NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Will Rogers Memorial Center
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 3401 West Lancaster Avenue
City or town: Fort Worth State: Texas County: Tarrant
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☑ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☑ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
☐ national ☑ statewide ☐ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☑ A ☐ B ☑ C ☐ D

State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official / Title **Date**

Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official **Date**

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register.
___ removed from the National Register
___ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper **Date of Action**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

	Private
x	Public - Local
	Public - State
	Public - Federal

Category of Property

	building(s)
x	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	1	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE: Auditorium, sports facility

Current Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE: Auditorium, sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification: MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

Principal Exterior Materials: BRICK, STONE/limestone, marble, CAST STONE

Narrative Description: (see continuation sheets 7 through 13)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

x	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
x	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance: 1936

Significant Dates: 1936

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Wyatt Hedrick and Elmer G. Withers, Associated Architects

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 14-21)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 22-25)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- _ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- _ previously listed in the National Register
- _ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- _ designated a National Historic Landmark
- _ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- _ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
- x State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*, Austin)
- _ Other state agency
- _ Federal agency
- _ Local government
- _ University
- _ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 20 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. 32.747376° -97.367428°
2. 32.747342° -97.364611°
3. 32.743989° -97.364726°
4. 32.744021° -97.366382°
5. 32.745618° -97.366399°
6. 32.745648° -97.367475°

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property is a contiguous parcel of approximately 20 acres in Fort Worth, Texas. Beginning at the point (32.747376° -97.367428°) at the northwest corner of the parcel at Lancaster Avenue, the property is bounded by Lancaster Avenue on the north, Rip Johnson Drive on the east, Burnett Tandy Road on the south, the east edge of driveway along the west elevation of the Burk Burnett Building on the west, the north edge of parking lot along the south elevation of the Auditorium, and the east edge of the driveway to the west of the Auditorium, continuing to the point of beginning at Lancaster Avenue.

Boundary Justification: The nomination includes the extant buildings dating to the first phase of construction in 1936.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Arthur Weinman, AIA, with assistance from National Register Coordinator Gregory Smith
Organization: Arthur Weinman Architects
Street & number: 6300 Ridglea Plaza, Suite 105
City or Town: Fort Worth, Texas 76116
Email: art_wa@swbell.net
Telephone: 817-737-0977
Date: March 11, 2015

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 26-27)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 28-33)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 5 through 6, and 34-55)

Photographs

Will Rogers Memorial Center
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas
Photographed by Art Weinman, 2015

Photo 1
West Elevation
Camera facing east

Photo 2
Tower detail
Camera facing east

Photo 3
Will Rogers Coliseum
From entry plaza on north side corner

Photo 4
Will Rogers Coliseum and Tower
From entry plaza on north side corner

Photo 5
Will Rogers Coliseum entry door, from west side, north end

Photo 6
Will Rogers Coliseum cast stone
Panel, from east side, south end

Photo 7
Will Rogers Coliseum at Burnett
Building dock, looking southwest

Photo 8
Will Rogers Auditorium, in service court, looking northwest at fly loft

Photo 9
Will Rogers Center, ticket sales building, northwest corner entry Plaza

Photo 10
East elevation, camera facing west

Photo 11
1936 Ticket Sales & Collection Booth from Burnett-Tandy Drive

Photo 12
Burnett Building, looking northeast from Burnett-Tandy Drive (formerly Crestline Street)

Photo 13
Tower lobby looking west with bust of Will Rogers in center

Photo 14
Tower lobby north entry doors with glass block over entry to dome

Photo 15
Auditorium lobby looking east at coat check window

Photo 16
Auditorium balcony looking at stage from top seating

Photo 17
Auditorium stage metal screens and wood paneling

Photo 18
Coliseum lobby looking west

Photo 19
Coliseum arena before rodeo opening performance

Photo 20
Coliseum looking down from cat walk at end pivots

Photo 21
Coliseum looking up at doubled arch trusses at pivots for stability

Photo 22
Coliseum lobby center, equestrian portrait of Will Rogers

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Description

The Will Rogers Memorial Center is a multipurpose entertainment complex in Fort Worth, Texas, established in 1936 in commemoration of the Texas Centennial. The nominated portion of the complex includes the original north central portion of the property containing the interconnected Tower, Auditorium and Coliseum, as well as two historic ticket booths, and associated landscape features on the 20 acre parcel west of downtown Fort Worth. The Art Deco main building features the iconic 209-foot-tall Pioneer Tower flanked by a domed Coliseum to the east and an Auditorium with a seating capacity of 2,856 to the west. The steel and brick buildings are decorated with rich and colorful sculptural reliefs, murals, and modernistic lighting fixtures, making the center one of the most exuberant and significant examples of Art Deco design in the city and state.

The Will Rogers Memorial Center is south of West Lancaster Boulevard and west of University Drive, approximately two miles west of downtown Fort Worth, Texas. The property is on a gently sloping site that was previously an agricultural field and, for a brief period, part of Camp Bowie during World War I. Based on recent observations of new construction, limestone bedrock is reasonably shallow and accessible for foundations.

