

FP-008

CENTENNIAL BUILDING

Before you stands the structure we now call the Centennial Building. Running the entire length of the thousand-foot-long Esplanade, this building appears to be a remnant of the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition. With its three large porticoes, colorful murals and massive statues, it certainly exemplifies the "Texanic" style created by George Dahl for the event.

In fact, a large part of this building was constructed in 1905 and workers added the Art Deco façade you see in 1936. It is only from the rear or sides that we can see evidence of the original structure, in the form of its three peaked roofs. Inside, the ironwork supporting those roofs clearly indicates a style earlier than 1936. Nevertheless, because of the façade, historians consider this Centennial Building one of the 30 historic structures at Fair Park remaining from the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition.

Throughout the decades, the building has served as one of the primary exhibition halls in the park. In its early years it showcased new consumer goods and farming equipment. During the 1936 Centennial Exposition the main portion of the building was dubbed the "Transportation Building" and a new extension wing on the east was called the "Chrysler Building". The inside walls of the Chrysler wing were covered with a mirrored glass, samples of which visitors purchased as souvenirs.

One of the most important moments in the Centennial Building's history came in 1992, when it hosted a glittering exhibit of the personal effects of Catherine the Great of Russia. Today, the building serves primarily as the secondary exhibit hall for the new car show that arrives each autumn during the State Fair of Texas. However, area Muslims also use the building each year as a place of prayer during Ramadan, and other special events and exhibits take place here on an intermittent basis. In fact, you can rent this building for parties or special events.

The 1930s-era façade is resplendent with murals painted by the artist, Carlo Ciampaglia. Statues designed by the renowned artist Lawrence Tenney Stevens and bas-relief sculptures by artist Pierre Bourdelle add to the building's aesthetic appeal.

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