

THE DALLAS COUNTY CHRONICLE

Commissioner Profiles

Christopher Sean Cornell



Christopher S. Cornell was appointed to the Dallas County Historical Commission by Commissioner Andy Sommerman, District 2 in 2023. Christopher is a lifelong Dallas resident (aside from some of his college years), who grew up in the Casa Linda and Forrest Hills neighborhoods of the east Dallas area where he continues to live today.

Christopher attended school in east Dallas at St. Bernard of Clairvaux where he was active in scouting and other activities and then Bishop Lynch High School where he was on the history and current events teams for three years at the state academic decathlon.

Christopher received a bachelor's degree in history and art from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, a masters degree in history from The University of St. Andrews in St Andrews, Scotland, Juris Doctor and Master of Laws degrees from the Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law, and a Master of Liberal Studies degree from the Southern Methodist University Simmons School of Education and Human Development.

Christopher has been interested in history from a young age and attributes this to a combination of being fascinated by the backstories of events playing out on the NPR news broadcasts he would hear in the car everyday growing up, having a house full of books, including a large number of history books and almanacs, and a history teacher for a father. One year for Christmas his parents gave him a copy of The World Almanac from the year that they were born so that he could look up the answers to "what things were like when they were young", rather than have to hunt down one of them to ask.

Professionally Christopher is a lawyer who for most of the last decade has primarily practiced construction law and related areas of law such as real estate law. In his daily work he is always fascinated when he gets to see projects that make use of, rather than tear down, existing structures and happily notes that in recent years the number of such project making use of earlier work appears to be increasing.

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Doc Holiday by Coy L. Poitier

John Henry "Doc" Holliday, the notorious gunslinger and partner of Wyatt Earp, is primarily remembered for his role in the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. However, for a brief period in the early 1870s, this legendary figure resided in Dallas, Texas, a city then known as the "Last Big City Before the Uncivilized Frontier." This lesser-known chapter of Holliday's life offers a fascinating glimpse into his past and his connection to the city's history.

Upon arriving in Dallas seeking a fresh start, Doc partnered with a friend of his father's, Dr. John A. Seegar. Their dental practice seemed to flourish for a while, with newspaper articles even highlighting their achievements at a local exposition. These awards, recognizing their expertise in categories like "Best set of teeth in gold" and "Best set of artificial teeth and dental ware," suggest initial success.

However, Doc's coughing fits, a characteristic sign of tuberculosis, likely deterred some patients.

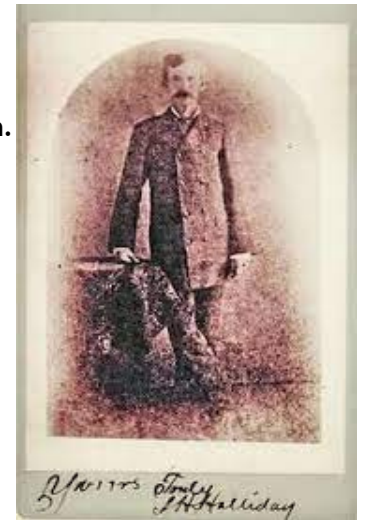
Unable to fully rely on dentistry, Doc turned to his other notable skill – gambling. News reports from the time mention his involvement in several card games, even an altercation with a saloon keeper that resulted in gunfire. Doc's reputation for gunslinging likely preceded him, making the gamble-friendly atmosphere of Dallas a double-edged sword.

Fearing further trouble with the law, Doc eventually left Dallas, moving on to Denison, Texas, and ultimately finding his place in the Wild West legend alongside Wyatt Earp in Tombstone.

While Doc Holliday's stay in Dallas was brief and his dental practice may be a forgotten footnote in history, it offers a window into the life of a complex figure. He arrived seeking a fresh start, but his past and his illness ultimately shaped his experience in the city.

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In conclusion, Doc Holliday's time in Dallas reveals a lesser-known aspect of this Wild West legend. It also highlights the diverse cast of characters who helped shape the early days of this Texas city.



On Memorial Day 2024, a holiday that honors slain military servicemen, we want to honor a rare example of an American hero who served to prevent the deaths of America's military. Nov. 18, 1918, marked the date an armistice had been declared for WWI, and the fighting that claimed more than 32 million lives had finally come to an end.

Breaking the war down by numbers can sometimes blunt the human scale of courage and sacrifice. Still, about 4 million Americans served in World War I. Of those, about 13,000 were women, and fewer than 100 of them were physicians. Only one of those doctors was from Texas: May Agness Hopkins, MD.

