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## “Think-Talk-Write Texas Centennial in 1936”: Historical Memory and the Texas Centennial in El Paso and the Border Region

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“Think-Talk-Write Texas Centennial in 1936”: Historical Memory and the Texas Centennial in  
El Paso and the Border Region©

Abbie Weiser

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## Introduction

In 1936 Texas commemorated the hundredth anniversary of its independence from Mexico. Throughout the state large-scale celebrations, such as the Central Centennial Celebration Exposition in Dallas, as well as smaller, localized observances combined history, civic and state pride, and economic opportunities. The Texas Centennial broadcast an Anglo-centric Texas image and identity to the world based on the state's revolutionary heritage, while simultaneously promoting the state's "new western image," contemporary resources, tourist attractions, and commercial enterprises – particularly significant given the debate over funding the Centennial during the Great Depression and the need to generate revenue from the commemoration.<sup>1</sup> Although the Centennial reinforced Euro-American historical and cultural assumptions about Texas exceptionalism, the Texas Revolution, and Texas pioneers (primarily at the expense of Mexicans and Mexican Americans), the event also catalyzed research into local history as well as provided a platform for publicizing lesser-known and often overlooked historical narratives.

Similar to leaders in other cities in Texas, boosters in El Paso and the border region fought for and took advantage of the funds and publicity provided by the Texas Centennial to culturally enrich the city and advertise it to tourists and developers. During the Centennial El Paso business leaders and city boosters easily commodified the Centennial and used it to promote border regional tourism and local material culture. Through the work of El Paso's boosters (often women), local businessmen, and civic and political leaders, the city witnessed a

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Cox, *The First Texas New Barons* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2005), 202, 204-205. Cox describes the press's role in publicizing a "new western image" based on Texas Revolution mythology and "cowboy mystique." He argues that during the 1930s Texas's revolutionary heritage replaced previous historical emphasis on the state's southern, Confederate past.

variety of Centennial-related activities. Class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, and the shared border with Mexico all shaped El Pasoans' Centennial participation and influenced key events.

Although the state denied El Paso's request to be an official Centennial auxiliary city, El Paso and the border region commemorated the Centennial by holding parades, a rodeo, a city-wide school pageant, lectures, and religious events, and by erecting historical markers. The city also marked the Centennial by building a natural history museum – the city's first public museum. Additionally, a special delegation comprised of Tigua Indians, the El Paso Pioneer Negro Chorus, the Típica Orchestra, and local civic leaders traveled in June, 1936, to the Exposition in Dallas for "El Paso Day." In Dallas the delegation publicized El Paso, performed for Exposition audiences, and met President Franklin D. Roosevelt. These events, often tinged with controversy and drama, produced lasting effects on the city's built environment, historical literature, art, and historical and cultural identity.

Most importantly, El Pasoans used the Texas Centennial to continue the city's long tradition of promoting the El Paso borderlands as modern and progressive, yet spatially, historically, and culturally separate from the rest of Texas. Boosters deliberately emphasized the region's multiculturalism and binationalism and promulgated a unique borderlands image and identity that incorporated Mexican, Spanish, Anglo-American, and Indian history and culture into El Paso's historical narrative and ongoing aspirations for modernity. El Pasoans, in particular, focused on the quadricentennial of the 1536 Cabeza de Vaca expedition through the San Elizario region in celebrations of local history, works of art, and history writing during 1936.

Although boosters' historical and cultural preoccupation with Spanish colonialism and Catholicism clearly dominated local historical literature and commemorations in 1936, Mexican

and Indian history and culture also surfaced in Centennial-related celebrations and border region tourist literature. Boosters undertook this multicultural approach not only to attract tourists to the area and emphasize the region's "exoticness," but also because El Paso's binational identity and heritage had become deeply engrained in their consciousnesses by the mid-1930s, in spite of repeated and often successful attempts over the years to homogenize and "whitewash" the region. Through this broader and highly localized conceptualization of Texas history, culture, and geography, the Centennial influenced internal and external perceptions about the border region and its distinctiveness and endowed local Centennial events with unique historical, cultural, and religious meanings and values.

Despite the significance of the Texas Centennial of 1936 to El Paso, few histories of the city mention the event and none cover it in any comprehensive manner. Classic survey histories of El Paso, such as W.H. Timmons' *El Paso: A Borderlands History* and C.L. Sonnichsen's *Pass of the North Volume II*, do not cover the Centennial at all, while articles and papers, such as Nicholas Houser's "Tigua Indians and El Paso at the Texas State Centennial Exposition, Part 1," Esther Thompson Cornell's "The El Paso Centennial Museum, 1935-1946," and Scott Comar's seminar paper "As the Sun Shined Brightly: Tigua Representations of Indigeneity and Agency through Public Presentations," discuss only certain aspects of the Centennial. Additionally, Yolanda Leyva's 2007 article "Moments of Conformity: Commemorating and Protesting Oñate on the Border" focuses primarily on the legacy of the "Spanish heritage fantasy" that spurred Texas Catholics to "claim social and cultural legitimacy" in the 1930s by emphasizing Spanish conquest history and Spanish backgrounds during the Centennial.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Yolanda Leyva, "Monuments of Conformity: Commemorating and Protesting Oñate on the Border," New Mexico Historical Review, 82, no. 3 (Summer 2007), 346-347.

Other works examine the ethnic, cultural, and gender ramifications of the Centennial, though not specifically in El Paso. John Moran González's *Border Renaissance: The Texas Centennial and the Emergence of Mexican American Literature* demonstrates the significance of the Texas Centennial to Mexican-American identity and literature in Texas, and Light Townsend Cummins' article "From the Midway to the Hall of State at Fair Park: Two Competing Views of Women at the Dallas Celebration of 1936" explores how gender affected the Centennial's Dallas Exposition's publicity, art, and material culture.<sup>3</sup> González's study, in particular, reveals that the Texas Centennial was a complex and major event for Texans and that the event merits continued historical investigation and analysis – especially here on the border. Therefore, this study identifies and analyzes key Texas Centennial events and participants in the El Paso borderlands, examines the Centennial's effects on the cultural and intellectual life and physical landscape of the area, and places the Centennial within the context of the border region's collective historical memory.

### **El Paso Remembered**

Prior to the arrival of the railroad in 1881, El Paso was geographically and culturally isolated from the rest of the state. This separation allowed a distinct regional identity, history, and collective historical memory to develop in the El Paso borderlands. In his memoirs, W.W. Mills stressed El Paso's scale and sense of extreme isolation by stating that in 1858 "El Paso was then a small adobe hamlet of about three hundred inhabitants, more than three-fourths of whom

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<sup>3</sup> John Moran González, *Border Renaissance: The Texas Centennial and the Emergence of Mexican American Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 1. González argues that the Texas Centennial "was an unlikely watershed in the development of Mexican American literature." 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* CXIV, No. 3 (January 2011): 225-251.

were Mexicans...there was not a railroad or telegraph station within a thousand miles of us.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, San Elizario and Ysleta, not El Paso, served as El Paso County’s early county seats during the mid-nineteenth century. With the coming of the railroad and supporting businesses, however, the city quickly industrialized and grew in population, though El Paso’s environment, ethnic makeup, and location on the U.S.-Mexico border continued to differentiate the city from the rest of Texas.

By the late nineteenth century many Anglos increasingly viewed El Paso’s Mexican-frontier image as a liability. Consequently, El Paso’s civic and business leaders began promoting and making over El Paso as an Anglo, “progressive,” modern city to better attract American businesses and industry as well as tourists to the area. Historian David Romo states, “As soon as whites felt sufficiently secure in their new surroundings, they moved quickly to erase the city’s Mexican identity. In the early 1880s, the Anglo press carried out campaigns to tear down all the adobe structures in downtown and replace them with brick buildings for aesthetic and hygienic reasons.”<sup>5</sup> Booster literature published by the El Paso Chamber of Commerce characterized El Paso as the “Gateway to Mexico” to tourists but focused heavily on property valuations, the number of teachers in El Paso, and the city’s “sanitary conditions” as well.<sup>6</sup>

Despite efforts to Anglicize and Americanize El Paso during the late nineteenth century, the early twentieth century witnessed increased municipal cooperation, business interactions, and binational participation with Ciudad Juárez in civic events and celebrations. According to historian Gladys Arlene Hodges, during the first decade of the twentieth century the two cities

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<sup>4</sup> W. W. Mills, Forty Years at El Paso, 1858-1898: Recollections of War, Politics, Adventure, Events, Narratives, Sketches, etc. (El Paso, Texas, 1901), 13-15.

<sup>5</sup> David Dorado Romo, Ringside Seat to a Revolution: an Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923 (El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005), 216.

<sup>6</sup> John Sneed, ed., El Paso: the Queen City of the Southwest (El Paso, Texas: El Paso Chamber of Commerce, 1904), 2.

showed “mutual respect” for each other and shared similar goals of espousing civic pride, development, and modernity, though deep tensions arose between the two cities during the Mexican Revolution (1910 to 1920). She identifies the violence and instability of the Mexican Revolution as well as financial losses by El Paso businessmen caused by the conflict as the reason for the breakdown of “municipal cohesion in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.” In particular, Hodges argues that the Mexican Revolution caused “stark imbalances” in “interdependency at the Pass.”<sup>7</sup>

The Mexican Revolution contributed to El Paso’s city leaders’ and boosters’ increasing tendencies to distance the city’s image from Juárez and instead emphasize Americanism and modernity – except when attracting tourists to the border region. Monica Perales’s work on Smelertown describes the transformation of El Paso’s physical landscape and built environment from adobe to brick as an “American facelift,” which further contrasted El Paso from Juárez and its “Mexican town” appearance. Perales, however, states that El Paso’s city boosters used Mexico’s “Old World” appeal and image to market El Paso to tourists – starting a long tradition of regional, binational tourism in the area. Interestingly, Perales concludes that “while the city as a whole benefited from the strategic plan to make it a modern American town, not everyone subscribed to the belief that erasing El Paso’s Mexican past was a positive thing.” From the 1925 City Plan Commission’s suggestions to improving and marketing Chihuahuita to tourists as a Mexican attraction to some locals romanticizing and reminiscing over traditional adobe or

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<sup>7</sup> Gladys Arlene Hodges, “El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, 1880-1930: A Material Culture Study of Borderlands Interdependency,” (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at El Paso, 2010), 141-142.



mission-style architecture, Perales's work illuminates some of the early conflicting and complicated emotions attached to El Paso's image and identity.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1920s progressively more virulent debates continued over El Paso's historical and contemporary identity as El Paso sought to complete its image transformation from a "frontier village to a prominent southwestern city."<sup>9</sup> The El Paso Chamber of Commerce promoted economic development and tourism in El Paso by working with the railroads to offer special fares to potential visitors, and booster literature extolled El Paso's climate, location, modernity, and business opportunities. According to the 1922-1923 annual report of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, "approximately 18,300 travelers riding on round trip tickets and 1,220 traveling on one-way tickets...stopped in El Paso from two to ten days during the past year." Additionally, 4,371 out-of-town delegates came to El Paso to attend conventions, such as the Texas Congress of Mothers, B'nai B'rith, and the Southwestern Medical Associations. These tourists spent approximately \$40,000 during their time in El Paso.<sup>10</sup> These conventions helped raise El Paso's regional profile and contributed to the city's economy.

Although most El Pasoans still viewed the city's binational identity and Juárez itself as an asset to El Paso (primarily as an important tourist attraction and as a place to get around Prohibition laws), others saw Juárez as an "utterly wicked" detriment to "American" El Paso throughout the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> The latter group tended to be comprised of Anglo, Protestant, former southerners who supported "dry" laws. Nevertheless, the special El Paso convention issue of *West Texas Today* – a publication of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce – heavily promoted

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<sup>8</sup> Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 52-55. Inhabited primarily by Mexican Americans, Chihuahuita was the oldest neighborhood in El Paso. Smelertown was also primarily inhabited by working-class Mexican Americans who worked at the American Smelting and Refining Company in El Paso.

<sup>9</sup> Perales, 55.

<sup>10</sup> *Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, Fiscal Year, 1922-1923* (El Paso, Texas: El Paso Chamber of Commerce, 1923), 18.

<sup>11</sup> W.H. Timmons, *El Paso: A Borderlands History* (El Paso, Texas: Texas Western Press, 1990), 227.

Juárez as a tourist attraction, advertising daily sightseeing tours for \$1.50 (round trip) and describing its “quaint, old world charm” and its designation as a “clean border city.” The publication also promoted tourist attractions in New Mexico, such as the golf courses in Cloudcroft and Carlsbad Caverns.<sup>12</sup> This emphasis on tri-state tourism (Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua) further cemented El Paso’s economic and public identity as a distinct border region.

Even more divisive to El Pasoans than opinions about Juárez, however, was the establishment of Frontier Klan No. 100 in El Paso in 1921. The Klan both caused and exacerbated tensions between long-time El Pasoans and recently arrived Protestant white southerners who mostly embraced the Klan’s “adaptable program of Americanism, Protestant fraternalism, better law enforcement, and a return to traditional morality.”<sup>13</sup> While the Klan was primarily nonviolent in El Paso, members still threatened and intimidated Catholics, masons, anti-Klan El Pasoans, and El Pasoans who simply visited Juárez. By September the local chapter of the Klan consisted of 3,000 members, including attorney S.J. Isaacks (who later was involved in El Paso’s Texas Centennial celebrations), Charles Ward, and Dr. J. Hal Gambrell, all of whom won election to El Paso’s school board in the early 1920s. During their brief tenure the three Klan members fired three female Catholic principals and renamed proposed and existing schools after “Texas heroes.” These schools included: Bowie, Austin, Crockett, Burleson, Fannin, and Rusk. According to El Paso historian W.H. Timmons, only El Paso High was not renamed due

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<sup>12</sup> West Texas Today (Stamford, Texas: West Texas Chamber of Commerce, October 1929), 8-10.