The combined Coliseum, Tower, Auditorium, and connecting corridors extend 1,100 linear feet and face north onto West Lancaster. The 209-foot-tall monumental Pioneer Tower rises from between the Coliseum to the east, and the Auditorium to the west. Directly in front of the center is a paved plaza approach to the three main entries. This plaza is partially circled by an original silver painted decorative wrought metal fence in the Art Moderne style. North of the fence and ticket sales is a circular drive for cars and busses. This drive circles a large landscaped yard or commons fronting directly on Lancaster. A life size bronze equestrian statue of Will Rogers and his horse Soapsuds is located at the center of this landscaped yard aligned with the center of the Tower. All were in a symmetrically composed site plan reaching up to Camp Bowie with the Tower at the southern center. All original buildings constructed at the same time as the Will Rogers Memorial Center have been replaced by the Burk Burnett Building (an attachment to the south side of the Coliseum), and to its west, by the independent Amon G. Carter, Sr. Exhibits Building. The Carter Building is a separate exhibitions building separated by Tower Drive from the Burnett Building and by parking, drive and truck loading from the Auditorium.

The Will Rogers Memorial Center site is within the Cultural District of Fort Worth, in close proximity to Trinity Park, Farrington Field (the Fort Worth Independent School District football stadium), Casa Manana theatre, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Kimball Art Museum and Piano Pavilion, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth Community Arts Center, Fort Worth Museum of Science and Technology, and the Cowgirl Hall of Fame.

Both Coliseum and Auditorium have an entry platform on their north side about 15 feet wide and matching the convex shape of the façade, with two risers from a larger concrete plaza for the Coliseum and one riser for the Auditorium. The separate center Tower entry is by a gently sloping walk with grass and landscaping on both sides. This proceeds from the larger concrete plaza, separating it from the Coliseum and Auditorium entries. The larger concrete fronting plaza is enclosed by a decorative wrought metal Moderne fence, about eight feet tall. The fence has been removed on the east face of the plaza, allowing the midway during Rodeo and Stock Show to extend into that paving.

Two enclosed 1936 brick and limestone ticket sales buildings with open rails and turnstiles are located at the northwest and northeast corners of the original fenced entry plaza. Large gates at the center of the plaza were originally included to allow un-ticketed entry of large throngs of people and horses. Although not aligned with a ramped entry from the Coliseum lobby to arena, this would allow performers to enter the arena from both north and south. The new ticket sales building constructed in 1988 at this central location disrupts the original design.

Tower, Auditorium, and Coliseum Building (1 contributing building)

Coliseum

The Coliseum is by far the largest component of the main building. It was revolutionary in its time as a clear span building with no interior supporting columns to block sight lines. The innovative engineering and design of the dome used flexible pivots in primary members at center span stress points, the foundation of all similar clear span steel truss design solutions constructed today. The Coliseum lobby ceiling is decorated with large, stylized Art Deco perimeter patterns, described as a "…formal assemblage of refined Zig-zag Art Deco forms: hard-edged triangles, rounded foliage and animal shapes, curlicues, waves and even an abbreviated, squat ziggurat motif."[1] Decorative cast aluminum balustrades on a second level maintenance balcony feature the Paris Exposition sunburst. Three rows of painted Mayan and cubistic moldings cap the fluted piers and pilasters on the lobby walls, with columns in the same design on the north supporting the balcony with vertical glass block windows between. Seven geometric ceiling light fixtures, flush mounted into the ceiling, have projecting geometric shaped lenses of white opal glass and are connected with simple linear and geometric design along the curved central axis of the lobby. The cast aluminum and brass fixtures are very well integrated into the Art Deco design. Unfortunately the necessary level of illumination required from inside these fixtures completely masks their design when illuminated.

Six ornamental Monel metal plaques are centered between pilasters on the south wall with two more on the north wall. There are three designs included in the eight plaques. Inspirations for these plaques include cattlemen with livestock, plowman, and two fishermen. Unfortunately, because of the monochromatic design of these plaques, uniform lighting field, height above floor and their small size, they are very difficult to decipher (and photograph).

Leaving the lobby, the circulation corridors around the exterior of arena seating are basic concrete floors, painted masonry walls and, originally, a flat painted suspended plaster ceiling. This ceiling became a maintenance issue with addition of air conditioning and new lighting. A new aluminum suspended planar strip ceiling was installed as part of the new lighting scheme by Love, Friberg & Associates in 1978.[2] Original concrete stairs from the circulation corridors up to seating remain. The stairs have distinctive curved pipe handrails more in the Art Moderne style. Current code requirements have not interrupted their shape and simplicity. A larger than life equestrian painting of Will Rogers on Soapsuds (his favorite horse) is in the central south bay of the lobby opposite the entry. The painting by Seymour Stone is lit from below.

