo.texas.gov/glo/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm> \1 "item/1966" <https://s3.glo.texas.gov/glo/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#item/1966>

¹⁴Map of Denton County, Texas 1852, The Portal to Texas History.

¹⁵Georgia Myers Ogle, *Elm Fork Settlements: Farmers Branch and Carrollton* (The Peters Colony Historical Society, Nortex Press, 1976).

¹⁶Steven R. Butler, "Pioneer Personified: The Life and Times of Capt. Preston Witt," *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 4-16.

¹⁷*Richmond Enquirer*, April 1 1853, Library of Virginia, Richmond VA.

¹⁸*Dallas Herald*, March 20, 1861.

¹⁹Dallas Genealogical Society, Dallas County, Texas, Probate Cases 1846-Early 1900s, Case Number 292, The Portal to Texas History.

²⁰Edmond Franklin Bates, *History and Reminiscences of Denton County* (N.p., reprinted 1976), 27, 28, 293, 294.

²¹Tom W. Perkins and Walter B. Wilson, *The Weekly Democrat Gazette* (McKinney Tex), April 22 1909, University of North Texas libraries, The Portal to Texas History

²²Jim Morriss, *Cross Timbers Gazette*, January 2009.

²³*Elm Fork Echoes*, Peters Colony Historical Society, Vol. XIV, no. 1 (April 1986).

²⁴Denton County Real Property, Deed 1854, R. H. Barksdale to Elisha Chinn; Chinn to C. M. Fox.

²⁵M. D. Wells, "Collinwood Farm, Noblit Survey, Plano, Texas, Ownership History," 2016.

²⁶"Sesquicentennial Scrapbook."

²⁷Brown, *The One Room School in Collin County*.

²⁸1930 Collin County Soil map, University of North Texas libraries, The Portal to Texas History.

²⁹"Sesquicentennial Scrapbook"; Personal correspondence with R. Haggard, 2020.

³⁰Brown, *The One Room School in Collin County*.

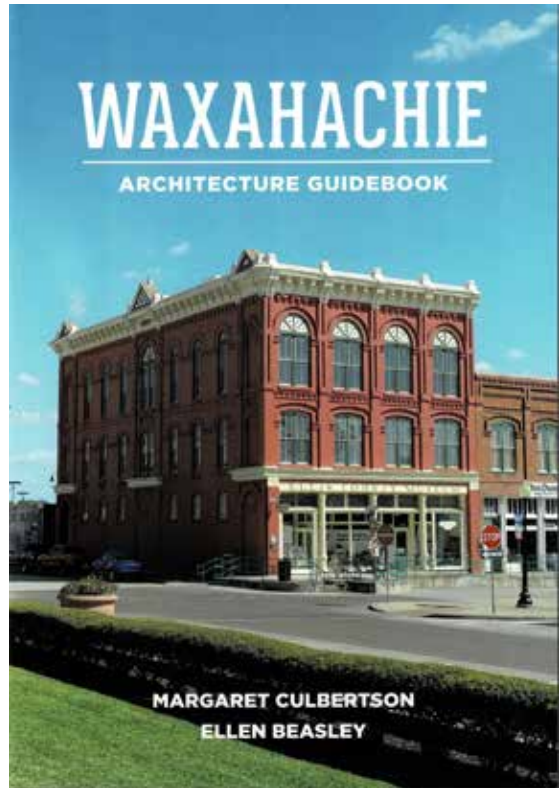
BOOK REVIEW

Margaret Culbertson and Ellen Beasley, *Waxahachie Architecture Guidebook* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2020, 363 pp., \$24.95)

This delightful volume is far more than an armchair tourist's guide to Waxahachie. Although it could technically be called an architectural survey, the *Waxahachie Architecture Guidebook* is, in fact, a dynamic history of the city as told through its structures and landscapes. Both readers and explorers will enjoy this volume. The volume's compact size makes it perfect to take on a driving or walking adventure. There are not only well-written introductory histories for the city and each of the areas covered, but also individual entries that share stories about a building's social history as well as its construction and remodeling.