Until Ed Owens came to work for the Dallas Historical Society, he had never been in the Collections Department of a museum. He assumed that the place would be full of historic "stuff" --a suit of armor here and old portrait there. There is some of that, of course, but mostly the place is full of boxes, hundreds of them, all neatly numbered and cataloged, each quietly protecting some particle of our past. For a historian like me, opening one of these boxes is like opening a Christmas present. Everyone contains some kind of treasure.

Recently, one of the boxes was opened and a WWI uniform was taken out to be readied for an exhibit. We have many uniforms so this one did not attract much of my attention, until I noticed that it was a woman's uniform and a doctor's at that. That piqued my curiosity about the woman who had worn this uniform, so I copied down the accession number and went to our files.

The uniform belonged to May Agness Hopkins, M.D, born in Austin, Texas, on August 18, 1883, the daughter of Eugene Pierce and Martha Houston (Mattingly) Hopkins. She grew up in Austin and graduated from the University of Texas in 1906. She then entered the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston and received her medical degree in 1911. She was the only woman in her class. She completed her internship at the New England Hospital for Women and Children in Boston and her residency at Pennsylvania State Hospital.

Dr. Hopkins then moved to Dallas to establish her pediatric practice. While she did note in a 1957 interview with the Dallas Times Herald that some people initially scoffed at a "lady doctor" in town, the decision to relocate there proved to be fortuitous. The early 20th century was transformative for the city of Dallas, which evolved from a frontier town to a thriving urban center that offered women a broader role in its many cultural and commercial developments.

But just as Dr. Hopkins began to build her medical practice, war broke out. Like many of her generation, Dr. Hopkins felt the stirrings of patriotism and duty and wanted to serve. And like most women of her generation, she was shut out of many opportunities to do so.

For doctors who wished to serve, the most direct route to the European front was the Army Medical Reserve Corps, but women physicians were explicitly barred from enlisting. Women could serve as stateside military physicians, but there would be no rank, no promotion, no bonus, and no pension.



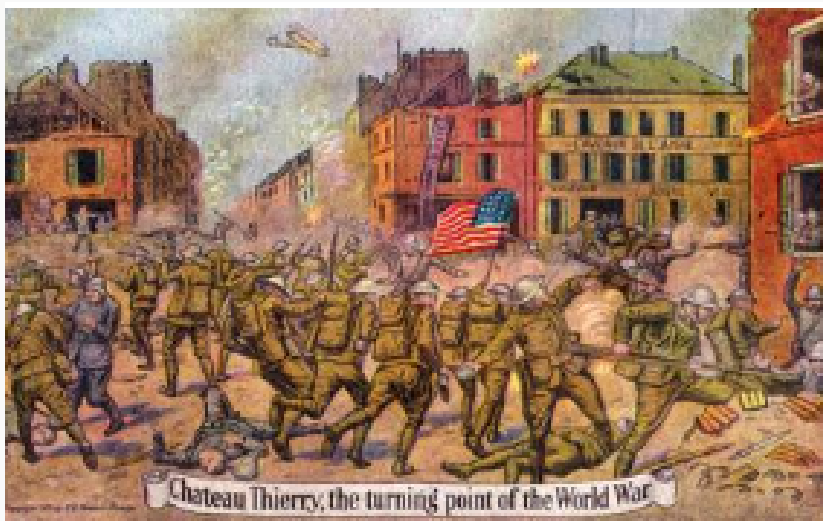
The American Red Cross provided another option. The organization placed women directly in France to staff the Children's Bureau, where they could perform medical services for displaced women and children. This was not battlefield medicine, but it was an opportunity Dr. Hopkins eagerly accepted as it afforded her passage across the Atlantic to work near the war zone.

When Dr. Hopkins left for France in July 1918, she was 35 years old and had never traveled outside of the United States, as she noted on her passport application. But like most new recruits, she was excited to be of service and eager to jump into action.

Dr. Hopkins was the only Texas doctor to serve in France during WWI, assigned to the Smith College unit of the Red Cross. Some of us may not fully appreciate what an accomplishment that was for a woman to become a doctor but remember that women did not get the right to vote in national elections until 1920.

Dr. Hopkins was supposed to be performing refugee work for the Red Cross. Now she was doing what she and other women physicians had hoped for all along — serving on the front lines of the war.

One of the first battles of the American Expeditionary Forces in France was during the German assault on Chateau-Thierry. This particularly bloody fight was part of the battle of the Marne, July 15 to August 6, 1918. Dr. Hopkins took charge of evacuating wounded American soldiers and moving them to safety behind the lines. She later became a medical leader in the southern zone of France where she assisted in establishing children's hospitals and provided care to repatriated children after the war.