The building has a mass foundation, bedded on underlying limestone. First level Coliseum box seats are on wood risers. Coliseum seating, from second level guardrail to top seating riser is on reinforced concrete. Restrooms and ancillary facilities are located under the concrete risers on concrete floor. Building infill, exterior wall back-up and interior partitions for office, service, toilet and maintenance rooms are structural clay tile. The original plaster ceiling over the first level perimeter access corridor is now concealed by a planar aluminum strip ceiling. The aluminum ceiling was installed in 1978.[3]

All structural steel arched trusses framing the dome are anchored to reinforced perimeter concrete buttresses. Only the top two rows of seats have any structural braces interfering with sight lines. The steel arched trusses along the length of the building extend to meet at a pivot at the center span of the arch. These arched trusses are connected so that differential distortion of the structure with daily and seasonal temperature changes does not cause any structural

[1] Ibid., p. 128.
[2] Drawings scanned and archived by City of Fort Worth Architectural Department, CD supplied January 9, 2014.
[3] Ibid..

distress. Roof deck spanning between steel arched trusses is wood, allowing nailing of original and subsequent roofing, and meeting 1936 building code requirements for fireproof construction.

The dome end arched trusses each extend up to pair at a double pivot at the center of the dome. These pivots allow the thermal movement of the arched trusses to adjust both horizontally and vertically to the center of the dome, eliminating any structural distress from thermal expansion or contraction.

Two ceramic tile building entry friezes, one over the grand lobby entry to the Coliseum and one over the grand lobby entry to the Auditorium were included as part of the construction documents prepared by Herman Koeppe as part of the design of the Will Rogers Coliseum building. Made of custom glazed 9-by-9-inch square ceramic tile, they two friezes were mounted in a mud base on the steel supported façade. Each frieze is ten feet tall by 200 feet long.[4] By October 1, 1936, the tile frieze was installed on the Coliseum.[5] The friezes over the Coliseum and Auditorium depict the economic and cultural heritage of the southwest and of Texas.

Two larger-than-life stylized profiles of panthers are found in the terrazzo vestibule before entry to the Coliseum lobby. They constitute the only executed portion of the original terrazzo design prepared by Herman Koeppe and are derived from designs shown in the construction documents for the vestibule and lobby. Balance of the design, including a bucking horse and rider as well as stylized west Texas cactus and other plants were deleted for cost control and to accelerate the construction schedule. Artist for the terrazzo design is unknown.

Four different large cast stone bucking horse and rider panels were designed by Herman Koeppe as part of the design of the Will Rogers Coliseum building. The fabricator of the molds for this work is unknown. The four large panels were incorporated into the exterior east and west walls of the Coliseum in 1936. Panels are approximately 5’-4” wide by 5’-8” tall. Three are currently visible today; the fourth is obscured by chiller plant and transformer building construction.

Cast stone sculptural panels prepared for the Will Rogers Center are composed fine cement concrete with small aggregate. Color and texture closely match the Texas limestone used for the balance of building construction. Cement mix with some reinforcement was placed to set in wooden, rubber lined wood, or painted plaster of Paris molds. Molds were prepared by artisans at the cast stone facility. Their design was based on drawings contained within the main construction documents set or on separate drawing slater prepared by Herman Koeppe.

Tower

The Tower stands between the Auditorium and the Coliseum, projecting 209 feet in height. An internal street level concourse connects all three buildings with interior steps on both sides of the Tower allowing for differences in exterior grade and building elevations. “Decorative elements within the rotunda include classical fluted columns, geometrically patterned air-conditioning vents and four sets of pyramidal glass-and-aluminum light fixtures. These lanterns, miniaturized replicas of the four gigantic Tower lanterns, light the four recessed alcoves cut into the high, rounded walls of the foyer.”[6] The four cast aluminum plaques quote Mirabeau B. Lamar on education, Lawrence S. Ross on economics, Britain R. Webb on the law and the Texas Constitution on government.[7] The bronze bust of Will Rogers is placed in the center of the circular floor.

[4] Cohen, p. 125.
[5] Liles, p. 54.
[6] Cohen, p. 126.
[7] Liles, p. 62.

The Tower is a simple reinforced concrete frame, column and floor plate design. The 17'-8" by 17'-8" opening through the center of all floor plates accommodates the single maintenance stair and open maintenance shaft way. Three columns spaced at each corner are tied to give diagonal and wind loading to the structure. Incidental structural steel framing is used on the top level to support the top center and four side lantern structures of the Tower. No additional structural steel is indicated in the Architectural plans and sections and none can be seen in the historic construction photographs.

Four side panels of the Tower were filled with cast glass block in aluminum frames with internal strip fluorescent illumination as part of the original design. These provided dramatic internal illumination for the Tower during special events. This feature was in use through the 1950s, and perhaps a bit later. Because of the cost of renovation, the glass block panels were covered with aluminum louvers, installed in the later 1970s or early 1980s as part of one of the annual preparations for the next annual Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo.

The four large lantern lights at the top four corners of the Tower were restored in the 1990s and new internal illumination provided in each lantern. This was part of a general restoration and rehabilitation of the interior and exterior of the Tower that year. A new spotlight was placed at the pinnacle of the Tower at the same time.

Auditorium

The geometrically patterned terrazzo floors of the corridors from the Coliseum to Tower, and from the Tower to Auditorium unite the decorative schemes of all three buildings. The Auditorium doors open into a carpeted, wide cross hall at the head of the seating. Stone shoulder height balusters separated the wide hall from seating allowing the hall to be used for standees during sold out performances. Wide side aisles at the extreme left and right of seating served the same purpose.