Both Margaret Culbertson and Ellen Beasley are architectural historians of the first order, and they also know how to write. The architectural details that historic preservation works long for are there, but don't overpower the engaging and accessible stories. Did someone say humor? It's there, too, in the form of tongue-in-cheek observations or asides that pop up unexpectedly.

The volume covers Waxahachie's central business district and older residential neighborhoods and is arranged in a spiral of seven sections that rotate out from downtown. A map shows the location of each entry, and there is a separate street address index. The chapter on East Waxahachie covers the city's historic African-American section in loving and insightful detail. Almost all entries have a color photograph, but historic black and white photographs or Sanborn map details are used with entries for significant buildings that



have been demolished. Historic photographs are also used throughout the introduction for each section and as a companion to the color photograph when available.

Perhaps most enlightening for those who do not live in Waxahachie are the fascinating connections with the built environment in Dallas and other parts of North Texas. Not only is there a house designed by Charles Stevens Dilbeck that rivals those in Highland Park, but also buildings by H. A. Overbeck, Hubbell & Greene, William Sydney Pittman, C. D. Hill, Thomas E. Stanley, and Marion Fooshee among many other Dallas architects. Marshall Sanguinet, the noted Fort Worth

architect, designed the 1893–94 Citizens National Bank building on one corner of the courthouse square and is believed to also be responsible for a string of buildings of the same vintage that line the north side of the square. Complementing pioneer African–American physician Dr. James E. Munchus’ circa 1912 office is the 1922 home of his brother and fellow physician, Dr. George M. Munchus, which stands in Fort Worth.

What sets the Waxahachie guidebook apart from other similar books is the research and understanding that went into each entry. Culbertson and Beasley go beyond just listing a structure and writing a thumbnail sketch about it. Each entry gives the full back story and places the structure in the context of its time—for example, how buildings were renovated or built to accommodate the automobile.

Culbertson wrote a book about houses designed using architectural plan books (*Texas Houses Built by the Book*), so she was able to iden-

tify the exact source(s) for a number of residences. Beasley has done many architectural surveys, including one for the Dallas Central Business District in 1980, and written extensively about Galveston’s architecture and social history. With their assistance, you can see Waxahachie’s story told through its built environment. The authors sought out not only the major landmarks, but smaller buildings and elements – intersections, bridges, parks, and industrial structures like cottonseed oil storage tanks – that help readers understand how Waxahachie developed and why it looks the way it does today.

It is obviously easier to craft such a guidebook for a smaller town rather than a large city, but the Waxahachie Architectural Guidebook is a model resource that belongs in every library with a Texas or architectural collection and in the home of everyone who enjoys a well-written history.

---Carol Roark

PHOTO CREDITS

Steven Butler: pp. 5, 14, 16

Dallas Historical Society: pp. 2, 23, 26, 28, 30, 32, 35, 35

Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library: p. 49

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Clint Haggard: pp. 60, 61 (top)

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Squire Haskins Collection: pp. 42, 47

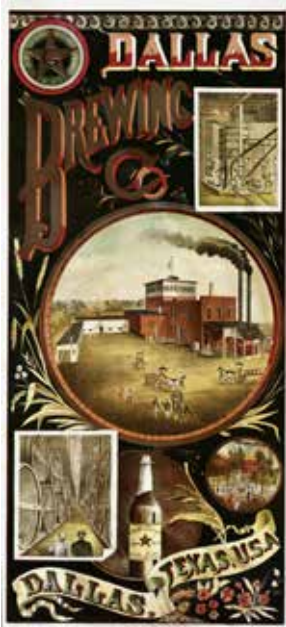
W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection: pp. 43, 46

Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University: p. 10

23rd Annual LEGACIES Dallas History Conference

Dining & Drinking in Dallas

Because of rapidly changing safety protocols necessitated by the surge of the delta variant of COVID-19, logistics for the 23rd Annual Legacies Dallas History Conference will probably not be determined until October. While the steering committee still hopes to present the conference at the Central Library downtown, it may need to shift to a virtual conference, or a hybrid of both virtual and in-person formats. Information will be posted on the Legacies DHC Facebook page as well as websites of the institutional sponsors.