When the Great War ended, Dr. Hopkins returned to Dallas and resumed her pediatric and endocrinology practice. "Dallas seemed a little tame" compared to her war experience, she told the Herald. A colleague of Dr. Hopkins', however, fondly remembered she often made house calls in her large Buick with a revolver tucked under the front seat.

She opened clinics for children and unwed mothers, was one of the first doctors to inspect milk for the city of Dallas and served on the staff of Baylor Hospital.

She also taught at Baylor University College of Medicine. Dr. Hopkins belonged to several professional organizations including the Dallas County Medical Society, the American Medical Women's Association, the American Medical Association, and the Texas Medical Association.

Dr. Hopkins answered the call to serve and did so despite the limitations imposed on women of her generation. "I couldn't have dreamed in my wildest dreams how wonderful Dallas has been to me and to all women physicians," she said in her Herald interview. "But now I know the doors are open. Many hospitals and schools now want the woman physician. There are more and more opportunities for us."

She was preceded in death by her husband, Howard E. Reitzel, whom she had married in 1927. Dr. Hopkins continued her practice until just before her death in 1972.

We wish to thank Ed Owens with the Dallas Historical Society and the Texas Medical Association for their contributions to this article.

I. Context

1936 was a pivotal time for the United States and especially for the State of Texas. The state and the country were recovering from the devastation of the Great Depression. To stimulate the American economy federal make-work projects were enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. 1936 was an election year and President Roosevelt did all he could to soothe the ills of the country and to win re-election. Of the many job programs, one was for the construction of the Texas Centennial Exposition. This was planned by the state as a commemoration of the hundred-year anniversary of the independence of Texas from Mexico. An added purpose was the opportunity to lift the spirits of the nation.¹ After an intense statewide competition, the federal contract to build the exposition was awarded to the City of Dallas. The Centennial Exposition was constructed a few miles southeast of Dallas at the fairground known as the historical Fair Park.

The exposition was jointly funded by the federal government, the Texas State Legislature and the City of Dallas. The event attracted over 6 million visitors, and cost around \$25 million dollars to build. The exposition was credited for buffering Dallas from the Great Depression, creating over 10,000 jobs and giving a \$50 million boost to the local economy.² The task of remaking the 50-year-old Fair Park into a modern exposition fell to 41-year-old Dallas architect George L. Dahl, who had oversight of every aspect of the exposition's design.³ Of the approximately 50 structures designed by Mr. Dahl and his staff, only one was built for the Negroes. It was named the Hall of Negro Life.

Prior to the 1936 Centennial Exposition, Negroes participated in other state expositions. One was the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition held in Atlanta, Georgia,⁴ where a Negro Building was constructed for that exposition. Another Negro Building was constructed at the 1907 Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition in Virginia and was designed by Negro Architect William S. Pittman.⁵

A Dallas Express Weekly newspaper headline published July 25th, 1936, announced that "83,000 VISIT NEGRO BUILDING" over a 40-day period.⁶ The Hall of Negro Life was a popular exhibit during the entirety of the Centennial Exposition.

When the celebration ended the Exposition Corporation of Dallas took over the fairgrounds with the intention of continuing the next year as the Pan American Exposition.⁷ Mr. Thomas wrote, On December 30, 1936, the City of Dallas passed a resolution that stated, "after careful consideration, we do not feel that the Negro Building would be of any value to the new exposition",⁸ At the end of the Texas Centennial Celebration, the Negro Building was the only exhibit building demolished.⁹ On January 13th, 1937, Mr. E. K. Jones, Advisory Committee chairman, was notified by W. B. Yeager, Executive Secretary of the U. S. Texas Centennial Commission, to dismantle the exhibits and return them to the exhibitors.¹⁰

1. Texas Centennial Exposition opens, June 6th, 1936 article, Texas State Historical Association Online (www.tshaonline.org)

2. Pamela Starr Dewey, November 7, 2013, Texas Invites the World, AmeirPics (ameripics.wordpress.com)

3. Kenneth B. Ragsdale, The Year America Discovered Texas Centennial ,36, Texas A & M University Press, 1987, p93

4. Annabella Jean-Laurent, 2014, Flashback: The 1895 Cotton States Exposition and the Negro Building, Atlanta Magazine, (www.atlantamagazine.com)

5. Sarah Watkins, 1994, Master's Thesis, The Negro Building: African-American Representation at the 1907 Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition, William & Mary College, (scholarworks.wm.edu)