The Auditorium walls in both lobby and theater were much more reserved than in the Coliseum or Tower. Relatively plain with vertical striation and outsize molding forms in the wide hall, fluted columns at each side of seating, and relief panel and pilaster column indications in the lobby, the Auditorium was much less Art Moderne and much more European Modern in its style. Balcony corridor windows facing into the lobby below, ticket window on the west side of the lobby with coat check window on the east, and three pair of gloss painted double doors relieved the interior of its direction toward unrelieved monumentalism. The painted ceilings, though they cannot be properly seen with the period light fixtures, give a complete contrast to the simple spaces they contain.

The most decorative parts of the Auditorium are the ceilings and the vertical metal panels on both sides of the stage. The ceilings are painted with a wide, white border with color in the center. The Auditorium ceiling has a central square relief design in red, white and blue. These colors cannot be seen properly with lights on. The wide corridor has a coffered ceiling, with coffers adjusting to columns and entries and with central panels painted blue. The lobby ceiling is red with a central panel of white, including the flush lighting fixtures. All lighting is provided by restored 1936 fixtures.

The panels at both sides of the stage are striking Modernistic designs. Three vertical aluminum fabrications on each side rest on a flush natural finish wood wainscot. The panels are bordered with recessed flat plaster recesses at side and head, painted the same tan, red and blue against the off-white walls in a striking Art Moderne design. All project out to the curved seating, arranged into two sections on the main level by a cross aisle and in the same manner on the balcony level.

The Auditorium, like the Coliseum and Tower, has a mass reinforced concrete foundation bedded on underlying limestone. According to photographs and surviving construction drawings, it is a steel frame building with concrete

fire proofing cast around steel, and with exterior masonry cladding. Second floors and balcony floor are all cast concrete. Steel building beams and columns are encased in concrete with roof decks of reinforced concrete spanning between steel beams and columns.

Burk Burnett Addition (1988 barn addition to Coliseum; not counted separately)

The Burk Burnett addition is physically connected to the interior of the Coliseum through the same corridor that accessed the 1936 metal barn building it replaced. The entire addition is essentially one big stable for horses with pens for cattle. There is a small central office along with a snack bar - all other areas of the building are devoted to pens, stalls, exercise arenas and corridors. Animals are unloaded on the building exterior either from small trailers or large semi-trailer trucks to a dock height entry. All corridors then lead to the south main entry of the Coliseum arena. Dressing rooms for cowboys and performers, holding pens and holding stalls are located close to the Coliseum on either side of the main entry. These serve as staging areas for events and performances in the arena. A wide aisle, designed to accommodate mounted riders and livestock, leads from the stalls and pens.

The Burk Burnett addition has fire protection sprinklers, heaters to maintain temperature above freezing, but no air conditioning. Roof top ventilators help air circulation. Skylights supplement artificial illumination. The interior is painted masonry, and the roof structure is double-T concrete joists on precast concrete beams, supported by precast columns. Exterior walls are concrete panel with brick veneer exterior and precast concrete detailing. Interior partitions for stock are concrete panel. Office and snack bar partitions are painted CMU. Horse stalls are prefabricated modular galvanized steel frame with composite infill panels. All floors are concrete, with dirt bed over concrete in the exercise paddock.

The floor level is slightly above grade. Interior ramps in the building join with the south main entry to the Coliseum's elevated floor level. Two wide aisles lead into the original entry aisles of the Coliseum to make mounted entry for the grand entrance ceremony possible. Additional chutes allow safe separate transfer of bucking stock to the six gated mounting pens that are part of the original Coliseum.

The transformer vaults and chilled water supply originates in a building to the northwest of the Burk Burnett addition next to the south west end of the Coliseum. Fans in that area, matched by fan rooms at the southeast corner, northeast and northwest corners, all supply chilled or heated air to the Coliseum to maintain an air conditioned environment in the building.

Ticket Offices (2 contributing buildings)

Two ticket offices and collection buildings were constructed at the same time as the Will Rogers Memorial Center and completed during the fall of 1936 before final completion of the complex. Both buildings are designed in a wholly compatible manner and use the same palette of exterior materials. Both buildings use the same buff brick, limestone detailing, windows and door design as the central building. The buildings each have a central enclosed office with windows on four sides, a south entry door and facing what were four ticket collection lines, two on each side. The central office has a cash window facing the two interior lines. All four lines originally had turnstiles.

The original Art Deco fence is painted steel. The fence originally enclosed a courtyard to the north of the center. Both east and west runs of this fence have been removed and the north run extended beyond to the east side of the original location to meet Rip Johnson Drive. New gates were included to allow closure of the drive where it enters the grounds.

1988 Ticket Sales and Office (1 noncontributing building)

The Ticket Sales and Offices building was designed by Hahnfeld, Hoffer, Stanford and constructed in 1988. This noncontributing property is one-level building was designed in an Art Deco style, with the same or similar exterior finish materials as the 1936 buildings. The building features an office area in the eastern third, the central portion is an open passage way, and the western third housing windows for ticket sales. With a concave façade facing the street, the central passage from street to enclosed grounds offered ample room for a number of standing ticket takers. There is a large ceramic tile bucking horse and rider taken from one of Herman Koeppe's unexecuted terrazzo designs for the Coliseum at the center of the arched building.

