

FP-041

PARRY AVENUE ENTRANCE GATES

Since the very first State Fair of Texas, in the 1880s, visitors to Fair Park have arrived in grand style through an entrance near where Parry Avenue today intersects with Exposition Avenue. Throughout the early part of the 20th century, many of those visitors arrived by way of trolley car on tracks that ran right next to the main entrance.

The current Parry Avenue Entrance was built for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition and represents one of the 30 historical structures at Fair Park remaining from that fair. The ceremony that opened that exhibition featured a key whose encrusted jewels made it worth more than 50,000 dollars. Crafted by a local jeweler, the key remained on display in a Dallas jewelry store until 1952, when it suddenly disappeared, never to be seen again.

Designed by Minnesota-born architect George Dahl, this Parry Avenue entrance truly reflects the 1930s Art Deco style found throughout the entire park. The central pylon is 85-foot high and placed squarely in the center of what was once a vehicle entry gate. Flanking it are two blockhouses which originally served as administrative offices. Today they operate as ticket offices during the State Fair of Texas. Attached to these blockhouses are metal animal-head medallions, six in all, which once graced the park's livestock buildings.

On the side of the pylon facing Parry Avenue, near its top, you can see a large, 5-pointed star that is made of aluminum but glows gold at night due to neon lights within. The star symbolizes the "Lone Star" of Texas. Near the pylon's base you'll find a frieze crafted by artist Buck Winn depicting a pioneer wagon train and a buffalo hunt. Below the frieze is a bronze plaque, which carries the raised seal of the Texas Centennial Exposition and the names of its officers.

In 1963, flagpoles made their debut at the entrance. During the State Fair of Texas, flags representing the fifty United States billow from these poles. A temporary addition to the entrance at the height of the Vietnam War created controversy in 1966. That addition was a replica of an entire Vietnam village, complete with thatched huts, a rice paddy, booby traps and a dead Viet Cong sniper in a tree.

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