6. Dallas Express, Saturday, July 25, 1936, 83,000 VISIT NEGRO BUILDING

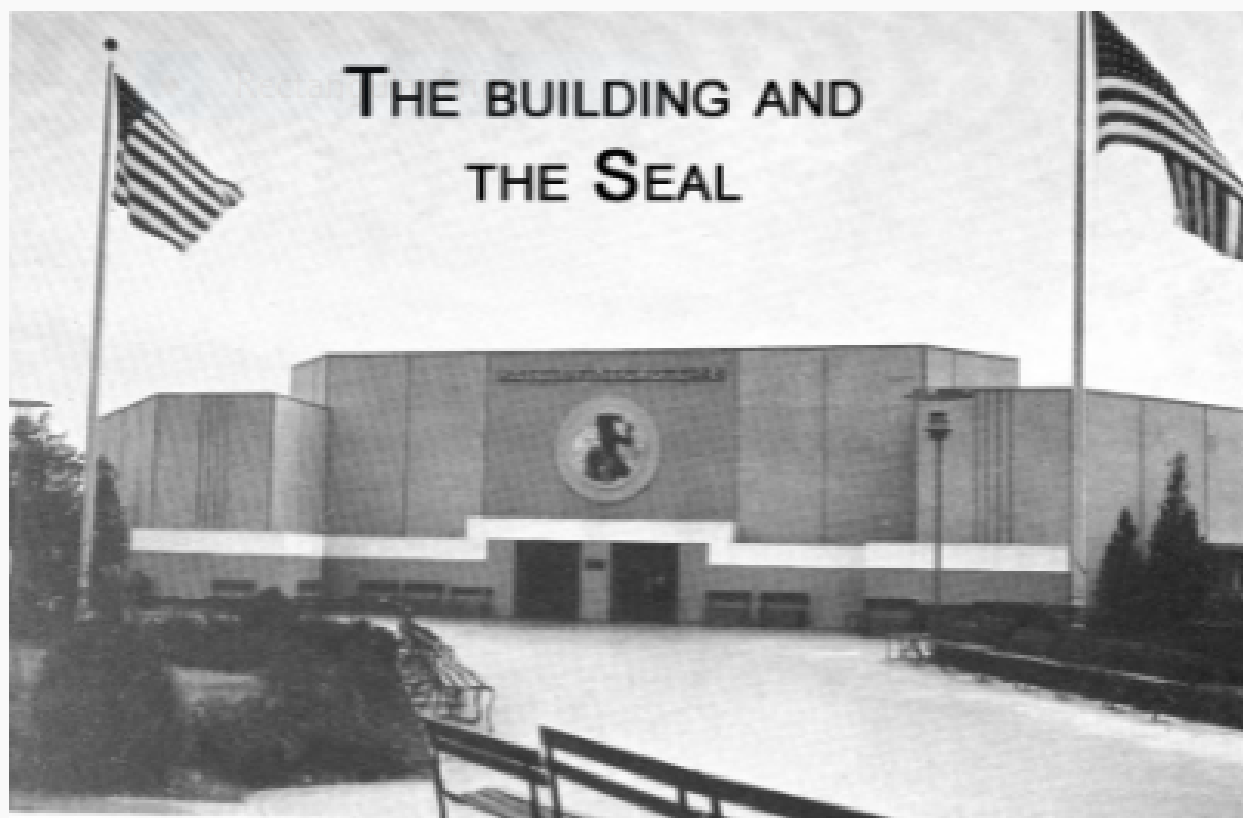
7. Greater Texas and Pan American Exposition, Historic Fair Park Home, (www.watermelon-kid.com)

8. Jessie O. Thomas, *Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition*, p117
9. Kenneth B. Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas Centennial*, 36, Texas A & M University Press, 1987, p305
10. Jessie O. Thomas, *Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition*, p117

II. Overview

The first efforts to organize Negro participation in the Centennial Exhibition was undertaken by the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce (DNCC) led by its Executive Secretary, A. Maceo Smith. The first public announcements of the construction of the Texas Centennial Exposition came in 1934. The Dallas Express Weekly newspaper announced in its September 22, 1934 edition the headline, "DALLAS PLANS FOR CENTENNIAL". Mr. Smith and the DNCC saw this exposition as an opportunity for the Negro community to showcase the accomplishments of Negro Texans.¹¹ The United States government had appropriated \$3,000,000 to construct exhibition buildings for the Texas Exposition. The February 1, 1936 edition of the Dallas Express Weekly announced that \$100,000 of the federal funds were approved by the government for the construction and staffing of a Negro building called the Hall of Negro Life.¹²