Subsequent Development and Changes

The nominated portion of the Will Rogers Memorial Center has survived largely unchanged and without significant modifications to its historic building fabric. The greatest changes were generally required in order to update the buildings with current HVAC systems, current electrical services, additional restrooms, and to replace the original barns with the Burnett Building. Primary interior and exterior finish materials have been maintained as original with only few exceptions.

Exterior changes to the center have been minimal. Currently all night light from the Tower comes from the four restored lanterns at the top, a restored top-of-tower light, and from flood lights illuminating the Tower exterior. Office and service windows have had window unit air conditioners installed. The south (back) of the Tower and west of the Coliseum has a canopy and several windows with window unit HVAC installed through the steel mullion windows. The Auditorium building exterior on east, south, and west is original construction.

Interior divisions within the lobby and ancillary spaces of the Coliseum have been made over time for offices, ticket sales, service, storage space and maintenance. Work is sensitive to the design with trompe l'oeil painted paneling to match existing tan marble wainscot, and with cornice and trim to match lobby limestone work. Two original glazed aluminum doors between Coliseum lobby and food service were replaced with painted hollow metal doors and frames and were probably installed about the same time. Incidental remodels and repairs to building interior functions include installation of a new planar painted strip aluminum ceiling and new lighting in the passages around the outside of the stairs to seating risers. Other remodels and changes to building interior functions include periodic toilet room remodels, food service changes and the conversion of original office space into a private club at the second level north end of the Coliseum. The club rooms are located over the lobby, accessed by an elevator from the west side of the lobby with a second access through the upper seating on the north end of the building. Both original upper level and elevator were part of original construction for the office space.

Interior ramps to meet accessibility requirements have been added at interior stairs between Coliseum and Tower, and between Tower and Auditorium. The Auditorium reopened in May 1992 after a $1.5 million restoration.[8] The scope of work included new carpets, general lighting restoration, ceiling repairs and restoration, original paint colors replaced, thorough general cleaning, and of course new roofing and waterproofing. Side stage panels were all restored including metal panels and wood paneling refinished. Restoration included interior stairs and the full balcony. After restoration was completed in 1992, theatrical consultants Schuler Shook designed new stage lighting with a fabric scrim hiding additional lighting installed at the head of the stage but over the seating.[9] The fly loft was restored and rehabilitated.

[8] Fort Worth Star Telegram; "Its Curtain Time - Will Rogers Auditorium Reopens with a New Look and a New Attitude", David Ferman, Star Telegram Writer; LIFE, p. 1; Saturday May 30, 1992.
[9] E-mail from Eric Hahnfeld, AIA at Hahnfeld Hoffer Stanford - Architects/Planners/Interiors, April 15, 2014.

Seating was resized down to 2,856 with allowances for accessible seating. The interior retained both the size and simple grandeur of the entry lobby with its simple detailing.

Livestock and other exhibition barns to the south and east of the Will Rogers Memorial Center are not part of this nomination. All of the original (1936) animal barns and shelters directly connected to the Will Rogers Coliseum were demolished for construction of the much larger Burnett Building in 1988. Other buildings were retained until after Burnett construction was complete and then demolished for other new construction in late 1988. The associated buildings not included as part of this nomination were all built later, some much later, than the Will Rogers Memorial Center. None of these buildings are in the signature Art Moderne style.

The Will Rogers Memorial Center has been home of the Fort Worth Stock Shown and Rodeo (an annual event, commenced 1896) for the past 70 years. During the Texas Centennial, the Rodeo was temporarily moved to the Will Rogers Coliseum for the exhibits and shows. It was moved back to the North Side Coliseum after the Centennial. The celebration of Western Heritage was moved permanently to Will Rogers in 1944 after a flood devastated the North Side in 1942 (there was no event in 1943).[10] Most of current Coliseum uses are associated with stock events, stock shows, riding events, and demonstration events. There have been three proposals for a new 14,000 seat multi-purpose arena and sports facility in the Cultural District. The new arena would be located at the southeast corner of Harley Avenue and Gendy Street, in the newly developed parking area south of current barns and other construction of the Will Rogers Center. Consultants have recommended that work be completed by 2020. The cost estimate is $450 million.[11]

[10] Liles, p. 67, 68.
[11] Hirst, Caty. "Arena's Cost to Public Drops," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, Section B, p. 1; Wednesday August 6, 2014.

Statement of Significance

The Will Rogers Memorial Center in Fort Worth, Texas, is significant one of the most outstanding examples of Art Deco architecture in the State of Texas and as a major component of the state's Centennial celebration in 1936. The complex, designed by Wyatt Hedrick with Herman Koeppe in 1936, and dedicated on January 10, 1937, stands as the crowning achievement of their partnership. The three-part main building features the iconic Pioneer Tower flanked by a domed Coliseum to the east and an Auditorium to the west. The complex was widely acclaimed by the architectural profession upon completion. The property is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation and Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the state level of significance. The period of significance for the center is 1936, the year of its construction.

