

FROM OLD SOUTH TO MODERN WEST:
FORT WORTH'S CELEBRATION OF THE TEXAS STATE CENTENNIAL
AND THE SHAPING OF AN URBAN IDENTITY AND IMAGE

by

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INTRODUCTION

It is a truism that the more exciting and colorful the story, the wider the audience.

--Robert G. Athearn, *The Mythic West*

After weeks of delay, in the afternoon on July 18, 1936, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, aboard his yacht floating off the coast of Maine, pressed a button sending a signal via radio and Western Union telegraph lines to the front gate of Fort Worth's celebration of the Texas State centennial. With thousands of onlookers cheering, the signal sent a knife slicing through a ribbon attached to a lasso stretched across the entrance to the centennial grounds where large letters over the turnstiles read in rough-hewn letters "Where the West Begins [sic]."¹ The event marked the beginning of the "Frontier Centennial," Fort Worth's four-month celebration of the Texas livestock industry and the city's storied past as frontier settlement on Trinity River. But for a variety of reasons, the message of the Frontier Centennial did not really speak to those commemorative objectives. Consciously distancing the event from anything as banal as historic commemoration, planners hoped to draw millions of visitors from around the state and nation with a celebration based on popular frontier mythology. Fort Worth called to Americans laden with fears about what the future of their nation would bring and the current woes of the depressed economy to escape into the thrilling days of the Old West. Omitting references to traditional commemorative fare such as pageants or historical exhibits, promotional literature for the Frontier Centennial

¹ "Route Impulse Will Travel to Open Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 17, 1936, 1. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* come from the morning edition. Opening day brought twenty-five-thousand visitors to the Frontier Centennial, see Jan Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1999), 76, 77.

boasted “a living, breathing recreation of the Old West” fashioned purely for the fun and entertainment of fair goers. “Go Elsewhere for Education” the slogan went, alluding to the neighboring Texas State Centennial Exposition in Dallas, “Come to Fort Worth for Entertainment.”

Rather than highlighting the distinctive western history of Fort Worth or West Texas, the Frontier Centennial presented a more homogenous mythic West bringing together most of the forms of entertainment depicting the western American experience for tourists in the 1930s. The celebration featured standard western favorites such as a horse show, rodeo, and Wild West show including live bison, whooping Indians, sharpshooting cavalrymen, and trick riding cowboys. Frontier Centennial planners further wrapped these attractions in a western themed environment with recreated buildings typifying the frontier such as a stockade, Old West Main Street, train station, and Native American village. Less a composition of historic facts, the “recreation of the Old West” exhibited an easily consumable western experience with wide appeal easily sold to Americans. With broad strokes, centennial planners hoped to paint a western landscape priming America’s imagination with widely understood western symbolism. But more than that, planners sought to create a utopia of pure leisure where, unlike the centennial exhibits and shows in Dallas, all entertainment could be enjoyed sitting down, “You don’t have to stand up at Fort Worth.”²

Centennial planners always intended to host a celebration with a dominant western message, although, their initial conception of the event oriented more toward honoring

² *Wild and Whoo-Pee: Fort Worth Frontier* (Fort Worth, 1936), Special Collections, Mary Couts Burnett Library, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth (cited hereafter as TCU/SC).

Fort Worth's western heritage and its contribution to the Texas livestock industry.

Celebrating Fort Worth's western past appealed to civic leaders and politicians because it paired Fort Worth with the distinctly American ideals of progress, independence, and self-reliance. The West provided a past to match Fort Worth's projected image as a thriving and progressive metropolis. Furthermore, civic leaders and centennial planners wanted to host a profitable event to help boost Fort Worth's sluggish economy in the midst of the Great Depression. Fearing a largely commemorative celebration would fail to attract enough visitors to Fort Worth's celebration, Frontier Centennial planners belatedly turned to New Yorker and Broadway producer Billy Rose. Though he dismissed much of the commemorative features of the celebration as dull, Rose embraced the western theme for its universal appeal and its great potential for sensationalism and spectacle. Rose relished the opportunity to dramatize hostile Indians raiding stage coaches and mail carriers, and other violent conflicts between cowboys and Indians, though Fort Worth's early history mostly lacked such conflicts. He kept some concepts initiated by centennial planners such as the recreation of a frontier village, but by dropping features such as a reproduction of the original Fort Worth military outpost he sanitized them of local flavor in favor of presenting a more entertaining and widely accepted conception of the American West.

Still, the celebration was not entirely bereft of commemorative offerings. Prior to Rose's arrival, the Women's Division of the Frontier Centennial Exposition Commission, composed primarily of Fort Worth club women, played a leading role in the shaping of the celebration. Seeking to imbue the celebration with some references to Fort Worth's western heritage and the Texas livestock industry in the face of Rose's alterations, the

Women's Division fought for the inclusion of historical and cultural attractions. Ultimately the Women's Division presented a museum of relics belonging to the major periods of Texas history, a large collection of western American art, and a library including rare books and documents on Texas's livestock industry and western past. In the long run the sensationalized expressions of the mythic West muted the celebration's location-specific commemorative message. In this work, I trace the evolution of the Frontier Centennial from its inception as a commemorative fair to themed park enshrining the mythic West to show the various ways centennial planners, boosters, and civic leaders sought to use the celebration as a means to bolster the city's identity and image as a modern city of the American West.

In order to appreciate the development of the Frontier Centennial, one must first understand the formation of Fort Worth's identity as a western city and accompanying public image. Studies investigating the identities of groups such as families, societies, or nations have found that identity is intimately linked with how a group collectively remembers its past. Despite its critics, who argue that current memory discourse lacks a sufficiently refined definition or sound methodology, scholars of history, anthropology, and literature have nevertheless produced a deluge of works analyzing the function of memory in society.³ As put by Alon Confino, these studies generally understand "collective memory"

³ See Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, "Collective Memory—What Is It?" *History & Memory* 8, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1996): 30-50; Wulf Kansteiner "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (May 2002): 179-197; and Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (December 1997): 1386-1403.

or “public memory” to mean “the ways in which people construct a sense of the past.”⁴

Kerwin Lee Klein further explained that “[collective memory] is a diverse and shifting collection of material artifacts and social practices.”⁵ Such artifacts and practices include the construction of monuments and museums, the celebration of holidays and commemorations, and the preservation of texts and film. These mnemonic aids and their cultural interpretation represent the core of a society’s historical memory. More than objectively preserving its history, Jan Assmann noted, “Cultural memory . . . always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation.”⁶ Simply put, collective memory is more a reflection of the needs of the present-day society than of its past. Moreover, because of the cultural power attached to controlling collective memory, its construction is often associated with the exercise of power within a society. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage explained “Groups routinely sort the past in a particular way to legitimize their current power or aspirations.”⁷

Studies of memory suggest that collective memory and cultural identity are closely linked because a society’s historical artifacts create a sense of group cohesion and peculiarity through shared cultural knowledge. John Gillis in his study of national identity argued “The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by

⁴ Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History,” 1386.

⁵ Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 130.

⁶ Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (Spring-Summer, 1995): 130.

⁷ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “No Deed but Memory,” in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 11.

the assumed identity.”⁸ In addition, providing a sense of unity and sameness, identity is often ego based distinguishing itself from the “other.” According to Assmann identity “sets the parameters for what a group is or what a group is not.”⁹ Of necessity, any discussion of Fort Worth’s identity must begin with an analysis of the city’s “collective memory” and the contemporary needs of the city as understood by the political, economic, and cultural elite.

Much like the rest in Texas, Fort Worth possesses a split identity.¹⁰ Culturally and geographically Fort Worth straddles two worlds. On the one hand, Fort Worth, and Texas in general, inherited a southern past. Southern states supplied the city with most of its early Anglo pioneers who brought with them slaves, cotton, and southern ranching culture.¹¹ Though home to few large plantations or slaveholders, Tarrant County (which includes Fort Worth) voted in favor of secession to preserve the institution of slavery. Following the war, former Confederates fleeing the Deep South for a better future settled in Fort Worth and Tarrant County and played a singular role in their development and the maintenance of the cultural attitudes of the Jim Crow South.¹² On the other hand, situated just east of ninety-eighth meridian, Fort Worth stood on the environmental precipice of the West. Moving

⁸ John R. Gillis, “Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

⁹ Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 130.

¹⁰ For example, see Laura Hernandez-Ehrisman, *Inventing the Fiesta City: Heritage and Carnival in San Antonio* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

¹¹ See Terry G. Jordan, *Trails to Texas: Southern Roots of Western Cattle Ranching* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

¹² Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 46-58. Michael Q. Hooks estimated that seventy-five percent of Fort Worth’s early boosters came from the South. See Michael Q. Hooks, “The Role of Promoters in Urban Rivalry: The Dallas-Fort Worth Experience, 1870-1910,” *Red River Valley Historical Review* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 5.

west from Fort Worth, precipitation declines and vegetation changes dramatically and the topography flattens into the southern Great Plains. Historian Walter Prescott Webb argued that such environmental changes created a uniquely western culture.¹³ As a military outpost on the Trinity River supporting forts further west in the 1850s, Fort Worth played part in the westward movement of the line dividing settled from unsettled lands and later served as a major terminal for ranchers and cowpunchers driving cattle from Texas to northern markets. Thus, the city drew its identity from both the South and the West.

If Fort Worth is a product of both southern and western parentage, recent research analyzing Texas's identity suggests the city initially favored its southern parent more than its western parent. In his recent analysis of Texas identity, Texas Historian Glen Ely found that those Texas communities situated between the ninety-eighth and one-hundredth meridians exhibited characteristics from both the West and South. In this "shatterbelt" region the collision of ecological and cultural traits of the two larger regions created cities with mixed identities. Furthermore, Ely explains that cities to the west of the shatterbelt, such as El Paso and Lubbock, have much more in common with the American West than cities to the east of the belt where characteristics of the Old South are dominant. Situated to the east of the ninety-eighth meridian, Fort Worth falls outside shatterbelt and therefore among the more distinctively southern communities of Texas.¹⁴

¹³ Because of the changes in topography, vegetation, and climate, Walter Prescott Webb suggested that at the ninety-eighth parallel represented the dividing line between the eastern and western United States. See Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (1931; repr., New York: Ginn and Company, 1959).

¹⁴ Glen Sample Ely, *Where the West Begins: Debating Texas Identity* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 9, 11-12.

Texas historiography reflects the diversity and complexity of its identity. Since the early twentieth-century scholars wishing to classify the state have attached Texas with the South or West depending upon the perspective of the author and the evidence used. Historians such as Walter Prescott Webb and Eugene C. Barker, influenced by Fredrick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," emphasized the significance of the state's western frontier period in the shaping of the state. Writing later in the century, historians such as Walter L. Buenger and Randolph B. Campbell have countered with an approach emphasizing the importance of southern culture to the state's history.¹⁵

To understand Texas's identity scholars have also begun to look to the study of memory. Gregg Cantrell has convincingly demonstrated that politicians during the Progressive-Era worked to shape "a new public view of Texas history that emphasized Texas as both a *Western* and a quintessentially *American* state whose identity sprang from the hardy pioneers who tamed the wilderness and defeated the Mexicans in the Texas Revolution."¹⁶ Through the removal of the remains of Stephen F. Austin to the state's capital, the commissioning of monuments honoring Texas pioneers, and the restoration and veneration of the Alamo, progressive politicians turned their back on the poverty and defeat of the South and its devotion to the Lost Cause by creating a more usable memory pointing toward a progressive Texas future. The new memory became so ingrained in public

¹⁵ For a review of Texas historiography see Ely, *Where the West Begins*, 5-7; Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert, "The Shelf Life of Truth in Texas," in *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations* ed. Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991), ix-xxxv. Buenger claimed Texas was "a southern place—with a Texas twist." Walter L. Buenger, "Texas and the South," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 103, no. 3 (January 2000): 309.

¹⁶ Gregg Cantrell, "The Bones of Stephen F. Austin: History and Memory in Progressive-Era Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (October 2004): 148.

consciousness that it influenced the perspective and writings of Texas history.¹⁷ Moreover, with its theme of progress, the Texas State Centennial in 1936, according to Walter L. Buenger, “culminated a two-decade old process—the conscious and unconscious distancing of a people from the South of defeat and poor expectations.”¹⁸ It is within this larger shift in Texas memory that Fort Worth began to reshape its own memory and identity.

The gradually increasing emphasis on Fort Worth’s western past and the forgetting of its southern roots began in the first few decades of the twentieth-century. These decades witnessed exponential growth for the city and marked its birth as a modern metropolis. The arrival of Armour and Swift in 1903 brought meat packing jobs and growth in the local livestock industry. Following the discovery of oil in West Texas, petroleum money inundated Fort Worth. The construction of refineries brought additional jobs and Fort Worth became a center for the oil industry in the state and region. City boosters worked to secure an army camp and several air fields during World War I, resulting in the city’s fledgling aviation industry. Finally, between 1909 and 1929, Fort Worth led the state in percentage increase of manufacturing. As a result of the city’s economic growth, its population grew exponentially.¹⁹

In developing a coherent strategy for economic growth city boosters, civic leaders, and cultural elites found the progressive message of the American West more appealing

¹⁷ Cantrell, “The Bones of Stephen F. Austin,” 177.

¹⁸ Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 258.

¹⁹ See Robert H. Talbert, *Cowtown—Metropolis: Case Study of a City’s Growth and Structure* (Fort Worth: Leo Potishman Foundation, Texas Christian University, 1956), 2-7.

than the South's legacy of defeat and concomitant devotion to the Lost Cause.²⁰ Similar to most Americans, Fort Worth boosters "associated the American West with the future, one of independence and self-reliance."²¹ The reshaping of its historical memory came through the publication of popular histories casting Fort Worth as a town typical of the Old West, celebrations commemorating the city's pioneer heritage, and Fort Worth's annual hosting of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show. Providing a counterpoint to early published recollection such as J. C. Terrell's *Reminiscences of the Early Days of Fort Worth*, in which much of the narrative is oriented around the Confederacy and the Civil War, Buckley B. Paddock, long time resident, booster, and publisher of the *Democrat*, characterized Fort Worth as a quintessential western town in his popular *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest Edition*.²² In the four volume history published in 1922 he wrote: "The town was typical of Western life; rushing business, noisy, boisterous existence, in which the cowboy and his twin companion, the six-shooter, figured conspicuously. . . . Fort Worth was the clearing house between the legally constituted society of the East and the free and untrammelled life of the West."²³ Because Paddock lived in Fort Worth during those years and knew many of its pioneer residents, his description of Fort Worth as a western city added weight to his claims. Importantly, Paddock situates Fort

²⁰ Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 4; Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 258.

²¹ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 88-89.

²² See J. C. Terrell, *Reminiscences of the Early Days of Fort Worth* (1906; repr., Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1999).

²³ B. B. Paddock, *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest Edition*, vol. 2 (Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1922), 613-614.

Worth on the western side of the line separating East and West. But more than a reference to the city's geographic location, Paddock defined Fort Worth's history as a western town in relationship with the "society of the East"—a veiled reference to Fort Worth's eastern neighbor and rival Dallas. Since the 1870s the cities sparred for economic dominance of the region—Fort Worth looking to the oil, agriculture, and cattle of West Texas and Dallas as gateway to the East.²⁴ It is significant to note that in the reshaping of Fort Worth's "collective memory" boosters like Paddock chose to embrace and promote a heritage which Dallas could not claim—it being east, and not west, of Fort Worth. Because the two cities are linked by geography, Fort Worth's identity as a western place should, at least in part, be understood as a response to Dallas or the "other."

Other authors also contributed to the canon of Fort Worth's western memory adding fallacious tales meant to validate the city's frontier past. For all of the cowboys with six-shooters roaming the stockyards or murders in "Hell's Half Acre" Fort Worth's notorious red-light district, Fort Worth's early historical record lacked a substantial conflict with hostile Native Americans—an important element of the mythic West. Most of the Native American groups to inhabit North Texas such as the Anadarko, Ionie, and Tonkawa were peaceful and agrarian. Moreover, early pioneers noted only occasionally interacting with Native Americans.²⁵ In *A Ranger of Commerce or 52 Years on the Road*, Howard W. Peak, son of a Fort Worth pioneer, created out of whole cloth a raid orchestrated by bloodthirsty Comanches attempting to exterminate the garrison at Fort Worth. In the ensuing conflict

²⁴ See Hooks, "The Role of Promoters in Urban Rivalry," 4-16.

²⁵ Richard F. Selcer, "Setting the Record Straight: Fort Worth and the Historians," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (January 1997): 374.

Major Ripley Arnold and his garrison killed thirty-seven Native Americans and wounded fifteen others.²⁶ As noted by Fort Worth historian Richard Selcer the fraudulent tale, now accepted as historic fact, made its way into local lore through repeated references in historical books and reference works on the city's history. Moreover, the placement of a cast-concrete monument on Summit Avenue commemorating the conflict has also contributed to the tale's durability.²⁷ In his study of Montana's pioneer generation, Clyde A. Milner II found that pioneers often fabricated encounters with Native Americans to "certify [their] overland journey."²⁸ Similarly, because of the powerful symbolic importance of aggressive Native Americans to the mythic West, such fabrications helped bind Fort Worth in a meaningful way to larger narratives of national expansion.

The 1923 the celebration of the city's seventy-fifth anniversary provided city officials with another opportunity to fortify Fort Worth's western memory. Diamond Jubilee planners selected an Old West theme to commemorate the event. A brochure for the four-day event, picturing a cowboy and pioneer women on the cover, promised "the greatest frolic of fun that was ever held in the Grand Old West," and that "The Western spirit and hospitality will prevail." Festivities included, among other things, a historical pageant with a cast of 2,500, and stage coach and pony express races. In honor of Fort Worth's pioneers, a dinner was held in the Texas Hotel with the venerable Amon G. Carter, publisher of the *Fort*

²⁶ See Howard W. Peak, *A Ranger of Commerce or 52 Years on the Road* (San Antonio: Naylor Printing Company, 1929), 163-177.

²⁷ Selcer, "Setting the Record Straight," 373.

²⁸ Clyde A. Milner, "The Shared Memory of Montana's Pioneers," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 37, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 4-5.

Worth Star-Telegram and notorious promoter of the city's western identity, acting as toastmaster.²⁹

Fort Worth's annual hosting of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show was perhaps the most important element in solidifying its western identity. Meant to support the city's livestock exchange and attract meatpacking interests to the city, beginning in the late nineteenth-century the stock show welcomed ranchers and cowboys to conduct business in the city. During the first three decades of the twentieth-century, as discussed in greater length in the next chapter, stock show owners worked to widen the appeal of the event to locals who possessed little or no knowledge of the livestock industry by adding entertainment venues such as carnival rides, sporting events, and rodeos. At the same time, stock show officials also shed features commemorating the Confederacy such as raising the Confederate flag or Confederate military drills conducted by Confederate Commemorative groups in favor of offerings with a western theme. By ritualizing Fort Worth's frontier past, the stock show, as an expression of cultural memory, established a much greater historical continuity with the West, than occasional celebrations such as the Diamond Jubilee. According to W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Such routinized performances are essential to the diffusion and enduring cultural authority of historical memory."³⁰ Moreover, Frank E. Manning has argued that celebrations like the stock show function as texts which reveal a "community's internal social relations and its identity vis-avis the outside world." Such celebrations characteristically include: the performance of "cultural symbols," the conscious

²⁹ Diamond Jubilee Committee, *Diamond Jubilee*, (Fort Worth: Claud Gross Co., 1923), and Diamond Jubilee Dinner [Program], 1923, Box 89, Folder "Fort Worth Diamond Jubilee Celebration, Amon G. Carter Papers, TCU/SC.

³⁰ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "No Deed but Memory," 9.

or unconscious presentation of such symbols and ideology for entertainment, engagement with the public, and the participation of spectators. Elites, who dominate the social order, Manning explained, typically control such “cultural productions” within a society.³¹ Through the attendance of and participation in the stock show, Fort Worth citizens both accepted and fortified the message presented by civic leaders and economic boosters regarding Fort Worth’s western heritage.

Public image both flows from and reinforces a group’s identity. Image, simply put, is the part of identity presented for outside consumption. Like collective memory and group identity, image is often controlled by elites within the community. Boosters, politicians, and newspapermen work to spin a specific image using recognized symbols such as mountains, parks, architectural styles, skyscrapers, cattle, and cowboys in advertisements, billboards, or promotional literature. Woven together these threads create the unique contours of a particular image. Though boosters assume the lead in promoting image, community members also care about and contribute to the public perceptions of their city.³²

Fort Worth’s path to a useful identity and public image is typical of thousands of communities in the United States. In many examples, public memory and image hide often conflicting and unflattering features of the past. In San Antonio, for example, boosters preferred to romanticize the Mexican influences on the city for tourism in the annual

³¹ Frank E. Manning, “Cosmos and Chaos: Celebration in the Modern World,” in *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance* ed. Frank E. Manning (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1983), 4, 7, 11 (quotation).

³² For recent discussions of the construction of public image in the West, see Bonnie Christensen, *Red Lodge and the Mythic West: Coal Miners to Cowboys* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), xiv-xv; and Alicia Barber, *Reno’s Big Gamble: Image and Reputation in the Biggest Little City* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 5-6.

celebration of Fiesta, while the southern practice of Jim Crow displaced Mexicanos. For the sake of tourism, Santa Fe, New Mexico, harmonized historic racial conflicts between Anglos, Mexicans, and Native Americans through the adoption of romantic adobe architectural styles to create a “unifying vision of the city, its people, and their history.”³³ Likewise, boosters in Southern California drew upon Spanish forms of architecture to romanticize the region’s Spanish past and promote the city as an appealing place to live and play.³⁴ In the city of Red Lodge, Montana, boosters opted to promote a memory of cowboys and ranching over its roots as a mining town. Based upon the city’s new identity, civic leaders remodeled the town’s appearance after prevailing ideas about the look of the Old West. Red Lodge is typical of “theme towns” which for various reasons turned to tourism to remain economically viable.³⁵

In Fort Worth, leaders looked to a western past as a useful reflection of current economic aspirations, rather than as a tourist gambit. For many Americans of the Progressive Era the West became a powerful symbol. Fort Worth civic leaders, like many progressives such as Theodore Roosevelt, sought to reap the benefits of industrialism while, at the same time, hold to individual freedoms associated with the frontier. Though the stock show increasingly appealed to tourists with images of cowboys, chuck wagons, and cattle drives, boosters and civic leaders developed a more nuanced image for the city’s promotion. They exhibited no interest in reshaping its physical landscape after romantic

³³ Hernandez-Ehrisman, *Inventing the Fiesta City*, 12-13. Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 7-8 (quotation).

³⁴ Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1.

³⁵ Christensen, *Red Lodge and the Mythic West*, xii-xiii.

depictions of the Southwest. Rather, boosters preferred to cast Fort Worth as a futuristic and growing metropolis tapping the vast resources of its hinterlands in West Texas. Chamber of Commerce literature often pictured downtown Fort Worth with towering skyscrapers bustling with commerce and industry and trains, planes, and automobiles moving swiftly to the west in the foreground. Other images evoked the city's western heritage with pioneers looking into the future and dreaming of a fortress-like city enshrouded in clouds.³⁶ The images boosters conjured began to take physical form in the 1920s and 30s as dozens of private and public buildings designed in the Moderne style in vogue filled Fort Worth's skyline. Fort Worth eventually became a western bastion of Art Deco.³⁷ Expressing the sentiment of the time, an ad for office space read "The Modern Spirit of the West is Reflected in these Buildings."³⁸ Though messages and images of progress and modernity always graced its covers and front pages, the city's promotional materials also depicted its bygone days as a frontier settlement as not in the too-distant past. In truth, civic leaders in Fort Worth wanted the best of both worlds. They sought to depict their city as possessing the characteristics of modernity while maintaining its wide-open agricultural spaces and the hospitable feel of a small western cow-town. The dichotomy between modern and western is exhibited in the city's slogan—"Where the West Begins." Promoted by Amon Carter and printed on the masthead of his newspaper since the 1920s, the phrase evokes both images of past and present. Americans viewed the frontier as not only the

³⁶ Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, "Fort Worth, 1929," (No publication data), Box 21, Folder 45 "Fort Worth, 1929," Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce Papers, TCU/SC.

³⁷ See Judith Singer Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth, Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988).

³⁸ *The Westerner*, Playbill (Fort Worth, 1940), Tarrant County Archives, Fort Worth, Texas.

dividing line between east and west but the verge of settled and unsettled, civilized and savage, and metropolis and wilderness.³⁹ Fort Worth civic leaders and booster identified their city as the very point of regeneration.

The continued struggle for boosters and civic leaders to maintain a balanced image of past and present stemmed from Fort Worth's close proximity to Dallas. Geography placed Fort Worth in a dangerous position, and its identity and public image played an important role in the town's cultural and economic survival. Claiming a western heritage prevented Fort Worth from becoming derivative in the shadow of its growing doppelganger. The casting of Fort Worth as a progressive western city with a modern look made it a viable candidate for manufacturers and merchants interested in the region. Boosters regularly fine-tuned Fort Worth's image to meet its contemporary needs. At no time was the need greater for civic leaders and boosters to maintain the city's image of modern western municipality than during the Great Depression. The Frontier Centennial is compelling because it illustrates the ways in which civic leaders and boosters used the celebration to simultaneously extend the city's image of western cowtown and modern city. Moreover, it illustrates the ways in which elite-driven identities and images are contested when they fail to align with the interests of underprivileged groups.

My examination of the Frontier Centennial looks at two distinctive processes. The first addresses the interplay of memory, identity, and image in the development of the celebration's commemorative messages. Fort Worth civic leaders and boosters viewed the state's centennial year as a means to further bolster the city's image as a western

³⁹ Ely, *Where the West Begins*, 3; Michael L. Johnson, *Hunger for the Wild: America's Obsession with the Untamed West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 207.

metropolis through a celebration of the livestock industry. They hoped to build modern stock show facilities and remove it to a more advantageous and prosperous part of town. In this way the public face of an industry, so vital to both the city's image and economy, would also reflect the city's images of progress and modernity. In the achievement of these goals, Fort Worth found a willing financial partner in the federal government. Civic leaders and boosters successfully procured millions of dollars from New Dealers in Washington who embraced the notions of progress, civic pride, and local development. By seeking federal funding to help alleviate economic conditions, Fort Worth and Texas in general behaved more like western municipalities than southern ones, who resisted federal aid during the Great Depression.⁴⁰ Fort Worth's image as a progressive western metropolis also impacted other less central areas of Frontier Centennial planning. Debates over how outsiders would interpret features of the celebration, carried on by club women and others, reveal the interest the citizenry held in upholding or contesting the city's modern image.

The Frontier Centennial also provides a poignant example of how public memories and celebratory messages are crafted. In the case of Fort Worth, club women played an integral role in forming the commemorative content of the celebration. After creating commemorative features, based on Fort Worth's history, the Women's Division presented the information to the Board of Control. This board, composed of men, then selected which venues would be included and those that would not. In the process, planners circumscribed

⁴⁰ Buenger, "Texas and the South," 312. Western states in general received more funding from New Deal programs than other states. For a discussion of how the federal funding influenced the American West during the Great Depression, see Gerald D. Nash, *The Federal Landscape: An Economic History of the Twentieth Century West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 21-39; Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

Fort Worth's memory of the past as presented in celebration. Thus, they cleansed the celebration's western message of inconsistencies and unwanted pasts often at the expense of non-whites. The commemorative venues produced for the Frontier Centennial reveal how civic leaders and boosters preferred citizens and visitors remember their city's history. In this work I examine the ways Fort Worth's memory, identity, and image were maintained through various ways and process in the production of the Frontier Centennial.

Overlapping with the issues of memory and identity, the second process addresses how the larger narratives of the mythic West influenced the content of the celebration. My use of the term myth borrows heavily from Richard Slotkin's study of the growth and history of the frontier myth from 1600 to today in his three-volume study *Regeneration Through Violence, The Fatal Environment, and Gunfighter Nation*. In these studies Slotkin uses myth in an anthropological sense suggesting that myths "are stories drawn from a society's history that have acquired through persistent usage the power of symbolizing that society's ideology and of dramatizing its moral consciousness—with all the complexities and contradictions that consciousness may contain."⁴¹ Though drawn from actual events or people, the myth reduces the past to its "ideological essence."⁴² Mythmakers, like historians, draw upon facts to explain and give meaning to a particular world view.

Since the early republic, Americans endowed the frontier with ideological and symbolic significance. Slotkin explains that as a colony of European nations, from its inception, America's development necessitated "repeated cycles of separation and

⁴¹ Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 5.

⁴² Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 475.

regression” whereby fortunes and life improved. On the frontier, Americans freed themselves from the constraints of eastern privilege and authoritarian regimes by conquering an untamed wilderness a process Slotkin’s labels “regeneration through violence.” This path of economic and cultural renewal often involved the displacement of Native Americans and the subjugation of Africans.⁴³ The myth of the frontier justified these processes as a triumph of “progress” through violent means and ultimately defined the essence of America.

By the nineteenth-century such processes became codified in the American psyche. Stories from the life of Daniel Boone, frontiersman and early archetypal American, served as a foundation for the myth of the frontier. Boone worked out man’s struggle between the natural and civilized on the wild frontier, where he cleared the path for civilization. James Fenimore Cooper subsequently created a series of literary figures based on Boone, in his novels “The Leatherstocking Tales.”⁴⁴ Building on the frontiersmen characters established by Cooper, dime novelists produced thousands of western tales illustrating the tension between social order and anarchy on the frontier.⁴⁵

Toward the end of the nineteenth-century many Americans became acquainted with the mythic West through frontiersman and scout Colonel William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill). Harnessing his experiences on the frontier, Buffalo Bill presented Americans with an exhibition building on widely accepted notions of the mythic West. Using the symbolic

⁴³ Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 10-11 (quotation on 11).

⁴⁴ Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950; repr., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 55-61.

⁴⁵ John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1984), 31.

props such as the rifle and the stage coach, Cody exploited a frontier mythology which cast westward expansion as a process in which the untamed and uncivilized West was subdued and civilized.⁴⁶ Cody's narrative hinged on a central facet of the frontier mythology—the characterization of Native Americans as brutal and aggressive. The theme of taming the uncivilized was ritualized through repeated depictions of the subjugation of marauding Native Americans. During performances, Native Americans were always cast as the aggressors who attacked innocent but heroic whites on stage coaches or prairie schooners.⁴⁷ Ultimately, Cody's characterization of westward expansion intentionally promoted an image of American progress. The frontier, his show suggested, advanced a sequence of national and material growth.⁴⁸

In the last decade of the nineteenth-century, in the face of growing eastern cities and industrialization, anxiety over the closing of the frontier, revitalized America's interest in the West.⁴⁹ Like Buffalo Bill, Frederick Jackson Turner drew upon the basic progressive message of frontier mythology in his presentation of "The Significance of the Frontier in American" at the annual meeting of the American History Association held in 1893 at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.⁵⁰ Turner suggested that as European settlers eked out an existence on the frontier they became Americans, embracing democracy and developing

⁴⁶ See Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in *The Frontier in American Culture* ed. James R. Grossman (Berkeley: University Press of California, 1994), 7-9, 11.

⁴⁷ White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," 27-39.

⁴⁸ Paul Reddin, *Wild West Shows* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 121.

⁴⁹ For an overview of frontier anxiety beginning in the 1890s, see Johnson, *Hunger for the Wild*, 204-237.

⁵⁰ Smith, *Virgin Land*, 3-4.

the traits of independence and self-reliance. The “frontier thesis” shaped historical interpretations of the American West for the next four decades. Three easterners also popularized the mythic West after transformative western experiences. Born into privileged families and the products of Ivy League educations, Theodore Roosevelt, Frederick Remington, and Owen Wister suggested only the West could preserve essential traits of the nation’s ideals of democratic freedom, courage, and common sense in the face of sweeping industrialization. Roosevelt expounded his thoughts on the significance of the West into several works and later shaped his political views. In the West, Remington rediscovered his love for painting and began a lucrative career preserving scenes from the American West on canvas. Drawing upon his experiences in the West, Wister wrote *The Virginian*, a western-themed novel which became a foundational work for the modern Western and later pulp novelists such as Zane Gray. Collectively, the trio claimed that only in the West could American men recover their natural masculinity.⁵¹

The growth of the modern western coincided with the emergence of the cowboy as the hero of the mythic west. Partly the result of a shift in westward settlement to the Great Plains and the Far West and the need for greater historical accuracy, by the 1890s authors began placing the cowboy at the center of the western.⁵² Mythmakers such as Buffalo Bill, who exhibited cowboy skills for the public in his Wild West shows, and Roosevelt,

⁵¹ Hine and Faragher, *The American West*, 495. See also G. Edward White, *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience: The West of Frederic Remington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Owen Wister* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

⁵² Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique*, 93; Richard Etulain, “Origins of the Western,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 5, no. 4 (1972): 800-801.

Remington, and Wister, also played a role in popularizing the mythic cowboy.⁵³ The cowboy would become, more than any other hero of the western, iconic, not only of the West, but of America.⁵⁴ Writers of the new westerns as published in pulp novels and weeklies, surrounded the cowboy with a cast of stereotypical, if not colorful, characters. Westerns depicted Native American peoples as either noble helpers or savage foils. Stories including Mexicans typically cast them as submissive peasants or fierce bandits. Americans found such characterizations of Native Americans and Mexicans reassuring because these depictions validated their own feelings of cultural superiority. African-Americans found themselves eliminated from the western landscape entirely. With the exception of prostitutes and female outlaws, westerns typically cast white women as genteel, married, middle class, and dependent on white men.⁵⁵ Depriving them of their sexuality, westerns cast these women as preservers of culture and civilization on the frontier. Juxtaposed to white women, Mexican or Indian women were presented as uniformly natural and therefore exotic and sensual.⁵⁶ The use of formulaic plots employing immediately recognizable stereotypical characters contributed to the appeal of the western as a literary genre. Classifying the western as a “cultural ritual” John G. Cawelti, author of *The Six-Gun*

⁵³ Kristine Fredriksson, *American Rodeo: From Buffalo Bill to Big Business* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1985), 10.

⁵⁴ Anne M. Butler, “Selling the Popular Myth,” in *The Oxford History of the American West* ed. Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. O’Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994; paperback edition 1996), 791.

⁵⁵ Butler, “Selling the Popular Myth,” 175-176.

⁵⁶ Richard White, *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 628.

Mystique argued, “a wide audience can follow a Western, appreciate its fine points and vicariously participate in its pattern of suspense and resolution.”⁵⁷

Recognizing the Old West as “a rich collection of usable myths and symbols,” moviemakers began exploiting the western in film early in the twentieth-century. The deserts of southern California provided directors with authentic-looking landscapes in which to set their films. Pairing the western myth with the medium of film created powerful visual images of the American West. Drawing on the patterns established in western novels, western films by the 1920s became the most popular type of film in the United States.⁵⁸ As in pulp novels, these films cast the cowboy as “a paragon of American qualities that included physical prowess, courage, and a sense of moral rectitude.”⁵⁹ The leading actors of western film such as William S. Hart, Gary Cooper, and Tom Mix attained international acclaim.

The popularity of western novels and film played a singular role in the development of the Frontier Centennial. In their initial planning of the celebration, Fort Worth’s civic leadership recognized, as had other leaders of western municipalities, the bankability of the Old West theme to attract tourists.⁶⁰ While politicians and scholars debated the usefulness

⁵⁷ Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique*, 32.

⁵⁸ Richard W. Etulain, *Western Films: A Brief History* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1983; second printing, 1988), 3.

⁵⁹ Don Graham, “Lone Star Cinema: A Century of Texas in the Movies,” in *Twentieth-Century Texas: A Social and Cultural History* ed. John W. Storey and Mary L. Kelly (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 246-247.

⁶⁰ Pendleton, Oregon selected a frontier theme to replace their Fourth of July celebration because of the potential appeal and profits of the Old West. See Renee M. Laegreid, *Riding Pretty: Rodeo Royalty in the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 22-23. For a good discussion of how companies have capitalizing on the American West in

of the frontier to American society in the midst of the Great Depression, the western remained a valuable source of revenue for Hollywood which continued to produce hundreds of B-westerns throughout the decade.⁶¹ Moreover, among cowboys, the Texas cowboy reigned supreme and the Texas landscape figured prominently in western films. According to a comprehensive list created by Don Graham, by 1936, Hollywood had produced over 135 films featuring either a dominant character from Texas or a Texas landscape.⁶² Centennial planners reasoned that when Americans thought of the Old West they thought of Texas. Furthermore, they reasoned that when Americans pictured the Texas livestock industry and cowboy they thought of Fort Worth. Based upon these assumptions, planners developed a radical scheme of celebration. They sought to celebrate the Old West through a recreation of the frontier as it existed in western films—a concept Walt Disney later used in 1955 when creating Disneyland’s tribute to the West, Frontierland.⁶³

Still, during the early planning stages, local history including the history of West Texas and perceptions of authenticity influenced the celebration’s structure more than the mythic West as portrayed in literature and film. Frontier Centennial planners sought simply to create a film set that reflected Fort Worth and West Texas, but sanitized of southern or

the advertisement of their products see Elliot West, “Selling the Myth: Western Images in Advertising,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 46, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 36-49.

⁶¹ See David M. Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 122-142.

⁶² See Don Graham, *Cowboys and Cadillacs: How Hollywood Looks at Texas* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1983), 109-116.

⁶³ Michael Steiner, “Frontierland as Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Architectural Packaging of the Mythic West,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 11. See also John M. Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after 1940* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University Press of California Press, 1992; paperback edition, 1993), 67-69.

Spanish influence. Eventually planners arrived at the conclusion that a celebration commemorating only local and state history could not appeal to a nation-wide audience. A movie set filled participants garbed in western attire and commemorative exhibits neither represented the grandness of the West nor offered sufficient entertainment venue, both of which Frontier Centennial planners aspired to present. Unacquainted with Fort Worth's heritage or its role in the Texas livestock industry, Billy Rose, after his arrival in Fort Worth, built his show around the immediately recognizable symbolism of the mythic West. Like Buffalo Bill, authors of dime and pulp novels, and movie producers, Rose used the nationally imagined West to appeal to Americans. Ironically, as Rose shifted the celebration away from the moorings of commemoration and historical accuracy which bolstered Fort Worth's western memory and identity, he used the mythic West to make the Frontier Centennial a vehicle for the city's promotion.

In his translation of the mythic West into physical space, Rose introduced a new genre depicting the mythic west, the western theme park. To be sure, the crafting of themed spaces originated more than three-hundred years earlier with the creation of plush European gardens. More recently world's fairs formed themed environments in the presentation of cultures, industry, and entertainment. Amusement parks such as Coney Island and Luna Park also attracted customers with themed attractions.⁶⁴ These venues in the nineteenth and twentieth gave form to widely accepted mythic forms and places. To appeal to their patrons, the developers of themed landscapes have developed

⁶⁴ See Lynn Sally, "Luna Park's Fantasy World and Dreamland's White City: Fire Spectacles at Coney Island as Elemental Performativity," in *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self* ed. Scott A. Lukas (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 39-55.

environments which according to David Lowenthal “oppose the chaos or ruin of the untamed and untidy mess beyond.”⁶⁵ The success of such places, Terence Young argues, rests upon the creator’s ability to “alleviate the anxieties in [the consumers] lives and the crises in their societies.”⁶⁶ Through clearly marked boundaries themed spaces remove themselves from the ordinary in time and space. Builders of themed landscapes also conflate opposing myths with a sense of nostalgia. Thus, historically themed environments thrive upon vagueness, comingle eras, and are unbound by chronology. To observers themed landscape becomes timeless. Like the myths upon which they are often based, themed spaces appeal to their audiences through allusions to authenticity or fact.

With the exception of Walt Disney’s “Frontierland” scholars have paid little attention to the subject of the West and themed spaces.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, like film and literature, themed space has become an important medium through which Americans and others experience the mythic West. By the 1930s, destinations such as Indian villages, dude ranches, and at least one drug store created western themed spaces for tourists.⁶⁸ Several Depression Era world’s fairs also included limited space portraying the mythic West, most

⁶⁵ David Lowenthal, “The Past as a Theme Park,” in *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations* ed. Terence Young and Robert Riley (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 2002), 11.

⁶⁶ Terence Young, “Grounding the Myth—Theme Park Landscapes in an Era of Commerce and Nationalism,” in Young, *Theme Park Landscapes*, 4.

⁶⁷ For studies of Disneyland’s western themed environment see Steiner, “Frontierland as Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Architectural Packaging of the Mythic West, 2-17; and Richard Francaviglia, “Walt Disney’s Frontierland as an Allegorical Map of the American West,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 155-182.

⁶⁸ William T. Anderson, “Wall Drug—South Dakota’s Tourist Emporium,” *American West* 22, no. 2 (March/April 1985): 72-76.

notably the Gold Gulch of the San Diego International Exposition in 1935-36.⁶⁹ Using western films and pulp novels as a guide, Rose conflated a number of mythic Wests into a singular themed environment. Anticipating Walt Disney's approach, Rose used the mythic West to communicate with audiences in an "attempt to stimulate and direct consumption."⁷⁰ The early use of theming as an expression of the mythic West at the Frontier Centennial makes it an important precursor to subsequent theme parks with significant western components such as Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, and Six Flags Over Texas.

My examination of the Frontier Centennial runs chronologically and is primarily concerned with chronicling events as they relate to planning and shaping the celebration. The various challenges involved in maintaining the Frontier Celebration, financial or other, during its four-month run in 1936, its subsequent incarnation as the Frontier Fiesta which ran from 1937 to 1939, and the theatrical merits of Rose's Frontier Centennial productions including *Casa Mañana*, *Jumbo*, and *The Last Frontier* fall outside the scope of this study.⁷¹

Because the plans for the Frontier Centennial changed radically after the arrival of Billy Rose, the chapters are divided into two parts. In part one, "Commemorating Regional

⁶⁹ Matthew F. Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 196-197.

⁷⁰ Young, "Grounding the Myth," 1.

⁷¹ For a treatment of the Frontier Centennial after its opening on July 18, the major productions, and the subsequent seasons as the Frontier Fiesta, see Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, especially chapters. 5-8. For research addressing the technical achievements of Rose's Casa Mañana, see Annie O. Cleveland and M. Barret Cleveland "Fort Worth for Entertainment: Billy Rose's Casa Mañana (1936-1939)," *Theatre Design & Technology* 44, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 25-40. For an interesting discussion of the early radio broadcasts Rose's *Jumbo*, see Geoffrey Block, "'Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus': The Broadway Musical, Radio, and Billy Rose's *Jumbo*," *The Musical Quarterly* 89, no. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 2006): 164-198.

History” I discuss the early planning of the Frontier Centennial to the time centennial planners decided the search for a showman to produce their celebration. Chapter one describes the origin of Fort Worth’s bid to host a memorial celebration to the livestock industry as part of Texas’s centennial festivities in 1936 and the efforts of city boosters to use the celebration to repackage the city’s western identity and simultaneously promulgate its images as a modern metropolis. The second chapter describes the gradual disenchantment of West Texans with the eastern focus of state’s centennial plans and their support for and participation in Fort Worth’s celebration. Chapter three describes the early efforts of Frontier Centennial planners to develop “authentic” western attractions and the prominent role played by Fort Worth’s club women in refining the celebration’s commemorative message. In part two, “Selling National Myth,” I discuss the hiring of Billy Rose and his approach to planning and promoting the celebration. The fourth chapter analyzes the circumstances which ultimately brought Rose to Fort Worth and his pitch to revamp Frontier Centennial plans. Chapter five describes Rose’s sexualization of the celebration and explores the paradoxical role played by women during the Frontier Centennial. Finally, the sixth chapter demonstrates Rose’s use of prevailing symbols of the mythic West in the creation of a “themed space” in the physical layout of the Frontier Centennial fair grounds.

In Texas memory and historiography, the Frontier Centennial is most often characterized as the “rival” centennial exposition of 1936, a ploy concocted by the Dallas-hating Carter and others to “siphon off” visitors from the Central Centennial Exposition and

steal the “national spotlight” from Dallas.⁷² Reducing the Frontier Centennial to a simple scheme of one-up-manship robs the celebration of a more meaningful significance to the history of Fort Worth, Texas, and the imagined West of the 1930s. Yes, Frontier Centennial planners did exploit the storied rivalry between the two cities to promote the celebration. And yes, Frontier Centennial planners shaped their centennial offerings around those planned for the Dallas-based exposition. Far more important, however, the Frontier Centennial was a high-water mark in the decades-old process of reshaping Fort Worth’s identity. As a city, Fort Worth predated the Civil War and for decades showed strong ties to the South and to the nation’s westward expansion. The realities of secession and reconstruction saw those dual ties/heritages continued, but the rise of the cattle drives and improved transportation links connecting Fort Worth to West Texas pointed Fort Worth’s identity and reality in a new direction. That identity crystallized in the minds of Fort Worthians during the Progressive Era. To Fort Worth boosters and civic leaders, the centennial year presented an unprecedented opportunity. Hoping to do more than simply commemorate one-hundred years of the livestock industry in Texas, centennial planners ultimately chose to use the celebration to not only boost the city’s economy, but to

⁷² Kenneth B. Ragsdale, *Centennial '36: The Year America Discovered Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987), 208 (1st quotation), 211 (2nd quotation). See also Jerry Flemmons, *Amon: The Life of Amon Carter, Sr. of Texas* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1978), 299-301; Caleb Pirtle, *Fort Worth: The Civilized West* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Continental Heritage Press, 1980), 131; Gaylon Polatti, “The Magic City and the Frontier,” *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 38; Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 16; Ty Cashon, *The New Frontier: A Contemporary History of Fort Worth & Tarrant County* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2006), 76, 131.

proclaim Fort Worth's presence on the landscape of the modern American West. Unfolding that dramatic story is the subject of this dissertation.

PART I

COMMEMORATING REGIONAL HISTORY

CHAPTER 1

AMON'S "COWSHED": FORT WORTH'S CENTENNIAL MEMORIAL TO THE TEXAS LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY AND THE REPACKAGING OF ITS WESTERN IDENTITY

The impetus for celebrating the Texas state centennial began, ironically, at the urging of a New Yorker. On November 5, 1923, at the annual meeting of the Tenth District Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of America, an organization devoted to boosting the State of Texas, Theodore H. Price, the editor of *Commerce and Finance*, told the crowd they had thus far failed to cultivate a reputation equal to the unlimited potential and wealth of the state. Beyond the agricultural and industrial opportunities, Price reminded listeners, the state possessed a singular past, "a gloriously romantic history," which, if exploited properly, could focus the nation's attention on Texas. He delighted those attending with a grandiose concept for advertising Texas history and progress on an international stage. Price suggested that in 1936 Texas celebrate "a centenary so important and so auspicious by [hosting] an exposition that will attract the attention and presence of the world."¹ His reasoning for staging a Texas exposition echoed the objectives of the world's fairs held in New Orleans, Atlanta, and Nashville at the end of the nineteenth-century. Each of these expositions attempted to move past old sectional rivalries and poverty of the past and, through the emphasizing of images of progress and patriotism,

¹ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 3-4 (quotation on 4). Quote taken from Theodore H. Price, "What Texas Has to Advertise and How to Advertise It," *Commerce and Finance*, November 5, 1923.

place the South in the vanguard of national and international economic growth.² Price's audacious remarks set the wheels in motion for what would become Texas's centennial celebration. In the course of the following decade, a hand full of die-hard centennial advocates kept the movement alive. As plans began to materialize with the formation of planning committees and the enactment of legislation in the early 1930s, debating whether the celebration should emphasize one-hundred years of Texas history or exhibit the state's industrial and cultural contribution to the nation and world remained at the center of many centennial developments and controversies. Those favoring a celebration of Texas heritage labeled those favoring a commercial exposition as unpatriotic, while those for an exhibition of Texas materialism accused the other camp of shortsightedness and preoccupation with ephemeral events and characters.

In Fort Worth, leaders worked hard to develop the city's image as a progressive metropolis. Before the years of the Great Depression, the city enjoyed substantial growth. The twentieth-century brought economic and population growth based upon oil, military spending, and manufacturing. These developments made Fort Worth Texas's fourth largest city. Although the growth and diversification of its economy marginalized the importance of the cattle industry to the city's economy, ties between the city and its historic livestock industry remained strong. Symbolically the annual hosting of the Southwestern Exhibition and Fat Stock Show represented the primary link between the city and its western heritage. As attendance of the stock show escalated so, too, did the concerns that the deteriorating

² Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 73.

North Side stockyards which hosted the annual event no longer reflected the image of modernity and progress which civic leaders and city boosters worked to create for their city.

In the year preceding the state's centennial civic leaders and boosters embarked on an odyssey which would culminate in the building of new stock show facilities removed from its historic home in the Fort Worth stockyards. Using the city's stock show as a foundation, Fort Worth proposed to host a centennial celebration commemorating the Texas livestock industry—a prospect which would reinforce and proclaim the city's western identity. Through the procurement of city, state, and federal funds, Fort Worth civic leaders and centennial planners hoped to build modern livestock facilities for the stock show and in the process provide greater financial unity between the stock show and its host city. After receiving sufficient funding, Amon G. Carter and other civic boosters and members of the city council began a campaign to remove the stock show to a location more consistent with the city's modern identity.

To appreciate centennial developments as they evolved in Fort Worth, one must first understand centennial planning on the state level in the years preceding 1936. Planning for the state's centennial celebration began in earnest more than a decade after Price's initial suggestion. During the intervening years the economic climate of the state and nation changed dramatically. The euphoric economic prosperity of the 1920s had given way to poverty and want. Material growth and progress had become so central to American ideology and expectations that the impact of the Great Depression on the American mind

was profound.³ The inabilities of politicians and economists to navigate the nation out of the depression led many Americans to question the value of the American political and economic systems. In Texas the depression destroyed the foundation of the state's economy as the value of livestock, cotton, and oil fell precipitously. Manufacturing jobs also declined sharply during the decade. Drought in the western half of the state also contributed to the economic plight of Texans hoping to eke out an agricultural living.⁴

Texas legislators believed the state's centennial year could prove useful to help counter rampant feelings of economic defeat and the chaos of the Great Depression. The state legislature passed House Bill No. 22, on February 14, 1934 authorizing a centennial celebration and creating a commission to begin preparing for the state's centennial year.⁵ Four months later the Texas Centennial Commission began to hold regular meetings for the planning and organization of the celebration.⁶ In the weeks following its first meeting, the Commission's executive committee formed three subcommittees to aid the Commission in carrying out its duties. Assigned to generate a master outline for the celebration of the state's centennial, the planning committee, on July 16, presented its report to the Centennial Commission for approval. The fourteen-point plan called for an event Texanic in size and "international in scope" honoring the heroism of Texas history and celebrating the industrial growth of the state and the contribution of Texans to the arts.

³ Lawrence W. Levine, "American Culture and the Great Depression," *The Yale Review* 74, no. 2 (January 1985): 198.

⁴ Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 378, 384.

⁵ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 32.

⁶ Will H. Mayes to Members Texas Centennial Commission, June 2, 1934, Box 198, Folder "Texas Centennial Commission," Carter Papers.

The planning committee envisioned a celebration staged on two fronts. First, it called for a series of celebrations around the state carried out on a local level and devoted to commemorating the history of individual Texas communities. To supplement these history-based celebrations, the planning committee suggested the history department at the University of Texas write “An authentic and comprehensive history of Texas,” and the State Department of Education and a host of educational organizations and clubs implement a set of “systematic and consecutive” education programs in Texas history.⁷ Second, the planning committee also recommended the state sponsored a “mammoth Central Exposition” celebrating the “material, educational, artistic, cultural and religious development of the people of Texas.”

The initial plan for the state centennial as laid out in the planning committee demonstrates a desire to strike a balance between the commemoration of the state’s history and exhibiting its material and cultural progress. The dual emphasis on history and progress followed a pattern set by other Depression Era world’s fairs. These expositions, particularly Chicago’s Century of Progress, “stressed America’s historical progress toward becoming a promised land of abundance.” Hoping to distract fair goers from the troubles of the depression and instill images of a future American utopia, fair planners presented displays of American scientific and cultural ingenuity. Like other Depression Era world’s fairs, Texas politicians also looked to the centennial exposition to provide state officials a

⁷ Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission in Session at Corsicana, Texas, July 16, 1934, 2-4, Box 198, Folder 1 “Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934,” Carter Papers.

platform from which to instill confidence in the state's political and economic leadership.⁸

Centennial planners soon discovered that striking an acceptable balance between the celebration of commercial developments and the commemoration of historical ones in the pursuit of their goals became a reoccurring point of conflict for politicians, cities, and entire regions of the state.

According to the vague references regarding the financing for the various programs of the celebration, the planning committee's proposal suggested funding for the centennial ultimately resided with the state. Because the Texas Legislature had yet to allocate any funds for the celebration, the proposal provided no itemized lists of required funds except one. The planning committee claimed that the centennial plans as laid out by their proposal necessitated a bank roll of at least \$15,000,000. The figure would eventually generate considerable consternation among prospective host cities, primarily because House Bill No. 22 suggested the honor of being host city would most likely go to the highest bidder.⁹

The Centennial Commission immediately moved forward with the selection of the central exposition host city. On July 16, the commissioners approved a list of requirements perspective cities would have to meet in their bids to host the central celebration. Substantive requirements included providing two-hundred acres of land serviced by electric, gas, water, sewage, and drainage facilities. Each city had to submit the dollar amount it could contribute for the financing of the celebration. Proposals would only be accepted if submitted with full support of the mayor, the city council, the chamber of

⁸ See Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8-10 (quotation on 9).

⁹ Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission in Session, 2-4.

commerce, and prominent citizens including the heads of the major financial institutions and luncheon clubs. Finally, the commission required all bid proposals be submitted to the headquarters of the Texas Centennial Commission in Austin by September 1, 1934.¹⁰ Though any interested city could submit a proposal, Commission Secretary Will H. Mayes sent copies of the proposal form to the mayors of Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and Fort Worth.¹¹

As the leadership of the four major Texas cities began to craft their bids for the Central Exposition, misgivings quickly developed regarding the September 1 deadline and the Commission's \$15,000,000 budgetary recommendations. The massive financial commitment accompanying a competitive centennial bid caused hesitation in the Houston civic and centennial leadership. Both Mayor Oscar Holcombe and Judge Clarence R. Wharton, chairman of the city's Centennial Committee, took neutral positions claiming they would support a bid only if convinced the local citizenry desired to host the centennial. Despite a poll of nineteen-thousand Houston property owners indicating a strong majority favored a centennial bond issue of \$3,000,000, Wharton sought an extension.¹² In a letter to the Centennial Commission, Wharton raised several objections to the September deadline. First, Wharton believed the Commission's intent to spend the centennial bid-money without the input of the city councils, which approved the bonds for the bid, was problematic. He suggested delaying the deadline until provisions for providing for the collaboration of the Centennial Commission and the host city's city council was worked out.

¹⁰ See Proposal Form No. 1, Program of Requirements for the Competition for the Central Exposition of the Texas Centennial, in Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission, 6.

¹¹ Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission, 7.

¹² Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 49-52.

Second, he pointed out that Houston's approval of the bond issue rested upon the assumption that the federal and state governments would allocate money for the centennial—and neither had committed to granting funds for that purpose. Third, Wharton reasoned that unless the state legislature could be "induced to make the State's appropriation" in the coming session of the Legislature, it would likely be too late to proceed. And, if the state appropriated no or little funds, moving forward with the proposed plans would result in "a half-way celebration" that "would make Texas a laughing stock." Finally, Wharton informed the Commission of his intent to enlist Dallas in his effort to force an extension of the deadline.¹³

The campaign to lengthen the deadline sharply divided the Texas cities developing bids. Jesse H. Jones, a prominent member of the Centennial Commission, confided to Lowry Martin, Vice President of the Commission, that such a rift between cities or sections would destroy the centennial movement.¹⁴ Civic leaders in Dallas did not welcome Houston's plea for an extension. Dallas's bid to host the centennial already enjoyed broad public support. Putting off the deadline could only weaken its chances for claiming victory by allowing other cities to strengthen their bids. Rather than arguing that a delay would create an unfair advantage for Dallas's competitors, Robert L. Thornton, President of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce sent several letters to Lowry Martin claiming a delay would have an adverse effect upon centennial developments in general. With the celebration less than a year and a half away, a delay would prove detrimental to the centennial by adding additional time

¹³ Clarence R. Wharton to Amon G. Carter, August 23, 1934, Box 198, Folder 1 "Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934," Carter Papers.

¹⁴ Jesse H. Jones to Lowry Martin, August 16, 1934, Box 2-10/776, "Centennial Materials, 1936," Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as TSA).

constraints to the host city's preparations for the event. Hitting upon a fear already expressed by some members of the Centennial Commission's Executive Committee, Thornton also argued that a delay might throttle the public's enthusiasm for the event which the centennial's publicity committee and the Dallas committee had worked so hard to generate.¹⁵

Officials in San Antonio also balked at Houston's request. Despite San Antonio's singular position as a city of historical significance to the State of Texas, early on the city's leadership and citizenship demonstrated little interest in hosting the centennial. The limits of the centennial's popularity in San Antonio resided in the blatant theme of commercialism embodying the centennial. San Antonians, in particular, chafed at the legislation suggesting financial and not historical considerations would largely determine the location of the Central Exposition.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce and Centennial Committee prepared a bid, emphasizing San Antonio's historical significance, which met the Commission's deadline requirement. After learning of Wharton's attempt to lengthen the deadline and court Dallas in support of his plea, Herman H. Ochs, chairman of San Antonio's Centennial Committee, fired-off a telegram to Vice President Martin objecting to a change in the deadline. Rather than arguing why changing the deadline would adversely impact the Central Exposition, Ochs simply claimed the action was "unfair" to San Antonio when both

¹⁵ John D. Middleton to Lowry Martin, August 17, 1934, Box 2-10/776, "Centennial Materials, 1936"; Robert L. Thornton to Lowry Martin, August 24, 1934, quoted in Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 52-53.

¹⁶ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 47-49.

Dallas and Houston had an equal opportunity to develop a bid by the September 1 deadline.¹⁷

Though minimized or omitted in studies evaluating the race for the centennial host city, civic leaders in Fort Worth also worked vigorously to develop a bid.¹⁸ Even before the Centennial Commission's announcement of the requirements for the host city, momentum gathered for either a Fort Worth bid or a bid to place the Centennial Exposition between Dallas and Fort Worth. Unfortunately, host plans proceeded without the support of Amon G. Carter, who actively opposed the city's participation in the bid race. According to his editor James M. North Jr., Carter favored either San Antonio or Houston as host city based on their historical significance.¹⁹ Carter used the *Star-Telegram* to vocalize his views on the centennial host city and the process of its selection. In the early days of the bid-race for the Central Exposition, the *Star-Telegram* ran an editorial condemning the use of the "highest bidder system" to select the host city and its potential impact on Fort Worth and the other potential host cities and the outcome of the centennial. On the basis of the Commission's goal to garner \$15,000,000 from the host city, the editorial rejected the notion that Fort Worth should or could propose a bid to host the centennial. Demonstrating the impracticality of a Fort Worth bid, the editorial reasoned that even if the city approved a city bond, "There are not 15,000 Fort Worthians financially able to subscribe for a \$1,000

¹⁷ Herman H. Ochs to Lowry Martin, August 25, 1936, Box 2-10/776, "Centennial Materials, 1936," TSA.

¹⁸ See Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 46; Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 3-4; Lois Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial" (MA thesis, Texas Christian University, 1938), 27.

¹⁹ James M. North, Jr. to S. H. McCarty, June 1, 1934, Box 198, Folder 1 "Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934," Carter Papers.

stock certificate in Centennial City, Inc.” Other cities would also likely experience similar difficulties. Perhaps more importantly, if one city did finance “the bulk of the creative expense” then the centennial would represent a sectional celebration rather than an “All-Texas Centennial.” Ultimately, the editorial concluded that only after the state committed to fund a majority of the centennial expenses, should the “five leading Texas cities” compete on grounds other than economic to host the centennial.²⁰

Carter’s negative appraisal of the centennial appears somewhat hypocritical in light of his position on the Centennial Commission. Appointed a member of the Commission on December 12, 1931, when the Commission began to develop plans for the celebration in June 1934, Carter failed to attend any of the Commission’s deliberations. Commission leaders continually sought to keep Carter abreast of centennial deliberations by sending him copies of the minutes of the meetings of the Commission.²¹ Carter’s secretary regularly replied with apologies that Carter wished the committee the best, but was simply out-of-town. In one instance, Vice President Martin pleaded for his participation.²² Though Carter did leave the country in August 1934 for a tour of capitals of South America, his apparent lack of interest in centennial developments seems inconsistent with the constant Texas boosterism for which he was well-known.²³

²⁰ “The Centennial Takes Form,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 19, 1934, 6.

²¹ See Will H. Mayes to Amon G. Carter, June 2, 1934; Secretary of Amon Carter to Will H. Mayes, June 4, 1934; Lowry Martin to Amon Carter, July 13, 1934; and Amon Carter to Lowry Martin, July 14, 1934; Secretary of Mr. Carter to Lowry Martin, July 24, 1934, Box 198, Folder 1 “Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934,” Carter Papers.

²² See Lowry Martin to Amon G. Carter, July 23, 1934, Box 198, Folder “Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934,” Carter Papers.

²³ See Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 46.

Without Carter's blessing, a number of Fort Worth civic leaders and organizations moved forward with the development of a proposal to host the central exposition. The Tarrant County Advisory Board to the Texas Centennial Commission assumed the central leadership role in the city's earliest centennial planning. Apparently concerned with the lack of state funding for the centennial, the Advisory Board initiated an inquiry to assess the legislature's mood in Austin regarding a possible centennial appropriation. The Advisory Board, chaired by Fort Worth lawyer J. H. Barwise, sent questionnaires to state senators and representatives requesting their position on the state appropriating funds for the centennial celebration.²⁴ In an unsuccessful attempt to explore the possibility of co-hosting the central exposition, the Advisory Board apparently extended an invitation to unresponsive officials in Dallas.²⁵ Barwise also acted as liaison between the Advisory Board and the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, the other organization deliberating over the features of host city bid.²⁶ The Chamber organized a Centennial Committee chaired by General John A. Hulén which held its first meeting only days before September 1 submission deadline.²⁷ Based upon the ambiguous responses of the Texas legislature to the investigation and the lack of interest in Dallas to co-host the celebration, the Advisory Board and the Chamber of Commerce pinned Fort Worth's hopes on convincing the Centennial Commission to

²⁴ "Candidates to Get Centennial Query," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 20, 1934, 1.

²⁵ Prior to the host city race James M. North Jr. mentioned the development of a Fort Worth movement to seek a joint Dallas Fort Worth bid. James M. North, Jr. to S. H. McCarty, June 1, 1934. Moreover, commenting on the selection of Dallas as the Centennial host city, Mrs. C. C. Peters, vice chairman of the Tarrant County Advisory Board to the Texas Centennial Commission stated, "I wish, of course, that Fort Worth and Dallas could have made a joint bid." "Exposition in North Texas Seen as Aid to Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 10, 1934, 2.

²⁶ "Big Centennial Group is Seen," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 4, 1934, 7.

²⁷ "Meeting Will Discuss Bidding on Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 24, 1934, 4.

postpone the deadline. For this purpose, Fort Worth's civic leadership sought a meeting with Martin and the heads of the Centennial Commission's executive, finance, and planning committees. At a conference held on August 26, representatives of Fort Worth failed to sway Centennial officials to extend the deadline.²⁸ Martin explained to the petitioners that it would be "impractical . . . to delay selection of the site for the exposition at this late date," because both Dallas and San Antonio already prepared qualifying bids.²⁹

The lack of sources makes assessing the completeness or character of the Fort Worth bid, at the time of the conference, difficult. The official publication of the publicity committee of the Texas Centennial Commission, the *Texas Centennial News*, which covered bid developments in Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas omitted any discussion of the Fort Worth bid plan suggesting no tangible plan ever existed.³⁰ On the other hand, in a mid-August letter to Commission member Jesse H. Jones, Lowry Martin wrote, "From present appearances it looks to me very much like we will not have more than two bids offered with a bare possibility of a third." Though Martin did not name the cities he believed would make a bid, in the course of the letter which discussed sectional rivalries based upon the location of the Central Exposition he mentioned only Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth.³¹ That the Fort Worth Centennial Committee made its first recommendations concerning the content of a

²⁸ "Centennial Group Will Meet Sunday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 25, 1934, 14; "Centennial Group Heads Meet Today," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 26, 1934, 5.

²⁹ "Centennial Site Selection Date Can Not Be Delayed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 27, 1934, 1.

³⁰ See, "Houston Drive For Celebration Started," *Texas Centennial News*, July 24, 1934, 3; "San Antonio Laying Its Centennial Plans," *Texas Centennial News*, July 31, 1934, 6; "Dallas Enters Fight to Secure Celebration," *Texas Centennial News*, July 31, 1934, 7; "Houston Starts Move to Get Centennial," *Texas Centennial News*, July 31, 1934, 7.

³¹ Jesse H. Jones to Lowry Martin, August 16, 1934.

bid to the Chamber of Commerce only days before the deadline suggests that, at the very least, a Fort Worth bid would have been hastily prepared.³² Moreover, the subject of a bond issue for a centennial bid never came before the Fort Worth City Council.³³ The manager of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Jack H. Hott, on the day before the deadline, made a last-ditch effort for a deadline extension. In a letter to Martin, Hott again drew upon the inconsistency of opinions held among state legislatures regarding a state centennial appropriation as evidence of a need for an extension. "It appears to us," he wrote, "that bids made at the present time and under present conditions must be entirely conditional in character as it is not believed that any city in Texas could put up sufficient amount to pay the entire cost incident to the Centennial."³⁴ Martin could only promise that Hott's letter would be passed along to the committee on bids.³⁵ But, nothing could be done; Fort Worth simply failed to meet the deadline.

The well worn narrative of the selection process for the centennial host city began on September 1.³⁶ On the day of deadline the Commission received three proposals. As expected they came from Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. A week later, the Commission traveled to each of the prospective host cities to hear oral presentations of the city's plans and examine the proposed sites for the Central Exposition. On September 6, the Commission began its tour with Dallas. Given the historic overtones of the centennial

³² "Recommendations on Centennial Due," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 30, 1934, 4.

³³ See Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, Office of the City Secretary, Fort Worth, Texas.

³⁴ Jack H. Hott to Lowry Martin, August 30, 1934, Box 2-10/776, "Centennial Materials, 1936," TSA.

³⁵ Lowry Martin to Jack Hott, August 21, 1934, Box 2-10/776, "Centennial Materials, 1936," TSA.

³⁶ For a detailed discussion of the selection process, see Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 54-58.

celebration, Dallas, which did not even exist at Texas's independence, faced a liability for its youth. This fact prompted many, including Amon G. Carter, to discount Dallas as the legitimate heir to the appointment for host city. During the presentation of the city's proposal, R. L. Thornton, President of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, worked to disabuse the Commission of that notion. Thornton argued that the Central Exposition should highlight the economic development of the state more than the historical, and that Dallas's diverse and growing economy made it the logical choice for hosting such an exhibition. Because Senate Bill No. 22 stipulated that the selection of the host city be based upon the strongest financial commitment, Walter Cline extended a question he would ask the other would-be host cities: "Assuming that Dallas is chosen as the Centennial city, would [it] carry on anyway without an[y] State or Federal aid?" Thornton replied "Dallas has already said 'Yes.' The State Fair will carry on regardless of where the Centennial is, and the Dallas bid stands firm as it is for the Centennial."³⁷ Including the value of the Texas State Fair grounds, Dallas submitted an offer of \$7,791,000.³⁸

The following day the Commission visited Houston where George Dahl and Mayor Oscar Holcombe touted the city's historical features as the group toured the prospective centennial site, the San Jacinto Battlefield, and other points of historic interest. Houston submitted a competitive offer of \$6,507,000 including the value of a number of civic

³⁷ Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission, September 6, 1934, 2, Box 198, Folder "Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934," Carter Papers.

³⁸ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 58. For a detailed description of the Dallas proposal see, "Dallas Shows Reasons Why This City Should Get Texas Centennial," *Dallas Morning News*, September 7, 1934, Section 2, 1.

buildings.³⁹ However, when Cline asked if Houston would still be interested in hosting the centennial without state or federal funding, Mayor Holcombe explained that under such circumstances Houston would not be interested. He argued that under such circumstances, the fair, if financed solely by Houston, would be a Houston celebration and not a state celebration. Houston required the federal or state governments to at least match the city's cash contribution of \$3,000,000.⁴⁰ The Commission visited San Antonio on the final leg of its tour. A group of prominent San Antonians paraded the Commission to a hand full of historic sites including the Alamo. Ochs argued that because Texans seemed in need of "spiritual reconstruction" first and economic reconstruction second, San Antonio represented the obvious choice for the "proper historical observance."⁴¹ The city offered a bid of \$4,835,000 to secure the appointment of the host city.⁴² When Cline asked the minimum state and federal contribution San Antonio would require to host the central exposition, Porter Whaley, general manager of the Chamber of Commerce, replied that "it was contingent on at least 1,000,000.00 from . . . these sources."⁴³

With San Antonio's third-place financial bid, some in Dallas began to write off San Antonio as a serious contender in the host city race. The *Dallas Morning News* hinted as much on September 8, the day the Commission traveled to San Antonio. A report in the Dallas daily claimed that with San Antonio in a distant third, the San Antonio officials began

³⁹ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 58.

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission, September 7, 1934, 3, Box 198, Folder "Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934," Carter Papers; Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 58.

⁴¹ Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission, September 8, 1934, 6, Box 198, Folder "Texas Centennial Commission, 1931-1934," Carter Papers.

⁴² Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 58.

⁴³ Minutes of the Texas Centennial Commission, September 8, 1934, 6.

negotiations with Dallas to drop its bid for the central exposition in exchange for support of a major historical celebration in San Antonio. The report both embarrassed the Commission and angered San Antonio officials who had yet to concede defeat.⁴⁴ Outraged Mayor C. K. Quinn and others publicly demonized the “highest bidder” system espoused by the legislature. Although he quickly denounced the bogus report, Commission Chair Cullen F. Thomas, still smarting from Quinn’s comments, declared the Commission’s responsibility to make an unbiased selection. Returning to Austin on September 9, the Commission began its deliberations. In a unanimous decision, based largely upon size of the Dallas’s pecuniary bid, Chairman Thomas emerged from the meeting with the announcement that Dallas won the race for host city.⁴⁵

Dallas’s selection brought a mixed response from the competing cities. Houston accepted defeat graciously and invited all Texans to support the Central Exposition in Dallas. San Antonio, however, balked at the selection. Several prominent members of the San Antonio Centennial Committee, including Mayor Quinn, openly criticized the Centennial Commission’s choice arguing that it based its decision on sectional rather than historical or commercial considerations. They claimed two-thirds of those selected to serve on the Commission originated from the northern portion of the state. As such, the vote for the centennial host city skewed north. They claimed only two members of the commission who resided south of San Antonio participated in the vote.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ “Centennial Will Be Held In Dallas, Newspaper Says,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 8, 1934, 1.

⁴⁵ Ragsdale, *Centennial ’36*, 58.

⁴⁶ Ragsdale, *Centennial ’36*, 59.

