

FP-017

CHILDREN'S AQUARIUM AT FAIR PARK

Excuse the bad pun, but this building contains some exhibits your kids will really want to ... SEA.

The Children's Aquarium at Fair Park debuted on September 24th, 2010, the opening day of the 2010 State Fair of Texas. Kids and adults alike love viewing the sharks, jellyfish, eels, rays, piranhas, turtles, clown fish and other species made popular in movies and books. The kid-friendly design offers interactive exhibits for hands-on exploration, including a coastal "touch pool". There, children can literally feel the texture of horseshoe crabs, sea stars, sea urchins, anemones, and other creatures from the deep.

Meanwhile, an outdoor pavilion includes Stingray Bay, where guests can feed and interact with cownose and southern rays, as well as small bamboo sharks. Eagle rays, and zebra and bonnethead, sharks will also be swimming nearby in a larger pool.

By the way the building housing the Children's Aquarium has an interesting history. It was built in 1936 for the Texas Centennial Exposition and is one of the 30 historic structures at Fair Park remaining from that fair. Back then, it was called the Hall of Aquatic Life and contained just 44 tanks with live marine specimens.

Brick, cast stone, Cordova cream limestone and native Texas shell stone make up much of the building's exterior. Renowned Dallas artist Allie V. Tennant -- who also sculpted the Tejas Warrior on the front of the Hall of State -- created the sculptural carvings on the brick and stone exterior. The small annex to the left of the building was also constructed in 1936. Used now to store the aquarium's exhibits when they are not on display, this building served during the 1936 exhibition as the Christian Science Monitor Pavilion.

If your family is from Dallas, your parents or grandparents might fondly remember Mikey, a harbor seal that was especially popular with Dallas-area kids. Well, this was Mikey's home, from September 1949 until her death in July of 1984.

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