Jessie O. Thomas, representative of the Urban League, was appointed General Manager for the project. Mr. Thomas kept notes and letters related to the historical events of the Hall's development. He documented them in his two rare books, *Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition*, published in 1938 and *My Story in Black and White, The Autobiography of Jessie O. Thomas*, published in 1967. Mr. Thomas wrote in detail about the events leading up to and after the existence of the Hall of Negro Life. The Dallas Express Weekly newspaper, published by the Southwestern Negro Press, along with a network of national Negro newspapers, led by the Associated Negro Press, published numerous articles detailing the Negro Building and the Texas Centennial Exposition.¹³



The completed Hall of Negro Life

Mr. Thomas wrote, "The plan for Negro participation in the Texas Centennial celebration was under the general supervision and authority of the United States Texas Centennial Commission, whose members included United States Vice President, John N. Garner, chairman; Secretary of State, Cordell Hull; Secretary of Commerce, Daniel C. Roper; and Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace". The first meeting of this committee was held in the library room of the Department of Commerce in Washington D.C. Those present at this meeting included Negro Centennial Advisory Committee Chairman, Eugene Kinckle Jones, Adviser on the Affairs of Negroes in the Department of Commerce, Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, President of Tuskegee Institute and Dr. W.R. Banks, President of Prairie View College". 14

The Negro Advisory Committee selected the administrative staff at this meeting. Jesse O. Thomas, on leave of absence as Southern Field Director of the National Urban League, was selected as General Manager. A. Maceo Smith, on leave of absence as head of the Department of Business at the Booker T Washington High School, Dallas, was chosen as Assistant General Manager.¹⁵

The Dallas Express Weekly reported in its February 1, 1936, edition that the federal government had allocated \$50,000 for the erection of Negro Life Building.¹⁶ The Newspaper reported that an additional \$50,000 was allocated for the collection, assembling and transportation of exhibits and administrative overhead.¹⁷ Funds were released in March for the construction of the Hall of Negro Life building. George L. Dahl, chief architect of the exposition, assigned Architect Donald Nelson to design the Hall building.¹⁸ Mr. Thomas described the building; "The Hall of Negro Life building was 106 feet by 202 feet outside measurements and contained approximately 14,000 square feet of floor space with 9,000 square feet of wall space reserved for exhibits".¹⁹ He said, "The Hall of Negro Life was situated between the General Motors Exhibit Building and the Museum of Fine Arts. It was about three minutes' walk from the main entrance and slightly behind the Globe Theatre. The building was one-story in height, somewhat L shaped. In front of the building, in large letters of wood, twelve inches high, with a bronze finish, appeared THE HALL OF NEGRO LIFE. Just beneath this designation was a sculptured plaster model, bronze color, which typified the Negro's contribution to the various phases of American culture".

Mr. Thomas went on to say; "The Hall of Negro Life was an impressive building from the point of view of its exterior. It compared favorably in design and followed closely the architectural scheme of the general exposition. The exterior walls were painted in bright colors and at night the flood lights which were located at the base of the building emphasized the color scheme and made the building a thing of beauty. The lobby inside the building was octagonal in shape, and decorated with four murals done by a Negro, Aaron Douglas, an artist of New York City, in the center was a large information desk. The murals portrayed the chronological transition of Negroes from the days of slavery up to the present time. The two wings of the building were divided into four major exhibit lanes".²⁰

Mr. Thomas described the interior; "The spacious lobby of the building is an array of modern blue furniture with chromium frames forming a semicircle around a triangular shaped information desk from which literature was distributed." Mr. Thomas gave a detailed description of each section, its decoration, and the magnificence of the items displayed in them.²¹

The Texas Centennial Celebration opened on June 6th to a huge crowd. Due to code violations by the building contractor, the Hall of Negro Life did not open until Monday, June 19th, referred to as Emancipation Day. Other days designated for Negro visitors were August 19th, Church and Music Day and October 19th, Education Day.²² Formal exercises for the Hall opening day took place in the Cotton Bowl. The Honorable Cullen F. Thomas, Commissioner General of the United States Centennial Commission made the opening speech. The dedicatory speech was made by Eugene Kinckle Jones, Advisory Committee chairperson.²³