Scholars often claim the Dallas selection sparked a plot ending with Fort Worth hosting a “rival” exposition at the expense of Dallas in 1936. Evidence, however, suggests that Fort Worth leaders reacted positively to Dallas’s selection. Expressing support for the newly named host city, Mrs. C. C. Peters, vice president of the Tarrant County Advisory Board to the Texas Centennial Commission, urged all Texas cities “to stand behind the chosen city and make the celebration as big as the State.” Peters also viewed the close proximity of the Central Exposition as a potential economic boon for the Fort Worth. “Everyone who visits the exposition” she claimed, “will come to Fort Worth and the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show likely will draw many.”⁴⁷ On learning of Dallas’s victory Amon Carter reportedly “set a record for consecutive gawddamns.”⁴⁸ However, knowing that the state used a “highest bidder system,” Carter must have believed that either San Antonio or Houston would place the highest bid for the Dallas victory to surprise him. Expletives aside, a few days following the announcement, Carter’s paper the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* published an editorial taking the selection in stride. The editorial claimed that Dallas “fairly earned the distinction of being the Texas Centennial City,” and “Fort Worth is happy to bask in reflected glory.” Like Peters, the editorial claimed Fort Worth would benefit as the “nearest piece of metroplitanism to what we hope will be the center of Texas interest during the next two years.”⁴⁹ No evidence suggests Carter or any of the civic leadership in Fort Worth conspired to exact revenge on its neighbor for claiming

⁴⁷ “Exposition in North Texas Seen as Aid to Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 10, 1934, 2.

⁴⁸ Flemmons, *Amon: The Life of Amon Carter*, 299.

⁴⁹ “Dallas Gets the Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 12, 1934, 6.

the Central Exposition. As in other Texas cities and counties, in the spring of 1935, Fort Worth began to develop a proposal for participation in the state's centennial celebration.

On May 7, 1935, Governor Allred signed legislation appropriating \$3,000,000 for the state's centennial of which Dallas received the lion's share, to host the Central Exposition. With the exception of Houston and San Antonio, which each received \$250,000 for monuments at San Jacinto and the Alamo, respectively, and Austin, which received \$225,000 for a museum, the legislature set aside \$575,000 for the construction of historical markers and monuments around the state.⁵⁰ To aid the newly established Commission of Control for the Texas Centennial Celebration in distributing these funds to cities and counties across the state, the legislation called for the creation of an Advisory Board of Texas Historians. In addition to making recommendations for places and events to receive a commemorative memorial or marker, the Advisory Board also granted an audience to delegations lobbying in behalf of cities and counties seeking funds for the construction of memorials in their respective principalities. The three-member board began meeting on June 10, 1935.⁵¹ Interestingly, the Advisory Board of Texas Historians included no professionally trained historians. Louis Wiltz Kemp, a former president of a number of historical societies including the Texas State Historical Association and author of several books on the Republic of Texas, chaired the Board. Reverend Paul J. Foik, a Roman Catholic

⁵⁰ See *General and Special Laws of the State of Texas, Forty-Fourth Legislature, Regular Session* (Austin, 1935), 1: 427-37; "Centennial Bill Signed By Governor," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 8, 1935, 1-2.

⁵¹ Advisory Board of Texas Historians "Bulletin No. 1," June 10, 1935, 1, Box 2B149, Folder "Reports to Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, June 1935-June 1937," James Frank Dobie Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as CAH).

priest and chair of the language department at St. Edward's University, and J. Frank Dobie, a national literary figure and Texas folklorist, joined Kemp on the board.⁵²

Meanwhile, in Fort Worth city fathers began crafting a proposal for a centennial memorial to the Texas livestock industry. Fort Worth's annual Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show provided a ready platform from which to launch a centennial celebration. By the 1930s, the stock show had become an important tradition in Fort Worth and central to its identity as a western city. Coincidentally, the year 1936 also marked the event's fortieth anniversary and stock show and city officials hoped to develop a proposal which commemorated the livestock industry in Texas and simultaneously preserved the stock show as one of the premier livestock shows in the nation. In its forty-year history the stock show not only celebrated Fort Worth's cowtown heritage, but also promulgated the city's shifting identity from southern to western.

In the late nineteenth-century when Fort Worth resembled only a way-station for cattle en route to northern markets in Kansas City or Chicago, Texas stockman Charles McFarland and public relations director of the Fort Worth Stock Yards Company Charles C. French believed a stock show represented a means to breathing new life in the city's livestock enterprise.⁵³ They reasoned that a properly orchestrated stock show would help establish a permanent livestock exchange in Fort Worth and attract the nation's larger

⁵² Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 98-99. For a more detailed overview of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians see Jeffery Mason Hancock, "Preservation of Texas Heritage in the 1936 Centennial," (MA thesis, University of Texas, 1963), 17-21.

⁵³ For a history of the early years of the Fort Worth stockyards, see J'Nell L. Pate, *Livestock Legacy: The Fort Worth Stockyards, 1887-1987* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1988), especially chapters 1 and 2.

meat-packing corporations to establish operations near the stockyards.⁵⁴ Organizers planned the first Fort Worth stock show to coincide with the annual meeting of the Texas Cattle Raisers' Association (TCRA) in March 1896. As the stock show grew in significance to the industry, the TCRA held its annual meeting more often than not in Fort Worth. As predicted by McFarland and French, the industry took notice and the meat packing giants Swift & Company and Armour & Company built facilities adjacent to the Fort Worth stockyards in 1903.⁵⁵

The earliest shows ran for one day and focused primarily on cattle. In the interest of broadening the show's appeal officials began admitting auxiliary exhibits including poultry and horses. Show officials later added hog, sheep, and mule exhibits.⁵⁶ As the stock show became a vital part of the Texas livestock industry, officials also worked to expand the importance of the show throughout the Southwest. Soon stockmen from Oklahoma, Louisiana, and New Mexico began attending the exposition. After a decade of stock show growth, the Fort Worth stockyard facilities had become inadequate. The Swift and Armour companies agreed to help fund construction of a new livestock pavilion in return for the creation of a permanent and incorporated company to oversee and ensure the continuation of the annual event. With additional investments on the part of local businessmen, the Stock Show Association lead by Texas cattleman and businessman Samuel Burk Burnett began to administer the annual event.⁵⁷ The Association oversaw the construction of a new

⁵⁴ Clay Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes: A History of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1995), 8-10.

⁵⁵ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 10, 26, 33.

⁵⁶ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 30-31, 39, 58.

⁵⁷ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 23, 45, 50, 54-55, 57.

pavilion. At the time of its 1908 completion, the Stock Yards Coliseum was hailed as the “largest, most elegant, and perfectly appointed live stock auditorium in the South, and one without superior in the United States.”⁵⁸ During the first three decades of the twentieth-century the exposition continued to cultivate new national markets and adapt to the changes in the livestock industry. The new facilities housed stock from Iowa, Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Missouri, Nebraska, and Tennessee. The show also began to create room for the exhibition of new breeds and adapt to the use of rail transportation. Indicating the Show’s renowned, former “cowboy-president” Theodore Roosevelt attended and spoke at the 1911 show.⁵⁹

The growth and changing dynamic of the city’s economy, particularly the importance of oil following World War I, dramatically altered the purpose and significance of the stock show to Fort Worth. With railroads already in place, the oil discovered in West Texas and elsewhere naturally flowed to Fort Worth and by 1922 the city boasted nine refineries. During World War I the federal government placed Camp Bowie and several air fields on the outskirts of the city. As a result of local manufacturing and industrial development, Fort Worth’s population grew dramatically. From 1910 to 1920 the population increased from 73,312 to 106,482 and from 1920 to 1930 increased to 163,447.⁶⁰ The livestock industry and meat-packing companies also continued to fit prominently into the city’s economy. By the 1920s, more than two million head of cattle arrived in the city annually with more than five-

⁵⁸ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, uncited quotation on 60.

⁵⁹ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 71, 85-56, 92.

⁶⁰ Talbert, *Cowtown—Metropolis*, 4, 35-37.

thousand workers drawing a salary from the stockyards and packing interests.⁶¹ Still, with the growing influence of oil in the Fort Worth economy, the power the meat-packing companies once wielded in Fort Worth began to wane. A loss of city approved abatements, according to stock show historian Clay Reynolds, signaled a shift in power and influence from the meat-packing companies to oil and other industrial interests.⁶² Concomitantly businessmen with little connection with the livestock industry assumed leadership roles in the Stock Show Association. New wealth now based in oil oversaw show operations. Without strong, interested corporations to back the exposition, civic leadership and organizations such as the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade stepped in to help underwrite the show. Interestingly, as Fort Worth boosters and civic leaders worked to promote the city as a modern metropolis they did not marginalize the stock show or the underlying livestock industry. Rather, in addition to viewing the show as the principal event in maintaining the city's importance to the Texas livestock industry, the new leadership began to mold the stock show into a venue for promoting Fort Worth's western lineage.⁶³

Beginning in the 1920s, the stock show enjoyed a closer relationship with Fort Worth's civic leadership and even greater ties with its citizenry. Van Zandt Jarvis took the helm of the Stock Show Association in 1924. His appointment as president represented the beginning of a strengthening of the ties between the exposition and the city. Though an experienced rancher and breeder with a long association with the show, Jarvis also maintained important political connections. Jarvis served as president of the West Texas

⁶¹ Pate, *Livestock Legacy*, 121.

⁶² Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 84-85, 129.

⁶³ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 130.

Chamber of Commerce and sat on the board of trustees at TCU. Eventually, Jarvis drew upon his broad appeal on both sides of the Trinity River to capture the mayor's office in 1932.⁶⁴ Other businessmen such as Amon G. Carter filled important roles in the association. Since 1918 Carter worked to cultivate a West Texas market drawing upon the newly created West Texas Chamber of Commerce to promote the stock show in the region. Though leaders such as Jarvis and Carter worked to maintain the centrality of the show to the livestock industry in Texas and the greater Southwest, they also began to make the show more appealing to locals. While stock show officials continued to enlarge the offerings of the exposition including the acquisition of new land and renovating and building new facilities, they also added attractions and exhibitions which would appeal to Fort Worth citizens to make the show economically self-sufficient.⁶⁵

From the very beginning organizers sought to make the show a diverse experience. Though the main attractions focused upon livestock, the exposition included entertainment geared to interest the family members who accompanied members of the TCRA. In an effort to generate greater ties between the city and the show, organizers also hoped to appeal to Fort Worth citizens. As a result the entertainment accompanying the stock show evolved into a Fort Worth tradition. Over the years, attractions supplementing the livestock exhibitions grew and became more lavish. Early attractions included Vaudeville acts and Wild West performances. Some years included exhibits featuring deformed animals with two heads or multiple appendages categorized as freaks. Eventually a carnival atmosphere began to accompany the show as a midway formed featuring typical carnival fare including

⁶⁴ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 129, 141-142.

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 108-109, 142-143, 149-150, 157.

“acrobats, sword swallows, fakirs, freak shows, ‘hoochie girls,’ and other ‘exotic entertainments.’”⁶⁶ In 1914 the exposition hosted the nation’s first indoor baseball game at the Stock Yards Coliseum. Motorized rides and fun houses also adorned the show providing entertainment typical of the midway at Coney Island.⁶⁷ Show officials contracted carnival and midway production companies such as the J. George Loos Company and Bill H. Hames Shows who promised, “Clean, Wholesome, Fun-making, Laugh-Provoking Round of Entertainment for the WHOLE Family!”⁶⁸

A reflection of Fort Worth’s southern roots, the stock show initially exhibited a southern rather than western orientation. For example in 1908 the exposition included a reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg. Dubbed the “Battle of the Cow Pens”⁶⁹ the exercise mocked the Union with a Confederate victory after which the victor raised the Confederate flag over the Coliseum.⁷⁰ The following year local groups of Confederate veterans opened the show with an “Old Confederate Drill” in which the veterans successfully defended a position near the Marine Creek Bridge against an attack lead by the Carlisle Cadets of Arlington. After the demonstration the Confederates again raised their flag over the coliseum. The appearance of the Confederate standard flying over the

⁶⁶ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 18, 28, 42, 68-69, 77 (quotation).

⁶⁷ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 105, 136-137, 140.

⁶⁸ Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1928, 58; Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1931, 80, Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show Programs, Box 1, Fort Worth Public Library Archives, Fort Worth, Texas (hereafter cited as FTWPLA).

⁶⁹ The title “Battle of Cow Pens” played on “Battle of Cowpens” of the American Revolution which took place in South Carolina in December 1780. See Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, Revised and Expanded ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 75-76.

⁷⁰ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 68.

coliseum became a ritual and a visual indicator of the show's annual commencement. Moreover, accompanying the demonstrations of loyalty to the Confederacy, convention also dictated that a band playing "Dixie" lead a procession into the coliseum at the beginning of the show.⁷¹

The stock show's southern orientation can also be attributed, at least in part, to the southern roots of the Texas ranching culture. In his study *Trails to Texas*, Terry G. Jordan convincingly demonstrates that open range cattle ranching in Texas originated in South Carolina and later blended with the techniques of Hispanic frontiersmen to produce a "hybrid ranching system that spread through much of the Great Plains."⁷² Although the early stock shows included traditionally western fare such as cowboys with six-shooters, trick ropers and riders, and bucking contests, these demonstrations always formed a part of the auxiliary exhibits.⁷³ Apparently considered alien to the southern livestock tradition, such activities including horse exhibitions and the cutting horse competition were designated as part of a "western demonstration."⁷⁴ However, by the early twentieth-century exhibitions and entertainment with a western flavor had become wildly popular and more central to the exposition. The show featured purveyors of Wild West entertainment such as Buffalo Bill and his "Congress of Rough Riders" and Native American showman Quanah Parker. In 1908 the Horse Show became an official part of the exhibition

⁷¹ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 68, 88, 90 (quotation).

⁷² Terry G. Jordan, *Trails to Texas: Southern Roots of Western Cattle Ranching* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 23.

⁷³ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 18-19, 31, 40.

⁷⁴ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 72.

which climaxed with “The Wild West and Range Country Life and Expert Riding Demonstration.”⁷⁵

Gradually offerings of a western character entirely replaced the southern orientation of the exposition. Revenue was an important reason for the transition. The extreme popularity of western entertainment had the potential to generate larger audiences composed of Fort Worth citizens and others. Western entertainment owed its appeal at least in part to the growing popularity of western films. During the first three decades of the twentieth-century the western had become the most popular film genre in America. Many of its stars became nationally known.⁷⁶ Eager to produce greater returns, stock show officials continued to cloak the event in a western garb. In 1916 officials booked Joe Miller and the Miller Brothers Wild West Show. They also invited Lucille Mulhall renowned as the “first cowgirl” accompanied by showman Will Rogers and western film star Tom Mix. Continued cultivation of the western theme included the institution of an official competition for cowboys. During the early decades of the twentieth-century, rodeo surpassed Wild West shows in popularity and lured away the most talented performers making it “a competitive spectator sport in its own right.”⁷⁷ In 1918 the stock show introduced an annual rodeo—reputedly the first held indoors. Attracting large audiences, the rodeo quickly evolved into the premiere event of the entire show and, perhaps more importantly, its principal revenue producer.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 77, 109, 111 (quotation).

⁷⁶ Etulain, *Western Films*, 3.

⁷⁷ Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 181; Fredriksson, *American Rodeo*, 21 (quotation).

⁷⁸ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 87, 111, 118, 131.

Beyond growing ticket sales, stock show officials, the media, and local businesses promoted Fort Worth's western heritage in connection with the stock show in other ways. Accounting for the growth of a larger audience with little direct knowledge of the livestock industry or ranching lifestyle, show planners worked to educate crowds in the vernacular of ranching life. Stock show programs included dictionaries with titles such as "Your Cowboy Dictionary," or "Dictionary of the West," to aid visitors in understanding standard cowboy, ranching, and rodeo terminology.⁷⁹ Show officials also used the programs to emphasize Fort Worth's western identity. "Out of the West came the Rodeo," Frank G. Evens, Director of Publicity, explained in the 1929 program, "It originated from the land of cattle, expert horsemen, ranchers and bucking broncs." As a throw-back to the Old West, the rodeo, he argued, called Fort Worth "home" because it is situated "where the West begins."⁸⁰ In other instances, casting Fort Worth as a modern western metropolis with close ties to West Texas, advertisements for the city noted, "livestock, grain and petroleum are all of more importance to Fort Worth's commercial life than is cotton."⁸¹ In addition to the rhetoric employed by the officials of the stock show the media and local businesses also cultivated the western identity in connection with the stock show. An advertisement for the Fort Worth Gas Company explained, "Since the days of the pioneer the trails of the plains

⁷⁹ See Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1929, 47, 49; Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1934, 45, 47, Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show Programs, Box 1, FTWPLA.

⁸⁰ Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1929, 3.

⁸¹ Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1928, 60, Box 2, "State and Local History," Folder "II;2:14 "Fort Worth Stock Show Rodeo—Programs—1908-1931," Mary Daggett Papers, FTWPLA.

country have centered in Fort Worth.”⁸² As a result, “Fort Worth has made of itself the store house for the West.” Local newspapers also encouraged visitors to embrace the trappings of the ranching lifestyle by wearing western attire to the exposition. According to Clay Reynolds, by the beginning of the 1930s, “More than ever, the stock show seemed to have become a celebration of Texas’s cowboy heritage, of its tradition of self-reliance and pioneer spirit.”⁸³

The efforts of Jarvis and others to make the exposition economically self-sufficient played an important role in helping it weather the Great Depression. In 1931 the show failed to turn a profit. The loss of their tax-exempt status in 1929 further distanced the meat-packing operations in the stock yards from the exposition. Moreover, the Depression thinned the membership of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raiser’s Association—a major supporter of the show.⁸⁴ These developments provided an impetus to strengthen the bond between the show and the city. Arguing for its “educational purposes, civic good, and public benefit,” Van Zandt Jarvis gained tax exemption for the stock show. Despite the exemption, the exposition still floundered economically to a point at which in 1935 it could no longer afford to pay the rodeo purses. Notwithstanding the stock show’s financial problems, lower hotel and rail rates, ticket discounts, and experimentation with new events and attractions increased the turnout. In 1935 more than 250,000 attended the exposition—a record year.⁸⁵ Making the show attractive to the public came with a price.

⁸² Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1928, 26.

⁸³ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 143, 159 (quotation).

⁸⁴ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 157, 162.

⁸⁵ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 164 (quotation), 165, 168.

The discrepancy between what the stock show had once been with what it had become, led stock show secretary-manager John B. Davis to remind exposition goers, the following year, of the of the “Serious Purpose” of the stock show. “The World’s Championship Rodeo and Horse Show and Rainbeau Garden, Midway and carnival attractions,” he wrote, “make the stock show the Southwest’s greatest amusement attraction, but its livestock departments make it an indispensable economic and educational institution.”⁸⁶ To succeed the stock show had become more hat than horse.

The state’s centennial year presented stock show officials with an opportunity to provide for the show’s continued growth and permanence. More specifically, stock show leaders took a proactive approach to using the centennial as a means to rectify the show’s inadequate financial backing and cramped stock yards facilities. During the 1920s the show began to turn a profit in spite of the decreasing power and influence of the meat-packing operations in Fort Worth and their reluctance to back the stock show. Now in the depths of the Great Depression, Jarvis, Carter, and others recognized the problem would become acute without a stable corporation taking an interest in the show. They turned to the city as a permanent solution to the problem. Unfortunately, the city’s relationship with the show, in the past, had been tenuous at best. Despite the millions that the livestock interest brought to the city, the show proved anathema to many because it annually attracted a grubby crowd of visitors to an already seedy part of the city. The location of the stockyards and later the railroads made the North Side of Fort Worth a natural location for a stock show. Still catering to cowboys who came in with the cattle, North Fort Worth provided a

⁸⁶ Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1936, 7, Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show Programs, Box 1, FTWPLA.

host of illicit and often illegal activities and establishments including saloons, gambling, and prostitution. As a result, the real estate surrounding the stock yards remained dilapidated and underdeveloped. Investors found little prospect or incentive in the redevelopment of North Fort Worth. As the Chamber of Commerce and city officials worked to cast Fort Worth as a modern metropolitan, North Fort Worth remained an embarrassment to the city. And in the mind of many citizens the stock show remained inseparable from its location.⁸⁷

To be sure, the twentieth-century brought some modern changes to Fort Worth's North Side. Improved roads made transporting the livestock to the stock yards via truck possible. By the 1930s, parking meters, gas stations, and telephone and telegraph lines graced the streets adjacent to the stockyards. Stockyard cowboys traded in their traditional overalls and heavy work-boots for more modern fashions of high-crowned felt hats, denim jeans, leather belts, and cowboy boots.⁸⁸ The Fort Worth Stockyards Company also spent millions to modernize the stockyards facilities and pave livestock pens. Meant to give the impression of modernity, a 1935 advertisement for the Fort Worth Stockyards Company featured a large aerial photograph of the orderly stockyards and boasted of its "modern, sanitary pens."⁸⁹

Still, Carter and other Fort Worth businessmen believed relocating the stock show to a more amenable location would remove a major stumbling block to forging a closer

⁸⁷ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 36, 170-172.

⁸⁸ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 127.

⁸⁹ Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Souvenir Program, 1935, 30, Box 28, Folder 43 "Research Regarding the Stock Show Around 1935, undated," Clay Reynolds Papers, 1895-2002, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas (cited hereafter as SWC).

relationship with the stock show and the city. In addition to strengthening stock show ties with the city, removing the show to a new location could provide new opportunities for growth. As the show grew, each year required more and more facilities and space. Stock show officials found the stockyards facilities increasingly inadequate to meet the event's growing needs. Perhaps more than anything else the rising use of the automobile represented a particularly challenging issue because the stock show grounds lacked adequate space for parking.

Though lacking documentation, historian Clay Reynolds speculates that Carter, Jarvis, and others began laying plans for the possible removal of the stock show during the centennial year as early as 1934.⁹⁰ The conception to celebrate the livestock industry as part of the centennial first appeared shortly after Dallas received the bid to host the Central Exposition. A delegation representing the interests of the stock show appeared before the Senate subcommittee charged with creating a centennial appropriation bill. The group asked for, but failed to acquire \$700,000 to aid in the expansion and renovation of the stock show facilities in North Fort Worth to help celebrate the progress of the livestock industry.⁹¹ Evidence of a deliberate campaign to remove the show, however, only begins to appear in the spring of 1935 in preparation for Fort Worth's official request for funds. Unlike Austin, Houston, and San Antonio, Fort Worth did not receive earmarked funds from the \$3,000,000 state appropriation, necessitating the development of a proposal for the Advisory Board. Preparations began two days after Governor Allred signed the

⁹⁰ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 169.

⁹¹ "More Pleas Made For Allotment of Centennial Cash," *Dallas Morning News*, October 24, 1934, 3.

appropriation bill into law. On May 9 Amon Carter sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes who ran Roosevelt's New Deal programs. Hoping to obtain a Public Works Administration (PWA) loan, Carter sketched a primitive picture of the city's plans for a centennial memorial to the Texas livestock industry. The envisioned memorial consisted of new livestock facilities befitting the size and renown of the stock show on a plot of land nearer to the city center. Initial estimates indicated that such centennial facilities, including a much need civic auditorium, could not be built for less than \$1,000,000. Carter explained that of the \$3,000,000 appropriated by the Texas legislature for the centennial, Fort Worth planned to ask for \$300,000 and hoped to procure a federal loan/grant of \$700,000 in which the stock show would repay \$490,000. Describing the stock show as a "successful civic institution" with close administrative ties to Fort Worth's municipal leadership, Carter hoped to illustrate for Ickes the civic nature of the show and its ability to amortize the loan. To grease the wheels, Carter sent along a steak from the prize winning steer from the most recent exposition.⁹²

Notwithstanding Carter's meaty bribe, Ickes curtly replied that based upon the information provided by Carter the PWA might have the authority to grant a loan for a private corporation, such as the Stock Show Association, if it included safeguards to protect against the loss of a federal investment. Ickes's primary reservation regarding a loan/grant for the Fort Worth memorial, however, was that the loan/grant powers of the National Recovery Act expired on June 16, 1935 and he would have no way of knowing the new provisions for making loan/grants upon the renewal of the act. However, he explained, "we

⁹² Amon G. Carter to Harold L. Ickes, May 9, 1935, Box 174, Folder "Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show, 1935," Carter Papers.

have in the past considered several applications for projects similar to the one in which you are interested but have been able to approve none of them.”⁹³

Despite Ickes’s negative reply to Carter’s inquiry, plans for the construction of a memorial to the livestock industry and exposition grounds for the stock show moved forward. The stock show’s executive committee hired a real estate dealer to scan the city for possible sites with at least 100 acres on which to build the new stock show facilities. Later Amon Carter claimed the dealer received instructions to “investigate North Fort Worth first.”⁹⁴ However, given Carter’s statement to Ickes that the city intended to build the memorial “near the city,” it seems likely that the investigation of North Fort Worth represented a perfunctory exercise for the placation of the citizens and businesses in that section of the city.⁹⁵ Without a North Fort Worth alternative, the real estate dealer recommended a 138 acre plot of land on the west side of the city dubbed the Van Zandt site or the Van Zandt tract. After two months of negotiations, the dealer procured an option for the city to purchase the site for \$150,000. With an option on the Van Zandt tract obtained, at the behest of Carter stock show general manager John B. Davis called together the Executive Committee to discuss removing the show to the new location as part of Fort Worth’s centennial celebration. At this meeting Carter brought a new and compelling argument to the deliberations. Carter insisted that if Fort Worth did not celebrate the centennial of the Texas livestock industry in grand fashion, it did so at the peril of the stock

⁹³ Harold L. Ickes to Amon G. Carter, May 20, 1935, Box 174, Folder “Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show, 1935,” Carter Papers.

⁹⁴ Amon G. Carter to Van Zandt Jarvis, February 11, 1937, Box 110, Folder “J-Miscellaneous, 1936-1940,” Carter Papers.

⁹⁵ Harold L. Ickes to Amon G. Carter, May 20, 1935.

show. "Our friends across the River, with their new buildings, costing from \$15,000,000 to \$20,000,000," Carter explained, "could and possibly would absorb our great Stock Show." Those present, including representatives of meatpackers Armour and Swift, lamented the loss of the show on the North Side but believed the move necessary to prevent the deterioration and perhaps the collapse of the Fort Worth show. Detailed plans for construction of new livestock show facilities as part of Fort Worth's centennial celebration finally received an official approval at a joint meeting of the stock show's Executive Committee and City Council where the council voted unanimously to include the memorial facilities as part of a larger proposal for a number of public building projects requiring a large PWA grant.⁹⁶

The Advisory Board of Texas Historians began hearing proposals for historical commemoration on June 18. During the first four days of hearings which consisted of two two-day sessions, the first on June 18 and 19 the second on July 1 and 2, the Board heard fifty-three proposals in behalf of several dozen Texas counties.⁹⁷ The flood of proposals quickly exceeded the Advisory Board's allotted budget for memorials and markers.⁹⁸ On July 8, the Board commenced a third session of hearings. The meeting began with a presentation on behalf of Tarrant County. Armed with a twenty-two page bound proposal, a delegation of twelve influential Fort Worth citizens including Mayor Jarvis, Carter, a half

⁹⁶ Amon G. Carter to Van Zandt Jarvis, February 11, 1937; see "PWA Grant of \$900,000 to be Sought," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 30, 1935, 1-2.

⁹⁷ See Advisory Board of Texas Historians "Bulletin No. 2," June 18-19, 1935; and Advisory Board of Texas Historians "Bulletin No. 3," July 1-2, 1935, Box 2B149, Folder "Reports to Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, June 1935-June 1937, Dobie Papers.

⁹⁸ "Texas Centennial Historical Advisors Plan State Survey," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1935, 9.

dozen members of the stock show's Executive Committee, several members of the city council, *Fort Worth Press* editor Seward Sheldon, and Texas State Senator Frank Rawlings appeared before the Board.⁹⁹ Though the proposal identified the delegation as representatives of Fort Worth, those present also served in the interest of the Stock Show Association. In fact the proposal carried the signatures of Jarvis, Carter, and Secretary-Manager Davis in behalf of the stock show rather than as representatives from the county or city.¹⁰⁰

Amon Carter and Van Zandt Jarvis led the group's presentation.¹⁰¹ Appealing to the Board's interests in recommending funds based on historical merit, the content of the proposal focused on conveying the fundamental importance of the livestock industry to the economic and cultural history of the state. The proposal claimed that livestock represented the first industry in the state even before its formation as a republic, and since that time Texas functioned primarily as a "cattle state." Given the central role the livestock industry represented to the state, the proposal argued it required its own celebration. In addition, the proposal argued that the livestock industry played a primary role in the epic saga of western expansion. Retelling the story of the intrepid Texas pioneers who transformed the West, the proposal predicted, would likely represent the most attractive part of the centennial to out-of-state visitors. The story of the pioneers and livestock industry provided

⁹⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians, July 8, 1935, 1, Box 2B149, Folder "Reports to Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, June 1935-June 1937, Dobie Papers.

¹⁰⁰ "Presentation by the City of Fort Worth to The Centennial Advisory Board of Texas Historians," cover, 6, Box 198, Folder "Texas Centennial commission [Republic of Texas], 1935-1937," Carter Papers.

¹⁰¹ Byron C. Utecht, "Both State Boards Will Co-Operate," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 9, 1935, 1-2.

a fundamental aspect lacking from all expositions based on commercial and industrial exhibits—“human nature appeal.”¹⁰² Naturally, Fort Worth represented the “logical site” for such an exposition. In fact, the proposal indicated that the “history and development of the livestock industry in Texas have so been intertwined” with Fort Worth, “there can be no separation.” Moreover, Fort Worth hosted the largest most significant livestock show in the Southwest.¹⁰³

To host an exposition worthy of the Texas livestock industry, the delegation unabashedly requested, as hinted by Amon Carter to Harold Ickes, \$300,000 of the \$575,000 discretionary funds available for historical markers and memorials for the construction of an “entirely new livestock exhibition plant.”¹⁰⁴ The funds, if granted, would be combined with a larger \$1,200,000 PWA loan claimed to be already under negotiation. Though Fort Worth already had access to facilities for operating a stock show, the proposal reasoned new facilities on a new 140-acre tract were necessary to do justice to the livestock industry in the centennial year.¹⁰⁵ The proposal then described all the necessary buildings. This included a 6,000-seat coliseum, an auditorium, an exhibition building, an arena for auction sales, and a host of buildings dedicated to housing the various breeds of livestock. With the new plant, the proposal exclaimed, Fort Worth planned to stage in the fall of 1936

¹⁰² “Presentation by the City of Fort Worth to The Centennial Advisory Board of Texas Historians,” 2 (1st quotation), 3 (2nd quotation).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1, 3 (quotation).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

a grand livestock exposition, horse show, and rodeo, superior to the standard annual stock show.¹⁰⁶

Several important themes emerged out of the proposal which signaled important conceptualization for the centennial. The proposal cast the livestock industry as a westering phenomenon central to the expansion of the American West. Descriptive terms used to characterize the livestock industry as western include pioneers, cowboys, ranches, horsemanship, and the West. In defining Fort Worth as inseparable from the Texas livestock heritage, the proposal implied Fort Worth also laid claim to a western heritage based on its historical relationship to the Texas livestock hinterland—West Texas. Thus, it was really not Fort Worth’s specific heritage centennial planners intended to celebrate. Rather they hoped to “give adequate recognition of the livestock industry, [and], the development of West Texas from cattle to an agricultural empire.” In describing the historical importance of the livestock industry and Texas’s pioneer heritage, the proposal made no reference to the original Fort Worth or the settlement of North Texas. It also made no distinction between a Fort Worth and West Texas heritage. Perhaps using earlier stock shows as a gauge, from a perspective of attracting visitors, the proposal argued a western theme would ensure the exposition’s success.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, the relationship of West Texas and Fort Worth as depicted in the proposal brings into focus the three-decade transition in which stock show officials gradually co-opted the West Texas livestock and pioneer heritage for Fort Worth. As state centennial plans developed, cashing in on West Texas’s pioneer heritage proved even more valuable and central to Fort Worth’s centennial plans.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 4, 15, 17-22.

¹⁰⁷ See Ibid., 4.

Unwilling to trust the Advisory Board's appraisal of the virtues of the proposal, the Fort Worth centennial delegation also met with the State Centennial Commission of Control. Hoping to sway those who controlled the distribution of the centennial's discretionary funds, the delegation prepared a second proposal addressed directly to the Commission. Fort Worth delegates came away from both meetings feeling very optimistic. Illustrating the extent to which Fort Worth's proposal traded on a platform celebrating West Texas, Louis Kemp of the Advisory Board told the delegates that he was especially anxious for West Texas to participate in the centennial and claimed "West Texas had as much history as any other section." Delegates also took solace in Kemp's willingness to consider Fort Worth's claims prior to the Board's October 1 deadline to present its recommendations to the Commission. Based largely on the comments of Senator Frank Rawlings, Commission Vice-Chairman and Speaker of the House Coke R. Stevenson claimed he would vote for allocating the funds "right now." Rawlings apparently gave an impassioned speech to both the Advisory Board and the Commission claiming the Texas Legislature's centennial appropriation originally included a major allocation for Fort Worth. Building on the major themes of the proposal, Rawlings exclaimed:

No one contests that Fort Worth is the logical place for the exhibition. The constitutional amendment calls for observation of the progress as well as the history of Texas, and that is where Fort Worth and West Texas come in. This show will attract more visitors than any other phase of the Centennial for crowds do not go to historical scenes only. Since the inception of the Centennial bill in the Legislature it was conceded that Fort Worth should receive an allocation of sufficient amount for a livestock show, and the bill as first drawn had us down for \$300,000 and I now lay claim to it. This will be more than just a show, for it will be of permanent benefit.

And none of us should overlook that Fort Worth and West Texas pay their share of the taxes that go into the Centennial fund.¹⁰⁸

During the early deliberations, the appropriations bill apparently included earmarks for all the major metropolitans including Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, Austin, and Fort Worth. Believing the inclusion of Fort Worth represented a slippery slope under which any town of historical importance might demand funds, Walter Cline of Wichita Falls and William Thornton of Austin asked Fort Worth to withdraw its request for funding. According to James M. North Jr. of Fort Worth, who attended the appropriation deliberations, Senator Rawlings only backed down after receiving assurances from Cline and Thornton that Fort Worth would receive funds from non-earmarked funds within the centennial appropriation after it passed. North characterized the exchange between Rawlings and Cline and Thornton not as a “definite agreement,” but an “understanding.”¹⁰⁹ Later several politicians who attended the deliberations disputed the existence of the apparently well-known “understanding.”

Following a joint meeting of the Commission of Control, the Advisory Board of Texas Historians, and the Advertising Board, on July 20, Commission Chairman Lieutenant Governor Walter F. Woodul made a surprising announcement. Heavily influenced by the argument presented by Senator Rawlings, the Commission, with a vote of five to one, decided to supersede the Advisory Board and grant Fort Worth \$250,000 of the \$575,000

¹⁰⁸ Byron C. Utecht, “Both State Boards Will Co-Operate,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 9, 1935, 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Byron C. Utecht, “Huge Livestock Show Is Visioned for Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 21, 1935, 1-2; James M. North Jr. to Ted Dealey, July 26, 1935, Box 198, Folder “Texas Centennial Commission [Republic of Texas], 1935-1937,” Carter Papers.

appropriated for historical markers and memorials. In the same statement Woodul indicated the Commission's decision to grant \$50,000 to Goliad to mark the location of the Fannin Massacre and \$50,000 to Gonzales to honor the location of the first shot in the fight for Texas independence.¹¹⁰ The Commission awarded the funds to Fort Worth with several caveats. First, the award rested upon the City of Fort Worth raising \$1,250,000 to match the state allocation. Second, if the federal government appropriated funds to support the Texas State Centennial including a Fort Worth earmark of \$250,000, the Commission would rescind its offer of the same amount.¹¹¹

At the time, a federal appropriation appeared imminent. Two months earlier the House Committee on Foreign Affairs had already begun hearings for Joint Resolution 293 which contained among other things a \$3,000,000 federal appropriation for the Texas centennial and the creation of the United States Texas Centennial Commission led by Vice President John Nance Garner.¹¹² Aware of these legislative developments, Fort Worth officials began to lobby for the procurement of funds from a possible federal appropriation bill. On July 12, Amon Carter attempted to persuade the bill's creator Texas Representative Fritz Lanham to use his influence to convince Garner and others to earmark funds for Fort Worth from a federal appropriation.¹¹³ Subsequently, Van Zandt Jarvis, Carter, and John B. Davis sent in an official application to the United States Texas Centennial Commission

¹¹⁰ Byron C. Utecht, "Huge Livestock Show Is Visioned for Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 21, 1935, 1-2.

¹¹¹ "Resolution of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations," July 20, 1935, Box 174, Folder "Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, 1935," Carter Papers.

¹¹² Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 77-79.

¹¹³ Amon G. Carter to Fritz Lanham, July 12, 1935, Box 198, Folder, "Texas Centennial Commission [Republic of Texas], 1935-1937," Carter Papers.

requesting an earmark of \$300,000 for Fort Worth's memorial of the Texas livestock industry.¹¹⁴ In light of the likelihood of federal appropriation, the State Commission's award merely assured Fort Worth officials that they would receive some centennial funding from either a state or federal source. However, to help ensure a federal appropriation for Fort Worth, Chairman Woodul publicly promised to travel to Washington and lobby for a Fort Worth earmark as part of the legislation.¹¹⁵

Notwithstanding the probability of a federal appropriation for Fort Worth which would mitigate their decision, the State Commission's actions still ignited a firestorm of protest. Immediately all three members the Advisory Board of Texas Historians registered their objections. Following the meeting, both Kemp and Reverend Foik tendered their resignation to the Commission. Though in Dallas at the time of the meeting, J. Frank Dobie threatened to submit his resignation if the federal funds were not granted for the Fort Worth monument. An allocation of \$250,000 to Fort Worth, they collectively argued, not only muted the authority of their body, but also rendered their job virtually impossible by cutting their already woefully inadequate budget in half. Unwilling to second-guess the actions of the Commission, Kemp explained the Commission simply placed a higher premium on celebrating commercial development as opposed to historical events.¹¹⁶ Far less charitable in his assessment of the decision, Dobie, despite the transparency of

¹¹⁴ Van Zandt Jarvis, Amon G. Carter, John B. Davis, "Application by City of Fort Worth to the United States Centennial Commission for an appropriation," circa, July 1935, Box 28, Folder 44 "Research Regarding the Stock Show Around 1936, Undated," Reynolds Papers.

¹¹⁵ William M. Thornton, "\$250,000 is Presented to Fort Worth to Hold 1936 Live Stock Show," *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1935, 1, 4.

¹¹⁶ Byron C. Utecht, "Huge Livestock Show Is Visioned for Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 21, 1935, 1-2.

Woodul's reasoning for the appropriation, accused the Commission of skullduggery, arguing the decision was a product of "political trades" and "the ambitions of politicians." Casting additional barbs at the Commission, he claimed a monument to the pioneer heritage of Texas would be "much more interesting to the public than \$1,000,000 worth of hog, sheep and chicken pens."¹¹⁷ Despite the Advisory Board's criticisms of the Commission's decision, the Commission refused to accept the resignations of the members of the Advisory Board and continued its deliberations assuming the federal government would allocate \$250,000 to Fort Worth thus maintaining the Commission's coffers.¹¹⁸

The objections that followed tended to reflect the criticisms already expressed by the members of the Advisory Board. The Commissioner who cast the sole dissenting vote against the Fort Worth appropriation, J. V. Vandenberg of Victoria, boldly announced he had vigorously opposed the allotment in the joint meeting believing it "sacrilege to subordinate the memory of our heroes to an exposition of our industries."¹¹⁹ State Senator T. J. Holbrook who fought for the state appropriation supported Kemp's resignation and claimed politics influenced the Commission's decision.¹²⁰ Wichita Falls Senator Ben G. Oneal, who authored the amendment to the appropriation bill providing for an advisory board of historians, charged members of the Commission and Fort Worth delegates with back-room politics. He claimed, "I purposely put that amendment in the bill to protect the control commission from those who would attempt to play politics or attempt pork barrel

¹¹⁷ "Dobie Concerned At Allotment of State Commission," *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1935, 1, 4.

¹¹⁸ "Advisory Board To Allot Markers For Centennial," *Dallas Morning News*, August 1, 1935, 2.

¹¹⁹ "Vanderberge, Deplores Act of Commission," *Victoria Advocate*, July 23, 1935, 1, 3.

¹²⁰ "Senator Is Indignant," *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1935, 4.

allotments.” A number of outraged state senators who followed Oneal’s lead challenged Woodul’s rationale for granting the Fort Worth allotment. Lufkin senator John S. Redditt and Senator John W. Hornsby of Austin both denied Rawlings and Woodul’s claim that an understanding accompanied the bill’s passage which implied Fort Worth would receive an appropriation.¹²¹

Until Woodul’s announcement of the Fort Worth appropriation, the historic rivalry with Dallas remained dormant in regard to the Texas Centennial. With the exception of boisterous language in Fort Worth’s proposal to the Advisory Board meant to extol the great public interest in the cattle industry and the pioneer era in Texas history opposed to the sterile commercial theme of the Central Exposition, Fort Worth leaders, including Amon Carter, recognized the unprofitability of “trying to take the play away from [Dallas].”¹²² However, an unintended result of the appropriation debacle included the cooling of relations between Fort Worth and Dallas’s major media outlets. In the week following the July 20 announcement, the *Dallas Morning News* broke its standards for journalistic objectivity by publishing several front-page “reports” authored by William M. Thornton, its Austin news correspondent, openly critical of the appropriation. In the July 21 report of the Commission’s announcement, Thornton pointed out the irony that Fort Worth and its memorial to the livestock industry received \$250,000 while two locations of enormous historical significance to Texas only received a pale \$50,000. He also argued the allotment of

¹²¹ “More Objections Lodged to Grant for Stock Show,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 24, 1935, 3.

¹²² See “Presentation by the City of Fort Worth to The Centennial Advisory Board of Texas Historians,” 3; Amon G. Carter to Fritz Lanham, July 12, 1935, Box 198, Folder “Texas Centennial Commission [Republic of Texas], 1935-37,” (quotation), Carter Papers.

\$250,000 to Fort Worth placed it “on parity with San Antonio and its Alamo, and Houston where was fought the Battle of San Jacinto, one of the seven decisive battles of the world and which won independence for Texas.”¹²³ A few days later, Thornton again took the Commission’s decision to task on the front-page of the *Dallas Morning News*. This time, Thornton argued that the Fort Worth allocation set a dangerous precedent. Thornton warned readers that as a result of the allotment other Texas cities with industries of significance to the Texas economy might make similar demands of the Commission. El Paso with its livestock and mining, Lufkin with its lumber manufacturing, Pecos with its cantaloupes, and Cuero with its turkey market, according to Thornton, all claimed as much a right to centennial funds as Fort Worth. But no Texas region claimed more rights to centennial funds than the oil producing cities in East Texas such as Tyler, Kilgore, and Longview. “Oil production has become by far the greatest industry in Texas,” he claimed, “far exceeding the livestock business in valuation and importance.”¹²⁴

Thornton’s depiction of the Commission’s Fort Worth allocation so angered Amon Carter that he delegated the task of registering his indignation over the *Dallas Morning News’s* coverage to James M. North Jr., editor of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, believing he would convey the concerns with a more “Christian spirit.” In a letter to Ted Dealey, the vice president of the corporation which published the *Dallas Morning News*, North conveyed Carter’s bewilderment with the appearance of Thornton’s “reports” on the front-page. More specifically, North questioned why, given the *News’s* high standards regarding

¹²³ William M. Thornton, “\$250,000 Is Presented To Fort Worth to Hold 1936 Livestock Show,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1936, 1, 4.

¹²⁴ William M. Thornton, “More Industries Would Share in Centennial Fund,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 23, 1935, 1, 12.

editorial policies, the paper published a news report “belittling a proposition and, by inference at least, condemning a public board for its action.” If the *News* opposed the actions of the Commission, he wondered, why such a position would not be taken up in an editorial. After chiding the *News*, North reaffirmed the desire of Fort Worth officials to complement the offerings at the central centennial rather than to compete directly with it and explained their perspective on the Commission’s decision to allot the money to Fort Worth. Given the manner in which the *News* published its objections, North concluded, they sounded “a little ‘sour grapey.’”¹²⁵ North ultimately neglected to discuss the real concern with Thornton’s reports: to readers his comparison of Fort Worth’s allotment with the money granted to Goliad and Gonzales and Houston, San Antonio, and Austin likely added gravity to the charges expressed by Dobie and others that Fort Worth officials engaged in inappropriate politicking. In addition to the letter to Dealey, Carter also published an editorial mocking the reports published in *Dallas Morning News* titled, “Tender Hearts in Dallas.” Challenging Thornton’s argument for the singular importance of the events at Goliad and Gonzales to the history of Texas, the editorial argued that development “is the best sort of history” and pointed out that such reasoning not only supported Dallas’ claim to hosting the Central Exposition but also Fort Worth’s plan for celebrating the livestock industry.¹²⁶

The U.S. Texas Centennial Commission settled the debate on August 17 when it announced an earmark of \$250,000 to support Fort Worth celebration of the livestock

¹²⁵ James M. North Jr. to Ted Dealey, July 26, 1935, Box 198, Folder “Texas Centennial Commission [Republic of Texas], 1935-1937,” Carter Papers.

¹²⁶ “Tender Hearts in Dallas,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 28, 1935, “Oil, Editorial, Classifieds,” 4.

industry, ending the Commission of Control's financial obligations to that city.¹²⁷ The victory for Fort Worth came only after Amon Carter appeared personally before the assistant commissioners of the United States Texas Centennial Commission in Washington D.C. and delivered a passionate speech in favor of a Fort Worth earmark.¹²⁸ No sooner had Fort Worth received the \$250,000 than the City Council announced a campaign to win public support for a \$687,500 bond issue for the new stock show facilities. In a few short weeks Fort Worth citizens would cast their vote on a series of bond issues funding a large building program of which the livestock memorial formed only a part. The building program included a library, hospital, tuberculosis sanatorium, and a new city hall-jail complex requiring the approval of \$1,438,500 in city bonds. The City Council voted for William Monnig, a local businessman and perhaps the most influential member of the council, to lead a committee to oversee the stock show bond issue campaign.¹²⁹ Once organized, the committee contained more than thirty prominent Fort Worth businessmen including Amon Carter, Van Zandt Jarvis, Marvin Leonard, and Frank Rawlings.¹³⁰ Monnig also formed several subcommittees including a "Speakers Committee" dedicated to educating Fort Worth citizens on the issues and a "Get-out-the-vote Committee" that worked to ensure a large showing on Election Day.¹³¹

With a promotional organization in place, the movement sprang into action.

Members of the Speakers Committee stumped at dozens of venues across the city.

¹²⁷ "250,000 For Fort Worth Is Included," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 18, 1935, 1-2.

¹²⁸ "Centennial Fund Appeal Is Repeated," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 17, 1935, 1-2.

¹²⁹ "Monnig Will Head Show Bond Drive," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 17, 1935, 1-2.

¹³⁰ "Committee for Centennial Stock Show Bonds Named," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 18, 1935, 1-2.

¹³¹ "Many To Speak For Bond," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 22, 1935, 9.

Organizations such as the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, the East Fort Worth Lion's Club, and various civic groups and labor unions hosted meetings and rallies. On one occasion, Carter and Monnig spoke before an audience of 30,000 attending a carnival celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Magnolia Community Business Men's Association.¹³² Although some speakers mentioned the wide appeal of the "human interest" angle attached to the livestock and western theme for the centennial show, the City Council at this time primarily justified the stock show bond issue to Fort Worth citizens on economic arguments. First, the bond would take hundreds of Fort Worth laborers off federal relief rolls by providing funds to put them back to work immediately. Second, because the stock show represented a self-sustaining enterprise, the profits from the show would be more than enough to repay the bonds without raising taxes. Thus, the construction of the new livestock facilities, they reasoned, would likely cost the public nothing. Third, with an investment of only \$687,500, the city would receive nearly a \$1,000,000 in grants from the federal and state governments. The city, the speakers reassured citizens, would not likely receive a similar deal ever again. Fourth, if the bond issue did not pass, then Fort Worth would lose the \$1,000,000 in grants from the federal and state government making Fort Worth unable to participate in the centennial and unable to capitalize on the city's proximity to the Central Exposition in Dallas. Finally, stock show supporters repeatedly asserted that if the show facilities went unimproved, Dallas would likely construct superior livestock facilities as part of the Central Exposition and host a superior livestock show of its

¹³² "30,000 Entertained by Magnolia Business Men," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 31, 1935, 1-2.

own. As a result Fort Worth would ultimately be displaced as host of one of the leading livestock shows in the nation.¹³³

After the campaign began a number of labor and civic organizations came out in support of the bond measures. On August 22 the Fort Worth Trades Assembly voted nearly unanimously in support of the issue,¹³⁴ believing the bonds would help diminish the surplus of unemployed laborers. The Fort Worth Building Trades Council also voted to support the city's building program.¹³⁵ The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce initiated several speeches in favor of the city bond issue. For example, on August 27, William L. Pier spoke in behalf of the Chamber to the Real Estate Board extolling the virtues of the plan to expand the stock show facilities.¹³⁶ The Allied Civic Leagues launched a campaign in support of the bonds and sponsored a number of meetings and rallies hosted by local divisions of the organization. Prominent individuals such as Monnig, Hammond, and Carter spoke at these meetings located around the city. Councilman Hammond also delivered a radio address sponsored by the Allied Civic Leagues.¹³⁷ Moreover, at the invitation of the Allied Civic Leagues, 125 leaders of dozens of women's organizations gathered to hear an explanation of the various bond issues. Following the presentation of James M. North, Jr., and others who spoke in

¹³³ In a telegram to Harry L. Hopkins, Amon G. Carter claimed, "Our two main arguments were fortyfive percent grants from PWA and opportunity of solving local unemployment problem by giving work directly to two-thousand men and a year's employment to every skilled and semiskilled worker now idle in city." Amon G. Carter to Harry L. Hopkins, September 5, 1935, Box 174, Folder "Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show," Carter Papers.

¹³⁴ "Organized Labor for Bonds," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 23, 1935, 9.

¹³⁵ "Building Council For All of Bonds," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 30, 1935, 1.

¹³⁶ "Show Bonds Urged By Pier," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 28, 1935, 3.

¹³⁷ See "Bond Election Rallies Set," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 27, 1935, 9; "4 Rallies For Bonds To Be Held Tonight," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 29, 1935, 9.

favor of all the bond issues, a majority of those present committed themselves to furthering the campaign within their own groups.¹³⁸

Fort Worth's North Side quickly voiced resistance to the bond measures— particularly the bond for the construction of new stock show facilities. Even though six of the sixteen construction site finalists under the consideration of the City Council were located in the North Side, interest in the Van Zandt tract exhibited by some city officials caused North Side residents to fear the possible economic impact of removal.¹³⁹ Believing they could prevent the passage of the bond issue if the City Council selected a non-North Side site, the Central Council of North Side Civic Leagues sent a delegation to the City Council to request they announce the final location of the site prior to the bond election. T. P. Leath, president of the North Side group told city officials that placing a ballot before the voters without knowledge of the location of the new stock show facilities constituted “poor politics.”¹⁴⁰ Believing he convincingly conveyed the intention and ability of the North Side to block the bond issue, after the meeting Leath concluded, “the city officials will name the site before the election.”¹⁴¹ Upon the refusal of City Council to bow to its demands, the North Side group initiated a campaign of its own to educate voters.¹⁴² Though the North Side group never claimed to tell citizens how to vote, speakers at their rallies challenged the

¹³⁸ “Women To Aid In Drive For Bond Issues,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 30, 1935, 9, 15.

¹³⁹ “Tour Of Show Sites Is Made,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 23, 1935, 9.

¹⁴⁰ “Urge Decision On Stock Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 27, 1935, 9.

¹⁴¹ “N. Side Opens Drive Tonight,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 28, 1935, 9.

¹⁴² On August 28, 1935 the City Council voted unanimously to adopt a resolution indicating that only after the bond issue successfully passed would the Council then hold a special meeting to select a site. See Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, August 28, 1935, 128.

propriety of the stock show bond on a number of counts. First, they questioned if the show would self-liquidate the bonds. Second, they claimed the large site requirements established by the City Council represented an attempt to prevent North Side sites from coming under consideration. Finally, they asserted that the removal of the show represented a plot orchestrated by some members of the City Council to purchase an overpriced piece of real estate.¹⁴³ A Reverend Garrett of a North Side congregation went so far as to accuse the city of attempting to hijack the stock show for the city at the expense of the North Side.¹⁴⁴

Those in favor of the bond issue quickly fired back. Councilman Monnig discounted charges that the City Council favored a non-North Side location, claiming that he would “bend over backwards in favor of the North Side.” Supporting Monnig’s position, Councilman Hammond argued, “No site has been selected and the cards are stacked in favor of the North Side because that section of the city has many advantages.”¹⁴⁵ The City Council, however, remained unwilling to name the location before the election or place the question on referendum to the bond. Still, Councilman Arthur Brown urged Fort Worth citizens to “bury all ideas of selfishness and stage a show that will be of great value to all of Fort Worth, West Texas and livestock industry.”¹⁴⁶ Carter’s *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* also attempted to mollify the concerns exhibited on the North Side. The paper published an

¹⁴³ “9 Speak At Marine Park Bond Rally,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 29, 1935, 9; “N. Side Mass Meeting on Bonds Set for Monday,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 30, 1935, 9.

¹⁴⁴ “North Side Asks Council To ‘Get on Dotted Line,’” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 31, 1935, 1-2.

¹⁴⁵ “Council To Consider All Show Sites,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 30, 1935, 1.

¹⁴⁶ “Show Bonds Cause Rally Enthusiasm,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 28, 1935, 9.

endorsement of the stock show bond issue given by Al G. Donovan, the general manager of the Fort Worth Stockyards Company. An editorial pointed out that Donovan, whose company annually rented the livestock facilities to the exposition, had much more to lose if the stock show relocated than any other North Side resident. The editorial also pointed out that Donovan recognized that Fort Worth's centrality to the Southwest livestock industry hung in the balance.¹⁴⁷ Answering the North Side assertion that Van Zandt Jarvis or Amon Carter would benefit from the sale of the Van Zandt site, another editorial in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* provided a list of the stock holders of the company, which owned the Van Zandt site of which Carter or Jarvis were not a part. The editorial also noted that the only commission or bonus resulting from the sale of the property would go directly to the real estate dealer who discovered and negotiated the option for the site.¹⁴⁸

On September 3, Fort Worth citizens cast their vote for the bond measures. To limit confusion over the stock show bond measure, the City Council arranged for its placement in the number one spot on the ballot. The day following the election newspapers reported the results indicating Fort Worthians voted in favor of the stock show bond by a margin of two to one.¹⁴⁹ The passage of the bond issue for new centennial stock show facilities culminated a process in which boosters and stock show officials worked to financially conjoin the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show with its host city. Members of the City Council demonstrated their support for making the exposition an official institution of the city by moving forward with the bond issue in spite of threats coming from the North Side and

¹⁴⁷ "A View All Should Take," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 29, 1935, 6.

¹⁴⁸ "Only Regular Fee Involved If Show Site Option Closed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 31, 1935, 3.

¹⁴⁹ "Bond Election Votes by Boxes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 4, 1935, 2.

placing the stock show measure in a place of prominence on the ballot over other bonds measures for badly needed civic buildings. Perhaps more importantly, through their vote, Fort Worth citizens revealed their belief in the significances of preserving the stock show and building modern facilities, no matter their location, to Fort Worth's future. Their vote also tacitly suggested they accepted the stock show's western orientation as representative of the city's heritage and identity.

With the city bond issue and centennial appropriation obtained, city fathers now focused on securing the last piece of funding for the new stock show facilities—the PWA grant. Coming on the heels of victory, Fort Worth officials learned disconcerting news. Public Works Administrator Harry L. Hopkins rejected 132 Texas projects submitted to and approved by Harold Ickes. These rejections included three prospective Fort Worth projects including the library, city hall, and a technical high school.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps of more concern was the fact that the PWA, attempting to aid as many of the truly destitute as possible, would soon require that all proposed projects reduce wage estimates to \$800 per man-year. Moreover, the Allotment Board announced it would reject projects as unnecessary where skilled laborers did not appear on local relief rolls. Both requirements jeopardized the livestock memorial. An irritated Carter sent a telegram to Hopkins to confirm and clarify the rumored requirements. As always, Fort Worth's centennial plans represented his greatest concern. Carter questioned the propriety of rejecting a project simply because the regional relief rolls included a minimal number of skilled laborers. In most cases, he argued, the skilled workers in Fort Worth maintained the ability to eke out a scanty living, but out of

¹⁵⁰ "Centennial Hall Among 1,908 WPA Projects Refused," *Dallas Morning News*, September 10, 1935, 1, 3.

pride did not ask for federal handouts. If the government failed to generate more PWA opportunities for skilled workers, he warned, they would surely add to the numbers on relief rolls. As the initial PWA proposal for the new stock show facilities included \$1,100 per man hour estimates for labor, Carter balked at reducing the figure by \$300. At \$800, he insisted, the per man-year wage would fail to meet the yearly needs of destitute workers.¹⁵¹ Failing to evoke a response, Fort Worth moved forward with altering its proposals to meet PWA standards.¹⁵²

After the resubmission of Fort Worth's application for PWA grants, the centennial stock show facilities met with continued resistance from federal administrators. Budgetary restraints prevented PWA officials from granting wholesale approval to all proposed projects. When appraising Fort Worth's proposed PWA projects Ickes judged the construction of livestock facilities for the centennial stock show as lacking "social desirability." As a result, the stock show facilities failed to receive approval from the PWA. Continually haunted with the imminent approach of the centennial year and unable to contact Ickes by phone, Carter traveled to Washington D.C., to defend the project's social desirability. After arriving in Washington, Carter zealously pinned down a vacation bound Ickes at the train station. Not surprisingly, Ickes, in no mood to debate the PWA's decision, brusquely dismissed Carter's imposition. Upon his return to Washington, however, Ickes sent a letter to Carter on September 27 begging his pardon for his "illnatured [*sic*]" response. He also explained the reasoning behind the rejection of the stock show facilities

¹⁵¹ Amon G. Carter to Harry L. Hopkins, September 5, 1935, Box 174, Folder, "Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show," Carter Papers.

¹⁵² Preston M. Geren to Amon G. Carter, September 9, 1935, Box 174, Folder "Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show," Carter Papers.

project, but expressed a belief that the PWA should not make decisions in opposition to local interests. "Other things being equal," Ickes explained, "we want to do what any given community would prefer that we should do." In essence, Ickes offered Carter an opportunity to prove that the rest of the city shared his urgency for the construction of the stock show facilities.¹⁵³ Based upon Ickes's offer, a number of civic organizations and important city and business leaders sent telegrams and letters to Ickes requesting the stock show facilities be given precedence over the other PWA projects in Fort Worth.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps the ultimate expression of the city's support for such a preference came in the form of a resolution passed unanimously by the City Council on October 23. The Council declared that the imminent arrival of the centennial celebration in Dallas created an "emergency." Therefore, they requested the PWA act in the "best interests of the city" and place the stock show facilities ahead of the other PWA projects proposed by the city.¹⁵⁵

Apparently the efforts of local officials to convince Ickes of the public's interest in gaining the approval for the stock show funds over the other PWA projects fell on deaf ears. Carter again traveled to Washington, this time to circumvent PWA administrators. Carter enlisted the aid of Postmaster General James Farley to intercede. After hearing Carter's pitch describing Fort Worth's need for a PWA grant for the construction of new stock show

¹⁵³ Harold Ickes to Amon G. Carter, September 27, 1935 and Amon G. Carter to Harold Ickes, September 28, 1935, Box 174, Folder "Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show," Carter Papers.

¹⁵⁴ Van Zandt Jarvis and William Monnig to Harold Ickes and Horatio M. Hackett, September 30, 1935; John B. Collier and Jack H. Hott to Harold Ickes and Horatio M. Hackett, September 30, 1935; T. B. Yarbrough to Horatio M. Hackett, October 9, 1935, Box 174, Folder "Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show," Carter Papers.

¹⁵⁵ Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, September 23, 1935, 147; Fort Worth City Council, "Resolution," [circa] October 23, 1935, Folder "October 1935," Council Proceedings, FTWPLA.

facilities, Farley then sought Roosevelt's personal approval on the project. According to Carter's biographer Jerry Flemmons, Farley took the opportunity to play a joke on Carter. At the meeting with Roosevelt, Farley purposely left the door ajar to allow an unsuspecting Carter to hear his deliberations with Roosevelt. Speaking loudly, Farley proceeded to describe the proposal as Carter's quest to build a "cowshed" in Fort Worth. Taking the bait, Carter stormed into the room shouting, "Now, gawddamit, it's not a cowshed" Both Roosevelt and Farley erupted in laughter.¹⁵⁶ Although, Roosevelt endorsed the project, PWA administrators apparently remained adamant that other projects take precedence. Still, Carter, Jarvis, and others continued to lobby for the PWA's approval. Though the details are obscure, Ickes ultimately acquiesced to Fort Worth's demands and the City Council accepted the PWA grant on January 2, 1936.¹⁵⁷

Selecting a site for the centennial livestock facilities plagued the City Council through the remaining months of 1935. Following the passage of the bond measures, the Council's Centennial Building Site Committee began deliberations to make recommendations to the Council.¹⁵⁸ Although the Building Site Committee received at least twenty-three proposals

¹⁵⁶ Flemmons, *Amon: The Life of Amon Carter*, 300-301. Unfortunately, a search of the Amon G. Carter Papers turned up no sources documenting the story as told by Flemmons. In a 1937 letter to Van Zandt Jarvis, Carter briefly recounted the campaign to finance the construction of the centennial Stock Show facilities and speaking of Roosevelt noted, "We went to Washington and found that Secretary Ickes had not approved this part of our program. Some of our friends interceded with the President and obtained his consent." Amon G. Carter to Van Zandt Jarvis, February 11, 1937.

¹⁵⁷ Amon G. Carter to Van Zandt Jarvis, February 11, 1937; Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, January 2, 1936, 186-187. For a detailed discussion of the requirements and negotiations for the PWA loan/grant, see Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 29-36.

¹⁵⁸ The Centennial Building Site Committee included: T. J. Harrell, William Monnig, Jerome C. Martin, and Arthur Brown. Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 46.

for sites scattered across the city,¹⁵⁹ the site discussion revolved primarily around two locations. In the ensuing debate over the two sites, these localities reveal two opposing views of the potential place of the stock show in the city's identity and image. North Side residents continued to voice their objection to the removal of the stock show, preferring the genuineness and grit of the traditional site. Their opposition suggests some North Side residents contested the vision of urban elites who sought to repackage the city's identity and image through the relocation of the stock show. On the other hand, the City Council also received a number of petitions favoring the Van Zandt tract because of its size, location, and accessibility.¹⁶⁰

On November 8 W. D. Smith, representing the legal interests of the Fort Worth Stockyards Company, extended an offer to sell the thirty-eight acres of land and improvements constituting the current stock show facilities to the City of Fort Worth for \$150,000. After hearing the proposal, the City Council agreed to entertain a formal proposal for the purchase of the stock show facilities from the Stock Yards Company, but at a price not exceeding \$100,000.¹⁶¹ Within days the Stockyards Company complied with the urgings of the Council and amended the sale price to \$100,000. They also took the opportunity to reinforce the advantages of retaining the stock show's current location which mostly centered on the preexisting improvements to the stockyards including loading and unloading pens, railroad facilities, sewage and water lines, and paved roads. Statements

¹⁵⁹ For summarized list of sites see Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 50-51.

¹⁶⁰ Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 52. Apparently the City Secretary's Office maintained a now non-extant file titled "Selection of Site for the Fort Worth Centennial Exposition and Fat Stock Show," containing the petitions.

¹⁶¹ Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, November 8, 1935, 160.

from the Armour and Swift Companies withdrawing their support for removal of the show also accompanied the brief.¹⁶² At the following meeting, the Council finally agreed to build the centennial livestock facilities on the existing stockyards grounds and on November 20 A. G. Donovan accepted the Council's decision.¹⁶³

Almost immediately a number of problems with the North Side site surfaced jeopardizing the Council's decision. Architects Wyatt C. Hedrick and Elmer G. Withers, retained by the city for designing the new facilities, informed the City Council of the infeasibility of passing large crowds across North Main Street, which transected the stock show grounds, necessitating the closure of the street during the centennial.¹⁶⁴ As a result, four members of the Council publicly aired their view that the issue of North Main Street validated their belief that the stock show facilities should be built elsewhere. "We have made every effort to locate the Centennial stock show and auditorium on the site now occupied by the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show," Councilman Thompson, one of the four objectors, declared. "Some of us have acted willingly and some unwilling, but there is nothing left for the council to do but select another site."¹⁶⁵ Councilman Thompson's comments suggest how divisive their deliberations over the site had been and the struggles within the Council to settle on the historic or new site for the stock show. Momentum against the original stockyards site continued to build when officials with the Stockyards Company failed to promptly deliver a contract delineating the terms of the lease

¹⁶² Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 54-55.

¹⁶³ Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, November 13, 1935, 166; Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, November 14, 1935, 167; Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, November 14, 1935, 168.

¹⁶⁴ Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, November 6, 1935, 152.

¹⁶⁵ "Possibility of New Site For Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 23, 1935, 1.

for the proposed city owned livestock facilities and the Stock Show Association. Councilman Hammond who apparently always opposed the North Side site, viewed the delay as “evidence of mismanagement” and called for a reexamination of the site question. Only Van Zandt Jarvis’s vow to hold an emergency meeting of the board pacified Hammond’s demands.¹⁶⁶

Within days additional issues with the North Side site emerged. On November 26 Fort Worth attorney Baylor B. Brown submitted a brief comparing the North Side grounds with the Van Zandt site to Councilmen Hammond and Murphy.¹⁶⁷ At their behest, Brown presented the data included in the brief to the City Council the following day.¹⁶⁸ The brief contained a side by side comparison of the two sites on a number of points including acreage, the suitability of foundations and elevations, parking space, division of the acreage in relation to main streets, purchase price, accessibility of the location, railroad and stock pen facilities, and possible future use of the property. According to the report, in every category the North Side site came up short. Even when considering accessibility of the railroad and stock pen facilities, the brief found these improvements a disadvantage to the North Side site because they required additional transportation from pens to the new coliseum and exhibition buildings. Much of the data would not have surprised the Council. The Councilmen already knew most of the pros and cons relating to the sites. However, Brown, who apparently consulted test holes excavated by the City Engineering Office and

¹⁶⁶ “Council Will Take Up Show Plant Issue,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 28, 1935, 9.

¹⁶⁷ Baylor B. Brown to W. J. Hammond and Murphy, November 26, 1935, Box 28 Folder 43 “Research Regarding the Stock Show Around 1935, Undated,” Reynolds Papers.

¹⁶⁸ Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, November 27, 1935, 173.

several contractors, raised serious concerns regarding suitability of the North Side site's landscape for the construction of new stock show facilities. Specifically, because the top fifteen feet of soil on much of the site consisted of "manure and rubbish" standard foundations could not be successfully constructed. The site also contained widely variant elevations requiring extensive leveling. The expense in solving both issues, Brown warned, would prove prohibitive. According to contractors the use of a floating foundation or pilings could add a half million dollars to construction costs.¹⁶⁹ More than demonstrating the need for floating foundations and piles, the excavations illustrated for the City Council not only the actual depths in which Fort Worth's storied past had been written into the landscape, but a reality in the North Side that no longer fit the city's modern image.

The individual who commissioned Brown's comparison of the two sites remains unknown. The pro-Van Zandt tract content makes Amon Carter a likely candidate. Carter, indeed, represented the premier supporter of the Van Zandt site, and several comments speak to his influence. Rather than assessing economic factors, the brief focused on the less tangible implications of the North Side geography. More than the "unsightly buildings and negro shacks" surrounding the property or the "unpleasant odor" emitted from the stock yards, the brief argued, the property, because it resided in a valley on Marine Creek, "would leave the impression on visitors and others of a crowded and unattractive condition." Perhaps more importantly, the brief pointed out "the view of the surrounding city and county is completely shut off." The Van Zandt site, on the other hand "is located on high,

¹⁶⁹ Baylor B. Brown, "Comparison of North Side Site and Van Zandt Site for Centennial Livestock Exposition," November 26, 1935, Box 28 F. 43 "Research Regarding the Stock Show Around 1935, Undated," Reynolds Papers.

rolling ground, comparatively level, and from this property the entire city can be viewed in all directions.” Perhaps most important, the Van Zandt site included a grand eastern view of the Fort Worth skyline—one teaming with modern buildings.¹⁷⁰ The contrast of the historic livestock industry, representing the city’s western past, and the modern metropolis, representing the city’s future, provided a physical reminder of the city’s growth and development to visitors of a theme long cultivated by Carter and the Chamber of Commerce. In other words the juxtaposition provided an excellent visual reminder of the city’s identity as a “progressive city” of the modern West.¹⁷¹ The Chamber of Commerce, in fact, commissioned art work to grace their promotional literature in the late 1920s and early 1930s contrasting the booming industry and commerce of modern Fort Worth with oxen dragging a wagon with a pioneer gazing west.¹⁷² Carter and others believed the construction of new livestock facilities for the celebration of the Texas State Centennial in an isolated and dilapidated location with the stench of manure and animal entrails wafting through the air would fail to convey an image of prosperity and progress.

Likely as a result of the Brown brief, the Council voted on December 3 to reopen deliberations over the selection of a site. Because of “the many problems that had confronted the Council in the selection of a site, both from an economic and social view point,” the Chairman of the Centennial Building Site Committee presented a solution to split the show and its facilities. According to the solution, the city would go through with the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ “What We Voted For,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 9, 1935, 6.

¹⁷² See Fort Worth Association of Commerce, promotional pamphlet [no title], 1929; *Fort Worth, 1929*, (no publication date), Box 21, Folder 45, Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce Papers, TCU/SC.

purchase of the stock yards facilities for the purpose of “handling of exhibit live stock, poultry, etc., . . . where they are to be handled after said exhibition.” The Council, however, stipulated that not more than \$150,000 in improvements be constructed on the site. The city would also construct the centennial stock show facilities on the Van Zandt site including the new coliseum and auditorium for a, “rodeo, horse show, agricultural and merchant exhibits and so on.” Essentially, the livestock business portion of the stock show would remain sequestered to the stockyards on the North Side while the new facilities would host the show’s more profitable and popular entertainment and commercial features. Fairgoers would enjoy a repackaged and scripted western experienced cleansed of the more authentic sights and smells of the western livestock industry. With a vote of seven to two, the City Council voted in support of the Building Site Committee’s proposal.¹⁷³ Shortly afterward the Council authorized the execution of contracts with the K. M. Van Zandt Land Company for purchase of the Van Zandt tract and the Fort Worth Stockyards Company for purchase of the North Side site and improvements.¹⁷⁴

In a last-ditch effort to prevent the removal of any part of the stock show from the North Side, twelve North Side residents joined to file an injunction against the city’s use of bonds for the construction of the coliseum and auditorium. They argued the city charter did not authorize the Council to use the bonds for constructing the proposed buildings under the general definition of “parks, playgrounds and pleasure grounds,” as they appeared on the ballot. On December 13, the Judge of the 96th District Court ruled in favor of the City of

¹⁷³ Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, December 3, 1935, 173.

¹⁷⁴ See Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, December 13, 1935, 182; Fort Worth City Council Meeting Minutes, December 18, 1935, 183.