<sup>13</sup> Hodges, 223. For more information about the Klan in El Paso see Shawn Lay’s War, Revolution, and the Ku Klux Klan: A Study of Intolerance in a Border City (El Paso: Texas Western Press, University of Texas at El Paso, 1985), and Edward F. Sherman, “The Ku Klux Klan and El Paso Politics Following World War I,” Research Seminar Paper, The University of Texas at El Paso, 1958.

to great opposition among El Pasoans to change the school's name to Sam Houston High School.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, many El Pasoans viewed place-name ties to the Texas Revolution as positive – especially when promoting Texas to other Texans. A 1929 issue of *West Texas Today* proudly described how San Jacinto Plaza (in downtown El Paso) “takes its name from the historic struggle...where Sam Houston won the independence of Texas from Santa Anna.”<sup>15</sup> Although the Klan's influence in El Paso was minimal and short-lived, the renaming of El Paso's public schools demonstrated how historical memory and historical identity were manipulated in El Paso.

Throughout the early to mid-twentieth century, interest in El Paso and its history grew among locals and nationally. Reviews of Owen White's *Out of the Desert: The Historical Romance of El Paso* (1924) praised the book for earning El Paso “national fame” and highlighted the work's descriptions of El Paso's pioneer days and the “intimate relationship of El Paso with the lurid history of the border.”<sup>16</sup> White's historical narrative framed El Paso's history and emergence as an industrial and booming city as spiritual and even evangelical in nature and focused heavily on El Paso's progress, modernity, and Americanism.<sup>17</sup> *Out of the Desert* includes White's account of El Paso's Golden Jubilee in 1923, which he contrasts against the political turmoil, intolerance, and dissension caused by the Klu Klux Klan during the early 1920s. This use of historical memory, for White, fostered civic pride and cooperation, though no financial benefits. He states:

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<sup>14</sup> Timmons, 233.

<sup>15</sup> *West Texas Today*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Clippings from *Albuquerque Journal* and *Sierra County Record*, about 1924, Box 1, Folder 15, Owen White papers, MS 112, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

<sup>17</sup> Owen White, *Out of the Desert: The Historical Romance of El Paso* (El Paso, Texas: The McMath Company, 1924), 1-2.

El Paso's celebration of its Golden Jubilee lasted for four days, and when it was over the citizens of the town, for the first time since the close of the war, felt that they had accomplished something by co-operative effort of which they had a right to be really proud... In its magnificence and in the local interest which it aroused, as well as in the successful manner in which it was carried out, the Jubilee celebration far surpassed anything that El Paso had ever produced... when it was all done and everybody was happy and proud, men met each other on the street with unanimous congratulations, because all felt that the *old El Paso spirit* had come back.<sup>18</sup>

The Golden Jubilee, primarily comprised of a historical parade and a pageant, was also important to El Paso's historical outlook for its inclusion of pre-1873 history. Historical figures, such as Cabeza de Vaca, Juan de Oñate, and Spanish priests, featured heavily in the parade and in White's conceptualization and retelling of El Paso's history.<sup>19</sup>

The 1920s witnessed continued growth and economic development in El Paso. By 1929 El Paso had 93 automobile and truck dealers, 59 clothing stores, 21 jewelry stores, 28 musical instrument and radio stores, and 120 restaurants.<sup>20</sup> In 1930 El Paso's population reached 102,421, and the city remained a strongly binational and multicultural city. According to the 1930 U.S. Census over half of the population (58,291) in El Paso was of Mexican origin. El Paso's population also contained 39,121 whites, 2,844 foreign-born whites, 1,855 African Americans, 274 people of Asian origin, 28 Indians, and 8 "others."<sup>21</sup> Clearly, the "small adobe hamlet" of W.W. Mills' memoirs no longer existed. Instead, during the 1920s and 1930s, El Paso achieved its aspirations of being a commercial and industrial-centered city, while its frontier heritage became engrained in the city's historical memory instead of in its immediate consciousness.

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<sup>18</sup> White, 284-285.

<sup>19</sup> White, 284.

<sup>20</sup> Chart, "Population and Trade Distribution in El Paso, Wholesale and Retail Trading Zones," in El Paso, Texas: Predestined to Become the Commercial and Industrial Center of the Scenic Southwest (El Paso, Texas: El Paso Chamber of Commerce, about 1930).

<sup>21</sup> Perales, 51.

During the early 1930s economic problems spurred by the worldwide Great Depression reached El Paso. In 1931 the First National Bank failed and closed, while competition for jobs and sales heightened tensions between Mexican Americans, Mexicans, and Anglos.<sup>22</sup> In 1936 the city registrar and city health office mandated new racial categories in El Paso that designated Mexican Americans as a “colored” race, which further strained race relations. By moving Mexican Americans from “white” to “colored,” the city sought to improve its infant mortality and health statistics – especially important to boosters and civic leaders given El Paso’s efforts to sell itself as a health mecca. Cleofas Calleros, local historian, social activist, and head of the El Paso chapter of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, protested vigorously against the designations, which he deemed insulting (see image 1).<sup>23</sup> Additionally, many Mexican Americans believed reclassification would make social and political inclusion in the U.S. and Texas more difficult. The successful campaign in opposition to these changes helped organize and politicize El Paso’s Mexican-American community in 1936.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Timmons, 238.

<sup>23</sup> Cleofas Calleros, “El Mexicano Es Raza de ‘Color,’ ” El Continental, 6 October 1936 [El Continental accessed via the Hispanic American Newspaper database].

<sup>24</sup> Mario T. García, “Mexican Americans and the Politics of Citizenship: The Case of El Paso, 1936,” New Mexico Historical Review 59, no. 2 (April 1984): 187-189.

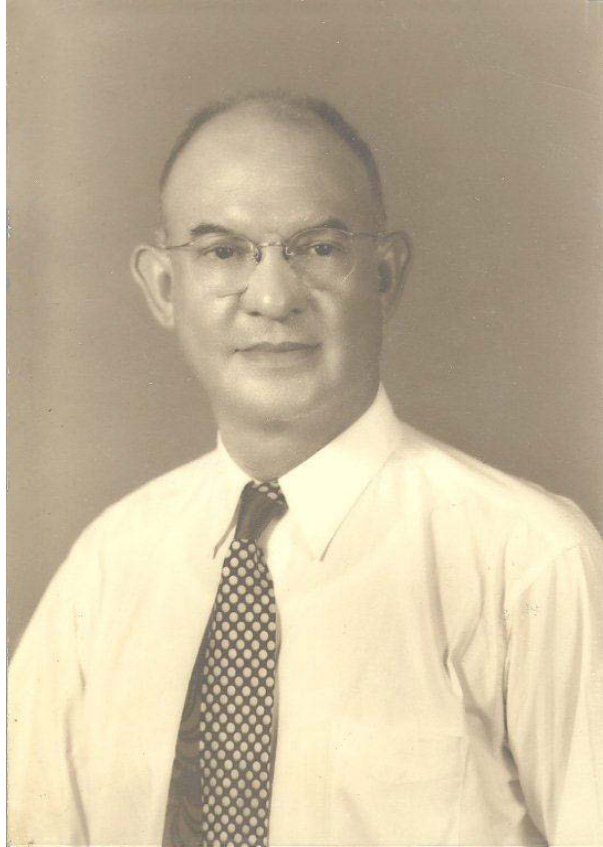


Image 1: Cleofas Calleros, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Soon El Paso's civic and business leaders introduced various programs and campaigns to help the local economy. For example, in 1934 the El Paso Chamber of Commerce instituted a "Speed Recovery in El Paso" plan to aid economic recovery in El Paso. The plan, headed by Chris P. Fox, Maurice Schwartz, R.S. Reading, Allen R. Grambling, and J.V. Proffitt, aimed to encourage local businesses and promote tourism. As part of the program one brochure touted the economic power of tourism in the border region and reminded El Pasoans that the "1929 tourist crop meant \$12,000,000 to El Paso alone."<sup>25</sup> By 1935, however, the city recovered somewhat financially and held the first Sun Bowl game and Sun Carnival. These events soon became important El Paso traditions and part of the city's collective civic and historical memory.

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<sup>25</sup> El Paso Chamber of Commerce scrapbook of activities for 1934, El Paso County Historical Society.

### Centennial Planning in “Texas’ Forgotten City”

As historian Glenn Ealy points out, the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed “Texas’s historical memory and identity” receive “a complete makeover.” Texas, instead of continuing to commemorate its southern civil war history, now focused almost exclusively on its Texas Revolution heritage as a way to distance itself from its slave-holding Confederate past. This transformation in Texas’s historical memory resulted in a “new state identity,” which further erased the state’s Hispanic heritage and emphasized Anglo pioneers and heroes, the legend of the Alamo, western entrepreneurs, modernity, cowboys, and individualism. Ealy concludes that by 1910 this “shift in public memory was complete.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, public historical memory and commemoration planning in Texas powerfully centered on the approaching Texas Centennial by the early 1930s.

Although El Paso and the border region’s history differed from the traditional Texas Revolution narrative, El Paso’s local leaders sought to firmly place the city within “mainstream” Texas history and participate in what historian Nick Houser termed the “biggest statewide celebration in Texas history.”<sup>27</sup> In 1934 El Pasoans began seriously planning for the Texas Centennial. City boosters, such as Mayor R.E. Sherman, Harriette Quisenberry, Wallace Perry (editor of the *El Paso Herald-Post*), Cleofas Calleros, the Woman’s Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, and Maurice Schwartz (of the Popular Dry Good Company in El Paso) frequently led planning efforts (see images 2 and 3).

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<sup>26</sup> Glen Sample Ealy, *Where the West Begins: Debating Texas Identity* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 123.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas P. Houser, “Tigua Indians and El Paso at the Texas State Centennial Exposition, Part I,” *Password* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 181.

Almost immediately, Centennial plans and celebrations were tied to economic development and tourism in El Paso (one early idea was to have a visitor center in El Paso built in the mission-style architecture). At a September, 1934, meeting, the El Paso Chamber of Commerce directors, the county advisory board for the Centennial, County Judge Joseph McGill, Mayor R.E. Sherman, and other local leaders discussed plans for El Paso to be designated an official auxiliary city for the Texas Centennial celebration.<sup>28</sup> By September 29 the Centennial



Image 2: Mayor R.E. Sherman, Stout-Feldman Studio photographs, PH074, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collection Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

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<sup>28</sup> Houser, 183; "Centennial Studied," El Paso Herald-Post, 6 September 1934. [El Paso Herald-Post accessed via the newspaperarchive.com database]



Committee of the Chamber of Commerce decided to submit a bid to become one of five official secondary celebrations. An article in the *El Paso Herald-Post* stated that the bid:

Ought to be successful, because El Paso not only is the fifth largest city in Texas, but it is one of the most historic. It also to be one undertaking in which business and industrial interests generally can cooperate with enthusiasm...To be included in the general advertising to be sent out as a bid for Centennial visitors alone ought to be worth much to El Paso...in west Texas, the area which may logically be looked to as the locale for America's next great boom. And supplementing its own attractions, its proximity to Mexico – now rapidly becoming a definite lure for world travelers – ought to swell the throngs which will be interested in Centennial events.<sup>29</sup>



Image 3: Harriette Quisenberry, *Voice of the Mexican Border*, December 1933 issue, El Paso County Historical Society.

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<sup>29</sup> "El Paso's Centennial Bid," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 29 September 1934.

On October 20 Maurice Schwartz, Chairman of the El Paso Centennial Committee, and other committee members completed the written bid addressed to the Texas Centennial Commission in Austin. The petition stated that the El Paso Centennial Committee requested “that an auxiliary celebration be held in El Paso, Texas, beginning September 1, 1936, and closing on September 16, 1936.” This celebration would include a historical pageant “depicting Four Hundred Years of Exploration, Conquest, and Development” and “an appropriate memorial to those who conquered and brought this part of the state under the sovereignty of Texas.” The El Paso Centennial Committee asked for \$150,000 for both the pageant and the memorial. The proposed pageant focused on the quadricentennial of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s and his companions’ passing through the El Paso valley and their status as “the first Europeans ever to set foot on Texas soil,” the Juan de Oñate expedition, mission history, and other aspects of early El Paso history. The memorial, which the committee designated as a municipal museum, would “house those relics of early days in this part of Texas, which would be dedicated to those early pioneers who won this part of the Southwest only through years of bitter struggle against tremendous odds.”<sup>30</sup>

According to the petition, the El Paso Exposition would be held in Washington Park and Dudley Field, and included several maps of the city of El Paso and plans for the El Paso Exposition. Map A, drawn by city planning engineer W.E. Stockwell, detailed plans for the Exposition (see image 4). The map showed Dudley Field housing a rodeo, auto park, and grand stand, while the main grounds in Washington Park, bound by Pera Street on the west and the Franklin Canal on the east, contained a children’s playground, zoo with a monkey island, an auto park, dance hall, bath house, swimming pool, tennis courts, and a sunken garden. Across the

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<sup>30</sup> Petition, The City of El Paso to the Texas Centennial Commission, MS 419, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Franklin Canal, the eastern Exposition grounds, bordered by the canal and Fresno Street, included a Mexican village, a *parque de diversiones*, a general exhibits arena, two lakes with a tea room connected to the main area by a land bridge, and agricultural and livestock areas.<sup>31</sup> The city's inclusion of the Mexican village as well as the use of the Spanish "*parque de diversiones*" for an amusement park demonstrated planners' identification with the city's location on the border, awareness of the region's Spanish-speaking heritage, and wish to make El Paso's celebrations bicultural and bilingual. Similar to Anglo boosters' promotion of Olvera Street in