Commemorating the Texas Centennial[12]

The year 1936 marked the one hundredth anniversary of Texas' independence from Mexico. The idea of celebrating the centennial was proposed as early as 1900. It continued to be discussed in the 1920s and early 1930s. A constitutional amendment authorizing a centennial celebration was proposed in 1932. The amendment passed and a permanent Texas Centennial Commission was created in 1934. The cities of Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston vied for the chance to host a statewide exposition. Dallas, having the least association with the Texas Revolution, won the right to host the event by offering the largest cash commitment, a suitable place to host the exposition (the facilities at the State Fair of Texas), and the unified support of city leaders.[13]

Although Dallas won the right to host the official exposition, that event was by no means Texas' only observance of this milestone in the state's history. The Texas Legislature appropriated three million dollars out of the General Revenue Fund for various centennial-related projects. It created an official body charged with approving centennial celebrations and allocating funds for those celebrations. That body, the Commission of Control for the Texas Centennial Celebrations [hereafter referred to as Commission of Control], was created by an act of the Forty-fourth Legislature in regular session on May 8, 1935. By an opinion of the Attorney General, the act was to terminate on May 8, 1937. The Forty-fifth Legislature extended the life of the commission until December 31, 1938, because some projects had not been completed by the original termination date.[14]

Through a combination of funds appropriated through the Commission of Control, the Public Works Administration (PWA), the WPA, the U. S. Texas Centennial Commission, the State Highway Department, and other sources, approximately eleven hundred centennial projects were completed across the state. The funding could be used for projects that commemorated early Texas patriots, sites of historic events or for the purchase of "suitable tracts of land where necessary for an approved celebration" as well as "the staging of pageants at appropriate places . . . [or for an] exposition in the recognition of the basic industries and their historical significance in the progress and growth of Texas."[15]

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[12] This section was copied in its entirety from the 2012 National Register nomination for the Van Zandt Cottage (Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas) by Susan Allen Kline.
[13] "Texas Centennial," *Handbook of Texas Online* (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/articles/lkt01), accessed February 12, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
[14] Texas, Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Harold L. Schoen, compiler, *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence* (Austin, Texas: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938), p. 9.
[15] Ibid.; Texas Historical Commission, "1936 Texas Centennial Markers," (http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigs/mad cent.shtml), accessed February 14, 2012.

Historical markers were the most numerous and widespread of all of the projects. Others projects included the construction of exposition and memorial (museum) buildings in Dallas, Fort Worth (the Casa Mañana Theater and the Will Rogers complex at the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial), El Paso, Canyon, Austin, Huntsville, Corpus Christi, Lubbock, Alpine, San Antonio, and Gonzales. Community Centers were constructed in Crockett, Goliad State Park, San Antonio, and Tyler. Other commemorative projects included monuments, statues, and park improvements throughout the state.[16] Commission of Control funds could also be used for "the restoring of all or parts of old houses, forts, Indian Villages, and other old structures connected with the history of the territory now embraced within the State of Texas."[17]

Texas Centennial Celebration in Fort Worth: The Texas Frontier Centennial[18]

Amon G. Carter, publisher of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and arguably the city's biggest booster, was not pleased that Dallas, with no ties to the events of 1836, was chosen as the location of the state's centennial celebration. Carter's rivalry with Dallas was legendary and he and a group of businessmen were determined that Fort Worth should reap some benefits from the celebration. They envisioned a celebration that would "present an authentic picture of frontier life as it was lived under the six flags that have floated over Texas soil."[19] First billed as the Texas Frontier Centennial, it was also commonly called the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial. As historian Jacob W. Olmstead discusses in his dissertation "From Old South to Modern West: Fort Worth's Celebration of the Texas State Centennial and the Shaping of an Urban Identity and Image," the quest for authenticity would take a back seat to the desire to attract a large patronage through an emphasis on the entertainment value of the event. One often- quoted slogan used in promotional literature for the Frontier Centennial was "Go Elsewhere for Education: Come to Fort Worth for Entertainment."[20]

The Fort Worth centennial celebration was largely financed through a bond issue and private subscription, although some federal funding was awarded in November 1935. Following the passage of the bond issue, the City Council approved the purchase of 138 acres from the Van Zandt Land Company. This parcel was located west of the Clear Fork and adjacent to Trinity Park. Within the southeast corner of the tract was K.M. Van Zandt's former home.[21]

To assure the Frontier Centennial's success, organizers hired master showman Billy Rose from New York as supervising director. Local architect Joseph R. Pelich was hired as the supervising architect. Temporary buildings were constructed along an M-shaped midway with the entrance built to resemble a stockade at a frontier fort. The midway included "Sunset Trail" set within "frontier" era buildings including a church, general store, livery stables and a replica train depot that housed the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, "Jumbo" (a circus arena), "Casa Mañana" (an outdoor

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[16] For more information, see Schoen, compiler, *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence*.

[17] Schoen, compiler, *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence*, pp. 9, and 39-54.