Fort Worth. Continuing the struggle the North Side residents appealed to second court of civil appeals.¹⁷⁵ The injunction of the North Side citizens as well as the funding of the stock show facilities continued well into 1936, but faded into the background as the city moved forward with its plans for the centennial.¹⁷⁶

Time would erase the debate over the location of the new livestock memorial and the centrality of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show to the Fort Worth's centennial celebration.¹⁷⁷ As discussed, the show proved integral to both the shaping of Fort Worth's western identity and the origin of Fort Worth's Frontier Centennial. During the first three decades of the twentieth-century Fort Worth's population and economy grew substantially resulting in a distancing of most Fort Worth citizens from the livestock industry and ranching lifestyle. Show officials astutely surmised that without the participation of locals, the stock show would eventually fall by the wayside. In an effort to attract locals, show planners provided entertainment for those not immediately connected with the livestock trade. Because of the popularity of Western type attractions, they sought to engage characters such as Buffalo Bill, Tom Mix and others, while eschewing activities and

¹⁷⁵ "Decision in Stock Show Case Today," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 12, 1935, 1; Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 59.

¹⁷⁶ See "Centennial Livestock Show Board Will Meet," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 1936, Second Section, 1.

¹⁷⁷ In her study of the Fort Worth's centennial celebration, written only two years after the celebration transpired described the Southwest Exhibition and Fat Stock Show as the "forerunner" of the centennial and devoted a whole chapter to the origins of the stock show. See Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 1-25. Kenneth B. Ragsdale's study of the Texas state centennial devotes two chapters to Fort Worth's centennial but mentions Fort Worth's stock show only once in passing. See Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 10. Finally, Jan Jones's book-length study of Fort Worth's centennial and subsequent incarnations fails to mention the Fort Worth Stock Show. See Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*.

traditions based upon the city and state's southern heritage. The embrace of all things western culminated with the institutionalization of the Fort Worth rodeo.

Meanwhile, the stock show's post-World War I leadership who built their wealth in oil and other industries rather in ranching, increasingly viewed the show as more symbolic of the city's heritage rather than central to the city's economy. Though the continued cultivation of local patronage made the show a tradition among Fort Worth residents and was eventually absorbed into the city's identity, the decline of the meat-packing industry in the city jeopardized the financial-backing of the show. While the Chamber of Commerce and other civic institutions joined in supporting the show, with the onset of the Great Depression show leaders looked to the city for financial backing. The construction of memorial livestock grounds as part of the Texas State Centennial, partially funded through the taxation of Fort Worth citizens, provided an opportunity to make the show a permanent fixture of the city. That an overwhelming majority of Fort Worth citizens supported the use of city funds to help construct new facilities for the stock show suggests Fort Worthians had also come to identify the stock show as symbolic of the city's western identity.

Simultaneously, Fort Worth sought to project an image of modernity. Despite twentieth-century improvements to the North Side and the investment of millions of dollars by the Fort Worth Stockyards Company, city boosters and civic leaders found the city's livestock industry inconsistent with the city's modern image. For civic leaders and boosters Fort Worth's future lay not so much in the livestock trade but in manufacturing and industry. Though they wore cowboy boots and hats, the sights and smells of the stockyards and meat packing plants that represented Fort Worth's heritage were no longer the reality

for most Fort Worthians. Fort Worth's western history needed cleaning to fit with its modern aspirations. From this perspective, building new stock show facilities and removing the show from the cramped, dilapidated, and historic landscape of the stockyards as part its proposal for a centennial memorial to the livestock industry represented an attempt to repackage Fort Worth's western identity—an image contested by North Side residents. From existing evidence Amon Carter and others desired to build the new facilities closer to the city. While the move would make access to the grounds easier from downtown and for most citizens in Fort Worth and beyond the stench of the stockyards, as expressed in the Brown briefing, relocation provided other less tangible benefits. As a symbol of Fort Worth's heritage and identity, some believed locating the memorial livestock facilities in the midst of a rundown portion of town would leave an unprogressive impression in the minds of visitors to the city. Conversely, locating the new facilities in the midst of the burgeoning skyline of Fort Worth would provide a symbolic continuity between past and present. The Juxtaposition of the historic livestock industry and the growing metropolis it was hoped would provide a visible reminder of Fort Worth's progressive past, present, and future.

CHAPTER 2

“HOW LONG, O LORD, MUST WE SUBMIT?”: THE MARGINALIZATION OF WEST TEXAS AND THE TEXAS STATE CENTENNIAL

While Amon Carter and the City Council toiled over bringing a centennial celebration of the Texas livestock industry to fruition in the second half of 1935, events transpired in West Texas which would ultimately set the stage for the region’s overwhelming support for Fort Worth’s centennial celebration rather than the Central Exposition in Dallas. Geographic proximity did not predetermine a Fort Worth/West Texas alignment as Fort Worth began preparations for its celebration. Though often labeled a big brother in the West Texas fraternity of cities, Fort Worth did not completely share in the region’s cultural, environmental, and historical homogeneity. As a result, Fort Worth often found itself situated east of the line defining West Texas.¹

¹ In June 1935 Judge R. C. Crane, President of the West Texas Historical Association, developed a map defining West Texas for the Advisory Board of Texas Historians. Crane used the 1873 tax exemption status of Texas counties on the frontier to define the eastern border of West Texas. This definition established a dividing line running north to south on approximately the ninety-eighth meridian. See map insert in R. C. Crane, “The Claims of West Texas to Recognition by Historians,” *The West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 12 (July 1936): 11-33, map insert between 16-17. More recently scholars have used characteristics such as lack of population and lands devoted to ranching and pasture lands to define West Texas. According to this paradigm Fort Worth also lies outside West Texas. See Tom Crum, “West Texas,” *The West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 76 (October 2000): 16-32. West Texas historian Glen Ely argues that West Texas begins with the one-hundredth meridian where rainfall drops below twenty inches annually. Ely, *Where the West Begins*, 14, 16. Still others, primarily residents of Fort Worth, persist in defining Fort Worth as a West Texas city. See Mike Cochran and John Lumpkin, *West Texas: A Portrait of Its People and Their Raw and Wondrous Land* (Lubbock, Texas Tech University Press, 1999), x-xii, 116-121. In the present study I use Judge R. C. Crane’s 1935 definition of West Texas as a guide for labeling counties or cities as part of that region.

Nevertheless, Fort Worth always shared an economic relationship with its western hinterland. Because a portion of its prosperity and progress rested upon successful production of West Texas resources, the region essentially became a hinterland of Fort Worth. Primarily out of economic self-interest Fort Worth promoted the region and served as a brokerage house for the region's material output. Indicative of the symbiotic relationship, the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, played a major role in the organization of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. In 1918 Dr. C. C. Gumm, manager of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce developed a plan for a regional organization "enthusiastically endorsed' by West Texas leaders."² Created to "foster, promote, protect and develop West Texas as to its agricultural, manufacturing, livestock, mineral, industrial and commercial resources and to extend its transportation facilities, encourage education, and otherwise stimulate its general prosperity and promote general welfare," the West Texas Chamber of Commerce held its first meeting in Fort Worth on February 19, 1918. From that time, Fort Worth businessmen occupied prominent positions in the organization.³

Amon G. Carter worked more than any other Fort Worth businessman to champion the causes of West Texas and focus the gaze of its population upon Fort Worth. Carter's paper, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, regularly covered West Texas developments and enjoyed a wide circulation in the region. Refusing to recognize the traditional geographic bounds of the region, Carter asserted that West Texas began with Fort Worth. In fact, the

² West Texas Chamber of Commerce Administrative Office, "History of West Texas Chamber of Commerce," Box 71, Folder "History 1929-1986," West Texas Chamber of Commerce Records, 1893-1937 & undated, SWC.

³ For a brief history of the Chamber of Commerce see "Twelve Years of Achievement," *West Texas Today* 11 (May 1930): 5-13 (quotation on 5).

banner of every *Fort Worth-Star Telegram* included the slogan, “Fort Worth, Texas, Where the West Begins.”⁴ Not surprisingly, when recalling Fort Worth’s initial motivation for putting on a centennial celebration, Carter wrote in 1937 that, “Shortly after the announcement that the main Texas Centennial Exposition would be held in Dallas some of us in Fort Worth felt that unless we made energetic effort and provided some character of celebration in Fort Worth, we would be remiss in our duty to the city and the folks in West Texas.”⁵ As noted in the preceding chapter, the proposals submitted to the Advisory Board of Texas Historians and the Texas Centennial Commission depicted Fort Worth’s anticipated celebration of the Texas livestock industry and pioneer heritage as more a celebration of West Texas than of Fort Worth. But these overtures to West Texas, no matter how well received by the Advisory Board of Texas Historians, the Commission of Control, or the Texas Centennial Committee, did not necessarily represent the interests and views of West Texans.

Despite their shared economic interests West Texans did not initially appreciate Fort Worth’s centennial overtures toward their region. In fact, rather than viewing the state’s \$250,000 allocation for Fort Worth as a victory for West Texas, they viewed it as yet another indication of the centennial leadership’s fixation on East Texas. As the state’s plans unfolded, West Texas continually found itself on the periphery. Despite the significance of the region to the history and economy of state in the years following 1836, West Texans lamented the minuscule allocation of state funds for regional memorialization of historical events and individuals. Moreover, few West Texans received appointments to centennial

⁴ Flemmons, *Amon: The Life of Amon Carter*, 59-61.

⁵ Amon G. Carter to Van Zandt Jarvis, February 11, 1937.

leadership positions, limiting the ability of the region to represent its interests. After discovering that centennial officials planned for no accommodations for West Texas to display the material abundance of the region they believed so vital to the state's economic success, some West Texans called for a regional boycott of the Central Exposition.

From the very beginning, West Texas maintained a largely antagonistic position regarding the Texas State Centennial.⁶ In 1932, as momentum began to build for the planning of the centennial, West Texas, and more specifically the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, opposed the campaign to grant the Texas State Legislature the power to allocate state funds for the purpose of celebrating the state's centennial. Without such a mandate from an amendment to the Texas Constitution, it made little sense to continue plans for a centennial celebration, especially one sponsored by the state. In May 1931 advocates for the centennial celebration convinced the legislature to approve a referendum to amend the constitution. Centennial advocates hoped to convince Texans to vote in favor of the amendment in November 1932 during the state's general election.⁷ Because planners believed securing state funds paramount to putting on a successful Texas-sized centennial, the future of the centennial rested entirely upon the outcome of the vote.

⁶ Scholars have paid limited attention to the West Texas's participation in the Texas State Centennial. Kenneth B. Ragsdale addresses some of the issues relating West Texas participation in the state centennial in *Centennial '36*. In his study of historical preservation as a result of the Texas State Centennial, Jeffery Mason Hancock fails to identify the eastern bias in the state's memorialization efforts. See Hancock, "Preservation of Texas Heritage in the 1936 Centennial." Texas State Senator Ben G. Oneal recounted his experiences lobbying for West Texas and the restoration of Fort Belknap as part of the centennial in a presentation before the West Texas Historical Association in 1953. See Ben G. Oneal, "A Brief Story of the Restoration of Fort Belknap," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 29 (October 1953): 105-114.

⁷ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 21-22.

During the summer of 1932 a coalition including the Texas Press Association, the Associated Advertising Clubs of Texas, the Texas Daily Press League, Progressive Texans Incorporated, and the Outdoor Poster Association with the support of the Centennial Committee began a campaign to generate voter support for the constitutional amendment. Often cooperating with local county organizations and media, the coalition sought to rally Texans around a celebration of the state's heroic past.⁸ Still, the depressed economic conditions of the time made it difficult to sell Texans on a centennial appropriation using state tax dollars. Many believed voting for the amendment meant choosing an increase in taxes when few Texans could comfortably meet their current tax obligations. As a result, many Texas politicians believed the amendment unpopular and therefore did not support it.⁹

Though many advocates argued the celebration would stimulate the failing economy, opinions regarding the amendment ultimately fell into opposing camps—those who believed honoring Texas history and progress warranted state spending on a centennial celebration and those who did not.¹⁰ Proponents of a state funded centennial celebration encountered an unanticipated opponent in the West Texas Chamber of

⁸ According to *The Texas Weekly* the campaign included “the cooperation of some seventy-five daily newspapers and several hundred weeklies, . . .” See “For Sake of the Record,” *The Texas Weekly*, October 1, 1932, 6. For examples of the campaign messages see Texas Centennial Commission, *Commemorating A Hundred Years of Texas History* (Austin, 1934), 13.

⁹ Peter Molyneaux, “Do Texans Really Revere Their Past?” *The Texas Weekly*, July 23, 1932, 5.

¹⁰ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 23-24.

Commerce. In July its Central Public Expenditure Committee crafted a statement calling for the ninety-nine local chambers in the region to actively oppose the amendment.¹¹

Although granting that the celebration of the state's centennial year represented a "worthy and patriotic project," the Expenditure Committee chaired by none other than Fort Worth mayor and president of the Southwestern Livestock Exposition and Fat Stock Show Van Zandt Jarvis explained that Texans should vigorously oppose the amendment "in view of the present plight of the taxpayers."¹² In light of the depressed economy, the Expenditure Committee suggested making the centennial self-sufficient through private investment and launching the celebration from institutions and facilities already extant. "Why not develop the idea," the Expenditure Committee asked "through institutions, buildings and equipment we already have, such as the Fort Worth Stock Show, the Dallas Fair, the Waco Cotton Palace, Arlington Downs, etc?"¹³

Peter Molyneaux, editor of *The Texas Weekly*, a periodical devoted to Texas politics and economics, led the charge to discredit the West Texas Chamber of Commerce's assault

¹¹ The position of the West Texas Chamber did not become public knowledge until September when its Assistant Manager sent a copy of the statement to Peter Molyneaux of *The Texas Weekly* on September 19, 1932. See Peter Molyneaux, "West Texas Chamber's Blunder," *The Texas Weekly*, September 24, 1932, 4.

¹² "West Texas Chamber's Blunder," 4. Quotes come from *The Texas Weekly* which published segments from the statement sent to the editor by the assistant manager of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. A search of the papers of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce turned up no copies of the statement.

¹³ Peter Molyneaux, "The Centennial Amendment Again," *The Texas Weekly*, October 15, 1936, 4. Molyneaux includes additional excerpts from the statement when quoting from a letter from Wilber Hawk, President of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce.

on the amendment.¹⁴ With his editorial titled “Do Texans Really Revere Their Past?” which castigated Texans for failing to pay sufficient homage to their past, Molyneaux had already established himself as a vocal leader of the pro-amendment campaign. In the editorial he discounted rumors that “a large percentage of the people of Texas are already saying that they are going to vote against the centennial amendment. . . .” He reminded readers, that if the amendment did not pass, Texans must “acknowledge reluctantly and with some degree of shame that all the loud talk about Texans being prouder of their glorious traditions than the people of any other State is just so much bombast.”¹⁵ In essence Molyneaux believed that despite the tough economic times, the outcome of this campaign would expose the true feelings of Texans regarding their heritage. Directly responding to the Chamber’s statement, Molyneaux reminded readers that he always supported the efforts of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce in working to bring economic development to the region, but in this instance the Chamber would commit a “blunder” if it succeeded in preventing the passage of the amendment. Such an event, Molyneaux argued, would ultimately bring a lasting shame upon the organization.¹⁶

As word spread of the position of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, a number of Texas newspapers joined Molyneaux vocalizing their support for the centennial amendment. Papers such as the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Austin American*, and the *Houston Post* labeled those who opposed the amendment as “short sighted” because they

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the crusade in favor of the passage of the amendment including efforts of Peter Molyneaux to cover the battle within the pages of *The Texas Weekly* see, Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 26-29.

¹⁵ Molyneaux, “Do Texans Really Revere Their Past?” 5.

¹⁶ “West Texas Chamber’s Blunder,” 4.

made judgments regarding the proposed legislation based upon current economic conditions which they believed likely to change before the centennial.¹⁷ The traditionally West Texas-friendly *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* supported this view, adding that it made no sense to oppose an amendment because it simply “remove[d] the constitutional prohibition against such and open[ed] the way for an appropriation when the time arrives, if such then be desirable.” “Certainly,” the paper continued, “if times should be no better, if people should be having as hard a time paying their taxes as they are having now, the Legislature would not appropriate any money.”¹⁸ Rather than viewing the appropriation of state funds for the centennial as an economic liability, other papers argued that the celebration represented a possible economic boon for the state. West Texas’s own *Brownwood Banner-Bulletin*, published southeast of Abilene, countered the regional chamber arguing that “No waste or extravagance is involved in the proposal for a State-supported Centennial. To the contrary, it will be the most profitable enterprise any State has ever attempted, and will repay its whole cost many times over.”¹⁹ *The San Antonio Express* expected much more from Centennial than simply making a profit. “While paying for itself,” the paper boasted, “a world’s fair here might usher in a new industrial era. Certainly its spirit and its exhibits alike would point the way to such achievement.”²⁰ Still, many Texas papers simply reduced the

¹⁷ *The Texas Weekly* included excerpts from editorials commenting on the amendment debate, see “The Economic Aspect,” *The Texas Weekly*, September 24, 1932, 6; “Views of Our Views,” *The Texas Weekly*, October 1, 1932, 11.

¹⁸ Excerpts from the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* printed in “Views of Our Views,” October 1, 1932, 11 and “Views of Our Views,” *The Texas Weekly*, October 8, 1932, 11.

¹⁹ Excerpts from the *Brownwood Banner-Bulletin* printed in “Views of Our Views,” October 8, 1932, 11.

²⁰ Excerpts from *The San Antonio Express* printed in “The Centennial Amendment,” *The Texas Weekly*, October 15, 1932, 12.

issue to a matter of patriotism. Those loyal to honoring the state's heritage simply supported the centennial amendment. Those who opposed the amendment lacked patriotism. "It appears to us," wrote the editor of the *Riesel Rustler*, "that any red blooded citizen of the Lone Star State would welcome the opportunity of having a part in such an event."²¹ The *Corpus Christi Caller* labeled the act of opposing the amendment "a palpable betrayal of the glorious past which we now seek to celebrate."²²

Although the West Texas Chamber of Commerce emerged as the only organization in the opposition movement, the chamber was hardly alone in its negative appraisal of the amendment. A number of papers both within and without West Texas opposed the amendment. Like the West Texas Chamber, most based their opposition on the assumption that the amendment would result in an additional tax burden. The *San Saba News* in central Texas lauded the actions of the Chamber claiming, "it is refreshing, to say the least, to find a Chamber of Commerce, or business organization, taking a stand for the reduction of taxes and for economy in expenditure of public money."²³ In the case of the *Wills Point Chronicle*, the owner of the northeast Texas paper so vehemently opposed the amendment that he refused "to give free advertising space to propaganda for the proposal."²⁴

Still, statements implying that West Texans represented a disloyal and unpatriotic bunch sparked several reactions from within the region. W. W. Halcomb of the *Moore County News*, who supported the amendment, objected to "the inference that West Texans

²¹ Excerpts from the *Riesel Rustler* printed in "The Centennial Amendment," 11.

²² Excerpts from the *Corpus Christi Caller* printed in "Views of Our Views," October 1, 1932, 11.

²³ "The Centennial Amendment," 11.

²⁴ "View of Our Views," October 8, 1932, 11.

do not revere the glorious and romantic history of Texas.” He argued that contrary to the assumptions of the daily press, the actions of the West Texas Chamber did not represent the sentiments of all West Texans. Linking West Texas with the state’s revolutionary past, he argued most West Texans were “loyal to the traditions of Texas, imbued with the pioneering spirit of Houston, Fannin, and Travis,” and “seriously object to being classified as pennypinchers and calloused materialists.”²⁵ Holcomb’s comments, ironically, seem to suggest that he viewed the chamber’s opposition to the amendment as unpatriotic—making many West Texans unpatriotic. The negative response to the Chamber’s position sparked a direct response from Wilbur Hawk, president of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. Hawk sent a rebuttal letter directly to Molyneaux and authored a statement appearing in the official publication of Chamber of Commerce, the *West Texas Today*. Referring to Molyneaux’s coverage of the amendment, Hawk wrote, “The position of our Central Public Expenditure Committee with reference to the Centennial has not been made clear.” Although Hawk provided some evidence of exorbitant tax increases from 1912 to 1930 his “clarification” of the Chamber’s position, in his letter to Molyneux resembled little more than a restatement—the Chamber’s opposition to the amendment did not equal opposition to the Centennial. To the contrary, he again affirmed, a “self-supporting and self-liquidating” centennial “would enlist greater and wider spread of voluntary and patriotic cooperation than a tax supported plan.”²⁶

²⁵ Excerpts from the *Moore County News* printed in “Views of Our Views,” October 1, 1932, 11.

²⁶ For excerpts of Hawk’s letter to Molyneaux see Peter Molyneaux, “The Centennial Amendment Again,” *The Texas Weekly*, October 15, 1932, 4. For excerpts of the Hawk’s

The rhetoric of Hawk and the West Texas Chamber of Commerce ultimately neglected to articulate what must have been a leading factor in the Chamber's opposition to the amendment—latent fears of regional favoritism toward the heritage and progress of the eastern half of the state. Experiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries convinced many West Texans that those in the eastern half of the state viewed their region as inconsequential—a colony to be pilfered for the greater benefit of the state. On several occasions in the 1860s politicians in Austin took steps to sell off vast regions in West Texas to the federal government to fund state programs believing the land of no value to the state. For all of the wealth garnered in the eastern half of the state from the sale of West Texas lands, including lands to promote desired railroads, West Texans felt they never received the benefit of the programs their region helped fund. For many West Texans the effort to build a region-specific agricultural college to advance agricultural techniques for West Texas epitomized the general opinions held by east Texans toward their region. Stonewalling politicians fought West Texans, claiming the state had no funds for such an endeavor. Only after a seven year struggle did Governor Pat Neff signed legislation in 1923 authorizing the creation of Texas Technological College (now known as Texas Tech University).²⁷

If the 1936 centennial followed the previous trend, the Chamber certainly believed West Texans should not be forced—through taxation—to fund a celebration of East Texas. Indications that the State Centennial would become a sectional affair appeared long before

rebuttal appearing in the *West Texas Today* see “West Texas Chamber Reiterates Opinion on State Centennial,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 1932, 7.

²⁷ See Ely, *Where the West Begins*, 31-34.

the West Texas Chamber decided to oppose the centennial amendment. With the creation of the Governing Board of One Hundred in April 1924, the first state sanctioned centennial planning organization, West Texans must have seen the writing on the wall. Intended to provide democratic representation in matters relating to the centennial, the Board of One Hundred included two elected representative directors from each of the thirty-one senatorial districts, twenty-nine at-large directors selected by the district representative directors, five directors appointed by the Governor and two directors appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor and Speaker of the House respectively.²⁸ Unfortunately, the final composition of the Board heavily favored the eastern half of the state in terms of total representatives. Of the one-hundred directors, the Board included only twenty directors originating from cities in West Texas, a ratio of five to one.²⁹ If the eastward orientation could be justified because of its “representative” composition, resulting from population-based senatorial districts, subsequent organizations could not. With each successive centennial planning organization the percentage of representative West Texans diminished. The creation of the Temporary Texas Centennial Commission organized by Secretary of State Jane Y. McCallum on December 28, 1931 exhibited the same eastward orientation. Assigned to compile data to aid the Forty-Third Legislature in determining the character of a possible Texas centennial, the twenty-one member group included only three members hailing from West Texas cities.³⁰

²⁸ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 8-9.

²⁹ For a roster of the Governing Board of One Hundred see *Commemorating A Hundred Years of Texas History*, 34-35.

³⁰ *Commemorating A Hundred Years of Texas History*, 10. The West Texas towns represented include Amarillo, Wichita Falls, and San Angelo.

Unable to gain adequate representation in these early centennial leadership organizations based largely upon senatorial districting, it may seem surprising that West Texans would not assert their economic relevance to the state in opposing the 1932 constitutional amendment. Estimates at the time indicate West Texans paid more than forty percent of the state's taxes—a result of West Texas comprising nearly half the state's real-estate.³¹ If West Texans provided more than forty percent of the state's tax revenue, logic suggested they would also essentially pay for forty percent of a state funded centennial. Yet, the West Texas Chamber of Commerce neglected to include these numbers in its statements opposing the amendment. Though there is no evidence explaining why they did not present this argument, it seems likely that wishing to avoid further charges of disloyalty, the Chamber and its president shunned the airing of their sectional concerns preferring to argue that preventing an increase in taxes represented a move for the common good of the entire state. Thus, the Chamber pushed for a privatized celebration with annual events already extant, all of which in the eastern half of the state including the Fort Worth stock show.

On November 8, 1932, Texans voted in favor of amending the constitution to make way for the possibility of a state-funded centennial celebration. Still the small margin of victory of less than sixty-thousand votes suggests that depressed economic conditions in the state outweighed patriotism for many Texans when voting for the amendment.³² The narrow victory did not remove the blemish upon West Texas patriotism, and the region continued to bear the stigma of opposing the celebration. Eventually the amendment's

³¹ Journal of the Senate of Texas, Fourth Session, Forty-Third Legislature, 32.

³² Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 29.

passage validated the fears of West Texans regarding regional favoritism in planning of the centennial.

The second major piece of centennial legislation, Senate Bill 22, initiated in February 1934 during the second session of the Forty-Third Legislative session by Senator Margery Neal, continued the trend of inadequate West Texas representation in the appointment of centennial leadership. Among other things, the bill called for the creation of a Texas Centennial Commission and executive committee to direct centennial planning. This thirty-four person Commission included only six West Texas residents. The executive committee of ten members which directed the efforts of the Commission included only two West Texans.³³ The bill also called for the organization of a Texas Centennial Advisory Board composed of the old Governing Board of One Hundred. As already mentioned, this group included twenty West Texans; however, the board's leadership contained a chairman, four vice-chairmen, a secretary, and a treasurer including no West Texans.³⁴ In terms of leadership, the passage of Senate Bill 22 rendered West Texas powerless to affect the direction and planning of the centennial.

In the legislative deliberations over the centennial appropriations during its fourth session, State Senator Walter C. Woodward of Coleman County finally voiced the frustrations of West Texans over blatant centennial sectionalism. Senate Bill No. 4 included a nearly nine million dollar centennial appropriation of which many of the state's largest cities, all of which were situated in the eastern half of the state, received earmarks. In

³³ For a list of the members of the commission and Executive Committee, see *Commemorating A Hundred Years of Texas History*, 15, 16.

³⁴ For a list of the leadership of The Advisory Board see *Ibid.*, 17.

defiance of the sectional current of the senatorial deliberations, Senator Woodward submitted Senate Resolution No. 3. In what could only be described as a sarcastic motion meant to open the Senate's eyes to the injustices perpetrated on West Texas, it chided the Senate for its neglect of the region in developing a Centennial appropriation bill. He declared:

Whereas, The Centennial bill now pending before the Committee of the Whole Senate calls for an appropriation of \$8,972,174.00 which money if appropriated must be paid as a result of taxes to be imposed upon and collected from the people of Texas; and, Whereas, Under the terms of said bill not one penny is appropriated for any purpose West of a line extending from Fort Worth to Laredo, Texas; and, Whereas, There are approximately 150 counties in Texas, West of said line and for none of which has there been any provision made in said bill for any recognition in connection with the celebration of the Texas Centennial; and, Whereas, The people and properties in said counties will be called upon and required to pay approximately 40% of the \$8,972, 174.00 so appropriated; and, Whereas, The people living in said counties should be advised of their right to at least attend the Centennial to be held in the northeast, East and southeast portions of Texas; now, therefore be it Resolved by the Senate of Texas that the citizens living west of said line be at least invited to attend said Centennial in the northeast, East and southeast portions of Texas, and that said bill contain some provision extending to those who live in West and southwest Texas an invitation to attend the Centennial in Northeast, East and Southeast Texas.

Where the West Texas Chamber of Commerce objected to the funding of the centennial through taxes in general, Woodward took the next step. In terms of state region allocations, West Texas had been omitted from a celebration for which it would pay forty percent of the cost through taxation. Whether or not the senators perceived the motion's sarcastic content—it seems hard to believe they did not—it passed twenty-two to two.³⁵

Taking a more practical approach, Benjamin Grady Oneal, a state senator from Wichita Falls, introduced several amendments to Senate Bill No. 4 intended to ensure that

³⁵ Journal of the Senate of Texas, Fourth Session, Forty-Third Legislature, 32-33.

“all parts of the State should have some kind of celebration.” In Amendment no. 1, Oneal called for an expansion of the term “celebration” used in the bill. By opening the interpretation, Oneal hoped to provide a means for cities, other than Dallas and Fort Worth, who planned elaborate celebrations using state funds, to commemorate the centennial. Specifically the amendment added to the definition the placing commemorative markers, the restoration of historic structures, and the placement of monuments honoring patriots from Texas’s early history. To guarantee funding for historical markers, restorations, and monuments as part of the centennial, Oneal introduced a second amendment. In Amendment No. 3, Oneal suggested the creation of an Advisory Board composed of three Texas historians to make recommendations to the Texas Centennial Commission on the allocation of state funds for the justifiable memorials.³⁶ The provisions of both amendments introduced by Oneal ultimately formed part of House Bill No. 11.³⁷ Governor Allred signed this bill into law in March 1935. Despite the possible state-wide application of these amendments, Oneal later noted that he had several West Texas restoration projects such as Fort Belknap, Fort Richardson, and Fort Griffin “in mind” when he introduced the amendments.³⁸

For West Texans, the Oneal amendments incorporated into House Bill No. 11 represented their last resort to receive any state centennial funding. Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Houston gobbled up the majority of the bill’s \$3,000,000 appropriation for the

³⁶ Oneal, “A Brief Story of the Restoration of Fort Belknap,” 109.

³⁷ Amendments nos. 1 and 3 of Senate Bill no. 4 are included in Sections 4 and 5 of House Bill No. 11. See General and Special Laws of the State of Texas Passed by the Forty-Fourth Legislature, 431-432.

³⁸ Oneal, “A Brief Story of the Restoration of Fort Belknap,” 109-110.

centennial leaving a scant \$575,000 for markers, memorials, and restorations around the state. The Advisory Board of Texas Historians, as mentioned in the previous chapter, began hearing proposals on June 18, 1935, with the intention of making recommendations to the Commission of Control for the Centennial celebration in the fall of 1935. Like the other centennial planning committees with an eastward orientation, the Advisory Board included two members from Austin and one from Houston. Had William C. Holden, professor of history and anthropology at Texas Technological College and chairman of the West Texas Museum Association, garnered one additional vote and been appointed a seat on the Advisory Board, the landscape of regional historical memorialization might have looked quite different.³⁹ Still, with the Advisory Board's declared intentions to "make an impartial recommendation to the Commission" based upon the historical merits of each proposal, West Texans had every reason to expect an unbiased hearing.⁴⁰

Over the course of the summer, the Advisory Board heard proposals from representatives of more than sixty Texas counties. About two dozen, nearly one-third, of all the proposals submitted to the Advisory Board during their hearings in June, July, and August, represented West Texas interests. The region as a whole, however, asked for a scant sum of \$633,497 to help fund the placement of various historical markers and monuments to individuals; the restorations of a number of forts including Forts Leaton,

³⁹ Louis W. Kemp to William C. Holden, October 3, 1935, Box 10, Folder 15, William Curry and Frances Mayhugh Holden Papers, SWC.

⁴⁰ Advisory Board of Texas Historians "Bulletin No. 1," 2.

Belknap, Richardson and Griffin; and the construction of a number of museums, an exposition building, and a club building for ex-Texas Rangers.⁴¹

On July 2, Judge R. C. Crane, president of the West Texas Historical Association, appeared before the Advisory Board in behalf of all West Texas.⁴² Crane delivered a lengthy speech hoping to convince the Board of the region's significance to the state. In his approach, Crane, a leading expert on the history of West Texas, employed an alternative to the economic argument for the equal participation of West Texas in the Texas Centennial. Challenging those "who will tell you that West Texas has no history," Crane assured the Board, "West Texas has a history as heroic and colorful as any other part of the state." Crane then recounted the epic history in which Texans pioneered an inhospitable western land initially eking out an existence on the parched soil under the continual threat of Indian attack. Aided by the U.S. military who manned a string of forts which divided the civilized from the uncivilized and battled the Native Americans, and the Texas rangers who also helped clear the region of its Native population, the pioneers ultimately subdued the land to make it profitable. Pointing to provisions in the Texas State Constitution restricting the use of state funds for the promotion of lands for immigration and preventing municipalities from contracting large debts, Crane pointed out that such impinging limitations failed to

⁴¹Calculating the total requests for allocations from West Texas counties and cities is problematic. A report produced in September 1935 documenting the total requests for funds does not agree with the reports generated at the time of the hearings in June, July, and August 1935. See Advisory Board of Texas Historians "Bulletin No. 2," and "Bulletin No. 3," Box 2B149, Folder "Reports to Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, June 1935-June 1937, and Advisory Board of Texas Historians, [untitled], report of proposals, September 20, 1935 Box 2B149, Folder "Recommended Historical Markers or Land Marks by County, September 20, 1935," James Frank Dobie Papers, CAH.

⁴² William M. Thornton, "West Texas' Past Is Described to Historical Board," *Dallas Morning News*, July 3, 1935, 2.

limit the region's growth. Following the Civil War the livestock industry took hold in spite of the economic gamble and risks to cattle ranchers on the Texas Plains. The success of the ranching industry and the concomitant construction of railroads connecting the region's urban oases ushered in a boom in the West Texas population. Subsequent growth of wheat and cotton cultivation and the discovery of large natural gas and petroleum reserves in the region made West Texas, in Crane's estimation, "one of the most prosperous regions in the United States."⁴³ Crane's narrative ultimately named dozens of individuals, battles, and forts which, he argued, demanded recognition on par with the heroes who secured Texas liberty in the East.

Echoing the colonial rhetoric employed by westerners in the early decades of the twentieth-century, who chafed at extractive industries and the eastern financiers who profited from draining the West of its resources, Crane bluntly pointed out that throughout the history of the state the eastern half continually enriched itself through the exploitation of West Texas.⁴⁴ Under the Republic and in early statehood, the sale of West Texas lands funded East Texas development. By the time West Texans could benefit from the sale of their own lands, a surplus of state-owned lands in the region no longer existed. The trend of West Texas financially propping up the East, Crane argued, continued into the 1930s as the vast majority of West Texas counties paid more taxes than the operational needs of their counties. The surplus funds garnered out of West Texas, according to Crane's interpretation of a report produced by the State Tax Commissioner, John G. Willacy, recently provided the state with extra funds to support destitute counties in the East to the tune of

⁴³ Crane, "The Claims of West Texas To Recognition By Historians," 11, 31.

⁴⁴ See Nash, *The Federal Landscape*, 3-20.

\$1,863,876.19. Economics aside, Crane concluded, “The winning of this vast region for Texas has been glamorous, and has called for as much determination, suffering and power of endurance on the part of its pioneers as has that of any other part of Texas. . . . It would not be far wrong to say that this has required the blood of martyrs.” Challenging the Board, Crane asked if the West Texas saga “shall be ignored or damned with faint praise?”⁴⁵

Months before the Advisory Board planned to make its final recommendations, the actions of the Commission of Control indicated to West Texans they would not receive a centennial appropriation proportionate to the heritage and economic significance of the region. As discussed in the previous chapter to the chagrin of the Advisory Board, on July 20, the Commission awarded \$250,000 to Fort Worth and \$50,000 to both Goliad and Gonzales cutting, by more than half, the amount allotted for regional memorials. Despite the economic relationship between the two, West Texans did not view the Fort Worth appropriation as a nod to their region. Quite the opposite, West Texans viewed the actions of the Commission as another indicator of the bias Centennial officials held toward the East. The decisions of the Commission of Control also likely contributed to a more vocal anti-centennial sentiment growing in the region. Increasingly, commentary critical of the state’s centennial plans began appearing regularly in media outlets. For example, the centennial became a continuing theme in “The Plainsman,” a regular editorial feature in Lubbock’s *The Evening Journal*. A Plainsman editorial chided West Texans for adhering to an ideology of “Texas, Indivisible” in accepting the centennial planners’ eastern bias. Arguing the centennial planners did not share the same ideology the editorial stated, “We ‘step-

⁴⁵ Crane, “The Claims of West Texas To Recognition By Historians,” 31, 32.

children' aren't even considered for anything so far." What should West Texans do it asked? "Frankly," the editorial retorted, "The Plainsman is in favor of a West Texas boycott on the Centennial."⁴⁶ Jabs at the state centennial coming out of Lubbock's daily continued well into 1936.

A second West Texas protest came in August at the annual meeting of the West Texas Press Association at Big Spring. At the concluding session, Will Cooper of Colorado City introduced a motion to pledge the support of the Association for the state centennial. For the first time in the organization's history the group voted down a resolution. Speaking of the significance of the failed measure, Abilene editor Max Bentley noted "The vote on the resolution is expressive not only of the attitude of the newspapermen but of the citizenship of West Texas generally who feel that our section has been grossly neglected."⁴⁷ Perhaps a speech given by W. A. Jackson, the head of the Department of Government at Texas Technological College, during the meeting shaped the outcome of the vote. Jackson described the centennial inequalities, evident in the over abundance of allotments granted to East Texas cities, as the most recent manifestation of West Texas being "left out of the picture." The centennial, Jackson argued, presented a prime opportunity for the region to assess its weaknesses and act. West Texas liabilities, according to Jackson, included lack of legislative representation and government offices held by West Texans, and insufficient regional solidarity—all of which hindered West Texas to some extent in the years leading to the centennial. Jackson attributed the failure of West Texans to unify to political immaturity

⁴⁶ "The Plainsman Says," *The Evening Journal* (Lubbock), July 16, 1935, 6.

⁴⁷ Boyce House, "Centennial Is Refused Help," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 18, 1935, 12.

which reduced the region to a set of rival cities. The defeat of the measure indicated that the members of the West Texas Press Association took Jackson's message to heart. The actions of the Press Association ultimately garnered the support of the region's largest and most powerful political organization, the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. In a demonstration of solidarity, the Chamber published Jackson's speech under the title "West Texas and the Centennial: They've Snubbed Us, as Usual—How Long, O Lord, Must We Submit?" in its monthly publication *West Texas Today* which touted Jackson as "a loyal Texan" who had resided in West Texas for more than a decade.⁴⁸

The recommendations of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians to the Commission of Control on October 6 likely dashed any lingering hopes held by West Texans for a proportional allocation of centennial dollars to the region. Differences of opinion within the Advisory Board regarding the proper approach to memorialization produced a schism within the three-member group. The division ultimately contained some negative implications for allocations to counties in the West Texas region. The schism pitted Chairman Kemp against board member J. Frank Dobie. As a Texas folklorist, Dobie believed historical memorials should spark the imagination of the observer. To Dobie sculpture provided just such a medium to depict the splendor of Texas's past. Kemp, on the other hand, believed memorials should primarily convey the facts of the past. And in many cases simple historical markers seemed an adequate memorial. Believing that Kemp's proposal to earmark allotments based upon senatorial districts smacked of political payoffs, Dobie suggested dividing funds based upon geographic regions instead. In a letter to Kemp, Dobie insinuated

⁴⁸ W. A. Jackson, "West Texas and the Centennial: They've Snubbed Us, as Usual—How Long, O Lord, Must We Submit?" *West Texas Today* 16, no. 7 (September 1935): 9.

that Kemp's attempt to divide allotments along the lines of senatorial districts represented an attempt to "[help] get certain senators reelected."⁴⁹ Finally, Kemp believed the Board should concern itself primarily with the memorialization of Texas independence and the Republic period alone. Dobie, on the other hand, desired to memorialize all the formative parts of the Texas past. Because Rev. Foik typically sided with Kemp, Dobie's opinions always represented a minority in the Board. Ultimately, Dobie, unable to sway the other members of the board, opted to file a minority report to the Commission of Control.⁵⁰

Not surprisingly Dobie's minority report granted West Texas a slightly larger portion of the state funds set aside for local centennial commemoration. Particularly, his desire to allot funds by geographical divisions and honor important historical developments not necessarily centered on the Revolution and the Republic stood to benefit West Texans. Still, Dobie's report granted only \$184,500, twenty-four percent of the available funds, to cities and counties considered part of West Texas.⁵¹ However, if the recommendations of the

⁴⁹ Frank J. Dobie to L. W. Kemp, September 11, 1935, cited in Hancock, "Preservation of Texas Heritage in the 1936 Centennial," 24.

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion of the differing approaches to the memorialization of the historic sites within the Advisory Board of Texas Historians and the minority and majority reports see Hancock, "Preservation of Texas Heritage in the 1936 Centennial," 21-35. For a first-hand description of Dobie's approach to memorialization see J. Frank Dobie, *Minority Report of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians to the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations* (Austin, 1935), 7-10.

⁵¹ The original state centennial appropriations bill granted \$575,000 for local centennial memorials. Although the Commission of Control granted Fort Worth \$250,000, the federal appropriation of a like amount negated the disposal of these funds for Fort Worth returning the amount to \$575,000. The Commission also granted both Goliad and Gonzales \$50,000 bringing the allotment for all other local memorials to \$475,000. After a federal allotment for the centennial, the state added an additional \$200,000. Thus the Advisory Board of Texas Historians made their recommendation based upon a total allotment of \$675,000. See William M. Thornton, "Centennial Board Again Overrides Advisers' Request," *Dallas*

minority report are organized according to West Texas senatorial districts then the West Texas allotment is reduced to \$169,000 or twenty-two percent of the total budget because some traditionally West Texas counties reside in senatorial districts situated mostly in the eastern half of the state.⁵² The majority report produced by Kemp and Foik presented to the Commission of Control stuck to the \$675,000 budget, but granted only \$146,950 to West Texas counties equaling twenty-two percent.⁵³ Ultimately the \$3,000,000 state centennial appropriation makes the \$37,550 difference between the minority and majority reports for West Texas allotments inconsequential. Whereas cities in the eastern portion of the state such as Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston received large allotments, the entire region of West Texas could expect to receive, based upon the recommendations of the Advisory Board, about five percent of the \$3,000,000 state appropriation.

The recommendations of the Advisory Board left many West Texas counties feeling bereft. As mentioned, the region as a whole asked for a mere \$633,497, of which the Advisory Board recommended an allotment of less than one-third. Moreover, in many of the West Texas counties, the Advisory Board discarded sites, events, and individuals the counties proposed for memorialization. The wanton disregard for the interests of the region resulted in several campaigns to press the region's proposals on the Commission of Control.

Morning News, September 5, 1935, 13. Frank J. Dobie's Minority Report made recommendations based on a budget exceeding the allotment by nearly \$100,000.

⁵² Neither the minority nor majority reports organized their recommendations according to East and West regions within the state. My calculations of Frank Dobie's allocations for West Texas towns and counties are based on a comparison of the allotments in the minority report and R. C. Crane's definition of West Texas as provided in his July 2, 1935 address to the Advisory Board of Texas Historians. See Dobie, *Minority Report of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians*, 2-6.

⁵³ For the recommendations of the Majority Report see William M. Thornton, "Historical Board Splits on Use of Centennial Fund," *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1935, 1, 2.

The two largest proposals authored by West Texas counties provide the best examples. These include requests for allotments to El Paso and Lubbock counties.

On June 18, 1935, an El Paso County delegation led by Judge Joseph McGill appeared before the Advisory Board. The group presented a plan similar to Fort Worth's, but smaller in scale. El Paso desired \$150,000 for the construction of a memorial museum and permanent livestock buildings to support the city's annual livestock exposition. The delegation informed the Board that in addition to the state's allotment, El Paso County raised \$100,000 to contribute to the project. The city also donated a plot of land in the historic Washington Park, the reputed location of Cabeza de Vaca's first steps on American soil, for the buildings. Hoping to capitalize on the city's proximity to Mexico, El Paso planned to fund a historical pageant which would include a ceremonial meeting of the President of the United States with the President of Mexico.⁵⁴

To the dismay of El Pasoans, the Advisory Board flatly rejected the delegation's proposal. Although Dobie allotted the county a relatively generous sum of \$30,000, he recommended the funds for a monument to Texas Ranger Jack Hays. Perhaps more insulting to Texas's fifth largest city, the majority report earmarked only \$1,000 for a historical monument honoring the history of its county.⁵⁵ More disappointing, recent changes in the Commission of Control suggested El Paso likely stood a better chance at securing the approval of that body if the Advisory Board recommended funding the city's proposal. Wallace Perry, prominent El Pasoan and editor of the *El Paso Herald-Post*, had

⁵⁴ See Advisory Board of Texas Historians "Bulletin No. 2," 2; "Historical Board Hears Pleas for Centennial Cash," *Dallas Morning News*, June 19, 1935, 3.

⁵⁵ Dobie, Minority Report, 6; "Historical Board Splits on Use of Centennial Fund," *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1935, 1, 2.

recently assumed one of the nine positions on the Commission—one of two seats held by West Texans.⁵⁶ Interestingly, in his effort to garner the favor of the Commission, Perry turned to none other than Amon Carter. Perry sent Carter a letter requesting his assistance hoping Carter might influence the powers that be, the way he had in behalf of Fort Worth. In the letter, Perry described the recent recommendations of the Advisory Board as “unfair discrimination against Texas’s fifth largest city.” Knowing Carter’s reputation for West Texas boosterism, he hoped Carter would help El Paso. “Not because you are under any obligation to me or that El Paso has any right to a claim upon your interests or activities,” he wrote, “but out of fairness to West Texas and the West Texas city which certainly is being discriminated against.” More specifically, Perry hoped Carter would persuade fellow Fort Worthian and member of the Commission General John A. Hulen not only to attend the Commission’s deliberations over the recommendations of the Advisory Board, but also to “vote to give El Paso a substantial allocation.” As indicated by Carter’s scrawling on the letter, he intended to phone the head of the Commission of Control, Lieutenant Governor Walter F. Woodul.⁵⁷

The Commission of Control began its deliberations for the formulation of allocations based upon the Advisory Board’s recommendations on October 17, 1935. On the second

⁵⁶ The members of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations included, Chairman, Lieutenant Governor Walter F. Woodul, Houston; Speaker of the House Coke R. Stevenson, Junction; Karl Hoblitzelle, Dallas; Former Governor Pat M. Neff, Waco; John Boyle, San Antonio; Joseph V. Vandenberg, Victoria; General John A. Hulen, Fort Worth; and John K. Beretta, San Antonio, James A. Elkins, Houston. Wallace Perry of El Paso, was appointed to fill the position originally occupied by John Boyle. See Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 98, n. 1.

⁵⁷ Wallace Perry to Amon G. Carter, October 12, 1935, Box 198, Folder “Texas Centennial Commission [Republic of Texas], 1935-1937,” Carter Papers.

day of meetings, accompanied by Mayor R. E. Sherman and several prominent El Paso citizens, Wallace Perry stood before the other members of the Commission to make a case for a greater allotment for El Paso. Denouncing the recommendation of the Advisory Board, Perry snidely suggested that instead of a \$1,000 allotment, El Paso County preferred \$100 for a monument honoring El Paso as “Texas’ forgotten city.” Although intent on eliciting a larger allotment for El Paso, Perry also took aim at the Advisory Board’s recommendations regarding the entire region of West Texas, leveling the same accusation Dobie made against Kemp’s apparent political pandering in the dispersion of allocations according to senatorial districts. When no history justified an allotment, he argued, the Advisory Board simply “made history.” What other reasoning could justify awarding New Braunfels \$10,000 to commemorate a German colony while the state’s fifth largest city and the first location of a European colony established in Texas received only \$1,000? Allotments based upon senatorial districts and thus population, Perry claimed, “made a stepchild out of West Texas.” Moreover, he noted that “Two hundred dollar markers are repeatedly recommended for oil wells, grist mills, early trading posts or hot dog stands in East Texas—but not a dime for Texas’ first mission which was established 225 years ago below El Paso.”⁵⁸ Whether based on Carter pulling strings behind the scenes or Perry’s rousing the sympathies of the Commission, the group ultimately reconsidered and granted El Paso

⁵⁸ “El Paso Share in Centennial Ridiculed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening Edition, October 18, 1935, 13.

County a state appropriation of \$50,000 for the construction of the El Paso Memorial Museum (now known as the Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Gardens).⁵⁹

Lubbock County's experience followed a similar course. Believing the centennial a good opportunity to obtain state support for the funding of a museum, the West Texas Museum Association played a leading role in the formation of Lubbock County's proposal. A group of Lubbock residents including William Holden and Lubbock Senator A. B. Davis presented Lubbock's proposal to the Advisory Board on June 19, 1935. The group requested \$100,000 for construction of a memorial museum on the campus of Texas Technological College exhibiting materials relating to the region's geological, paleontological, archaeological, and historical treasures.⁶⁰ Shortly following the submission of the original proposal, the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce joined the quest for an appropriation for a West Texas museum. Believing a more unified West Texas might elicit a greater consideration from the Advisory Board, the Chamber began recruiting West Texas counties to support Lubbock's proposal. On July 30, a Lubbock delegation led by A. B. Davis, manager of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce, reappeared before the Advisory Board to amend the county's proposal.

Rehearsing the same economic argument made by Crane and Woodward, Davis argued that since West Texas paid forty-two percent of the state's taxes, the region should receive a substantial allocation. The delegation produced a document titled "WILL WEST

⁵⁹ See Harold Schoen, *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence* (Austin: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938), 21.

⁶⁰ See Advisory Board of Texas Historians "Bulletin No. 2," 2; "5,000,000 Sought, \$550,000 Available For '36 Centennial," *Dallas Morning News*, June 20, 1935, 2.

TEXAS HAVE ANY PART IN THE CENTENNIAL?" With a large outline of the State of Texas in the center, the document included a visual depiction of the bias against West Texas perpetrated by centennial planners. With a line cutting across the state from the southwest to the northeast signifying the division between East and West Texas, the map included markers noting the location of the previous allocations of the Commission of Control, the residence of the members of the Commission of Control and the Advisory Board of Texas Historians. With the exception of Speaker of the House Coke Stevenson, who lived in Junction, all the appropriations of the Commission of Control and the residence of its members along with the members of the Advisory Board were situated to the east of the line. The map also included the outline of an area composing nearly half of West Texas titled "West Texas Regional Application."⁶¹ The Chamber of Commerce successfully procured the signatures of the local Centennial Advisory Committees of sixty-seven West Texas counties representing four and a half West Texas senatorial districts effectually announcing the deferment of their share of any appropriation for local commemoration over to Lubbock County's proposal for a West Texas museum. The Lubbock proposal had become a "regional application." Among other things, the proposal now requested additional funding for the museum totaling \$118,750.⁶²

⁶¹ "WILL WEST TEXAS HAVE ANY PART IN THE TEXAS CENTENNIAL?" [no date], Box 10, Folder 5, Holden Papers. Though the origins and date of this document are unknown, because it illustrates the region encompassed by the "West Texas Regional Application" and is included with William Holden's correspondence about the West Texas regional application for a centennial museum in Lubbock it is a reasonable assumption A. B. Davis used this document to illustrate his points at the meeting with the Advisory Board.

⁶² William M. Thornton, "Over \$5,000,000 Sought to Mark Historic Spots," *Dallas Morning News*, July 31, 1935, 1, 9.

Following the second meeting with the Advisory Board, the Chamber of Commerce continued the campaign to gain support for a regional West Texas application. Likely after Fort Worth received a federal appropriation of \$250,000, Lubbock County increased its official request to the like amount of \$250,000 for the museum project.⁶³ There is also some evidence that the West Texas Chamber of Commerce aided Lubbock in an attempt to get greater representation for West Texas during the centennial year.⁶⁴ Moreover, working behind the scenes, William Holden also attempted to influence the outcome of the Advisory Board's recommendations. Such lobbying apparently held little sway with the Advisory Board, particularly Kemp who seemed irritated at Holden's badgering. In response to one of Holden's pleas, he revealed the Advisory Board's perspective on the plight of West Texas with regard to centennial allocations. Responding to Holden's suggestion that the Advisory Board should adopt a policy of regional equality in recommending allocations, Kemp retorted shortly, "We shall not make the slightest attempt to have the funds distributed equally." Moreover, in a veiled reference to West Texas, he explained, "We are not concerned in the least about how any county in the state may have been discriminated against in the past; how great its population; how much taxes it pays or how much cotton, corn or wheat it raises." Kemp also enthusiastically acknowledged the Advisory Board's intent to recommend the distribution of funds based upon senatorial districts. Holden apparently learned from Dobie that the Advisory Board refused to recognize the Lubbock County proposal as representing sixty-seven counties and had apparently earlier raised the

⁶³ See Advisory Board of Texas Historians, [untitled], report of proposals, September 20, 1935.

⁶⁴ See, J. A. Rix to William C. Holden, October 7, 1935, Box 10 Folder 15, Holden Papers.

issue with Kemp. Kemp responded by claiming that the Centennial Advisory Committees for the sixty-seven counties, which offered their prospective allocations to Lubbock, are not imbued with the power to democratically represent the citizens living within their counties. Only the state senators were in a position to “to know the wishes of his constituents.” And to his knowledge, Kemp told Holden, no senators contacted the Advisory Board to turn over any allotment their districts would receive to Lubbock County. Well aware of what he referred to as the “militant campaign” of Lubbock’s chamber to garner additional support for the county’s proposal, Kemp concluded by explaining to Holden that “we . . . are going to make our recommendations honestly and fearlessly, irrespective of whom it may please or displease.”⁶⁵

Given his heated exchanges with Kemp, the recommendations of the Advisory Board regarding Lubbock County came as no surprise to Holden.⁶⁶ On October 6, the Advisory Board issued a majority report recommending for Lubbock County an allotment of \$14,000 for a monument to Thomas S. Lubbock and a minority report granting the county \$20,000 for a monument to the Santa Fe Expedition—both paltry recommendations compared with the \$250,000 request. Moreover, as Dobie indicated to Holden, prior to the announcement the Advisory Board dismissed outright the notion of a regional application.⁶⁷ Undaunted, Holden and the West Texas Museum Association “decided to carry the campaign to the last ditch.”⁶⁸ Learning that the Commission of Control planned to deliberate the

⁶⁵ Louis W. Kemp to William C. Holden, October 3, 1935, Box 10, Folder 15, Holden Papers.

⁶⁶ William C. Holden to R. C. Crane, October 8, 1935, Box 10, Folder 15, Holden Papers.

⁶⁷ See “Historical Board Splits on Use of Centennial Fund,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1935, 1, 2; Dobie, Minority Report, 6.

⁶⁸ William C. Holden to R. C. Crane, October 8, 1935.

recommendations of the Advisory Board toward the end of the month, Holden began assembling a panel of prominent West Texans to meet with the Commission during these meetings.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the coalition of West Texas counties began to weaken, making Kemp's assertion that only senators could accurately gauge the interest of the their districts seem prophetic. The Advisory Board awarded Young County \$14,000 to restore some of the original buildings at Fort Belknap. Kemp likely relished the opportunity of informing Senator Oneal, a strong supporter of the Fort Belknap's restoration, that, because each of the County Centennial Advisory Committees in his senatorial district signed over their funding rights to Lubbock County's proposal, his district stood to lose its allocation if Lubbock County successfully lobbied its case before the Commission of Control. Oneal contacted the County Advisory Committees in his district only to discover that those members who signed the petition did not believe they signed away their county's rights to any allocation. Withdrawing their support from the Lubbock's regional application, "The people of the Twenty-third Senatorial District stood firm for Fort Belknap."⁷⁰

On October 17, a host of Lubbock County delegates, including representatives of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce, the West Texas Museum Association, and the sixty-seven West Texas counties and a number of prominent West Texans, stood before the Commission of Control.⁷¹ Asking the Commission to discard the recommendations of the

⁶⁹ See William C. Holden to R. C. Crane, October 8, 1935; William C. Holden to Clifford B. Jones, October 9, 1935, William C. Holden to Claude Denham, October 12, 1935, Box 10 Folder 15, Holden Papers.

⁷⁰ Oneal, "A Brief Story of the Restoration of Fort Belknap," 112-114.

⁷¹ V. Z. Rogers to William C. Holden, November 1, 1935, Box 10, Folder 15, Holden Papers.

Advisory Board, the coalition asked for an allotment of \$50,000 for the construction of a West Texas museum at Texas Technological College. Unfortunately, the historical record provides only limited insight into the proceedings of the meeting. Apparently, the delegation drew from the same arguments raised ad nauseam during the past three years by West Texans. With a parade of statistics and data, the delegation argued that according to the size of its population, the expanse of its geographical boundaries, and the large quantity of its tax obligations, West Texas deserved a substantially larger portion of the state centennial allocation. Size of the allotment aside, they also argued that the Advisory Board's recommendation to build a monument simply failed to represent the greatness of the region's history and progress. "We don't want a cold stone monument," claimed Tahoka Senator G. H. Nelson, "It should be a living monument to commemorate a new kind of country and a new type of history." The Commission's response to the Lubbock delegation seemed mixed. Coke Stevenson, one of the members of the Commission from West Texas, indicated he would rather allocate funds for a historical memorial, because funds might later be awarded for a museum through a legislative appropriation. "When this Centennial money is gone," he said, "we can not appropriate funds for historical purposes, but we could continue to make appropriations for Tech, including a museum." Commission chairman Lieutenant-Governor Walter Woodal chided West Texans for the attitude engendered toward the Commission by "unthinking people." "The commission is not a bunch of racketeers," he declared.⁷² Ultimately, on the motion of Woodal, the Commission awarded Lubbock County \$25,000 to help with the construction of a West Texas museum at

⁷² "\$50,000 Asked for Museum," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 18, 1935, 2.

Texas Technological College.⁷³ Although the \$25,000 provision fell well below the requested \$250,000, Holden and the members of the West Texas Museum Associations viewed the allocation as a victory. The allocation would at least provide funds to at begin construction on a museum.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, the enlarged allocations and the promise of two new museums for El Paso and Lubbock, two of the largest projects approved by the Commission of Control, did nothing to alter the negative view of the state centennial prevailing among West Texans.⁷⁵ In fact, as the celebration's June 6, 1936, opening day approached, the ire of West Texans toward and the state centennial increased. Coming on the heels of the victories in El Paso and Lubbock, the Chamber of Commerce discovered that the planners of the Central Exposition at Dallas developed no means for the presentation of industrial and agricultural contributions of West Texas to the state. In the process of forming plans for such an exhibition of West Texas resources on the central centennial grounds, the Chamber learned space would not be made available in the State of Texas Building as they had hoped. The Chamber also approached officials developing the \$225,000 museum in Austin for space but to no avail. Finally, chamber officials learned that if the region wanted to display its agricultural and industrial products at the Central Exposition, space could be rented at six dollars per square foot in one of the centennial buildings devoted to transportation, food,

⁷³ William C. Holden to Walter Woodal, October 22, 1935, Box 10, Folder 15, Holden Papers; Schoen, *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas*, 26.

⁷⁴ See William C. Holden to Walter Woodal, October 22, 1935; William C. Holden to John K. Beretta, October 24, 1935, Box 10, Folder 15, Holden Papers.

⁷⁵ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 112.

or electronics and communication. Furthermore, the state would make no allocation for the preparation, installation, or oversight of such a regional exhibit.⁷⁶

News of the lack of support for the presentation of the region's resources infuriated officials of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce who published an editorial in *West Texas Today* castigating centennial officials. Failing to focus "the attention of the outside world on our resources and potentialities," the editorial argued, represented a wholesale violation of centennial campaign promises. Perhaps overstating the original impetus for celebrating the centennial, the editorial claimed "Taxpayers were led to believe that the Centennial . . . would result in launching a new era of agricultural and industrial development and in bringing to Texas many new permanent citizens."⁷⁷ Without an exhibition of the state's resources and products how, they wondered, could such a boom take place? Ironically, the editorial blamed historians for blinding politicians and centennial planners with historical brick-a-brack and derailing the true purpose of the centennial.

Objecting to the inadequate opportunities afforded by the Central Exposition to display the abundant offering of their region probably seemed like the logical next move for the Chamber of Commerce in West Texas's campaign to obtain some representation at the centennial. Although lack of state allotments pushed West Texas history to the commemorative periphery, the Chamber believed this simply could not be done to West Texas industry and agriculture. "Surely, there should be told the story of the most remarkable agricultural development in the history of the United States," the editorial argued. West Texas produced ten percent of the nation's cotton and oil, twenty-five

⁷⁶ "Yesterday, Or Tomorrow?" *West Texas Today* 16, no. 9 (November 1935): 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

percent of the nation's grain sorghums, and seven percent of the nation's wheat, and a majority of the country's wool. And with millions of acres still undeveloped, "The story of the only remaining open range in the United States must be told." Hoping to prevent such an oversight from occurring, the editorial called for the governing powers to "do something about portraying the resources, development and potentialities of the State of Texas."⁷⁸

In the case of West Texas versus the Texas Centennial, population, geographical boundaries, and abundant natural resources ultimately did not translate into historical significance. An enduring irony of the state centennial is that centennial planners refused to recognize the region embodying the western heritage they worked to promote during the centennial year. Since the early twentieth-century state officials had been moving the state away from the state's southern roots in an effort to promote a more American and western identity. The state centennial with its images of cowboys, pioneers, ten-gallon hats, and Texas Rangers was the culmination of this process.⁷⁹ On the eve of the centennial, however, officials failed to embrace the state's quintessentially American and western half. As a result a rift grew between many West Texans and the official celebration of the state's one-hundredth birthday.

Although Fort Worth through the efforts of Amon Carter and others supported the West Texas campaign for greater representation in the centennial, the region's inability to make any progress on that front held important ramifications for the Fort Worth's centennial plans. The shared heritage of the state's cattle industry represented the central

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ See Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 258, and Cantrell, "The Bones of Stephen F. Austin," 148.

theme of Fort Worth celebration. As it turned out, West Texas support proved significant to the success of Fort Worth's own centennial ambitions. Staggering from the defeat, dejected West Texans turned to Fort Worth, which welcomed the region's participation in the celebration of the Frontier Centennial.

CHAPTER 3

“HOME OF THE COWBOY”: CLUB WOMEN, WEST TEXAS, AND RECREATING THE OLD WEST

A major reconceptualization and expansion of Fort Worth’s centennial offering emerged in the early weeks of 1936. Toward the end of 1935, Fort Worth’s City Council organized a Board of Control to develop and implement the celebration.¹ Chaired by William Monnig, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, successful department store owner, and early activist in garnering funds for Fort Worth’s centennial observance, the Board met for the first time on January 3, 1936, in the *Star-Telegram* Building’s Club Room. The business of the meeting consisted of organizing planning and finance committees and selecting members of a Centennial Commission—a body to consist of two-hundred men and two-hundred women.² At the second meeting of Board, a week later, its planning committee presented an outline for the celebration, heavily influenced by ideas developed by a centennial committee within the Fort Worth Advertising Club, expanding the bounds of the original proposal presented to the Centennial Advisory Board of Texas Historians and

¹ On December 26, 1936, the Fort Worth City Council organized the Board of Control to “plan entertainment and supervise the financing” of the centennial. At the time of its organization the Board of Control included John N. Sparks, Van Zandt Jarvis, William L. Pier, T. J. Harrell, Marvin D. Evans, J. M. North, Jr., Seward Sheldon, E. H. Winton, J. C. Martin, O. B. Sellers, and William Monnig. See Fort Worth City Council, Meeting Minutes, December 26, 1935, 185. James F. Pollock replaced Seward Sheldon after Sheldon relocated to another city. Gray, *History of the Frontier Centennial*, 39. Amon G. Carter’s name is conspicuously absent from the Board of Control. He subsequently explained to his daughter that he and the *Fort Worth-Star Telegram* were represented by J. M. North, Jr. See Amon G. Carter to Mrs. Harry R. Kay (Bertice Carter), April 15, 1936, Box 113, Folder “Key, Bertice Carter (Speck),” Carter Papers.

² “Centennial Stock Show Is Organized,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 4, 1936, Second Section, 1. See also “Centennial Livestock Show Board Will Meet,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 1936, Second Section, 1.

the Centennial Commission of Control when applying for financial support from the state in the summer of 1935.³ In addition to the original concept of celebrating one-hundred years of progress in the Texas livestock industry through an expanded version of the Southwestern Exhibition and Fat Stock Show and the construction of modern livestock facilities in Fort Worth, the planning committee's outline called for additional entertainment based upon a concept indicative of the progress of Texas's livestock industry—the frontier or “Old West.” The planning committee believed a celebration depicting the “romance, color, and action” of the Old West a more attractive and profitable approach to commemorate the livestock industry than a commercial exposition.⁴ The new plans called for museums containing relics of the pioneer era, shows highlighting historical scenes from frontier Texas, and perhaps most notably the reproduction of a pioneer town including a dance hall, saloon, general store, and post office. These early centennial plans also included recreations of Native American and Mexican villages. To strengthen the emphasis on the celebration's Old West or frontier theme, at the behest of Fort Worth's Advertising Club the Board changed the official title of Fort Worth's centennial unit from “Texas Livestock and Frontier Days Centennial Exposition” to “Texas Centennial Livestock and Frontier Days Exposition”—or simply the “Texas Frontier Centennial.”⁵

With an agreed-upon approach for commemorating the livestock industry, the numerous committees organized under the Centennial Commission sprang into action

³ “Urges More Attention Be Given Stock Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 21, 1936, 3.

⁴ J. M. North Jr. to R. C. Crane, January 7, 1936, Box 13, Folder 4, Papers of R. C. Crane Sr., SWC.

⁵ “Centennial Livestock Exposition's Control Board Maps Program,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2.

developing a detailed plan for the festivities during early months of 1936. Possibly due to a lack of documentary evidence in the form of meeting minutes or correspondences, these early developments have been omitted from studies commenting on Fort Worth's centennial offering. Scholars have chosen rather to focus upon the more heavily documented developments following the March arrival of the Broadway producer-turned-centennial-director, Billy Rose.⁶ As a result the secondary literature ignores the singular contributions of women in the initial organization and planning of the centennial, the planners' early goal of historical accuracy in commemorating Texas's frontier heritage, and the importance West Texans to the celebration.⁷

Drawing upon a thorough search of Fort Worth's two daily newspapers, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Fort Worth Press*, the following chapter details the planning steps taken during January and February 1936. The narrative follows three facets of the early development of the plans for the Frontier Centennial: the role of women, the development of perceived authentic attractions, and the influence of West Texas. After the organization

⁶ Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial" focuses primarily upon pre-centennial developments regarding financing and the impact of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show. She also addresses the construction of the Will Rogers Memorial and the frontier village, briefly, but only after the arrival of Billy Rose. Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, the most detailed discussion of the Texas Frontier Centennial, discusses the origin of Fort Worth's centennial unit to 1936, but passes over the developments in January and February starting in earnest with Billy Rose.

⁷ Both Gray and Jones fail to address the participation of women in any meaningful way. Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 210, devotes a paragraph to the discussion of the 1936, pre-Rose developments including the contribution of women. Unfortunately, the content is based entirely upon Jerry Flemmons, prejudiced and inaccurate biography *Amon: The Life of Amon Carter, Sr.* With the exception of women working as showgirls, a recent history of Fort Worth women also omits their participation in the centennial, see Jan L. Jones, "There's Nothing So Useless as a Showgirl," in *Grace & Gumption: Stories of Fort Worth Women* ed. Katie Sherrod (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2007), 177-191.

of the Centennial Commission and Board of Control, Frontier Centennial officials selected a theme for an expanded celebration. In the development of the celebration's offerings Fort Worth's club women played a central role. Organized under the Women's Division, thousands of club women went to work fleshing-out the cultural, historical, and entertainment offerings of the Frontier Centennial. Juxtaposed to the work of the committees composed of men, which took place behind closed doors, the activities of the Women's Division represented the public face of the celebration's planning. These efforts, particularly those relating to the Women's Division's Historical Research Committee and Planning Committees, played a singular role in circumscribing the Frontier Centennial's commemorative offerings. To make the entertainment venues attractive to fairgoers, the Board of Control stipulated that the Frontier Centennial present only historically "authentic" attractions. Thus, for the exposition's principal attraction, the recreation of a frontier town of the Old West, centennial planners looked to the historic cow towns in West Texas as a model. Turning to West Texas as the inspiration for the Frontier Centennial's commemorative offerings represented the culmination of Fort Worth's growing dependence on the region for its western heritage. Efforts to embrace West Texans on the part of centennial planners, civic leaders, and city boosters ultimately resulted in the emergence of a symbiotic centennial relationship between Fort Worth and West Texas.

The motives for expanding Fort Worth's centennial offering to include entertainment in addition to the centennial stock and horse show resided primarily in potential revenues—the siren's song heard by all Depression Era cities who hosted a world's

fair, including Dallas.⁸ The chairman of the Planning Committee T. J. Harrell argued that Chicago provided a case in point. He suggested that the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition put the struggling city, unable to pay its school teachers and policemen, back on solid fiscal ground.⁹ Officials in Dallas had recently announced they expected centennial attendance to exceed twelve million. The Board of Control reasoned that Fort Worth's celebration, if done right, could expect draw at least one-third of all centennial-goers in Dallas to Fort Worth.¹⁰ If at least 1.5 million to 2 million could be attracted to travel the thirty-five miles west and each spent only ten dollars, Fort Worth stood to gross 10.5 to 20 million dollars—more than enough to pay off the bonds issued for the show's production.¹¹ Moreover, Chairman Monnig estimated that the initial construction requirements would generate at least seven-hundred jobs.¹² He later told a group of Rotarians simply, "This is the greatest proposition Fort Worth has ever had. It would be a great misfortune if we should miss our opportunity."¹³ To take greater advantage of the crowds planners believed would flood

⁸ Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle, eds, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 86-87.

⁹ "Expect Show To Bring Two Million Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 18, 1936, 1-2.

¹⁰ "June 6-Nov. 29 Centennial, Having \$15,000,000 Plant, Expected to Draw 12,000,000," *Dallas Morning News*, November 28, 1935, 7.

¹¹ "Centennial Livestock Exposition's Control Board Maps Program," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2.

¹² "Expect Show to Bring Two Million Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 18, 1936, 1-2.

¹³ "Centennial Plea Made to Rotarians by Monnig," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 18, 1936, 8.

Dallas, the opening date for Fort Worth's centennial offering was eventually moved forward from August 1 to coincide with the June 6 opening of the Dallas exhibition.¹⁴

The unfolding construction of the Central Exposition ground in Dallas also generated fears that the centennial might provide a means for its neighbor to usurp Fort Worth's central role in the livestock industry in the Southwest. In October 1935 work began at the Dallas centennial grounds on the first of two buildings devoted to livestock.¹⁵ Buildings one and two of the Hall of Livestock and Animal Husbandry, which formed a part of the \$750,000 Farm Center, appeared to surpass the size and quality of the Fort Worth stock yards buildings used for the Southwestern Exhibition and Fat Stock Show.¹⁶ Moreover, W. L. Stangel, the head of the Livestock Exhibits Department at the centennial boasted, "The prospects now are that the livestock show of the Texas Centennial Exposition will be the biggest ever held in the Southwest."¹⁷ More than a simple infringement on Fort Worth's plans to host a celebration of the livestock industry, the construction of livestock buildings in Dallas and Stangel's assertions posed a significant threat not only to Fort Worth's stake in the Southwest's livestock industry but to its identity as a western city. Boosters and civic leaders believed it would only take one successful livestock show in Dallas to jeopardize the standing of the Fort Worth stock show. As already mentioned, Amon Carter drew upon these fears when cultivating support for the city's bond issue for new centennial livestock

¹⁴ "Centennial Livestock Exposition's Control Board Maps Program," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2; "Board of Control Sets June 6 for Opening of Frontier Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 11, 1936, 1-2.

¹⁵ "Livestock Structure Plans Ready," *Centennial News* 1, no. 7 (October 19, 1935): 4.

¹⁶ "Work is Started on All But One of Major Halls," *Centennial News* 1, no. 14 (December 7, 1935): 2.