11. Dallas Express, Saturday, September 22, 1934, DALLAS PLANS FOR CENTENNIAL

12. J Dallas Express, Saturday, February 1, 1936, COST OF U. S. PART IN FAIR BUDGETED

13. Associated Negro Press, Encyclopedia Of Chicago, (www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org)

14. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, 1938, p28
15. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, 1938, p28
16. Dallas Express, February 1, 1936, NEGROS TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN CENTRAL EXPOSITION AT DALLAS
17. Dallas Express, February 1, 1936, COST OF U. S. PART IN FAIR IS BUDGETED
18. Kenneth B. Ragsdale, The Year America Discovered Texas Centennial ,36, Texas A & M University Press, 1987, p177
19. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p25
20. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p45
21. Jessie O. Thomas, My Story in Black and White, the Autobiography of Jessie O. Thomas p140
22. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p35
23. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p28

III. Significance

Mr. Thomas wrote, “The excellence of the Negro exhibit, which has received universal praise, can be ascribed to the work of the Advisory Committee which collected, organized, and assembled the great number of artistic and scientific objects which are on display”.²⁴ Planning, setup, and organization of the Hall’s exhibits were successful because of the efforts of Assistant Manager A. Maceo Smith and Dr. Evans.²⁵ They typified progress made by Negroes in art, literature, craft, music, agriculture, medicine, education, invention, business and religion.²⁶ There were nearly 400 exhibits assembled from 32 states and the District of Columbia. A majority of the exhibits came from Southern states. The Federal Government supplied 78 exhibits with Texas displaying the greatest number of exhibits from a state with 76, New York next with 42 followed by Georgia with 23.²⁷ The exhibits were assembled under six major classifications: Education, Fine Arts, Health, Agriculture, Mechanical Arts and Business.²⁸

Mr. Thomas also stated, “The exhibits are well arranged and representative of the Negro’s contribution in American culture”.²⁹ He added a quote from Missouri Congressman Joseph B. Shannon, “No one can come into this building and inspect these exhibits without having his appreciation of the Negro’s artistic abilities heightened”.³⁰

The Education exhibits consisted of graphs, charts, pictures, maps and printed material. The Black Colleges represented were Howard University, (Washington, D.C.), Fisk University, Tennessee, Hampton Institute, (Hampton, Virginia), Tuskegee Institute, (Tuskegee, Alabama), Prairie View State College, (Prairie View, Texas), Bishop and Wiley Colleges, (Marshall, Texas), and Xavier University, (New Orleans, Louisiana).³¹

The Fine Arts section featured paintings, drawings, graphic arts, sculpture, architecture, drama and music. According to Mr. Thomas, there was a \$75,000 collection of Negro paintings, sculptures and graphic arts³² which were assembled by the Harmon Foundation.³³

The Health exhibits included posters, pictures, charts, maps, diagrams that depicted images of health activities from county, city, and state health units. Also featured were photographs of general practice physicians, surgeons and specialists. Exhibits featured the National Tuberculosis Association and the United States Public Health Service.³⁴

The Agriculture exhibits featured dioramas of miniature farms, maps, farm implements made and manufactured by Negroes. In this section were demonstrations and discoveries presented by the eminent analytical chemist, Dr. George W. Carver.³⁵ The Business section included documents and images of insurance companies, retail stores, manufacturers, laundries, hotels, theaters, printing shops, undertakers and cafeterias.

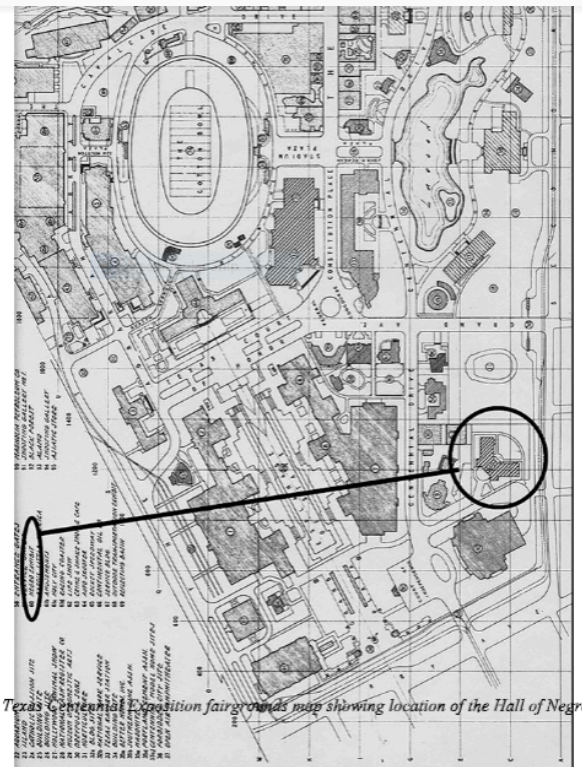
The Newspaper exhibit consisted of sample copies of Negro newspapers. This exhibit was assembled by the director of the Associated Negro Press which served news to Negro weeklies.³⁶