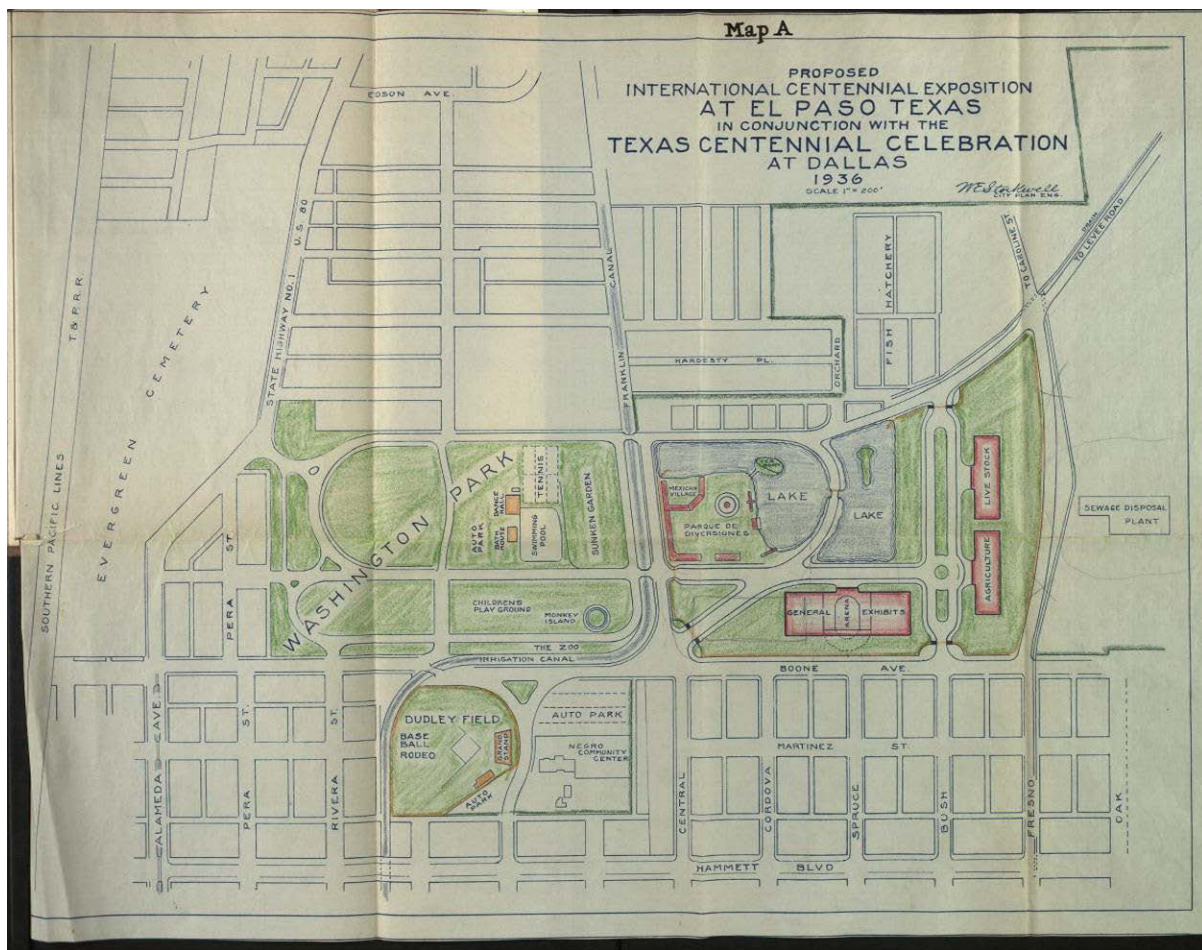


Image 4: Map A, Petition, The City of El Paso to the Texas Centennial Commission, MS 419, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

<sup>31</sup> Map A, Petition, The City of El Paso to the Texas Centennial Commission, MS 419.

early 1930s Los Angeles as a “Mexican Street of Yesterday in a City of Today,” El Paso boosters sought to incorporate romanticized visions of the city’s Mexican past into its Centennial celebrations as a way for El Paso to consciously differentiate itself from other cities in Texas to attract tourists.<sup>32</sup>

El Paso’s petition to the Texas Centennial Commission to be a secondary city also revealed and reinforced existing ideas of identifying and advertising El Paso as part of a southwestern border region that included New Mexico, northern Mexico, and West Texas. Indeed, other early ideas in the Centennial planning process included forming a southwestern district unit, which would consist of El Paso and eight other West Texas counties to help support the area, secure funding, and plan local Centennial events for the region.<sup>33</sup> In addition to these proposals, the petition listed border region transportation methods, such as railroads and highways, and included several pages dedicated to describing local border region attractions, including McKelligan Canyon Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, the Dog Race Track in New Mexico, and the Bull Ring, Cock Pit, and old mission in Juárez, Mexico. The petition’s narrative concluded with assertions that the celebration in El Paso would not only bring thousands of dollars to other parts of West Texas but also would publicize the Centennial to the large number of tourists already visiting El Paso and the border.<sup>34</sup>

On October 22 E.H. Simmons, executive vice president of the Chamber of Commerce, and Paul Thomas of the El Paso Committee of the Texas Centennial, traveled to Austin to ask that El Paso be designated a secondary city and request the \$150,000 in funds from the state

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<sup>32</sup> Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 208.

<sup>33</sup> “District Unit Seen to Help Centennial,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 9 August 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Petition, The City of El Paso to the Texas Centennial Commission, MS 419.

senate committee.<sup>35</sup> Not only was El Paso's petition to be a secondary city denied, but the Commission only awarded the city \$1,000 to build a statue – nominally of a Texas Ranger. One of El Paso's strongest supporters of the Texas Centennial, Wallace Perry, himself a member of the Texas Centennial Commission of Control, protested vigorously against the Commission's decision. He scathingly commented that Austin should erect an "adobe brick" monument to "Texas' Forgotten City" so that "in this moist climate of chilly receptions, the monument itself may be soon forgotten." Perry argued that "West Texas communities' claim to a share in the Centennial funds...lay chiefly in recognition of the bill's intent to encourage auxiliary celebrations because of industrial development or because of historic associations other than connection with the war for independence."<sup>36</sup> One local newspaper article titled "We Feel Better, Anyway" praised Perry for speaking "the mind of many El Pasoans in his criticism of the Texas Centennial Commission in Austin" and for his attack "aimed at the Centennial Historical Advisory Board for its recommendation of statues and markers to commemorate Texas heroes and events."<sup>37</sup>

Although Perry requested an increase in funding to \$75,000, the Centennial Commission of Control ultimately awarded El Paso \$50,000 in November, 1934, which city leaders designated for the proposed city museum.<sup>38</sup> This amount, though less than what other Texas cities, such as Houston, San Antonio, and Austin received, represented a vast improvement in funding for El Paso. The Commission also selected West Texas as an "honorable mention" region. An article in the *El Paso Herald-Post* concluded, "Maybe, after all, the statesmen down

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<sup>35</sup> "El Pasoans to Ask Centennial Funds," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 22 October 1934.

<sup>36</sup> *El Paso Herald-Post*, 21 October 1935.

<sup>37</sup> Clipping, "We Feel Better, Anyway," about 1934, newspaper not identified, Centennial Museum historical files, Centennial Museum, The University of Texas at El Paso.

<sup>38</sup> Esther Thompson Cornell, "The El Paso Centennial Museum 1935-1946," *Password* XXVI, no. 1 (1981), 5.

at Austin are going to figure El Paso a part of Texas.”<sup>39</sup> This controversy over funding once again illustrated Austin’s long history of “forgetting” about and underfunding El Paso and West Texas.<sup>40</sup>

Despite these setbacks, planning for the Centennial in El Paso continued. Upper and middle class Anglo women, in particular, took an active role in early planning activities. El Pasoans Mrs. Percy McGhee, Jr., Mrs. Lawrence Gardner, and Mrs. Rodway Keen were named as members of an advisory board for the Texas Centennial.<sup>41</sup> The most active and Centennial-enthusiastic El Paso woman, however, was Harriette Quisenberry, the chair of the El Paso County advisory board. Appointed by Senator Ken Regan in June, 1934, Quisenberry, a local historian and prominent member of many El Paso women’s organizations, was instrumental in planning Centennial-related activities and generating excitement about the upcoming Centennial. Employed by the Popular Dry Goods Company of El Paso since 1918, Quisenberry worked “as head of the Mail Order Department and Director of Personal Service and Radio Advertising.” A profile in the December, 1933, issue of *Voice of the Mexican Border* stated, “It is said of her that she knows more people in Texas and the El Paso district by their first names than almost any other person.” In that same issue she wrote an article “El Paso the Hub of Texas History” that focused on “the importance of El Paso in the frontier history of the Southwest” starting in the early sixteenth century.<sup>42</sup>

During 1934 Quisenberry planned and promoted the Texas Centennial in El Paso. Through her position as chair of the advisory board, Quisenberry started the idea of a Texas Centennial Club, which she unveiled at the group’s November 14 meeting. The Club’s goal was

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<sup>39</sup> “Centennial Hope for El Paso,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 3 November 1934.

<sup>40</sup> Timmons, 298-299.

<sup>41</sup> “Women Named on Centennial Board,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 23 May 1934.

<sup>42</sup> *Voice of the Mexican Border* (Marfa, Texas: J. Shipman, December 1933), 143, 147-148.

to “enroll every citizen of El Paso over 15 years of age” and to have these names filed and sent to Austin as a way of showing El Paso’s support for the Centennial and help secure state funding for its Centennial activities. Advertised in downtown stores and public buildings, the Club asked El Pasoans to join the organization and follow the state slogan of “Think-talk-write Texas Centennial in 1936.”<sup>43</sup> This same meeting was also significant for its attempts to include the heavily Mexican-American south side schools in El Paso’s Centennial efforts. Quisenberry appointed Calleros to visit the schools to publicize and rouse interest in the Centennial.<sup>44</sup> Quisenberry also urged El Pasoans to support Mayor Sherman and to participate in the Dallas Exposition and El Paso’s own celebrations. She warned that unless El Pasoans involved themselves in the planning process and Centennial activities, El Pasoans were “going to find ourselves on the out-side looking in on the Centennial Celebration.”<sup>45</sup> By October 24, 1935, El Paso’s two main Centennial Committees (the original Centennial Advisory Committee and the Centennial Committee of the Chamber of Commerce) merged to help streamline the planning process.<sup>46</sup>

Later that year, Dale Miller, director of the press division of the Texas Centennial Commission of Control, wrote to Dr. C.M. Hendricks, director general of the Southwestern Sun Carnival, that the Sun Carnival Parade “had been adopted as the official opening of the Texas Centennial year of 1936.” This decision generated excitement among local planners and boosters due to not only having the honor of opening the Centennial festivities, but also because the “El Paso Fiesta” would now be linked with state-sponsored advertising of the Centennial. Indeed, the December 11, 1935, issue of the *Texas Centennial Review* featured El Paso’s Sun

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<sup>43</sup> El Paso Herald-Post, 28 December 1934.

<sup>44</sup> “Meeting Called on Centennial,” El Paso Herald-Post, 13 November 1934.

<sup>45</sup> “Urges Support for Centennial,” El Paso Herald-Post, 4 March 1936.

<sup>46</sup> “Ideas Sought on Museum Fund,” El Paso Herald-Post, 23 October 1935.

Carnival on its cover. The accompanying article promised readers “brilliant festivity” and that “the Sun Carnival...will carry Centennial year interest to the far Southwestern corner of Texas, being planned to depict in parade and pageant the El Paso section's thrilling history which is recorded back to the days of the cliff dwellers.”<sup>47</sup>

Local newspapers also publicized the Sun Carnival parade and its ties to the Texas Centennial to El Pasoans as well as tourists. The December 6, 1935, *El Paso Herald-Post* proclaimed “El Paso’s historical background with its Conquistadores, cliff dwellers, pony express and rangers is put on par with the background of other sections of the state and will be broadcast to the nation as a section rich in lore and color.” And local officials quickly wrote to singer Bing Crosby’s manager “asking him to call the Southwestern Sun Carnival the first official Texas Centennial celebration when he mentions the carnival on the Kraft Cheese program, December 28, over NBC.” The article additionally stated that Sun Carnival officials invited Governor James V. Allred to crown the Sun Carnival queen at a special coronation ceremony on December 30 (officials hoped that he could stop in El Paso since he would be traveling to Los Angeles for the Rose Bowl on January 1).<sup>48</sup>

Other pre-Centennial events included a national radio broadcast of an El Paso radio program (which included a chorus singing “The Eyes of Texas”), Governor Allred’s crowning of the Sun Queen at Liberty Hall, and a free public concert by the Mexican Chief of Staff Band. Arranged by Brigadier General Juan Felipe Rico, the Juárez military commander, and Aurelio L. Gallardo, the Mexican Consul General, the concert served as “a gesture of friendship” to the Pan American Round Table of El Paso – an El Paso and Juárez women’s organization that promoted

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<sup>47</sup> *Texas Centennial Review*, December 11, 1935, Texas Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Records. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

<sup>48</sup> “Sun Carnival To Be Opening of Centennial,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 6 December 1935. It is unclear whether Crosby complied with El Paso officials’ request on the Kraft Cheese program.



Pan Americanism.<sup>49</sup> El Paso, originally neglected by the Centennial Commission, finally received much-welcomed recognition and national publicity regarding the Texas Centennial in El Paso.