[18] This section was copied in its entirety from the 2012 National Register nomination for the Van Zandt Cottage (Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas) by Susan Allen Kline.

[19] P. J. R. MacIntosh, "Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," *The Texas Weekly*, April 11, 1936, p. 6.

[20] Evidence also suggests that Fort Worth's desire to stage its own centennial celebration was not necessarily based on competition but as a way to compliment and benefit from the Dallas event. See Jacob W. Olmstead, "From Old South to Modern West: Fort Worth's Celebration of the Texas State Centennial and the Shaping of an Urban Identity and Image," Dissertation (Ph.D.), (Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, December 2011. [UMI dissertation, electronic resource]), pp. 17 and 50-51. See the brochure "Wild and Whoo-pee: Fort Worth Frontier Centennial," found in the "Frontier Centennial" files, Box 89, Amon G. Carter Papers, Special Collections, Texas Christian University Library.

[21] Olmstead, "From Old South to Modern West: Fort Worth's Celebration of the Texas State Centennial and the Shaping of an Urban Identity and Image," pp. 66, 84 and 94.

dinner theater with revolving stage), "Pioneer Palace" (where patrons could grab a bite to eat and watch burlesque shows), and "The Last Frontier" (where one could watch Indians on horseback attack a stage coach). A big draw was exotic dancer Sally Rand and her "Nude Ranch." Also constructed in conjunction with the centennial celebration, but completed after its closure, were the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum, Pioneer Tower, and Auditorium. Designed by the firms of Wyatt C. Hedrick, Architect-Engineers, and Elmer G. Withers Architectural Company, these buildings were located north of the main centennial grounds. Unlike the temporary nature of those along the midway, the buildings of the Will Rogers complex have proven to be of permanent value to the city and remain beloved local landmarks.[22]

Will Rogers Memorial Center

After Carter found out in 1935 that Dallas had been granted the Centennial, he focused on a rival local celebration. Fort Worth, with benefit of Carter's close friendships and associations with Vice President John Nance Garner (of Texas) and President Roosevelt, undertook a crash program to compete with Dallas for the national publicity stage. They launched their efforts by applying for State funds as well as PWA (Public Works Administration) loan-grants to finance the building program. Carter was personally involved, and made use of his access to the White House. While Carter was seated in the hall outside of FDR's office before a meeting, he heard Postmaster General James Farley commenting that "…Amon wants to build a cowshed," to which the president replied "A cowshed…" Carter burst in, exclaiming "Now g*ddamit, it's not a cowshed..." to which the other two men roared in laughter.[23] Carter soon secured federal support for his Fort Worth exposition.[24]

Part of the local justification for the Will Rogers Memorial Center was completion of the 1923 Five Year Program, initiated to help pull Fort Worth from its reputation as strictly a cattle drive and slaughterhouse center into a cosmopolitan "city of the future."[25] With the approval of bond issue for civic development, the project was fully underway by 1929. Architect Wyatt Hedrick, through his prominence on the Chamber of Commerce, was on the committee that directed the goals of the Five Year Plan. Of the ten objectives, four involved Hedrick. One objective included support for modernistic design for new central business district buildings.[26] Other objectives included construction of a new City Auditorium, finding solutions to problems with existing facilities on the North Side (location of the expansive stockyards), relocating the annual "Rodeo and Fat Stock Show."

The city submitted a request to the PWA, meeting a funding deadline of January 20, 1935.[27] The request included: $150,000 for site acquisition, $1,376,378 for construction, and $68,819 for "contingencies." Proposed structures included: a Coliseum and Auditorium ($532,378); Agriculture and General Exhibit Buildings ($200,000); Cattle Exhibit Building ($160,000); and a Horse Show Building ($80,000).[28] The PWA grant was for 45% of the project's cost, not to exceed $725,727 along with a $637,000 loan.[29] The Fort Worth City Council accepted the PWA loan-grant

[22] Wesley E. Sparling, "Texas Frontier Centennial," *Handbook of Texas Online* (http://www.tshaonline.or/handbook/online/articles/lkt03), accessed February 12, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association; "Wild and Whoo-pee: Fort Worth Frontier Centennial;" Carol Roark, *Fort Worth's Legendary Landmarks* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1995) p. 223.

[23] Ibid., p. 300.
[24] Ibid., p. 301.
[25] Liles, p. 65.
[26] Ibid., p. 66.
[27] Cohen, p. 122.
[28] Ragsdale, p. 209.
[29] Ibid.; p. 209.

on January 2, 1936, but finalizing site selection and some disagreements at the city level delayed the start of construction until March 17, 1936.[30] The Auditorium and Coliseum (with a central Tower) would serve as a memorial to Amon Carter's close friend, Will Rogers, who had perished in a plane crash in Point Barrow, Alaska, on August 15, 1935. Planned to open on the same date as the Dallas Centennial Exposition on June 6, 1936, the Frontier Centennial and Exposition opened on July 18, 1936.[31] Meanwhile, permanent facilities for the Will Rogers Memorial Center would not be completed until the following year.