When the Texas Centennial Exposition ended over 400,000 people came to the Hall of Negro Life building to see the Negro exhibit, at least 275,000 were White³⁷ The Dallas Express Weekly published comments in its July 25, 1939 edition, one of which was from Dallas Mayor George Sergeant, who said, “The items to be witnessed in the Negro exhibit building are a true revelation to me. I urge each of us in the South to see this exhibit. It will lead to a better understanding of our races”.³⁸

24. Jessie O. Thomas, My Story in Black and White, the Autobiography of Jessie O. Thomas, p133
25. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p45
26. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p31
27. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p35
28. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p28
29. Jessie O. Thomas, My Story in Black and White, the Autobiography of Jessie O. Thomas, p133
30. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p104
31. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p30
32. Jessie O. Thomas, My Story in Black and White, the Autobiography of Jessie O. Thomas, p141
33. Anne Evenhaugen, February 22, 2013, African American Art in the Harmon Foundation, Unbound, Smithsonian Libraries and Archives, (blog.library.si.edu)
34. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p33
35. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p32
36. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p33
37. Jessie O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, p86
38. Dallas Express, July 25, 1936, COMMENT ON EXHIBITS, Proves Very Popular On Fair Grounds



Typical Hall of Negro Life Exhibit



36 Texas Centennial Exposition fairgrounds map showing location of the Hall of Negro Life

Forest Hills celebrates 100 years!

By Judy Whalen

Forest Hills is a neighborhood in East Dallas. It borders White Rock Lake to the north.

With Forest Hills approaching its 100-year celebration in 2024, the Forest Hills Neighborhood Association will develop a Forest Hills digital library collection of historical information about our homes circa 1920-1930-1940, notable residents, trees, urban myths, fun facts and more!

Warren Angus Ferris could be considered the Father of Forest Hills. “In 1849, Warren Ferris settled down after years of surveying the Dallas County area to farming east of White Rock Creek within the borders of what is now Forest Hills. His log cabin stood on the eastern edge of a large grove of trees about 200 yards east of a large grove of trees about 200 yards east of the present junction of St Francis Drive and Garland Road, where he farmed 85 acres. He had six head of horses, 30 head of cattle, 80 head of hogs, two dogs, three cats, 200 chickens and hives of bees. The thickest of white Rock Creek provided some of the best hunting. Everywhere deer, turkeys, and prairie chickens were thick as ants on the hills and bear, panthers, wolves and wildcats kept to the river and creek bottoms. Buffalo, wild mustangs and maverick cattle roamed. On White Rock Creek near where the spillway of White Rock Lake is presently located, Ferris built a gristmill. He fished White Rock Creek and also Ash Creek that runs along our present-day Barbaree / Forest Meade neighbors.



Throughout time, Ferris sold off acres of his property. Ferris died in 1873 and was buried in the Warren Angus Ferris Cemetery. In 1988 his cemetery at St Francis and San Leandro received a Texas Historical Marker, bringing long-overdue attention to the accomplishments of this pioneer Dallas settler.

After the homestead was destroyed by 1875, the old log cabin became a stopover for drifters, as did the vacant Ferris farmhouse he had built later. Some say the James boys (gang) stayed there and Sam Brass and his gang holed up in the farm house prior to their robbery of the Texas & Pacific train in Mesquite in 1878. The house was destroyed by fire around 1909.

In the 1840s, while Texas was still an independent republic, settlers like Warren Ferris began establishing homesteads on the high grounds surrounding the White Rock Valley. In this once shallow-lined valley Indigenous Peoples hunted for bison that came to drink from White Rock Creek and graze its grassy banks. It was there that Warren Ferris had once fished and had built a grist mill little knowing that eventually it would be converted into a beautiful lake.

In the early 1900s when Dallas had a growing need for water resources, a dam was built on White Rock Creek forming a reservoir and the first water from it was pumped into the Dallas mains. Dallasites quickly discovered the lake and the surrounding land was an ideal place for outdoor sports. The lake became known as the “People’s Playground” with weekend cabins being the first structures along its banks. At one time there were more than a hundred private fishing cabins! A fish house still exists in the back yard of one San Fernando Way house!