¹⁷ "Expo To Get Fine Cattle," *Centennial News* 1, no. 9 (November 2, 1935): 4.

facilities. Referencing the threat he believed Dallas's centennial stock show ambitions represented if Fort Worth did not host an ambitious centennial stock show of their own, he wrote to Vice President John Garner, "We are blown up and Dallas will walk off with our fat stock show."¹⁸

These fears grew more intense after a mid-January 1936 visit of Mayor Jarvis and Chairman Monnig to the Dallas exposition grounds to witness centennial developments. An editorial in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* informed readers that upon returning the delegation expressed their amazement at the "scope and progress of the Central Centennial" and the belief that these permanent livestock facilities could become a "future menace to Fort Worth's own Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show." "Unless Fort Worth makes proper provision, Dallas will have the best facilities for a livestock show of any city in the Southwest," the editorial asserted. "It, in time, will have the best show in the Southwest." In light of the size and scope of the Dallas exposition, the editorial supported the Board of Control's assertion that Fort Worth, if it chose to host an exposition of its own, could not go forward half-heartedly. Fort Worth's show had to be big enough to attract visitors and, perhaps more important, it had to be worth the price of admission. Anything less stood to tarnish the reputation of the city.¹⁹

The theme embraced by the Board of Control featured a Texas frontier lacking specific geographical and chronological parameters. Underscoring the ambiguity of the theme, Frontier Centennial planners used the phrases "Texas frontier," "Old West," and

¹⁸ Amon G. Carter to John Nance Garner, September 25, 1935, Box 174, Folder "Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, 1935," Carter Papers.

¹⁹ "Opportunity a Threat," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 18, 1936, 6.

“pioneer days” interchangeably. Precisely what constituted these mythic terms and how they figured into Fort Worth’s and Texas’s history, as well as how they should be commemorated as part of the centennial, represents a salient narrative in the development of the Texas Frontier Centennial.

In the minds of Fort Worth planners, the frontier they sought to commemorate existed once upon a time on the vast lands of West Texas. Still, failing to define the specific time and place these terms represented eventually created problems in the realization of accurate historical depictions as part of the commemoration of the Texas frontier.

Nevertheless, Frontier Centennial planners believed that “the Texas cowboy and his experiences in Indian warfare and range work” reflected an important figure within the American frontier experience.²⁰ Given the pecuniary impetus for expanding Fort Worth’s celebration, the Board appeared to embrace an Old West theme not only because Texas and more specifically Fort Worth maintained a historic association with cowboys, the western frontier, and the open range, but also because of its marketability. Chairman of the Planning Committee T. J. Harrell explained, “America visualizes Fort Worth as the home of the cowboy when he is not on the open range.” This image, he argued, was popularly portrayed in motion pictures, folk songs, and novels.²¹ To be sure, centennial planners acknowledged that a history of the cattle industry and the Texas pioneer which depicted their importance to the progress and development of Texas would play a central role in the “character” of the celebration. But, more importantly, they believed a “frontier” celebration

²⁰ “Frontier Show Bonds Backed,” *Fort Worth Press*, January 18, 1936, 1-2.

²¹ Quote from “Expect Show To Bring Two Million Here” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 18, 1936, 1-2; “Centennial Livestock Exposition’s Control Board Maps Program,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2.

exploited a theme which would attract visitors from the Dallas Centennial. “Properly staged,” the Board of Control explained, a frontier theme “from the amusement standpoint, will provide the color, romance and action necessary to make the Frontier Centennial the most appealing and entertaining of all Centennial Celebrations.”²²

In the 1930s, creating successful attractions based upon an Old West theme appeared far from straightforward. Throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries western-themed shows proved a big success, particularly William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody’s Wild West. The success of his show and the dozens of imitators it spawned rested in the recreation of the western or frontier experience for eastern audiences—capitalizing on the nation’s anxiety over the vanishing frontier. Following World War I, several elements conspired to bring about an end to the frontier shows. Purveyors of such entertainment diluted the potency of the show’s meaning through the inclusion of circus-type acts. Wild West features became only one genre of the entertainment presented in these shows. For example, a 1925 ad for the Oklahoma-based 101 Ranch Wild West, the premier purveyor of Wild West entertainment following World War I, noted the show included “battalions of clowns” and a “complete three-ring circus,” in addition to Wild West offerings.²³ By the 1920s the rodeo, as a popular form of entertainment and sport, had come into its own and exhibited some of the same type of entertainment featured in the Wild West shows.

²² “Centennial Livestock Exposition’s Control Board Maps Program,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2.

²³ Quoted in Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 180.

Moreover, the most talented cowboys and cowgirls gravitated toward rodeo competitions.²⁴

The emergence of western themed motion pictures played the most important role in usurping Wild West entertainment. According to Paul Reddin, new silent films were far more successful at capitalizing on the “lingering spirit of frontier anxiety” felt by Americans than the last remnants of the Wild West shows.²⁵ The Board of Control readily recognized that Texas-based characters and landscapes often played leading roles in western films. Perhaps more importantly, they understood that westerns romanticized the life of the cowboy—a character closely associated with Texas. In the 1920s and 1930s Western plots borrowed heavily from dime novels, plays, and the Wild West shows which depicted the Texas cowboy as the personification of individualism and courage as opposed simply to hired cow hands. Popular film star Tom Mix also played an important role in popularizing the Texas cowboy. Staring in *The Man from Texas* (1915), *The Heart of Texas Ryan* (1917), and *The Texan* (1920), many of Mix’s films bore a Texas theme. Moreover, Mix also publicized himself as a onetime Texas Ranger and a Texan by birth.²⁶ Ultimately American audiences embraced the mythologized cowboy as they had Buffalo Bill’s frontier.

Given the popularity of the Texas landscape and cowboy in western films, the Advertising Club and Board of Control reasoned that if motion pictures inherited the mantle of preserving frontier nostalgia and drew vast audiences allowing them to experience the Old West vicariously, what better way to commemorate Texas’s frontier heritage than to let

²⁴ Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 181.

²⁵ Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 183.

²⁶ Don Graham, “Lone Star Cinema,” 246-250.

visitors return to the wild days of the Old West via the reconstruction of a movie set resembling a frontier settlement. Moving past the false façades of Hollywood, however, Fort Worth planners sincerely desired to imbue their commemorative recreation with “authenticity.”²⁷

As the organizational structure for the planning and implementing of the Texas Frontier Centennial emerged, women played a leading role. Even before the organization of the Centennial Commission, the Fort Worth Woman’s Club adopted a resolution expressing confidence in and offering its services to the newly organized Board of Control in its centennial efforts.²⁸ Organized in 1923, the Fort Worth Woman’s Club represented nearly a dozen white women’s organization in the city composed of the city’s privileged women devoted to “the cultural and civic advancement of Fort Worth; and the study of literature, history, science, painting, music and the other fine arts.”²⁹ In addition to advancing these stated objectives the Woman’s Club, like other woman’s clubs in the state, became actively involved in civic affairs and promoting political reform.³⁰ Although the committees of the

²⁷ “Centennial Livestock Exposition’s Control Board Maps Program,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2.

²⁸ “Women’s Club Offers Support to Group,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 4, 1936, 9. See Anna Shelton and Mattie Ingram to Fort Worth City Council, January 10, 1936, Folder “January 1936,” Fort Worth City Council, Proceedings, FTWPLA.

²⁹ The charter of The Woman’s Club of Fort Worth is reproduced in Marion Day Mullins, *A History of The Woman’s Club of Fort Worth, 1923-1973* (Published Privately), 11-13, copy held at the Tarrant County Archives, Fort Worth, Texas (hereafter cited as TCA).

³⁰ Elizabeth Miller, *The Woman’s Club of Fort Worth: The First Twenty-Five Years, 1923-1948* (Published Privately, 1959), 19; Angela Boswell, “From Farm to Future: Women’s Journey through Twentieth-Century Texas,” in *Twentieth-Century Texas: A Social and Cultural History* ed. John W. Storey and Mary L. Kelley (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 114-115, 122. See also Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

Centennial Commission assigned to see to the planning, financing, and administration of the celebration were composed entirely of men, women accounted for at least half of the Centennial Commission. These women played a more visible role in the centennial's planning than did the male-dominated committees.

On January 24, the Board of Control requested a committee of eight women, including Anna Shelton and Margaret McLean, both notable leaders among the city's club women, to organize a Women's Division of the Centennial Commission to head the efforts of Fort Worth women.³¹ The committee invited five-hundred of the city's most active women about ninety percent of whom attended the first meeting.³² The primary business of the meeting included naming committees to carry out the directives assigned to the Women's Division by the Board of Control. Under McLean's chairmanship, the group formed ten committees. Projects assigned to the Women's Division included the beautification of Fort Worth, including the cleaning up of alleys and centers of industry, and the placement of street markers. Other initiatives under the purview of the Women's Division included providing centennial hospitality and lodging for visitors exceeding Fort Worth's hotel capacity. Although a male committee developed the official publicity campaign for the Texas Frontier Centennial, a committee under the Women's Division launched a grass-roots campaign to advertise the centennial.³³

³¹ For more information on Anna Shelton see Mullins, *A History of The Women's Club of Fort Worth*, 22-25.

³² Edith Alderman Guedry, "'Who Says Women Putter?' Not This Texas Frontier Centennial Body of 500," *Fort Worth Press*, January 27, 1936, 6.

³³ "Women to Band for Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 24, 1936, 20.

Beyond beautification, hospitality, and publicity, the Women's Division also led the effort to imbue the celebration with historicity and culture. Though the Board of Control determined that Texas's frontier heritage would define the centennial celebration, which history would be commemorated and how remained under the discretion of the Women's Division. Thus, at its first meeting the Women's Division organized committees devoted to historical research, assembling a historical museum, and the creation of genuine frontier entertainment. Other committees were assigned to organize a speaker's bureau and create "pilgrimage" tours to help educate locals and visitors alike.³⁴ Eventually, the Women's Division would organize upward of five-thousand women into twenty committees, the majority of which were dedicated to developing the means for commemoration of the Texas frontier heritage and imbuing the celebration with historical authenticity.³⁵ Once organized, each committee often reached out for aid to women's groups in Fort Worth, West Texas, and as far as New England.

In late January as the Women's Division began to organize, the Board of Control appealed to the women of Fort Worth and West Texas for suggestions regarding appropriate costuming for women and men during the centennial festivities. Hoping to totally immerse Frontier Centennial-goers in an Old West setting, they called on Fort Worthians to dress the part of pioneer residents of the recreated frontier village. Though the Board of Control sought suggestions for men's costumes, interest in women's wear far

³⁴ Edith Alderman Guedry, "'Who Says Women Putter?' Not This Texas Frontier Centennial Body of 500," *Fort Worth Press*, January 27, 1936, 6; "Women Launch Mammoth Plans for Centennial; Will Set Up Museum," *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 8.

³⁵ "Women Launch Mammoth Plans for Centennial; Will Set Up Museum," *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 8.

exceeded that of men's. Offering a prize to the winning costume, the Board sought suggestions for a "practical and effective mode of dress for women to lend a western atmosphere."³⁶ The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* supported the Board of Control by offering the winner a copy of the very outfit they suggested. The paper also invited men to propose men's costumes.³⁷

Helping Fort Worthians visualize the "authentic costumes" of the "Frontier Days," *The Fort Worth Press* printed a series of illustrated articles providing examples of western dress during the 1870s and 1880s. The paper printed photographs engendering images of a violent west including: Rose Dunn, also known as the "Rose of Cimarron," Anna Emmaline McDoulet and Jennie Metcalf otherwise known as "Cattle Annie" and "Little Britches" of the Doolin Gang, and a posse of cowboys who posed in San Angelo. Dunn posed in a striped frock with a lace-trimmed bonnet holding a .45 Colt, or "Thumb-buster," while Annie gripped a Winchester in a dress and Little Britches dressed in leather chaps with a six-shooter at her side.³⁸ In the photo of the cowboys, the *Fort Worth Press* noted that though all the men donned a broad brimmed hat, coats, and boots each wore their attire differently as in the 1930s.³⁹

In the following weeks nearly two dozen women submitted descriptions of their proposed costumes. Within the pages of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, which published the

³⁶ "Which Best Portrays Frontier Days," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 25, 1936, 1.

³⁷ "Ideas on Costumes for Show Asked," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 30, 1936, 10.

³⁸ C. L. Douglas, "Chic Gown of Frontier Days Served For All Occasions," *Fort Worth Press*, February 15, 1936, 8; C. L. Douglas, "A Ride, Eh? Well, Milady, Copy Styles During Expo," *Fort Worth Press*, February 20, 1936, 2.

³⁹ C. L. Douglas, "If You're Wondering What to Wear During The Centennial, How About These Styles," *Fort Worth Press*, February 17, 1936, 14.

details and photographs of the outfits, a debate unfolded revealing the complexities of Fort Worth's identity and image as a western and modern city in the minds of local women. The submitted proposals reflected a number of approaches to the costume, but most favored costumes featuring elements of progress, modernity, and practicality rather than rigid historical accuracy. Moreover, a number of women voiced concern regarding the impracticality of historical costumes and claimed they made Fort Worth and Texas women, in general, appear backward and outdated. For example, Dorothy George suggested an anachronistic dress of "bright colored paisley." She justified the inauthentic design by stressing its practicality and style. "I believe the women will wear something stylish quicker," she wrote, "than they will a dress from bygone days. The cowgirl regalia is, of course, picturesque, but I do not believe many women would like to wear it." George believed the message of progress would benefit Fort Worth much more than historical accuracy. "If we want to impress the visitors from out of town," she reasoned, "let us impress them with the fact that we have progressed."⁴⁰ Mrs. William F. Bryant agreed, fearing that historical costumes would misrepresent Texas womanhood. "Some think [Texas women] go barefoot, never wear corsets, chew gum all the time and dip snuff." "Our pioneer mothers," she argued, "could they speak would not want us trailing foot-length beruffled skirts around."⁴¹ Nellie Sue Bliven argued that sunbonnets were more historically accurate but, "lack the smartness that women demand." Although hats of a Spanish-inspired sombrero "are not typical of the pioneer women," she claimed, "they would

⁴⁰ "Paisley Suggested As Show Costume," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 10, 1936, 4.

⁴¹ "Women Urged Not to Adopt Freakish Frontier Costumes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 23, 1936, 8.

provide that picturesque illusionary western atmosphere with which Texas, especially Fort Worth is associated in the minds of many in other sections of the country.”⁴²

Other women submitted designs emphasizing the qualities of style, comfort, practicality, and affordability over historical accuracy. Favoring affordability, Mrs. Alma Turner Phelps proposed a simple western-style dress which could be created for less than a dollar. Using an old bedspread, Phelps stitched a frock highlighted on the shoulder with a spray of bluebonnets and recommended an accompanying bluebonnet perfume.⁴³ Several others also suggested inexpensive western accessories such as a knotted cowboy handkerchief around the neck, a badge, or armband.⁴⁴ Mrs. M. Wright suggested women’s dress should promote Texas industry in its design rather than its history. She proposed an outfit consisting of a traditional cowboy hat, a cotton or plaid wool shirt, a woolen skirt trimmed with brown buttons, a bandana neckerchief, tan leather gloves with red fringed trim and belt, a purse, and tanned sports oxfords, “composed as completely as possible of Texas products—leather, wool, cotton and buttons and buckles made of native bone or wood.”⁴⁵ Mrs. Hugh P. Prince favored comfort and practicality. She suggested a medium-sized cowboy hat with white chin strap, a red bandana, a blue silk shirt, a belt of braded leather or horse hair, a tan light-weight leather skirt, and full-length cowboy boots. Though lacking historical accuracy, Prince believed this outfit distinctive, pleasing, and at a price

⁴² “Sunbonnets Are Not Likely to Set Centennial Style,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 25, 1936, 1.

⁴³ “And It Cost Less Than \$1,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 16, 1936, 3.

⁴⁴ “Women Unable to Agree on Costumes for Frontier Show” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 26, 1936, 3.

⁴⁵ “Centennial Costume Urged Entirely of Texas Products,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 16, 1936, 3.

most women could afford. Perhaps more important she argued the costume was comfortable and practical for a variety of activities including horse riding.⁴⁶

Some women disagreed as to which style was more historically accurate. Helea Bowles Bowie maintained her mother who resided in West Texas since 1882 claimed “no women wore hats on the range. They wore bonnets with splits. The wind would have blown the hats away.”⁴⁷ Margaret McLean, chairman of the Women’s Division, held a different perspective. She noted, “Some women of pioneer days wore sunbonnets, just as some women wear today, but all pioneer women were not ridiculous. I am not a pioneer woman, but my mother was and I know that she wore hats and not sunbonnets.”⁴⁸ Reflecting Fort Worth’s historic ties to the South, not all women looked to the West for inspiration for proposed costuming. Mrs. L. E. Hulen suggested an outfit composed of, “a white frock, made shirt-waist style with a brilliant kerchief at the neck.” “This style,” she argued, “is becoming to the business woman or the housewife, the stout or the slender.” For men she recommended a white shirt, white suit, and ten-gallon hat accompanied by a kerchief attire indicative of the Old South. Hulen wrote, “I can think of nothing that would be more striking than to be entertained in a Southern city where everyone wore white costumes with [a] brilliant scarf advertising our part in the program.”⁴⁹ Proposed centennial costuming provides a unique perspective into the contours of Fort Worth’s identity and image. Though

⁴⁶ “Ideal Costume for Show is Offered by Gladewater Women,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 8, 1936, 8.

⁴⁷ “Split Bonnets Urged At Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 27, 1936, 12.

⁴⁸ “Sunbonnets Are Not Likely to Set Centennial Style,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 25, 1936, 1.

⁴⁹ “White Costumes Urged for Wear at Centennial” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 14, 1936, 15.

some still considered Fort Worth a city of the Old South, most women submitted designs adhering to prevailing notions of “western” reflecting Fort Worth’s contemporary identity and theme of the Frontier Centennial. Perhaps as important as contributing designs of a western flavor, Fort Worth woman emphatically expressed, through the costume designs, their interest in presenting the city’s women as modern.

The failure of local women to propose accurate pioneer costuming elicited the chastisement of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Chiding Fort Worth women, the paper exclaimed in an editorial that the official centennial outfit “should be as nearly historically correct as possible and should not be treated as caricatures.” Furthermore, it argued that the ceremonies and pageants of the celebration commemorated “real persons and they were as correctly garbed according to the times and the styles as are the Fort Worthians and Texans of today.” But the editorial also pointed to an issue which would befuddle the committee charged with adopting an official costume. “There can be no set costume for the 100 years of progress,” the editorial charged. “The clothing of the local citizenry,” it warned, “when the courthouse was moved from Birdville to Fort Worth wouldn’t match the styles of those who turned out to greet the first locomotive.”⁵⁰ Because the Board of Control chose a frontier theme, reflecting a decades long process of westward development, the problem of jumbling anachronistic dress, architectural styles, and symbols seemed endemic to the aim for an accurate historical commemoration of the Texas frontier. The very nature of the frontier or Old West defied its commemoration by “authentic” recreation.

⁵⁰ “On Costuming TFC,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 26, 1936, 6.

On February 27 the Women's Division organized a Suggestions Committee to act as liaison between the public and Board of Control. The committee's first order of business included deliberations regarding the official costuming of the Frontier Centennial.⁵¹ After evaluating the many suggestions and conducting hundreds of interviews with Fort Worth women, the committee opted to present no official costume to the Board of Control for consideration. "We are not going to say to the women of Fort Worth," they told the press, "here is something you're going to wear." The committee did, however, recommend Frontier Centennial hostesses adopt costumes for specific exhibits and urged the use of Texas cotton in any centennial dress. Though the committee's decision might have been based on the problems of naming an accurate costume for an ambiguous Texas frontier period, it seems their decision stemmed from concerns relating to maintain Fort Worth's image as a modern city. "There is no use in pretending," stated Mrs. Edwin Phillips, chairman of the Women's Division's Planning Committee, "that what the women of 1836 wore is the choice of the women today."⁵²

In the midst of the debate over women's dress, the committees organized under the Women's Division began in earnest developing plans for the Frontier Centennial. The surge of women volunteering to aid quickly overshadowed the men's centennial activities. Commenting on the women's efforts, an editorial in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* claimed the women's "enthusiastic support . . . introduced sufficient initiative to give the movement a distinct impetus." "The women," the editorial noted, "are setting the pace for public reception of the project. The men's groups should catch the cadence." In fact,

⁵¹ "Women's Group To Discuss Costumes," *Fort Worth Press*, February 27, 1936, 6.

⁵² "Frontier Show Dress to Vary," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 29, 1936, 9.

outside the activities of a few men, such as William Monnig or T. J. Harrell, who chaired the Board of Control and the Planning Committee respectively, little is known of the efforts of the two-hundred-plus men named to the Centennial Commission. Although Monnig, Harrell, and others spoke at local Rotary and Kiwanis clubs and churches to describe centennial plans, build enthusiasm for participation and attendance, and generate support for city bonds to finance the celebration, the editorial argued that Fort Worth women could be “a tremendous driving force . . . depended upon” for creating a “belief in the plan and determination to present it on a high plane.”⁵³ The *Fort Worth Press* also “wondered how the Control Board, composed entirely of men, could have carried on without the aid of the Women’s Division.”⁵⁴ The flood of support coming from the Fort Worth’s club women suggest female planners recognized the centennial not only as an unparalleled opportunity to continue their work cultivating local appreciation for history and culture, but also to further extend the position of women in civic affairs.

The shaping of the historical content of the centennial resided primarily with four women’s committees: the Historical Research Committee, the Museum Committee, the Fine Arts Committee, and the Planning Committee. Each developed plans intended to play a role in the centennial’s historic atmosphere and by extension the underlying message of the

⁵³ “Women and the Frontier Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 5, 1936, 6. See, “Centennial Plea Made to Rotarians by Monnig,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 18, 1936, 8; “Harrell Will Speak On Centennial Plans,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 19, 1936, 9; “Urges More Attention Be Given Stock Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 21, 1936, 3; “Group Hears Talk On Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 21, 1936, 9. For an example of rhetoric used to sell the centennial to Fort Worth citizens see, Fort Worth Frontier Centennial, *A Statement by William Monnig, Chairman of the Board of Control*, 1936, Box 3, Folder 46, Tarrant County Historical Society Records, FTWPLA.

⁵⁴ “Women Launch Mammoth Plans for Centennial; Will Set Up Museum,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 8.

celebration. Indicative of the broad heritage contained within the Texas “frontier experience,” women’s committees introduced features celebrating the frontier history of Fort Worth and West Texas including the commemoration of the Spanish and Mexican frontiers. Notwithstanding the celebration’s western orientation, the women’s committees also sought to celebrate the region’s southern history including the institution of slavery and cotton culture and Texas’s participation in the Confederacy and Reconstruction.

Chaired by Mrs. Will Lake, the Historical Research Committee began forming sub-committees for the purpose of collecting materials documenting the history of the state. Immediately the Period Research subcommittee began assembling data on the major periods of Texas history including newspaper clippings, historic correspondence, and books. For each period the subcommittee collected materials relating to politics; social life; religious life; education; economics and industry; and geography, agriculture, and race.⁵⁵ Subsequently, a subcommittee dedicated to gathering historical data on the frontier history of Tarrant County was also organized. The activities of the Historical Research Committee rested largely on the participation of external groups to help locate the relevant materials. In collecting materials pertinent to the history of Texas, the Period Research Sub-committee called for local women’s groups to “search out legends, romantic stories, written and printed documents, and souvenirs.”⁵⁶ Ultimately the Historical Research Committee

⁵⁵ “5,000 Women Expected to Aid Frontier Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 4, 1936, 9; “Name Groups for Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 9, 1936, 4; “Guide Chart for Use of Patriotic Societies Applicable to Each Period, 1819-1936,” no date, Folder “Fort Worth Frontier Centennial, Historical Research Committee—Miscellaneous—1936,” Box 2 “State and Local History,” Series II, Mary Daggett Lake Papers, FTWPLA.

⁵⁶ “Women’s Frontier Body Will Search County for History” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 6, 1936, 9.

received aid from more than a dozen women's organizations which offered to assist the committee in reaching its objectives.⁵⁷ Mrs. James E. Gardner, a member of the Period Research subcommittee and president of the National Society of New England Women, enlisted that organization to aid in the committee's efforts.⁵⁸ The Society called on the vocational department of the Charles E. Nash School to create a hand-made replica of Elias Austin's Durham, Connecticut home for display at the Frontier Centennial. Considered the "cradle of Texas history," the home witnessed the birth of Moses Austin, the father of Stephen F. Austin. To add to the accuracy of the replica, the society obtained a copy of the contents inventory of the Austin home for the creation of miniature furnishings.⁵⁹ The United States Daughters of 1812 also aided the Period Research subcommittee by compiling historical materials on the life of General E. H. Tarrant, the county's namesake.⁶⁰

The Julia Jackson Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the Frances Cooke Van Zandt Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) played

⁵⁷ Women's organizations who oversaw research for specific historical periods include: Mary Isham Keith, Six Flags, and Fort Worth chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution; Catholic Daughters; United States Daughters of 1812; United Daughters of the Confederacy; Daughters of Union Veterans; National Society of New England Women; Spanish-American War Veterans Auxiliary; and Disabled American Veterans of World War Auxiliary. See "Period Research Committee, Patriotic Organization Allotments," no date, Folder "Fort Worth Frontier Centennial, Historical Research Committee—Miscellaneous—1936, Box 2 "State and Local History," Series II, Lake Papers. Other women's organizations who aided Historical Research Committee include: Colonial Dames of America, the National Society of Colonial Dames, the United Daughters of 1812, the American Legion Auxiliary of Bothwell Kane Post, the American War Mothers, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary. See "Name Groups for Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 9, 1936, 4.

⁵⁸ "Van Zandt Home to be Resorted at Show Site," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1936, 9.

⁵⁹ "Women's Frontier Body Will Search County for History" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 6, 1936, 9; "Will Reclaim Van Zandt Home," *Fort Worth Press*, February 13, 1936, 6.

⁶⁰ "Will Reclaim Van Zandt Home," *Fort Worth Press*, February 13, 1936, 6.

particularly important and public roles aiding the Historical Research Committee. On February 12 the committee announced its intention to restore the dilapidated Van Zandt Cottage. Proposed by Margaret McLean, the head of the Women's Division, the Committee reasoned the cottage's historical significance warranted commemoration through restoration. The centennial year brought the restoration or reconstruction of numerous structures of historical significance across the state of Texas. The Women's Division offered three reasons for the cottage's restoration. First, they argued the cottage deserved restoration during the centennial year because its historic connection with the Republic of Texas. Isaac Van Zandt, the father of Major Khleber Miller Van Zandt, the builder and original owner of the cottage, served as Minister for the Republic of Texas to the United States during Texas annexation. Second, they claimed the cottage represented the oldest home in Fort Worth still on its original foundation. Finally, the Women's Division noted that Major Van Zandt's "connection" with the Confederacy of which Texas formed a part contributed to the cottage's historical value.⁶¹

The Women's Division's casual connection of Major Van Zandt and his cottage with the Confederacy represented a giant understatement. In a city with virtually no monuments to the Confederacy, the Van Zandt cottage represented one of the only physical reminders of the Confederacy.⁶² Van Zandt served the Confederacy as a second lieutenant in the "Bass

⁶¹ "Van Zandt Home to Be Restored at Show Site," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1936, 9; Dora Davenport Jones, *The History of the Julia Jackson Chapter #414, United Daughters of the Confederacy: Fort Worth, Texas, 1897-1976* (Fort Worth, Texas: Kwik-Kopy Printing Center, 1976), 70. A copy is available at the TCA.

⁶² The Julia Jackson Chapter of the UDC and Major K. M Van Zandt, himself, launched several unsuccessful campaigns to build a monument to memory of Confederate soldiers. In 1933 the Julia Jackson Chapter placed a bronze tablet in the new Fort Worth Federal Post

Grays" militia company in Marshall, Texas, and later a Major in Company D, of the Seventh Texas Infantry Regiment. After returning from the war he removed his wife, Minerva Peete, and two daughters, Mary Louise and Florence, from Marshall to Fort Worth to pursue a mercantile business. In the early 1870s the Van Zandt family moved into the cottage.⁶³ For more than forty years Octavia Pendleton, Van Zandt's third wife, was an active member of the Julia Jackson Chapter of the UDC. Her three daughters Alice, Frances Cooke, and Margaret also became devoted members. Major Van Zandt's sisters Louise Clough and Frances C. Beall also occupied original memberships in the Julia Jackson Chapter. Beall's husband served as a surgeon for the Confederacy, and Clough's husband Lieutenant Colonel Jeremiah M. Clough died during the war. Major Van Zandt himself provided financial support to the United Confederate Veterans, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and the UDC.⁶⁴ Because of the cottage's connection with the Republic of Texas and the Confederacy, the Historical Research Committee chose the Julia Jackson Chapter #141 of the UDC and the Frances Cooke Van Zandt Chapter of the DRT to jointly sponsor the restoration.⁶⁵ The Research Committee also proposed that the cottage could be used as a museum during the Frontier Centennial after which both organizations would serve as joint custodians.⁶⁶

Office. Interestingly the dedication of the marker was held on the sixty-eighth anniversary of the ending of the Civil War and commemorated the bravery of southern women during Reconstruction. See Jones, *The History of the Julia Jackson Chapter #414*, 42-51.

⁶³ Jones, *The History of the Julia Jackson Chapter #414*, 66-67.

⁶⁴ For a more detailed account of the life of K. M. Van Zandt see Khleber Miller Van Zandt, *Force Without Fanfare: The Autobiography of K. M. Van Zandt* (1968; repr., Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1995).

⁶⁵ Jones, *The History of the Julia Jackson Chapter #414*, 68, 70.

⁶⁶ "Van Zandt Home to Be Restored at Show Site," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1936, 9.

The restoration of the Van Zandt Cottage became the first in a series of suggestions proffered by the Women's Division which the Board of Control modified or rejected to conform to their evolving vision of the celebration's frontier theme. No documentary evidence remains regarding the Board of Control's deliberations over the proposed restoration of the Van Zandt Cottage. It seems likely the Board opted to support the plan due to the cottage's connection with the Republic of Texas, rather than the Confederacy. In fact, a shift in emphasis from the Confederacy to the Republic of Texas might have been requested by the Board of Control. When the Women's Division proposed the restoration project to the Board, Margaret McLean suggested that the UDC take sole charge of project.⁶⁷ The DRT became involved after the Women's Division met with the Board of Control. That the cottage sat upon the Van Zandt property purchased by Fort Worth for the centennial grounds and yet resided outside the improved boundaries for the centennial grounds might have also played a role. Because the city already owned the plot upon which the cottage stood, supporting the restoration required little financial commitment. Moreover, while the restoration of the Van Zandt cottage represented an additional historic attraction, because it stood outside the official centennial grounds its connection with the Confederacy did not detract from the Centennial's western message. In fact, members of the Board of Control might have preferred to view the cottage as an important relic of a pioneering effort to revitalize the city following the Civil War. Accordingly on June 1, the Board of Control awarded \$2,000 for the restoration of the cottage and stipulated that the

⁶⁷ "Centennial Plans Heard," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 7, 1936, 9.

Women's Division oversee the restoration rather than the UDC or DRT.⁶⁸ For the time being, the control of the site resided with the Frontier Centennial.

On February 6, the Museum Committee met for the first time to discuss the creation of exhibits for display in a museum in the frontier village. The group initially selected the major exhibit theme of "Texas Under Six Flags." The committee's objective, according Chairman Mrs. W. P. Littlejohn, would be the selection of representative items indicative of the state's frontier experience. Apparently, the committee already had received many offers to loan historic items for the museum. As a result, Littlejohn believed much of the committee's efforts would be spent selecting items for inclusion as opposed to gathering items.⁶⁹ The subcommittees established to select materials for the displays provide insight into the type of exhibits the Museum Committee planned to create. The majority of the subcommittees received assignments to collect primarily items of cultural significance. In addition to subcommittees devoted to old books and rare prints, historical documents and letters, subcommittees on furniture, dolls, old glass, china, costumes, family relics, guns, Indian relics, war relics, telephones, and pioneer Texas relics were organized. Believing that West Texas embodied the frontier experience in the state, the committee enlisted the aid of West Texas women's clubs in the collection of materials and promised that these items would be given prominence in the museum. However, Littlejohn noted that the exhibits

⁶⁸ J. B. Davis to Margaret McLean, June 2, 1936. A transcription of the letter is published in Jones, *The History of the Julia Jackson Chapter #414*, 68, 71.

⁶⁹ The subcommittee on old books called for the citizens of Fort Worth to search their attics to aid in the collection of rare books, especially on the cattle industry. See Pauline Naylor, "Attic Books Needed for Museum," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 8, 1936, Society and Clubs Section, 1, 3.

would include items from all sections of the state.⁷⁰ Although, the Museum Committee omitted the Civil War as a possible exhibit, the Confederacy would receive a spotlight in the displays relating to costumes and war relics. Though the history of Texas women did not receive its own exhibit space, it is significant that the Museum Committee celebrated the activities of women on the Texas frontier with displays devoted to dolls, frontier china, family relics, and costumes.

In addition to the exhibits proper, decorating and furnishing the recreated frontier buildings also fell under the purview of the Museum Committee. Planners of the centennial looked to the Museum Committee to provide decorations and furnishings reflecting the time period of the proposed buildings providing a sense of historical accuracy. Many of the rooms within the recreated buildings of the frontier village would provide the housing for the museum exhibits. The Museum Committee planned for rooms appointed to contain relics of the cattle industry, old china, and pioneer furnishings. Another room would contain the furnishings of a typical pioneer home.⁷¹ In addition to furnishing the reproduced buildings of the Old West, the Museum Committee also received the assignment to furnish the Van Zandt Cottage.⁷²

The efforts of the Fine Arts Committee revolved around bringing culture to the “Wild West of the Frontier Centennial Show.” In accordance with the ambiguous frontier theme their selection of material also reflected a wide interpretation of the frontier experience.

The “Plinkety-plank of the dance hall piano will have its place,” Mrs. Charles Scheuber, the

⁷⁰ “Frontier Show Group Meets,” *Fort Worth star-Telegram*, February 7, 1936, 14.

⁷¹ “Plan Museum,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 26, 1936, 6.

⁷² “Women Launch Mammoth Plans for Centennial; Will Set Up Museum,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 8.

committee chairman, noted, but so too would the symphony orchestra. The committee desired a nightly performance of a greatly augmented Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in the centennial's proposed amphitheater. After hearing the recommendation, the Women's Division concurred but supported the idea for offering one concert a week. Another proposal of the Fine Arts Committee held a much greater potential to shape the historical message of the Frontier Centennial. The committee suggested the centennial offer a nightly production of Carl Venth's opera "La Vida de la Mision" or "Life at a Mission."⁷³ Venth, a German born violinist and composer, moved to Texas in 1908 and became an influential supporter of the development of the fine arts in the state. He organized Fort Worth's Symphony Orchestra and served as its first conductor. In 1914 he accepted an appointment as dean of the school of fine arts at Texas Woman's College in Fort Worth. At the time of the Texas Centennial he was head of the music department at Westmoorland College (later known as the University of San Antonio and then Trinity University).⁷⁴

In preparation for the centennial year the central Centennial Committee sponsored many works of art to celebrate and commemorate Texas history and culture.⁷⁵ Venth composed an opera for performances during the festivities.⁷⁶ Depicting the early days of

⁷³ "Women Determined Culture Will Have Day During Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1936, 9. This article inaccurately labeled the opera "Life in a Mission."

⁷⁴ For a detailed discussion of Venth's life and contribution to the development of the fine arts in Texas see Gary Dan Gibbs, "Carl Venth (1860-1938): Texas's Master Musician His Life, His Music, His Influence" (PhD diss., University of Texas, 1990); Carl Venth, *My Memories* (San Antonio, Texas: Alamo Printing, 1939), in Box 1, Folder "Book, 'My Memories' by Carl Venth," Carl Venth Papers, FTWPLA.

⁷⁵ See Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 167-185, 207.

⁷⁶ Historians covering Venth's centennial work disagree as to whether he actually received a commission or composed the opera on his own accord. See Gibbs, "Carl Venth (1860-1938)," 226 n. 90.

Texas history, Venth wrote the opera with Texans in mind. In addition to writing the libretto, piano score, and orchestral score, Venth spent the summer of 1934 in Mexico City doing research on Spanish culture and history to imbue the tale with a sense of accuracy.⁷⁷ Set in the late eighteenth century in San Antonio's Mission San José, the opera intertwined a love story within the greater historical conflict of the Spanish and local Native Americans. Inez, a young Spanish orphan and resident of the mission, falls hopelessly in love with the commander of the mission's military guard, Rafael. Tolteja, the chief of the Lipan tribe, favors Inez, who spurns his advances. Angered, Tolteja abducts Inez and in the process kills Padre Vicente, her guardian and the mission priest. Because Inez rejected Tolteja, he prepares to offer her as a human sacrifice to the Lipan god of death. While searching for Inez, Raphael becomes separated from the military guard and is captured and bound with Inez to be burned at the stake. On the verge of death, the guard arrives and rescues Inez and Rafael. During the ensuing conflict Rafael kills Tolteja.⁷⁸

Though the opera received local and national publicity even before its performance, the Centennial Commission, apparently due to budgetary restraints, passed on producing Venth's opera during the Centennial Exposition in Dallas. A lavish production, the opera necessitated a large number of cast members and musicians. Contributing to the work's historical accuracy and difficulty of the production, its performance required the Catholic priests to deliver real chant melodies and texts. For the dance and song of the Native

⁷⁷ Venth, *My Memories*, 83-84.

⁷⁸ "Life at the Mission," Program Notes, September 28, 1959, Box 1, Folder "Program Notes, 'Life at the Mission,' by Carl Venth, 1959," Venth Papers.

Americans, Venth called for the accompaniment of native instruments in the orchestra.⁷⁹ Contemplating producing the opera at the Frontier Centennial, the Fine Arts Committee estimated a nightly production would cost \$6,000 a week. Believing nightly productions of “Life at a Mission” would never turn a profit, the Women’s Division adopted a plan for one performance every two weeks.⁸⁰ Ultimately, the Board of Control declined to produce Venth’s work opera at the Frontier Centennial.⁸¹ Surviving records do not provide insight into the Board’s deliberations regarding the opera. It seems likely the large production costs and the possibility of the opera’s inability to turn a profit played a significant role in the decision. Whatever the reasoning, by cutting the opera the Board of Control omitted the Spanish and their interactions with the Native Americans from the Texas frontier heritage further, whitening the commemorative message of the Frontier Centennial.

The Planning Committee of the Women’s Division also made suggestions regarding the design of the central attraction of the Frontier Centennial—the reproduction of a frontier township. Though Western films served as the inspiration for the recreation of a frontier settlement, reproductions of historic landscapes and structures had become a standard feature at World’s Fairs. In fact, the midways of both the Depression Era and Victorian Era world’s fairs often included both anthropological and historical curiosities embodied in genuine architectural representations. The Central Exposition in Dallas boasted a number of architectural reproductions. For example, the Texas Ranger exhibit would be housed in “a large rambling structure typical of early Texas Rangers,” and the Texas Sheriff’s

⁷⁹ Gibbs, “Carl Venth (1860-1938),” 205, 207.

⁸⁰ “Women Determined Culture Will Have Day During Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1936, 9.

⁸¹ Gibbs, “Carl Venth (1860-1938),” 205.

Association received permission to build a replica of the famed Roy Bean's saloon-courthouse of Langtry, Texas.⁸² The 1935-36 World Fair in San Diego, designed to be "an everlasting symbol of—the West," contained a recreation of a street from a typical forty-niner mining camp known as Gold Gulch. Intended to depict the "colorful towns of that period," the Gulch, an off-shoot of the exposition's midway, contained alcohol dispensing saloons and burlesque shows.⁸³ For the 1933 Century of Progress exposition in Chicago planners included a reproduction of the city's earliest settlement, Fort Dearborn.⁸⁴ Juxtaposed to the historical reproductions built along the midways in Dallas, San Diego, or Chicago, the frontier village designed for the Texas Frontier Centennial far exceeded the reproductions of the Depression Era expositions in size and scope.

Because of the frontier village represented the central entertainment attraction of the Frontier Centennial, the Board of Control carefully deliberated over its design. The composition of the physical layout of the "pleasure grounds" reflected the importance of the cattle industry to the centennial celebration. More specifically the designs of the proposed buildings were to "depict the homely architecture and life of the frontier cattle towns just as they were in the days when the Longhorn was King of the prairies."⁸⁵ Early plans also called for an open air stockade for the production of pageants and shows with frontier themes. For example, the Board of Control hoped to cast a group Native American

⁸² See "Old Ranch House for Texas Ranger Headquarters," *Centennial News* 1, no. 12 (November 23, 1935): 3; "Sheriffs of Texas Planning to Build Court Replica," *Centennial News*, 1 no. 17-A (December 28, 1935): 4.

⁸³ Bokovoy, *The Sand Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory*, 165, 210.

⁸⁴ Cheryl R. Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair: A Century of Progress* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 34.

⁸⁵ "Frontier Days To Be Revived," *Fort Worth Press*, January 11, 1936, special insert, "A Greater Fort Worth in 1936," 8.

warriors and a troop of U.S. cavalrymen for daily historical reenactments of the Great Plains military conflicts.⁸⁶ On January 24, the City Council, which oversaw the development of plans and bids for both temporary and permanent structures on the centennial grounds, called upon local architects to develop preliminary plans for proposal to the Council. For this purpose, the Council provided a general depiction of what the village should include as a guide from which architectural blue prints could be generated. Council members suggested the village should include replicas of dance halls, an “opery” house, saloons, general stores, and the main street lined with hitching posts. The main street would function as a midway of sorts containing pioneer-themed attractions. The Council also noted an Indian town or village and stockade housing the frontier days show should be situated adjacent to the main street. Admittedly the Council took its cues regarding what the Old West looked like from descriptions presented primarily in motion pictures. As such, they suggested the designs of the buildings should reflect Hollywood movie sets which they believed captured the atmosphere of the Old West. Moreover, much like movie sets representing the Old West, the construction of the frontier town should be of temporary composition—meaning composed of wood and stucco.⁸⁷

Although motion pictures and novels served as the source of the Council’s recommendations regarding the pioneer village, centennial planners desired more than superficial old-looking designs—they desired historical accuracy. According to C. L. Douglas of the *Fort Worth Press*, in reproducing a frontier village “Fort Worth intends to give its

⁸⁶ “Frontier Bonds Backed,” *Fort Worth Press*, January 18, 1936, 1-2.

⁸⁷ “Council Asks for Pioneer Village Plan,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 25, 1936, 1-2; “Show Control To Be Shared By City, Board,” *Fort Worth Press*, January 25, 1936, 1-2.

visitors a taste of the real thing—boarded shacks and all.”⁸⁸ For help, the Board of Control contacted West Texas amateur historian Judge R. C. Crane. They requested Crane recommend the “most picturesque and the wildest of pioneer West Texas towns for that will be the one we shall wish to reproduce.”⁸⁹ Crane recommended Colorado City as the “outstanding cow-town in all West Texas.”⁹⁰ Other old cow towns in West Texas under consideration for use as an architectural model included Mobeetie, Tascosa, Toyah, and Dog Town.⁹¹

Planners believed “authenticity” would play a singular role in the financial success of the Frontier Centennial. J. M. North explained to R. C. Crane, “a historically accurate reproduction will be an attraction worth the money.”⁹² Several editorials published in both the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Fort Worth Press* also championed the importance of creating historically accurate spectacles and attractions to the financial success of the celebration. The *Star-Telegram* urged centennial planners that the gates of the frontier village must generate a powerful first impression. The buildings that followed “must not dissipate that impression . . . just an exaggerated carnival effect will not fill the order.” Moreover the *Star-Telegram* warned that the attractions “must be a . . . prideful reminder in the history of Fort Worth’s civic progress.”⁹³ The *Fort Worth Press* also noted that “Fort

⁸⁸ C. L. Douglas, “Community Will Revive Memories Among Pioneers Visiting Here,” *Fort Worth Press*, January 24, 1936, 8.

⁸⁹ J. M. North, Jr. to R. C. Crane, January 14, 1936, Folder 3, Box 3, Crane Papers.

⁹⁰ R. C. Crane to J. M. North Jr., January 20, 1936, Folder 3, Box 13, Crane Papers.

⁹¹ C. L. Douglas, “Community Will Revive Memories Among Pioneers Visiting Here,” *Fort Worth Press*, January 24, 1936, 8.

⁹² J. M. North, Jr. to R. C. Crane, January 14, 1936.

⁹³ “Now for the Frontier Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 30, 1936, 6.

Worth's job is to provide the bait in the way of an authentic, well appointed exposition of frontier days that will typify the factual and legendary picture of the old Southwest."⁹⁴

Prior to the City Council's approval of a set of finalized plans for the frontier village, the Women's Division presented to a group of centennial planners, including city officials and the Board of Control, features they believed should be included on the grounds. The plan, heavily influenced by the suggestions of Fort Worth's Woman's Club and presented by Margaret McLean, included a number of features already embraced by the Board of Control including a pioneer settlement and Indian and Mexican villages. McLean also introduced a number of original ideas. Her group's plan called for a replica of the original Fort Worth complete with a detachment of soldiers from Fort Sam Houston. The fort would house Native American and Civil War relics including the collection of Cleburne businessman William J. Layland, containing an array of firearms, Civil War uniforms, and Native American artifacts. The Women's Division also suggested the grounds contain a ranch house complete with a chuck wagon and corral accompanied by cowboys playing the banjo and guitar, a miniature Spring Palace, and a "shell" to house presentations of pageants and symphony concerts.⁹⁵

The Women's Division again proposed a number of features intended to commemorate the Confederacy and the Old South. As already mentioned, the women's division pursued the restoration of the Van Zandt Cottage, a structure closely tied with the

⁹⁴ "A Big Job Ahead," *Fort Worth Press*, February 6, 1936, 4.

⁹⁵ "Centennial Plans Heard," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 7, 1936, 9. Opened in 1889 as a vehicle to advertise Fort Worth and the products of Texas, the Spring Palace an oriental-style pavilion housed exhibits from many of the surrounding counties. See Sandra L. Myres, "Fort Worth, 1870-1900," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (October 1968): 204-205.

memory of the Confederacy and a reproduction of the original Fort Worth which would exhibit relics of the Civil War and the Layland Collection which also contained artifacts from the Civil War. McLean's plans also called for the inclusion of a reconstructed plantation house accompanied by "belles and beaux of the Old South in costume." The Women's Division also suggested "spirituals sung by negroes" to add to flavor to the plantation house.⁹⁶ In contrast to the Board of Control which repeatedly rejected or limited their attempts to inject Fort Worth's southern heritage into the Texas Frontier Centennial, Fort Worth club women seemed to hold a lingering devotion to the memory of the Old South and Lost Cause, an orientation common among club women throughout Texas and the South.⁹⁷

In the week following the proposal of the Women's Division's plan for the temporary structures on the centennial grounds, D. L. Bush, a landscape consultant, and architect Joe R. Pelich, both retained by the Centennial Commission, and assistant city manager and engineer L. W. Hoelscher worked together to draft a layout for the frontier village including cost estimates.⁹⁸ Notwithstanding the input of Bush and Hoelscher, Pelich was considered the chief designer of the plans. After receiving the approval of the City Council on February 12, Hoelscher and City Manager Fairtrace laid the plans before the Board of Control.⁹⁹ The designs presented to the City Council and the Board of Control resembled a simple layout of buildings situated on the east side of the centennial grounds, adjacent to the coliseum and

⁹⁶ "Centennial Plans Heard," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 7, 1936, 9.

⁹⁷ McArthur, *Creating the New Woman*, 3.

⁹⁸ "Replica of Old Fort Worth Takes Shape on Drawing Board," *Fort Worth Press*, February 11, 1936, 1.

⁹⁹ "Centennial Board to Continue Plans Today," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1936, 1-2.

auditorium which composed the new centennial stock show facilities. They also provided some indication of the attractions contained within the centennial grounds. The buildings ran along a midway creating the shape of a triangle—each side commemorating a specific aspect of the frontier experience. Based upon the suggestion of the Women’s Division the scene which would greet centennial visitors was a gate created by two military stockades. A southward path would lead to a quadrangle of military structures representing the old Fort Worth site. Attended by cavalymen, the fort buildings would house the museum displays developed by the Women’s Division’s Museum Committee. On the south side the quadrangle would open to the Cavalry Corral and a trail leading to an Indian encampment including a series of tepees and painted Native American warriors.

The Pioneer Main Street stretched west from the south end of the Cavalry Corral. Pelich’s plans proposed to line the street with a general store, dance halls, and a building containing a “Wild West movie thriller.” The west end of the Main Street, on the suggestion of the Women’s Division, also included a trail leading to a Ranch House providing accommodations for the Frontier Centennial’s hospitality hostesses. Taking advantage of a natural slope in the terrain the plans placed an amphitheater to the south of Main Street’s west end.¹⁰⁰ Pelich called for the amphitheater to accommodate at least six-thousand persons. The amphitheater design reflected a compromise between the “shell” requested by the Women’s Division for symphony orchestra productions, and the original conception of a stockade for Wild West type shows including staged Indian attacks and stage coach robberies.

¹⁰⁰ “Council to Get Building Plans,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 12, 1936, 1-2.

The third side of the triangle layout contained a Mexican Village and moved east to west from the entrance to connect with the west end of the Main Street. Organized around a Mexican plaza, the Mexican Village included space for Mexican shops and displays of Mexican crafts. Pelich's plans called for bright serapes and Mexican dancing girls to greet centennial-goers on the west entrance of the Mexican Village.¹⁰¹ Though the designers of the centennial layout embraced several of the suggestions conveyed by the Women's Division including commemorating Fort Worth's frontier heritage with a reproduction of the original Fort Worth outpost, the plans clearly omitted any references of the Old South or the Confederacy and either erased or limited non-whites from history commemorated during the Frontier Centennial. Planners declined to celebrate the state's Spanish heritage with the production of "Life at a Mission" and reduced Texas's Mexican heritage to the sale of trinkets and dancing girls. Moreover, Fort Worth civic leaders made no room for African Americans in the city's official centennial celebration. As a result, the African American community developed plans for their own centennial celebrating "A Century of Negro Progress" in connection with the annual Juneteenth celebration.¹⁰²

With the general outline approved by the City Council and the Board of Control of the newly organized Centennial Corporation, Pelich, with the aid of Bush and Hoelscher, began preparing draft elevation sketches of the centennial structures. Desiring the appearance of accuracy, the Board of Control stipulated that the architects "consult

¹⁰¹ "Here's How Centennial Buildings are to be Arranged on Van Zandt Site," *Fort Worth Press*, February 13, 1936, 3. This article contains the proposed layout created by Pelich, Bush, and Hoelscher.

¹⁰² "Negroes will Open Own Show June 15," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 3, 1936, 2.

historical records and pictures” in the developments of the plans.¹⁰³ Within days, Pelich, Bush and Hoelscher presented the Board of Control a set of representative sketches.¹⁰⁴ Sketches published in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Fort Worth Press* provided the public with its first glimpse of the proposed recreation of a frontier town. Moreover, the accompanying article provided depictions of additional attractions it would contain. The two stockades and the reproduction of the original Fort Worth appeared to be constructed of rough-hewn timbers. The Pioneer Main Street contained a shooting gallery, a dance hall-café, a general store, a penny arcade, gambling hall, a bank, and wax museum with false facades constructed of planks typical of the Old West construction. The Mexican village composed of stucco archways, bell towers, and tiled roof tops, included a war museum, a dining room, Mexican shops, a Chinese restaurant, and chapel. The plaza itself would include shops containing native wares. In the space connecting the Mexican plaza and the old fort, the designers situated a church and accompanying graveyard.¹⁰⁵ Finally, on February 23, the City Council and Centennial Corporation approved the plans for the centennial’s temporary buildings with a guarantee they could be completed by the projected June 6 opening. With approval of the plans, the City Council also approved the sale of \$500,000 in short term bonds to finance its construction. Initially, the city only

¹⁰³ “Centennial Board to Continue Plans Today,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1936, 1-2.

¹⁰⁴ “Show Building Plans To Davis,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 15, 1936, 5.

¹⁰⁵ “How Old Fort Worth Will Live Over Again at Texas Frontier Exposition,” February 18, 1936, 3. Article contains the sketches of the historical reproductions. See also “These Replicas of Frontier Buildings Will be Scene of Colorful Centennial Pageantry,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening Edition, February 18, 1936, 4.

approved the sale of \$250,000 in bonds, but the figure more than doubled when estimates for construction increased to \$400,000.¹⁰⁶

More than a source for the construction of an “authentic” frontier village, Fort Worth centennial planners looked to West Texas history as the source on which to base the celebration. Within days of the Board of Control’s organization, board member J. M. North Jr. fired off a letter to West Texas historian R. C. Crane. North noted that though the plans were still in the early stage and the “ideas of the organization somewhat nebulous” Fort Worth centennial planners “want to make the central theme pioneer and, along with it, to depict the development of the ranch country, of livestock, and of West Texas.” North hoped Crane might “outline a few ideas of the possibilities latent in such a celebration.”¹⁰⁷ Looking to West Texas as a latent source for the Frontier Centennial reflected Fort Worth’s growing reliance on its historic links with that region, particularly the cattle industry, as the basis of its western memory and identity. Without the cattle drives which linked the city with the storied frontier history of West Texas, Fort Worth had little to distinguish itself from Dallas or the South. Ultimately, Fort Worth depended upon the participation and support of West Texas to lend historical credibility, a major component of the celebration’s appeal, to the Frontier Centennial’s commemoration of the Texas frontier.

By commemorating the cattle industry and the Old West as experienced in West Texas, Frontier Centennial planners also hoped to appeal to West Texans. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the marginalization of the history and industry of the western half of

¹⁰⁶ “West Texas to Create Exhibit,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 23, 1936, 1-2; “Half Million Frontier Show Fund Sought,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 26, 1936, 1.

¹⁰⁷ J. M. North Jr. to R. C. Crane, January 7, 1936, Crane Papers.

the state in the planning of the state centennial alienated West Texans. In their effort to claim more recognition in the state's centennial planning boards some West Texans turned to Fort Worth boosters such as Amon Carter for help. Though West Texans did not consider Fort Worth as a traditional part of West Texas, its emphasis on commemorating West Texas led some to include the Frontier Centennial among the celebrations hosted by other West Texas towns, many of which also celebrated the region's pioneer and western heritage.¹⁰⁸ For example, Mrs. Hulen R. Carroll, a member of the Texas Centennial Commission's press division, proclaimed Fort Worth's celebration the crowning jewel among the thirty-seven other centennial celebrations planned in West Texas.¹⁰⁹ Not surprisingly Amon Carter's *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* enthusiastically embraced Carroll's appraisal of the West Texas celebrations and her inclusion of Fort Worth. An editorial exclaimed, "Fort Worth is happy to be a participant in the West Texas enthusiasm over the Centennial."¹¹⁰

As Fort Worth's centennial plans moved forward, officials worked to include West Texans. That the Board of Control sought out West Texas historian R. C. Crane is a good example of this effort. The Women's Division also supported the effort to cultivate West Texas participation in the planning of the Frontier Centennial. In their search for the official centennial costumes members of the Women's Division sought designs from women living in West Texas cities. Working to assemble pioneer artifacts for display, the Museum Committee called on women's clubs throughout West Texas as well as individual women in

¹⁰⁸ "Expos in Texas to Emphasize Opportunities," *Fort Worth Press*, January 31, 1936, 19.

¹⁰⁹ For example see "West Texas to 'Steal Show,'" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 15, 1936, 11.

¹¹⁰ "Texas Frontier Centennial," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, January 16, 1936, 6.

the region to collect and submit materials.¹¹¹ The Women’s Division also recruited West Texans in its grassroots advertising campaign. In early March the Women’s Division organized a West Texas All-States Centennial Club. Calling for all first-generation Texans residing in West Texas and Fort Worth to join its efforts, the club began an expansive letter-writing campaign to invite friends and relatives from their home states to attend the Frontier Centennial.¹¹²

In addition to inviting West Texans to contribute to the planning for the Frontier Centennial, Fort Worth planners also looked to its western hinterlands for revenue—paying customers—for its celebration. As the opening dates of Fort Worth’s centennial venues approached and the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show loomed, various Fort Worth groups sponsored booster tours to travel to West Texas and extended a personal invitation to the festivities. Initiated by the Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Roundup Club, the first of these tours carried approximately one-hundred club members for a daylong tour of West Texas towns including stops at a dozen communities.¹¹³ Later, the Fort Worth Advertising Club joined with the Retail Merchants Credit Association to sponsor a two-day booster excursion through West Texas to promote West Texas attendance of Fort Worth stock show. About seventy boosters stopped at a half-dozen West Texas communities while in route to San Angelo. Arriving at their destination, the trippers attended Fort Worth Day of San Angelo’s Fat Stock Show and rodeo where a party was

¹¹¹ “Plan Museum,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 26, 1936, 6.

¹¹² “Frontier Show Clubs Planned,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1936, 3; “Frontier Show Clubs Planned,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1936, 3; “Back Plan for W. Texas All States Centennial Club,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 8, 1936, 8.

¹¹³ “Tourists Will Invite West Texans to Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1936, 9.

thrown in their honor.¹¹⁴ With West Texas specifically in mind, a group of Fort Worth businessmen also urged the City Council to construct a permanent merchants and manufacturers building on the centennial grounds with floor space for retail and wholesale exhibitions during and after the celebration. Reasoning that West Texas exhibitors would be interested in renting the space, local merchants J. H. Brillhart and Leon Gross argued that the “building is necessary to keep the good will of West Texas.”¹¹⁵

The civic leadership in West Texas also played an important role in boosting Fort Worth’s centennial celebration in the region. In addition to promoting the celebration, West Texas officials attempted to subdue any lingering negative sentiment regarding the exorbitant funds initially granted to Fort Worth for their celebration by the state. D. A. Bandeen, the manager of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, argued that allotments granted to Fort Worth were appropriate because Fort Worth planned to celebrate a century of progress in the livestock industry and labeled the concept as a “splendid idea.”¹¹⁶ A member of the State Pension Board, H. T. T. Kimbro of Lubbock, urged West Texans to plan a visit to Fort Worth claiming they “will appreciate the exposition.” He also noted that “Fort Worth certainly is the proper place for this exhibition, for it is not only the gateway, but the big brother of the West.”¹¹⁷ Such boosterism not only helped generate goodwill between Fort Worth and West Texas but also helped stimulate interest and participation in the

¹¹⁴ “Booster Trip Schedule To West Texas Is Set,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 6, 1936, 13; “70 Show Trippers Are Off Today to Invite Texas,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 9, 1936, 12.

¹¹⁵ “Group Plans Centennial Structure,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1936, 9.

¹¹⁶ “Bandeen Praises Plans for Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 29, 1936, 2.

¹¹⁷ Byron C. Utecht, “Show Praised by Officials,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1936, 1-2.

celebration. Early reports indicated that 1936 would represent a record year for West Texas involvement in the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, the mid-March prequel to Fort Worth's centennial celebration.¹¹⁸

Though Fort Worth courted and received the support of many West Texans, including several important civic leaders within the region, official support from the region came through the West Texas Chamber of Commerce which viewed the Frontier Centennial as an opportunity to promote the western region of the state. Despite hard feelings in West Texas based upon a prevailing notion that state centennial officials dismissed the region as historically insignificant in comparison with the East, West Texas began plans to participate in the state's Central Exposition in Dallas by contributing poster exhibits for display on the centennial grounds. Viewed as an opportunity to advertise the products of the region to the millions of centennial-goers, each of the ten districts represented by the West Texas Chamber of Commerce received a space measuring eight by thirty six feet with a total retail value \$36,000. Each town within the ten districts received room to feature a product grown or produced in the area.¹¹⁹ By mid-February, however, the executive committee of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce began deliberations over the possibility of placing the exhibits at the Fort Worth celebration.¹²⁰ On February 22, D. A. Bandeen, the general manager of the chamber, announced the executive committee's intention to retool the displays of

¹¹⁸ "West Texas Booms Livestock Show," *Fort Worth Press*, January 7, 1936, 7.

¹¹⁹ Minutes of Executive Board Meeting West Texas Chamber of Commerce, February 21, 1936, 2, Box 17, "West Texas Chamber of Commerce, Internal Affairs," West Texas Chamber of Commerce Records, 1918-1968, SWC. See also "Cotton to be Main Feature," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 16, 1936, 1-2; "Area Plans for Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 24, 1936, 2.

¹²⁰ "W.T.C.C. to Talk," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 21, 1936, 19.

nearly two-hundred West Texas towns for exhibition at Fort Worth rather than Dallas. The chamber's Exhibit Committee received instructions to act as liaison between the executive committee and Fort Worth's centennial Board of Control. The chamber did not plan to abandon the Central Centennial Exposition all together but intended to contribute a simple display emphasizing the region's agricultural significance similar to those of East and South Texas.¹²¹ Contrary to the exhibits developed for Dallas, the chamber planned for the creation of permanent "all-resource" exhibits to be maintained in Fort Worth following the conclusion of the centennial year.¹²² The placement of a permanent West Texas exhibit on the centennial grounds seemed particularly opportune as Camp Bowie Boulevard, the centennial ground's frontage road, converged with Highway 1, the main route into West Texas. Thus, Fort Worth would again become a symbolic gateway to West Texas.¹²³

Officials in both Fort Worth and West Texas lauded the plans. Ray H. Nichols, chamber president, noted that 135 cities already pledged support for the move. The prospect of developing a permanent exhibit in Fort Worth, he claimed, "offers West Texas the greatest opportunity in its history to tell the world about its progressiveness, its livestock and about its people." Of course, executive committee member Amon Carter and Fort Worth Mayor Van Zandt Jarvis, who may have been behind shifting the West Texas exhibits to Fort Worth, promised support for the exhibit.¹²⁴ A few days later, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* pledged unqualified support for a permanent exhibit depicting the "partnership" as the culmination of a century of progress which "has linked Fort Worth

¹²¹ "West Texas Will Have Exhibit Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 22, 1936, 9.

¹²² "Will Confer on WTCC Exhibit," *Fort Worth Press*, February 25, 1936, 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ "West Texans Plan Exhibit," *Fort Worth Press*, February 22, 1936, 2.

more closely to the West Texas of which it was an early frontier point.” “The Texas Frontier Centennial,” the editorial concluded, “could have no greater impetus than the cooperation of 195 West Texas communities.”¹²⁵ By March 3, seven-hundred committeemen had been appointed by 135 West Texas towns to begin preparations for the Frontier Centennial exhibits. The West Texas Chamber of Commerce vowed to invest \$66,000 in the development of the displays. Like the exhibits initially prepared for Dallas, display space would be divided between the ten districts represented by the West Texas Chamber of Commerce.¹²⁶

The planning of the Texas Frontier Centennial in January and February 1936 ultimately illustrates the process by which elites used a commemorative celebration to shape collective memory, group identity, and civic image. Since the beginning of the twentieth-century, city boosters and civic leaders worked to strengthen Fort Worth’s ties with the American West and its progressive heritage. By the 1930s, the increasingly westernized Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show and the city’s livestock industry became the primary cultural links between Fort Worth and that western heritage. Given Fort Worth’s central role in the Texas livestock industry which played a singular role in shaping the state’s history, centennial planners, as discussed in chapter one, developed their plans around the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show and a corresponding commemoration of the Texas livestock industry. The initiative to expand Fort Worth’s centennial offerings resulted from the hopes held by civic leaders and boosters that such a

¹²⁵ “West Texas and Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 24, 1936, 6.

¹²⁶ “West Texas Group Named to Plan \$66,000 Frontier Show Exhibit,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 4, 1936, 10.

move would attract more fair goers from Dallas to Fort Worth thereby generating additional revenue, but also their fears that having built modern livestock facilities in Dallas, the Central Exposition officials intended to host a superior stock show. Trading on the prevailing popularity of the Texas cowboy in western literature and motion pictures, Fort Worth centennial planners announced its intention to commemorate the livestock industry and by extension the American West through the recreation of a “living, breathing” reproduction of the Old West as Americans experienced vicariously in the movies. A centennial commemoration of the Old West would, centennial planners believed, simultaneously generate more revenue than a commercial exposition and fortify Fort Worth’s identity and image as a western city. But, the event would have to offer more than a few false store and saloon fronts; planners believed that only an “authentic” recreation of the Old West would be worth the price of admission.

Fort Worth’s club women played a primary role in the process of refining the contours of the Frontier Centennial’s commemorative message. Reflecting the city’s rich tradition of club women participating in city boosterism and cultural offerings, the Centennial Commission’s Women’s Division marshaled the aid of thousands of club women. Though they led dozens of initiatives relating to centennial preparations, their contributions relating to the celebration’s historic message are most distinctive. The Board of Control embraced a nebulous Texas frontier theme in time and space, allowing the Women’s Division to explore the depths of the meaning of the Texas frontier heritage. In addition to gathering items from all the periods of Texas’s history under the six flags, they also developed historical and cultural entertainment venues touching on the state’s Spanish

heritage and Fort Worth's history as a frontier outpost. Particularly notable are suggestions to commemorate the history of Old South and Texas's part in the Confederacy. Given the Frontier Centennial's dominant western theme, such suggestions seemed to reflect the duality of Fort Worth's heritage, a duality that was readily apparent to the city's club women. As the Board of Control accepted or rejected the suggestions of the Women's Division, the nebulous "frontier" theme narrowed. Suggestions such as Carl Venth's Spanish-themed opera and Old South plantation house considered beyond the desired scope of the centennial's message were either discarded completely or minimized. Other concepts such as the reconstruction of old Fort Worth and the renovation of the Van Zandt site included Fort Worth in its commemorative message. The cleansing of the Spanish, Mexican, southern, or African American influence from the Frontier Centennial's commemorative message according to perceived civic needs stood in sharp contrast to the Board of Control's stated desire for historic accuracy.

The significance of the participation of Fort Worth's club women in the initial planning of the Frontier Centennial increases when compared with the representation of women in the world's fairs. Many believed the inclusion of a Women's Building at Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1893 brought a new era of significance for American women in spheres of social progress and culture. During the fair the Board of Lady Managers, who managed the Women's Building, played an influential role in the ways women would experience the exposition. The lack of offerings at subsequent world's fairs devoted to the aspirations of women seemed to counter the notion that the Columbian Exposition actually served as a harbinger of a new era for women. Scholars analyzing the century-of-progress

expositions of the Depression Era, in particular, suggest these fairs offered women little.¹²⁷ As noted by world's fair scholar Robert Rydell these expositions "reconfirmed the status of women as consumable objects . . . to preserve dominant gender relations well into the future."¹²⁸ The activities of club women under the direction of the Women's Division in the initial planning of the Frontier Centennial runs counter to these depictions of women as sexual commodities at the century-of-progress expositions including the Texas State Centennial in Dallas.¹²⁹ Club women headed dozens of planning initiatives for the celebration including the development of the Frontier Centennial's commemorative offerings. These women also showcased the historic role of women in Texas through the development of the celebrations museum offerings. Preferring to support a modern image

¹²⁷ Tracey Jean Boisseau, "Once Again in Chicago: revisioning women as workers at the Chicago Woman's World's Fairs of 1925-1928," *Women's History Review* 18, no. 2 (April 2009): 265-266. See also Boisseau, "White Queens at the Chicago World's Fair, 1893: New Womanhood in the Service of Class, Race, and Nation," *Gender & History* 12, no. 1 (April 2000): 33-81.

¹²⁸ Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 117, 140.

¹²⁹ Kenneth B. Ragsdale's study of the Texas State Centennial does not indicate that women's clubs local or other participated in the planning of the central exposition in Dallas. See Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*. A recent article by Light T. Cummins suggests that in addition to commodified sex objects, women did make important contributions to the celebrations as artists, sculptors, and photographers. See Light Townsend Cummins, "From the Midway to the Hall of State at Fair Park: Two Competing Views of Women at the Dallas Celebration of 1936," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (January 2011): 225-251. There is some evidence that the state centennial attempted to marshal the aid of local women's clubs to help with city beautification, collecting local history, collecting Texas history books for schools, and a grass-roots advertising campaign. See Frank N. Watson to W. A. Webb, November 9, 1935, Box 159, Folder "Prom: Women's Club Participation," Texas Centennial Central Exposition in Dallas Collection, Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas. See also A Centennial Message to Women's Clubs, Written by Elithe Hamilton Beal, Dallas, Texas, Folder "Undated Speeches, Maus 13—Pages 41," Box 151, Texas Centennial Central Exposition in Dallas Collection.

of Fort Worth women, the Women's Division refused to nominate an official women's costume for the celebration despite the urging of officials.

Planning a centennial celebration commemorating the Old West turned the Board of Control to Fort Worth's hinterland. As Fort Worth embraced its western heritage during the early decades of the twentieth-century, a burgeoning common historical identity only strengthened longstanding economic ties that bound Fort Worth and West Texas.

Historically Fort Worth turned to West Texas as a source of cattle, agricultural products, and oil. Now centennial planners turned to the region as the ultimate source of its western heritage. Indeed, in the early stages of planning, the elusive search for authenticity made the Frontier Centennial as much a commemoration of West Texas as Fort Worth or the Texas cattle industry. Seeing an opportunity to increase Frontier Centennial revenue, planners sought to encourage West Texans to support and attend the event. By alienating West Texas, state centennial officials inadvertently assisted these efforts which culminated with plans to construct a permanent exhibit at the Frontier Centennial presenting the region's agricultural and commercial progress.

Despite the singular contributions of women and the desire to commemorate the Texas frontier with authentic attractions, in the coming months the direction of the celebration took a radically different course as Frontier Centennial planners searched for a vehicle to attract larger crowds. In the process the role of women in the centennial changed, the objective of historical accuracy diminished, the scope of the centennial's western appeal broadened, and the relationship of Fort Worth's celebration to Dallas was defined.

PART II
SELLING NATIONAL MYTH

CHAPTER 4

THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN: AMON CARTER, BUFFALO BILL, AND THE ARRIVAL OF BILLY ROSE

As plans for the Texas Frontier Centennial rolled forward in early March, the Fort Worth dailies reported unexpected news. They announced that famed Broadway producer and showman Billy Rose had signed on to direct Fort Worth's centennial celebration. Accompanied by photographs of Rose showing him as a smartly dressed young man with slicked-back jet-black hair, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* clamored to introduce its readers to the new director of the Frontier Centennial, describing him as the "nationally recognized 'man of the hour' among showmen because of his 'Jumbo' now running at the Hippodrome in New York" and "Broadway's No. 1 producer," who inherited the mantles of famed showmen and creators of spectacle P. T. Barnum and Florenz Ziegfeld.¹ With William Monnig, the president of the centennial's Board of Control, and John B. Davis, the show's general manager, looking on, on March 9 Rose signed the contract.² The contract obligated Rose to provide centennial amusement, develop publicity, and contract the show's concessions. Even with the opening day delayed to July 1, Rose had less than four months to make good on the hullabaloo he promised Fort Worth's city fathers and centennial planners.³

¹ "Billy Rose, Who Put New York on Edge of Seat, Signs to Stage Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 1, 14; "Work on Show Awaiting Rose" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 10, 1936, 1, 2.

² "No. 1 Showman of America Signs to Stage Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1934, 14.

³ "Billy Rose, Who Put New York on Edge of Seat, Signs to Stage Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 1, 14.

