

FP-031

HALL OF STATE

The building before you is considered the grandest in all of Fair Park – some even say in all of Texas. The Hall of State was built in 1936 for the Texas Centennial Exposition. It is one of the 30 historic structures in Fair Park that remain from that fair. The building cost 1.2 million dollars to construct, a sum made all the more remarkable when you consider this was during The Great Depression.

Step inside the Hall of State and you will step into a glorious world of art and history that is sure to make your jaw drop. Dominating the Great Hall is a spectacular gold medallion featuring a Lone Star surrounded by coats of arms symbolizing the six governments that have held dominion over Texas during its history. Murals on both walls display finely rendered scenes from Texas history.

Other rooms, named after different regions of the state, contain sculptures and murals that pay tribute to cowboy culture, Texas families, and Texas before and after the discovery of oil, as well as other Texas icons. Meanwhile, the Hall of Heroes contains stunning sculptures of six early Texas leaders: James Fannin, Mirabeau B. Lamar, Stephen F. Austin, Sam Houston, Thomas Rusk and William Travis.

The interior also houses the offices of the Dallas Historical Society. At times, portions of the society's collection are on view and the space sometimes hosts special exhibitions, such as the artifacts of legendary Dallas Cowboys coach, Tom Landry. The library has on hand some 8 thousand rare books, 13 thousand artifacts and numerous other items of interest to researchers. The Hall of State is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm, and on Sunday from 1 pm to 5 pm. It is closed on Mondays and holidays. Admission -- except for special exhibits -- is free.

The building's interior is truly beautiful, but the exterior gives it a run for its money. If you were floating above the building, you would see that it is shaped in the form of a 'T' – for Texas, of course. Native Texas limestone comprises the body of the building and bronze makes up the front doors. On those portals you will see such iconic Texas images as cattle, cotton bolls, a cowboy lariat and a circle of oil derricks surrounding a gusher.

The semi-circular paved area at the entrance to the building is called the "Portico Tejas." Commanding the portico is the "Tejas Warrior", a heroic statue crafted by Dallas artist Allie

Victoria Tennant. Made of bronze covered with gold leaf, this warrior is now protected from the park's pigeons by an almost-invisible netting. Blue tiles on the wall behind the warrior represent the Texas state flower, the bluebonnet. The orange designs are meant to recall the Aztec Indians who were native to Mexico.

High above the warrior you can see "The Symbolic Seal of Texas," designed by Donald Barthelme and sculpted by Henry Lee Gibson. It features a female figure known as the "Lady of Texas." In front of her is a shield bearing a Texas flag. In her left hand she holds aloft a fire representing the spirit of patriotism. Beside her is an owl (representing wisdom) perched on a key, which is symbolic of prosperity and progress. The leaves of a pecan, the Texas state tree, spread out behind the owl.

You will also find, circling the top of the building, the names of 59 prominent Texans from the past. Here is a fun piece of trivia that escapes the casual passerby. If you look at the first letters of the first eight names on the front of the building - B A R T H E L M - you'll see they spell the last name of the architect, Donald Barthelme. We surmise Barthelme decided to make the next name Burnet because there was no other name on the list that began with E, and from a distance, the B would resemble the letter E more than any other letter would.

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