By April 1924, Leon L. Fechenback had dedicated the plat of the Forest Hills Addition, six miles from the Dallas city limits, bounded by Garland Road (old Bankhead Highway); Lakeland Drive (old John West Road); the Santa Fe Railroad tracks; Highland Road (then called Wilshire Blvd.); and one block of San Rafael Drive. An advertisement in the November 30, 1924 Dallas Morning News shows an English tudor house with the headline, "Forest Hills along the shores of White Rock Lake" and the proclamation, "Your home in a forest" - built among massive oak, elm, and pecan trees - within a stone's throw of beautiful White Rock Lake- is possible in only one addition - FOREST HILLS- and with the city's announcement of White Rock Lake being turned into a pleasure lake upon the completion of the Garza project, assures you all the advantages at your front door."

At that time, Forest Hills was truly in the country and was one of the few wooded areas around the lake, which lured the first local home builders. Forest Hills was officially annexed into Dallas in May 1945.

Another news article boasted, "One of the most beautiful scenic home spots, Forest Hills addition, owned by Leon L. Fechenback is a thickly wooded hill overlooking White Rock Lake. Like the additions on the other sides, this has been completely paved and improved and the Dallas Gas company is now laying 6,000 feet of high-pressure gas mains to connect it with the city fuel system. Forest Hills has its own water supply, a 1,200-foot artesian well with a high-pressure pumping plant. More than \$50,000 already has been spent on residential construction and a quarter-million more is in view, according to H.W. Brouse, developer."

One hundred years later, Forest Hills is a quiet, tree-shaded area of homes without the feeling of being within the large bustling city of Dallas. Its residents can be seen throughout the neighborhood, walking, running and bicycling along White Rock Lake and generally enjoying this unique oasis of calm in the city.



The 1936 Hall of Negro Life Historical Marker Is Installed at the African American Museum At Fair Park

by Joan Bouldin

On December 9, 2023, a historical marker was dedicated on the grounds of the African American Museum to memorialize the Hall of Negro Life. The Hall was part of the Texas Centennial Exposition of 1936 which commemorated the 100-year anniversary of the Texas independence from Mexico.

The 1936 Exposition was one of the many public works projects that were funded by the federal government under the New Deal enacted by President Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression. The jobs created for the Texas Centennial also helped the Dallas economy.

Even though the State of Texas originally agreed to fund the Hall of Negro Life, the state pulled back its support after A. Maceo Smith and other African American leaders refused to urge Ammon Wells to not seek elected office. The federal government funded the Hall of Negro Life at the urging of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce and other Black groups. The federal Negro Advisory Committee, chaired by Eugene K. Jones, planned the exhibition, and selected Jesse O. Thomas of the National Urban League as general manager. Antonio Maceo Smith, a Dallas high school principal and leader of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce, became the assistant general manager. Dallas architect George Dahl designed the building. Thomas credits the success of the Hall's exhibits to A. Maceo Smith.



ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Seated on front row, reading from left to right: C. P. Johnson, Miss Earline Carson, Mrs. Ethel Scott Maynard, A. Maceo Smith, Assistant General Manager, Jesse C. Thomas, General Manager, Alonzo A. Aden, Mrs. Bernice Galloway, Miss Margaret Burrell, Thomas Holley.

Standing on second row, dressed in white: The nurse aides who served in the Health Department of the W. P. A. Project.

Standing on third row: Students on N. Y. A. Project who were trained as part of intelligence personnel.

The Texas Centennial opened June 6, 1936. The opening of the Hall of Negro Life was delayed due to alleged code violations until June 19. The building faced north just east of the General Motors exhibit. The large seal over the door, sculptured by Raoul Jossset, depicted a figure with broken chains.

The lobby of the Hall displayed four murals of Black History in Texas that were painted by Aaron Douglas. The Hall housed six main exhibits: Education, Health, Agriculture, Mechanical Arts, Business and Industry and Fine Arts. On display were works of African American artists that were lent from various collections throughout the country. Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia contributed to the exhibits at the Hall which included a 2,000-seat outdoor amphitheater. Visitors received educational pamphlets by prominent writers such as W. E. B Dubois and Charles E. Hall.

On December 30, 1936 the City of Dallas passed a resolution that stated "...we do not feel that the Negro Building would be of any value to the new exhibition" (Pan American Exposition). The structure for The Hall of Negro Life was subsequently torn down before the Pan American Exposition.

It is estimated that approximately 400, 000 people visited the Hall of Negro Life.

Sources

Texas Centennial Exposition opens, June 6, 1936 article, Texas State Historical Association Online (www.tshaonline.org)

Jesse O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition, 1938 African American Museum



historical commission members with the Executive Director, CEO Dr. Robinson of African American Museum where marker is placed

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