During the preceding weeks, Centennial planners apparently concluded that hosting a successful celebration necessitated hiring a “nationally recognized showman” who could take advantage of the unique opportunity they believed the state centennial represented.⁴ In his study of the Texas State Centennial Kenneth B. Ragsdale observed rightly that “What occurred during those frantic days of early March, 1936, has been partially blurred by time.”⁵ Precious few documents remain describing the path which led Fort Worth centennial planners to seek out a showman of national fame. As a result scholars addressing the Frontier Centennial have wholeheartedly embraced the myth that the primary impetus for Fort Worth’s celebration began and ended with Fort Worth’s longstanding rivalry with Dallas and that hiring Billy Rose figured prominently into Amon G. Carter’s and centennial planners’ desire to “mount a rival exposition” bent on “steal[ing] Dallas’s thunder.”⁶ To be sure, Carter often spoke of the centennial in terms of stealing the spotlight from the exposition hosted by Dallas and may have cast Fort Worth’s celebration in this light when attempting to convince Rose to accept the position of centennial director. Indeed, Rose often described his part in the Fort Worth’s celebration in competitive terms. Though rivalry makes for a better story, economic and political necessity and Carter’s entanglement of Fort Worth in a controversy over the placement of a statue of Buffalo Bill on the centennial

⁴ “Billy Rose, Who Put New York on Edge of Seat, Signs to Stage Frontier Show,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 1, 14; “Billy Rose, ‘Jumbo’ Producer, Will Present Giant Spectacle For Fort Worth’s Centennial,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 10, 1936, 4.

⁵ Kenneth B. Ragsdale, *Centennial ’36*, 210.

⁶ For examples of this interpretation see Ragsdale, *Centennial ’36*, 210-211. Stephen Nelson, “Only A Paper Moon,”: *The Theatre of Billy Rose* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985; reprint 1987), 48; Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 16; Maurice Zolotow, “The Fabulous Billy Rose,” *Collier’s*, March 8, 1947, 44.

exposition grounds in Dallas compelled Frontier Centennial planners to seek out and hire Rose.

When Fort Worth's centennial planners announced the selection of a centennial theme, they reasoned that the "color, romance and action" of the Old West reflected a useful premise upon which sufficiently alluring attractions could be created. The earliest concepts for entertainment revolved around attractions depicting the cowboy and pioneer life of early Texas history. As discussed in chapter three, the reproduction of a frontier town reflected the central attraction of the Texas Frontier Centennial.⁷ As plans for its construction materialized, entertainments accompanying the village emerged. Some of the larger attractions included a museum containing pioneer relics, a "dance hall-café," a gambling hall, and an "opery" house presenting period melodramas from the late nineteenth-century. The main streets of the pioneer and Mexican villages would also contain "attractions of a pioneer days theme" including a penny arcade and shooting gallery.⁸

More nebulous were references to historical pageants and shows. Designs for the pioneer village included a stockade, later labeled an amphitheater for the production of "wild west attractions."⁹ The Planning Committee proposed hiring a tribe of Native Americans and U.S. cavalrymen to stage a nineteenth-century plains war reenactment. By

⁷ "Centennial Livestock Exposition's Control Board Maps Program," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2.

⁸ "Council Asks For Pioneer Village Plan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 25, 1936, 1-2; "Here's How Centennial Buildings Are To Be Arranged On Van Zandt Site," *Fort Worth Press*, February 13, 1936, 3; "How Old Fort Worth Will Live Over Again At Texas Frontier Exposition," *Fort Worth Press*, February 18, 1936, 3; "J. M. North, Jr. to R. C. Crane, January 14, 1936, R. C. Crane Sr. Papers.

⁹ "Show Control To Be Shared By City, Board," *Fort Worth Press*, January 25, 1936, 1-2.

mid-February planners began exploring the possibility of stationing the Second Cavalry of the United States Army on the Centennial grounds.¹⁰ Other possible plans included reenactments of an Indian attack or robbery of a stage coach.¹¹ The Women's Division of the Centennial Commission also suggested other forms of entertainment including regular performances of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and Carl Venth's centennial opera "Life at a Mission."¹² Ultimately, the Board of Control rejected both ideas. Finally the Planning Committee also considered the possibility of hosting athletic events and garden and pet shows which had little to do with the state's frontier heritage.¹³

During January and February plans moved forward with many aspects of the centennial. The architects drafted plans for the frontier city including the amphitheater and living space for U.S. cavalrymen and Native Americans. The Women's Division's Museum and Fine Arts subcommittees gathered materials for exhibit at the Frontier Centennial. Despite the earmarking of centennial funds for "Rodeo performers, livestock owners, dance bands and crooners" the Planning Committee had yet to solidify plans regarding the shows and pageants to be staged in the amphitheater or hire a troupe for melodramatic

¹⁰ J. M. North, Jr. to George H. Dern, February 17, 1936, Box 89, Folder 6, "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

¹¹ "Frontier Show Bonds Backed," *Fort Worth Press*, January 18, 1936, 1-2; "Here's How Centennial Buildings Are To Be Arranged On Van Zandt Site," *Fort Worth Press*, February 13, 1936, 3.

¹² "Centennial Plans Heard," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, February 7, 1936, 9; "Women Determined Culture Will Have Day During Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1936, 9.

¹³ "Frontier Days to be Revived," *Fort Worth Press*, January 11, 1936, special insert, "A Greater Fort Worth in 1936," 8.

performances in the “opery” house in the pioneer village.¹⁴ Moreover, several of the Frontier Centennial’s major attractions including the horse show and rodeo would not begin until the completion of the new stock show facilities in October.

As the Dallas exposition’s June 6 opening rapidly approached Fort Worth civic leaders and city boosters became painfully aware of their promises in selling the show to the citizens of Fort Worth.¹⁵ Frontier Centennial planners reasoned that the romance and color of an Old West theme placed Fort Worth on the best footing for developing a profitable celebration. However, they also continually warned that the entertainment must be worth the price of admission. In a typical statement, T. J. Harrell, the head of the Planning Committee, told a group of south-side citizens, “Everybody who comes to Fort Worth must get his money’s worth. We’re going to see to it that it is not a hi-jacking proposition.”¹⁶ Similarly, editorials in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* warned “an exaggerated carnival effect will not fill the order” and “There must be exhibits and entertainment worth the ticket price.”¹⁷ Without worthwhile attractions, they reasoned, Fort Worth would fail to entice sufficient numbers of central centennial-goers to travel the thirty-five miles west to the Frontier Centennial.

By the end of February, after more than two months of planning, Fort Worth had figuratively moved close to a point of no return. In addition to considerable time devoted to

¹⁴ Dave Hall, “Merchant Sees Humming City,” *Fort Worth Press*, January 11, 1936, special insert “A Greater Fort Worth in 1936,” 6; “Show Board Must Speed Up Work To Pen Expo June 6,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 11, 1936, 1.

¹⁵ “Show Board Must Speed Up Work To Pen Expo June 6,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 11, 1936, 1.

¹⁶ “Group Hears Talk On Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 21, 1936, 9.

¹⁷ “Now For The Frontier Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 30, 1936, 6; “TFC’s Potential Visitors,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 7, 1936, 6.

the creation of a “frontier centennial,” several developments made the plausibility of calling off or scaling-back Fort Worth’s celebration nearly impossible. After the announcement of the centennial’s proposed theme, city fathers and centennial planners launched a campaign to convince Fort Worth’s citizenry of the economic expediency and viability of producing a western themed celebration. Planners ultimately achieved victory at the polls on January 28 when through their vote the city’s citizens essentially consented to the centennial plans by approving \$250,000 in additional bonds to finance the celebration.¹⁸ Perhaps more importantly, Fort Worth officials boasted of their city’s intention to stage a spectacular western themed celebration. Fort Worth’s centennial plans had already received acclaim by a host of state officials.¹⁹ The state had also published and distributed centennial promotional pamphlets announcing Fort Worth’s Texas Frontier Centennial as “a highlight of the Centennial year.”²⁰ No longer a matter of boosting the city’s economy or preventing a coup d’état in the removal of the center of Texas cattle industry from Fort Worth to Dallas, according to William Monnig the head of the Board of Control, “The city’s reputation is at

¹⁸ “Way Cleared For Show By Bond Victory,” *Fort Worth Press*, January 29, 1936, 1-2.

¹⁹ See “West Texas To ‘Steal Show,’” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 15, 1936, 11; “Bandeem Praises Plans for Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 29, 1936, 2; Byron C. Utecht, “Show Praised By Officials,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1936, 1-2.

²⁰ *Texas Centennial Celebrations: Centennial Year Calendar*, (Dallas, 1936), Box 4-16/117, “Texas Centennial Materials: Pamphlets and Printed Materials,” Texas Centennial Collection, TSA. Texas Centennial advertisements, including depictions of Fort Worth’s western themed celebration were published in papers throughout the nation. See “You’ll See it All in Texas,” *World Herald* (Omaha, Nebraska), May 3, 1936, 14E; “More for your Vacation Money See Texas,” *The Kansas City Star*, April 19, 1936, “This Year’s Star Vacation Attractions!” *The Seattle Sunday Times*, April 5, 1936. Copies in folder “Advertisements from Newspapers,” box 4-16/98B, “Texas Centennial Commission—Correspondence,” Texas Centennial Collection, TSA.

stake in this matter.”²¹ If the centennial planners abandoned their campaign for a frontier-themed centennial or produced a flop, city fathers believed the municipality would have been better off never to have entered the centennial game.

The stakes increased in the last days of February when Fort Worth’s Frontier Centennial made national news through its association with a controversy in Dallas over the placement of a statue of William F. Cody, the venerable plainsman and purveyor of western-themed-entertainment. The conflict began on February 22 when officials announced that a bronze replica of “The Scout,” a statue of Buffalo Bill, would grace the entrance of the new Hall of Fine Arts on the centennial grounds in Dallas.²² American artist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney sculpted the memorial for placement in Cody, Wyoming on July 4, 1924.²³ The life-size statue depicted a mounted Cody with rifle in hand in the motion of pulling the reins tight as he inspects the ground for Indian tracks.²⁴ The selection proved anathema to a number of individuals who stepped forward to issue complaints regarding the selection of the Buffalo Bill statue. Although some voiced objections on the grounds that Cody had little or no connection with Texas, many found his service as a scout for Union forces during the Civil War simply damnable.

²¹ “Board of Control Sets June 6 Opening of Frontier Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 11, 1936, 1-2.

²² Herbert De Shong, “Centennial Gets Nation-Wide Publicity On Cody Statue As Press Agent Chortles At Hoax,” *Dallas Times-Herald*, March 1, 1936, Box 60, Folder “Cody, ‘Buffalo Bill’ Statue Controversy, 1936,” Carter Papers.

²³ B. H. Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 459; “Diana Rice, “Mrs. Whitney’s Buffalo Bill,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 1922, Special Features, 87.

²⁴ “Against Narrowness, Mrs. Whitney’s Cody Rides in Dallas,” *The Art Digest*, June, 1, 1936, 19.

Not surprisingly the sectional outcry initially came from the regional and local leadership of Confederate memorial organizations. Mrs. J. C. Turner, the president of the Dallas-based Bonnie Blue Flag Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), captured the crux of the argument held by many associated with the Confederate commemorative groups. "The primary purpose of the exposition is to pay tribute to our State's history and the heroes who made it," she reasoned, "If Buffalo Bill was included we would be honoring a Union spy."²⁵ Mrs. Fred Schenkenberg, an official of Dallas-based Chapter Six of the UDC, also objected to honoring Cody due to his military service. If memorializing a frontier scout of the past was behind the selection, however, "why go outside of Texas" she asked? "We [have] our own Colonel Hayes of the Texas Rangers, Deaf Smith and Ben McCulloch." Schenkenberg wondered if those responsible for picking the statue were ignorant of Texas history. However, she noted "old-timers . . . remembered that Buffalo Bill, during the Civil War, was attached as a scout to Kansas irregulars of the Union Army, who were called 'Jayhawkers' by the Confederates."²⁶ A voice of opposition also came from Earl E. Hurt, commander of the Texas division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), who argued the selection of the Cody statue, was "unreasonable" considering Confederate generals John B. Hood and Albert Sidney Johnson had been passed over. "It's an outrage," he declared, "that the first thing a Southerner should see when he steps into the Centennial art museum must be the statue of an out-and-out Union spy. It

²⁵ "U. D. C. Called Into Session To Prevent Use Of Statue At Fair Of 'Spy' Buffalo Bill," *Dallas Morning News*, February 26, 1936, 1-2.

²⁶ "'Buffalo Bill' a Union Spy; Claims Woman, Up In Arms," *Fort Worth Press*, February 25, 1936, 2.

won't be tolerated."²⁷ Making no official statement regarding the official position of the UDC, Mrs. C. C. Cameron state president of the UDC, called for a special meeting of the Dallas-based chapters to discuss the organization's official position and the possibility of a formal protest.²⁸

Primarily interested in the statue as an important example of American sculpture, there is little evidence to suggest those responsible for assembling works for presentation at the state centennial considered the cultural significance of Whitney's statue of Cody. With a \$500,000 Museum of Fine Arts rising on the centennial grounds, the Dallas Arts Association appointed Richard Foster Howard as director of the new museum. A native of New Jersey, Howard graduated from Harvard and Yale Universities. To head the gathering of materials for the Texas Centennial Art Collections, the Dallas Art Association also hired Chicagoan Robert B. Harshe, the acclaimed director of the art exhibitions at Chicago's 1933 Century of Progress. Aided by Howard and Daniel Catton Rich, the associate director of the Chicago Art Institute, Harshe sought to assemble an expansive sampling of art including a group of works representative of Southwestern and Texas artists.²⁹ Although the Dallas Arts

²⁷ "U. D. C. Called Into Session To Prevent Use Of Statue At Fair Of 'Spy' Buffalo Bill," *Dallas Morning News*, February 26, 1936, 1-2; "Pawnee Bill may Present Centennial Wild West Show," *Fort Worth Press*, February 26, 1936, 16.

²⁸ "U. D. C. Called Into Session To Prevent Use Of Statue At Fair Of 'Spy' Buffalo Bill," *Dallas Morning News*, February 26, 1936, 1-2; "'Buffalo Bill' a Union Spy; Claims Woman, Up In Arms," *Fort Worth Press*, February 25, 1936, 2.

²⁹ "Dallas, Besides Its Texas Art, Has a New Sort of Museum Director," *The Art Digest*, June 1, 1936, 21-22. For a discussion of the Harshe's methodological approach to assembling the collection see, "Dallas Exhibit Reveals World's Art and Significance of Southwest," *The Art*

Association and the museum operated under the Dallas Park Board which offered its cooperation with Dallas centennial officials, it appears as though Howard and Harshe performed their duties with little oversight, if any.³⁰ In the wake of the objections issued by the Confederate groups, President of the Dallas Art Association Arthur Kramer explained, "If we tried to interfere with him he would quit." Hoping to mollify the detractors he continued, "He's not interested in Buffalo Bill as a hero. All he is thinking about is whether it is a work of art."³¹ Neither Harshe, Howard, nor Kramer ever offered a public justification for the selection of the statue. Nevertheless, it was an important piece of American art. The statue not only represented perhaps the high point in the career of Whitney, an important American sculptor, but the statue itself measuring twelve feet high and weighing three tons constituted the largest statue ever sculpted by a woman.³²

For the Confederates the quality of the art, in the case of Buffalo Bill, was irrelevant. They appeared much more concerned with the subject of the sculpture and the prominence of its display. The negative perceptions of Cody in the region stemmed from the biographical works in circulation at the time of the Centennial. These books often told sensational tales regarding Cody's exploits, including his service for the Union Army. Although Cody provided little detail of his efforts for the North, these early biographies often devolved into spy stories typical of a dime-novel and likely exaggerating his military

Digest, June 1, 1936, 9-13; "Art of Texas Presents an Epitome of Aesthetics of Modern Age," *The Art Digest*, June 1, 1936, 14-15, 20.

³⁰ "'Buffalo Bill' a Union Spy; Claims Woman, Up In Arms," *Fort Worth Press*, February 25, 1936, 2.

³¹ "U. D. C. Called Into Session To Prevent Use Of Statue At Fair Of 'Spy' Buffalo Bill," *Dallas Morning News*, February 26, 1936, 1-2.

³² Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*, 448, 451, 459.

contribution.³³ To be sure, Cody did enlist with the Seventh Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, sometimes known as the “Jayhawkers,” in February 1864, and served for more than a year and a half in a regiment under Colonel Thomas P. Herrick. The only skirmish of note, however, in which Cody participated, was the Battle of Tupelo in July 1864. During this minor conflict the Seventh Kansas under Major General Andrew J. Smith aided Union forces in a victory over the Confederates lead by Nathan Bedford Forrest. The Seventh Kansas sustained only two deaths during the fighting. Rather than risking life and limb in scouting missions of vital importance to the northern cause, Cody’s biographer Don Russell speculated that “Private Cody spent most of his time in the ranks of Company H.”³⁴

Nevertheless, several biographies, including one authored by Cody’s sister published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contained apocryphal stories in which his service as a scout greatly aided the Union victory. These accounts portray Confederates as trusting naves who are easily fooled by Cody. In one instance, after gaining entry to a Confederate camp by adopting southern colloquialisms, Cody says to himself, “I have played the part. The combination of ‘Yank’ and ‘I reckon’ ought to establish me as a promising candidate for Confederate honors.” In another scene Cody is taken into the confidence of General Forrest after defeating the General in a “duel of wits” over Cody’s identity.³⁵ In a third example, describing the scene when Cody dons a Confederate uniform in preparation

³³ Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 65.

³⁴ For a detailed account of Cody’s service see, Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, 55-72, (quotation on 65).

³⁵ Helen Cody Wetmore, *Last of the Great Scouts* (Chicago and Duluth, Duluth Press, 1899), 112. In a variation of this story Cody deceives Confederate General Braxton Bragg. See Frank C. Cooper, *Stirring Lives of Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill* (New York, 1912), 44-46.

for his mission General Smith asks “Going to change your colors, eh?” Cody responded, “Yes, for the time being; but not my principles.”³⁶ Members of Confederate memorial organizations would have likely chafed at Cody’s disparaging of the principles, honor, and intellect of Confederate soldiers and a prominent general. But beyond the jabs at the Confederacy and his service with the Union, the acts of telling half-truths and wearing the Confederate colors suggested that Cody lacked honor.³⁷ Celebrating such a figure through the placement of a memorial and giving him a place of honor in an exposition devoted to the celebration of the history of a southern state and former member of the Confederacy represented an act of betrayal.

Confederate groups disparaging an iconic American plainsman connected with the Texas State Centennial provided great fodder for the media, who quickly provided a national stage for the parochial complaints. Some later argued that the Centennial’s publicity committee orchestrated the entire conflict, including the media’s coverage of the controversy, to generate publicity for the centennial.³⁸ In any event, as news of the conflict spread, the media reports quickly elicited charged responses from interested parties across the nation. From Tulsa, Oklahoma, Major Gordon W. Lillie, the renowned “Pawnee Bill” and Cody’s one-time partner in the last years of his Wild West, was the first to respond to the

³⁶ Frank Winch, *Thrilling Lives of Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill* (New York, 1911), 43.

³⁷ See Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially 24-50.

³⁸ De Shong, “Centennial Gets Nation-Wide Publicity On Cody Statue As Press Agent Chortles At Hoax,” Carter Papers.

allegations of the Confederate organizations.³⁹ Although Lillie claimed he was aware of Cody's service for the North, he discounted the claims that Cody served as a spy. Reflecting on his friendship with Cody, Lillie claimed the showman never held any animosity for the South after the war's end and never experienced any hostility while touring the South with his Wild West show. The sectional complaints over the statue, Lillie warned, only served to enflame "an issue long dead."⁴⁰ Coincidentally, at the time the Confederate groups announced their objection to the Cody statue, the town of Cody, Wyoming, was in the process of celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of its founder and namesake. Several of Cody's relatives, on hand for the celebration, paused to comment on the developments in Dallas. Mary Jester Allen, a niece of Cody, praised Texas for selecting a monument which honored "a great scout and a fine American and the outstanding character in the development of the West." Mrs. H. W. Thurston, another niece attending the celebration took a more caustic tone. She dismissed the disparaging remarks made by the UDC and other Confederate groups regarding Cody's service for the Union, noting that he was simply fulfilling his duty. Such comments, she noted, were "so small and trivial in comparison with his great contribution to the West that it is not worth comment or consideration."⁴¹

³⁹ Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 152-156. For more on Pawnee Bill see Glenn Shirley, *Pawnee Bill: A Biography of Major Gordon W. Lillie* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1958).

⁴⁰ "Pawnee Bill May Present Centennial Wild West Show," *Fort Worth Press*, February 26, 1936, 16.

⁴¹ "Cody's Relatives Reply to Criticism on Statue," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 27, 1936, 1-2.

Stepping into the media fray, renowned American sculptor Gutzon Borglum publicly reduced Cody to a historic dude rider unworthy of memorialization and denounced the sculpture as uninspired. In the midst of chiseling the monolithic figures on Mount Rushmore, Borglum paused to voice his objection to Harshe's selection. Since 1925 Borglum had maintained a studio in San Antonio to sculpt a monument for the Texas cattle industry commissioned by the Trail Drivers Association. While in Texas, Borglum immersed himself in Texas history and became involved in a number of Texas projects and served on a number of Texas state civic committees including acting as an unofficial advisor to the centennial. In preparation for the centennial, Borglum traveled to nearly every major Texas city to suggest memorials for centennial commemoration. Unable to generate support for his suggestions, Borglum grew resentful of centennial officials and became an outspoken critic of the state's process of memorialization.⁴² Borglum questioned the value of the Cody sculpture as a piece of art. He argued, "the statue is mediocre. . . . It is insincere and no work can be great unless the element of sincerity is the basis of its conception and carried out in technical treatment." Moreover, he took exception to the subject. Arguing that he was not worthy of adoration, Borglum claimed Cody "was the forerunner of the circus rodeo" and did not reflect the sturdy and self-reliant pioneers of Texas stock.⁴³ That Borglum recently sculpted a bust of Cody's former partner Gordon Lillie seem to suggest that Borglum's falling-out

⁴² Robin Borglum Carter, *Gutzon Borglum: His Life and Work* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1998), 79-82. Less than a month after he announced his objections to the Buffalo Bill statue, Borglum also rejected William Zoarch's proposal for a bare breasted statue commemorating Texas pioneer women as "a rotten piece of art." Borglum quoted in Fletcher Lane, "Democratic Art," Letters from Readers, *Dallas Morning News*, April 17, 1936, Section 2, 8.

⁴³ "Cody Dude Rider of His Day, Says Gutzon Borglum," *Dallas Morning News*, February 28, 1936, 6.

with the officials of the Texas State Centennial is likely the source of his acrid comments regarding Cody and his statue.⁴⁴

Frontier Centennial planners could not have devised an opportunity more suitable for publicizing its celebration—a sectional conflict engulfing the Central Exposition in Dallas capturing the attention of the national media over an iconic western plainsman of unparalleled symbolic importance to the meaning of the frontier and a creator of “West” in his own right. As Amon G. Carter observed the contest over the statue and the clamoring of the media to cover new developments, he perceived a golden opportunity to publicize Fort Worth’s burgeoning centennial offering and simultaneously bolster Fort Worth’s image as a progressive and modern city with roots deeply planted in western sod. On February 26 Carter sent a telegram to Walter Holbrook, a member of the Publicity Department for the Texas Central Centennial, feigning to extend an amiable hand of support to Dallas. With the appearance of affability, he wrote, “I am surprised to note that Dallas, where everything usually proceeds so harmoniously, is involved in some sort of controversy over the proposal to erect a replica of Mrs. Whitney’s famous statue of W. F. Cody.” “While I have not been given credit in the past for lying awake nights trying to help Dallas,” he conceded, “at the same time the Centennial is an all-state endeavor and one so big and beneficial that like every other Texan I am interested in its success and willing to contribute everything possible

⁴⁴ Willadene Price, *Gutzon Borglum: Artist and Patriot* (1961; repr., Chicago, New York, San Francisco: Rand McNally, 1962), 166.

to that end.” Carter then proffered a solution making headlines across the nation: “If Dallas doesn’t want a statue of Buffalo Bill Fort Worth certainly does.”⁴⁵

Prompted to “volunteer this suggestion” in the interest of aiding in the success of the state centennial, Carter claimed Fort Worth did not desire to become embroiled in the controversy surrounding the Cody statue. His actions, however, following the authorship of the telegram suggest the contrary.⁴⁶ To guarantee his commentary on the statue made headlines, Carter shamelessly called upon a network of associations and friendships he established during years of business in Fort Worth. He sent a copy of his telegram to Holbrook to nearly 250 individuals throughout the nation. The roll of recipients read like a 1930s Who’s Who directory of businessmen, politicians, and media moguls. A host of executives in the oil, automobile, airline, railroad, and finance industries received the telegram, in addition to numerous state and federal politicians including the secretaries of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vice President John N. Garner, a number of New Deal administrators, and congressmen. However, to ensure widespread media coverage, Carter also sent the telegram to dozens of newspaper executives, editors, and columnists throughout the nation including a number of managers with radio and motion picture companies.⁴⁷

More important than Carter’s proposal, the contents of the widely distributed telegram illustrate his intent to publicize the Old West theme of the Texas Frontier

⁴⁵ Amon G. Carter to Walter Holbrook, February 26, 1936, Box 60, Folder “Cody, ‘Buffalo Bill’ Statue Controversy, 1936,” Carter Papers.

⁴⁶ Carter to Holbrook, February 26, 1936.

⁴⁷ A copy of a list of addresses to which Carter sent the telegram can be found in Box 60, Folder “Cody, ‘Buffalo Bill’ Statue Controversy, 1936,” Carter Papers.

Centennial. Here Buffalo Bill proved extremely handy. "It occurs to me that the Frontier Centennial site would be far more appropriate," Carter wrote, "for while Buffalo Bill played no part in either the history or development of Texas he was a famous Indian scout, picturesque plainsman, typifies the spirit of the old West as no other figure does, and a statue to him on the Frontier Centennial grounds would be . . . wholly in keeping with our purposes."⁴⁸ By embracing the statue of Cody, Carter, like the Confederate groups, viewed the monument in terms of its symbolic value rather than its aesthetics.

For Americans, Buffalo Bill embodied the frontier experience. Cody spent much of his life on the plains as a hunting guide and scout and took an active part in the Indian Wars on the Great Plains. Subsequently, Cody harnessed these experiences into his exhibition known as Buffalo Bill's Wild West. From 1883 to 1913, Cody toured the United States and Europe dazzling audiences with sharpshooting, trick riding, recreation of military battles, and Indian raids. Given Cody's first-hand experience on the frontier, his presence imbued his shows with credibility. Indeed, Cody employed only genuine Pony Express riders and Native Americans who fought in the Plains Indian Wars. And Cody himself dressed in the outfits he sported during battle. Programs also informed viewers of Cody's frontier accolades. In perhaps the ultimate example of blending reality and fiction, Cody reenacted his fight with the Native American warrior Yellow Hand using Yellow Hand's actual scalp as a prop during the performance.⁴⁹ Cody's refusal to label his brand of entertainment a "show" suggests his conscious desire to imbue his performances with a sense of realism. As a result the audience could not often distinguish the historical from the fictional. Thus, for many

⁴⁸ Carter to Holbrook, February 26, 1936.

⁴⁹ Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 58-61.

Americans, Cody's depictions circumscribed their understanding of the meaning and experience of the frontier.

The potency of Cody's frontier narrative also resided in his ability to draw upon prevailing symbols and myths widely accepted among Americans regarding the frontier. Using props such as the rifle and the stage coach, Cody exploited a frontier mythology which cast westward expansion as a process in which the untamed and uncivilized West was subdued and civilized.⁵⁰ Cody's narrative hinged on a central facet of the frontier mythology—the characterization of Native Americans as brutal and aggressive. The theme of taming the uncivilized was ritualized through repeated depictions of the subjugation of marauding Native Americans. Performances always cast Native Americans as the aggressors who attacked innocent but heroic whites on stage coaches or prairie schooners.⁵¹ Ultimately, Cody's characterization of westward expansion intentionally promoted an image of American progress. The frontier, his show suggested, advanced a sequence of national and material growth.⁵² As a result Buffalo Bill became the icon of the frontier, the West, and nationalism and progress.

Although Fort Worth's centennial planners looked to Hollywood for conceptualizing the Frontier Centennial, Buffalo Bill, though unnamed, represented a fundamental influence. The characterization of possible entertainment and shows, including the reproduction of Indian raids on the Plains and stage coaches, smacked of regular features presented in Buffalo Bill's Wild West. More than drawing upon Buffalo Bill's Wild West as a

⁵⁰ See White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," 7-9, 11.

⁵¹ White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," 27-39.

⁵² Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 121.

model for Fort Worth's centennial entertainment, Carter used the statue controversy as another means to attach Fort Worth to the larger narratives of progress and nationalism associated with the development of the greater American frontier described by Buffalo Bill. For Carter, Dallas's seeming rejection of the statue highlighted the fundamental difference between Fort Worth and Dallas. In the telegram Carter noted, "I fear a hardy old plainsman such as [Cody] might not feel at home in the city atmosphere of Dallas and that if he could have a voice in the location of a statue he would select a place where he would feel at home and want an atmosphere in keeping with the period in which he lived and in which he played such a heroic part."⁵³ Because of what Cody represented, Carter's intermediation was more than a mere offer to take the statue, but a statement that Fort Worth was West and therefore progressive and Dallas was not.

The response to the telegram likely exceeded Carter's expectations. On February 27, the day after he sent out the telegram, reports of Carter's commentary on the statue appeared in more than a dozen newspapers throughout the state with more the following day. Most news outlets based their reports on coverage provided through the wire services such as the Associated Press or the International News Service.⁵⁴ In at least one case,

⁵³ Carter to Holbrook, February 26, 1936.

⁵⁴ See "Cody Statue Used As Frontispiece At Hall Opposed," *Dallas Morning News*, February 27, 1936, 3; "Buffalo Bill Can Make Home Here," *Fort Worth Press*, February 27, 1936, 7; "The Buffalo Bill Controversy," *Galveston News*, February 28, 1936 and "Cody Statue Should Be Placed Inside Centennial Museum and Not As Frontispiece, U.D.C. Groups Say," *Dallas Journal*, February 28, 1936, copies contained in Box 60, Folder "Cody, 'Buffalo Bill' Statue Controversy, 1936," Carter Papers. Texas papers including reports by the Associated Press, United Press International, or International News Service on February 27 or 28, 1936 include: the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, the *Longview Daily News*, the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, the *Gonzales Inquirer*, the *Express* (San Antonio), the *Monitor* (McAllen), the *Wichita Falls Record News*, the *Amarillo Daily News*, the *Tyler Telegraph*, the *Sweetwater Reporter*, and

Carter's proposal represented the first reporting by a Texas city on the Buffalo Bill statue controversy.⁵⁵ Although Carter received only a few official responses from politicians acknowledging their receipt of the telegram, his proposition elicited responses from several officials from the Confederate groups.⁵⁶ Finessing her initial statement Mrs. J. C. Turner, chapter president of the Bonnie Blue Flag Dallas-based chapter of the UDC, argued that her group did not oppose the inclusion of the statue among the works of art, "but [were] protesting its being given such a prominent position as the frontispiece." Because Cody was a "Union Spy," Turner added the UDC "[has] considerable feeling about his statue being the first one that a person will see upon approaching the art museum."⁵⁷ Perhaps believing the removal of the statue an unachievable goal, the joint meeting of the Dallas chapters of the UDC would ultimately produce a resolution simply asking for a relocation of the statue to the interior of the Hall of Fine Arts.⁵⁸ Still, unwilling to concede any space for Cody's statue in the Centennial's art exhibit, Earl E. Hurt, commander of the Texas Division of the SCV, declared, "Amon Carter and Fort Worth could have the statue of Buffalo Bill." Detecting the condescension in Hurt's remark, Carter retorted sarcastically that, "it was the first time

the *Cleburne Times-Review*. Copies contained in Box 60, Folder "Cody, 'Buffalo Bill' Statue Controversy, 1936," Carter Papers.

⁵⁵ See "Buffalo Bill Wouldn't Like City Atmosphere In Dallas, Says Carter," *Amarillo Daily News*, February 27, 1936, 1, 11.

⁵⁶ Carter received written responses from offices of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Texas Senators Tom Connally and Morris Sheppard, and Executive Assistant of the National Emergency Council, Eugene S. Leggett. See Box 60, Folder, "Cody, 'Buffalo Bill' Statue Controversy, 1936," Carter Papers.

⁵⁷ "Cody Statue Used As Frontispiece At Hall Opposed," *Dallas Morning News*, February 27, 1936, 3.

⁵⁸ "Statue Is Wanted In Arts Exhibit," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 29, 1936, 2. See also "'Cody Statue Should Be Placed Inside Centennial Museum and Not As Frontispiece, U.D.C. Groups Say," *Dallas Journal*, February 28, 1936, Box 60, Folder "Cody, 'Buffalo Bill' Statue Controversy, 1936," Carter Papers.

Dallas had ever offered him anything.”⁵⁹ Unlike Dallas, Carter’s proposal apparently did not elicit any responses from Fort Worthians. Juxtaposed to the heated response from the Dallas-based Confederate groups, those in Fort Worth, specifically the Robert E. Lee Camp of the UCV, appeared more reticent to join the detractors and did not make a statement which might appear at odds with the city’s western identity and theme of the centennial celebration.⁶⁰

Given that Fort Worth still lacked any tangible western-themed “entertainment,” Carter’s telegram reflected a calculated gamble. On one hand, the telegram provided national exposure for the city and its centennial celebration. On the other, with such wide and sweeping publicity, now any failure to produce a celebration equal to Carter’s boastings would certainly reflect poorly on the city and its leadership—a proposition all the more unacceptable given that Dallas appeared poised to host a successful and profitable exposition. Moreover, the centennial’s June 6 opening date was only a little more than three months away. The high stakes culminating with Carter’s involvement in the Buffalo Bill statue controversy help explain the frantic actions of Carter and the Board of Control in their search for a showman to produce the centennial’s western entertainment. They also explain Carter’s apparent desire to take a more hands-on approach in the planning of the

⁵⁹ “Cody Statue Should Be Placed Inside Centennial Museum and Not As Frontispiece, U.D.C. Groups Say,” *Dallas Journal*, February 28, 1936, copy in Box 60, Folder “Cody, ‘Buffalo Bill’ Statue Controversy, 1936,” Carter Papers.

⁶⁰ See United Confederate Veterans, Robert E. Lee Camp, Collection, Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1936, United Confederate Veterans, Robert E. Lee Camp, Box 6, Folder 11, “Minutes, UCV, RE Lee Camp, 1936,” FTWPLA; “Centennial’s Row On Buffalo Bill Is Feature in Meeting Of Veterans, Sons,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 2, 1936, 5.

centennial. During the first two months of planning, Carter operated mostly behind the scenes.

As the Confederates began voicing their objections to the Cody statue, a search began for a producer with the ability to create a successful show, in short order, worthy of Carter's big-talk and with a reputation large enough to lend credibility to the production and draw crowds. Apparently, centennial officials extended an initial invitation to none other than Major Gordon Lillie, who currently operated "Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West" in Oklahoma to prepare a show for Fort Worth's exposition.⁶¹ Since 1930, the aging showman had retired to a ranch outside Pawnee, Oklahoma where he built an accurate replica of a pioneer settlement reminiscent of those established along the frontier in the nineteenth-century. Operated by former members of Lillie's show and local Native Americans, Old Town, as it was called, featured a trading post, a museum displaying Indian relics, an Indian Village, and a herd of buffalo. Although constructed for the purpose of preserving "the atmosphere of the days of the pioneer," Lillie's Old Town proved wildly successful among tourists who flocked to the ranch.⁶² With his fame and experience, Lillie possessed all the desired qualities sought by Centennial planners. For reasons unknown a contract never materialized. If anything, Lillie, though mentally alert at age 76, probably lacked the vigor he or Frontier Centennial planners believed necessary to produce in short-order a successful celebration.

⁶¹ "Pawnee Bill May Present Centennial Wild West Show," *Fort Worth Press*, February 26, 1936, 16. Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 152-156.

⁶² Shirley, *Pawnee Bill*, 227-227 (quotation on 227).

As centennial planners continued to scan the national landscape for a director, they focused their gaze upon Hollywood. The studios in California, after all, produced the very films lionizing the Texas cowboy, a fact celebration planners drew upon to sell the frontier theme to Fort Worth citizens. Moreover, from the very earliest conceptions, centennial planners hoped to recreate a functioning Old West similar to those represented on the silver screen. Carter initially brought the Frontier Centennial to the attention of a number of Hollywood moguls through his Buffalo Bill telegram including Harry Cohn, the president of Columbia Pictures; Winfield Sheehan, an independent film producer and former vice president of Fox; and Irvin S. Cobb an actor and screenplay author who hosted the 1935 Academy Awards. Carter also sent the telegram to former Fort Worth resident Rufus LeMaire, the casting director for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.⁶³ For Carter, LeMaire represented a Hollywood insider with the connections to help locate a director with the right qualifications for the job. A few days following the telegram, Carter telephoned LeMaire hoping to enlist his services. One account suggests that Carter initially offered the job to LeMaire, who turned it down promising to locate a director who fit the bill.⁶⁴ As it turned out, Carter and the centennial planners erred in their calculations to contract a Hollywood director. The abilities to produce large-scale live entertainment were more likely found on Broadway. As a result, LeMaire found the task of locating an unengaged director with the necessary qualifications a difficult one. Fortuitously, one afternoon a few days after Carter's call, as LeMaire gazed out the window of his second-floor office onto a courtyard below, he

⁶³ A copy of a list of addresses to which Carter sent the telegram can be found in Box 60, Folder "Cody, 'Buffalo Bill' Statue Controversy, 1936," Carter Papers; "Rufus LeMaire Dies; Ft. Worth Cinema Figure," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 4, 1950, 1, 4.

⁶⁴ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 17.

spied an individual who had escaped his mind—the legendary Billy Rose crossing the way. LeMaire quickly beckoned him up to his office.

Arriving in Hollywood on March 1, Rose hoped to work out a movie deal with Hollywood executives for his latest Broadway production—*Jumbo*. Though Rose had authored dozens of popular tunes, run a number of successful nightclubs, and produced a moderately successful variety show, it was Rose’s production of the acclaimed Broadway musical *Jumbo*, featuring dozens of circus acts and the participation of an elephant, which sparked LeMaire’s interest. The show opened to critical and popular acclaim and played for five-month in the historic Hippodrome in New York City.⁶⁵ More than the show’s popularity, it was Rose’s demonstrated abilities to stage successfully a gargantuan spectacle which led LeMaire to recommend him to Carter and the Frontier Centennial planners in Fort Worth.

Understanding the magnificence of the *Jumbo* production and its success begins with understanding Billy Rose, originally William S. Rosenberg (1899-1966), a lyricist, nightclub owner, and producer determined to present entertainment on such a grand scale that he would develop a reputation large enough to escape the shadow of his wife, the popular Ziegfeld comedienne Fanny Brice. Rose’s unquenchable desire for notoriety predated his marriage to Brice. In fact, as a songwriter and nightclub owner with much higher aspirations, scholars speculate that Rose pursued Brice, at least in part, as a means to gain entrance into the higher echelons of show business. Unfortunately for Rose, the marriage came with a price. He became known as Mr. Fanny Brice—often the punch line in

⁶⁵ Block, “Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus,” 183-186.

jokes contrasting Rose's short stature with the height of his wife.⁶⁶ Brice's fame, throughout Rose's ten-year marriage to the star, continually represented a yardstick by which he assessed his own celebrity. Rose believed producing his own Broadway show represented the surest way to establish an identity of his own and claim the recognition he desired.

In October 1930 Rose produced a show staged in Philadelphia starring his wife consisting of a string of unrelated acts unfortunately titled *Corned Beef and Roses*. Despite continued retooling, relocation to Broadway, and constant promotion, the show and its subsequent incarnations, *Sweet and Low* and *Crazy Quilt*, failed to turn a profit. After *Crazy Quilt*'s short two-month stint on Broadway, Rose met Ned Alvord, a press agent, who claimed *Crazy Quilt*, if properly promoted and revamped, would play to full houses across rural America. Rose, Alvord suggested, had to promote his production the way P. T. Barnum peddled his circus. In accordance with Alvord's recommendations, Rose "juice[d] up the show," hiring production director John Murray Anderson to direct, and toured the show throughout the East, South, and Midwest for a year.⁶⁷ Mentored by Alf T. Ringling, Alvord generated a scandalous ad campaign both shocking and tantalizing potential viewers.⁶⁸ Concomitant with its publicity, the show, with its blend of vaudeville acts and burlesque, generated controversy and was even banned in some cities, proved enormously successful.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 11-12.

⁶⁷ Quote from Billy Rose, *Wine, Women and Words* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 14; Maurice Zolotow, "The Fabulous Billy Rose," *Collier's*, March 1, 1947, 54. See also Barbara W. Grossman, *Funny Woman: The Life and Times of Fanny Brice* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana university Press, 1991), 192.

⁶⁸ Maurice Zolotow, "The Fabulous Billy Rose," *Collier's*, March 1, 1947, 54.

⁶⁹ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 13-20.

Rose found himself managing nightclubs again after a second attempt to produce a Broadway show ended in failure. He returned to Broadway in December 1932 with the production of *The Great Magoo*. The show closed after a week with Rose's nearly \$75,000 investment gone.⁷⁰ Following the closing of *The Great Magoo*, Rose accepted an offer from a group of New York mobsters to manage the Gallo Theater just west of Broadway. Though Rose's last experience partnering with mobsters ended badly, he found their willingness to grant him absolute autonomy, production rights, and a weekly salary of \$1,000 irresistible. Rose's penchant for notoriety led him to prominently display his name in all promotional materials for his productions—making his productions and his name inseparable. When negotiating with the mobsters, Rose demanded his name be given prominence in all the theater's promotional materials. Reimagining cabaret shows of earlier days, Rose planned to combine the successful elements of the theater and the nightclub in the production of a hedonistic extravaganza. The show, like *Crazy Quilt*, would include a seemingly endless succession of quality carnival-esque side-shows, vaudeville acts, comedy, and music featuring well-known bands and showgirls. In addition he added fine dining, alcohol, and dancing. Rose ordered the seats in the theater torn out and replaced with tiers of tables and chairs. The Casino de Paree opened on December 15, 1933 and became an instant success receiving glowing reviews from the city's critics.⁷¹ With the phenomenal success of The Casino de Paree, a second club patterned on the first titled the Billy Rose Music Hall opened in June of 1934. Promotion for the club included a giant forty-foot tall sign illuminating the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁷¹ Ibid., 22-24. See also Susan Waggoner, *Nightclub Nights: Art, Legend, and Style, 1920-1960* (New York: Rizzoli: 2001), 44-45.

name BILLY ROSE. On the first night the sign blazed high over Broadway and Fifty-Third Street, as Rose bathed in the light of his own name he reportedly overheard someone ask who was Billy Rose. A passerby responded he is the husband of Fanny Brice.⁷²

Believing he had not yet arrived, Rose began planning his next show. His interest in the capacity of carnival acts to entertain took him to Europe where he attended several indoor circuses, the Cirque d’Hiver and the Cirque Medrano, and a circus in Budapest with a dramatic narrative.⁷³ His trip to Europe provided the inspiration for *Jumbo*. Rose returned to find that the mobsters ran both clubs into the ground during his absence. Because of the intimate association of his name with both clubs, Rose found the situation intolerable and confronted the mob. With the aid of J. Edgar Hoover, Rose secured his safety after turning on the club owners. Walking away from both clubs, the unflappable Rose began work on his next production. “I felt I needed a big medium to channel all my energies,” he later recalled. “The super-spectacle, the Big Show appealed to me. I knew the life stories of Barnum, of Thompson and Dundy, of the Ringling brothers. I knew that all who had functioned in the spectacle field were dead. If I was looking for a field devoid of competition . . . that required a certain kind of desperado cockeyed showmanship, . . . this was it.”⁷⁴

Since his days as a songwriter Rose sought to surround himself with the most talented people in the business, now he drew upon those associations to present something grandiose and unprecedented. Rose pitched the idea for a musical about a circus to John

⁷² Nelson, “*Only A Paper Moon*,” 25.

⁷³ Maurice Zolotow, “The Fabulous Billy Rose,” *Collier’s*, March 1, 1947, 55; Nelson, “*Only A Paper Moon*,” 28.

⁷⁴ Quotation extracted from Maurice Zolotow, *Billy Rose of Broadway*, unpublished manuscript, 1945, published in Nelson, “*Only A Paper Moon*,” 30.

Murray Anderson who liked the concept and agreed to direct. Rose then called on former colleagues and writers Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur to develop a script. Borrowing heavily from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the team fleshed out a story about feuding circuses—the Considine Wonder Show which had fallen on hard times due to the owner's mismanagement and drinking, and the Mulligan Circus, which desired to overtake its rival. The daughter of Considine and the son of Mulligan fell in love. With a more upbeat final act than *Romeo and Juliet*, the Considine's press agent, Claudius B. Bowers, ultimately saves the Considine Wonder Show, and the adversarial parents reconcile for the spectacular circus wedding of their children.⁷⁵ MacArthur suggested naming the production after Barnum's famous elephant *Jumbo* which likely appealed to Rose's megalomania.⁷⁶ With the script nearly fleshed out, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart signed onto write the songs to accompany the narrative. Rose had worked with this team for more than a decade, and the pair contributed songs to *Corned Beef and Roses* and a revue produced for Rose's 1926 nightclub Fifth Avenue Club.⁷⁷ Finally, Rose hired Albert Johnson to design the sets, including expanding the size of the stage and a massive renovation of the old and decaying Hippodrome theater, the only theater in New York judged large enough for the production.⁷⁸

Rose needed substantial financial support for the production he intended to create. After emptying his own coffers, he turned to John "Jock" Whitney, a wealthy acquaintance, who, though not connected to Broadway, moved in its social circles. Providing an overview

⁷⁵ Block, "Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus," 175.

⁷⁶ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 31.

⁷⁷ Block, "Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus," 166.

⁷⁸ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 31-34.

of the plot, music, costuming, and sets, Rose convinced Jock and his sister Joan Payson, co-heirs of their father's railroad fortune, to underwrite the endeavor.⁷⁹ With financing in place, Rose began hiring performers. To play the role of Claudius B. Bowers, Rose cast Jimmy Durante, famed comic actor and film and radio star. Rose also booked Paul Whiteman and his nationally renowned jazz orchestra.⁸⁰

The show included all the complexities of a circus and a Broadway musical. Having hired the major actors, Rose began auditioning carnival acts. Ads went out for the show's specialty and side show acts and Rose hired a host of attractions typical of circus fare including six-foot showgirls.⁸¹ Rose also began collecting a variety of animals and placed them at Teevan's Riding Academy in Brooklyn for storage and training. The roster of animal performers included monkeys, tigers, lions, jaguars, wolves, bears, llamas, camels, horses, donkeys, reindeers, lambs, pigs, storks, and pigeons. The star of the show, a female elephant named Big Rosie came from Coney Island's Luna Park.⁸² Coordinating the various circus acts with Paul Whiteman's orchestra and the plays dialogue proved extremely difficult. The unpredictability of having live animals on stage only added to the complexity of the production. The sheer size and difficulty of the production prompted Rose's first biographer to write, "Jumbo was absolutely unprecedented in the history of Broadway and

⁷⁹ Ibid., 34-35. See also Hugh Abercrombie Anderson, *Out Without My Rubbers: The Memoirs of John Murray Anderson* (New York: Library Publishers, 1954), 146.

⁸⁰ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 36.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 31-32.

it has since had neither imitators nor competitors. No producer will ever have the nerve, the energy, the tenacity and the imagination to duplicate Rose's feat."⁸³

The complexities of the show brought continued delays of its premiere, seven times in eleven weeks—a record for a Broadway production. These delays proved costly. With a price tag of \$340,000, the production also proved the most expensive musical of the era.⁸⁴ Thanks to these delays, Richard Maney, Rose's press agent, made *Jumbo*, according to one scholar, "one of the most publicized and eagerly anticipated public events in New York of the year, if not the decade."⁸⁵ Using the delays to build anticipation, posters for *Jumbo* read: "BIGGER THAN A SHOW—BETTER THAN A CIRCUS," "Rome wasn't built in a day," and a building-sized sign graced the side of the Hippodrome which read: "SH-H-H-H! JUMBO IS IN REHEARSAL!"⁸⁶ To offset the production's soaring expenses, Rose, in an unprecedented move, serialized the production for radio. Texaco sponsored twelve thirty-minute broadcasts for \$12,000 each. Although the broadcasts brought in some much needed revenue, more importantly they promoted *Jumbo's* songs and dialogue. In the week preceding the premiere, Maney also paraded elephants draped with large advertisements for the show up and down Sixth Avenue.⁸⁷

Jumbo opened with fanfare equaling the menagerie of the production. To convince a weary public that the show would indeed premiere on the evening of November 17, 1935,

⁸³ Maurice Zolotow, "The Fabulous Billy Rose," *Collier's*, March 1, 1947, 55.

⁸⁴ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 38; Block, "'Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus,'" 167.

⁸⁵ Block, "'Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus,'" 169.

⁸⁶ Ibid.; Richard Maney, *Fanfare: The Confessions of a Press Agent* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 157.

⁸⁷ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 39. See also Block, "'Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus,'" 169.

after so many postponements, Maney distributed broadsides resembling a sworn affidavit bearing Rose's signature guaranteeing the opening date.⁸⁸ The roping-off of seventeen blocks of Sixth Avenue to make way for the opening night audience generated traffic delays required pushing back the start time by one hour. Among the mob flooding the Hippodrome on the night of *Jumbo's* premiere was a host of New York celebrities and showbiz luminaries including: Gracie Allen, Tallulah Bankhead, Irving Berlin, Ben Bernie, Fanny Brice, George Burns, Marion Davies, Jack Dempsy, the Gershwins, Helen Hays, Katharine Hepburn, the Marx Brothers, Ed Wynn, and Jimmy Walker, the mayor of New York City.⁸⁹ Scholars estimate that during its twenty-week run of 233 performances, more than a million people saw the show.⁹⁰ Despite glowing reviews and the longest run of a musical on Broadway in 1935 *Jumbo* failed to turn a profit. Whitney lost \$100,000 of his investment.⁹¹

Still, with the production of *Jumbo*, Rose finally embodied the image Maney and Alvord crafted for him—the Bantam Barnum. Drawing from the open-air traditions of P. T. Barnum and Buffalo Bill, Rose created a gargantuan exhibition which exploded the confines of traditional Broadway productions. The show's fantastic popularity only served to convince Rose that he would no longer be contented with producing the typical, no matter how successful. And Broadway did not possess a venue large enough for the spectacles he wanted to produce.⁹² Even before *Jumbo* finished its run on Broadway, Rose already began

⁸⁸ Maney, *Fanfare*, 158.

⁸⁹ Block, "Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus," 164; Maurice Zolotow, "The Fabulous Billy Rose," *Collier's*, March 1, 1947, 56.

⁹⁰ Block, "Bigger Than a Show—Better Than a Circus," 168.

⁹¹ Nelson, "Only A Paper Moon," 45.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 45-46.

hinting at a greatly expanded venue for his next production which he called “a world’s fair on wheels.”⁹³

Certainly, LeMaire knew that Frontier Centennial planners would be hard pressed to find someone with Rose’s ability to imagine and produce a giant and elaborate spectacle which drew in more than a million viewers. And considering Rose’s vocalized world’s fair aspirations, LeMaire might have believed he would be an easy sell on the opportunity to produce Fort Worth’s centennial exposition. Once in his office, LeMaire pitched Rose the idea. Apprehensively, Rose ironically told LeMaire, “It sounds like some sort of carnival proposition to me.”⁹⁴ Despite his initial misgivings, LeMaire apparently succeeded in convincing Rose to accompany him to Fort Worth to appraise the offer and discuss it with the Board of Control.⁹⁵ In the meantime, LeMaire informed Carter of his encounter with Rose. Having seen *Jumbo* while in New York, Carter, with the support of the Board of Control, completely supported LeMaire’s nomination of Rose.⁹⁶ After mulling over LeMaire’s proposal, Rose cancelled his trip to Fort Worth, apparently believing that Fort Worth did not have the time to produce such a show nor the money to do it.⁹⁷ Learning of Rose’s hesitation, Carter enlisted the aid of Rose’s friend and financier Jock Whitney hoping he might quiet Rose’s fears and prod him “to drop over to Fort Worth and give the project the once over.” Carter pitched the centennial to Whitney in terms Rose would find

⁹³ “Producer, Director Predicts Huge Centennial Crowds,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 6, 1936, 1, 8.

⁹⁴ Quotation from a March 3, 1936 letter from Billy Rose to Richard Maney quoted in Nelson, “*Only A Paper Moon*,” 48.

⁹⁵ Amon G. Carter to Jock Whitney, March 4, 1936, Box 89, Folder “Frontier Centennial,” Carter Papers.

⁹⁶ Nelson, “*Only A Paper Moon*,” 48.

⁹⁷ Carter to Whitney, March 4, 1936.

irresistible. Explaining the situation, Carter wrote, “The only thing lacking is an outstanding genius to develop and carry through the picturesque possibilities of cashing in on this great opportunity.” Playing to his desire for recognition as the world’s greatest showman, Carter wrote that Fort Worth’s Frontier Centennial would provide Rose with “the possibilities and opportunities . . . to produce a great show even excelling Jumbo.”⁹⁸

Within a day of Carter’s telegram to Whitney, Rose and LeMaire arrived in Fort Worth. Concealing the real purpose of the trip, LeMaire explained to the press that he and Rose stopped in Fort Worth on their way to New York so he could visit his sister.⁹⁹ Although the story of the negotiations between Billy Rose and the Board of Control has been rehearsed in a number of secondary works, the lack of documentation makes articulating the story with any accuracy difficult.¹⁰⁰ In these tales, Amon Carter and the other members of the Board of Control are often cast as cartoonish wildcatter Texas oil men. As the story goes, on the morning of their arrival, the Board of Control accompanied by Carter greeted Rose and LeMaire. While en route to the Van Zandt site, board members showed Rose

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Producer, Director Predicts Huge Centennial Crowds,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 6, 1936, 1, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Nelson, “*Only a Paper Moon*,” and Jones in *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana* base their discussion of Fort Worth’s hiring of Rose primarily on an unpublished biography authored by Maurice Zolotow titled *Billy Rose of Broadway*. In a four part series, Zolotow published portions of the larger work in *Collier’s*. See Zolotow, “The Fabulous Billy Rose,” *Collier’s*, February 15, 1947, 11-13, 81-84; February 22, 1947, 18-19, 83-87; March 1, 1947, 20, 54-56; March 8, 1947, 44, 52-56. Kenneth B. Ragsdale’s, *Centennial ’36*, rests upon Flemmons, *Amon: the life of Amon Carter, Sr.* The omission of references and the quoting of conversations which likely went unrecorded undermine the reliability of Zolotow’s and Flemmons’s work. Other less than credible works describing Rose’s work in Fort Worth are Polly Rose Gottlieb, *The Nine Lives of Billy Rose* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1968), 105-116, and Earl Conrad, *Billy Rose: Manhattan Primitive* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing, 1968), 105-109.

pictures of the exposition grounds developing in Dallas and explained that Dallas already garnered all the relevant corporate and industrial exhibits planning to invest \$25,000,000 in their celebration.¹⁰¹ The presentation on the progress of the state centennial in Dallas likely represented the Board of Control's way of demonstrating the great opportunity the Frontier Centennial presented with a readymade centennial audience which only had to be attracted west. It seems extremely unlikely that the Board of Control, including Amon Carter, believed or much less tried to convince Rose that Fort Worth could compete with the Dallas exposition, especially considering, as Carter explained to Rose, that Fort Worth, not counting the funding for the new stock show facilities, had garnered only \$500,000 for its celebration.

The arrival of the entourage at the future Frontier Centennial grounds which did not bear the marks of improvement of any kind further reinforced the notion that the Fort Worth centennial could not have been about revenge or competition with Dallas. Once on location, the members of the Board of Control likely described their plans to build an "authentic" pioneer village including the Indian and Mexican villages, the replica of Fort Worth which would contain a museum with relics from the history of Fort Worth and West Texas, and a stockade for the presentation of pageants and western type shows. As Rose scanned the landscape, he reportedly exclaimed "This is a wilderness, not a site." Rose further explained to the board members what they already knew: "Do you boys realize what you've got to build here? It's not only a problem of putting up exposition buildings— but you've got to build a small city. You've got no lighting facilities here, no water supply, no

¹⁰¹ Nelson, *Only A Paper Moon*, 48.

sewerage system. You've got to build all that."¹⁰² The July 1 opening date made the Board of Control's proposal all the more daunting.

Following the visit to the site, Rose enjoyed a hearty repast of Texas favorites with Carter and the Board of Control at the Fort Worth Club. At the conclusion of the meal, Rose asked for some time to organize his thoughts. Once sequestered in a private room with a typewriter, Rose went to work putting his ideas to paper. Reportedly after forty-five minutes he emerged with an outline which, with few departures, represented what would become the primary plan for the Frontier Centennial. Before he began to present his ideas, Rose allegedly paused and said, "I ought to say this. What I am laying out for your committee is pretty big and if, . . ." Unable to complete his sentence, he was interrupted by Carter who exclaimed, "Nothing is too big for the state of Texas!" These words were purportedly supported by the members of the Board of Control by a series of whoops and hollers for Texas.¹⁰³ Not as radical as the above quote suggests, Rose's proposal in many ways worked within the bounds of what the Board of Control already planned. His agenda simply reoriented the purpose of the celebration which gave direction to the buildings already designed. Although he dropped the Native American and Mexican villages, he kept the idea for creating several blocks of buildings typical of the Old West. But the recreation of a pioneer town would house concessions and a saloon/cabaret and serve to connect major hubs of entertainment. He suggested a Wild West musical, a large open-air café, and the transplantation of the entire *Jumbo* production from New York headlined by nationally recognized talent. And because Fort Worth could not boast complete indoor air-

¹⁰² Zolotow, "The Fabulous Billy Rose," *Collier's*, March 8, 1947, 44.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 44-45 (quotation on 45).

conditioning of all exhibit buildings like Dallas, Rose recommended that Fort Worth's celebration operate only in the cooler evening hours.¹⁰⁴

Rose's presentation thrilled those present. But, given the corner Carter and the Board of Control had backed themselves into with the national publicity brought by the Buffalo Bill statue controversy and the sale of bonds it seems likely they would have accepted just about anything Rose presented. The desperation of the situation also explains the group's response to Rose's financial requirements. Following his presentation, William Monnig, President of the Board of Control, reportedly asked, "What will this here shindig of yours cost?"¹⁰⁵ Without mincing words, Rose projected between one and two million dollars. Likely drawing upon his experience with producing *Jumbo*, Rose educated the Board of Control regarding the improbability of generating a return on such a large investment in a few short months. He told the Board members they should expect to lose at least half of their investment. That the celebration could not be considered a financial windfall, as they had suspected, likely dashed the hopes of most the men present. Perhaps sensing their dismay, Rose explained, "If you look at it as a venture in civic exploitation, it will pay big dividends in the long run. Some of the shows will show a profit on their dollars. . . . And if it's consolation to you . . . Dallas will be losing twenty million."¹⁰⁶ Monnig then asked what Rose expected for remuneration. Knowing the centennial planners were over a barrel, Rose asked for the now legendary sum of \$1,000 a day for one-hundred days of work. According to one source, LeMaire, who accompanied Rose out of the room while the Board of Control

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 45; Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Zolotow, "The Fabulous Billy Rose," *Collier's*, March 8, 1947, 52.

¹⁰⁶ Quotation taken from Zolotow, Billy Rose of Broadway quoted in Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 24.

considered his offer, “berate[d] him for undue greed.”¹⁰⁷ Rather than greed, it seems more plausible that Rose believed that, if accepted, the large fee would add to his reputation as a showman. Despite some apparent dissention regarding the large sums of money and the new direction of the celebration, Carter emerged with the support of the Board of Control and accepted Rose’s terms. According to one version of the tale, offering his hand to Rose, Carter said, “Pardner, you got yourself a deal.”¹⁰⁸

In his autobiography, Rose later claimed that he earned his fee the next day when he pitched a slogan, summarizing the concept he sold to the Board of Control—“Dallas for Education, Fort Worth for Entertainment.”¹⁰⁹ Though the statement, which would eventually find its way onto nearly every piece of promotional literature printed for the Frontier Centennial, made a matter-of-fact distinction between the two celebrations, Rose clearly sought to juxtapose the banality of education with the excitement of entertainment. Rose’s catchphrase represents the first in a series of promotions aimed at advertising the Fort Worth celebration at the expense of the Dallas-based exposition. Prior to Rose’s involvement in the Frontier Centennial, a cooperative spirit had largely prevailed as both cities worked together for the good of the state’s celebration. Rex L. Lent, director of public relations for the Texas Centennial, told the Fort Worth Traffic Club that “We do not consider the Fort Worth celebration as a competing attraction; on the contrary, the two celebrations are complementary.”¹¹⁰ At a meeting of the Fort Worth Advertising Club, Charles Roster, the director of publicity for the Texas Centennial, praised the Frontier Centennial noting,

¹⁰⁷ Nelson, “*Only A Paper Moon*,” 50.

¹⁰⁸ Zolotow, “The Fabulous Billy Rose,” *Collier’s*, March 8, 1947, 52.

¹⁰⁹ Rose, *Wine, Women and Words*, 18.

¹¹⁰ “Teamwork For Centennial Urged,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 4, 1936, 5.

“The average visitor will be looking for the type of frontier show” presented by the Frontier Centennial.¹¹¹ Urging unity for the betterment of all the state centennial celebration, George Dahl, technical director for the state-wide celebration, told the Fort Worth Rotary Club, “All of us have a big job to get together and look through the same knothole. It is important that we see the picture together because that is the only way that we are going to put the Centennial over.”¹¹² Fort Worth officials also spoke of the Frontier Centennial in non-competitive terms. Jack Hott, the manager of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, told the Fort Worth Traffic Club that “It will take both cities to take care of the crowds.”¹¹³ When James M. North, Jr., a member of the Planning Committee and editor of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, described the Texas Frontier Centennial to George H. Dern, the Secretary of War, he wrote, “It is not our idea to conduct the usual type of exposition or to compete in any manner with the central Centennial at Dallas.”¹¹⁴ Squashing the notion that sectional rivalries would have an adverse impact on the state centennial, *The Texas Weekly* which carefully reported on centennial developments, claimed, “Not only has [local rivalry] been completely averted, but there is already abundant evidence that the very diversity of the celebrations is promoting a spirit of all for one and one for all which is going to result in making both the Central Exposition and the other State celebrations greater successes than they would have been under a different plan.”¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ “City Is Told It Can ‘Steal Show’ At Expo,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 6, 1936, 10.

¹¹² “Frontier Show Draws Praise,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 9, 1936, 9.

¹¹³ “Teamwork For Centennial Urged,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 4, 1936, 5.

¹¹⁴ James M. North, Jr. to George H. Dern, February 17, 1936, Box 89, Folder “Frontier Centennial,” Carter Papers.

¹¹⁵ “So All Over Texas,” *The Texas Weekly*, February 22, 1936, 3.

Rose's presence however, brought an immediate and adverse impact upon the tentative spirit of cooperation which existed between Fort Worth and Dallas. Following the slogan which pitted America's hunger for entertainment with its interest in learning, Rose began running ads in show business papers such as *The Billboard* and *Variety* in mid-March calling for concessionaires interested in purchasing a concession with the Texas Frontier Centennial to contact Rose at the Sinclair Building in Fort Worth. The ad in *Variety* informed readers that Billy Rose, who had "wrapped the voluminous cloak of P. T. Barnum around his shoulders," signed on as managing director of the Frontier Centennial. "And with his cooperation," the ad noted, "Fort Worth will offer to America, not a pale carbon copy of the Chicago World's Fair, but a LIVING, BREATHING, HIGHLY EXCITING VERSION OF THE LAST FRONTIER." The ad in *The Billboard* used Rose's catchphrase, "For education go to Dallas, for entertainment, come to Fort Worth."¹¹⁶

Rose's early digs against the Dallas exhibition resulted in a heated exchange between the planning organizations of the two centennials. In the days following the appearance of the ads in *Variety* and *The Billboard*, Arthur L. Kramer, a member of the Management Committee of the Texas Centennial Central Exhibition, sent a letter to William Monnig, president of the Board of Control, regarding the content of the ads. Kramer took issue with both the implied characterization of the Dallas exposition as "a pale carbon copy of the Chicago World's Fair," and with the slogan, "For education go to Dallas, for entertainment, come to Fort Worth." Believing that centennial leaders in Fort Worth would never "seek to hurt the Dallas exposition," Kramer assumed the content of the ads had

¹¹⁶ "The City of Fort Worth," *Variety*, March 11, 1936, 38. For a copy of the ad appearing in both *The Billboard* and *Variety* see Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

simply escaped the Board of Control's attention. Notwithstanding the innocence of the error, he argued "the Dallas exposition has the right to demand that no other city in Texas refer to it either directly or by implication in any advertisement or publicity relating to a competitive attraction."¹¹⁷ Apparently Monnig shared Kramer's letter with the Board of Control. After discussing the contents of the letter, the Board of Control, Monnig wrote, believed, "you have become unduly disturbed." First, Monnig reiterated Fort Worth's continual support for the Central Exposition. "Our entire plans," he wrote, "are built around yours, in that ours largely are dependent upon the number of persons attracted to Dallas and the percentage of such we can attract to Fort Worth." Monnig also reminded Kramer of Fort Worth's good-faith effort to avoid duplicating any attractions planned for the Dallas celebration. As such, Monnig informed Kramer, the Board of Control was "somewhat surprised, after we had proceeded with the frontier theme, to have Dallas announce a rodeo, and again, after the employment of Mr. Rose, to read in the Dallas newspapers that the central exposition planned an enlargement of its entertainment features and duplication, to some extent at least, of what we had planned." Since Dallas drew first blood, Monnig and the Board of Control found Kramer's demands "somewhat impertinent." Although Monnig reserved the right for the Board of Control to publicize the Texas Frontier Centennial "in the manner best calculated, in our judgment, to achieve the desired ends" he claimed Fort Worth had "no thought of antagonizing Dallas."¹¹⁸ This exchange over ads appearing in *Variety* and *The Billboard* placed by Billy Rose in the days following his arrival

¹¹⁷ Arthur L. Kramer to William Monnig, March 19, 1936, Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

¹¹⁸ William Monning to Arthur L. Kramer, no date, Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

marked the beginning of the centennial rivalry between Fort Worth and Dallas and would ultimately come to define the celebration in the national coverage of the state centennial.¹¹⁹

Like a devil's bargain, the hiring of Rose bought Frontier Centennial planners everything they desired in terms of creating and promoting a spectacle capable of attracting centennial-goers to Fort Worth. But the recruitment of Rose ultimately cost the centennial its soul. The ideology embraced in the catchphrase "Dallas for Education, Fort Worth for Entertainment" represented a fundamental shift in the conceptualization of the celebration. Early plans called for a commemoration of the Texas cattle industry through a celebration of the Texas frontier heritage. Planners believed that historic western-style attractions could serve the purpose of both commemorating and entertaining large crowds. Uninterested in commemoration or "authenticity," Rose emphasized the importance of entertainment. He simultaneously dropped the commemoration of Fort Worth's history as a priority, while making the centennial function primarily as a promotional event to boost the City of Fort Worth. The Texas Frontier Centennial, after Rose's arrival, would become known as the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial. Although Rose readily embraced the centennial's theme and favored creating entertainment with a "strong western flavor," what would attract and entertain visitors now represented the fundamental approach.¹²⁰ To achieve the desired effect Rose would draw upon a larger western mythology in the frontier theming of Fort Worth's celebration rather local history. With the exception of making the centennial an

¹¹⁹ Louis W. Kemp to W. H. Kershaw, March 16, 1936, Box 60, Folder, "Cody, 'Buffalo Bill' Statue Controversy," 1936, Carter Papers.

¹²⁰ Quotation taken from Zolotow, Billy Rose of Broadway published in Jones in *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 24.

exclusively promotional event, as director of the Fort Worth celebration, Rose, though invoking symbolic images of the Old West, would not trifle with larger ideological questions such as the meaning of the centennial's western message. Like all of Rose's previous productions the Texas Frontier Centennial would become a production low on historical content and cultural value, but high on spectacle. As an easterner and entertainer Rose would take the Frontier Centennial in a markedly different path than initially intended by the centennial planners.

CHAPTER 5

“THE NEW TYPE OF WOMANLY BEAUTY”: MODERNITY, SEX APPEAL, AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE BATTLE FOR FORT WORTH’S SOUL

Even with a local livewire such as Amon Carter, Fort Worthians had likely never witnessed the unabashed egomania which poured from Billy Rose. Rose guaranteed the press a centennial spectacle without equal in history. He claimed the show would “make ‘Jumbo’ look like a peep show” and would be the “talk of the world.”¹ He promised to bejewel the spectacle with Hollywood royalty such as Jack Benny, Shirley Temple, Mae West, Guy Lombardo, Dick Powell and later Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.² The exposition, he claimed, “[would] be a sort of combination New York musical comedy, a circus, a rodeo and a country fair” featuring a three-ring circus, a livestock exposition, a replica of a frontier city, and a giant swimming pool containing “artificial waves.” Besides importing the entire production of *Jumbo* to Fort Worth, Rose ballyhooed two additional entertainment venues to headline the Frontier Centennial. He promised to create a lavish musical titled the Frontier Frolics. For this production he intended to build a large theater-restaurant presenting the nation’s most notable entertainers weekly.³ Second, he promised a Texas-themed “Musical Rodeo” showcasing America’s top rodeo talent. Simultaneously illustrating

¹ Joseph Mitchell, “Rose Maps an Ambitious Program,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 1-2; A. H. Montford Jr., “Billy Rose is Back More Enthusiastic Than Ever,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 14, 1936, 1-2.

² Joseph Mitchell, “Rose Maps an Ambitious Program,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 1-2; Jack Gordon, “Billy Rose Picks a Beauty, But That’s Only Beginning,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 17, 1936, 10.

³ Joseph Mitchell, “Rose Maps an Ambitious Program,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 1-2; “2 Big Spectacles Planned for Frontier Centennial,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 18, 1936, 2.

his desire to capitalize on the Frontier Centennial's western theme and demonstrating his total ignorance of Texas history, Rose speculated he would call the show "'The Fall of the Alamo,' 'The Battle of San Jacinto' or some [other] Texas [name]" featuring "two thousand Indians and one thousand cowboys." As an afterthought he coyly added ". . . and guess who wins."⁴

Still, as large as Rose's ego was, he knew Broadway caliber productions and western themed entertainment alone would not draw a substantial number of fairgoers from Dallas to Fort Worth. With the Central Exposition spending millions on new facilities and claiming the sponsorship from industrial giants such as General Motors and Sinclair Oil Company, Rose, as a showman and nightclub owner, believed only one thing could give the Frontier Centennial an edge—unabashed sexuality. Rose jumped to this conclusion almost immediately upon seeing the desolate fields of the Van Zandt Tract. Reportedly Rose brazenly explained to show officials "There's only one thing that can compete with twenty million bucks of machinery," referring to the Dallas exposition, "and that is girls—pelvic machinery. . . . We have to give them girls and more girls."⁵ Apparently, Frontier Centennial officials heartily approved of Rose's pitch for a highly sexualized celebration. After Rose suggested the celebration would only play at night and have no attractions for children, Carter reportedly joked, "In Texas the children are very precocious."⁶ When Rose

⁴ 2 Big Spectacles Planned for Frontier Centennial," *Fort Worth Press*, March 18, 1936, 2.