### **The Sun Carnival Parade, a School Pageant, and a Military Mass (Without the Military)**

El Paso's Sun Carnival parade took place on January 1, 1936, and was the first of seven key Centennial events for the city. It was the largest event held in El Paso – over 100,000 people viewed the parade – and included approximately seventy floats that featured local and southwestern regional history and showcased the area's ethnic groups.<sup>50</sup> One local newspaper account raved about the floats that included historical figures, such as Zebulon Pike, Confederate soldiers, Billy the Kid, and Indian cliff dwellers, as well as floats by Mescalero Apaches, local Chinese, and local Japanese. The parade also featured historical episodes about Cabeza de Vaca, Coronado and the *conquistadores*, Juan de Oñate, and the coming of the Americans.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, a large number of Tigua Indians marched in the parade.<sup>52</sup> This multiethnic participation in the Sun Carnival parade highlighted the diverse ethnic character of the city. The second annual Sun Carnival was successful and particularly important to El Paso for the civic pride and widespread publicity it generated. El Paso's newspapers particularly praised “the free publicity which came to us through the Centennial broadcast and Centennial bureau advertising,” which “has established El Paso's Sun Bowl in the minds of the public everywhere.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> “Concert Tomorrow in Liberty Hall,” El Paso Herald-Post, 31 December 1935; “Governor Allred Crowns Sun Carnival Queen at Liberty Hall,” El Paso Herald-Post, 30 December 1935; “Audience Has State Fright at First Big E.P. Broadcast,” El Paso Herald-Post, December 24, 1935.

<sup>50</sup> Houser, 184.

<sup>51</sup> Texas Centennial Review, December 11, 1935, Texas Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Records, Texas State Archives Commission.

<sup>52</sup> El Paso Herald-Post, 2 January 1936; Houser, 184.

<sup>53</sup> El Paso Herald-Post, 2 January 1936.

During January through March, city leaders, the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, and various El Paso Centennial committees continued planning future Centennial events. The next major event, however, was the El Paso Centennial School Exhibit Program, which lasted from April 15 to April 20, 1936. Sponsored by the Woman's Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, the School program involved over 30,000 students and 800 teachers from the city's public and private schools. The official program stated that "El Paso and El Paso Schools will be living in an atmosphere of song and story culled from the glowing pages of Texas History." Boosters, including A.B. Poe (the president of the Chamber of Commerce) and L.P. Bloodworth (general manager of the Chamber of Commerce), helped sponsor and manage the ambitious city-wide school program.<sup>54</sup>

The scripted pageant, written by Jeannie Frank, divided El Paso and the border region's history into five historic episodes: the Earliest Europeans in the Southwest; the Mission Period; the Period of Texas Independence; Mexican War and Civil War Periods; and the Modern Period. Frank, an El Paso High School teacher from 1903 to 1940, recounted:

I went back to the coming of the First White Man to the U.S.A., Cabeza de Vaca. In fact, I went back further, as history had so fascinated me. This production was held in our spacious, fine stadium...Fortunately, the big U.S. Army fort near our city, freely let us have...up to 1,000 men and officers. Cowmen (ex-pupils) brought small herds of cattle and many horsemen.<sup>55</sup>

The program opened on the evening of April 15, 1936, at El Paso High School's stadium with the Austin High School Band playing a "fanfare of trumpets and drums to announce opening of Centennial Week in the Schools of El Paso." Next Austin High School students presented the

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<sup>54</sup> Houser, 184; "A History of the El Paso Woman's Chamber of Commerce," by Gloria Wright in Woman's Department Chamber of Commerce records, MS 356, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso; "El Paso Schools Centennial Program Portraying Texas History," Folder 790, Woman's Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce records, MS 356.

<sup>55</sup> Martha Patterson Peterson, "Dynamic Mrs. Frank: Pioneer Teacher, Pioneer Historian," Password 33, no. 2 (Fall 1988): 121.

“Appearance of the First Europeans in the El Paso Valley,” which began with the arrival of Cabeza de Vaca and his companions Maldonado, Dorantes, and Estevanico and concluded with an attack on a pack train by Apaches.<sup>56</sup>

The following day the city and parochial school exhibits opened to the public at Liberty Hall.<sup>57</sup> Twenty El Paso public schools, including Alamo, Aoy, Beall, Burleson, Crockett, Dudley, Houston, and Zavala, displayed exhibits. Exhibit topics and themes ranged from lumber in Texas and state highways to El Paso history and animals of Texas. The private Catholic school Loretto College and Academy, assisted by Cathedral High School, mounted an exhibition on education in Texas. This exhibit consisted of portraits of Texas educators, drawings of Texas schools, and even a miniature replica of Loretto College and Academy. Additionally, six local parish schools (Sacred Heart, Guardian Angel, St. Mary’s, St. Ignatius, St. Patrick’s, and St. Joseph’s) participated in the exhibition and exhibited the six flags of Texas. Interestingly, the Health Department also participated and staged an exhibit simply called the “state exhibition.”<sup>58</sup>

Later that evening Rusk and Lamar Schools performed “The Mission Period” at Liberty Hall, while Loretto College and Academy held a special matinee performance Friday afternoon of their section of the pageant – “The Pioneer Women of Texas.” On Friday night Crockett, Coldwell, Morehead, and Dudley Schools performed the “Period of Texas Independence,” and Saturday the Radford School for Girls and Scottish Rite Cathedral performed. Bailey School also presented a “History of Music in Texas” on Saturday. The next day 200 students from Douglass School, El Paso’s African-American school, sang spirituals and patriotic songs at Liberty Hall, and on Monday El Paso County Schools (Ysleta, Fabens, Cooley, and others)

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<sup>56</sup> “El Paso Schools Centennial Program Portraying Texas History,” Folder 790, Woman’s Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce records, MS 356.

<sup>57</sup> “E.P. Centennial School Exhibit Program Ready,” El Paso Herald-Post, 14 March 1936.

<sup>58</sup> “El Paso Schools Centennial Program Portraying Texas History,” Folder 790, Woman’s Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce records, MS 356.

performed Texas and Texas Centennial songs there. Additionally, El Paso High School and all other participating schools held the program's grand finale at El Paso High School's stadium on Monday.<sup>59</sup> Important for its size and inclusive nature (African Americans, Catholics, and predominantly Mexican-American schools all participated), the city-wide school program demonstrated the Texas Centennial's significance to El Pasoans and particularly to students.

Although the Texas Centennial celebrations included El Pasoans of most major religions, the Centennial was particularly important to El Paso Catholics, who were heavily involved in researching mission history, compiling historical literature on Catholics in El Paso, and mounting Catholic mission exhibits at the Dallas Exposition – mostly under the direction of Cleofas Calleros who was active in the Catholic church and the Knights of Columbus. The largest and most important Centennial events for Catholics, however, were the public reception for visiting prelates on the evening of May 30, 1936, and the Pontifical Military Mass at El Paso High School Stadium on May 31, 1936. These events preceded the annual Corpus Christi procession, which was designated part of the Texas Centennial Celebrations.<sup>60</sup>

The public reception, held at Liberty Hall and chaired by Dr. Paul Gallagher (a prominent El Paso physician) and Bishop Anthony Schuler, included a "Welcome to El Paso" address by Mayor R.E. Sherman, greetings from Governor James V. Allred, an address by Bishop Schuler, and a choir performance of "*Salve Estrella de los Mares*." The reception concluded with the singing of the Mexican and American National Anthems. The reception's special guest was Monsignor Juan Navarrete, Catholic bishop of Sonora, Mexico. Additionally, six thousand copies of the El Paso Diocese's publication *Texas 1936 Centennial Celebration: Official Publication* (which detailed the Catholic Church's quadricentennial in El Paso and the border

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<sup>59</sup> El Paso Schools Centennial Program Portraying Texas History, Folder 790, Woman's Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce records, MS 356.

<sup>60</sup> "Mexican Bishop Will Be Guest," El Paso Herald-Post, 26 May 1936.

region) were distributed to the public and prelates at the reception.<sup>61</sup> Prior to the mass on Sunday morning, three thousand parochial school students marched from the Court House and Houston Square to the stadium, headed by the Cathedral High School and Bowie High School bands. The mass, led by Bishop Schuler, attracted approximately 10,000 people and included students singing “Faith of Our Fathers” – the official Catholic Hymn of the Centennial.

Controversy, however, soon erupted over the lack of a military presence at the military mass. A Ft. Bliss cavalry troop and drum and bugle troop were originally scheduled to take part in the mass, but Ft. Bliss never sent the promised soldiers, stating that “not enough soldiers volunteered.” Calleros, Director General of the ceremony, criticized Ft. Bliss for not sending the promised troops. He stated that “Ft. Bliss received orders from the Eighth Corps Area headquarters early in May to send troops to the mass.” According to the *El Paso Herald-Post*, “the only military touch was the presence of two National Guard sentries, obtained at the last moment by a midnight telephone call to Gov. James V. Allred.” El Paso Catholic officials protested to military and government officials in Washington, D.C. about Ft. Bliss’s decision not to send troops. Calleros, in particular, argued that in “other Texas celebrations the military was represented” and that Ft. Bliss should have followed the order.<sup>62</sup> The lack of military participation in the mass contrasted with Ft. Bliss’s willingness to send officers and men to take part in the school system pageant, perhaps revealing lingering anti-Catholic sentiment.

Regardless of the drama and tension between Catholic officials and Ft. Bliss, the Corpus Christi Procession started at 6:00 that evening from St. Patrick’s Cathedral and ended at Sacred Heart Church. Grand Marshall Gallagher and Cleofas Calleros led the procession, while thousands of spectators watched along El Paso streets. Additionally, a group of Tigua Indians

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<sup>61</sup> “8000 E.P. Booklets Will Be Distributed,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 16 May 1936.

<sup>62</sup> “Church Heads On Way Home After Pageant,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 1 June 1936.

participated in the religious procession. Described as an “impressive spectacle” of bishops wearing bright robes and Knights of Columbus in full costume, the Corpus Christi procession was the largest religious procession ever seen in El Paso. According to newspaper accounts, over 35,000 people participated in the Catholic celebrations.<sup>63</sup> These multiethnic, bilingual, and binational religious events demonstrated the Centennial’s importance to local Catholics. The Pontifical Military Mass and Corpus Christi Procession also revealed how many El Paso Catholics gave religious expression to celebrating the Centennial and how it became endowed with personal, religious meaning for them.

#### **“El Paso Day” in Dallas, Meeting President Roosevelt, and Missed Opportunities**

The fourth major Centennial event for El Pasoans - El Paso Day (June 12) at the Dallas Exposition - also generated drama and controversy. The Dallas Exposition served not only as the official exposition of the Texas Centennial and as the Texas State Fair, but also as the World’s Fair. The Exposition officially opened June 6 and closed November 29.<sup>64</sup> Exposition grounds included several museums, agricultural and livestock buildings, an aquarium, restaurants, a grandstand, open-air amphitheatre, various exhibition buildings, a Hall of Texas with a “Niche of Heroes,” a Hall of Negro Life building, and a race track and polo field. According to promotional literature, the Exposition buildings, grounds, murals, sculptures, and friezes cost \$15 million. The federal, Texas, and Dallas governments financed the Exposition with the hope that it would generate large amounts of revenue. At the Exposition El Paso’s booth featured an

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<sup>63</sup> Clefoas Calleros, Joseph I. Driscoll, eds. Texas 1936 Centennial Celebration: Official Publication (El Paso, Texas: Diocese of El Paso, 1936); “Church Heads On Way Home After Pageant,” El Paso Herald-Post, 1 June 1936; “Mexican Bishop Will Be Guest,” El Paso Herald-Post, 26 May 1936.

<sup>64</sup> W.G. MacFarlane, compiled. The Texas Centennial and Dallas Exposition, 1836-1936 (Chicago: American Autochrome, 1937).

exhibit “on the development of irrigation in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.”<sup>65</sup>

Additionally, the El Paso Diocesan Committee sponsored the construction of a replica of old Socorro mission at the Exposition, which cost \$30,000.<sup>66</sup> El Pasoans, such as the Seldon Parmalee family and Mrs. O.C. Coles of the Woman’s Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, traveled from El Paso to Dallas to visit the much-hyped and much-anticipated Exposition.<sup>67</sup> Other large-scale Centennial events included the commemoration of the fall of the Alamo in San Antonio, which similar to El Paso’s celebrations, incorporated local civic leaders as well as many Catholic officials and participants.

El Paso boosters and civic leaders viewed El Paso Day in Dallas (part of the National Folk Festival of the Texas Centennial) as one of their most important Centennial-related events due to the international press coverage of the Exposition. June 12 was also designated as President’s Day, and President Roosevelt’s presence at the Exposition provided additional publicity. Locally, the *El Paso Herald-Post* generated excitement about El Paso Day at the Dallas Exposition by sponsoring a “Star Carrier” contest. The prize for the winning carrier was a trip to the Dallas Exposition.<sup>68</sup> Jack Chaney, chairman of the transportation committee for El Paso Day, even asked employers to give employees free release time to visit the Dallas Exposition. Additionally, the Texas & Pacific Railroad offered special deals to El Pasoans who traveled to Dallas by rail.<sup>69</sup>

During late January, 1936, city officials, civic organizations’ leaders, and railroad representatives began planning for the event. In early April Sarah Gertrude Knotts of Dallas,

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<sup>65</sup> *El Paso Herald-Post*, 8 January 1936.

<sup>66</sup> “Calleros Says Structure at Centennial Gives New History Slant,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 30 September 1936.

<sup>67</sup> “A History of the El Paso Woman’s Chamber of Commerce,” Woman’s Department of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, MS 356.; Seldon Parmalee Scrapbook, El Paso County Historical Society.

<sup>68</sup> Advertisement, *El Paso Herald-Post*, 6 April 1936.

<sup>69</sup> “Employers Asked To Aid Dallas Trip,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 23 May 1936.

director of the Folk Lore Pageant, traveled to El Paso and met with Quisenberry and other members of her El Paso County Centennial Committee, who included Mrs. L.N. Nickey, Maud Sullivan, Jeannie Frank, C.M. Newman, Dr. L.D. Moses, C.L. Sonnichsen, and Calleros.<sup>70</sup>

Despite the local Centennial Executive Committee's activities to involve El Pasoans in the planning process, the Committee faced a largely apathetic city. Quisenberry told reporters that the "apparent indifference of El Pasoans may defeat plans for staging El Paso Day at the Texas Centennial Celebration at Dallas June 12."<sup>71</sup> This lack of enthusiasm most likely occurred because El Paso Day in Dallas was not a localized celebration and because of funding controversies.

