

FP-027

FOUNDERS STATUE

This unusual statue graced by a bold female figure has several unusual stories associated with it. It is commonly referred to these days as the Founders Statue, for it was commissioned to honor the founders of the State Fair of Texas. However, records at the City of Dallas' Office of Cultural Affairs show the official name of this statue to be Allegorical Figure of the State Fair of Texas.

Fair officials commissioned the work for the 1938 state fair, billed as the fair's Golden Jubilee Celebration. Although the fair actually began in 1886, 52 years earlier, it was in fact the 50th state fair. Fair Park's hosting of the Texas Centennial Exposition in 1936, and the Pan-American Exposition in 1937, caused the two-year delay in the state fair celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Two artists who had greatly contributed to the artwork that debuted in the park during the Texas Centennial Exposition received the commission. Raoul Josset, who designed three of the large statues around the Esplanade, designed this grand work. His colleague, Jose Martin, executed it. It is made of ore mined from Cherokee County, Texas, just west of Killeen.

Fair officials dedicated the statue at a celebration attended by some 300 descendants of those who founded the state fair. The statue also honored the role of the press in publicizing the state fair throughout the years. So, officials inserted the front pages of 300 Texas newspapers dated October 8, 1938, into an iron crypt embedded within the statue's base. Fair officials then handed the key to the crypt to the Texas Press Association for safe keeping. The plan was to reopen the crypt and review the newspapers fifty years hence - in 1988.

The plan went awry. When officials took a "sneak peek" inside the crypt just before the 1988 State Fair, they discovered the vault had not been well-sealed and had leaked. When touched, the bundle of deteriorating newspapers crumbled into dust. As a result, fair officials cancelled the ceremonies for the opening of the crypt.

Here's another interesting side-note about this statue... it appears that someone at some point mistakenly moved it to a completely different location within Fair Park the plaque identifying this statue. You'll find the plaque honoring Jose Martin's execution of this statue embedded in the ground near the base of a replica of the Statue of Liberty, situated on the north lawn of the Hall of State.

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