⁵ Quotation taken from Maurice Zolotow, *Billy Rose of Broadway*, quoted in Jan Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1996), 24. Zolotow used a similar quote in his article titled "The Fabulous Bill Rose," *Colliers*, March 8, 1947, 44.

⁶ Quotation taken from Zolotow, *Billy Rose of Broadway*, quoted in Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 24.

brandished the theme “Fort Worth for Entertainment” there was little doubt the kind of entertainment he planned to present.

As director of the Frontier Centennial, Rose redefined the role women would play during the celebration. Though the Women’s Division continued to promote centennial education, develop historical and fine art exhibits for the celebration, lead the grassroots advertising campaign, and head the city beautification movement, the coverage of local showgirl tryouts and scouting, the state-wide completion for Texas Sweetheart #1, the sexualized Frontier Centennial promotion material, and the hiring and movements of infamous fan-dancer Sally Rand muted the role occupied by local club women. In addition to a diminished prominence in Frontier Centennial media coverage, behind the scenes, Rose, who wielded autocratic control over the celebration’s staging, confined Women’s Division participation relating to the centennial grounds, to a museum. Much like the century-of-progress expositions of the Depression Era, Rose exhibited women as commodified sexual objects on display for the gratification of male audiences. And similar to the experience of other city’s hosting these Depression Era expositions some groups within Fort Worth objected to the sexuality evident in the planning and promotion of the Frontier Centennial.

The transition of the role played by women at the Frontier Centennial from traditional protectors of the city’s heritage to seducing sirens sparked a conflict in Fort Worth over the potential impact of the Frontier Centennial to the city’s identity and image as a modern city of the American West. In the competition for Texas Sweetheart #1 the media cast contestants and the winner as harbingers of modern Texas womanhood exuding

talent, natural beauty, and modesty. In a like manner, the media depicted New York showgirls working in the Frontier Centennial as Texas-loving, wholesome beauties exhibiting talent and a hard work ethic. Beauty competitions and showgirl revues represented the edge of accepted displays of female sexuality. When Rose's promotion machine flooded the Southwest with broadsides and pamphlets featuring scantily clad cowgirls and nude bathing maidens advertising the Frontier Centennial some found the content an insult to the city's pioneer heritage. Others believed the promise of illicit entertainment pandering to the baser desires of society inconsistent with the city's modern and progressive image. Responding to the objections, Frontier Centennial planners, including Rose, curtailed the most overt instances of the use of sex in the promotion of the celebration to within acceptable bounds. With the arrival of Sally Rand, civic leaders worked to cleanse Sally Rand's reputation as sexual icon of Chicago's Century of Progress exposition, dressing her as a smart, no-nonsense, business woman of the modern era. At the behest of the Women's Division, whose members stepped forward once again as the guardians of Fort Worth's identity and image, Frontier Centennial planners developed new promotional materials for the Frontier Centennial which depicted Fort Worth as a modern metropolis with deep roots in the American West. In the end, the battle for the city's soul was as much about defining acceptable roles for women as about preserving the city's identity and image.

While Rose labored to produce "a super-bevy of 1000 show girls" the Women's Division also continued to play a leading role in the preparations for the Frontier

Centennial.⁷ Most of their efforts focused on grassroots advertising, city beautification, and education off the centennial grounds.⁸ The Women's Division's initiative to boost the show began in earnest with the creation of the West Texas All-States Centennial Club—a branch of the larger state-wide organization. Covering the Club's March 17 organizational meeting, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* explained, "The only obligation [of Club members] is to pledge loyalty to the Texas Frontier Centennial and to spread news of it to their native States and home towns."⁹ "Adopted Texans" responded enthusiastically to the Club's call to enroll, and soon it boasted 450 members with groups representing all forty-eight states and nine countries.¹⁰ Some states such as Louisiana attracted more than sixty representatives. Women, not surprisingly, assumed the leadership of most groups and comprised a majority of the rank-and-file membership.¹¹ Members of the Club boosted the show primarily by passing along promotional literature and extending invitations to family, friends, and

⁷ Joseph Mitchell, "Rose Maps an Ambitious Program," *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 1-2; A. H. Montford Jr. "Billy Rose is Back More Enthusiastic Than Ever," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 14, 1936, 1-2.

⁸ Once composed of over twenty committees, by April the Women's Division contained only twelve in all. They included committees assigned to the museum, historical research, fine arts, pilgrimage, publicity, centennial in the schools, speaker's bureau, street signs, suggestions, civic clean up and beautification, hospitality, and the All-States Club. See "Clubwomen Plan Good Will Trips," *Fort Worth Press*, April 15, 1936, 3.

⁹ "Frontier Show Clubs to Form," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 17, 1936, 3. See also "All-States Club Session Becomes International," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 18, 1936, 9.

¹⁰ "All-State Club Parley Called," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 29, 1936, 10; "Adopted Texans Urged to Enroll in State Groups," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1936, 13; "States Club Banquet Set," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 23, 1936, 9; "Show Boosters Write Letters," *Fort Worth Press*, May 8, 1936, 12.

¹¹ "Dates Set for Organizing and Starting Letter Writing Campaign," *Fort Worth Press*, April 8, 1936, 11. For women's role in the leadership of groups see "Adopted Texans Urged to Enroll in State Groups," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1936, 13; "16 Chairmen in Fort Worth Frontier All-States Club," *Fort Worth Press*, April 30, 1936, 11.

newspaper editors in their home states and countries to travel to Fort Worth for the celebration. All-States Club members also sent invitations to the governors of the states they represented and worked to establish special days for their states during the festivities.¹² By June 6, Mayor Jarvis' office in Fort Worth had received replies from at least eighteen governors. Though most responded with gracious enthusiasm for the invitation and welcomed a special day to honor the state, only a few responded with a commitment to attend.¹³

With the West Texas All States Club up and running, on April 20 the Women's Division relinquished control of the Club to focus on its other operations.¹⁴ Still, the Women's Division continued to play an active role in promoting the Frontier Centennial. The All-States Committee became the Good-Will Committee which sponsored a series of good-will tours in May and June to boost the celebration in dozens of towns within a one-hundred mile radius of Fort Worth.¹⁵ Traveling in a donated "rubberneck" sight-seeing bus outfitted with a speaker system and a large sign reading "Women's Good Will Tour-Fort Worth Frontier Centennial" dozens of women dressed in pioneer garb representing all of the local woman's clubs sang booster songs, waved handkerchiefs, and hailed their

¹² "State Clubs Will Invite Governors," *Fort Worth Press*, April 15, 1936; "Show Boosters Write Letters," *Fort Worth Press*, May 8, 1936, 1; "42 Governors to get Frontier Show Bids," *Fort Worth Press*, May 13, 1936, 1; "Plan Special Days for Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Press*, May 21, 1936, 3.

¹³ "Frontier Exposition to Draw Governors to Fort Worth from Coast-to-Coast," *Fort Worth Press*, June 6, 1936, 3.

¹⁴ "All-States Club to be Separate Unit," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 21, 1936, 9.

¹⁵ "Women to Hear of Show Plans," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 3, 1936, 3. See "Clubwomen Plan Tours for Expo," *Fort Worth Press*, April 14, 1936, 1; "Clubwomen Plan Good Will Trips," *Fort Worth Press*, April 15, 1936, 3; "'Frontier' Boosters Plan First Trip," *Fort Worth Press*, May 8, 1936, 3.

destinations with song. Often greeted by both city officials and representatives of local women's and civic clubs, the women representing Fort Worth extended an official invitation and hosted a local rally for the celebration.¹⁶ Highlighting the western commemorative message celebration, the good-will tours sponsored by the Women's Division played an important role in the early promotion of the Frontier Centennial in the cities surrounding Fort Worth.

The Women's Division's committee assigned to endorse an "official greeting" for the Frontier Centennial revealed tension between presenting Fort Worth as a city with strong western roots and a modern metropolis. Initially, the committee endorsed the western-themed "Howdy, Stranger." Believing the folksy greeting inconsistent with the character of citizens living in contemporary Fort Worth, some argued it might perpetuate "Easterners' conception of Texans as uncouth people." The committee agreed and responded by endorsing the more sophisticated salutation—"How do you do?" Mayor Van Zandt Jarvis and a host of local woman's clubs heartily approved of the new welcome and worked to promote its use throughout the city during the celebration.¹⁷ Though considered too unsophisticated for utterance by modern citizens of Fort Worth, planners apparently felt the western greeting fit nicely with recreated Old West atmosphere of the Frontier

¹⁶ See "Women Will Make Trip to Boost Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 13, 1936, 20; "Women Start Goodwill Tour," *Fort Worth Press*, May 14, 1936, 5; "Women Start Planning Their Second Junket," *Fort Worth Press*, May 15, 1936, 6; "Women Make Good Will Tour for Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 15, 1936, 9; "68 Women Boosters Leaving Tomorrow," *Fort Worth Press*, May 21, 1936, 3; "Bridgeport to Hear of Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 30, 1936, 9.

¹⁷ "Fort Worth's Campaign of Friendliness Gains Ground," *Fort Worth Press*, April 13, 1936, 7.

Centennial grounds where a large sign reading “Howdy Stranger” greeted those approaching the grounds via automobile.¹⁸

The committees of the Women’s Division continued to carry out a host of other initiatives supporting the Frontier Centennial as well. To raise Frontier Centennial awareness, the committee on Centennial Work in Schools sponsored a scrapbooking contest among local elementary schools.¹⁹ Other committees continued their efforts to improve the physical landscape of the city for the celebration. The Street Signs subcommittee worked to identify missing street markers and replacing the signage to make the city easier for visitors to navigate.²⁰ The subcommittee on Civic Clean Up and Beautification continued to organize the efforts of local civic groups and clubs, such as the Kiwanis Club, the Fort Worth Garden Club, the Parent Teacher Association, and others to clean up the city. More specifically they called on home owners to clean up neighboring vacant lots and all used car lots and gas stations to begin a spring cleaning and where possible plant flowers to spruce up their places of business—recommending heavenly-blue morning glories and white periwinkles because of their fast growing season. They also urged the junkyards on West Seventh Street to clean up their properties as well.²¹

The city-wide clean up dovetailed with the work of the Pilgrimage Committee which developed a number of tours to acquaint centennial visitors with the various features of the city. Some tours focused specifically on Fort Worth’s western and frontier heritage and

¹⁸ See “Pinwheel Avenue,” Frontier Centennial Postcards, TCA.

¹⁹ “Flag Prizes Received for Centennial Contest,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 16, 1936, 9.

²⁰ “Ninth Business Women’s Week,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 18, 1936, 6.

²¹ “Beautification Program is Adopted by P. T. A., Kiwanis, Garden Club Members,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 13, 1936, 13; “Women Press Cleanup Drive,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 22, 1936, 3.

modern sites while others included locations such as the city's thirty-three parks, Lake Worth, Texas Christian University, Cooks Memorial Hospital, the new post office, and the Texas and Pacific Railroad Station. Once the committee identified tour routes, the two-bus operation was turned over to Bowen Bus Line for management.²² The arrival of tourists from unidentified northern states with tickets purchased from railroad companies in northern cities forced the tours into early operation. The tours also drew many Fort Worth citizens interested in learning more about the "beauty spots of their own city."²³ By July, hundreds of visitors from the states of Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Indiana explored Fort Worth on the Women's Division's tours.²⁴

Under the direction of the Women's Division, work also progressed on the restoration of the Van Zandt Cottage, the only historic structure to appear in the Frontier Centennial—though off the centennial grounds proper. Desiring to use the home as a museum during the celebration, the Women's Division wanted the structure to "look just as it did in 1871." Commenting on the methodology they planned to employ to produce the desired results, Margaret McLean interestingly stated, that because the cottage resulted from unschooled craftsmanship, "Unskilled labor should be used to bring about this effect."²⁵ Early appraisals of the dilapidated site revealed that restoration would require a

²² "Centennial Pilgrimage Announced," *Fort Worth Press*, March 12, 1936, 6.

²³ "Arrival of Tourists from North Forces Sightseeing Tours into Early Start," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 17, 1936, 9; "Second Bus Tour of City Held Today," *Fort Worth Press*, June 16, 1936, 8.

²⁴ "Seeing Fort Worth Points of Interest Treat to Visitors," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 9, 1936, 3.

²⁵ "Committee Named to Study Details of Van Zandt Home," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 13, 1936, 9.

near reconstruction of the entire four-room structure.²⁶ To match the original structure composed of rough-hewn logs and handmade bricks, the Women's Division's Research Committee with the help of the local chapters of the DTR and the UDC, which would become its caretakers after the centennial, consulted members of the Van Zandt family and obtained furniture from the 1860s and 1870s for the structure's interior.²⁷ The cottage officially opened on July 19, the day after the opening day of the Frontier Centennial, with a housewarming party. Though the Board of Control supported the restoration of the cottage because of its association with the Texas Revolution and post-Confederacy Fort Worth development, reflecting the intent of the UDC to make the cottage a memorial to Fort Worth's southern heritage, those present christened the cottage by singing "How Firm a Foundation," reportedly Robert E. Lee's favorite hymn.²⁸

The shift in the roles women played in the Frontier Centennial began with Rose's limiting the influence of Women's Division on matters relating to venues on the centennial grounds and strictly demarking their presence on the grounds. Rose appeared to have little use for the support or efforts of the city's club women. A few weeks following his arrival, Rose attended a rally hosted by two-hundred representatives of thirty-six women's groups who pledged their organizations' support to Rose and the production of the Frontier Centennial. During the meeting Rose requested the Women's Division form a three-person

²⁶ "Museum Cost to be Studied," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 14, 1936, 10.

²⁷ "Restoration of Old Van Zandt Home Is Interesting Project," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 12, 1936, "Society & Clubs," 6; Edith Alderman Guedry, "Stage Coach Road Passed Van Zandt Home; Being Restored for Centennial," *Fort Worth Press*, June 19, 1936, 14. For the custodianship of the local chapters of the DTR and the UDC see Margaret McLean to J. S. Morris, June 26, 1936, Box 6, Folder 19, "Van Zandt Cottage," United Daughters of the Confederacy, Julia Jackson Chapter, 1897-1969, Collection, FTWPLA.

²⁸ "Old Van Zandt Homestead Party is Set," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 16, 1936, 10.

committee to act as liaison between his office and the five-thousand women the Division represented. He told the women present, "You can be of tremendous concrete help," he said, "But you can do it only by actually functioning. You have a magnificent spirit and I'd like to see you capitalize on it." "Give me 5,000 women," he added, "who want only to cooperate and nothing will be accomplished."²⁹ Rose's comments at the rally seem to suggest that the Women's Division had failed to contribute anything of value to the Frontier Centennial and that they could only do so under his direction. Considering the sizable role the Women's Division already played in the planning of the celebration, Rose's comments must have insulted those present.

Notwithstanding Rose's slighting remarks, evidence suggests that Fort Worth's club women initially embraced the showman. At a meeting of the Fort Worth Woman's Club Elizabeth Miller recited a poem to the group receiving a riotous response:

One of the beauty spots of the city is the Rose Garden which boasts rare specimens from all over the county. Our latest acquisition is the famous Billy Rose, a rare and very expensive variety, said to be the only one of kind in the United States. Considerable grafting has been necessary to bring this hardy bloomer to Fort Worth. It is not indigenous to soil but by careful cultivation it may in time become acclimated to the true tradition of the Frontier Centennial.³⁰

Rose's agreement with the Women's Division's suggestion that the design of the Frontier Centennial grounds draw heavily upon historic architecture rather than modern styles, also left the impression that he valued their participation.³¹ What the Women's Division failed to

²⁹ "Women Told How To Aid Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 25, 1936, 1-2; "Women Rally to Centennial," *Fort Worth Press*, March 25, 1936, 1.

³⁰ "Billy Rose, Face-Lifting at Women's Club and Gas Situation Receive 'Digs,'" *Fort Worth Press*, April 6, 1936, 6.

³¹ "Women Told How to Aid Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 25, 1936, 1-2.

understand is that Rose's vision for the Frontier Centennial included little room for commemoration, education, or culture—issues pursued by club women.

As Rose's plans for the Frontier Centennial began to unfold, the Women's Division discovered how little he valued their contribution to centennial planning. On April 7, the Planning Committee of the Women's Division met with Rose and the Board of Control to synchronize the plans developed by the Women's Division and those laid out by Rose. Rose and the Board of Control seemed to welcome the contributions of the Women's Division in areas such as grass-roots advertising, education, and city beautification, activities they believed simply bolstered civic awareness and participation. But the centennial grounds, the primary money-maker of the celebration, were another matter entirely. Viewing the centennial grounds as sacrosanct, the Board of Control believed decisions regarding the character of its construction and content should be left entirely to Billy Rose. And the endlessly self-important Rose did not relinquish control of his productions to others. In February the Women's Division convinced the Board of Control to include both a reproduction of Old Fort Worth and a Mexican Village in the designs for the centennial grounds. The addition of these structures represented important victories for the Women's Division which worked to include both the frontier history of Fort Worth and the diversity of Texas cultures in the centennial's commemorative memory. During this meeting the Women's Division learned that Rose intended to cut both the reproduction of the original Fort Worth and the Mexican Village from the centennial grounds. Speaking of the Mexican Village, Rose told the representatives of the Women's Division that the Frontier Centennial would have a Mexican atmosphere, "but an adobe village wouldn't be good for anything

but to ‘rehearse echoes.’”³² Rose’s apparent disinterest in things historical and the inability of the Planning Committee to preserve portions of the celebration perceived as significant to the celebration’s commemorative message led chairman Margaret McLean to complain “We’ve had a hard time holding on to our part of the show.”³³

As it turned out the collection of Western art and Texas relics for presentation on the centennial grounds was the only part of the “show” Rose allowed the Women’s Division to hold onto. Moreover, from the beginning Rose made it clear the Women’s Division would only involve themselves in the collection of the materials not necessarily its presentation. “If you’ll assemble it,” he explained, “we’ll serve it in a colorful, interesting form. . . .We will put the picture frame around it, but you must gather what goes in it.”³⁴ To the relief of the Women’s Division, Rose promised to provide ample exhibit space in the designs of the Frontier City. At the April 7 meeting, the Planning Committee learned that Rose intended to fill many of Old Western-type facades with museum and art exhibits.³⁵

With their commemorative and cultural contribution on the centennial grounds limited to a historical and fine arts museum, the Museum and Fine Arts Committees began in earnest to collect materials for exposition. Initially these groups planned for as many as

³² “Two Groups Put Their Show Plans Together,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 8, 1936, 1-2. Apparently the Planning Committee continued to discuss the possibility of a “Mexican Village” after their meeting with Rose. See “Group Will Discuss Show Exhibit,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 30, 1936, 2.

³³ “Group Hears Reports on Space for Exhibitions,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 8, 1936, 10.

³⁴ “Women Told How To Aid Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 25, 1936, 1-2.

³⁵ “Two Groups Put Their Show Plans Together,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 8, 1936, 1-2. Fort Worth Woman’s Club historian Elizabeth Miller claimed Rose initially intended the first leg of the midway to be facades of Old West buildings only. Miller, *The Woman’s Club of Fort Worth*, 19.

sixteen exhibits educating patrons in the culture and way of life on the Texas frontier.³⁶ As such the Museum Committee amassed thousands of relics from the major periods of Texas history—enough material for eleven exhibits. The displays featured pioneer furniture, relics from ranching life in Texas including a collection of cattle brands and guns, materials from Fort Worth and Civil War history including uniforms and weapons, a large collection of Native American artifacts from the Leyland Collection, thousands of pieces of frontier china, clothing from the various periods of Texas history, a collection of seven-hundred dolls from the region, and materials from the state’s Mexican heritage.³⁷ The Museum Committee also assembled more than six-hundred tomes and manuscripts on the subjects of West Texas pioneer history, the cattle industry, Texas Indians, and works of poetry and fiction.³⁸

Complementing the Museum Committee’s collection of artifacts and relics illustrating the state’s frontier history, the Fine Arts Committee of the Fort Worth Art Association also collected materials illustrating life on the frontier and in the American West for display at the Frontier Centennial. On loan from dozens of collectors, museums, and

³⁶ “Village Street Plans are Told,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 1, 1936, 9.

³⁷ For an overview of the materials exhibited in the museum, see Edith Alderman Guedry, “Rare Relics Arrive Now Every Day for Museum to be in Frontier Building,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 4, 1936, 6; Pauline Naylor, “Frontier Museum is being Stocked with Treasures of Pioneers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 14, 1936, “Society & Clubs,” 9; Pauline Naylor, “Texas Got National Publicity Century Ago, Museum Shows,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 28, 1936, “Society & Clubs,” 5; “To Exhibit Old Hand-Carved Set,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 17, 1936, 13; and “Baby Bag of Porcupine Quills, Necklace of Human Finger Bones on Exhibit,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 17, 1936, 15. At the last minute an exhibit featuring relics from Mexico collected by Mrs. Glover Johnson was added to the exhibits. See “Museum Exhibits will be Ready for Opening July 18,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 7, 1936, 18.

³⁸ See Pauline Mayor, “1,000 Volumes for Frontier Show Library are Assured,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 7, 1936, “Society & Clubs,” 7; Pauline Naylor, “Frontier Museum in being Stocked with Treasures of Pioneers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 14, 1936, “Society & Clubs,” 9; “Frontier Museum to House 600 Old Manuscripts, Maps, Documents about Texas,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 17, 1936, 16.

galleries across the United States, the Committee amassed what must have been an unprecedented collection of western art including fifty-five paintings, seventeen sculptures, and eleven lithographs. The collection contained the works of West Texan Harold D. Bugbee and notable Western artists such as George Catlin, Frederick Remington, and Charles M. Russell.³⁹

When the time came to begin arranging the frontier relics and works of art for exhibition on the centennial ground in mid-June, the Women's Division lost further control of their part in the "show." Once the Museum and Fine Arts Committees began working on the exhibit space on the centennial grounds, Rose began to exhibit an interest in their work. Reportedly Rose, who micromanaged every detail of the exposition, demanded the Women's Division secure his approval on all aspects of the displays down to the color of the walls, window treatments, and rugs. Not surprisingly, the members of the Women's Division who interacted with Rose apparently found his dictatorial style and lack of deference to historicity off-putting, to say the least. On one occasion he told the press, "Dallas has all the historical stuff so we don't have to worry about that. We can just show the folks a good time."⁴⁰ But Rose's treatment of the club women could be downright reprehensible. On one occasion speaking of an exhibit Rose barked, "Get more stuff in here. Make it homier. Make it look like folks live here." On another occasion Rose told the club women their museum

³⁹ Sallie Blythe Mummert, "Art on Exhibit," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 5, 1936, "Radio, Art, Stage," 8. See also "Art Exhibit Depict Days of Frontier," *Fort Worth Press*, July 17, 1936, 15.

⁴⁰ Ernie Pyle, "'Big Four' Attractions of Frontier Show Visualized," *Fort Worth Press*, June 1, 1936, 1, 3.

looked like “hell and a bunch of Spinach” and proceeded to explain why museums were naturally dull.⁴¹

Billy Rose’s plan for the Frontier Centennial provided little room for women to play a leading role as preservers and promoters of culture, history, or education. Notwithstanding the manifold contributions of the Women’s Division to the planning of the celebration prior to his arrival, under Rose club women became increasingly associated solely with the exhibits of Texas frontier history and western art.⁴² Ironically, with Rose’s constant criticism and direction, even the museum no longer represented an expression of the Women’s Division. Rose successfully pushed the Women’s Division to the periphery of Frontier Centennial developments. For Rose, concepts such as commemoration and historical accuracy could not attract or wow centennial visitors and therefore belonged at the periphery along with the club women. Juxtaposed to club women who sought to preserve and promote Fort Worth’s heritage and culture, Rose sought to place women in the contrasting role of sexual commodity. Rose conceived of attractions far more seductive than frontier china, dolls, uniforms, old photos and books, and furniture to place on the center stage of his show.

During the ballyhoo of Rose’s arrival in Fort Worth, he made dozens of statements hinting at the extravaganza he planned to produce. Perhaps his most oft repeated claim was that a feature he called the “Frontier Frolics” or “Frontier Follies” would showcase one-

⁴¹ “Women Busy at the Frontier Centennial have Bucked Up Against Numerous Problems,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 14, 1936, 6. See also “Population Boom Hits Frontier Show Grounds—Staff Moves In,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 28, 1936, 1, 4. Flemmons, *Amon: The Life of Amon Carter Sr.*, 306 (quotation).

⁴² See Pauline Naylor, “Frontier Museum is being Stocked with Treasures of Pioneers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 14, 1936, “Society & Clubs,” 9.

thousand beautiful showgirls.⁴³ The logistics of making good on that claim, like most of Rose's early promises, appeared more easily said than done. Budgetary constraints made transporting one-thousand showgirls from Broadway to Fort Worth cost-prohibitive. As a result Rose began his search for what he called "pelvic machinery" in Fort Worth. He began a search with an appeal through the press, "I want to be completely fair to all local talent," he explained, "and I don't want to import except where I have to. . . . I will interview all applicants at my office at the Sinclair Building, experience is unnecessary, but the girls must be beautiful. I especially want to see dancers and showgirls."⁴⁴ Rose's plea initially produced a lackluster response. On March 15, the first day of tryouts, only five young women appeared before Rose. Appalled, Mary Wynn, a columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* chided local young women for their apparent apathy for the opportunity and challenged them to do better. "You let the little man with the big ideas," she wrote, "sit practically undisturbed for an hour." If he didn't find "beauty" in Fort Worth, she warned, Rose would have to "import it from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles—or Dallas. Would your pride stand for that?"⁴⁵ The article must have struck a chord with Fort Worthians, the following day Rose found one-hundred ladies lined up outside his office.⁴⁶

⁴³ Some time he also referred to the venue as the "Frontier Frolics." See "Billy Rose to Set Up Office," *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 1-2.

⁴⁴ A. H. Montford Jr. "Billy Rose is Back More Enthusiastic than Ever," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 14, 1936, 1-2. See also Jack Gordon, "Swamped! But Billy Rose Tackles Job with Vim; Opens Up Frontier Office," *Fort Worth Press*, March 14, 1936, 2.

⁴⁵ Mary Wynn, "Was Billy Rose Stormed by Girls? No, He Wasn't," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 15, 1936, 2.

⁴⁶ Jack Gordon, "Billy Rose Picks a Beauty. But that's Only Beginning," *Fort Worth Press*, March 17, 1936, 10.

After the first week of tryouts Rose hatched an ingenious plan to exploit the showgirl audition process and its concomitant sex appeal to promote the Frontier Centennial. Rose announced he would hold the second audition prior to the final rodeo of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in the Stock Yards Coliseum.⁴⁷ Contrary to Rose's early estimates that the first week of tryouts would result in hundreds of call backs, they only produced sixty-eight candidates for a second audition. On the night of the second audition, all sixty-eight young women lined up on the pock-marked dirt floor of the Stock Yards Coliseum in high heeled shoes and swimsuits. On a makeshift platform, they sashayed and danced before Rose and the rodeo crowd. Rose's "talent" for picking out beauty was as much on display as the young women. "A girl can't be attractive unless she walks like a lady," he told the audience. "Unfortunately, many of them slouch over until they look like a Comanche going into a war dance."⁴⁸ Passing swift and, at times, unforgiving judgment, Rose barked at the various participants "Ask your mother to spend more money on your dancing lessons," or "I can't say much for your dance, dear, but that smile is worth a million bucks!"⁴⁹ By the end of the audition, Rose promised at least five contenders a part in the show. The scene at the Stock Show Coliseum provided a poignant example of the role Rose intended women to occupy in the Frontier Centennial. Like livestock the young women were reduced to commodities presented for audience consumption. Young women shuffling before a judge in the Stock Show Coliseum with the aroma of manure hanging on

⁴⁷ "Billy Rose to Fly After New Ideas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 21, 1936, 10.

⁴⁸ "Frontier Show Director Judges Applicant's Features Next," *Fort Worth Press*, March 23, 1936, 5.

⁴⁹ Jack Gordon, "It's Plucky Beauty Who Dares Sharp Eyes and Tongue of Little Barnum," *Fort Worth Press*, March 23, 1936, 8.

the humid air proved a little too reminiscent of the activities of the Fort Worth Livestock Exchange for Joe Cooper, a columnist at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, who described the scene in the headline of his column: “Rose Qualifies as Show Judge; Splits Sheep from Goats.”⁵⁰

Ever the optimist, Rose explained to local newspapers that, in his experience, the discovery of five talented young women from a thousand represented a good crop. Still, it must have been clear that Fort Worth auditions would never produce the number of showgirls he boasted would grace the Frontier Centennial. Rose quickly devised yet another plan to both attract talented and beautiful Texas young women to Fort Worth and simultaneously generate state-wide interest in Fort Worth’s celebration through the commodification of women. He announced Fort Worth would host a beauty contest for the title of “Texas Sweetheart #1.” He called on newspaper editors, radio stations, local chamber of commerce, and club women from every Texas town with a population greater than one-thousand to promote the contest. Each city would host its own completion to select a representative to send to Fort Worth. Lending legitimacy to the competition, Rose promised the legendary Clark Gable would be in attendance to judge the May 30 final competition. The winner would become something of symbol for the Frontier Centennial receiving a starring role in the Fortier Follies and a six-month movie contract with Universal Studios. Moreover, he claimed the top thirty-six runners-ups would also receive parts in the Frontier Follies.

⁵⁰ Joe Cooper, “Rose Qualifies as Show Judge; Splits Sheep from Goats,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 23, 1936, 2. For a photograph of the auditions see “Girls, Can You Strut? If You are Looking for Job with Billy Rose, You Had Better Not Shuffle Along,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 23, 1936, 5.

The scheme worked. Within weeks cities from around the state, but especially West Texas, announced their own competitions to determine their city's most beautiful woman.⁵¹ In most cities, the local chamber of commerce or junior chamber of commerce sponsored the completion. All told, eighty-eight towns planned to send representatives to Fort Worth. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* regularly covered, often on its front-page, the local contests from around the state and announced the winners.⁵²

In mid-April Fort Worth began preparing for its own competition. But, after a week of sign ups, the junior chamber of commerce, who sponsored the event reported that only seven young women announced themselves as contestants. In desperation junior chamber president, Joe W. Oxendine, "called on local beauties to uphold the city's reputation for feminine pulchritude."⁵³ Eventually, the Fort Worth competition garnered nearly fifty contenders. Helping to generate interest in the local contest, the *Fort Worth Press* and *Star-*

⁵¹ "Towns Planning Contests to Pick Frontier Belles," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 12, 1936, 1, 4; "60 Towns Stage Beauty Contests," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 23, 1936, 2.

⁵² See "Colorado, Texas, Will Pick Beauty for Fort Worth Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 18, 1936, 1, 2; "60 Beauties in Haskell County Enter Contest for Sweetheart," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 21, 1936, 1; "Miss Lexington of Texas' Chosen at Gonzales for Frontier Contest," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 24, 1936, 1; "Graham to Pick Frontier Belle," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 26, 1936, 1; "Frontier Belle to be Picked May 8 in Hamilton Area for District Trip," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 27, 1936, 1; "McKinney Invites Beauties to Enter," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 30, 1936, 1; "Three Towns Pick Beauties," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 10, 1936, 10; "Lions Club Beauty is Coleman Winner," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 12, 1936, 2; "Stephenville Beauty Named," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 14, 1936, 2; "30 in Centennial Beauty Contest at Eastland May 30," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 17, 1936, 9; "Midland Beauty Picked on Birthday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 19, 1936, 1; "Beauty Picking Due Saturday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 24, 1936, 9; "Texas Selects Many Beauties," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 28, 1936, 1.

⁵³ "Beauty Contest Plans Announced," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 16, 1936, 3; "Local Beauties Asked to Get in Show Contest," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 29, 1936, 17.

Telegram began regularly publishing revealing photographs of the contestants.⁵⁴ On the evening of May 26, the contestants put on a seven-act floor show with each contestant performing specialty numbers in the Lake Worth Casino. The principal judge was none other than John Murray Anderson, Rose's stage director, who named Alice McWhorter, a recent high school graduate who worked at a local department store, "Miss Fort Worth."⁵⁵

In the days immediately preceding the state-wide completion, eighty-two contestants and their family and friends descended upon the city. To protect the contestants from local "johnnies" the Women's Division stepped forward to monitor the activities of the young women while in town. Forming a committee of sixteen members, the Women's Division would become not only promoters of Fort Worth history and culture during the Frontier Centennial, but virtue as well.⁵⁶ Free of charge, the hundreds of visitors and locals filled the auditorium at Paschal High School to witness the selection of the most beautiful girl in Texas. Because of scheduling conflicts arising from a new movie commitment, Clark Gable was unable to judge the competition. Too late to find a replacement with Gable's cachet, Rose selected Anderson to again assume the mantle of

⁵⁴ See "Wouldn't She Get Your Vote?" *Fort Worth Press*, April 22, 1936, 1; "These Girls Enter Frontier Beauty Contest," *Fort Worth Press*, April 28, 1936, 5; "34th-May be 1st," *Fort Worth Press*, May 15, 1936, 1; "Now How'd You Pick 'Miss Fort Worth?'" *Fort Worth Press*, May 20, 1936, 1; "Goes a'Gunning for Beauty Title," *Fort Worth Press*, May 22, 1936, 1; "Seeks to be Fort Worth's Sweetheart," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 8, 1936, 7; "Wants to be Sweetheart," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 10, 1936, 10; "She Would be Queen There," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 12, 1936, 8; "Did You Notice the Wagon," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 14, 1936, 19; "Oh, for Life of a Judge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 16, 1936, 16; and "To Appear at Follies Revue," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 22, 1936, 11.

⁵⁵ "Beauty Picking Due Saturday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 24, 1936, 9; "Friends Hail Beauty Winner," *Fort Worth Press*, May 27, 1936, 3.

⁵⁶ "75 Beauty Contestants Will Be Chaperoned While Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 26, 1936, 9.

judge.⁵⁷ With Rose as master of ceremonies and Anderson as head judge the competition appeared virtually indistinguishable from other auditions for the Frontier Centennial. In fact, depending on whether they wanted to be considered as dancers or showgirls, contestants either walked or danced across the stage. Though the crowd, full of locals, favored the selection of Miss McWhorter, the panel of judges, including Anderson, Lucius Beebe, a New York reporter, and Dr. Webb Walker of Fort Worth, crowned nineteen-year old Faye Cotton of Borger "Texas Sweetheart #1." McWhorter along with Edith Goode took first and second runners up.⁵⁸

As "Texas' most beautiful girl," Cotton quickly became a celebrity around Fort Worth. The papers regularly reported her comings and goings. Her first official appearance was at an All-States Club banquet to pose for photographs with Governor James Allred.⁵⁹ Cotton also visited the dressmaker for costuming measurements. For Cotton's part in the Frontier Follies, Anderson commissioned Raoul Pene De Bois, renowned costume designer of stage and screen, to design the "most fabulous gown ever worn." The result was a \$5,000 gold mesh gown weighing forty pounds rendered by the New York Jewelers Whiting and Davis.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ "Beauty Picking Due Saturday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 24, 1936, 9.

⁵⁸ Mary Wynn, "Borger Beauty Captures Sweetheart Title," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 31, 1936, 1, 4; "They're Texas' Three Fairest Ladies!" *Fort Worth Press*, June 1, 1936, 1.

⁵⁹ "Busy Day for a Beauty," *Fort Worth Press*, June 3, 1936, 8.

⁶⁰ "Sweetheart of Texas to Wear \$5,000 Gown," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 18, 1936, 2; "No. 1 Beauty Goes Shopping," *Fort Worth Press*, June 1, 1936, 1, 9; "Donning Her Gorgeous \$5,000 Golden Gown Dose n't Make Texas' 18-Karat Sweetheart the Least Bit Nervous," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 7, 1936, 9. "Fairest Daughter of State to Feature Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1936, 1-2 (quotation).

Despite Rose's intent to procure the bodies of Texas's young women to promote the celebration, the local media preferred to view the competition for "Texas Sweetheart #1" as an expression of virtue and patriotism. Descended from alleged highbrow revues and burlesque shows produced by the likes of Florenz Ziegfeld, American beauty competitions became but one of the acceptable "theatrical forms" for displaying the female body among middle-class Americans. In 1935 the Miss America Pageant sought to counter the prevailing reputation of beauty competitions as "leg-and-more-show" by recasting itself as the antithesis of such performances heralding its contestants as societal role models for young women. Strengthening the ties between the completion and civic promotion, participants now acquired sponsorships from cities, regions, and states rather than businesses. Deemphasizing the show's sex appeal contestants also began to appear in costumes other than bathing suits.⁶¹ Though the emphasis of the "Texas Sweetheart #1" competition rested primarily upon appearance in a bathing suit, the local media preferred to cast the Sweetheart competition, like the Miss America Pageant, as an expression of patriotism and beauty.

Columnists from both the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Fort Worth Press* depicted Cotton as the archetypal Texas young women exuding the qualities of all Texas Women. Mary Crutcher of the *Fort Worth Press* argued that Cotton embodied a new era for women in show business. Perhaps drawing a sharp contrast between the natural beauties of Texas

⁶¹ Brenda Foley, *Undressed for Success: Beauty Contestants and Exotic Dancers as Merchants of Morality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 46-49 (Quotation on 47). See also Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1983), 66-70. For more on Ziegfeld and Burlesque see Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 243-246.

and the well packaged and streamlined glamour look made popular by scantily clad actresses in the 1930s, she quoted John Murray Anderson who described Cotton as “typical of the new type of womanly beauty” he had discovered in Texas needing no makeup or artificial beauty.⁶² This new era, she claimed, would draw agents to Texas seeking women endowed with natural beauty allegedly rare in New York or California.⁶³ Further associating Cotton with cherished Texas ideals the Fort Worth Press covered Cotton’s visit to Dr. Sam Jagoda’s renowned gun collection. Featuring a photograph of Cotton aiming a four-hundred year old Blunderbuss, the headline read: “Faye Cotton, True Daughter of Texas, is Fond of Guns.”⁶⁴ *Fort Worth Press* Columnist Edith Alderman Guedry also praised Cotton’s humility, integrity, and independence. Speaking of the young woman’s sense of modesty Guedry recounted Cotton’s claim that she would never participate in any contest that required her to wear anything scantier than a bathing suit.⁶⁵ Also quick to praise her humility, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* noted that Cotton “passed a mirror in the Hotel Texas lobby without even a side glance, ate a man-sized steak without bothering about her figure, let her nose get faintly shiny without hauling out a powder puff and talked with startling candor about the very ordinary pattern of her life up to now.” Moreover, the paper explained that Cotton neither drank nor smoked and always had a full night’s sleep.⁶⁶ By identifying Cotton and

⁶² Mary Crutcher, “Frontier Show’s Marked Success in Fining Natural Beauties in Texas Opens New Era in the Show World,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 2, 1936, 2 (quotation); Laegreid, *Riding Pretty: Rodeo Royalty in the American West*, 100-101.

⁶³ Mary Crutcher, “Frontier Show’s Marked Success in Fining Natural Beauties in Texas Opens New Era in the Show World,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 2, 1936, 2.

⁶⁴ “Faye Cotton, True Daughter of Texas, is Fond of Guns,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 4, 1936, 3.

⁶⁵ Edith Alderman Guedry, “Texas Sweetheart No. 1 is Good Reading Because She Dares to be Herself,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 8, 1936, 6.

⁶⁶ “Texas Sweetheart is Sure Judges Wrong,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 1, 1936, 1-2.

the rest of the participants as possessing the traits of natural beauty, civic pride, modesty, humility, and morality, the media defined a new standard of femininity in modern Texas. Conjoining these traits with the contestants also reinforced the acceptability of presentation of the female form and created a yardstick by which future female participants in the Frontier Centennial would be judged.⁶⁷

During the competition, Rose continued to hold regular auditions. It soon became apparent that he would not find enough local talent to support the production he planned. By the end of April Rose expanded his search for talent to Dallas. The venture only yielded eight dancers and two showgirls. Commenting on the dearth of talented young women in Dallas, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* noted that “tall beauties in Dallas were as scarce as dust in a thundershower.”⁶⁸ All told, Rose would hire less than fifty Texans.⁶⁹ Rose found the outcome of the search for “Texas Sweetheart #1” a dismal failure to produce fresh local talent. Of all the contestants to prance before Rose, he offered only five parts as either dancers or showgirls; only a fraction of the thirty-six he promised would receive roles in the Frontier Follies. Though the vast majority of the Sweetheart contestants did not meet

⁶⁷ In the establishment of the first successful modeling agency in 1923, John Powers made “modeling acceptable to women (and to men) by connecting it with ‘naturalness’ and the ‘all-American way.’ His ‘girls,’ he said, came from the best homes and the best finishing schools; none walked in the ‘mincing artificial manner’ of the ordinary actress-model; and none wore ‘excessive makeup.’ His ‘girls’ were ‘typical American girls, pretty, healthy, vivacious, and self-reliant.’” William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 310.

⁶⁸ “Rose Picks Eight Dallas Dancers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 29, 1936, 2.

⁶⁹ Mary Crutcher, “Frontier Show’s Marked Success in Finding Natural Beauties in Texas Opens New Era in the Show World,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 2, 1936, 2.

Rose's eastern showgirl ideal, he did offer twenty-five parts as square dancers in the far less glamorous western-themed musical rodeo which he recently began conducting auditions.⁷⁰

Rose simply needed more pretty faces. More importantly, he required experienced dancers. Rose always assumed he would have to import experienced dancers and showgirls from New York.⁷¹ Several months of auditions proved his intuition right. He sent newly arrived Broadway dance director and protégé of John Murray Anderson, Robert Alton, back to New York in mid-May to recruit dancers and showgirls. Rose himself made a follow-up visit to sign experienced Broadway dancers just prior the finals of the Sweetheart competition.⁷² Contracted dancers, showgirls, and some male dancers began arriving at the Texas and Pacific Station the day before the scheduled June 8 rehearsals.⁷³ In all, Rose imported 150 showgirls and dancers from New York, more than three times his early estimates. The Board of Control again turned to the Women's Division to see to the housing needs of the group. After some deliberation and learning that there were no rooms available in the TCU dormitories the Women's Division decided to find accommodations in the available apartments downtown.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Mary Wynn, "Borger Beauty Captures Sweetheart Title," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 31, 1936, 1, 4.

⁷¹ "Billy Rose will Pay 100 'Bonafide' Noblemen \$100 a Week a Piece to Dance with the Ladies at Show," *Fort Worth Press*, April 4, 1936, 3.

⁷² See "Show Dance Director Here for Breathtaking Task," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 24, 1936, 2, "Fairest Daughter of State to Feature Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1936, 1-2, and "Billy Rose is Back in Town," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 25, 1936, 4.

⁷³ "Rose Show Girls and Boys Arrive," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 7, 1936, 4; "Frontier Dancers at Work," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 7, 1936, "Sports & Amusements," 8.

⁷⁴ "Women's Division of Show Seeks to House Chorines," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 21, 1936, 3.

The Fort Worth dailies regularly published images of the newly arrived showgirls and dancers as well as rehearsals for the show.⁷⁵ And like the coverage of Faye Cotton and the competition for Texas Sweetheart #1, the *Fort Worth Press* and *Star-Telegram* depicted the visiting chorines as virtuous, hardworking, Texas-loving beauties. An article in the *Star-Telegram* reported that Mrs. Phillips of the Women's Division held reservations about the incoming dancers and showgirls, but changed her mind after discovering they were the "the best behaved and hardest working' young women she had ever seen."⁷⁶ Another piece described a troupe of seventeen women known as the Foster Girls performing in *Jumbo*. According to the story, the group "live[s] by rules almost as strict as those of a convent." The girls were not permitted to date, smoke or drink, they ate regularly and always traveled in a group to and from the hotel. Their trainer Allan K. Foster proudly told the paper that no Foster girl had ever been in a scandal worthy of publication.⁷⁷ Apparently show planners also took some precautions to preserve an image of modesty for the dancers while in public. A sign placed in Monnig's Warehouse, the location of dance rehearsals, exclaimed, "Dress Decent."⁷⁸ Other articles extolled the various talents of the young women. Reporting on a pair of sisters in the show, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* wrote, "Dancing is but one of their talents, Mildred, 18 is an artist, has an expert business head and a knack for foreign

⁷⁵ For example see "New York Show Girls Begin Rehearsal for Parts in Exposition," *Fort Worth Press*, June 8, 1936, 3; "Rehearse for Frontier Show Follies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 9, 1936, 9.

⁷⁶ "Women's Division of Show Seeks to House Chorines," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 21, 1936, 3.

⁷⁷ "17 Young Beauties in Cast of 'Jumbo' Live by Rules Like Those of Convent," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 26, 1936, 9.

⁷⁸ "'Inferno' Roars Tonight; Show Girls on Part Pay; Who said Fried Chicken?" *Fort Worth Press*, June 11, 1936, 11.

languages. . . . Virginia, the younger sister is 16, has an aptitude for dramatic roles as well as dancing.”⁷⁹ Mary Crutcher, a columnist with the *Fort Worth Press*, flattered readers with an article suggesting that the dancers and showgirls held mostly positive views of Texas and Texans, notwithstanding the heat and a noticeable lack of cowboys and ten gallon hats. One said, “The people are so very hospitable in the South, and especially in Texas. I know that I will not want to go back to New York in November.” Another stated, “Texas people are simply marvelous!”⁸⁰

Rose’s initial description of the content of Frontier Centennial entertainment seemed to reinforce the depiction of female participants as beautiful and virtuous models of modern Texas womanhood. Within days of his arrival Rose quickly eschewed any intimations that he would produce anything amoral or indecent. He assured Jack Gordon of the *Fort Worth Press* that although he planned to include hundreds of beautiful showgirls in the entertainment venues, there would be neither nudity nor “smut.” “Nine persons out of 10,” he explained, “are revolted by smut. It has no place in show business.”⁸¹ Initially his actions appeared as good as his words. During the auditions at the Stock Yards Coliseum a young lady took off her jacket and according to Jack Gordon of the *Fort Worth Press* did “a snake-hips that would make the boys up on the midway blush.” To the performance, Rose

⁷⁹ “Chevenal Sisters Don’t Mind Long Rehearsal Hours,” *Fort Worth Star-Telgram*, July 14, 1936, 3.

⁸⁰ Mary Crutcher, “Heat Doesn’t Bother New York Show Girls Here for Frontier Show—But They Do Miss the Cowboys,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 9, 1936, 14.

⁸¹ Jack Gordon, “Billy’s Amusement Fantasy Makes Our Head Swim,” *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 1.

exclaimed, "It's not gonna be that kind of show."⁸² As late as March 31 Rose, alluding to traditional world's fair midway entertainment, claimed the Frontier Centennial would, "have lots of pretty girls. [But,] No fan dancers or nudist camps. Everything would be clean."⁸³ Given his reputation as the "Barnum of Sex" it seems likely Rose's early comments concerning Frontier Centennial nudity reflected an attempt to preserve an image of propriety.⁸⁴

Prior to his work on *Jumbo* and the Frontier Centennial, in the early years of the Great Depression Rose helped pioneer a unique style of nightclub fusing dining and cabaret entertainment. During the 1920s, before he turned producer, Rose ran a series of success speakeasies and dry nightclubs featuring variety acts. And having cultivated an intuition for what would attract and dazzle the nightclub goers, in 1933 he opened Casino de Paree. For the club, Rose gutted the Gallo Theater in New York making space for terraced tables and chairs effectively turning a theater into a restaurant.⁸⁵ A believer in the "Big night out" concept Rose provided, in the midst of a time of poverty and want, inexpensive and abundant culinary offerings and liquor coupled with novelty acts, comedians, and musical numbers New Yorkers found irresistible. Sex appeal also played an important role in the success of the Casino de Paree and later Billy Rose's Music Box. Rose featured numerous showgirls prominently and reportedly selected only tall women because they kicked higher

⁸² Jack Gordon, "It's Plucky Beauty Who Dares Sharp Eyes and Tongue of Little Barnum," *Fort Worth Press*, March 23, 1936, 8.

⁸³ Ernie Pyle, "About Billy Rose: 'A Broadway Spellbinder Talks Three Hours,' Says Ernie Pyle, 'And Sells Himself to Texans For \$100,000,'" *Fort Worth Press*, March 31, 1936, 1-2.

⁸⁴ Lloyd Lewis, *It Takes All Kinds* (1947 repr., New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1974), 204.

⁸⁵ Nelson, "Only a Paper Moon," 8-10, 22-23.

and gave the appearance of more skin.⁸⁶ And scantily clad waitresses wandered the club tending to the needs of patrons. A giant fishbowl containing an unclothed woman attracted patrons to the bar at the Casino de Paree. Likewise, the Gay Nineties bar in Billy Rose's Music Hall featured a wishing well offering those who peered inside reflected glimpses of a naked woman residing inside the well.⁸⁷ Rose's claim to the local press in Fort Worth that his venues did not contain nudity or smut represented pure fabrication.

With midways at the recent world's fairs becoming expressions of pure hedonism, it seemed a foregone conclusion that Rose would have eventually become a purveyor of entertainment at such expositions. Rose knew well that world's fairs had become showcases for the exotic—scenes which fair goers could not see in their home towns.⁸⁸ In many instances this meant nudity. Both the growing popularity of nudity in nightclubs, such as Rose's, and burlesque shows and the burgeoning sexual freedoms experienced by young women in the 1930s played important roles in shaping the character of midway attractions available at Depression Era world's fairs.⁸⁹ Rose's preemptive comments regarding what he labeled "smut," are indicative of the prevalence of exotic or provocative entertainment which lined the midways of world's fairs dating back to the Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Attractions found along the midway such as the Streets of Cairo and later the Streets of Paris at Chicago's 1933 Century of Progress presenting fair goers with entertainment featuring scantily clad if not nude women would emerge as the

⁸⁶ Waggoner, *Nightclub Nights*, 11-15, 43.

⁸⁷ Nelson, "Only a Paper Moon," 23, 25.

⁸⁸ Jack Gordon, "Billy's Amusement Fantasy Makes Our Head Swim," *Fort Worth Press*, March 9, 1936, 1.

⁸⁹ Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair*, 14.

most popular and memorable venues of these expositions. In fact, the revenue garnered from the Streets of Paris exhibit at the Century of Progress prompted officials, who favored a healthy bottom-line over unflinching morality, to look the other way.⁹⁰ Prior to a public outcry of indecency and the elimination of offensive entertainment, the nude dancers at Zorro's Gardens and a stripper named Gold Gulch Gertie were among the more popular attractions at the 1935-36 San Diego's World Fair.⁹¹

Even the annual Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show offered entertainment reminiscent of the offerings at world's fairs. In the automobile building, the Rainbeau Garden, boasting a "French Village Atmosphere" and "Sixteen Glorious Continental Beauties" offered matinee and evening dance and floor shows accompanied by Bert Lown's NBC Orchestra. The headlining event, the *Folies de Patee* featured bubble dancer Reggie Roth and Muff Dancer Tyna Ravel. Ads in the stock show's program and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* featured young women in various stages of undress, though the show likely contained no nudity.⁹² The evening Rose arrived in Fort Worth to assume direction of the Frontier Centennial, Amon Carter accompanied him to the Rainbeau Garden. After watching the floor show, Rose stood before the audience and exclaimed "I am confident that Texas and the Southwest will come to see pretty girls, hear good music and be entertained."⁹³

⁹⁰ Lisa Krissoff Boehm, "The Fair and the Fan Dancer: A Century of Progress and Chicago's Image," *Chicago History* 27, no. 2 (July 1998): 54-55.

⁹¹ Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory*, 196.

⁹² Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 88. See also Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Souvenir Annual, 1935, 1, Box 1, Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show Programs, FTWPLA; "Rainbeau Garden!" Advertisement, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 15, 1935, 10.

⁹³ A. H. Montford Jr., "Billy Rose is Back More Enthusiastic than Ever," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 14, 1936, 1-2.

Though it is unknown why Carter brought Rose to the Rainbeau Garden, the immediacy of the trip on Rose's first evening in Fort Worth suggests that Carter hoped to introduce to the showman to the type of entertainment typically available during the stock show. As indicated by his pronouncements at the Rainbeau Garden, the presence of bubble dancers and showgirls probably suggested to Rose that audiences from the city and state would embrace the revues he had in mind for the Frontier Centennial.

Despite the prevailing atmosphere of sexualized spectacle Americans had become accustomed to seeing at world's fairs, the celebration in Dallas initially appeared devoid of the exotic entertainment featured at the midways of these expositions. Extant evidence suggests the increase of sex appeal at the Central Exposition in Dallas appeared after Billy Rose's arrival in Fort Worth. In August 1935, Nat D. Rogers, concessions director for the Central Exposition, speaking of one of the more popular offerings at San Diego's World's Fair "ridiculed the idea of a nudist colony as crude and vulgar," but understood its appeal.⁹⁴ The only publicized hint of sexual allure came in December 1935 when the official Texas centennial publication, *Centennial News*, announced the organization of the Texas Rangerette Company. Dressed in boots, spurs, and ten gallon hats, this group of twenty-five "of the most beautiful girls in Texas" assumed the role of official centennial hostesses.⁹⁵ Rose's reputation as a showman, creator of spectacle, and purveyor of sex appeal likely gave Dallas officials pause. Within weeks of his arrival, Dallas planners began augmenting the centennial exposition with additional entertainment venues some of which would

⁹⁴ "Beauty of San Diego Nudist Colony 'Gets' Texas Centennial Concessions Director," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 21, 1935, 1.

⁹⁵ "Texas Rangerettes Great Visitors to Exposition," *Centennial News*, December 7, 1935, 3.

duplicate planned features of the Frontier Centennial.⁹⁶ W. S. McHenry, the concessions manager of the Central Exposition, met with John H. McMahon, producer of the infamous Streets of Paris concession at Chicago's Century of Progress. Thanks in part to his discovery of Sally Rand, the Streets of Paris became one of the most profitable and memorable features of Chicago's fair. After touring the centennial grounds, McMahon announced his interest in spending \$250,000 for the construction of a new Streets of Paris exhibit at the Dallas exposition.⁹⁷ By the end of March, McMahon signed on as a concessionaire for the centennial.⁹⁸ His plans called for the construction of a replica of the *S.S. Normandie*, a modern French luxury ocean liner, to house his concession.

McMahon, however, lacked the primary attraction that made the Streets of Paris a smashing success in Chicago—Sally Rand. Rand emerged not only as the most memorable feature of the Century of Progress but also its financial savior. Initially Chicago planners disdained the notion that they would allow the debauched entertainment exhibited at the Columbian Exposition to tarnish the reputation of their exposition. A major reason for hosting an exposition was to counter the city's notoriety for vice and poverty through demonstrations of progress. Despite such claims, the Century of Progress did host numerous exhibits featuring displays of the female body in beauty contests and dancing and modeling shows. Eventually Chicago planners would count on the revenue produced by tawdry late-night entertainment ranging from nude posing and stripping to taxi dancing at venues such as the Streets of Paris. According to Century of Progress historian Cheryl R.

⁹⁶ William Monnig to Arthur L. Kramer, no date.

⁹⁷ "Sally Rand's Boss is Ready to Spend \$250,000 at Fair," *Dallas Morning News*, March 17, 1936, 10.

⁹⁸ "'Streets of Paris' Seen for Centennial," *Dallas Morning News*, March 27, 1936, 14.

Ganz, by looking the other way, Century of Progress officials helped increase the “commoditization of women’s sexuality at the world’s fair.”⁹⁹ Planners, however, never wanted such entertainment to define the exposition.¹⁰⁰

Like Chicago’s Century of Progress, Sally Rand would become an important figure in the Frontier Centennial and the ensuing battle regarding the role of women as commodified sexual objects and the identity and image of Fort Worth as a modern city of the American West. In the year preceding the opening of the Century of Progress, Sally Rand found herself stranded in Chicago after the show she toured with, *Sweethearts on Parade*, closed. Born Harriet Helen Beck, in Elkton, Missouri, in 1904, Rand spent most of her life until that point seeking a career in dance. A runaway at fourteen, Rand worked as an acrobatic circus performer, toured with a ballet company, and studied modeling at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1923 Rand moved to Hollywood hoping to find work as a dancer, but ended up working as a stunt woman. Eventually she landed a contract with Cecil B. DeMille’s new stock company. Rand appeared in a number of DeMille’s pictures including an ironic part as handmaiden to Mary Magdalene in *King of Kings*. She idolized DeMille, who, inspired by a Rand McNally world atlas, gave her the stage name “Sally Rand.” While in Hollywood, Rand appeared in dozens of films produced by a number of studios. Unfortunately for Rand, the 1927 premiere of *The Jazz Singer* signaled the end of the silent era. Apparently, Rand’s

⁹⁹ Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World’s Fair*, 14.

¹⁰⁰ See Boehm, “The Fair and the Fan Dancer,” 42-52.

Ozark twang and lisp, limited her appeal for talking motion pictures. Rand continued to search for employment in dance and appeared in several acts before arriving in Chicago.¹⁰¹

Because Rand told several versions of her rise to stardom, the origin of her “Fan Dance” remains obscured. As told by her biographer, in desperation Rand answered an ad for exotic acts posted by the Paramount Club in Chicago. Hit by hard times, the club sought new acts to boost its revenue. Finding a large pair of pink ostrich feather fans in a second-hand store, she worked out an act with the feathers. Unable to sew an appropriate costume, Rand, at the suggestion of another dancer, took the stage with little more than the plumage to obscure the view of onlookers. As she danced, Rand maneuvered the fans to screen her exposed torso. In subsequent performances she appeared in a sheer body stocking, a thick layer of grease paint, or other states of undress depending upon the circumstances. With the addition of Rand’s act, the Paramount Club began to attract large audiences.¹⁰²

Rand hoped to find a home for her act with the Century of Progress after learning about the Streets of Paris concession on the midway. Having failed to get a hearing with concession owners, with Ed Callahan, the manager of the Paramount Club, she conceived of a plan to promote herself by crashing the May 27 preopening party for the exposition for Chicago’s elite hosted by the wife of media mogul, Millicent Hearst, in the newly opened Streets of Paris concession. Rand rented a white horse fitted with a white saddle. Denied an entrance at the front gate, because she had no ticket, Rand gained access at the back

¹⁰¹ See Holly Knox, *Sally Rand: From Film to Fans* (Bend, Oregon: Maverick Publications, 1988), 1-18. See also Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 169.

¹⁰² Knox, *Sally Rand: From Film to Fans*, 19-22.

entrance from a yacht on Lake Michigan, with the help of Callahan. Donning a blond wig, velvet cape, and floral ankle band, Rand rode the horse sidesaddle onto the stage stunning the crowd. The befuddled emcee announced amid a roaring applause “And now Lady Godiva will take her famous ride.” The police quickly escorted Rand away from the party and booked her for obscenity. The scheme worked, with the aid of an exposition attorney, Rand was released and offered a contract headlining the Café de la Paix’s floor show at the Streets of Paris.¹⁰³ Thanks, in large part, to Rand the Streets of Paris sometimes made more than \$100,000 a day. Though a version of the dance originated in New York in 1930, Rand made the dance a national craze spawning numerous imitators.¹⁰⁴ Rand’s success, like Billy Rose’s, lay in her ability to tap the desire for “consumption-based sex and spectacle” burgeoning in American during the Great Depression. Ultimately, Rand “brought credibility to burlesque dancing by taking it into the public arena and presenting it with pride and a level of perfection that made it an art.”¹⁰⁵

Rand’s stardom, however, came at a price. Though Century of Progress officials refused to enforce the city’s indecency laws, Rand’s dance sparked a heated debate over public nudity in Chicago. After viewing the show, attorney Mary Belle Spencer aided by Chicago Mayor Edward Kelly filed a suit against the fair arguing it violated the state’s anti-obscenity law which prohibited “lewd” or lascivious” exhibitions. Though Rand continually found herself brought before the courts, Chicago judges were simply unwilling to file

¹⁰³ Knox, *Sally Rand: From Film to Fans*, 23-32; Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World’s Fair*, 9-10. Quote from Terkel, *Hard Times*, 150.

¹⁰⁴ Rachel Shteir, *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 149.

¹⁰⁵ Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World’s Fair*, 18 (1st quotation), 27 (2nd quotation).

injunctions against the offending establishments.¹⁰⁶ Rand always maintained in court that because of her training in dance, her performances rose above the other forms of tawdry entertainment available on the midway. She argued the fan dance showcased the beauty and grace of the feminine form making it a work of art.

Ultimately financial disputes regarding her contract with the Streets of Paris prompted Rand to leave the fair. She traveled to New York to perform at the Paramount Theater. While away from Chicago, she invented a new act—the bubble dance. During the new performance, she used a large custom-made transparent balloon to obstruct her nakedness from audiences while dancing. This dance, like the fan dance, generated numerous imitations. Rand also traveled to Hollywood, making several motion pictures and increasing her notoriety which she drew upon to negotiate a more lucrative contract to perform in the Italian Village and later the Oriental Village at the Century of Progress in 1934.¹⁰⁷

Though Rose never mentioned his intention to bring Rand to the Frontier Centennial, it seems likely she was on his list of candidates. Rand represented the gold standard for exotic entertainment on the midway of Depression Era world's fairs. Though it is unknown if Rose extended an invitation to meet with Rand, prior to a two week engagement at the San Diego fair, Rand stopped for a layover in Fort Worth during the first week of April.¹⁰⁸ Offering advice about the content of the Frontier Centennial she told reporters "Your show's got to have sex appeal." "People don't go to expositions to get

¹⁰⁶ For details of court battles see Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair*, 21-25.

¹⁰⁷ Shteir, *Striptease*, 152-153; Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of Rand's appearance in San Diego see Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory*, 219-221.

educated," she quipped referring to Dallas, "They go to see things they don't see at home." Touting a new version of her dance apparently incorporating electricity and rays of light, she told the press she would like to introduce the new number at the Frontier Centennial. When reporters pressed Rose if he was interested in Rand's offer he said coyly, "I'm considering everybody."¹⁰⁹ Rose evidently offered Rand a spot in Frontier Centennial which she accepted.¹¹⁰ And almost immediately Rose changed his tune regarding fan dances and the propriety of nudity in the Frontier Centennial. A few weeks after his meeting with Rand he told the press, "I am supposed to keep it clean, but [it] will probably be a little on the nude side."¹¹¹ Rose's comments about the possibility of nudity aside, Fort Worthians initially appeared indifferent to the contracting of the infamous dancer.

Still, the hiring of Rand and the sexualized promotion of the celebration which shortly followed denoted a significant shift in the role women would play at the Frontier Centennial. Promotional material for the Frontier Centennial until mid-April consisted of small and innocuous blurbs noting the Fort Worth's celebration as one of many events hosted by Texas cities during its centennial year. On April 14 Ned Alvord, Rose's longtime press agent arrived to help Rose sell the fledgling celebration to Americans.¹¹² Alvord played an important role in several of Rose's previous productions including *Jumbo* and *Crazy Quilt*

¹⁰⁹ "Sally Rand: 'Frontier Show Needs Some Sex Appeal,'" *Fort Worth Press*, April 8, 1936, 2. See also Bess Stephenson, "Sally to Use Electricity in Dance to Shock 'Em," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 8, 1936, 1-2.

¹¹⁰ "Billy Rose, 'Now a Texan,' Tells Jumbo Works of Frontier Show's Magnitude," *Fort Worth Press*, April 21, 1936, 1.

¹¹¹ "Billy Rose, 'Now a Texan,' Tells Jumbo Works of Frontier Show's Magnitude," *Fort Worth Press*, April 21, 1936, 1.

¹¹² "Ned Alvord Has Arrived, Folks!" *Fort Worth Press*, April 14, 1936, 1.

and relished the opportunity to promote the Frontier Centennial.¹¹³ The western theme, the musical rodeo, Frontier Follies, *Jumbo*, and of course the girls, according to Alvord provided “more chance for exploitation” than any of the previous venues he had promoted. “Even the big fairs,” he added, “never had the comprehensive layout that this show has.” Alvord arrived with a preliminary outline for promoting the show. He told the press he planned to saturate the region from Albuquerque on the west to Mississippi on the east and Hutchison, Kansas, on the north to the Gulf on the south with posters, billboards, hand bills, and newspaper ads promoting the show.¹¹⁴ Wasting no time, Alvord took his plans to the Board of Control which promptly allocated an \$80,000 budget for promoting Fort Worth’s exposition.¹¹⁵ Within weeks the first wave of promotional materials surfaced.¹¹⁶

A month later the main thrust of the campaign began. Alvord ordered the printing of hundreds of thousands of posters and banners in a variety of shapes and sizes heralding the show. From the Fort Worth stock show’s poultry building, Alvord organized and loaded eight trucks manned by twenty-five “bill posters” set to deluge nine states in the Southwest with promotional materials. Traveling the major highways of the region, the caravans plastered broadsides on every billboard, railroad station, and store front.¹¹⁷ Broadsides also found their way onto private fences, barns, and outhouses. If caught, the college-age bill

¹¹³ Nelson, “*Only a Paper Moon*”, 19, 30.

¹¹⁴ A. H. Montford Jr., “Alvord Arrives Full of Enthusiasm for Centennial Promotional Duties,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 14, 1936, 5.

¹¹⁵ Nelson, “*Only a Paper Moon*,” 52.

¹¹⁶ “Stickers Will Advertise Frontier Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 23, 1936, 9.

¹¹⁷ “Frontier Posters are Assembled in Largest Bill Room,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening Edition, May 26, 1936, clipping in Frontier Centennial Scrapbook, Volume II, TCU/SC; “Will Not Keep Show Secret,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 22, 1936, 19.

posters allegedly paid-off farmers with free tickets to the show.¹¹⁸ Advertisement materials also graced eleven-thousand illuminated billboards. Dallas, a focal point of the campaign, received 3,500 posters and eighty illuminated billboards. In all, centennial planners estimated the promotional materials would reach twelve-million people.¹¹⁹

Although Rose made no secret that the showgirl would occupy center stage in the Frontier Centennial, many Fort Worth citizens were ill prepared for the content of the promotional campaign Rose and Alvord intended to mount in behalf of the exposition. Millions received their first impression of the Frontier Centennial and Fort Worth from a young woman covered only by a bandana cinched at the waist mounted atop a bucking steed. The image, created by a local woman,¹²⁰ borrowed heavily from promotional photographs of rodeo queens appearing atop a rearing horse to appear in the early 1930s. Signaling a fundamental shift in the attitudes of Americans towards the place of women in a sport traditionally dominated by men; according to Renee M. Laegreid, the image emerged as a part of a growing acceptance of the athleticism exhibited by women participating in rodeo concomitant with the glamorization of the cowgirl both in movies and dime novels. Movie stars and entertainers regularly posed for these “cheesecake shots,” and by the

¹¹⁸William E. Jary, “Facts on the Billy Rose Fort Worth FRONTIER CENTENNIAL 1936,” circa 1960, Box 8, Folder 5, William E. Jary Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas.

¹¹⁹ “Show Ads will Cover 9 States,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 10, 1936, 3.

¹²⁰ Apparently the first drawing of “a girl in an abbreviated costume atop a bucking bronc” came from Mrs. Pauline Belew of Fort Worth. The official version which received much wider distribution came from Jewel Brannon Parker, a local artist. See “Stickers Will Advertise Frontier Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 23, 1936, 9; “How’re They Going to Stay Away?” *Fort Worth Press*, May 5, 1936, 3.

second half of the 1930s glamorized images of cowgirls saturated the media.¹²¹ By 1936, the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show hosted the third largest rodeo in the nation likely making the image a familiar one among Fort Worthians.¹²² Though not responsible for the image itself, Fort Worth is certainly responsible for its overt sexualization as a result of the Frontier Centennial. The further sexualization of an image, which formed a part of a trend legitimizing the display of the female body, signaled another important step in the commodification of women for sexual appeal during Fort Worth's celebration.

Not to be confused with the title formerly awarded to Alice McWhorter, the iconic lady on horseback also known as "Miss Fort Worth" became the primary symbol of the centennial. The "official hostess" of the celebration, graced nearly all promotional signage and literature including stickers, posters, leaflets, and billboards.¹²³ Eventually nine versions of the Miss Fort Worth image, each one posing in various degrees of undress, appeared on promotional literature and show programs for the celebration.¹²⁴

A new slogan also accompanied the debut of Miss Fort Worth. Here again Rose and Alvord drew upon well-known western terminology and altered it to hint at a naughtier side of the exposition's entertainment. They conjoined the terms Wild West, borrowed from William F. Cody's frontier show, and whoopee, an expression for wild revelry but also a

¹²¹ Laegreid, *Riding Pretty*, 98-101.

¹²² Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 188.

¹²³ "How're They Going to Stay Away?" *Fort Worth Press*, May 5, 1936, 3.

¹²⁴ For example, see *Bulletin of the Tarrant County Medical Society*, 9 no 3 (June 1936), 8-9.

double entendre for sex, to create the slogan “Wild and Whoo-Pee!”¹²⁵ Pairing the image of Miss Fort Worth and the new motto made a sexual interpretation implicit.

The ad campaign consisted of other advertising venues as well. Sporting signs carrying the phrases “Wild and Whoop-ee” and “Where the Fun Begins” and a poster of Miss Fort Worth, a ten passenger Stinson plane traveling to destinations throughout the nation would advertise the exposition.¹²⁶ Local radio stations also trumpeted the centennial. Amon Carter’s radio station, WBAP, broadcast a show providing progress reports for the centennial grounds, novelty acts, and music from the Frontier Centennial programs preformed by the Frontier Troubadours.¹²⁷ In a blatant attempt to draw centennial-goers west to spend their dollars in Fort Worth, Frontier Centennial officials initiated plans to construct a large sign advertising the show outside the main gate of the Dallas exposition. After receiving permission from officials of the central exposition and approval of the design plans from the Dallas city inspector, construction began atop a row of two story buildings.¹²⁸ Weighing in at two tons, the forty by 130 foot sign, claimed to be the second largest in the world, could reportedly be viewed from any anywhere in the

¹²⁵ The *Oxford Dictionary* defines whoopee as “wild celebration and merrymaking” and the phrase make whoopee as “celebrate wildly” or “have sexual intercourse.” See *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 2001, 3d ed., “Whoopee,” ed. Catherine Soanes.

¹²⁶ “Aviators to Barnstorm and Advertise Show Here,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 7, 1936, 1. To promote the show’s sex appeal, Rose unsuccessfully attempted to obtain a zeppelin from Hitler’s Germany to fly fifty showgirls from New York to Fort Worth. See Amon G. Carter to James R. Record, April 8, 1936, Box 89, Folder “Frontier Centennial,” Carter Papers.

¹²⁷ “Frontier Centennial News on Radio Program for Tonight,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 22, 1936, 19.

¹²⁸ “No Protest to Ft. Worth Sign,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 9, 1936, 1; “New Frontier Sign Plans Submitted,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 23, 1936, 8.