Eventually the Committee approved an El Paso Day program, which was funded by private contributions. The program, part of El Paso Day, President's Day, and the National Folk Festival, included performances by the Tigua Indians of Ysleta, the El Paso Chorus, the El Paso Pioneer Negro Chorus (sponsored by the El Paso County Colored Pioneer Club), and the Mexican Típica Orchestra (sponsored by Roland Harwell) (see images 5 and 6). Local El Paso businesses, such as A. Mathias and Co., D.G. Palm Shoe Store, and J.M. Blanco, supplied the Tiguas with new outfits for their presentation and dance.<sup>72</sup> Cleofas Calleros arranged the Tiguas' participation, while Jack Chaney, general chairman of El Paso Day, and Dorrance Roderick, program chairman, oversaw El Paso's three day participation in the Dallas Exposition.<sup>73</sup> In addition to the performances, the El Paso group announced plans to have Tigua

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<sup>70</sup> "Miss Knotts to Discuss Pageant for Centennial," El Paso Herald-Post, 3 April 1936.

<sup>71</sup> "May Abandon El Paso Day: Indifference Displayed Toward Celebration Committee Told," El Paso Times, April 8, 1936 in Cleofas Calleros Collection, El Paso Public Library.

<sup>72</sup> "El Pasoans and the Neighbors Greet You Amigo!," program, Box 28, Folder 16, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

<sup>73</sup> Houser, 186; For a more detailed account of the Tigua's experiences at the Dallas Exposition, see Houser and Scott Comar's "As the Sun Shined Brightly: Tigua Representations of Indigeneity and Agency through Public Presentations During the Progressive Era and the Interwar Years." (Research seminar paper, The University of Texas at El Paso, Spring 2011).



Cacique Damasio Colmenero make President Franklin D. Roosevelt an honorary Tigua in a “ritualistic ceremony.” The El Paso city delegation, comprised of Cleofas Calleros, Mayor R.E. Sherman, and Wallace Perry, additionally planned to present Roosevelt with a Mexican sombrero.<sup>74</sup>



Image 5: Tigua Indian dancers, 1936, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections, The University of Texas at El Paso.

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<sup>74</sup> “El Pasoans and the Neighbors Greet You Amigo!,” program, Box 28, Folder 16, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231.

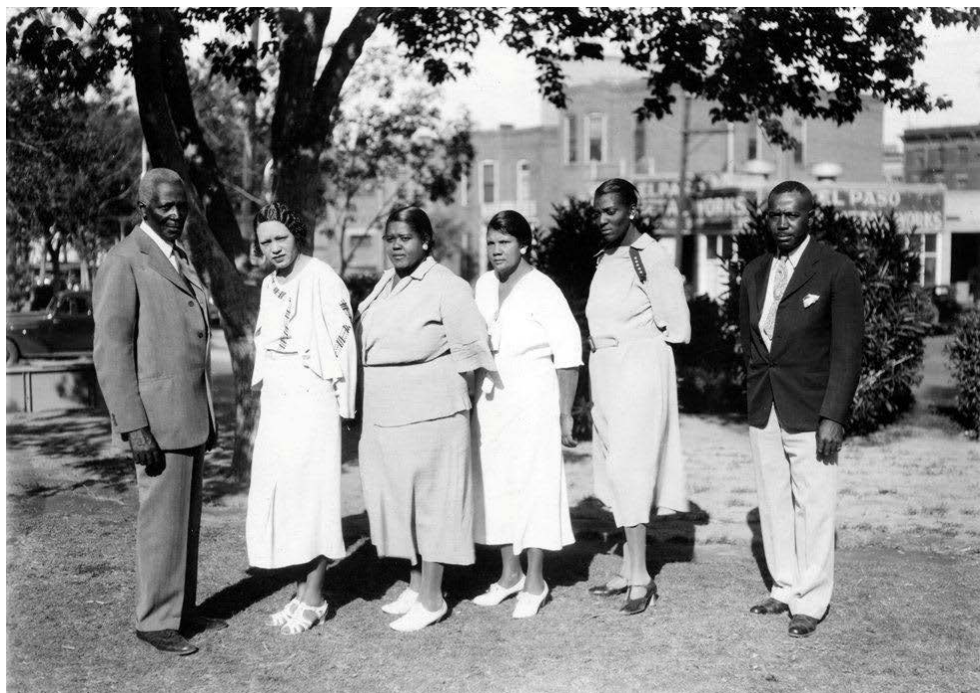


Image 6: El Paso Pioneer Negro Chorus, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Disputes over money for the El Paso delegation to travel by train soon emerged. Despite receiving money from the El Paso City Council and other groups, plans to travel by train to Dallas fell through due to lack of funds. Instead, the El Paso Pioneer Negro Chorus and the Tigua Indian delegation traveled to Dallas in a new Ford bus, which stopped in several Texas cities along the way to distribute centennial ribbons and booster literature about El Paso.<sup>75</sup>

In El Paso the English-language newspapers and the city's Spanish-language newspaper, *El Continental*, covered El Paso Day in Dallas extensively.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, poor communication between the El Paso delegation and the Dallas Exposition coordinators led to a variety of mistakes and misunderstandings. According to Houser, the El Paso delegation failed to present the sombrero to President Roosevelt after his speech at the Cotton Bowl Stadium. Additionally, Houser states, "Although the group was well stocked with promotional materials,

<sup>75</sup> Houser, 185-186.

<sup>76</sup> El Paso Herald-Post, June 1936; El Continental, June 1936.

only a few El Paso Centennial promotional badges and ribbons were distributed at the Exposition.” Even more embarrassing, however, was the lack of knowledge by visiting El Pasoans about the Tigua “chief-making” presentation to President Roosevelt (which caused most El Pasoans to miss the ceremony), and that the Tigua were misidentified as the Alabama Indians by the announcer right before the presentation (see image 7). Furthermore, the Dallas Exposition staff was unaware that the Tiguas and the El Paso Pioneer Negro Chorus were even scheduled to perform that day.<sup>77</sup>

Much criticized over these mistakes by El Pasoans, Calleros wrote a letter addressed to “Dear Around Here,” which recounted his experiences and explained his understanding of events, though it is unclear whether this letter was ever published.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, Calleros deemed the adventure “a little costly” to himself as he was “still paying for some obligations” six months later.<sup>79</sup> Regardless of the criticism and financial difficulties, Calleros remembered the Centennial fondly. In a letter to Knotts, he wrote:

What a pleasant memory to reminisce our participation in the Tigua Indian presentation during the 1936 Texas Centennial...I vividly recall that we opened the Texas Calvacade with the Tigua Indians beating their Tom Toms as they did when they first came to El Paso in 1680...followed by the melodious strings of the El Paso Mexican Típica Orchestra with their joyful Mexican Airs, and closing with the El Paso Negro’s beautiful and touching spirituals.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Houser, 186-187.

<sup>78</sup> Letter by Cleofas Calleros, June 18, 1936, Texas Centennial – El Paso Day, Cleofas Calleros Collection, El Paso Public Library. Dallas Exposition staff were also likely at fault.

<sup>79</sup> Letter to Rev. Father R.M. Libertini from Cleofas Calleros, December 1, 1936, Box 28, Folder 16, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231.

<sup>80</sup> Letter to Sarah Gertrude Knott from Cleofas Calleros, about September 1971, Box 28, Folder 16, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231.



*Dallas Cotton Bowl — June 12, 1936*

Image 7: El Paso Day in Dallas – Damasio Colmenero making President Roosevelt an honorary *cacique* of the Tigua Indian Nation, clipping, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Because of the immense pressure and cost to promote the border region in Dallas, these mistakes and missed opportunities to properly showcase and identify local history, heritage, and culture were particularly unfortunate. Nevertheless, El Paso Day at the Dallas Exposition benefited El Paso through national press exposure. In addition to the El Paso Day and President’s Day publicity, the Mexican Típica Orchestra received much attention for their June 14 concert, part of which was broadcast on the NBC radio station.<sup>81</sup> Most importantly, El Paso Day in Dallas allowed El Paso and the southwest border region, finally, to interject its own multiethnic, multilingual border culture into the “official” Texas Centennial celebrations.

### **The Kids’ Rodeo and El Paso (Finally) Holds an Exposition**

<sup>81</sup> “Concierto de la Típica Desde Dallas el Día 14,” El Continental, 12 June 1936.

Several months later, on September 3 to September 5, El Paso held the Fourth Annual Kids' Rodeo – the fifth major Centennial-related event in El Paso. “Devoted to the observance of the Centennial year,” the Kids' Rodeo also included a “frontier fête.” Comprised of a “Parade of the Centuries Revue,” a Rodeo Queen contest, a square dance, and an old fiddlers' contest, the fête was sponsored by the Woman's Auxiliary of the College of Mines. Additionally, the city held an adult rodeo for range hands. The Centennial Commission's publicity bureau published literature describing the rodeos, which the *El Paso Herald-Post* sponsored primarily for its advertising value.<sup>82</sup> Proceeds from the Kids' Rodeo and the Women's Auxiliary frontier fête, some nine hundred dollars, helped fund the College of Mines Centennial Museum.<sup>83</sup> Originally planned as a Kids' Rodeo and a Southwestern Festival that would celebrate the arrival of Cristóbal de Quiñones (the first musician believed to enter El Paso) and include folk songs and tales of the Southwest, the Southwestern Festival never happened.<sup>84</sup> Although it is unclear why the Southwestern Festival transformed into the Parade of the Centuries Fashion Revue, the frontier fête events proved highly successful. Indeed, the Revue and the fiddlers' contest moved to Liberty Hall from Washington Park after planners witnessed a high demand for tickets, while Rodeo events took place at Rodeo Field near Washington Park.<sup>85</sup> These events appealed to “Anglo fantasy heritage” sentiments, which focused on cowboy and pioneer mythology in the west, and confirmed El Paso's attachment to Centennial-related emphasis on Anglo pioneers and pioneer heritage.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> “Publicity in Rodeos,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 1 September 1936.

<sup>83</sup> “Calendar for Rodeo,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 1 September 1936.

<sup>84</sup> “El Paso Centennial Festival Announced,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 19 February 1936.

<sup>85</sup> “Fiddlers' Show Site Changed,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 27 August 1936.

<sup>86</sup> For more information about Anglo/pioneer fantasy heritage, see Lydia Otero's *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010).

Rodeo events also enjoyed great popularity. The city chose Lucille Davenport as its Rodeo Princess, and Quisenberry designed a crown (“made of silver and horns tipped with rhinestones”) and a cape, which featured an oil painting of a longhorn steer by José Jáuregui of the Popular Dry Goods Company, for the Rodeo Queen to wear.<sup>87</sup> The Juárez Chamber of Commerce and the Pro-Juárez Association sent their own princess, Olga Padilla, to compete for Rodeo Queen as well.<sup>88</sup> Scott MacDonald of Chihuahua, Mexico, won the boys’ division grand championship in the Kids’ Rodeo, while Virginia Grooms of El Paso won the girls’ division grand championship. According to the *El Paso Herald-Post*, “Approximately 15,000 persons attended the four performances at Rodeo Field.”<sup>89</sup> Again, El Paso’s Centennial-related events included participants from both sides of the border.

The following month El Paso held its first annual Harvest Festival. Although not specifically designated a Centennial-related event, the Harvest Festival, which lasted from October 1 to October 4, was significant as the city finally had its own Exposition. Sponsored by the Retailers’ Division of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, the Harvest Festival promised entertainment at Liberty Hall, shopping opportunities, agricultural and industrial exhibits, and a curb art show and fiesta.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, stores offered “Harvest Festival” values, the Chamber of Commerce held an open house presided over by several hostesses from the Woman’s Division of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, and the city sponsored polo games, a golf tournament, and three football games.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> “Miss Lucille Davenport Elected Princess of El Paso’s Rodeos,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 1 September 1936.

<sup>88</sup> “Juárez Princess is Selected,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 2 September 1936.

<sup>89</sup> *El Paso Herald-Post*, 7 September 1936.

<sup>90</sup> Advertisement, *El Paso Herald-Post*, 28 September 1936; “Liberty Hall Will Be Decorated Gaily for Opening of Fall Harvest Festival,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 29 September 1936.

<sup>91</sup> “Hostesses Are Announced for Fall Harvest Festival,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 28 September 1936; Advertisement, *El Paso Herald-Post*, 28 September 1936

The Festival itself featured 56 manufacturing and business exhibits, a special exhibit of farm products, and “prize products” from eleven communities around the border region. Farm community participants included Upper and Lower Doña Ana County, Pecos, Canutillo, Country Club district, Deming, San Elizario, Fabens, Ysleta, and Alamogordo, New Mexico.<sup>92</sup> The Chamber of Commerce offered cash prizes to the top entries.

The Harvest Festival was a moderate success and attracted around 5,000 people, though minor drama erupted over an entertainer’s costume.<sup>93</sup> On the evening of October 2 Harvest Festival entertainer Billie Farragut performed her “red-hot chili dance” at Liberty Hall after being postponed earlier in the day when Harvest Festival official Dan T. White, Jr. brought her the wrong type of chili peppers for her costume – green instead of red. According to newspaper accounts, a “heated battle” erupted between Quisenberry, who designed Farragut’s chili costume, and White. Quisenberry insisted that the costume needed red peppers, which White later secured. Unfortunately, Quisenberry asserted that new red peppers White brought were too heavy for the costume and for the dancer to move comfortably. White responded to Quisenberry’s complaints stating that “they were prize chili peppers at the Festival.” Finally, White found lightweight red peppers and the dance was rescheduled. The Harvest Festival became an annual event for the rest of the 1930s and a public-oriented way for the Chamber of Commerce to promote local businesses, industry, and agriculture during the Great Depression.