23rd Annual Legacies Dallas History Conference Sponsors*

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Texas State Historical Association
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CONTRIBUTORS



Steven R. Butler, a Dallas native, earned his Ph.D. in history at the University of Texas at Arlington. He is currently an Associate Professor of History at Richland College in Dallas and Collin College in Plano. Among his books are a history of White Rock Lake and a biography of John Neely Bryan. A two-time presenter at the annual Dallas History Conference, Butler is also a frequent contributor to *Legacies*. His most recent articles were “Marian’s Story” and “Fifty Years On: Remembering the Texas International Pop Festival,” in the fall 2019 issue.



Candace Fountoulakis serves on the Collin County Historical Commission with a focus on historic Texas cemeteries and architectural landmarks. Her interest in preservation began with the Young Cemetery of Plano and advanced to successfully advocating for the preservation of the 1861 Collinwood house. Recently her research led to a completed subject marker from the Texas Historical Commission entitled “Sam Bass and Gang in Stephens County.” She has been a frequent speaker on local history and is the author of numerous articles in newspapers, magazines and books in her areas of expertise.



Frank Jackson received a B.A. in English from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.A. in Radio-TV-Film from Northwestern. Currently employed by the Turley Law Firm, he has written more than 250 articles for the *Hardball Times* web site and has also written several articles for the Texas Rangers program magazine. He has been a frequent contributor to *Legacies*.



Nancy McCoy, FAIA, FAPT is the founding principal of McCoy Collaborative Preservation Architecture. A seasoned preservation architect, she has national experience and recognition gained over thirty-five years of practice. Her experience adapting historic buildings for continued use includes National Historic Landmarks such as the U. S. Custom House in New York City, Fair Park in Dallas, as well as locally significant structures. Her work has been recognized with National Trust Honor Awards, state and local awards, and with Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects and the Association for Preservation Technology International.



Willis Winters is the Director Emeritus of the Dallas Park and Recreation Department, having retired in 2019 after a 27-year career. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and the author or co-author of six books, including *Fair Park* (2010) and *Great American Suburbs: The Houses of the Park Cities, Dallas* (2008). His most recent article for *Legacies* was “A Means to a Peaceful Transition: L. B. Houston and the Desegregation of Dallas Parks,” for the spring 2016 issue.

BOOK REVIEWER

Carol Roark has spent many years researching and writing about historic buildings. After twenty years as the Archivist and Manager of the Special Collections Division at the Dallas Public Library, she is now working on a number of freelance history and historic preservation projects. Carol’s two passions are historic photography and buildings, publishing four books related to those topics.

Dallas THEN & NOW

The Gulf Cloud

Young Sydney Smith had just begun his career as a Mississippi cotton planter when the Civil War broke out. Smith enlisted in the Confederate cavalry and rose to the rank of captain before hostilities ended. Returning to Mississippi, Smith endured slumping cotton prices and backbreaking plantation work until his health failed.

Smith relocated to Dallas in 1878 and established a successful farm implements business in the booming young city. Dallas soon became a leading distribution point for farm equipment. The State Fair, organized in 1886, was largely an exposition of farm machinery, and Captain Smith was a natural choice to lead the event. The State Fair directors asked Smith to serve as permanent secretary, a post he would hold almost continuously for the next twenty-six years.

After Smith's death in 1912, the State Fair directors sought a way to memorialize his service over the years. The sum of \$20,000 was appropriated for the creation of a fitting monument. A Dallas-raised sculptor, Miss Clyde Chandler, was commissioned to create the Sydney Smith Memorial. She set to work in a Chicago studio in 1913 and completed the heroic piece three years later.

Chandler designed a massive bronze fountain consisting of four allegorical female figures representing various regions of the state beneath a Gulf cloud, bringing life-giving water to the landscape. The finished sculpture weighed over five tons. It would become the city's first great piece of sculpture. The "Gulf Cloud" was installed on a special plaza near the main gate in time for the 1916 State Fair and dedicated to Captain Smith during special ceremonies on the same day that Union Station was opened.

The Gulf Cloud remained in place for twenty years before being relocated to a new site near the State Fair Auditorium (Music Hall) in 1936.

—Mark Rice