Magic City.¹²⁹ In giant neon letters, the sign beckoned to visitors “WILD & Whoo-pee, 45 minutes west” accompanied by an animated bucking bronco moving across the sign.¹³⁰ Speaking of its content, the sign’s designer, William E. Jary, later claimed the inclusion of the phrase “Wild and Whoo-pee” was “calculated to excite anyone who saw it.”¹³¹ Following Fort Worth’s lead, officials in Dallas also initiated plans to build a sign advertising the Central Exposition on Camp Bowie Boulevard opposite the main entrance of the Frontier Centennial.¹³²

As discussed in the previous chapter, prior to Rose’s arrival, with a few exceptions, the Dallas and Fort Worth expositions maintained an amicable relationship.¹³³ The association of Rose with the Fort Worth exposition, however, apparently sent Dallas on the defensive. As suggested by the catchphrase “Go to Dallas for Education, Come to Fort Worth for Entertainment,” Rose cast the two expositions in competitive terms from the outset. His subsequent characterization of the Dallas exposition as an imitation of the Century of Progress in Chicago in *Variety* and *The Billboard* produced a heated exchange between the Board of Control and the Management Committee of the Texas Centennial

¹²⁹ “Permit Issued at Dallas for Giant Sign Pointing Way to Frontier Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 3, 1936, 1; “Giant ‘Whoopie’ Sign Clears Its Last Big Hurdle,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 10, 1936, 22.

¹³⁰ Jones, 49. “Giant ‘Whoopie’ Sign Clears Its Last Big Hurdle,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 10, 1936, 22.

¹³¹ Jack Gordon, “Biggest most brazen Signboard recalled by Casa publicist,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 14, 1974, copy in “Frontier Centennial,” Vertical Files, FTWPLA.

¹³² “Fort Worth and Dallas Wage ‘Battle of Signs,’” *Fort Worth Press*, May 18, 1936, 1.

¹³³ Amon Carter stated just days after Rose’s arrival: “Fort Worth is fortunate in being close to the Central Exposition at Dallas, and Dallas in turn, expects the Frontier Centennial to be a drawing card for its celebration.” See “Break Earth for Frontier Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 11, 1936, 1-2.

Central Exposition.¹³⁴ After visiting the Central Exposition grounds in Dallas, in his comments to the press, Rose again drew a sharp contrast between the Fort Worth and Dallas expositions. Although he praised the Central Exposition as having “an imposing layout” patterned after the Chicago Century of Progress, Rose claimed the offerings of the Frontier Centennial were more “strictly in the spirit of Texas.” Rose explained to the press, however, that based upon his experiences in Dallas, he expected “nice cooperation” between the two celebrations.¹³⁵

Still, the actions of the opposing expositions influenced the offerings of the other. Sally Rand’s commitment to the Frontier Centennial left McMahon scrambling to find a replacement for the popular fan dancer. He’d promised Rand’s fan and bubble dance, would come “back in numbers” when visitors witnessed the sensations he promised to unveil.¹³⁶ McMahon and others developed venues presenting sexually-charged entertainment for the Dallas midway on par with the other century-of-progress expositions of the 1930s.¹³⁷ The Streets of Paris concession would ultimately present Andre Lasky’s French Revue featuring Mona Lleslie, who plunged into a flaming pool of water sans bathing suit. Rivaling the Streets of Paris, the Streets of All Nations concession featured a nude Mlle. Corrine who danced with an oversized apple. Both the Streets of Paris and Streets of All Nations also

¹³⁴ “The City of Fort Worth,” *Variety*, March 11, 1936, 38; “The City of Fort Worth,” *The Billboard* March 14, 1936, 5; Arthur L. Kramer to William Monnig, March 19, 1936 and William Monnig to Arthur L. Kramer, no date, Box 89, Folder “Frontier Centennial,” Carter Papers.

¹³⁵ “Frontier Show to Have Texas Spirit,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 16, 1936, 4.

¹³⁶ “Centennial Names its Sally Rand; A Flame Dancer,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 18, 1936, 8.

¹³⁷ Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 135-154.

featured peep shows presenting images of naked women.¹³⁸ Eventually, Dallas pulled out all the stops. Based upon a report revealing that Fort Worth received a substantial portion of inbound freeway traffic, a group of concerned Dallas politicians known as the “Catfish Council” worked to open the city to all forms of vice, most notably prostitution. Without the knowledge of Dallas Mayor George Sergeant, the City Health Department issued 2,400 “health cards” to reported prostitutes.¹³⁹

The rivalry between Fort Worth and Dallas helped spur commodified sexual roles played by women at both celebrations. Believing healthy competition would benefit both expositions, officials in Fort Worth, and to a lesser extent those in Dallas, embraced the rivalry. At the annual West Texas Chamber of Commerce meeting in May, representatives of Fort Worth and West Texas pledged with R. L. Thornton, chairman of the Managing Board of the Central Centennial Exposition, to “outrival” each other believing the entire state of Texas would benefit from a “finish fight” between the two metropolitans.¹⁴⁰ The rivalry also proved invaluable to Fort Worth for promotional purposes. At Rose’s urging the Board of Control hired Richard Maney, one of Rose’s former press agents, to represent the show in New York.¹⁴¹ Maney worked to arrange media coverage in the major national media

¹³⁸ For a detailed discussion of the offerings at the Streets of Paris and the Streets of All Nations see Cummins, “From the Midway to the Hall of State at Fair Park,” 228-229. See also Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 259; “Lasky’s French Revue to Open Preview Ball for Streets of Paris,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 31, 1936, 2; “The Midway Gazette: John McMahon Speaks Up on Rand, Corinne,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 1936, 5.

¹³⁹ Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 287-288.

¹⁴⁰ “West Texas, Fort Worth and Dallas Join Hands for Centennial Shows,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 13, 1936, 1-2.

¹⁴¹ Maney, *Fanfare*, 165.

outlets,¹⁴² and the rivalry made a convenient angle to pitch to reporters and columnists.

Though occasionally mentioning showgirls or the frontier theme, the press found the rivalry irresistible. Publications such as *Collier's*, *Vogue*, *The Literary Digest*, *Business Week*, *Time*, *Variety*, and *Architectural Forum* all couched their coverage of Fort Worth's participation in the centennial in terms of the rivalry.¹⁴³ In the process the national media elevated Fort Worth alongside Dallas and provided the Frontier Centennial with free publicity.

Most coverage, however, focused on the central exposition in Dallas and in some cases dismissed Fort Worth's centennial offering as a petty and vindictive sideshow produced in an attempt to harm Dallas. Unprepared for such an interpretive tack, an irate Carter fired off a letter to *Collier's* magazine complaining about Owen P. White's article which described Fort Worth as "resurrect[ing] its ancient animosity on the strength of which it is planning to put on a special show."¹⁴⁴ White's "treatment of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," wrote Carter, "is both niggardly and unfair." Though he objected to the limited coverage of the Frontier Centennial compared with the central exposition, Carter found the article's assertion that Fort Worth staged its own celebration purely out of hatred for Dallas disconcerting. "There is no animosity between Fort Worth and Dallas," Carter quickly explained. "There has been a friendly rivalry for generations, and, in my opinion, the rivalry

¹⁴² Billy Rose to Amon G. Carter, June 3, 1936, Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

¹⁴³ See Owen P. White, "Texas Roundup," *Collier's*, May 30, 1936, 21, 64-65; Stanley Walker, "Texas Range: A Sketch of Violent Texas and Its Two Rival Fairs," *Vogue*, June 1, 1936, 66-67, 108; "Texas Fiesta: Lone Star Land's Centenary; Southwest in Gala Mood for Parties," *The Literary Digest*, June 6, 1936, 32; "The Lone Star Rise and Shines," *Business Week*, June 6, 1936, 17-18, 20; and "Bluebonnet Boldness," *Time*, June 8, 1936, 11-13; "Ft. Worth Starts Thinkin' Dallas' Gal Stuff Beat 'Em to the Punch," *Variety*, June 17, 1936, 1, 63; "Fort Worth Festival," *Architectural Forum*, September 1936, 9, 39.

¹⁴⁴ Owen P. White, "Texas Roundup," *Collier's*, May 30, 1936, 65.

has done both good, for it has been a competitive rivalry that has kept both on their civic toes.”¹⁴⁵ Carter’s complaints regarding the *Collier’s* article and his rebuttal illustrate his primary desire that Fort Worth be depicted on equal footing with Dallas in the rivalry. Although a subsequent article appearing in *Vogue* also gave the Frontier Centennial short-shrift, Carter loved the piece because it noted “The two cities always have hated each other” and perhaps because it claimed that “Fort Worth, despite its occasional pretensions to culture, remains somewhat proud that it is distinctly a Western town, while its sister to the East is as stuck-up as anything.”¹⁴⁶ Notwithstanding the discrepancy between space devoted to the central exposition and that of the Frontier Centennial, Carter and Rose reveled in the cheap publicity provided by the national media coverage.¹⁴⁷

In mid-May Rose achieved a major promotional coup which would have implications for the depiction of women as objects at the Frontier Centennial. On May 15, he arranged with a representative of the monthly motion picture newsreel *The March of Time* to shoot a full-length episode covering the Frontier Centennial. The wildly popular news series debuted in 1935 and introduced audiences to “a new kind of pictorial journalism.” Surpassing existing newsreels, *The March of Time* offered twenty to thirty minutes of interpretive analysis and dramatic coverage of a single news story. Adding context to its reports narrated by Westbrook Van Voorhis, the producers often combined both live action coverage and reenactments. Despite its high journalistic aims and production values, *The*

¹⁴⁵ Amon G. Carter to Mr. Maxwell, no date, Box 89, Folder “Frontier Centennial,” Carter Papers.

¹⁴⁶ Stanley Walker, “Texas Range: A Sketch of Violent Texas and Its Two Rival Fairs,” *Vogue*, June 1, 1936, 66-67; Amon G. Carter to Conde Nast, no date, Box 220, Folder, “Walker, Stanley [Vogue article on Texas Centennial],” Carter Papers.

¹⁴⁷ Billy Rose to Amon G. Carter, June 3, 1936.

March of Time's sharp interpretive slant bordered on rhetoric rather than journalism and in several instances embroiled the newsreel in controversy. Still, by 1936, episodes of *The March of Times* regularly screened in more than five-thousand theaters in 3,200 cities nationally and internationally.¹⁴⁸ Coverage of the Frontier Centennial in an episode of *The March of Time* extended the promotional campaign far beyond the media blitz in the Southwest and the coverage in the national print media. Elated with the exposure the Frontier Centennial would receive from the newsreel, Rose declared, "It's the best individual publicity feature our show could get."¹⁴⁹

By mid-June, *The March of Time* episode billed as "The Battle of a Centennial" began showing in theaters nation-wide.¹⁵⁰ True to form, the reel presented a deeply biased and inaccurate picture of the centennial developments in the state. Placing the Fort Worth-Dallas feud at the heart of the story, the reel claimed the centennial rivalry between the two cities represented the most recent fight in a long heritage of fighters in Texas. Noting the honor accorded to Dallas after defeating Fort Worth in the fight to host the official exposition, the story cuts to a reenactment featuring Amon G. Carter rallying a group of boosters to put on a rival celebration. "You'd think Dallas invented Texas," Carter shouted from a pulpit, "just because they bid higher for the centennial than any other city. But we're going to put on a show of our own and teach those dudes, over there, where the West really begins." The reel moves onto the hiring of Billy Rose including a reenactment of Rose

¹⁴⁸ Mike Dillon, "March of Time, The," in *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*, ed. Stephen L. Vaughn (New York: Routledge, 2008), 292-293.

¹⁴⁹ "March of Time Plans to Film Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Press*, May 16, 1936, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Jack Gordon, "Here's Preview of that 'March of Time' Reel on Fort Worth-Dallas Feud," *Fort Worth Press*, June 18, 1936, 12.

proposing the legendary fee of \$1,000 a day for one-hundred days from his office in New York. Cutting back to Fort Worth, Rose tells a group of boosters from atop a horse, “The battle between Fort Worth and Dallas is right up my alley. And if you people string along with me, I’ll make Texas the biggest state of the Union.”

Amid scenes of the *Jumbo* circus-theater and the Casa Mañana theater, the building intended to house Rose’s Frontier Follies, rising on the Frontier Centennial grounds, the narrator delineates the subject of the most recent competition. He explains the buildings rising on the centennial grounds are “to be filled to bursting with . . . eye bedeviling coryphées [dancers], mostly nude.” With shots of Jonny McMahon, the reel explains that “Dallas resolves to liven up its own midway” by adding sex lectures and the Streets of Paris concession. With shots of showgirls rehearsing, Sally Rand packing her ostrich feathers, the Rangerettes, a shot of Lady Godiva from the Streets of Paris, the balance of the reels provides shots of Fort Worth and Dallas attempting to top the other with more girls and more nudity. The narrator concludes, “The keynote of the Texas centennial becomes sex appeal.” The final scene featured Colonel Andrew Jackson Houston, the only surviving son of Sam Houston, shaking his head in disbelief at the content of the centennial celebration.¹⁵¹

Fort Worth received a lion’s share of the nearly seven minute spot. Moreover, the newsreel merged the two themes Frontier Centennial officials cultivated in the promotion of the exposition—sex appeal and the rivalry. The reel’s focus on the risqué and the rivalry, however, came at the expense of the celebration’s western-theme. Not only did the reel fail

¹⁵¹ *The March of Time* (newsreel), “The Battle of a Centennial,” (originally aired June 1936), Archives, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

to mention the name of Fort Worth's centennial offering, with the exception of Frontier Centennial signage in the background, several shots of Miss Fort Worth posters, Rose and Carter in cowboy garb, and Carter's rant about showing Dallas where the West really begins, it made no mention of the frontier or the Old West. Rather than providing glimpses of the reproduced frontier buildings or the sets and stage of the *Last Frontier*, Rose's musical rodeo/Wild West show, *The March of Time* episode only provided scenes of the Casa Mañana theater and the *Jumbo* circus-theater. Notwithstanding the omissions, the content of the newsreel no doubt elated Rose and the Frontier Centennial planners.¹⁵²

Officials in Dallas likely chafed at *The March of Time's* reduction of the Central Exposition to a "leg show." In an editorial, the *Dallas Morning News* dismissed the slant of the newsreel claiming, "Dallas was fully stocked with undraped torsos, to say nothing of limbs, long ere Fort Worth decided to catch on to our coattails."¹⁵³ John Rosenfield Jr., author of the column "The Passing Show," in the *Dallas Morning News*, labeled the newsreel "a good story but hardly a true one." "With much soundness of contention," he wrote, "Dallas will argue that its lively Midway would have been much like it is without the Billy Rose threat." Interestingly, Rosenfield attributed the Frontier Centennial with influencing another aspect of the Central Exposition. "If the threat of rivalry from Fort Worth has influenced Dallas at all," he wrote, "it is in the assortment of frontier shacks, Roy

¹⁵² Billy Rose to Amon G. Carter, June 15, 1936, Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

¹⁵³ "Centennial Fight in 'Time' Release," *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1936, 3.

Bean's judicial grocery store, etc., at the south end of the park. In presenting the new Texas to the world, Dallas almost forgot the old."¹⁵⁴

The March of Time's characterization of the Frontier Centennial as "a monster leg show" with "eye bedeviling coryphées, mostly nude" played right into the promotional tactics devised by Alvord. As a bill poster for Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey circus, Alvord learned his promotional techniques from Alf T. Ringling. Alvord specialized in whipping up controversy around the shows he promoted through chicanery. One of his favorite schemes included conning the moral authorities in rural communities in which his shows toured to denounce the show as filth. After tricking the local newspaper to print ads featuring a spread of nearly nude women encircled by catchphrases such as "Dashing Demoiselles," "A Saturnalia of Wanton Rhythm," or "Voluptuous Houris," Alvord, dressed as a clergyman, met with local pastors prior to the arrival of the show and convinced them to condemn the production. The ads promising a show featuring forbidden delights and the accompanying religious denunciation made the shows irresistible, especially to a rural population. Such tactics not only packed local theaters, but also earned Alvord a nickname—"The Dirty Deacon."¹⁵⁵ When peddling Rose's *Crazy Quilt*, Alvord reputedly convinced the mayor of Minneapolis to ban the production from the city. As a result the show played to sold-out crowds in neighboring St. Paul. In the following election, the mayor failed to retain his position because he "had made Minneapolis a hick town in the eyes of

¹⁵⁴ John Rosenfield Jr., "The Passing Show," *Dallas Morning News*, June 16, 1936, section 2, 4.

¹⁵⁵ Rose, *Wine, Women and Words*, 14; Maurice Zolotow, "The Fabulous Billy Rose," *Collier's*, March 1, 1947, 54.

the world.”¹⁵⁶ The ultimate irony of Alvord’s promotional schemes was that the show never actually delivered naughtiness on the scale implied by the ads and the denunciations.

Without the prompting of a collar-clad Alvord, the Fort Worth clergy fell into his trap. Though the hiring of Sally Rand and her rumored “Nude Ranch” became potent symbols of the immoral direction of the Frontier Centennial, ultimately Alvord’s promotion pushed local religious organizations to act. Though the nearly nude Frontier Centennial symbol Miss Fort Worth and the accompanying slogan “Wild and Whoo-Pee,” likely gave the resident pastors pause, they found the promotional pamphlet highlighting the various features of the celebration intolerable.¹⁵⁷ The offending leaflet featured teasers for each of the major centennial shows claiming “The Old West, Out Where the Fun Begins” had been “Recreated in the flesh” and contained a blurb for the “Frontier Follies,” now called *Casa Mañana*, which labeled the show the “BIGGEST GIRL SHOW EVER PRODUCED.” The ad also included an ink sketch featuring nearly a dozen totally nude bathers in the Casa Mañana theater’s stage-side pool and a number of dancers posed on stage in various states of undress before a crowd of diners. The illustration in the brochure provided the first glimpse of the entertainment Rose planned to present at Fort Worth’s centennial. In connection with Rand and the “Nude Ranch,” the message unequivocally stated the celebration would feature full-nudity. Moreover, as per Rose’s original suggestion to the Board of Control to make the celebration an exercise of civic boosterism, the pamphlet gave a new title to the centennial celebration strengthening its ties with Fort Worth. No longer known as the Texas

¹⁵⁶ Lewis, *It Takes All Kinds*, 205.

¹⁵⁷ Ernie Pyle, “‘Whoopee’ Aspect of Show Causes a Few Doubts Hear,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 3, 1936, 8.

Frontier Centennial,” the pamphlet promoted the “Fort Worth Frontier Centennial” — explicitly linking Fort Worth with Wild and Whoo-pee.¹⁵⁸

The offending brochure precipitated a heated exchange, most of it appearing on the front page of the *Fort Worth Press*, between local religious organizations and Rose and the Board of Control which likely sent Alvord into a state of euphoria.¹⁵⁹ Taking aim at the Frontier Centennial during a May 22 district conference, the Methodist Episcopal Church drafted and unanimously adopted a resolution denouncing the publicity campaign and the forms of entertainment it represented as an insult to the city’s heritage. Designed to appeal to “the hoodlum element,” the statement argued, the publicity campaign is “in so low and vulgar character as to be wholly unworthy” of our city and its history. “We wish to denounce,” the statement continued, “the drinking of intoxicating liquors, legalized or other forms of gambling, lewd and nude dancing as morally degenerating and as subversive to the noble ideas of those pioneers whose lives and achievements we celebrate this Centennial year.”¹⁶⁰ William Monnig, Chairman of the Board of Control, immediately responded to the allegations of the Methodist Episcopal Conference. Monnig explained to the press that the Frontier Centennial would be “a decent show.” However, he quickly added, “but it won’t be a Sunday school.” He dismissed the criticisms of the Methodists, noting that after its debut those protesting the show would be proven wrong. On the matter of Sally Rand’s “Dude

¹⁵⁸ *Wild and Whoo-pee!: Fort Worth Frontier Centennial*, 1936, Special Collections, Mary Coats Burnett Library, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas. By April 1936 Frontier Centennial letterhead reflected the new title of the celebration. See Billy Rose to Amon G. Carter, April 13, 1936, Box 116, Folder “Lanham, Fritze, 1926-1947, Carter Papers.

¹⁵⁹ With a few exceptions the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* did not cover those protesting the immorality of the entertainment featured at the Frontier Centennial.

¹⁶⁰ “Church Hits Type of Show Fixed by Rose,” *Fort Worth Press*, May 22, 1936, 1.

Ranch” he claimed reports had been exaggerated and denied allegations that Rand would host a “Nude Ranch” at the centennial.¹⁶¹

Within days, the Tarrant County Baptist Pastors Conference also discussed the possibility of issuing a statement in opposition to the Frontier Centennial. At the meeting a call for a resolution condemning the show based upon the rumors concerning Sally Rand’s “Nude Ranch” and the promotion of the Frontier Centennial failed to pass. Some at the meeting apparently objected to the resolution, claiming they could not vote to condemn the Frontier Centennial without concrete evidence of the actual centennial plans. The Conference appointed a four-person committee to investigate the show.¹⁶² Upon learning of the committee, Rose invited the group to meet with him claiming he would “be glad to go over the complete plans of the show with any legitimate committee.” “But,” Rose added, “Any pastor jumping on the show to get his name in the papers will get a cold reception.”¹⁶³ On June 1 the committee, chaired by Rev. C. E. Matthews, met in a closed meeting with Billy Rose and the Board of Control.¹⁶⁴ Following the fact-finding mission, the Conference again met to deliberate over the findings of the committee. Based upon the plans presented to the committee, their inspection of the show costuming, and the assurances of the Board of Control, Matthews reported that the centennial plans called for no nudity in any of the celebration’s venues. To clarify, he explained that a showgirl bare above the waist was classified as nude while a showgirl in a bathing suit would be considered not nude. In a

¹⁶¹ “‘Show to be Decent—But,’ Says Monning,” *Fort Worth Press*, May 23, 1936, 1.

¹⁶² Billy Rose Welcomes Baptist Probe of Frontier Show; Warns ‘Publicity Seekers,” *Fort Worth Press*, May 26, 1936, 1.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ “Baptist Committee Holds Closed Session With Rose,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 2, 1936, 9.

frenzied state of disbelief, a Rev. Fred Swank shouted from the crowd, "I don't believe it!" Notwithstanding the lack of nudity, Matthews remained unconvinced of the inherent moral and civic value to the celebration under the direction of Billy Rose. "The show is mercenary in spirit throughout," he explained. "It is not concerned with promoting the welfare of Fort Worth." However, because the committee found no evidence that the show itself would include outright nudity, the Conference drafted a strongly-worded resolution taking issue with the advertising only. The statement read:

We the members of the Tarrant County Baptist Pastors Conference, protest as a group and as individuals against the class of publicity now carried in newspapers, circulars, etc., concerning the Texas Frontier Centennial. The Board of Control informs us that the publicity does not represent the exhibition. We protest against misrepresentation, believing such is hurtful not only to the Frontier Centennial, but to the morals of our people, and the future growth of our city. We believe that only failure can come to such a movement and we do not believe the business men and church people of our city will support such a movement with their money.¹⁶⁵

For the Baptists, like the Methodists, whether the Frontier Centennial included nudity or not made little difference; the celebration under the management of Rose and the commodification of women for publicity, they believed, had become a detriment to both the city's honorable pioneer heritage and future growth as a modern American city.

Though dismayed by the direction of the Frontier Centennial, Fort Worth's club women attempted to resolve their concerns directly with celebration officials. Shortly after the debut of the official Frontier Centennial icon, Miss Fort Worth, the leadership of Women's Division presented a resolution to the Board of Control requesting more dignified promotional literature for the Women's Division use in promoting the show to friends,

¹⁶⁵ "Billy Rose Welcomes Baptist Probe of Frontier Show; warns 'publicity seekers,'" *Fort Worth Press*, May 26, 1936, 1; "Pastors Slap at Plans for Frontier Expo," *Fort Worth Press*, June 8, 1936, 1.

relatives, and convention groups throughout the nation. More specifically they urged the incorporation of historical facts relating to Fort Worth and the region.¹⁶⁶ The Women's Division also requested the modification of Miss Fort Worth's costume into something "more typically western." Though the Women's Division provided no specifics of what they considered "more western," they clearly preferred an alternative to her current attire "which seems to be kept in place only by an act of Providence."¹⁶⁷ According to John Murray Anderson, representatives of the Fort Worth Woman's Club also approached Ned Alvord to request changes to the provocative images of the ad campaign, particularly the images of the nude women playing in the stage-side pool at the Casa Mañana theater. In response to their objections, Alvord exclaimed, "Who did you expect me to put in the pool—John the Baptist? Wouldn't draw a nickel at the box-office!"¹⁶⁸ Apparently club women chose to endure the sexualization of the centennial in muted anguish rather than chance bringing the city and celebration to financial ruin by launching a heated protest or boycotting the celebration they worked so hard to help produce. As evidence of their acceptance, when Oklahoma columnist Mrs. Walter Ferguson traveled to Fort Worth to write a report on the

¹⁶⁶ "Women Ask Dignified Literature on Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening Edition, May 16, 1936, clipping in Frontier Centennial Scrapbook, Volume II, TCU/SC. The request also coincided with the need for promotional literature for distribution as part of the centennial tours of Fort Worth initiated by the Pilgrimage Committee of the Women's Division. "What if You are Asked to Point Out Beauty Spots?" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 21, 1936, 9.

¹⁶⁷ "Typically Western?" *Fort Worth Press*, May 18, 1936, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Hugh Abercrombie Anderson, *Out Without My Rubbers: The Memoirs of John Murray Anderson* (New York: Library Publishers, 1954), 164.

preparations of the exposition the “club ladies” simply urged her to ignore the “nasty cracks” about “Rose’s advertising copy,” and approach the show with “an open mind.”¹⁶⁹

Local papers appeared amenable to the sexualization of the celebration. Though the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Fort Worth Press* cast participants in the Texas Sweetheart #1 competition and showgirls as models of a modern generation of civic minded and virtuous beauties, they nevertheless depicted the commodification of women as innocent fun. Making great copy, headlines regularly employed clever word play to describe centennial developments. For example, accompanying the pictures of four young women in bathing suits participating in a public showgirl audition at the Southwestern Exposition at Fat Stock Show the caption, thumbing its nose at the education exhibits at the Dallas exposition, read: “Part of ‘Educational’ Exhibit at Coliseum Tonight.”¹⁷⁰ The heading above a picture of Billy Rose and Sally Rand supplementing an article addressing their discussions of the Frontier Centennial asked: “Recognize Her with Her Clothes On?”¹⁷¹ “Picking Dancers No Job for Man with High Blood Pressure” headlined several images of the local showgirl auditions.¹⁷² A picture of a young woman hoping to win the title Miss Fort Worth posed with a model of a prairie schooner along with the caption: “Did You Notice the Wagon?”¹⁷³ Finally the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*’s coverage of several peeping-toms trying to catch a glimpse of showgirl rehearsals represents perhaps the greatest example of the paper’s complicity in

¹⁶⁹ “Stupendous! Magnificent! Says Mrs. Ferguson of Frontier Show,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 15, 1936, 1.

¹⁷⁰ “Part of ‘Educational’ Exhibit at Coliseum Tonight,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 22, 1936, 8.

¹⁷¹ “Recognize Her with Her Clothes On?” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 8, 1936, 1.

¹⁷² “Picking Dancers No Job for Man with High Blood Pressure,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 28, 1936, 9.

¹⁷³ “Did You Notice the Wagon?” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 14, 1936, 19.

the sexualization and commodification of women for the centennial celebration. Under the front-page headline, “No Fair Peeping! 2 Youths Nabbed as Follies Cavort,” the paper jovially rehearsed the details of two voyeurs who were caught watching the “scantily clad young women going through their dance routine.”¹⁷⁴ The simultaneous depiction of young women as role models of virtue and beauty and items existing to fulfill the visual pleasures of men, suggest fluidity between the two roles in the minds of Texans and Americans.

The *Fort Worth Press* also supported Rose and the sexual orientation of the Frontier Centennial. After receiving “letters from several citizens who are afraid Fort Worth’s Frontier Centennial will represent smutty entertainment to our visitors this summer,” the paper in an editorial defended Rose and the Board of Control’s choice to hire him. “This city would be foolish indeed to import Rose, John Murray Anderson, famous stage designer, and their corps of professional theater experts from New York at such great cost,” the paper explained, “merely to put on a bawdy peep show. Any cheap burlesque director can do that.”¹⁷⁵ *Fort Worth Press* columnist Edith Alderman Guedry also discounted rumors of nudity at the Frontier Centennial. She told the story of a Miss Marion and the two-hundred seamstresses charged with task of creating the costumes for the centennial shows. Considering the fifty-thousand yards of material going into the costuming, Guedry wrote, they “get a good laugh every time they see the word nudity connected with the . . . Frontier Centennial.” According to the columnist the seamstresses seemed more concerned with

¹⁷⁴ “No Fair Peeping! 2 Youths Nabbed as Follies Cavort,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 10, 1936, 1.

¹⁷⁵ “Billy Rose on Smut,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 3, 1936, 4.

“how the show girls will be able to stand so many coverings in the Texas heat.”¹⁷⁶ The press’s apparent kowtowing to the wishes of Rose and the Board of Control only served to enrage the religious opposition. In several letters to the Fort Worth Press, Rev. C. V. Dunn of Stephenville chastised the paper for trivializing centennial nudity. “I have seen no word from the editor,” Dunn wrote, “condemning the infernal thing.”¹⁷⁷

Despite the complicity of the press in the sexualization of the Frontier Centennial, like the officials at the San Diego World’s Fair who, after a year’s run, eliminated all the sexually explicit entertainment from their exposition because it “threatened the moral economy of the Southland’s conservative and evangelical Protestant residents,” Rose and Alvord made a tactical error in the strategy for publicizing the Frontier Centennial.¹⁷⁸ They failed to realize that Fort Worthians viewed the Frontier Centennial and its promotion as a reflection of their city’s image and heritage. As a result, Fort Worth citizens were much more inclined to concern themselves with the contents and implications of the promotional campaign than other cities in which previous Rose productions played. Moreover, because the previous “girl shows” Alvord promoted remained in a town for only a short time, generating a controversy around the show proved safe because the show left town as quickly as it arrived. The short engagement of a show prevented a major opposition movement from taking root. Four months of construction and rehearsals and the four-

¹⁷⁶ Edith Alderman Guedry, title missing, *Fort Worth Press*, June 10, 1936, 8.

¹⁷⁷ C. V. Dunn, “Gospel is Remedy for immorality,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 6, 1936, 4; C. V. Dunn, “Says Nude Shows at Exposition Defile State’s Name,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 15, 1936, 4.

¹⁷⁸ Bokovoy, *The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory*, 196.

month run of the Frontier Centennial meant that the development of a powerful opposition movement pushing a boycott could have a crippling impact on attendance at the centennial.

Fearing that his reputation might turn into a liability for the celebration, Rose headed off allegations of centennial filth raised by the Methodists, Baptists, and other religious organizations at an open public forum in which concerned citizens could ask questions about the show.¹⁷⁹ Rose told those present that “The Fort Worth show will be in excellent taste. I don’t go in for smut. I don’t abstain for any religious reason. I simply have found through years in the show business, that dirt doesn’t pay.” But, he added “Sure, we’ll have girls, lots of girls.” As evidence of his virtuous approach to entertainment, Rose mentioned that in the preceding year the Catholic Church in New York placed *Jumbo* at the top of its “white list.”¹⁸⁰ On another occasion Rose again backpedaled from his former veiled references to centennial nudity, when asked by the press if the Frontier show would “shock” anyone. Rose responded, “There’ll be nothing any more shocking about our show than you will find in the movies being shown every day in Fort Worth’s family theaters. We’ll have no more nudity—and no less.”¹⁸¹

More direct measures were required to avoid the possibility of additional negative publicity coming from religious firebrand J. Frank Norris. The head pastor of First Baptist church in Fort Worth, Norris played a significant role in bringing Christian fundamentalism

¹⁷⁹ The General Minister’s Association also produced a resolution censuring the Frontier Centennial ad campaign. See “Billy Rose Welcomes Baptist Probe of Frontier Show; warns ‘publicity seekers,’” *Fort Worth Press*, May 26, 1936, 1. “Rose Will Answer Public’s Queries,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 2, 1936, 8.

¹⁸⁰ Jack Gordon, “Smut Just Not Good Business Says Maestro,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 3, 1936, 8.

¹⁸¹ “Billy Rose Welcomes Baptist Probe of Frontier Show; warns ‘publicity seekers,’” *Fort Worth Press*, May 26, 1936, 1.

to the American South. Unafraid to denounce insufficient enforcement of vice laws, in 1912 he had launched a series of tent meetings preaching against the city's failure to implement prostitution and liquor laws in the city's notorious red-light district "Hell's Half Acre."¹⁸² Amon Carter astutely believed Norris would find the ad campaign, Sally Rand, and a "nude ranch" repugnant. Fearing Norris would issue scathing criticisms from his pulpit and mobilize religious sentiment against the Centennial, Amon Carter allegedly contacted Norris personally. As the story goes, after Carter explained that the Frontier Centennial planned to show nude girls and sell liquor, Norris offered to begin his planned national summer tour of revivals early to avoid a moral conflict with the show and the city.¹⁸³ Although the story might be apocryphal, it nevertheless illustrates that Carter recognized the danger in alienating one segment of the population.

Centennial planners also took decisive action to curtail the most offensive features of promotional materials. On all posters and billboards featuring the scene of nude maidens bathing in the pool at the Casa Mañana, the offending women were retouched with a painted-on bathing suit.¹⁸⁴ Apparently inundated with complaints from farmers whose barns now advertized the Frontier Centennial with images of Miss Fort Worth, Ned Alvord "tardily" sent replacement posters publicizing routes to the Frontier Centennial which "avoid[ed] Dallas bottlenecks."¹⁸⁵ Prior to the public protest issued by the Baptists, Carter's paper the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* brazenly published the same advertisement of the

¹⁸² Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris & the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 2, 16, 90.

¹⁸³ Pirtle, *Fort Worth: The Civilized West*, 131. Pirtle provides no citation for the story's origin.

¹⁸⁴ "Show Ads Will Cover 9 States," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 10, 1936, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Lewis, *It Takes All Kinds*, 205.

Frontier Centennial featured in many other papers in the Southwest. In addition to the Casa Mañana pool scene and Miss Fort Worth, the ad included a large picture of Sally Rand posing with her famed bubble. Though taken from the side with her arms and legs arranged to give only a view of her silhouette, the picture presented a clearly nude Rand.¹⁸⁶ The ad never again appeared in the paper. Subsequent ads for the centennial featured no images and did not hint at anything wild or whoo-pee.¹⁸⁷ The Frontier Centennial handbill's continued to include the infamous pool scene at the Casa Mañana, however, the scene now obscured the immodesty of the bathing maidens.¹⁸⁸

Though Miss Fort Worth remained the symbol of the Frontier Centennial, the Women's Division successfully lobbied for promotional materials emphasizing Fort Worth's western heritage and prominence in the Texas livestock industry and its advantages as a modern metropolis. Acquiescing to the request of the Women's Division, the Board issued a pamphlet under the title *Fort Worth Frontier Centennial in the Capital of the Cattle Kings*. In contrast to earlier promotional materials, the pamphlet omitted the use of overt sex appeal to boost the Frontier Centennial. Omitting references to "Wild & Whoo-pee," it featured a significantly modified Miss Fort Worth. Still sitting astride a bucking bronco, she now wore a pair of shorts and a riding vest. Though the pamphlet did mention Sally Rand, it referred to her ranch as the "D'Nude Ranch." With images of Native Americans, cowboys and cowgirls, bison, and rodeo scenes the tract also brought the emphasis of celebration back to the

¹⁸⁶ "The Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 7, 1936, 3.

¹⁸⁷ "Advance in Price, Frontier," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 8, 1935, 3. Apparently centennial planners never purchased ad space in the *Fort Worth Press* to promote the Frontier Centennial.

¹⁸⁸ "Opens Saturday, Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," [no date], Box 7, Folder 40, Jary Collection.

cattle industry and the frontier. In addition to presenting scenes from *Jumbo* and an image of the Casa Mañana, it also included a sketch of the Frontier Centennial grounds it labeled “Pioneer Village” and detailed drawings of the false-façade buildings on the “frontier village street” and reconstructed railroad building built for the West Texas Chamber of Commerce exhibit.

Because the Women’s Division planned to send the pamphlet to attract convention business to Fort Worth during the centennial year, the pamphlet also boosted Fort Worth emphasizing its western heritage and image as a modern city. In addition to the western imagery of the Frontier Centennial, it further connected Fort Worth to a western heritage by including photographs of a prize winning Hereford presumably from the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show and the color guard of the 2nd Cavalry of the United States Army who initially occupied the old Fort Worth army outpost in 1849. The tract also highlighted several modern tourist attractions near the city including the botanical gardens and the Arlington Downs race track. Perhaps most interesting are the juxtaposition of Fort Worth’s western past with its modern growth and prosperity--connecting past and present. In a large layout, occupying a quarter of its space, the pamphlet included side-by-side drawings of “Pioneer Village” with architectural renderings of the new Art Deco livestock facilities. The brochure also placed side-by-side an aerial photograph of downtown Fort Worth including the new Moderne Texas and Pacific Station and Post Office Building with detail sketches of the recreated first railroad station in Fort Worth and the false-façade buildings of “Frontier Village Street” including a post office to appear on the Frontier

Centennial grounds.¹⁸⁹ As discussed in the first chapter, the intentional combination of old and new served to foster Fort Worth's image as a modern American city sharing in the heritage of progressive nation building on the frontier west.

Initially Rose and centennial planners viewed the booking of Sally Rand as a major promotional coup, however, with an opposition movement brewing in Fort Worth, she became another potential liability to the centennial. To help curb public outcries of immorality relating to Rand's participation, show officials ceased providing the press with any information on the content of the Rand's "Nude Ranch" and deemphasized that attraction in promotional literature.¹⁹⁰ Claiming the fan and bubble dances were "dated," Rose also told the press that Rand would not perform either during her stay at Fort Worth.¹⁹¹ Aided by city officials and the media, upon her arrival in early July, centennial planners also began a campaign to tame Rand's persona for Fort Worth citizens. Contrary to Alvord, who believed "Nobody must shoot Miss Rand till they can see the white of her thighs," the centennial planners orchestrated speaking and photo opportunities for Rand at a number of civic events, often accompanied by city officials.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ *Fort Worth Frontier Centennial in the Capital of the Cattle Kings*, (no publication data), Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers. Other handbills also surfaced featuring the western element of the centennial highlighting the recreated frontier village and characterizing Rose's *The Last Frontier* "a rip-roaring colorful dramatization of the old west." See *Fort Worth Frontier Centennial a living, breathing recreation of the Old West*, (no publication data), Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

¹⁹⁰ "Ft. Worth Starts Thinkin' Dallas' Gal Stuff Beat 'Em to the Punch," *Variety*, June 17, 1936, 1, 63. For example the Texas Centennial Review reported in mid-June: "Details of this unique attraction have not been made known to the public but sponsors indicate that unlimited surprises are in store for visitors to this innovation in ranch life." *Texas Centennial Review* 1, no. 31 (June 17, 1936): 4.

¹⁹¹ "Bans Fans," *Fort Worth Press*, July 2, 1936, 3.

¹⁹² Anderson, *Out Without My Rubbers*, 164.

In a tribute to pioneer womanhood, Rand's first appearance before the public was in a "split-bonnet and old-fashioned gingham frock" aboard a prairie schooner with members of the Board of Control and heads of the Women's Division.¹⁹³ Members of the Women's Division apparently only appeared to welcome Rand at the airport after the "fervent behest" of the Board of Control.¹⁹⁴ Disarmed by Rand's charm, Anna Shelton, president of the Fort Worth Woman's Club claimed, "I was amazed. She's a cute little thing." Mrs. J. B. Hamilton, former president of the Junior League noted, "I was agreeably surprised. She was bright, witty."¹⁹⁵ Rand also participated in an exhibition of tandem hackney driving at the Town and Country Horse Club's show and boosted the Frontier Centennial before the Kiwanis Club, Advertising Club, and Junior Chamber of Commerce.¹⁹⁶ With Mayor Jarvis, Rand helped inaugurate Fort Worth Railroad Week by pulling the whistle cord of a locomotive. She also tossed the first pitch and encouraged women's participation in sports at the dedication ceremony of the new softball field in Forest Park.¹⁹⁷ On several occasions Rand used the podium to soft-pedal Frontier Centennial nudity and distance herself from the "Nude Ranch." During her first dinner in Fort Worth she told the press, "My work in the theater is confined to the creation of a beautiful illusion. I won't dance in the Nude

¹⁹³ "Sally Rand Wears Bonnet, Gingham to Town," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening Edition, [no date], "Frontier Centennial," Vertical File, FTWPLA.

¹⁹⁴ Miller, *The Woman's Club of Fort Worth*, 19.

¹⁹⁵ "Fan Dancer Is 'So Quaint', Fort Worth Women Find," *Fort Worth Press*, July 1, 1936, 1, 10.

¹⁹⁶ "Bubble Dancer Billed Ride in Horse Show," *Fort Worth Press*, July 7, 1936, 3; "Sally is Guest at Horse Show," *Fort Worth Press*, July 13, 1936, 7; "Bubble Dancer Show Booster," *Fort Worth Press*, July 9, 1936, 9.

¹⁹⁷ "Sally Rand Mounted to the Cabin," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 14, 1936, 8; "Sally Will Fan-Interest in Softball Here Tonight," *Fort Worth Press*, July 16, 1936, 10; ". . . Sally Rand Now Pitching!" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 15, 1936, 10; Ed Prell, "Sally Rand, Three Games Thrill Fans at Forest Park," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 17, 1936, 13.

Ranch.”¹⁹⁸ Answering questions about the Frontier Centennial, she told the Kiwanis Club, “It’s true there won’t be anything cheap or tawdry in the entertainment.”¹⁹⁹ Dismissing the entertainment in the Streets of Paris at the Central Exposition as a crude imitation and taking aim at Mlle. Corrine’s apple dance, she told the press in Austin, “When I started my bubble dance, I said someone would eventually get that bubble down to a grape. Now they’ve got it down to an apple and I guess the grape is next.”²⁰⁰

Though stopping short of describing Rand as a role model for Fort Worth young women, as with Fay Cotton and the showgirls, the local newspapers endowed Rand with the more acceptable traits of domesticity, civic mindedness, talent, and intelligence. Highlighting Rand’s domestic side, in a blurb accompanying a picture of Rand in an apron preparing dinner in her kitchen, the *Fort Worth Press* claimed she “was ‘whooping up’ a meal.”²⁰¹ The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported on Rand’s interest in Texas history as she traveled to “the Alamo and other historical spots.”²⁰² Several columnists also extolled Rand’s innocent charm and intelligence within the pages of the *Fort Worth Press*. Poking fun at those protesting and “beat[ing] their tom-toms” about the hiring of Sally Rand, Jack Gordon wrote, “A half hour’s conversation with Sally Rand, will convince any fan-devouring brother or sister that here is no Jezebel or Terpsichore, but a witty, charming and

¹⁹⁸ “Clever Sally,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1936, 20.

¹⁹⁹ “Bubble Dancer Show Booster,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 9, 1936, 9.

²⁰⁰ “Grape Dance Due, Says Sally,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 7, 1936, 9.

²⁰¹ “Darned Good Cook as Well as Fan-Tosser, the Sally Rand!” *Fort Worth Press*, July 10, 1936, 14.

²⁰² “Sally Rand to Visit Austin, San Antonio,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 5, 1936, 7; “Grape Dane Due, Says Sally,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 7, 1936, 9.

astonishingly well-informed young woman.”²⁰³ In a description of her first encounter with Rand, Edith Alderman Guedry wrote, “I was oft sold on Sally Rand’s personality. She has personal charm, intellect, and believe it or not is demure in manner.”²⁰⁴ In the end, the public appearances and positive press coverage successfully co-opted Rand’s persona as exotic purveyor of the immodest and conjoined it with those traits exhibited by Cotton to create an image tolerable to Fort Worth citizens.

That the vocalized opposition to centennial immorality subsided suggests that the campaign to rollback overt Frontier Centennial sexuality succeeded. Still, when the Central Exposition’s midway opened on June 6 with plenty of tawdry entertainment, some Fort Worth centennial planners wondered if Dallas stole “the edge” from the offering of the Frontier Centennial.²⁰⁵ Carter and others had no intention of losing the sex appeal game to Dallas. As opening day neared, information regarding Sally Rand’s “Nude Ranch” began to reappear in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Centennial planners, however, remained tight-lipped concerning the contents of the venue. The building itself remained one of the last structures to take shape on the centennial grounds. Just ten days before the opening, Rand began auditions for positions in the Ranch’s “Sun Garden” which would present the Frontier Centennial’s most explicit forms of commodified sex. Apparently attempting to preserve the image of virtue among Fort Worth young women, locals were prohibited from trying out for one of the eighteen positions at the Ranch. From the forty applicants, most of whom came

²⁰³ “Jack Gordon, “Sally’s due With Fans! Dancer’s Wit, Intellect Should Quiet All Alarm,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 30, 1936, 7.

²⁰⁴ Edith Alderman Guedry, “Claire Ogden Davis here with Sally Rand Started Her Career in Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 6, 1936, 6.

²⁰⁵ “Ft. Worth Starts Thinkin’ Dallas’ Gal Stuff Beat ‘Em to the Punch,” *Variety*, June 17, 1936, 1, 63.

from Dallas, Rand selected twelve for Rose's final approval. Exactly what the women would do at the Nude Ranch remained a secret to outsiders, but Rand promised the *Press* it would be "artistic."²⁰⁶ Three days before the beginning of the exposition the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported on the costuming of the women to perform at the Ranch. The ensemble represented another step in sexualization of the cowgirl image. Reflecting the attire of Miss Fort Worth, the outfit included boots, a 10-gallon hat, and gun holsters.²⁰⁷ According to historian Rachel Shteir, Rand's sexualization of the cowgirl at the Nude Ranch brought about one of her most enduring legacies. Shteir argued that Rand's conjoining of the cowgirl imagery and the fan dance represented the primary source for the cowgirl striptease which "would become one of the most widely imitated [strip] numbers during the Cold War."²⁰⁸

Lack of evidence makes evaluating the reaction of the general population to Rose's approach to the celebration, its promotional literature, and the arrival of Sally Rand difficult. Though the *Fort Worth Press* referred to incoming letters from readers concerned with "smutty entertainment," the paper only published a few, and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* never published a single letter commenting on the content of the publicity or the sexualization of the Frontier Centennial in general. The letters published by the *Fort Worth Press* suggest a mixed response. Perhaps most intriguing is that those commenting on the sexualized role of women at the Frontier Centennial appear to make their evaluations from a perspective of progress and modernity. For example, seventy-two-year-old M. Jordan told readers he deplored the trend toward increased public nudity. Perhaps stating the obvious

²⁰⁶ "Sally Picks Nudies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 9, 1936, 5.

²⁰⁷ "Costumers Get Sally's Cuties Ready," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 15, 1936, 5.

²⁰⁸ Shteir, *Striptease*, 155.

he wrote, "I have learned that young beauties flaunting their half-nude selves, either on paper or in public, are not conducive to pure desires or thoughts." Jordan suggested that the decline in morality resulted from demands for instant gratification spurred by wealth resulting from greater education in modern society.²⁰⁹

Columnist Edith Guedry also argued the "emphasis on the risque" was decidedly unprogressive. "It gives one a certain feeling of shame," she wrote, "to know that during this, a year set aside to observe a Century of Progress in Texas we should have to give risque shows to spotlight so." What would "our pioneer ancestors, whom we are honoring, think of us . . . and our so-call progress?" she asked. For Guedry the need for explicit sexuality at the Frontier Centennial for greater appeal indicated a nation bereft of its morality. Ultimately, she concluded Americans had progressed in science and materiality, but not spiritually. Like the Greek and Roman civilizations that collapsed at the height of their golden eras, modern America stood on the precipice of a spiritual if not physical pitfall.²¹⁰

A Tarleton woman also wondered if the city's embrace of Sally Rand signaled a shift in the standards expected of modern young women. "In our midst," she wrote, "is a woman who pulls her [shirt] off with such a rip that the whole U.S. has learned to use her name as synonymous with birthday suits, and the home town takes her to its bosom and appears to be proud of her for doing it." "One wouldn't be surprised," she added, "at her being taken to the male bosom, privately speaking, while being given the keys to the city and other places, but the female bosom is another matter." She chastised "city fathers and mothers"

²⁰⁹ M. Jordan, "Deplores Tendency Toward Nudity," *Fort Worth Press*, June 22, 1936, 4.

²¹⁰ Edith Alderman Guedry, "Risque Shows Take Floor; History, Science in Texas Fade into Dim Background," *Fort Worth Press*, June 24, 1936, 6.

for teaching young women that it was no longer enough for women to be “clever, pretty, smart, demure, [and] naïve,” young women must take their clothes off too. The writer concluded, “Hasn’t the experience of the ‘Rose’ taught us some important things about womanhood?”²¹¹

Notwithstanding the erosion of women’s position in society others believed the sexualization of the Frontier Centennial represented an important step in the city’s path toward modernity. More specifically they argued the sexualization of the Frontier Centennial was an indication of Fort Worth’s arrival as city of the modern American West. An editorial in the *Fort Worth Press* challenging the Women’s Division’s request that Miss Fort Worth don clothing more “typically western” asked, “have the ladies visited a bathing pool lately?” The piece posited that if “Fort Worth is Where the West Begins . . . they might conclude that the poster girl’s costume is typical of the modern West, at least.”²¹²

Embracing the traits of the modern woman emerging from the Frontier Centennial, the Tarrant County Medical Society linked the image of Miss Fort Worth with women’s education when it hired Pauline Belew, one of the original creators of the Miss Fort Worth image, to design the cover of the June 1936 issue of the organization’s publication—the *Bulletin*. The cover featured two women sitting on the top of an outline of the State of Texas—one atop the North Texas-Oklahoma border, the other with her back to the Panhandle. On the right sits Miss Fort Worth, legs crossed, and extending a flirtatious

²¹¹ Elizabeth Wright, “Are Standards for Women Changing? Reader Wonders,” *Fort Worth Press*, July 14, 1936, 4.

²¹² “Typically Western?” *Fort Worth Press*, May 18, 1936, 4.

invitation. On the left in a near mirror image, a woman dressed in cap and gown, holding a stack of books, likewise extends an invitation with an arm outstretched.²¹³

The picture captured perfectly the prevailing conflict inherent in the bifurcated roles occupied by women in the 1930s as Rose assumed direction of the Frontier Centennial. Assuming a more traditional role of modest preservers of culture, and promoters of female education, Fort Worth's club women, under the direction of the centennial's Women's Division, worked to develop Frontier Centennial attractions meant to create a greater sense of the city's frontier heritage, to educate, and to enlighten. Under Rose's direction the influence of the Women's Division, particularly as it related to attractions and their involvement on the centennial grounds, shrank. The move toward creating a new role for women at the Frontier Centennial began with the completion for Texas Sweetheart #1. Commodified presentations of young women such as beauty pageants represented the verge of acceptable displays of the female body. Helping to define a tolerable role for these young women in the celebration, the media depicted them as virtuous, civic-minded, natural beauties. Similarly, when showgirls began arriving from New York, the media again cast these young women as modest, hard working, and talented.

The overtly sexualized promotional materials and the hiring of Sally Rand transcended the bounds of the acceptable role women played in mainstream society. World's fairs, particularly during the Depression Era, became important avenues for expanding the role of women as in American to that of sexual commodity. World's fair scholar Robert Rydell has argued that "By suffusing the world of tomorrow with highly

²¹³ See *Bulletin of the Tarrant County Medical Society* 9, no. 3 (June 1936), cover.

charged male sexual fantasies, the century-of-progress expositions not only reconfirmed the status of women as objects of desire, but represented their bodies as showcases that perfectly complemented displays of futuristic consumer durables everywhere on exhibit at the fairs.”²¹⁴ Though the centennial grounds included no industrial exhibits presenting advances in American material culture, the significance of progress to Fort Worth identity as a city and the repeated linkages of the Frontier Centennial to a prosperous future made the association of commodified sex at the celebration and modernity implicit. Billy Rose himself perhaps viewed his participation in the Frontier Centennial and the entertainment he produced as contributing to the city’s cultural modernity. Originally Rose liked the title *Casa Diablo* for the premiere entertainment venue at the Frontier Centennial, but believing his show on the cutting-edge of Broadway entertainment found *Casa Mañana*—or House of Tomorrow—more fitting.²¹⁵ The city’s religious groups and club women however, contested the increasingly sexualized role of women viewing them as at odds with the city’s heritage and image as a modern city. They believed the commodification of women undignified for Fort Worth’s honored pioneer heritage and modern and progressive aspirations. Ironically, it was the Women’s Division that pushed for new promotional materials which simultaneously returned the advertising of Frontier Centennial to its western theme and preserved the city’s modern image.

²¹⁴ Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 117.

²¹⁵ See “Enters Contest,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 5, 1936, 5. This article references identified the *Casa Mañana* as *Casa Diablo*.

CHAPTER 6

“IS IT TEXAS? IS IT FRONIER? IS IT WESTERN?”: BILLY ROSE AND THEMING THE MYTHIC WEST

When Billy Rose stood before the Board of Control to pitch his concepts for the Frontier Centennial, his only original contribution was bringing in hordes of showgirls and presenting Broadway-caliber entertainment. He pitched two shows, the vaguely titled “Frontier Frolics” which became known as the *Casa Mañana* and a musicalized Wild West show/rodeo he later titled *The Last Frontier*. He also suggested vacating his production of *Jumbo* from the Hippodrome Theater in New York and moving it to Fort Worth for the celebration. Rose liked the idea of a “frontier” or “western” centennial, but had no previous experience in producing western entertainment. Still, as a showman, Rose exhibited an astute sense for what would attract audiences. Rose knew that in the business of drawing crowds, creating overtly historical pageants or museums would not pay rich dividends. Like many Americans the fountainhead for Rose’s understanding of the American West came from mythic portrayals in western novels and films. Rose immediately seized upon the symbols of the mythic West and used them as a framework for presenting his entertainment creations.

From the very beginning the Board of Control viewed the Frontier Centennial grounds as a means to promote Fort Worth’s western identity, but as well as its image as a modern metropolis. Recent world’s fairs in Chicago and San Diego represented important models for the creation of scripted space. World’s fairs had become showcase of both modern and historic architecture. Rose kept the concept developed by the Board of Control

to reproduce a frontier settlement of the Old West. However, rather than turning to historical records and photographs, Rose turned to western mythology to resurrect the Old West. In addition Rose also used the “six flags” of Texas as a framework upon which to structure his centennial amusements. The conflating of time and space created a unique environment some believed looked more like a “fairyland” than a frontier settlement of the Old West.¹ Prior to Rose’s arrival such inconsistency created problems as the Board of Control worked to create an experience true to history for commemorating the past. Unencumbered by historical inconsistencies or architectural accuracy, in the recreation of the frontier settlement Rose produced an experience meant to evoke a sense of historicity and nostalgia without referencing any facts of the past. In this sense, the Frontier Centennial is best understood as a themed space.

Rose saw in the Centennial Planners’ concept to recreate the Old West of literature and film an innovative source for entertainment. As a producer Rose imagined the West as a grand stage from which he could create an unprecedented spectacle. With *Jumbo*, he produced a phenomenon, splicing the excitement and thrill of the circus with the drama and music of Broadway. The Frontier Centennial provided Rose an opportunity to replace the big top with a rustic frontier town, the circus performer with the heroic cowboy, and the clown with the “savage” Native American. He also understood that more than the circus, the frontier of the American West tapped narratives of a time and place for which Americans still longed. This must have been particularly appealing to Rose. As a producer, Rose exhibited a knack for playing on the nostalgia his audiences felt for days gone by. It

¹ “Frontier Grounds Viewed from Air Seem a Fairyland,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 8, 1936, 2.

became a trademark of his works. In his 1924 production of *The Fatal Wedding*, Rose presented audiences with a wistful look at the 1890s. The success of the production convinced Rose that audiences found entertainment mixing nostalgia, satire, and comedy universally appealing. Rose's successful implementation of this formula which he repeatedly turned to over the years, including his production of *Jumbo*, played an important role in his success as producer.² Mixing the excitement of the Old West with the near overwhelming nostalgia Americans felt for the frontier made perfect sense to Rose and likely played a role in his decision to assume direction of the Frontier Centennial.

Rose easily slipped into the role of cowboy showman once occupied by Buffalo Bill. Like many easterners, Rose, as a youth, imbibed the nostalgic depictions of the mythic West in pulp novels and western films. He later recalled in his autobiography that, "As a kid, I had read Zane Grey with a flashlight under the blankets after my old man had chased me off to bed. In the nickelodeons I had whooped 'Look out!' when the bad guy snuck up behind William S. Hart."³ Upon Rose's arrival in Fort Worth, Amon Carter immediately baptized Rose a Texan and dropped a "twenty gallon Stetson" on his head.⁴ Later, the Fort Worth sheriff's office strapped a .45 caliber "shooting iron" to his waist, pinned a "gold five pointed badge" to his chest, and deputized him a special sheriff.⁵ Rose's sister later reminisced that during his summer in Fort Worth, Rose became a crack shot with the pistol, practicing at a makeshift range when he was not directing. To publicize the centennial, Rose

² Nelson, *Only a Paper Moon*, 8.

³ Rose, *Wine, Women and Words*, 18.

⁴ Gottlieb, *The Nine Lives of Billy Rose*, 109.

⁵ See "Little Barnum Becomes A Full-Fledged Officer," *Fort Worth Press*, April 28, 1936, 1; "Rose Dines in Jail, Gets Commission," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 28, 1936, 9; "Rose Gets Pistol to Back up Badge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 5, 1936, 2.

regularly appeared duded up in cowboy boots, hat, and chaps, with six-guns, twirling a lasso on or near a horse.⁶ Rose's affinity for his new cowboy image led him to brag to the New York press, "I am now a Texan."⁷ Emphasizing his transformation from New Yorker to Texan, Rose's publicity agent, Richard Maney, told the New York press that Rose had become "Billy Rose of the Rancho." He further added, "You may judge of Mr. Rose's fever when I cite the contents of his overnight bag, through which I prowled as he mulled over rhymes for Travis and Bowie and Crockett. Items: A sombrero, a Colt's .45, a pair of leather chaps, Prescott's 'Conquest of Mexico' in three volumes, a set of silver spurs, a flag carrying a lone star, a can of chili con carne and a set of Remington prints."⁸ In the course of the celebration, the local and national press provided Rose a number of clever monikers reflecting his new cowboy image. For example, *Architectural Forum* labeled the showman, "Billy 'wow puncher' Rose."⁹ In their regular feature "America's Interesting People," *The American Magazine* dubbed Rose a "Frontiersman."¹⁰

Though Rose donned the cowboy imagery for publicity, it might have lent some credibility to his ability to produce a western themed exposition. Some questioned the "little Jew boy's" knowledge of the West. In an interview, Ernie Pyle, a Scripps-Howard columnist, asked "Do you think people may not like the idea of a Broadway hot shot putting on a Wild West show?" Rose responded, "I told them they'd just have to have confidence in

⁶ See photo printed in Jan Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 56.

⁷ "Billy Rose, 'Now a Texan,' Tells Jumbo Workers of Frontier Show's Magnitude," *Fort Worth Press*, April 21, 1936, 1.

⁸ "New York Columnist Break Out in Rhetorical Rash Over Billy Rose's Fort Worth Plans," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 27, 1936, 11.

⁹ "Fort Worth Festival," *Architectural Forum* 65, no. 3 (September 1936), 9.

¹⁰ "Frontiersman," *The American Magazine*, July 1936, 90.

me. I know the Southwest well enough.”¹¹ Those who questioned Rose’s missing western pedigree did not realize that the fundamental nature of the celebration had changed. The day after Rose signed the contract, William Monnig told the press, “we wanted to make it [the Frontier Centennial] the greatest amusement attraction of the State during the Centennial year and we got the greatest show man we could find.”¹² Describing the aims of Frontier Centennial planners in a letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Amon G. Carter wrote the Fort Worth show would be “the most colorful, thrilling and interesting show ever produced in Texas.”¹³ Suggesting planners no longer thought of their celebration as an opportunity to commemorate the city’s or state’s frontier heritage or the Texas livestock industry, they increasingly referred to the Frontier Centennial as a “show.” As such, the only credential that mattered to planners was that Rose knew how to stage a spectacle that attracted large audiences.

Only Rose’s continued ballyhoo for Frontier Centennial pulchritude overshadowed his denunciation of all things historical. At least part of Rose’s denunciation of history came from the historical tone struck by the Central Centennial Exhibition in Dallas. On more than one occasion Rose labeled the exposition in Dallas, with its scientific, industrial, and

¹¹ Ernie Pyle, “About Billy Rose: ‘A Broadway Spellbinder Talks Three Hours,’ Says Ernie Pyle, ‘And Sells Himself to Texans for \$100,000,’” *Fort Worth Press*, March 31, 1936, 1-2. Rose apparently spent some time in Texas in the 1920s. He worked as a stenographer in Wichita Falls and at the Republican State Convention in San Antonio he made \$1,000 selling type written copies of the proceedings, he had taken the preceding day in shorthand. See *Billy Rose Presents Frontier Fiesta*, Playbill, (Fort Worth, 1937), 2. Copy available at TCU/SC.

¹² “Centennial Bond Issue Unanimously Indorsed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 11, 1936, 1-2.

¹³ Amon G. Carter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, April 13, 1936, Carter Papers.

historical exhibits, a “carbon copy” of Chicago’s Century of Progress.¹⁴ Naturally, Fort Worth stood to profit from offering something original. Moreover, Rose also believed historical exhibits and museums were boring and antithetical to entertainment. Rose shared his antipathy for the historical when he told the *Fort Worth Press*, “Dallas has all the historical stuff so we don’t have to worry about that. We can just show the folks a good time.”¹⁵ Desiring to separate permanently history from the Frontier Centennial in the mind of prospective centennial-goers, Rose even sought to eliminate the word “centennial” from the title of the show. Ned Alvord, the show’s promoter placed an ad in the *Fort Worth Press* seeking ideas for a new title. In the ad, Alvord stated, “Centennial sounds too much like history. And there’ll be dam’ little history in the show when Billy Rose gets through.”¹⁶ Though some Fort Worth citizens responded to Alvord’s plea with suggestions such as “Frontier Fiesta” or “Frontier-Frolic,” Rose apparently failed to convince city fathers and centennial planners to change the title of the celebration.¹⁷

For all of Rose’s anti-history rhetoric, he astutely recognized that producing a successful western show did require some references to western history. Like western films, the show could not succeed without some elements anchoring it to the past. Moreover, he understood that such references to the past must be clearly and immediately recognizable to the intended audience. Rose explained this in his initial meeting with the Board of Control. He told those present that the Frontier Centennial needed “Entertainment on a

¹⁴ See “Frontier Show to have Texas Spirit,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 16, 1936, 4.

¹⁵ “‘Big Four’ Attractions of Frontier Show Visualized,” *Fort Worth Press*, June 1, 1936, 1, 3.

¹⁶ “Gotta Slogan?” *Fort Worth Press*, April 15, 1936, 1.

¹⁷ See “What our Readers Say,” *Fort Worth Press*, April 20, 1936, 4; “What our Readers Say,” *Fort Worth Press*, April 28, 1936, 4.

grand scale, with a strong western *flavor*" (emphasis added).¹⁸ Like Buffalo Bill, pulp novelists, and movie producers, Rose hoped to situate the Frontier Centennial within the parameters of the mythic West by using western or Texas sounding names, western symbols such as the epic struggle between cowboys and Indians, and deemphasizing the influence of women, African Americans, Mexicans and Native Americans.¹⁹

Beyond western novels and films, Rose turned to several additional sources to help generate ideas for creating an Old West atmosphere and developing a layout for the grounds of the Frontier Centennial. A few days after Rose agreed to direct the celebration, the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show began. By the 1930s, the Old West had become the overriding theme of the annual stock show (see chapter 1). And 1936 would prove a hallmark year in the history of the stock show. Though Galveston, Houston, San Antonio, and Huntsville all hosted centennial related events prior to the commencement of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, civic and stock show officials regularly referred to the exposition as not only the opening act of the Frontier Centennial, but Texas's centennial year.²⁰ Officials also believed the attendance and participation in the stock show provided a significant indicator of the Frontier Centennial's future success. For months Fort Worth business men promoted the stock show in cities around the Southwest through a series of goodwill tours. In the days preceding the beginning of the show, the Roundup Club preached the word of the exposition in 165 cities in the region, including twenty-two cities

¹⁸ Maurice Zolotow, *Collier's*, March 8, 1947, 52.

¹⁹ See Joseph Mitchell, "Rose Maps An Ambitious Program," *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 1-2.

²⁰ *Texas Centennial Celebrations, Centennial Year Calendar, 1936, "Texas Centennial Materials Pamphlets & Printed Materials"* Box 4-16/117, TSA.

in West Texas alone.²¹ Amon Carter, through the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, also continually charged local readers with the duty of supporting the stock show. "Fort Worthians," an editorial argued, "owe a record attendance to that institution . . . being no less than the 'curtain raiser' for the [Texas Centennial]." ²² As a "curtain raiser" for the state's centennial year, and more importantly as a forerunner of the Frontier Centennial, the stock show continued its western theme. Anticipating the pomp of the opening scenes of the festivities, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* boasted, "The Spirit of the Old West will live again in Fort Worth this afternoon as a picturesque procession swings through city streets to herald the opening of the fortieth annual Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show."²³ The *Fort Worth Press*, describing the sights of the stockyards, noted, "Cowboys from all over the West are to be seen, with their sombreros, highly colored bandanas and flashy shirts, slacks and high-heeled boots. There are bronc and wild Brahma bull riders, bull-doggers, trick riders and trick ropers."²⁴ On his first night in the Fort Worth, Amon Carter whisked Rose to the stock show where he no doubt drank deeply of show's western atmosphere.²⁵

²¹ "Show Trippers Visit Brady," *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 3; "70 Plan to Make Last Booster Trip," *Fort Worth Press*, March 10, 1936, 9; "Abilene Greets Show Boosters," *Fort Worth Press*, March 11, 1936, 1, 11; "Trippers Will Ride in Parade," *Fort Worth Press*, March 13, 1936, 8.

²² "Stock Show Friday Night," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 11, 1936, 6. See also "The Spirit of Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 12, 1936, 6.

²³ "Advance Sales of Tickets Indicate Attendance Will Exceed 300,000," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 13, 1936, 1.

²⁴ "Broncs and Men from Cow Tails Still Show Feature," *Fort Worth Press*, March 13, 1936, 3.

²⁵ A. H. Montiford Jr., "Billy Rose is Back More Enthusiastic than Ever," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 14, 1936, 1-2.

Moreover, during the course of the stock show Rose attended other events, including the finals of the World's Championship Rodeo Contest.²⁶

Rose also traveled to several locations to help generate ideas for the Frontier Centennial. First, he arranged to travel to Pawnee Bill's Ranch in Oklahoma. Major Gordon W. Lillie, former partner with Buffalo Bill and retired Wild West showman, owned a three-thousand acre ranch in Pawnee County, Oklahoma. Featuring replicas of an Indian trading post and an Indian Village called "Old Town" from the 1880s, Pawnee Bill's Ranch became a center of tourism in the state. With a herd of buffalo and Native Americans which made appearances in formal dress, in 1936 Lillie's operation garnered the attention of Paramount Pictures which secured permission to include shots of the buffalo herd and "Old Town" in a forthcoming motion picture.²⁷ During his visit to Pawnee Bill's Ranch, Rose hoped to "garner ideas for Western atmosphere at the show here."²⁸ Rose also traveled west to San Diego to visit the California-Pacific International Exposition which opened in the spring of 1935. Though little is known of his trip to San Diego, Rose explained to the press that he wanted to assess the fair's "general layout."²⁹ Rose must have found "Gold Gulch," one of the fair's most popular attractions, useful. A recreation of a street from an old mining town of the 49ers, Gold Gulch featured a row of seemingly dilapidated wooden structures housing

²⁶ See Jack Gordon, "It's Plucky Beauty Who Dares Sharp Eyes and Tongue of Little Barnum," *Fort Worth Press*, March 23, 1936, 8; Joe Cooper, "Rose Qualifies as Show Judge; Splits Sheep from Goats," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 23, 1936, 2.

²⁷ See "Pawnee Bill Emerges from Retirement to Relive Wild West on Oklahoma Day," *Fort Worth Press*, March 17, 1936, 3; "Letters from Readers," *Dallas Morning News*, March 3, 1936, 2, section 2.

²⁸ "Billy Rose to Fly after New Ideas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 21, 1936, 10.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

honky-tonks and a burlesque show featuring Gold Gulch Gertie.³⁰ The design of the Frontier Centennial would ultimately include characteristics from both Pawnee Bill's ranch and San Diego's World's Fair. Rose's production of *The Last Frontier* included authentic Native Americans and a herd of bison. On the other hand, Rose used a layout structured around a midway to organize the recreated structures of the frontier village, and the venue for Sally Rand.

In the broader conceptualization of the Frontier Centennial as a historical themed environment, world's fairs played perhaps the most important role. Though planners sought to capture the Old West as it appeared in western films and novels, since the construction of Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition of Works of Industry of All Nations held in London in 1851, world's fair expositions represented prominent examples of themed architecture and environments. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago featured "ethnological" attractions along its midway including German, Irish, Chinese, and Japanese villages, as well as villages for Dakota Sioux, Navajos, and Apaches. The midway also housed exhibits to the "Mohammedan world" and West and East Asia.³¹ Other Victorian Era fairs such as the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895 featured the usual ethnological villages, but also a reconstructed old plantation house.³² These exhibits, like those at the Columbian Exposition, were meant to reinforce the colonial status and hegemonic control of a pluralistic society.³³ The Painted Desert Exhibit at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Diego featured a large pseudopueblo building to

³⁰ Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940*, 196-197.

³¹ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 63, 65.

³² *Ibid.*, 88.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

display the culture of the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest. Matthew Bokovoy argued that the exhibit appealed to fairgoers' "fascination with Indian primitivism and tourist yearnings to escape from the industrial age in the rustic lifestyle of the Southwest."³⁴

The century-of-progress expositions of the 1930s also used themed architecture to reinforce their messages. During the economic turmoil of the Great Depression, the world's fairs of the 1930s, according to Robert Rydell, "stressed America's historical progress towards becoming a promised land of abundance."³⁵ Planners hoped to connect a progressive past with a modern and prosperous future in the minds of fairgoers through the juxtaposition of themed landscapes of the past and the modern architecture structures housing the industrial and manufacture exhibits. At the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, centennial planners intentionally situated the Native American village and an exact replica of a Mayan Temple next to General Motors automobile manufacturing exhibit. A publicity release for the exposition noted "The General Motors tower rises, a bright orange tribute to Modernism, over the wigwams and tepees and hogans of the oldest Americans, over the dances and feathers and beads in the Indian stadium. . . . 'What a distance we have come,' is the theme of the World's Fair, but nowhere does it come home so sharply to the visitor as when he attends the Indian ceremonials."³⁶ The Chicago fair also featured a recreation of Fort Dear Borne. Like the Century of Progress, the California-Pacific International Exposition juxtaposed Gold Gulch with exhibits such as "Modeltown and

³⁴ Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory*, 114..

³⁵ Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 9.

³⁶ Quotation from promotional materials quoted in Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 104.

Modernization Magic” which offered fairgoers a futuristic look at suburbia.³⁷ By the time of the Frontier Centennial, world’s fairs had generally become buffets of themed environments, both of modernity and the past.

Like the planners of the century-of-progress expositions, Fort Worth civic leaders and centennial planners sought to write messages of progress and modernity into the physical landscape of the Frontier Centennial grounds. As discussed in chapter one, hoping to bring the local livestock industry into harmony with the city’s projected image of a modern metropolis, civic leaders and city boosters fought for the purchase of the Van Zandt site to build the modern livestock facilities for the stock show. By placing the stock show facilities adjacent to downtown, civic leaders hoped to link Fort Worth’s livestock industry and larger western heritage with the growth and progress manifest in its modern skyscrapers.