### **Contentious Committees and the Centennial Memorial Museum**

El Paso’s most important Centennial event, however, was the building of the Centennial Memorial Museum on the campus of the College of Mines and Metallurgy (later the University

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<sup>92</sup> “Liberty Hall Will Be Decorated Gaily for Opening of Fall Harvest Festival,” El Paso Herald-Post, 29 September 1936.

<sup>93</sup> “5000 Show Attendance,” El Paso Herald-Post, 6 October 1936.

of Texas at El Paso). For many years El Paso boosters supported the idea of creating a municipal museum to enrich the city, both intellectually and culturally. According to Esther Thompson Cornell, “Mrs. Branch Craige and Mrs. Maud Sullivan, city librarian campaigned for a museum in the early 1920s.” Cornell also points out the stalled efforts of the Pioneers Association, the Archeological Society, and the College Woman’s Club to start a city museum in 1923. By 1935, the Woman’s Auxiliary of the College of Mines, the International Museum Association, the El Paso Pioneers Association, and the college faculty requested a \$150,000 Public Works Administration loan to build a city museum on the College of Mines campus. The proposed location of the museum at the College of Mines soon generated controversy as many El Pasoans wanted a downtown location (the College of Mines in 1935 was beyond the city limits) – either in San Jacinto Plaza, Washington Park, the main El Paso Public Library, or the Magoffin Home. The group also requested Congress to donate the old Federal Building to use for a city museum, though both these plans failed.<sup>94</sup>

El Paso finally secured funding for the museum through its Centennial fund appropriation of \$50,000. An article by the Chairman of the Museum Committee of the Women’s Auxiliary of the College of Mines argued that Centennial funds should “be used to erect a building of lasting usefulness such as a combined auditorium and museum on the campus.”<sup>95</sup> Wallace Perry also advocated for a memorial building to commemorate “the early explorers and Conquistadores” and later “be turned over to the College of Mines as a community and college museum.”<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, while controversies over the museum’s location emerged again, the decision to use the Centennial funds to build and operate a city museum generated no debate. City boosters and

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<sup>94</sup> Cornell, 5.

<sup>95</sup> Clipping (not identified), “Museum Building on Campus, Summer 1935,” Centennial Museum Historical Files.

<sup>96</sup> “Ideas Sought on Museum Fund,” El Paso Herald-Post, 23 October 1935.



civic leaders also disagreed over who would be responsible for the museum's operations and maintenance.<sup>97</sup>

Although College of Mines President Dr. Dossie Wiggins secured approval from the UT Board of Regents to house the museum on college land as well as operate and maintain it, resistance to the College of Mines site persisted. Led by retired El Paso businessman L.W. Hoffecker and three other members of the joint Centennial Chamber of Commerce Committee – El Paso County Advisory Centennial Committee, the opposition circulated a petition signed by one hundred businessmen wanting the museum at a downtown location.<sup>98</sup> Hoffecker opposed the College of Mines site due to lack of police protection, the fact that the site was outside the city limits, and because he worried that that students would damage the property.<sup>99</sup> Other objectors favored a downtown location to better attract tourists. One editorial argued that a College of Mines site “would be just another College of Mines building, that it would receive little attention as a museum from either townspeople or tourists.”<sup>100</sup>

Arguments became so contentious that Hoffecker eventually resigned from the Committee (he complained, in particular, of “abuse” by El Paso women who favored the College of Mines site), and stated that he did not “want to hear the word ‘museum’ again.” Mayor R.E. Sherman avoided becoming involved in the increasingly vitriolic debates by stating that “the city of El Paso as a governmental party has no authority to make a decision as to where the museum will be located” and that it was a matter for the Centennial Committee to decide.<sup>101</sup> The controversy and criticism over the College of Mines site worsened, and members of the Chamber

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<sup>97</sup> Cornell, 7-8.

<sup>98</sup> El Paso Herald-Post, 14 December 1935.

<sup>99</sup> Cornell, 10.

<sup>100</sup> El Paso Times, December 5, 1935, clipping, Centennial Museum Historical Files.

<sup>101</sup> El Paso Herald-Post, 14 December 1935.

of Commerce Committee section of the joint Centennial Committee resigned.<sup>102</sup> Thus, Quisenberry's original El Paso County Advisory Committee decided by secret ballot in a six-five vote for the College of Mines site.<sup>103</sup> On January 31, 1936, the *El Paso Herald-Post* announced that the Committee decided on the College of Mines site, which would be located "at the west end of College Ave., just south of the site reserved for the Mines' administration building."<sup>104</sup>

Designed by local architect Percy McGhee and built in the Bhutanese style to complement other College of Mines buildings, the Centennial Museum's planning began in early 1936. Featured on the front cover of the February 19, 1936, *El Paso Herald-Post*, McGhee's plan received quick approval by the Centennial Department of the State Board of Control in Austin.<sup>105</sup> By March, McGhee completed a series of detailed blueprints for the museum.<sup>106</sup> Contractor R.E. McKee, hired to build the museum, started on June 4, 1936, and finished on October 22, 1936.<sup>107</sup> Commissioned by McGhee to create special artwork for the museum, El Paso artist Tom Lea designed the carved limestone bas-relief, which depicted the 1536 arrival of Cabeza de Vaca at the Pass of the North. Lea decided to use Cabeza de Vaca and his companions due to de Vaca's status as the "earliest Old World explorer into this part of a New World."<sup>108</sup> The bas-relief, chiseled by a quarry firm in Austin, was placed over the museum entrance's double doors.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Cornell, 10.

<sup>103</sup> Cornell, 11.

<sup>104</sup> "Site Chosen for Museum," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 31 January 1936.

<sup>105</sup> "Arts Building Plan Drawn," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 19 February 1936; Cornell, 12-14.

<sup>106</sup> Centennial Memorial Museum blueprints, Folder 5, Architectural Maps and Drawings, UTEP Collection, MS 001, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

<sup>107</sup> Cornell, 15.

<sup>108</sup> Letter to Rex E. Gerald from Tom Lea, July 3, 1972, Box 79, Folder 32, Tom Lea papers, MS 476, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

<sup>109</sup> "Historical Lintel Over Doorway of College of Mines Museum," *El Paso Herald-Post*, Box 79, Folder 32, Tom Lea papers, MS 476.

Formally dedicated on April 23, 1937, the Centennial Museum opened with “a dedication ceremony, a reception and housewarming, and an old-timers’ program honoring the pioneer citizens of El Paso and the entire community.”<sup>110</sup> The Centennial Museum not only affected the physical landscape and built environment of the College of Mines, but also became an important source of civic and campus pride. Consequently, the College of Mines featured the “Natural History Museum” in a large advertisement in the May 28, 1936, *El Paso Herald-Post*. The advertisement proclaimed, “The history of the Texas Centennial will live forever at the College of Mines, because of the Museum of Arts building, which is now being erected on its grounds by the state as a part of the Centennial exposition.”<sup>111</sup> College of Mines catalogs also promoted the city’s new museum, which was often called the El Paso Centennial Museum.<sup>112</sup> And according to the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations official report of 1938, the “El Paso Memorial Museum” contained “the most complete mineral collections in the Southwest, an excellent exhibit of Indian pottery, habitat groups of birds and mammals of West Texas, and a large collection of invertebrate paleontological materials arranged for individual study.”<sup>113</sup>

The Centennial Museum was particularly significant for publicizing and making local natural history and history collections more accessible to El Pasoans.<sup>114</sup> Previously in El Paso natural history collections were held privately or in the College of Mines Geology Museum, which was located on the ground floor of the Main Building. Lea also pointed out the museum’s importance for providing “our town with its first public gallery with suitable space and suitable

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<sup>110</sup> “Dedication of Museum at College of Mines April 23-24 To Be Made of Interest to Entire Southwestern Area,” *El Paso Times*, April 23, 1937, clipping, Centennial Museum Historical Files.

<sup>111</sup> *El Paso Herald-Post*, 28 May 1936.

<sup>112</sup> *College of Mines and Metallurgy Catalog, 1937-1938*, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

<sup>113</sup> Neff, et al., 21.

<sup>114</sup> *College of Mines and Metallurgy Catalog, 1935-1936*, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

lighting for public art exhibitions.”<sup>115</sup> In particular, the Centennial museum demonstrated El Pasoans’ commitment to focusing on local heritage, culture, and natural history and highlighted its ongoing strategy of using the Centennial as a mechanism for generating funds and publicity to benefit the border region.

### **More Thinking, Talking, and Writing about the Texas Centennial in El Paso**

In addition to these seven major Centennial-related events, El Pasoans participated in a variety of other Centennial activities. Along with the city-wide school exhibits and program, many individual schools staged their own events. In early September, 1935, the Superintendent of El Paso schools specially charged teachers “to give special attention” in their teaching to the Texas Centennial, though teachers were free “to develop their own plans.” At Burluson School teacher Lucy Roberts designed a Centennial unit of work for her students in the seventh grade. The unit included studying expositions and the history of fairs (none of the students – primarily low-income Mexican Americans – had never attended one) and researching Texas cattle, cotton, and oil. Based on their research, students designed a model Texas Centennial Exposition – later exhibited at Liberty Hall during the city-wide school program.<sup>116</sup> Rusk School students performed a Centennial play called “All Aboard for the Texas Centennial” and also won third place in a state historical essay contest. Sponsored by the Texas Centennial Historical Committee in Austin, the contest prize included a certificate of merit, a plaque, and a \$10 check.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, Aoy School, a Mexican-American school located in El Paso’s *segundio*

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<sup>115</sup> Letter to Rex E. Gerald from Tom Lea, July 3, 1972, Box 79, Folder 32, Tom Lea papers, MS 476.

<sup>116</sup> “The Texas Centennial: A Unit of Work” by Lucy Roberts, The Instructor, June 1936 in Box 16, Folder 14, Barbara Dent files, MS 534, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

<sup>117</sup> “Centennial Play Given at Rusk,” El Paso Herald-Post, 21 May 1936; “Wins Third Prize,” El Paso Herald-Post, 23 November 1936.

*barrio* neighborhood, presented a musical pageant of Texas, while the seventh grade civics classes at Crockett School organized Texas Centennial Clubs.<sup>118</sup> And El Paso High School's graduation of January, 1936, observed "old classical graduation traditions," including singing *Gaudeamus Igitur* and *Intger Vitae*, in honor of the Texas Centennial celebrations.<sup>119</sup> These events reveal El Paso students' (and teachers) enthusiasm and interest in the Texas Centennial.

Many local organizations participated in Texas Centennial-themed events and activities as well. Women's organizations, such as the Woman's Department of the Chamber of Commerce, Daughters of Zion, Panhellenic, the Altrusa Club, and Pioneer Women, sponsored talks or programs about the Centennial during 1934 to 1936, while the Bachelor Club used "a Texas Centennial theme" in its decorations, place cards, and favors for a Saturday night dinner dance.<sup>120</sup> The Lower Valley Garden Club benefited El Paso's natural landscape by planting willow trees, oleanders, altheas, and pampas grass along the Cadwallader bridge on the valley road as part of "the movement to beautify the state highways for the Texas Centennial and the future enjoyment of the people of Texas."<sup>121</sup> El Paso's Protestant religious organizations also held Centennial events, such as the El Paso Centennial revival rally held in mid-March (El Paso was one of 16 Texas cities chosen by the Centennial Interdenominational Revival Committee to host a rally). Additionally, the Baptist Churches of El Paso celebrated Sam Houston's birthday (March 2) and Texas Independence Day (March 4) with a special Centennial-themed program.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> "Organize Centennial Clubs at Crockett," El Paso Herald-Post, 13 February 1936; "Texas Pageant Will Be Given at Aoy School," El Paso Herald-Post, 21 May 1936.

<sup>119</sup> "El Paso High School Graduation To Be in Old Classical Tradition," El Paso Herald-Post, 18 January 1936.

<sup>120</sup> El Paso Herald-Post, 17 October 1934; El Paso Herald-Post, 5 November 1934; "Panhellenic to Have Centennial Program at Meet," El Paso Herald-Post, 23 February 1935; El Paso Herald-Post, 11 January 1936; "Bachelor Club to Hold Saturday Night Dance," El Paso Herald-Post, 3 February 1936; "Mrs. Sullivan to Speak on Historic Aspects of El Paso," El Paso Herald-Post, 3 June 1936.

<sup>121</sup> "Women Beautify Valley Bridge," El Paso Herald-Post, 4 March 1936.

<sup>122</sup> "Centennial Revival Will Be Held Here," El Paso Herald-Post, 8 January 1936; "Churches Plan Joint Services," El Paso Herald-Post, 26 February 1936.

The Texas Centennial also affected El Paso's historical literature and collective memory by stimulating interest in local history. During 1936 the El Paso Diocese published *Texas 1936 Centennial Celebration, 1536-1936*, edited by Cleofas Calleros, which contained histories of local churches and missions and praised Catholics for bringing and sustaining Christianity. Early on the El Paso Diocesan Committee decided to use their religious history to commemorate not only the Centennial of Texas independence but also the border region's quadricentennial of the arrival of the first Christians (Cabeza de Vaca) in the area.<sup>123</sup> Special Centennial editions of the *El Paso Herald-Post* from May 28, 1936, and the *Voice of the Mexican Border* from May, 1936, published in Marfa by John Shipman, also featured Cabeza de Vaca themes with the cover of the *El Paso Herald-Post* featuring a brightly colored rendering of Cabeza de Vaca at the Pass of the North in 1536 (see image 8). The special *El Paso Herald-Post* Centennial edition contained an assortment of essays on local border region history, advertisements from local businesses, and articles about modern El Paso.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Letter to Rev. Father Joseph G.O. Donohue from Cleofas Calleros, Texas Centennial Celebration – Catholic Participation, Cleofas Calleros Collection, El Paso Public Library.

<sup>124</sup> Special Centennial Edition, *El Paso Herald-Post*, 28 May 1936.

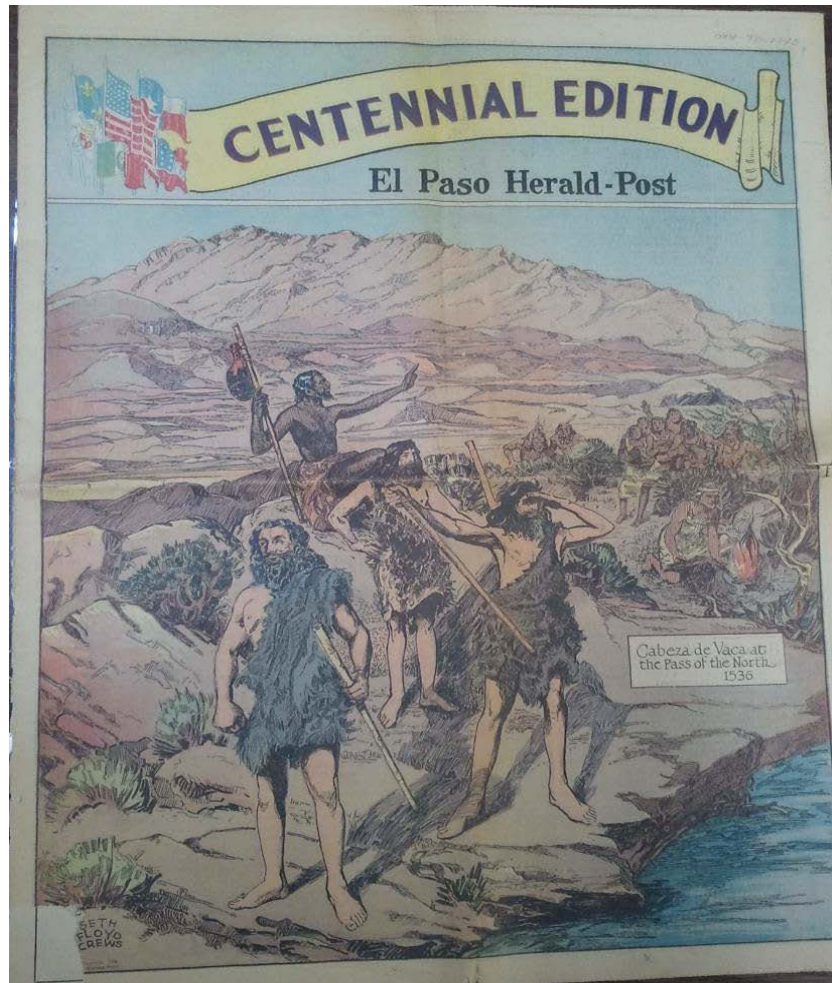


Image 8: Centennial Edition, El Paso Herald-Post, May 28, 1936, El Paso County Historical Society.

Other examples of Centennial-related interest in local history include Elaine Lewis Morrel’s master’s thesis on the history of El Paso’s public schools. In her preface she wrote that she had been “Stirred by the Centennial of the State of Texas, and realizing the rapid departure of the generation of pioneers, and likewise the increasing scarcity of source materials, I have undertaken to record the history of El Paso and its Public Schools.”<sup>125</sup> El Paso librarian Maud Sullivan noted that there was “new interest in El Paso history” as more El Pasoans requested

<sup>125</sup> Elaine Lewis Morrel, “The Rise and Growth of Public Education in El Paso, Texas” (Master’s thesis, University of Texas, August 1936), preface.

materials about their city's history.<sup>126</sup> And by late June, 1935, Annie Lee Marshall's "Dusting the Covers of Texas History" articles were replaced by Jeannie Frank's "Dusting the Covers of Southwestern History" series in an effort by the *El Paso Herald-Post* to "bring the 'history-dusting' story closer to home."<sup>127</sup> The series under Frank covered southwestern history topics from Cabeza de Vaca to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 to the history of California.<sup>128</sup> Clearly, the Texas Centennial helped bring Centennial-related history-consciousness to the border region as El Pasoans remembered and commemorated their own local history as well as added to El Paso's body of historical literature.

Local historical memory, in particular, focused on the preservation and history of the border region's missions. Wallace Perry strongly advocated for the missions and in 1935 sought funding to promote the missions and mission history as part of El Paso's Centennial activities.<sup>129</sup> And in late February, 1936, Monsignor A.J. Schuler, the bishop of El Paso, commissioned Reverend Father Gerard Decorme to research the age and history of the Ysleta mission. The *El Paso Herald-Post* reported that "the study is being made in connection with Texas' Centennial Celebration in Dallas this year."<sup>130</sup> The study later named the Ysleta Mission, founded in 1682, as Texas's oldest mission. This designation became a source of local pride and significantly contributed to local and Texas historiography as the oldest missions were previously thought to have been located in East Texas.<sup>131</sup>

The Texas Centennial also altered El Paso's historical landscape through the placement of historical markers during 1936 to 1937. Historical markers, funded by special Centennial

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<sup>126</sup> "New Interest in E.P. History," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 5 October 1935.

<sup>127</sup> "Dusting the Covers of Texas History," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 28 June 1935.

<sup>128</sup> Jeannie Frank, "Dusting the Covers of Southwestern History," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 20 September 1935.

<sup>129</sup> Houser, 188.

<sup>130</sup> "El Paso Priest Seeks Oldest Valley Mission," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 25 February 1936.

<sup>131</sup> "Calleros Says Structure at Centennial Gives New History Slant," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 30 September 1936.



monies, were erected at the Ysleta and Socorro missions and at the San Elizario presidio and chapel during 1936. At the Ysleta Centennial celebration on July 16, 1936, Cleofas Calleros served as master of ceremonies for the festivities surrounding the unveiling of the Ysleta mission's historical marker, which credited the mission as the oldest in Texas. County Judge Joseph McGill and S.J. Isaacks described the mission's history, while mission pastor Reverend Paul Levain blessed the historical marker. After the dedication ceremony, the celebration included dancing by the Tigua Indians, fireworks, a Mexican supper, and a procession. Calleros estimated that approximately 4,500 people "attended the dedication and watched the procession which followed."<sup>132</sup>

Similarly, the unveiling of the Socorro mission's historical marker on September 29, 1936, mixed the Texas Centennial with the border region's own historical narrative and local culture. The marker unveiling celebrations consisted of "an all-day civic and religious feast... as part of the Texas Centennial Celebration and in observance of the feast of St. Michael, patron saint of Socorro parish." The dedication celebration also included a high mass led by Bishop Schuler, speeches by local civic and religious dignitaries, dancing by *matachines*, a blessing of the historical marker by Father Decorme, and a procession in honor of St. Michael. After the religious services, the "mayordomos of the fiesta" set off fireworks. The marker itself described the mission site, its founding in 1683, and the Franciscan missionaries' work in "civilizing and Christianizing" the Piro, Thano, and Gemex Indians after they fled New Mexico during the Pueblo uprising.<sup>133</sup> Other Centennial-funded historical markers located in the border region include a Pass of the North marker (near El Paso, U.S. Highway 80A); an El Paso Salt War marker (located one mile East Salt Flats, Hudspeth County, U.S. Highway 62); and a marker

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<sup>132</sup> "Bells and Dancing Indians Recall Era of Spanish Might," El Paso Herald-Post, 16 July 1936.

<sup>133</sup> "Socorro Will Unveil Marker," El Paso Herald-Post, 29 September 1936.

honoring Texas Ranger Captain Frank Jones (near Ysleta High School).<sup>134</sup> These events highly localized the Texas Centennial for El Paso and the borderlands as well as provided important opportunities for the region to celebrate its own history and cultural and religious traditions.

In addition to Tom Lea's *Pass of the North* for the Centennial Museum entrance, the Texas Centennial inspired other artists to create art work featuring local history. The Catholic Exhibit Building at the Dallas Centennial Exposition exhibited H. Harris Shelton's painting, *Ysleta Mission, First Church in Texas*. Shelton also designed the cover art for the El Paso Diocese Committee's official Centennial publication.<sup>135</sup> And Taos artist Howard Leigh sketched border region missions "for a series of Texas Centennial paintings."<sup>136</sup>

The Texas Centennial also offered El Paso and the border region economies various ways to promote borderlands tourism. Boosters, in particular, sought to attract tourists passing through El Paso on their way to the Dallas Exposition. Radio broadcasts and national news exposure through Centennial events, such as the Sun Carnival parade and El Paso Day in Dallas, all publicized the El Paso borderlands to tourists. The El Paso Chamber of Commerce also authored at least two publications directed at attracting tourists to the border region. One publication urged tourists to "stop in the land of sunshine" and to "take time to see El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico," and included maps and lists of nearby historic sites and cultural attractions (see image 9). Another more extensive publication, "Know El Paso and Vicinity," which was compiled by Clifford Morrill for the Chamber of Commerce, contained hand-colored maps and detailed descriptions of border region history and places to visit in the border region (see image 10). Both publications' covers featured Mexican singers and dancers on the covers and tied El

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<sup>134</sup> Neff et al., 133-144; "Isaacks to Preside at Marker Dedication," El Paso Herald-Post, 13 November 1937.

<sup>135</sup> "Painting of Original Ysleta Mission Will Be Shown at Centennial Show," El Paso Herald-Post, 3 April 1936; Cleofas Calleros, Joseph I. Driscoll, eds. Texas 1936 Centennial Celebration: Official Publication. (El Paso, Texas: Diocese of El Paso, 1936).

<sup>136</sup> "Valley Mission Will Be Sketched by Taos Artist," El Paso Herald-Post, 24 April 1936.

Paso tourism closely to Juárez. The Morrill publication's cover, in particular, with its hand-colored scene of a Mexican man in traditional dress viewing modern El Paso's attractive skyline with an airplane flying overhead, perfectly captured the image El Paso boosters and city leaders sought to project – that of a modern city rich in history, yet next to quaint “Old Mexico.”<sup>137</sup>

Additionally, Centennial publicity publications, such as the *Texas Centennial Review*, as well as state promotional brochures highlighted El Paso and its rich history. One brochure romanticized the region to potential tourists stating:

The lovely valley of the Rio Grande with its orchards, healthful climate, blue skies and rich overtones of near-by Old Mexico is a romantic interlude to a southwestern journey, while the lofty peaks of the Davis Mountains invite sportsmen to game-filled fastnesses. El Paso, city of the Sun, stands tribute to ancient Spanish Dons. Ysleta, oldest Texas community, with its mellow mission, is near-by, and there travelers truly recapture golden yesterdays.<sup>138</sup>

Roger M. Busfield, director of the periodical division of the Texas Centennial Commission for Board of Control, wrote to the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, declaring that “the district around El Paso is more colorful and interesting than any other section of the state... editors have been asking for more copy on West Texas than on any other section of the state.”<sup>139</sup> The *El Paso Herald-Post* also noted when tourists, such as a fifty-person Northern Pacific tour, visited El Paso and Juárez when traveling to the Dallas Exposition.<sup>140</sup> Although the number of tourists who visited El Paso and the border region remains unclear, efforts to promote borderlands tourism did help publicize the region and its attractions and history to a wider audience than ever before.

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<sup>137</sup> “Stop in the Land of Sunshine: Take Time to See El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Old Mexico,” El Paso Chamber of Commerce, Box 9, El Paso Pioneer Association records, El Paso County Historical Society; “Know El Paso and Vicinity,” Box 9, El Paso Pioneer Association records, El Paso County Historical Society.

<sup>138</sup> “Starring Texas: Texas Centennial Exposition Dallas,” booklet, Box 28, Folder 16, Cleofas Calleros papers, MS 231.

<sup>139</sup> “Says E.P. District Is Most Colorful,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 1 February 1936.

<sup>140</sup> “50 Tourists Here,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 15 July 1936.

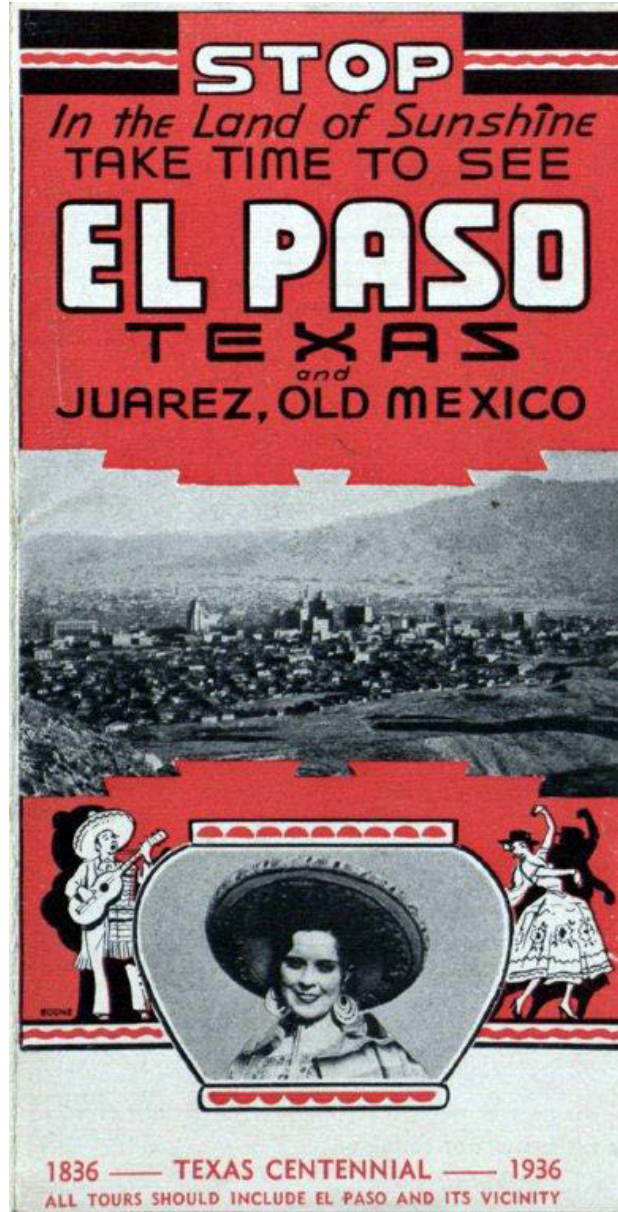


Image 9: El Paso Chamber of Commerce publication, El Paso Pioneer Association records, El Paso County Historical Society.