In addition to its location, the design of the new stock show facilities were meant to make them important members in the cast of buildings which composed modern Fort Worth. During the campaign to acquire New Deal funds for the stock show facilities in September 1935, Carter described the new livestock buildings as part of a larger process of modernizing Fort Worth. In a letter to Harry L. Hopkins, Carter wrote that the planned PWA building projects in Fort Worth, of which the stock show facilities were foremost, “will . . . give us [a] thoroughly modern city in every respect.”³⁸ During campaigning for the bond issue to provide funding for the stock show buildings, editorials in the *Fort Worth Star-*

³⁷ Bokovoy, *The San Diego World’s Fair*, 173.

³⁸ Amon G. Carter to Harry L. Hopkins, September 5, 1935, Box 174, Folder “Southwestern Exposition & Fat Stock Show,” Carter Papers.

Telegram also described the modern livestock buildings as the “the greatest of all opportunities to improve the city” which would also “make the Stock Show one of the foremost livestock shows of the country.”³⁹ The construction of modern livestock facilities would not only repackage Fort Worth’s livestock industry to conform to its modern identity but also secure a place for the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in the upper echelon of the nation’s premier stock shows.

Both in layout and design, civic leaders intended the stock show buildings to represent the most advanced livestock facilities in the United States. As such, the plans for the new facilities submitted by Wyatt C. Hedrick and Herman P. Koeppe to the PWA blended classical composition with the austere Moderne or Art Deco style emerging from Europe in the 1920s and 30s.⁴⁰ From its inception the plans called for a coliseum and auditorium anchored by a memorial tower. The final plans included a 208 foot tower flanked by a 6,161 seat coliseum on the left, and a 2,994 seat auditorium on the right with auxiliary buildings situated behind the main buildings. As “the city’s most conspicuous Art Deco landmark” the signature tower with stair-stepped ziggurat pinnacle topped by a beacon light immediately tied the new livestock facilities to the city’s image of modernity.⁴¹

Moreover, the coliseum boasted a revolutionary domed ceiling. Designed by Herbert M.

³⁹ “Full Speed Ahead,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 23, 1936, 4; “What We Voted For,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 9, 1935, 6.

⁴⁰ “Frontier Show Plans Pushed,” *Fort Worth Press*, February 3, 1936, 1-2. “Frontier Show Already Fascinating Spectacle With Amazing Growth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 15, 1936, 9. Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne*, 122.

⁴¹ Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne*, 124 (quotation), 126, 132. Amon G. Carter to Dan Moran, April 17, 1936, Box 89, Folder “Frontier Centennial,” Carter Papers.

Hinckley Sr., the selfsupporting dome spanned the 250-by-125 foot arena and required no support beams to obstruct the views of spectators.⁴²

More than a symbol of modernization, the new facilities also memorialized the state's western heritage. Named the Pioneer Tower, the focal point of the complex honored the early pioneers who settled Texas. City councilman and head of the Department of History at TCU, W. J. Hammond, selected quotations from the writings of Britain Rice Webb, Mirabeau Lamar, and Lawrence S. Ross, and portions of the Texas State Constitution for display on four plaques in the Pioneer Tower's rotunda.⁴³ The lobby of the coliseum houses several Monel plaques inspired by the western theme of the stock show. Of particular interest is an image of a rancher with his livestock. Art Deco historian Judith Singer Cohen suggests, "The rugged cattleman is an obvious tribute to the resourceful settlers of the Southwest who were responsible for developing the region's cattle industry."⁴⁴ On its east-side façade the coliseum also featured a sculpture of a bucking horse and rider, a familiar symbol for the stock show's rodeo. Interestingly the plans for the coliseum also called for a large mosaic featuring a similar horse and rider scene in the center of its lobby flanked by cactus designs, but these went unexecuted.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most striking tribute the state's western heritage are two ten-by-two-hundred foot tile friezes situated atop six stone piers on the main entrances of the coliseum and auditorium. Meant to present "the various historical development of the state," W. J.

⁴² Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne*, 126-128.

⁴³ Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne*, 125-126. See also Fort Worth City Council, Meeting Minutes, July 22, 1936, 285.

⁴⁴ Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne*, 129.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

Hammond selected the content for the mosaics, while Kenneth Gale of the Zanesville Tile Company created the panels.⁴⁶ Though both friezes run chronologically, the pair present different themes from Texas history and together do not convey a liner narrative. For example, the first of the six scenes presented in the frieze over the coliseum, to the left of Pioneer Tower, includes a depiction of several Native Americans presenting a gift to two frontiersmen with the Alamo in the background alluding to the Texas Revolution. (It should be noted that the frieze depicts the Alamo as it looked in 1936 not 1836.) The first of the six scenes presented in the frieze over the auditorium, to the right of the Pioneer Tower, includes several Spanish Conquistadors, a Catholic priest, and a Mexican woman and two men with a Spanish mission in the distance connoting the presence of the Spanish and Mexican settlers in pre-independence Texas history.

Presenting Texas history within a broader narrative of frontier progress and settlement, the mosaic over the coliseum included images of the Alamo, Native American Plains culture, frontiersmen, pioneers, peace settlements with the Native Americans, the arrival of the railroad, and cowboys at play. In contrast, the frieze over the auditorium presents a more diverse portrait of Texas history, but one which emphasizes the state's progress toward modernity and prosperity. The first two scenes includes tributes to Texas's Spanish and Mexican roots, frontiersmen, and a pair of Confederate soldiers wearing blue hats, and Union soldiers wearing gray hats, moving a cannon together signifying the reunion

⁴⁶ Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 71. Hammond initially asked S. P. Ziegler, the head of TCU's Art Department, to compose the designs. On March 17, 1936 the Fort Worth City Council evaluated his sketches. Fort Worth City Council, Meeting Minutes, March 17, 1936, 215. Apparently Hammond or the City Council passed on these designs in favor of those of Kenneth Gale. Cohen erroneously suggests that the friezes were the work of Herman Koeppel, Wyatt C. Hedrick's chief designer. *Cowtown Moderne*, 124-126.

of North and South. The final four scenes highlight the significance of the livestock industry; agricultural development; oil extraction and refining; and construction, manufacturing, and shipping. Though the content of the friezes were meant to depict Texas's history, they clearly present a perspective of history promoted by Fort Worth's civic leadership during the first decades of the twentieth century. Of particular interest is the innocuous reference Texas's part in the Confederacy and with the exception of an agricultural scene depicting several African Americans picking cotton the friezes provided no space for portrayals of the Old South. Moreover, though it acknowledged Texas's cultural and racial diversity including the historic presence of Native Americans, Spaniards, and Mexicans the mosaic emphasized the state's white heritage.

Even before construction on the complex began, the project added to an image of prosperity and progress by removing an unsightly shanty town from the site. At least fifteen families living in tents, shacks, and huts were evicted from the site when preparations for construction began. Victims of the depressed economy, some of the relief-roll families had resided on the property for as long as three years. Attempting to put a good spin on the face of progress, Delbert Willis reporting the story for the *Fort Worth Press*, claimed the families felt it their civic duty to vacate for the new centennial grounds. "Shanty towners are willing to give it up," he wrote, "All for Billy Rose and the Centennial."⁴⁷

A groundbreaking ceremony held on March 10 marked the beginning of construction. To the tune of "The Eyes of Texas" played by the TCU ROTC band, William Monnig, Mayor Van Zandt Jarvis, Uel Stevens, chief engineer-examiner for the state PWA,

⁴⁷ Delbert Willis, "Shanty Town Residents Gladly Move Out to Make Way for Centennial," *Fort Worth Press*, April 14, 1936, 18.

and Amon Carter, plunged gilded shovels into the ground. Reflecting the symbolic nature of the new facilities, the comments made by those officiating pointed to the importance of the building in memorializing Fort Worth's western heritage and image as a modern metropolis. Commenting on the significance of the structure Lionel Bevan, president of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, exclaimed, "We are again making history for Fort Worth and all of Texas, especially West Texas." "We want this to be a monument and memory of the West," he added, "for the thousands and millions of visitors who will come here." Not omitting the significance of West Texas to Fort Worth's western identity he noted, "'This is particularly West Texas' interpretation of Texas history." Following Bevan, Carter reminded those present of the importance of the new facilities to Fort Worth's future. He exclaimed "We not only are celebrating 100 years of progress, but we are laying the groundwork and foundation for another 100 years." Mayor Van Zandt Jarvis also addressed the significance of the modern livestock facilities to the city's future economic opportunities. He "envisioned Fort Worth as the leading convention city in the South because of facilities to be made available by the construction of the new buildings."⁴⁸

The ceremony signaled the beginning of the foundation work for the three prominent features of the new facilities—the coliseum, the auditorium, and the memorial tower. The actual work of excavation began the following day as engineers and surveyors defined the layout of the buildings and carpenters began constructing temporary offices

⁴⁸ "Break Earth for Frontier Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 11, 1936, 1-2. Amon G. Carter orchestrated the event. He arraigned for the pulpit and sent out 300 personal invitations. Amon G. Carter to Jack H. Hott, March 7, 1936, Box 6, Folder "Correspondence, 1934-1936," Carter Papers.

and work sheds on the site.⁴⁹ In the coming weeks work also began on the remaining auxiliary exhibit structures. These included the Rodeo Horses and Stock Building, and the Horse Show Horses Building.⁵⁰ In total, the new stock show facilities would cost the City of Fort Worth \$1,550,739.⁵¹ At the official dedication of the coliseum on September 21, 1936, Amon Carter announced the plans to call the edifice the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum after Carter's friend, the popular cowboy-humorist Will Rogers.⁵² The auditorium was dedicated a few months later on December 23, 1936 marking the completion of the three main structures in the complex.⁵³

Just as centennial planners hoped the placement of modern stock show facilities near downtown would link Fort Worth's western heritage with its contemporary urban growth and prosperity, they also hoped the reconstruction of a frontier village next to the modern stock show buildings would also evoke a powerful message of progress. In an editorial the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* suggested this interpretation when it stated that the Frontier Centennial grounds "must be a thing of prideful reminder in the history of Fort

⁴⁹ "Hammers Ring as Work Starts on Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Press*, March 11, 1936, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Expo Construction is Started Early," *Fort Worth Press*, March 25, 1936, 1. Lack of funding resulted in the omission of the Casino and Agricultural Exhibit Building and Manufacture's Exhibit Building from the facilities. See "2 More Show Structures Are Planned," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 25, 1936, 1; Lois Gray, "History of the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," 69.

⁵¹ Wyatt C. Hedrick and Elmer G. Withers Architectural Company Incorporated to City of Fort Worth, March 31, 1936, Box 1, Folder "April 1936, folder 3 of 3," Fort Worth City Council, Council Proceedings, FTWPLA.

⁵² Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne*, 129-130. The City Council subsequently adopted a resolution to call the building the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum several days later on September 23, 1936. Fort Worth City Council, Meeting Minutes, September 23, 1936, 318. Amon Carter referred to the coliseum as the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum as early as April 1936. See Amon G. Carter to Dan Moran, April 17, 1936, Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

⁵³ Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne*, 132.

Worth's civic progress"⁵⁴ The notion to build an "authentic reproduction" of a frontier town as a counterpoint to the new stock show facilities represented a central component of the earliest centennial plans.⁵⁵

Not long after his trips to Pawnee Bill's Ranch and the San Diego World's Fair, Rose began to make more specific comments on the direction he would take in the development of the grounds. Describing his conceptualization for the grounds he said, "I want to recreate a typical city of the days of '49." "I want to have the atmosphere of a Texas town 100 years ago," he added, "—a city of soldiers, surrounded by herds of wild buffalo, Indians, cowboys, gambling halls, etc."⁵⁶ Interestingly his description of the grounds differed little, if at all, from comments made earlier by centennial planners and city boosters.⁵⁷ Though such comments seem to suggest a narrow definition of the historical environment Rose intended to create, over time his conceptions of the "west" appeared far broader. Likely after learning that Rose brought in Albert Johnson, renowned Broadway stage designer from New York, to design the lands, the Women's Division expressed their concerns that "native architecture" would no longer be used in the design of the fair grounds. At a Women's Division rally, Rose assured them that in the construction of the grounds his test question would be "Is it Texas? Is it frontier? Is it Western? If it is, it is right. If it's Forty-Second Street, if it's New York, if it's Broadway, it's wrong." Comments made by his publicist also

⁵⁴ "Now for the Frontier Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 30, 1936, 6.

⁵⁵ "Centennial Livestock Exposition's Control Board Maps Program," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 11, 1936, 1-2.

⁵⁶ "Frontier Show to Pay, Will Not Be Pageant, Says Rose," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 19, 1936, 8.

⁵⁷ See Amon G. Carter to William Cameron, March 13, 1936, Box 89, Folder "Frontier Centennial," Carter Papers.

suggest Rose's conceptualization for the Frontier Centennial grounds were no longer anchored in Texas or one-hundred years ago. Richard Maney explained the frontier town "will combine the best features of Deadwood, Virginia City and San Francisco of '49."⁵⁸ Like dime and pulp novels and western films, Rose moved toward a generic conception of the mythic West which extended from the Great Plains to the Pacific Ocean and from the 1830s to the 1870 or 1880s.

Late in March 1936, Johnson began working with architect John R. Pelich to develop a general layout for the Frontier Centennial. Within days Johnson drafted a layout radically altering Pelich's original organization of the Pioneer Village.⁵⁹ Meant to give "a surprise at every turn," the new "frontier city" featured a "W" shaped midway a half mile long consuming nearly twenty-three acres.⁶⁰ Later *Architectural Forum* praised the layout as "a simple but effective plan which led traffic along short avenues with a major interesting building at the end of each vista."⁶¹ Like modern shopping malls, each of the four points along the midway featured an entertainment "anchor." In addition to layout, Johnson also scrapped Pelich's original architectural designs based upon historic West Texas ghost towns. Johnson and Rose developed an ingenious way to depict Rose's broad notions of the Texas and the American West. Each of the major entertainment venues and the midway itself

⁵⁸ "New York Columnist Break Out in Rhetorical Rash over Billy Rose's Fort Worth Plans," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 27, 1936, 11.

⁵⁹ "Lonely Hearts to Get Chance to be Less Lonely When Frontier Centennial Opens," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 24, 1936, 7.

⁶⁰ "Show Board Meets with Billy Rose," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 5, 1936, 8.

⁶¹ "Fort Worth Festival," *Architectural Forum* 65 no. 3 (September 1936), 9.

featured an architectural representation of one of the six nations to fly flags over Texas.⁶² Johnson's design represented a conflation of all the eras of Texas's past into one uniform park. Because Rose had yet to flesh out the content of his major attractions, with the exception of the importation of *Jumbo*, the designs only hinted at the attractions the sketched buildings would eventually house.⁶³ With a July 1 opening day, construction on the major "temporary" Frontier Centennial buildings commenced soon after the work on the new stock show facilities began.⁶⁴

Rose's themed vision of Texas history and the Old West began to take shape on the Frontier Centennial grounds directly to the east of the new stock show facilities. Work first began on the buildings housing the major entertainment venues. Though he claimed each building would, in its architectural styling, represent an era of Texas history, Johnson's designs maintained no allusions to historical accuracy. Detailed plans for what would become the iconic and most expensive "temporary" building debuted on the first of April.⁶⁵ For the presentation of what Rose called the "Frontier Follies" Johnson conceived of a giant horseshoe shaped open-air café-theater with a seating capacity of four-thousand. Intended

⁶² "Work to Start Next Week on Frontier Show," *Fort Worth Press*, March 23, 1936, 7; "Lonely Hearts to Get Chance to be Less Lonely When Frontier Centennial Opens," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 24, 1936, 7; "Women Told How to Aid Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 25, 1936, 1-2; "Two 'Old-Time' Buildings to Feature Show," *Fort Worth Press*, March 26, 1936, 2.

⁶³ "Here's First Sketch of Centennial 'Frontier City,'" *Fort Worth Press*, March 26, 1936, 2.

⁶⁴ Bess Stephenson, "Centennial Show Sketch Plans Ready," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1936, 1-2.

⁶⁵ Centennial officials contracted construction of the Casa Mañana for \$150,000. "Plans Ready on Two Buildings," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 2, 1936, 20. Though judged safe for occupation, the quickly constructed redwood buildings of the Frontier City did not meet the typical safety standards set by the city. See "Frontier City Contract Let," *Fort Worth Press*, April 1, 1936, 1, 9; L. G. Larson to G. D. Fairtrace, May 19, 1936, Box 1, Folder "May 1936," Fort Worth City Council, Council Proceedings.

to reflect the architecture of the “Spanish flag,” the plans called for six hundred arches accompanied by Spanish lanterns and a copper and white color scheme. In addition to claiming the distinction of largest café-theater on earth, the designs included several engineering features intended to enhance the stage productions, but also impress and attract audiences. The 130-foot revolving stage, also billed as the world’s largest, rested above a pool of water. The hidden mechanisms which turned the great stage also allowed for forward and reverse lateral motion. When moved in reverse, the stage drew away from the front rows to reveal a pool featuring a set of fountains. Moreover, during the show gondolas and boats could move freely between the audience and the stage. From the stage, rows of tables and chairs fanned outward in escalating tiers to meet first and second floor box seats at the sides and rear of the interior.⁶⁶ To serve dining guests, the centennial officials employed two-hundred African-American waiters—the only part African Americans played during the Frontier Centennial.⁶⁷

Within a week of the unveiling of the plans, work began on the massive café-theater with an exterior façade stretching 280 feet.⁶⁸ The contractor employed 150 workmen on that structure alone. In early May as the theater began to take shape, Rose christened the building. Because of its futuristic features, Rose claimed far surpassed existing theaters he named the building Casa Mañana or House of Tomorrow.⁶⁹ On June 18, with Rose and other

⁶⁶ Bess Stephenson, “Centennial Show Sketch Plans Ready,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1936, 1-2; “Frontier Centennial will be Riot of Color,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 12, 1936, 1, 4; “Frontier City Contract Let,” *Fort Worth Press*, April 1, 1936, 1, 9.

⁶⁷ “Frontier Show Almost Ready,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 3, 1936, 9.

⁶⁸ “Frontier City Contract Let,” *Fort Worth Press*, April 1, 1936, 1, 9.

⁶⁹ “Paul Whitman’s Orchestra Signed for 6 Weeks’ Stay at Frontier Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 7, 1936, 1-2; Show Dance Hall’s Name Is Changed To Pioneer Palace,” *Fort*

Centennial officials looking on, the Casa Mañana's two-thousand ton revolving stage made its first revolution. To what must have been Rose's relief, then delight, the stage worked with smooth precision.⁷⁰

Soon after the debut of the plans for the café-theater, Johnson introduced designs for the other three major entertainment buildings. For Rose's masterwork *Jumbo*, he envisioned a 2,500 seat circular auditorium reminiscent of the "famous old circus building in New Orleans in the [18]70s, the Hippodrome in New York in the [18]60s and older structures in Europe." Like the Casa Mañana, Johnson meant the Circus Building to represent one of the six flags to fly over Texas. With the addition of details "typical of French structures," such as French scroll work, the circus building represented the French period in Texas history.⁷¹ The intricacy of the light grey scroll work against buildings scarlet exterior and white coned roof made for a striking and unique edifice. The interior consisted of a large bowl surrounding the circular stage or circus ring which reached forty feet in diameter. Plans also called for two fan-shaped menageries flanking the structure for holding and viewing the animals between performances.⁷²

Far less striking than the Casa Mañana or the Circus Building, Johnson's Rodeo Building would house Rose's much-touted "musicalized Wild West Show." The simple, though large, concrete and wood structure consisted of a "U" shaped three-thousand seat

Worth Star-Telegram, May 3, 1936, 2. See also "Casa Mañana--House of Tomorrow—Rapidly Becomes House of Today," *Fort Worth Press*, May 23, 1936, 1.

⁷⁰ "2,000-Ton Casa Mañana Revolving Stage Gets Whirl," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 19, 1936, 9.

⁷¹ "Centennial Show Sketch Plans Ready," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1936, 1-2; "Jumbo' Will Be Here For Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 10, 1936, 1-2; "Here's Where 'Jumbo' Will Be Housed for Summer," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 12, 1936, 1.

⁷² "'Jumbo Will Be Here For Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 10, 1936, 1-2.

grandstand covered by a canvas awning. Characterized as “a side show structure” the exterior featured a series of rectangle panels colored in the earth tones of brown, green, and orange. Each panel featured alternating images of a large bear skin and an “Indian Shield” with crossed tomahawks.⁷³ Unlike the designs of the Casa Mañana and the Circus Building which exhibited some architectural preferences of the nations they intended to represent, neither the façade nor the interior of the Rodeo Building reflected the design motifs of the Mexican flag--the nation Centennial planners claimed it represented. In fact, the tent-like canvas awning and grandstand seating around the arena seemed more reminiscent of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West shows than homage to Mexico. Early plans called for two sets of train tracks to meet on the dirt floor of 120-foot arena for reenacting the 1869 joining of the transcontinental railroad. Instead, Centennial planners opted to build an artificial mountain functioning as both stage and backdrop to Rose’s musical rodeo.⁷⁴ Construction on the Rodeo Building began shortly after the signing of the contract on April 6.⁷⁵

Construction on what would be the fourth and final major entertainment structure began nearly a month after the previous three.⁷⁶ When Rose first announced the structure, he described it as “A real, old-time honky-tonk.” He promised to fill the bar with pretty girls, a Mexican orchestra, singing waiters, and dance hostesses. Initially, titled the “Gay Nineties

⁷³ “Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra Signed for 6 Weeks’ Stay at Frontier Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 7, 1936, 1-2; “Frontier Centennial Will Be Riot of Color,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 12, 1936, 1, 4.

⁷⁴ “Centennial Show Sketch Plans Ready,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1936, 1-2; “Western Show Stage is Large,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 6, 1936, 1; “‘Last Frontier’ stage to Be Like This,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 20, 1936, 10.

⁷⁵ “Rose Plans ‘Honky Tonk’ Entertainment Palace,” *Fort Worth Press*, April 7, 1936, 16.

⁷⁶ “Western Show Stage is Large,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 6, 1936, 1.

Casino” eventually Rose dubbed the building the Pioneer Palace.⁷⁷ Essentially a massive dance hall and bar, the designs for the Pioneer Palace included a large dance floor three-hundred feet long and 175 feet wide at the center and a forty-foot bar with an elevated stage behind running its entire length. The exterior of the one-story wedge-shaped ultramarine building featured deep set windows with white shutters and scalloped points on the roof.⁷⁸ Neither Rose nor Johnson ever revealed which of the six flags the design of the Pioneer Palace reflected.

Johnson’s plans, keeping with the six flags theme, originally called for six large entertainment structures. In the process of construction, however, several features of his “Frontier City” ultimately fell by the wayside. Borrowed from earlier plans for the centennial grounds, Johnson’s plans included space for a four-hundred seat “old-time gas-lighted ‘opery house’” to present melodramas. Rose later argued that because of the proliferation of melodramas in recent years the concept lacked the requisite novelty for a major attraction at the Frontier Centennial and was therefore dropped from the plans. Other sources suggest that Frontier Centennial planners simply ran out money.⁷⁹ Interestingly, this venue represented Texas under the Confederate flag.⁸⁰ By the end of April, Rose began

⁷⁷ “Rose Plans ‘Honky Tonk’ Entertainment Palace,” *Fort Worth Press*, April 7, 1936, 16; “Jumbo Will Be Here For Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 10, 1936, 16.

⁷⁸ “Show Palace Contract Let,” *Fort Worth Press*, May 5, 1936, 1; “Frontier Centennial will be Riot of Color,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 12, 1936, 1, 4.

⁷⁹ See, “Fort Worth Festival,” *Architectural Forum* 65, no. 3 (September 1936), 9.

⁸⁰ “Billy Rose is Back with Ideas of Zeppelin Size,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 4, 1936, 16; “Here’s First Sketch of Centennial ‘Frontier City,’” *Fort Worth Press*, March 26, 1936, 2; “Centennial Show Sketch Plans Ready,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1936, 1-2. Apparently the excavation of the foundation and the laying of sewer and water lines for the Opey House had already commenced before the building was scrapped. See “Skyline at

considering the placement of carnival-type rides and attractions on the plot which the Opey House would have stood. On April 29, Rose hosted the designer of the Century of Progress's "Sky-Ride" who developed plans for 250 foot tower which would spin and lift a number of "Stratoships" simulating the experience of flight. However, Rose ultimately contracted Bill Hames, who annually provided midway entertainment for the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show.⁸¹ Though the "Stratoships" tower never materialized, Rose did construct an artificial mountain surrounded by a moat and wire netting to display two-hundred monkeys.⁸² Rose also dropped plans for a "Trading Post Exhibits" building Johnson situated across from the Circus Building. With the omission of the Opey House representing the Confederacy and the Trading Post, perhaps representing the Republic of Texas, by the time work began on the Pioneer Palace, Centennial Planners mentioned nothing of its possible representation of the American Flag. Although it never fully materialized, the six flags theme at the Frontier Centennial represented the first use of such theming for entertainment purposes subsequently embraced by the Six Flags over Texas theme park in 1961.⁸³

Frontier Centennial Grounds Shapes Up as Roofing Work is Rushed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 16, 1936, 3.

⁸¹ "Airplanes' Will Roar Around 250-Foot Tower to Thrill Frontier Show Crowds," *Fort Worth Press*, April 29, 1936, 3.

⁸² "Sale of Frontier Show Tickets at Bargain Rates to be Begun Monday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 29, 1936, 1-2. See also "Here's Some More Actors Who'll Be in Centennial Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 1, 1936, 8.

⁸³ In his study of the theming of Six Flags Over Texas theme park, Richard Francaviglia suggests that the first use of the symbols of the six nations to govern Texas used on grounds of the Texas State Centennial in 1936 represented the first "amusement-oriented environment to use the six flags theme." See Richard Francaviglia, "Texas History in Texas Theme Parks: Six Flags Over Texas Revisited," *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Texas* 7 (Fall 1995): 34-43 (quotation on 35). I would argue that since the Texas State

Centennial planners eventually added a fifth building, incongruent with the six flags theme, at the behest of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. Officials in Dallas originally offered West Texas six-thousand square feet of space to exhibit the region's resources. After officials cut the region's exhibit space down to 1,300 square feet, the West Texas Chamber of Commerce turned to Fort Worth and the Frontier Centennial as an alternative for presenting the region's resources to centennial visitors. From the beginning, Fort Worth boosters, civic leaders, and Frontier Centennial planners sought the participation of West Texans in the development of Fort Worth's centennial celebration. Naturally, centennial planners, many of whom actively participated in the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, happily acquiesced to the placement of a West Texas display at the Frontier Centennial.⁸⁴ On March 4, Chamber president Ray H. Nichols and general manager D. A. Bandeen issued a letter announcing a two-pronged plan for presenting the region's resources to centennial visitors. First, an "All-Resources and All-Community exhibit" originally planned for the central centennial in Dallas would be exhibited at the Frontier Centennial. Second, the West Texas Chamber of Commerce would "cooperate fully" with the creation of a "general agricultural exhibit" on par with those presented by East and South Texas. However, "Responsibility for gathering the West Texas exhibit will rest upon the Central Exposition."⁸⁵

Centennial focused on education rather than entertainment and only drew upon the themes as ornamentation rather cultivating specific organizational or architectural themes, the Frontier Centennial represents the first use of the six flags theme for entertainment purposes.

⁸⁴ "Westex Centennial Exhibit Plan Broadened with Main Showing at Fort Worth's Frontier Centennial," *West Texas Today* 17, no. 1 (March 1936): 7; "All West Texas Rally at Frontier Show is Urged," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 14, 1936, 3.

⁸⁵ "Westex Centennial Exhibit Plan Broadened with Main Showing at Fort Worth's Frontier Centennial," *West Texas Today* 17, no. 1 (March 1936): 7

D. A. Bandeen, manager of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, met with both Frontier Centennial architect John R. Pelich and Billy Rose to discuss the needs of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce.⁸⁶ Though “educational” exhibits did not fit with Rose’s conception of the Frontier Centennial, planners developed a novel space for the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. Contributing to Rose’s western-themed space, Pelich designed a rectangular building resembling the old Texas and Pacific Station at Fort Worth. Painted in red and black stripes with a flat top tar covered roof, the replica included “verandah, spittoons, and 1876 time tables.⁸⁷ The inclusion of a replica of the city’s first railroad station represented the only building on the grounds to architecturally tie the Frontier Centennial to Fort Worth’s history. To add to the station’s authenticity, the City Council passed an ordinance permitting the St. Louis, San Francisco and Texas Railway to build nineteen-hundred-foot spur to West Texas Chamber of Commerce building. The St. Louis, San Francisco and Texas Railway also rebuilt and refurbished old railroad equipment for presentation at the centennial.⁸⁸ The interior of the building provided the West Texas Chamber of Commerce with space to display a number of dioramas and panels depicting the various raw materials and goods produced in the region, a collection of West Texas

⁸⁶ “West Teas Exhibits Start is Asked,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 17, 1936, 9; “Big Spring Man to Draw Plans,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 19, 1936, 4.

⁸⁷ “Old Railroad Station Replica to Be at Show,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 25, 1936, 1-2; “Railroad Station Replica at Show Nears Completion,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 27, 1936, 3.

⁸⁸ “Pioneer Railway Station at Show Will Be Completed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 28, 1936, 9; “Old T. P. Equipment Rebuilt for Exhibits in Centennial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 31, 1936, 10.

branding irons, a color motion picture boosting the region, and a replica of the office of the recently deceased Will Rogers containing many of his personal belongings.⁸⁹

Tying together the conflated eras of Texas history, Johnson's design called for structures typical of the "Old West" to line the entire length of the midway. Unlike Pelich's design which implemented features of Fort Worth's frontier heritage and the state's Mexican and southern past, Johnson presented a series of buildings representing the conventional props in formula westerns of the era.⁹⁰ These props became so important to portrayals of the mythic West by the 1930s, that without them the Old West would not be recognized by audiences. As such, an editorial in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* explained Frontier Centennial planners carefully followed the canon of western mythology. "The reconstructed Frontier Village," the editorial explained, "the Block house, the Indian Camp, the Second Dragoons—they are all parts of a ritual."⁹¹

After entering the turnstiles, Frontier Centennial-goers walked through a row of old and weather-beaten buildings scattered haphazardly along the midway complete with hitching posts, Rose dubbed the "Sunset Trail." To add an "authentic" weatherworn appearance each board when through a carefully measured process of charring.⁹² Those

⁸⁹ See "1,000 at Work on WTCC Show," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 17, 1936, 7; Ella Daggett "Pinwheels and Pioneers," 28-29, typescript, Folder "II: 2:11 Fort Worth Frontier Centennial—Typescript by Ella Daggett—1936," Box 2, Series 11, Lake Papers. For an architectural rendering of the interior and exterior of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce building, see D. A. Bandeen, "Who'd Like to be an Ethiopian? West Texas to Get its Story Told at the Frontier Centennial," *West Texas Today* 17, no. 3 (May 1936): 28.

⁹⁰ Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique*, 28-29.

⁹¹ "Tomorrow in Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 17, 1936, 6.

⁹² Harold Brown, "Well, Sir, We'll Amble Over to Cactus Ike's Bar and a More Dilapidated Structure You've Never Seen; When Last Nail's Driven It'll Be a He Man's Stomping Ground," *Fort Worth Press*, June 3, 1936, 1, 8.

allowed to view the Sunset Trail prior to opening day praised the designers and marveled at the details giving the buildings an aged appearance including the appearance of leaning, worm holes in the wood, grass growing in the cracks, and desiccated lumber.⁹³ Buildings included a pair of frontier stockades, a general store, a two-story town hall, a saloon and dance hall, and two hotels known as the Astor House and Palmer House.

These buildings of false-front design contained a string of twenty by twenty-foot rooms containing the Women's Division museum of pioneer relics and western art.⁹⁴ Continuing to occupy the role of civilizers, volunteers from the Women's Division in frontier attire saw to the hospitality needs of centennial visitors in a replica of a village church complete with an old organ.⁹⁵ Commenting on the location of the Women's Division's museum on the first leg of the "W" shaped midway, columnist Ernie Pyle claimed the organization was intentional "so that the public can get through them first and have it over with, and then be free to have fun with a clear historical conscience."⁹⁶

Other frontier buildings included the blacksmith shop, the Wells Fargo building, *The Weekly Star* printing house distributing a mock frontier paper, and the livery stable which featured old buggies and coaches. An adobe house containing Mexican arts and crafts provided the Frontier Centennial's only hint to the state's Mexican heritage. Celebrities

⁹³ See "C. L. Douglas, "Frontier Show Village Scene Merits Praise," *Fort Worth Press*, June 24, 1936, 7; "What our Readers Say," *Fort Worth Press*, June 17, 1936, 4.

⁹⁴ See "Village Street Plans are Told," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 1, 1936, 9; "Show Sites Allocated to Women," *Fort Worth Press*, May 5, 1936, 6; Edith Alderman Guedry, "Rare Relics Arrive Now Every Day for Museum to be in Frontier Building," *Fort Worth Press*, June 4, 1936, 6.

⁹⁵ "Village Street Plans are Told," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 1, 1936, 9; See also Dagget, "Pinwheels and Pioneers," 3, 16, 18-19, 22.

⁹⁶ Ernie Pyle, "'Big Four' Attractions of Frontier Show Visualized," *Fort Worth Press*, June 1, 1936, 1.

attending the show were often brought by blue-coated soldiers before the court of Judge Roy Bean's "Law West of the Pecos." Along the midway Frontier Centennial-goers could also find other western themed amusements such as a "tin type" photo studio, wax museum, old-time leather shop, tonsorial parlor, and shooting galleries.⁹⁷ For meals centennial visitors ate at The Chuck Wagon, an eatery designed to look like a row of prairie schooners.⁹⁸

Though the Frontier Centennial grounds conflated numerous times and places and architectural styles in the history of Texas and the American West, its allusion to "authenticity" was intended to produce a sense of nostalgia for the mythic West—a West that most Americans knew well and Fort Worth claimed to be a part. Still little remained in the physical layout of the centennial grounds to connect Fort Worth and the mythic West. Ironically, the distancing of the physical layout from Fort Worth by omitting structures such as a reproduction of the military outpost of the city's namesake coincided with a greater connection of Fort Worth to Frontier Centennial. For example, as early as April 1936 the letterhead for centennial correspondence as well as subsequent promotional material now carried the title "Fort Worth Frontier Centennial"⁹⁹ The change in title reflects the culmination of a process which altered the purpose of Fort Worth's celebration of the state centennial from commemorating the state's livestock industry to an exercise in civic

⁹⁷ Daggett, "Pinwheels and Pioneers," 3, 23; "Show to Have Early Texas 'Main Street,'" *Fort Worth Press*, April 13, 1936, 1. For a copy of the mock-frontier paper see, *The Frontier City Weekly Star*, Folder "July 5, 1936-July 29, 1936," Box 322 (6), Carter Papers.

⁹⁸ See *Jumbo*, playbill, Fort Worth, 1936, Folder 2, Jane Wiggins Gudgeon York Collection, TCA.

⁹⁹ See Billy Rose to Amon G. Carter, April 13, 1936, Box 116, Folder "Lanham, Fritz, 1926-1947," Carter Papers.

boostering. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited Dallas to inaugurate the state's centennial celebration, Fort Worth civic leaders found an opportunity to validate their own centennial offering.¹⁰⁰ On June 12, civic leaders arranged for the President to make a stop in Fort Worth. To ensure the President would receive a "patriotic and loyal welcome," Mayor Van Zandt Jarvis declared June 12, a holiday beginning at 1:00 pm, and dubbed it "Fort Worth and West Texas President's Day."¹⁰¹ After arriving at the Texas and Pacific Station, Roosevelt's entourage headed north through the city lined with flag waving Fort Worthians to Marine Park where the President gave a speech. Following his remarks the presidential motorcade moved south to the centennial grounds touted as "Fort Worth's No. 1 pride."¹⁰² During the five minute stop, the President and Mrs. Roosevelt met architect of the new stock show facilities Joe Pelich and his wife. Afterward, Amon Carter approached the President's limousine and stood next to the seated Roosevelt pointing out the four major temporary centennial buildings still under construction. Reportedly, Roosevelt responded to Carter's boosterism with an enthusiastic "wonderful."¹⁰³ Like pioneer societies who sought legalization through the attendance of celebrities at their annual meetings, Fort Worth civic leaders likely viewed Roosevelt's visit as means to validate Fort Worth's western

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth B. Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 246-247.

¹⁰¹ Van Zandt Jarvis, Untitled Document, May 1936, Box 163, Folder, "Roosevelt, Franklin D., 1934-1936," Carter Papers.

¹⁰² For details regarding the purpose of the President's trip to Texas see "Roosevelt to Say Here June 12 and Part of 13th," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 28, 1936, 8.

¹⁰³ "Fort Worth Set to Hail Roosevelt," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 12, 1936, 1-2; "Route to Be Followed by President Roosevelt and Party," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 12, 1936, 2. "'Wonderful,' Says President On viewing Show Grounds," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 13, 1936, 1 (quotation). For a photograph of Carter instructing Roosevelt see "President Finds Much of Interest as He Inspects Frontier Centennial Site," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 13, 1936, 9.

identity through the affirmation of the Frontier Centennial grounds by the President of the United States.¹⁰⁴

Together the ramshackle buildings of the Sunset Trail, the unique Circus building, the exotic Casa Mañana with its round stage and moat, and the modern design of the new stock show buildings must have created an interesting spectacle to Frontier Centennial-goers. Though the group of structures seemed otherworldly, their form and organization was precisely planned to convey meaning in the present. City fathers intentionally juxtaposed the structures of the past with those of the present to convey the city's progressive and modern image. Moving beyond the itemized themed spaces of world's fairs, Rose sought to create in totality the mythic West. Rose tapped deeply meaningful symbolism to create, with a sense of nostalgia, a historic Texas and Old West, without any overt reference to the past. By conflating diversely different times and places, Rose sought to sell an easily recognizable and consumable mythic West and in the process placed Fort Worth within the nation's epic frontier past in the minds of centennial-goers.

¹⁰⁴ David M. Wrobel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 122.

EPILOGUE

The turnstiles counted nearly one million visitors to the Frontier Centennial grounds during the summer and fall of 1936. Attracting guests from around the nation, the celebration played host to dozens of dignitaries and celebrities. Notable political attendees included Vice President John Nance Garner and his wife, director of the FBI J. Edgar Hoover, Texas governor James Allred, Texas senator Tom Connally, and Florida governor Dave Sholtz. Other celebrities to attend included Ernest Hemingway, former heavyweight boxing champ Max Baer, and Broadway producers Earl Carroll and George White.¹ MGM studios also took an interest in the Frontier Centennial and sent a film crew to Fort Worth to film *Casa Mañana*.² In addition audiences around the nation experienced the Frontier Centennial vicariously through a number of coast-to-coast broadcasts of *Casa Mañana* and *The Last Frontier*.³

During its four-month run the Frontier Centennial operated with only a few major setbacks. Behind the scenes, centennial planners struggled against a chronic lack of capital. Perhaps more disconcerting, the design of the Circus Building, one of Johnson's architectural wonders, reduced *Jumbo*, one of the three major entertainment attractions, to a financial failure. The building suffered from a lack of air conditioning or even proper ventilation. Though *Jumbo* played mostly evening performances, the sweltering summer heat concentrated under the conical ceiling of the Circus Building made viewing the show

¹ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 77, 94; Rose, *Wine, Women and Words*, 21-22.

² Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 94.

³ *Ibid.*, 80, 96-97. See also Amon G. Carter to Walter A. Jones, August 21, 1936, Box 110, Folder "J-Miscellaneous, 1936-1940," Carter Papers.

unbearable for audiences. Hoping to solve the problem planners pared down the length of the show by half and installed water-cooled fans all to no avail. To boost ailing profit margins, Frontier Centennial planners even abated their Jim Crow policies and began admitting African Americans to *Jumbo*.⁴ As some predicted during the height of the religious protest over the sexual content of Frontier Centennial promotional materials, visitors to the celebration found presentations of the female form in Rose's productions, including Rand's performance of the bubble dance at the Casa Mañana and her Nude Ranch, innocuous. Frontier Centennial planners prepared for the worst when J. Frank Norris appeared on the centennial grounds unannounced, after returning from his summertime evangelist travels. Rose used several methods of chicanery hoping to divert the preacher's attention from Rand's performance. Norris surprised the press after his visit, when he announced, "My hat is off to Amon Carter and his associates. They've done a real job."⁵ Though the Tarrant County Baptist Association and other religious leaders continued to object to Frontier Centennial nudity, unlike the earlier religious protests against the celebration's promotional materials these went unheeded.⁶

Similar to the world's fairs of the era, in terms of revenue and attendance the Frontier Centennial failed to meet the high expectations of civic leaders and city boosters. The celebration lost \$97,000 and brought in less than one-fourth the number expected to

⁴ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 86, 99.

⁵ J. Frank Norris quoted in Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 98.

⁶ After the show opened a solitary complaint about Rand's performance came from a Reverend Joe Scheumack. See Fort Worth City Council, Meeting Minutes, August 5, 1936, 290. Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 132-133.

attend.⁷ Despite the dismal figures, centennial planners and civic boosters judged it an unmitigated success. As a vehicle for civic promotion the celebration achieved its aims. As William Monnig explained to the unpaid bond holders following the celebration, “the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial was worth all it cost to Fort Worth, in the advertising it gave the city, the favorable impression made upon visitors, and the business activity for which it was responsible, estimated at approximately \$5,000,000.”⁸ Amon Carter shared Monnig’s assessment of the success of the exposition in promoting Fort Worth and gave much of the success to Billy Rose. In a farewell telegram to Rose, Carter wrote, “You did a magnificent job in the creation of our Frontier Centennial. I appreciate it and I feel that everyone intimately connected with the enterprise feels the same way. It has been an outstanding success. I think in advertising value alone it has been worth to Fort Worth all its cost. . . . I regard it as the biggest and best thing Fort Worth ever has done and no little of the credit goes to you, for without you and the magnificent shows you created none of this value could have been obtained.” Monnig’s and Carter’s comments reflect the extent to which the Texas Frontier Centennial had become Fort Worth’s Frontier Centennial after the arrival of Billy Rose.⁹

For those associated with the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, the decision to promote West Texas at the Frontier Centennial rather than the central exposition in Dallas with the “All Resource, All Community” exhibit represented a shrewd decision. The West

⁷ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 103; Ragsdale, *Centennial '36*, 294.

⁸ Report of the Texas Centennial Livestock and Frontier Days Exposition, Inc., March 11, 1937[7], in Lois Gray, “History of Fort Worth Centennial,” appendix.

⁹ Amon G. Carter to Billy Rose, November 14, 1936, Box 163, Folder “Billy Rose, 1936-1939,” Carter Papers.

Texas Chamber of Commerce estimated that more than 700,000 fair goers visited the exhibit during the celebration exceeding the number who visited the West Texas agricultural exhibit in Dallas by a factor of ten. Based upon the exposure the region received at the Frontier Centennial, officials with the West Texas Chamber of Commerce considered making the exhibit a permanent part of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, a move which would further strengthen the economic and cultural ties between Fort Worth and West Texas.¹⁰

Rose returned to Fort Worth for an encore in 1937. Billed as the Fort Worth Frontier Fiesta, the second run of the Frontier Centennial promised visitors new and more exciting entertainment offerings. Retrofitting expositions for a second year to help make up for first year losses had become standard practice among world's fair host cities. Dallas also announced it would host the Greater Texas and Pan American Exposition in 1937. Continuing to promote the Dallas/Fort Worth rivalry Rose told the press "We'll be all-American, not Pan-American."¹¹ Rose's persistent hostility toward Dallas did not reflect the tone struck by the new management of the Frontier Fiesta. In April 1937 James F. Pollock, who replaced John B. Davis as general manager, began a dialogue with the officials of the Pan American Exposition, suggesting the two cities work together in promoting special days promising "that Fort Worth, officially and generally, will enter wholeheartedly into this new relationship, which cannot but result advantageously to both cities." Assistant Director

¹⁰ "The Story of West Texas at the Frontier Centennial; Permanency of Exhibit Now Under Consideration," *West Texas Today* 17 no. 9 (November 1936): 3-4.

¹¹ Rose quoted in Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 107.

General of the Pan American Exposition Frank N. Watson responded favorably seeking an opportunity for the heads of the two expositions to meet.¹²

For the most part, the Frontier Fiesta lacked the western focus and grandeur of Texas patriotism inherent in the centennial celebration of the previous year. Rose returned many of the same personnel who shaped the Frontier Centennial such as John Murray Anderson, Albert Johnson, and costume designer Raoul Rene du Bois. Personalities such as Everett Marshall and Paul Whiteman also returned.¹³ Although advertising materials continued to promote the Sunset Trail, claiming “it’s a hairy-chested he-man’s town of the Texas frontier” which looked “more like the Old West than the pioneers knew,” Rose did away with his musical Wild West show *The Last Frontier*.¹⁴ The Rodeo Building now housed a circus-type attraction called “Flirting With Death.” On the grounds where Sally Rand’s Nude Ranch once stood, seventy-two hackberry trees ornamented with ten-thousand twinkling lights provided a stage for “Firefly Garden” featuring performances from the Salici Marionettes.¹⁵

Though Sally Rand and her Nude Ranch no longer graced the grounds, the issue of sex appeal and nudity at the Frontier Fiesta remained an issue for city officials. Prior to the 1936 celebration, image- and heritage-conscious religious leaders and club women convinced Rose and civic leaders to curtail overt depictions of nudity in promotional materials. However, during the celebration civic leaders turned a blind eye to centennial

¹² James F. Pollock to Frank L. McNeny, April 5, 1937; James F. Pollock to Frank N. Watson, April 6, 1937 (quotation); Frank N. Watson to James F. Pollock, April 10, 1937, Box 15, Folder “Ft. Worth Frontier Fiesta,” Texas Centennial Central Exposition in Dallas Collection.

¹³ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 108-109.

¹⁴ *Billy Rose Presents Frontier Fiesta*, Fort Worth 1937.

¹⁵ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 121-123.

nudity. Although civic leaders looked past Frontier Centennial nudity a year earlier, Frontier Fiesta nudity now came under scrutiny. To boost ailing revenue at the Pioneer Palace, Rose hired Hinda Wassau who performed a number titled “The Evolution of the Strip-Tease.” Initially the City Council passed a resolution condemning the act but later threatened to stop the number entirely. Defying the City Council’s censure, Wassau continued to perform her dance unaltered. Eventually, however, she bowed to the Council’s wishes performing a more modest version of the dance.¹⁶

As with the Frontier Centennial, the Casa Mañana remained the premiere attraction of the Frontier Fiesta. For the new *Casa Mañana*, Rose drew upon scenes from four popular literary works. These included *Gone With the Wind*, *Wake Up and Live*, *Lost Horizon*, and *It Can’t Happen Here*. Without Sally Rand to draw crowds, Rose counted on more elaborate costuming and stage designs to attract audiences. For example, the scenes from *Gone With the Wind* were performed before a façade of an antebellum mansion two-hundred feet across and three stories tall. As the stage rotated to the next scene, the mansion burst into flames.¹⁷ Given the lengths to which the Board of Control went to omit any references to the South or the Confederacy at the Frontier Centennial, Rose’s selection of *Gone With the Wind*, a novel romanticizing the Old South, is interesting and perhaps suggests the City Council, who approved Rose’s selections, did not consider the Frontier Fiesta as important a vehicle for civic memory as the Frontier Centennial.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 109-110, 114, 116.

Rose's selection of the southern-themed *Gone With the Wind* is all the more ironic considering it brought the Frontier Fiesta to an early closing. In September Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone With the Wind*, filed a law suit against Billy Rose and the Frontier Fiesta for plagiarizing her work. Mitchell's lawyers also sought an immediate injunction to impound all the scenery, costumes, and music used in the production. Though Rose claimed Mitchell had no evidence that he plagiarized the novel, fearing the court would seize his take of show profits, he announced the Frontier Fiesta would close in two weeks, three weeks premature of the original closing date.¹⁸ The closing of the Frontier Fiesta ended Rose's association with *Casa Mañana* in Fort Worth. Though *Casa Mañana* reopened for a third and fourth season in 1938 and 1939, the revues were produced by Lou Wasserman and backed by Music Corporation of America (MCA).¹⁹

Primarily through the participation of Billy Rose, the Frontier Centennial would play a role in shaping the entertainment content of several Depression Era world's fairs. In the fall of the 1936, the Great Lakes Exposition held in Cleveland was finishing its first year, and both attendance and income fell well below expectation. Looking to boost revenue during the fair's second year, the general manager, Lincoln Dickey, traveled to Fort Worth to attend the Frontier Centennial hoping to generate ideas for revamping the fair's entertainment offerings. After seeing *Casa Mañana*, Dickey believed Rose the person to boost the exposition's appeal.²⁰ During a visit to Cleveland, Rose pitched an idea for an outdoor aquatic spectacle featuring divers, swimmers, and a chorus he would call

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of the law suit see Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 134-139.

¹⁹ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 142, 150.

²⁰ Nelson, "Only a Paper Moon," 63-64.

Aquacade. Officials agreed to pay Rose \$100,000 to produce the show for the expositions 1937 season. To create *Aquacade* Rose called on John Murray Anderson, Albert Johnson, and Ned Alford to promote the show.²¹ Rose borrowed heavily from staging concepts and musical numbers he developed for both the 1936 and 1937 seasons of *Casa Mañana* and spent much of 1937 traveling between his shows in Fort Worth and Cleveland. Similar to the *Casa Mañana* stage, the stage for *Aquacade* revolved and could slide both forward and backward to reveal a pool of water between the stage and guests. Rose also included tables for dining customers. Unlike the *Casa Mañana*, *Aquacade's* stage rested on two floating barges anchored to the shore of Lake Erie. *Aquacade* often played to sold-out crowds, and thanks to good weather it played an important role in aiding the Great Lakes Exposition end its second season in the black.²²

Following the conclusion of his engagements with *Aquacade* and *Casa Mañana*, Rose set his sights on the New York World's Fair planned for 1939. In the summer of 1936, the planners of the exposition sent a fourteen-person delegation to Fort Worth to inspect the Frontier Centennial.²³ However, when Rose approached New York planners they initially rejected his proposals for a show at the world's fair believing his brand of entertainment too undignified for what was perceived to be a cultural event. Undaunted, Rose appealed to the vanity of fair president Grover Whalen by producing a show for the new *Casa Mañana* in New York City titled *Let's Play Fair*. The revue told the story of Whalen's search for talent to exhibit at the world's fair. With a lineup of stars including actor Oscar Shaw and Sally

²¹ Ibid., 65.

²² Ibid., 69-70, 74.

²³ Howard A. Flanigan to Amon G. Carter, July 30, 1936, Box 125, Folder "N-Miscellaneous, 1936-1939," Carter Papers.

Rand, Rose's ploy worked. After Whalen viewed the production he contracted Rose to produce a show in the New York State Amphitheatre.²⁴ After dismissing concepts for several historically based revues, Rose ultimately decided to reproduce *Aquacade* for the New York World's Fair. While preparing the New York version of the show, planners from the Golden Gate Exposition invited Rose to prepare a version of *Aquacade* for the San Francisco fair also starting in 1939. Initially Rose declined the offer, but after learning that MCA planned to create a duplicate show titled *Treasure Island Water Follies* for the fair, Rose acquiesced and produced the show for San Francisco.²⁵

In Fort Worth, the Frontier Centennial and the accompanying Stock Show facilities initially brought few changes to the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show. For the following year's show, the stock show executive committee voted to continue holding the exposition at the old stockyards facilities. After learning of the decision, Amon Carter sent a scathing letter to the president of the stock show and Fort Worth mayor Van Zandt Jarvis. Carter bitterly protested the decision. Providing a detailed recitation of the events which led to the construction of the new facilities, including the arguments he and Van Zandt Jarvis both made to convince Fort Worth citizens to vote for stock show bonds, Carter asked, "How do you suppose the public regards our pleas that the Show could not long survive in the old quarters; that unless given larger ones it would gradually die? Or, what of our claims that unless we did something worthwhile our friends across the river would absorb our Stock Show. . . . To say the position in which the committee has placed all of us is awkward

²⁴ Nelson, "*Only a Paper Moon*," 81, 83, 86-87.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 98-100, 113-114.

and embarrassing is to use terms that do not adequately depict the situation as I see it.”²⁶

Notwithstanding Carter’s pleas, the stock show remained on the North Side for another six years. As the result of a flash flood down Marine Creek damaging the stockyards facilities and the overwhelming demand for livestock to support American military action in World War II, stock show officials canceled the 1943 show.²⁷ The following year, lingering damage to the stockyards forced officials to hold all stock show events at the new facilities. For several years the stock show was held there, and the success of these shows demonstrated to the Stock Show Association that the proximity of rail lines to the facilities were no longer essential for livestock transportation to the show. In 1948, some twelve years after the Frontier Centennial, the Fort Worth City Council named the centennial exposition grounds as the permanent home of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show.²⁸

More than simply altering the location of the stock show, in the memory of Fort Worthians the Frontier Centennial has become a golden era in the history of the city. Recording her memory shortly after the celebration, Ella Daggett, sister of Mary Daggett Lake, a Fort Worth historian and head of the Women’s Division’s Historical Research Committee, preferred to remember the Frontier Centennial as “the Cinderella of Centennial plans” or a bride to whom Billy Rose whispered “Be different, my dear, and be gay . . . Different and Gay!” As a bride, Daggett explained, the celebration needed “Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue.”²⁹ Escorting readers through a

²⁶ Amon G. Carter to Van Zandt Jarvis, February 11, 1937, box 110, folder “J-Miscellaneous, 1936-1940,” Carter Papers.

²⁷ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 210-211.

²⁸ Reynolds, *A Hundred Years of Heroes*, 218-219.

²⁹ Ella Daggett, “Pinwheels and Pioneers.”

nostalgic tour of the centennial grounds, Daggett described the Sunset Trail, the Circus Building, the Will Rogers display in the West Texas Chamber of Commerce Building, and the Casa Mañana as meeting the marital requirements. Sharing Daggett's longing for the summer of '36, *Fort Worth-Star Telegram* reporter E. Clyde Whitlock noted on the celebration's tenth anniversary that "To this day those who lived here then talk about it with wistful nostalgia and a far-away look in their eyes."³⁰

By the time Fort Worth celebrated Fiesta-Cade, its own centennial celebration in 1949, the Frontier Centennial had become memorialized as a defining feature in Fort Worth's history. A promotional pamphlet placed Fiesta-Cade's commemoration of the Frontier Centennial alongside its celebration of the founding of Fort Worth, the coming of the railroad, the cattle drives, and Fort Worth's participation in World War I and announced, "The memory of Fort Worth's thrilling Casa Manana show of 1936 conceived by Billy Rose will be revived by a re-enactment of Fort Worth's theme song, "The Night Is Young and You're So Beautiful."³¹

Others did not share the view that the Frontier Centennial should occupy a center space in the glories of Texas or Fort Worth history. As deliberations began for the celebration of Fort Worth's centennial some preferred to forget the Frontier Centennial and the blatant use of sex for its promotion and shows. Dr. Kathryn Garrett of the Fort Worth and Tarrant County Historical Society exclaimed, "Fort Worth doesn't want to be disgraced

³⁰ E. Clyde Whitlock, "The Night Isn't Young but Memory Beautiful—the Frontier Centennial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1946, copy in "Frontier Centennial," vertical file, FTWPLA.

³¹ *Fort Worth Fiesta-Cade: A Century in Review*, (Fort Worth, 1949), Box 7, Folder 32, Jary Collection.

as Texas was in 1936. That year we had posters out all over the State of a modern cowgirl with very few clothes on. . . . We had those, instead of the romantic figures of conquistadores with flowing capes to advertise the one hundredth birthday of Texas.”³² Writing a history of the Women’s Club, a year before the Fiesta-Cade, Elizabeth Miller shared Garrett’s assessment of the Frontier Centennial. Miller described the Fort Worth’s centennial year as “The Year of Great Foolishness,” pointing out that “It is interesting to recall the lively discussions as to what style of cotton dresses would be most suitable for the Women’s Division to wear when one realizes that nobody noticed the women who wore dresses.”³³

Although the Fiesta-Cade remained commemorative in nature and proceeded without sex appeal, throughout the remainder of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century Fort Worthians remembered the Frontier Centennial primarily as the year Billy Rose brought showgirls and Sally Rand to Fort Worth and made the city the entertainment capital of the Southwest. Capturing this sentiment, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* columnist Jack Gordon quoted John Murray Anderson on the show’s forty-fifth anniversary as saying, “Not since the days of Nero has such a show been put together.”³⁴ Two factors helped fortify this memory in the public’s consciousness. Because of the temporary construction of the Frontier Centennial grounds, by the celebration’s twentieth anniversary the only physical reminders of the Frontier Centennial included the dilapidated ruins of the Pioneer Palace

³² “City Urged to Forego Nude for History,” (unknown newspaper) January 14, 1941, Box 3, Folder 32, “FW Centennial, Clippings, 1941, Tarrant County Historical Society, TCA.

³³ Miller, *The Women’s Club of Fort Worth*, 19.

³⁴ Jack Gordon, “Stars from Casa of 1939 sought,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, April 27, 1981, 6B.

and the skeletal machinery of the Casa Mañana's revolving stage.³⁵ In 1958 the City Council sponsored the construction of a theater-in-the-round on the old Frontier Centennial grounds. Becoming a living monument to the pomp and splendor of the Billy Rose's revue featuring hundreds of showgirls and Sally Rand, the theater was dubbed Casa Mañana.³⁶ A photograph published in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Frontier Centennial, two years after the opening of the new casa Mañana, illustrates how the new venue fortified civic memories of the old centennial revue. Over the caption "In 1936, an Office Was Here" the paper published a photograph of James F. Pollock, former board member of the Frontier Centennial and general manager of the Frontier Fiesta, pretending to dictate a letter to Carly de Onis, a showgirl at the new Casa Mañana, with the new theater in the distance. According to the blurb under the photo, the image was meant "To link the past with the present."³⁷

The holding of showgirl reunions and published showgirl accounts also strongly linked the memory of the Frontier Centennial with showgirls and sex appeal. Though Fort Worth dailies reminded readers of the anniversary of the Frontier Centennial, they also reported on reunions held for women who worked as showgirls in *Casa Mañana* in 1936. For example in 1981, on the forty-fifth anniversary of the Frontier Centennial, the Fort Worth Hyatt Regency Hotel hosted a cocktail party for showgirls and dancers from *Casa Mañana*.³⁸ Former showgirl Mrs. Jack T. Homes also hosted a reunion for former dancers at

³⁵ "Turn an Eyesore into a Park," *Fort Worth Press*, November 14, 1946, 15.

³⁶ Jones, *Billy Rose Presents . . . Casa Mañana*, 159.

³⁷ "In 1936, an Office Was Here," *Fort Worth Press*, July 16, 1961, 23A.

³⁸ "Guests expected from afar for reunion of showgirls," clipping from box 8, folder 2, Jary Collection.

her home.³⁹ As recently as 2001, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* published stories on the lives of several local women who worked as showgirls in the 1936 revue.⁴⁰ Reinforcing the public memory of the Frontier Centennial, popular histories of the celebration have also emphasized the importance of Billy Rose, *Casa Mañana*, and showgirls.

Perhaps more significant than showgirls and sex appeal are the ways the Frontier Centennial helped mold and cement its host city's identity as a urban center in the modern American West. In the early twentieth century civic leaders and city boosters began shifting the civic memory of Fort Worth from a city of the Old South to an urban center born out of America's western frontier. Civic leaders found in the western narrative of national progress and development a more usable history upon which to build Fort Worth's economy. The city's annual livestock show provided city leaders a valuable vehicle to reinforce their interpretation of the past. At a time in which Americans consumed western-themed films and literature in great quantities, the western theming of the stock show also ensured the event's financial success. As the power of the city's meatpacking interests waned, stock show officials found a willing partner in the show's host city—a move further validating the city's western heritage and culture. Concomitant with Fort Worth's growing western identity, civic leaders and boosters also began developing an image of modernity. Together Fort Worth's embrace of a western heritage and projected image as a modern metropolis provided a unique identity to distinguish itself from Dallas.

³⁹ Jack Gordon, "Stars from Casa of 1939 sought," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening Edition, April 27, 1981, 6B; Jack Gordon, "He couldn't Hope for a better tipper," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening Edition, June 8, 1981, 6B.

⁴⁰ See Perry Stewart, "The Summer of their lives," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 12, 2001, Theaters—Casa Mañana—Texas Centennial, folder 2, vertical files, TCA.

The celebration of the state's centennial year provided Fort Worth with an opportunity to further establish itself as a western and modern place. Though the stock show provided Fort Worth with a link to ranching in the West, the stock yards appeared increasingly out-of-step with Fort Worth's pursuit of modernity. Cramped, out-of-date facilities limiting the show's ability to grow prompted civic leaders and city boosters to seek both state centennial funds and New Deal funds to host the state's celebration of the livestock industry including the construction modern livestock facilities for the city's stock show. In the push for new livestock facilities some members of the City Council and city boosters believed removing the show to more appealing grounds essential to the repackaging of Fort Worth's livestock industry and western identity—a move hotly contested by North Side residents. Thus, the struggle to remove the stock show facilities to a new location had important ramifications for Fort Worth identity and image. That the stock show through its new location and facilities became a member of Fort Worth's modern landscape remains an important legacy of Fort Worth's centennial celebration.

After claiming the funds for constructing new stock show facilities on the west side of Fort Worth, centennial planners announced the celebration's frontier theme. Hosting a western themed celebration achieved two ends. First, it reinforced Fort Worth western memory and identity. Second, centennial planners believed a western-themed celebration sufficiently enticing to attract tourists from around the state and nation ensuring the financial success of the celebration. Thus, the celebration would become a boon for the city's depressed economy. Initially centennial plans revolved around celebrating the frontier through the recreation of an "authentic" and "living" frontier town akin to what Americans

experienced only in the movies. To further validate Fort Worth's connection to the American West, centennial planners reached out to West Texas, its economic hinterland, as the subject of commemoration. For the construction of the celebration's primary attraction, the recreation of an authentic frontier settlement, civic leaders stipulated that the designs be based on historic photographs of early West Texas settlements. The decision to commemorate West Texas's frontier heritage reveals the extent to which Fort Worth was beholden to its hinterland for its economic prosperity as it was for its western culture and identity.

Frontier Centennial planners would ultimately find the standards of historical authenticity nettlesome. As the Women's Division worked to develop historical attractions based upon the varieties of Texas heritage, centennial planners found themselves in a position to accept or reject ideas based upon their conceptions of the state's frontier history. As a result of the city's rejection of its southern heritage, centennial planners omitted attractions intended to commemorate the Old South, the Confederacy, or African Americans. Centennial planners also chose to deemphasize the place of the non-white historical participants in commemorating the state's past. In this way they embraced their own versions of a mythic Texas West. At the same time, they embraced the Women's Division's suggestion to include a recreation of the original Fort Worth military outpost. The inclusion of the old Fort Worth represented the first step toward making the centennial festivities a celebration boosting Fort Worth and West Texas only.

Fearing historical exhibits alone would fail to attract a sufficient number of visitors centennial planners sought a western showman capable of producing a spectacle. What

they found was an eastern showman who offered them a devil's bargain. Billy Rose cared little for history, authenticity, or commemoration, the primary impetus for the celebration, but promised to make a spectacle that in the process would elevate Fort Worth's profile in the nation. While Amon Carter and others salivated over Rose's penchant for boosterism, Rose's direction cost the celebration its commemorative soul. It also forced Fort Worthians to consider the role women would play in modern Fort Worth. In the planning of the Frontier Centennial, the Women's Division played an essential role working to preserve Fort Worth's history and culture, promote education, and boost and beautify the city through grassroots advertising and city cleanup efforts. Rose viewed women in terms of their ability to attract audiences and placed a premium on beauty and skin. While Fort Worthians embraced public showgirl auditions and beauty competitions, both acceptable presentation of the female form, some found the subsequent use of overt sexuality in the promotion of the celebration and the announcement of Sally Rand's Nude Ranch disconcerting. Those who protested believed the sexualized depictions of women an insult to Fort Worth's western heritage and threat to its progressive and modern identity. To prevent a boycott Rose and Frontier Centennial planners brought the depiction of women, including Sally Rand, into the acceptable bounds of American society.

Unrestrained by authenticity or history Rose freely drew upon prevailing concepts of the mythic West in the preparation of the centennial grounds. Drawing upon standardized plots which had become ritualized on film and in literature, Rose created a western vision centennial-goers immediately recognized and that appealed to their nostalgia. In his creation of the Frontier Centennial grounds Rose drew upon principles used in modern

theme parks. As long as fairgoers are presented with the illusion of the historic or authentic they accept themed spaces which conflate historic times and places. Taken as a whole the Frontier Centennial grounds also reinforced both the city's western identity and image of modernity. By placing the recreated frontier village next to the newly constructed modern livestock facilities centennial planners physically linked the city's western heritage with its modern development suggesting to visitors an image of progress.

The tandem themes of the West and modernity so carefully articulated during the Frontier Centennial remain central to Fort Worth's urban identity and image. One reason Amon Carter and others hailed the celebration as the "biggest and best thing Fort Worth ever has done" is because it successfully expressed these themes in the minds of those who attended. Since the centennial year, Fort Worth civic leaders and boosters have continued to maintain a balance between its small town western heritage and modernity and growth. Fort Worth's continued effort to pursue an image of modernity while retaining a western heritage during the twentieth century is reflected in its historiography. For his study of Fort Worth's urban growth through the 1950s Robert H. Talbert titled his work *Cowtown—Metropolis*.⁴¹ Later, Caleb Pirtle's study *Fort Worth: The Civilized West* juxtaposed a photograph of Fort Worth's 1980 skyline with an image of a string of false front buildings connoting the Old West on its front cover.⁴² In perhaps the most recent example, Ty Cashion labeled his survey of the city's history, *The New Frontier: A Contemporary History of Fort Worth & Tarrant County*.⁴³

⁴¹ See Talbert, *Cowtown Metropolis*.

⁴² See Caleb Pirtle, *Fort Worth: The Civilized West*.

⁴³ Ty Cashion, *The New Frontier*, cover.

Following the Frontier Centennial the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce and Fort Worth companies continued, for the next twenty years, to commission art work placing pioneers and prairie schooners in the midst of modern skyscrapers and oil refineries with planes, trains, and automobiles in the distances.⁴⁴ Believing cowtown passé, civic leaders work to bolster a “Nowtown” image during the mid-1950s. They sought to revitalize the city’s downtown area and its modern identity by hiring Victor Gruen, famed designer of retail space turned city planner, to apply his ultramodern concepts to downtown Fort Worth. In his plan *A Greater Fort Worth Tomorrow*, Gruen suggested an automobile-free, pedestrian space where citizens worked, shopped, and lived with large pedestrian thoroughfares instead of streets. Unable to obtain sufficient civic support the plan fell by the wayside.⁴⁵

By the late-1970s Fort Worth, with the aid of Sid Richardson Bass, began to develop its modern and western image through the revitalization of downtown Fort Worth. The revitalization of the city began around reconstructing two square blocks which would become known as Sundance Square, named after The Sundance Kid, the infamous outlaw who reputedly lived in the area. Subsequently a number of high-end western-themed boutiques, art galleries, and restaurants lined Sundance Square.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, the

⁴⁴ See Fort Worth Clearing House Association advertisement in *Billy Rose Presents Frontier Fiesta*, (Fort Worth, 1937), 5, and Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce advertisement in *West Texas Today*, vol. 30, no. 9 (November 1949), 1.

⁴⁵ M. Jeffrey Harwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 169-192. See Victor Gruen Associates, *A Greater Fort Worth Tomorrow* (Greater Fort Worth Planning Committee, 1956).

⁴⁶ Renee Martini Laegreid, “Faux-Low Pop: Urban Cowboys and the Inversion of High-Pop,” *Metropoli e Nuovi Consumi Culturali: Performance urbane dell’identita*, *Annali del*

restoration and redevelopment of the stockyards as a tourist destination in the mid-1970s bolstered the city's western heritage.⁴⁷ The purchase of the Van Zandt site in 1936 paved the way for the creation of Fort Worth's cultural district which speaks to Fort Worth's western heritage with museums such as the Amon Carter Museum, the Cowgirl Hall of Fame, and the Cattle Raiser's Museum, but also its modern identity with the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth affectionately known as The Modern.⁴⁸ Bridging the gap between Fort Worth's western and modern identities, the Amon Carter Museum which originally housed Carter's collection of western art, recently broadened its name to the Amon Carter Museum of American Art. The press release which offered a justification for the name change quoted from the museum's first director Mitchell A. Wilder who stated that he "believed the history of American art could be interpreted as the history of artists working on successive frontiers, both geographic and artistic."⁴⁹ Today western icons and modern images freely comingle in museums, on cab tops, police cars, and billboards in contemporary Fort Worth declaring a western urban identity refined and reflected in the modern landscape—a legacy of the Frontier Centennial.

Dispartimento di Scienze della Comunicazione dell'Universita degli Studi de Teramo 4, no. 1 (October 2009): 86.

⁴⁷ See Peter Cawley, "Fort Worth Rides Again," *Historic Preservation* 31, no. 1 (January-February 1980): 10-16.

⁴⁸ See *Fort Worth: City of Cowboys and Culture* (Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau, no date); *Fort Worth: Cultural District* (no publication data). Both pamphlets in the possession of the author.

⁴⁹ See Press Release, "Amon Carter Museum Adds "of American Art" to Its Name," August 2, 2010, copy in possession of the author. For a history of the evolution of the Amon Carter Museum see Bart C. Pointer, "Culture in Cowtown: The Amon Carter Museum," *East Texas Historical Journal* 39, no. 2 (2001): 40-46.

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ABSTRACT

FROM OLD SOUTH TO MODERN WEST: FORT WORTH'S CELEBRATION OF THE TEXAS STATE CENTENNIAL AND THE SHAPING OF AN URBAN IDENTITY AND IMAGE

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Using Fort Worth's 1936 celebration of the Texas State Centennial as a case study, this dissertation analyzes the way civic leaders and city boosters used the celebration as an opportunity to reinforce the city's western identity while proclaiming an image of modernity to fairgoers.

Chapter one describes the origin of Fort Worth's bid to host a memorial celebration to the livestock industry as part of Texas's centennial festivities in 1936 and the efforts of city boosters to use the celebration to repackage the city's western identity and simultaneously promulgate its images as a modern metropolis.

The second chapter describes the gradual disenchantment of West Texans with the eastern focus of state's centennial plans and their support for and participation in Fort Worth's celebration.

Chapter three describes the early efforts of Frontier Centennial planners to develop "authentic" western attractions while omitting references to the city's southern heritage

and the prominent role played by Fort Worth's club women in refining the celebration's commemorative message.

The fourth chapter analyzes the circumstances which ultimately brought Rose to Fort Worth and his pitch to revamp Frontier Centennial plans.

Chapter five describes Rose's sexualization of the celebration and explores the paradoxical role played by women during the Frontier Centennial.

Finally, the sixth chapter demonstrates Rose's use of prevailing symbols of the mythic West in the creation of a "themed space" in the physical layout of the Frontier Centennial fair grounds.