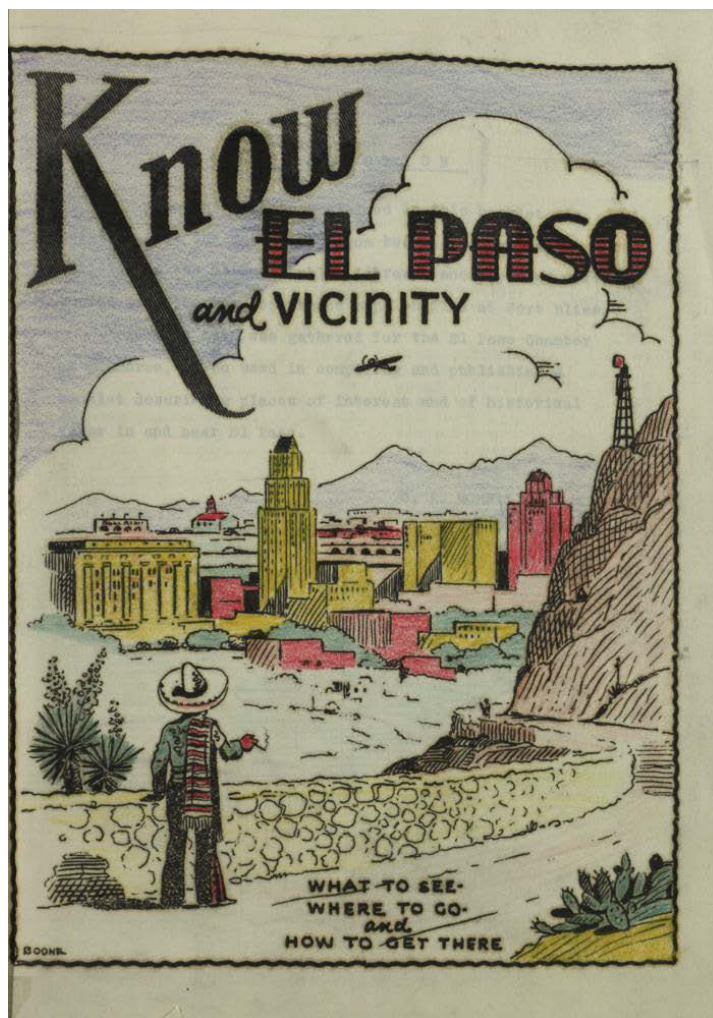


Image 10: “Know El Paso and Vicinity” booklet, Pioneer Association records, El Paso County Historical Society.

El Pasoans also commodified the Texas Centennial in various ways. The Woman’s Club of El Paso sold Centennial postcards to help raise funds to pay the Club’s property taxes (the club lost its funds after the First National Bank failed). According to Rosalie W. Walker, “The cards bore the golden key to the State, the Alamo, and the map of Texas. One member sold four hundred cards in one day.”<sup>141</sup> The Popular Dry Goods Company of El Paso tied the Texas Centennial into its marketing. In February, 1936, owner Maurice Schwartz publicized the

<sup>141</sup> “A History of the Woman’s Club of El Paso” by Rosalie W. Walker, January 1954, Woman’s Club of El Paso records, MS 576, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso.

Popular's forthcoming fashions made in "Bluebonnet Blue" – the "official color for the Texas Centennial."<sup>142</sup> Later that year he described the new fall styles as reflecting "the spirit of pageantry inspired abroad by the Texas Centennial."<sup>143</sup> Bolton's Restaurant on East San Antonio Street specifically advertised to Texas Centennial visitors in the *El Paso Herald-Post*, while the Red and White Store announced a special Texas Centennial Sale.<sup>144</sup> The Texas Centennial was also tied to marketing specific products in El Paso. The *El Paso Herald-Post* publicized its Used Car section by tying getting a used car to traveling the state during the Texas Centennial, and a Sears advertisement in *El Continental* promoted a radio lamp with scenes of the Texas Centennial for \$1.<sup>145</sup>

Despite the popularity of many Centennial-related events in El Paso and the historical and cultural effects that it had on the city and border region, local opinions about the Centennial ranged from enthusiasm to indifference to antipathy. While El Pasoans such as Perry, Quisenberry, and Calleros saw Texas Centennial participation as a source of civic and state pride as well as a cultural and economic opportunity for the city, other El Pasoans disagreed. Throughout 1936 the Centennial remained a controversial subject for Mexican Americans and Mexicans in the El Paso borderlands. John González points out the lack of interest of many Mexican Americans in participating in the Centennial due to their systematic demonization and erasure in Texas's historical narrative.<sup>146</sup> Conversely, Houser points out that "many Texans of Native American, African-American, and Hispanic ancestry considered the 1936 Centennial Exposition in Dallas as an important milestone in Texas history because it acknowledged and

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<sup>142</sup> "Centennial Blue Will Be Upon Market Soon," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 26 February 1936.

<sup>143</sup> "Fall Styles," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 1 August 1936.

<sup>144</sup> *El Paso Herald-Post*, 28 May 1936; *El Paso Herald-Post*, 29 May 1936.

<sup>145</sup> *El Paso Herald-Post*, 26 May 1936; *El Continental*, 23 October 1936.

<sup>146</sup> González, 10.

celebrated the state's multicultural heritage.”<sup>147</sup> Kevin Mooney in his article “Texas Centennial 1936: African-American Texans and the Third National Folk Festival” echoes Houser’s view of the Centennial. Mooney argues that the event allowed African Americans in Texas to express “ethnic as well as regional pride” and served as an important starting point for the African-American civil rights movement in Texas.<sup>148</sup> Due to differing perspectives and conflicts between ethnic and national loyalties, participation in the Texas Centennial continued to be a divisive issue.

In El Paso Calleros was the sole Mexican-American Centennial booster, perhaps due to his ties to the Catholic Church, strong civic pride, and relationship with El Paso officials, though many Mexican Americans, particularly students, as well as some Mexicans, participated in Centennial-related events in El Paso. At the opposite end of public opinion, Celia Villa, daughter of Pancho Villa and a former El Pasoan, heavily criticized the Centennial commemoration celebrations. She categorically refused an invitation to appear in the Texas Centennial stating:

Mexico feels the Texas celebration of its liberation from Mexico is in poor taste... the Mexican Congress was asked by the people to declare the period one of mourning. All Mexicans have been appealed to boycott the Centennial.<sup>149</sup>

*El Continental's* August 19, 1935, issue contained an article by Nemesio García Naranjo in which he argued that Mexico should not participate in any commemorations of the Texas Centennial of Independence as it perpetuated false history and that the Texas Revolution was not a true “revolution.” García Naranjo contended that because the revolutionaries were primarily American Anglos – not Mexicans – the Texas Revolution was simply a land grab and not a fight

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<sup>147</sup> Houser, 182.

<sup>148</sup> Kevin Mooney, “Texas Centennial 1936: African-American Texans and the Third National Folk Festival,” The Berkeley Electronic Press, 2001. [Accessed at <https://digital.library.txstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10877/2654/fulltext.pdf>], 1.

<sup>149</sup> “Celia Snubs Texas Centennial Fete,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, 21 April 1936.

for independence.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, Centennial celebrations caused lingering bad feelings between Texas and Mexico. In 1937 Mexican athletes boycotted the Pan American Olympics in Dallas – a year after the Texas Centennial – reasoning that the games “allegedly celebrated Texas’ war for independence against Mexico.”<sup>151</sup>

On the other hand, El Paso “midget and dancer” Luz Villalobos, a student of well-known El Paso dancing instructor Karma Deane, became a “sensation” performing at the Dallas Exposition, while the Juárez Chamber of Commerce, Mexican consulate officials, and Mexican church officials all participated in Centennial activities.<sup>152</sup> And despite the heavily Anglo-centric historical narrative and imagery of the Texas Centennial, one official Texas Centennial promotional poster featured a *mariachi* with a *ristra* in the background (see image 11). The Dallas Exposition also used some Aztec-influenced architecture and art work on its grounds.<sup>153</sup>

These conflicting messages over race and national identity and imagery produced diverse personal and public opinions regarding Texas Centennial participation in El Paso and the border region throughout 1936. Additionally, debates over Centennial participation and national and ethnic loyalties influenced local historical memory as El Pasoans almost exclusively utilized and celebrated their own regional history in their Centennial-related activities. This personalization and localization of Texas history helped Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Catholics, in particular, transcend Texas’s traditional revolution narrative and firmly place themselves in the context of both historical and modern Texas.

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<sup>150</sup> “El Centenario de la ‘Independencia’ Texana,” El Continental, 19 August 1935.

<sup>151</sup> Mark Dyreson and Jodella Kite Dyreson, “**Error! Main Document Only.**The Racial Dynamics of the Pan American Olympics, 1937,” For the 2007 Texas State Historical Association Meeting, 8. The paper mentions that the intent of the 1937 Pan American games’ (to promote Pan Americanism) was confused with the purpose of the Texas Centennial celebrations. Perhaps Centennial propaganda was too successful?

<sup>152</sup> “Luz Villalobos A Sensation at Texas Centennial,” El Paso Herald-Post, 26 September 1936.

<sup>153</sup> Poster, Centennial Museum Poster Collection.





Image 11: Poster, Centennial Museum Poster Collection, Centennial Museum, The University of Texas at El Paso.

## Conclusion

The Texas Centennial celebrations of 1936 in El Paso had very few connections with events in central and eastern Texas during 1836. El Paso's environment, geographical location on the U.S.-Mexico border, and physical distance from Texas's traditional political and economic centers of power, such as Austin and Dallas, caused El Paso to separate itself historically and culturally from the rest of the state (and vice versa) after being incorporated into Texas by the Compromise of 1850. In spite of these historical and cultural differences, El Paso's civic leaders and boosters participated in Texas's official Centennial commemorations to

publicize and celebrate the El Paso borderlands and its rich history and diverse cultures as well as to promote tourism and businesses. Moreover, local boosters bought into Progressive-era shifts in Texas's public historical memory that focused on the state's "new western image" that stressed the Texas Revolution, economic development, Anglo pioneers, and modernity. This adherence to Texas's prevailing collective historical memory as well as strong interest in border region history and culture influenced El Paso's varied Texas Centennial celebrations and activities.

During 1934 El Paso's city and business leaders confronted the state's long history of overlooking and underfunding El Paso. Debates raged over the city's meager state Centennial appropriation of \$1,000, while El Paso's bid to be an official auxiliary city was rejected. Through the efforts of Commission of Control for the Texas Centennial Celebration member Wallace Perry, El Paso finally received a \$50,000 appropriation from the state. These funds helped build the city's first museum – the Centennial Memorial Museum – which remains the Texas Centennial's most significant legacy in El Paso. In addition to the creation of the Centennial Museum, the city witnessed six other major Centennial-related events. These events included the Sun Carnival Parade that officially opened the Texas Centennial celebrations, the city-wide school program and pageant, the Pontifical Military Mass and Corpus Christi procession, El Paso Day at the Dallas Exposition, the El Paso Kids' Rodeo, and the Harvest Festival. Local civic and religious organizations also sponsored Centennial activities, such as city beautification projects, religious revivals, and Centennial-themed programs and parties.

Ultimately, El Pasoans used their own history and culture to find meaning in Texas Centennial celebrations. The Texas Centennial not only inspired interest in researching and celebrating local history, but also resulted in artwork and numerous articles, essays, and

publications about the history of El Paso and the border region. Historical literature and art strongly emphasized the quadricentennial of the arrival of Cabeza de Vaca in the El Paso borderlands and mission history. The Centennial also transformed the border region's physical landscape as historical markers were erected and celebrated, and the Ysleta mission received official designation as the first mission established in Texas. Additionally, the Texas Centennial affected material culture and efforts to attract tourists to the El Paso area through the national publicity that the Centennial generated.

Throughout 1936 Centennial participation became a contentious issue in El Paso, and opinions about the Centennial varied widely. Some Mexicans as well as Mexican Americans in El Paso felt conflicting emotions about participating in the Texas Centennial, though members of both groups often took part in Texas Centennial events in El Paso and at the Dallas Exposition. Nevertheless, Cleofas Calleros remained El Paso's only Mexican-American Centennial booster, and almost all Centennial Committee members were upper and middle class Anglos. Schoolchildren and Catholics, in particular, enthusiastically participated in Centennial-related events and activities in the border region.

Despite these controversies, the Texas Centennial affected the El Paso borderlands in a predominantly positive way. The Texas Centennial strongly reinforced local and nonlocal perceptions of the El Paso borderlands as historically and culturally distinct from other places in Texas. During the mid-1930s city officials, religious leaders, and boosters used local historical memory and modern advertising to deliberately characterize and promote the El Paso border region as multicultural and binational as a way to market the region's diversity and uniqueness to both locals and tourists. El Paso and the border region's history and culture became important sources of regional pride as well as valuable marketing tools. Although Catholics and other local

boosters heavily emphasized the region's Spanish heritage and background in booster literature and Centennial-related publications, Mexican, and to some extent Tigua, imagery, culture, places, and history were also stressed and publicized. By focusing on local history, staging popular civic events, celebrating borderlands traditions, and establishing the city's first museum, El Pasoans incorporated the Centennial's emphasis on history and commemoration into their own historical narrative, which significantly added to and shaped the border region's ever-evolving collective memory.

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