The timetable for design and construction of the Will Rogers Memorial Center was ambitious, leading to the project's completion in an extraordinarily short period: 340 days (11 months).[32] Architects Wyatt Hedrick and Elmer Withers were commissioned on October 30, 1935 for the design, and Herbert M. Hinckley, Jr., Hedrick's structural engineer, was responsible for structural engineering. Withers (associated architect) was responsible for the interior of the Theater, and at the suggestion of architect George Dahl (principal architect of Fair Park in Dallas), hired Donald S. Nelson as a designer.[33] The staff in both Hedrick's and Withers' firms worked day and night to produce the documents to meet federal submittal deadlines of January 20, 1936.[34] Once completed and submitted for PWA Funding, everything waited until the funding was ready. Once funding was secured and the site was selected, the groundbreaking ceremony was held on March 10, 1936.[35] Construction accelerated from the start, with as many skilled workers as could be found, completing the project in record time. The Coliseum was pushed ahead of the Tower and Auditorium, owing to prior commitments for a horse show in October 1936.[36] By August 1, the steel structure was erected, stone and brick was being placed, and the roof deck installation was underway.[37] The Mosaic Tile Company of Zanesville, Ohio, constructed the tile friezes for Coliseum and Auditorium, installed by October 1, 1936.[38] The Coliseum was dedicated September 21, albeit with an incomplete roof.[39]

By August 24, steel was erected for the Auditorium and the building exterior was starting to take shape in time for a special celebration of Will Rogers Day at the Center. In attendance were Rogers' widow and their two sons.[40] By October 1, the exterior of the Tower was partially completed.[41] Official dedication of the Will Rogers Center was held on December 23, 1936. As stated by Debora Liles, "Working with the City could not have been easy, as it was ultimately in charge of accepting and rejecting (sub-contractor's) bids all the way through November, 1936."[42] A second (and final) dedication of the center was held January 10, 1937, marking its actual completion.[43]

Original livestock and exhibition buildings constructed at the same time as the Will Rogers Memorial Center, and included the Cattle Exhibit Building (attached to Coliseum), the Merchant's Exhibit Building, the Rodeo Stock Barn (attached to Coliseum), the building for Rodeo Horses (attached to Coliseum), the Horse Show building, the Animal

[30] Cohen, p. 209.
[31] Liles, p. 24.
[32] Ibid., p. 66.
[33] Cohen, p. 134.
[34] Ibid, p. 122.
[35] Liles, p. 44.
[36] Ibid.; p. 47.
[37] Ibid.; p. 48.
[38] Ibid.; p. 51.
[39] Ibid., p. 54.
[40] Ibid., p. 53.
[41] Ibid., p. 57.
[42] Ibid.; p. 63.
[43] Ibid., p. 60.

Husbandry Building, and stock unloading pens.[44] All of these buildings have been demolished and replaced with the Burnett Building and the Amon G. Carter, Sr. Exhibits Building. The Carter Building is a separate exhibitions building separated by drives and parking from the Auditorium and Burnett Building.

When the Will Rogers project was completed, there were two walkways tunneling under the newly widened West Lancaster Avenue connecting automobile parking on the north side with the center on the south side.[45] These walkways established a grand central concourse, two blocks long, centered on the Tower. This urban design scheme was part of the overall presence of the Will Rogers Memorial Center. Upon construction of the Kimball Museum in 1974, the underground walkways were removed and the eastern street stripped out, leaving its border of oak trees in two rows to the west of the new Kimball museum. These were removed and replaced with a new landscape design coinciding with construction of the new Piano Pavilion in 2013.

Architects and Designers

Wyatt Cephas Hedrick (1888-1964)

Wyatt Hedrick was born in Chatham, Virginia on December 17, 1888. He was one of nine children on the family tobacco farm, living in a home built by one of the pioneering families in the area. He earned his BA from Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia in 1909 and his engineering degree from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia in 1910. He went to work with Stone and Webster Engineering Corporation of Boston after graduation. They sent him to their Dallas office as a construction engineer. By 1914 Wyatt Hedrick started his own construction firm, active as a contractor until 1921. In 1921 he became a partner with the Sanguinet and Staats architectural firm in Fort Worth. By 1925 he opened his own architectural practice in Fort Worth with offices in Dallas and Houston. The following year, when both Sanguinet and Staats retired, he bought the remaining interest in their practice.[46] Hedrick rapidly built his business. He was not an architect by training, but an engineer and businessman. He was eager to place himself where business could be had and where money could be made. Through the rest of the 1920s onward into the 1950s he maintained an active national practice, and at one time was considered the third largest architectural firm in the country. Typical for architectural firms of the time, he produced buildings in a wide range of historical and modern styles.

His firm's work included the Shamrock Hotel in Houston; the Sterick Building in Memphis, Tennessee; and Medical Arts Building in Fort Worth. His firm's work in the Moderne style included the Worth Theater (with Alfred C. Finn); the Lone Star Gas Company; the Hollywood Theater; the Texas and Pacific Railroad Terminal and Office Building; The Texas and Pacific Railroad Warehouse; Will Rogers Memorial Center; and the City Hall, all in Fort Worth. Both the City Hall and the Will Rogers Memorial Center were in association with Elmer G. Withers Architectural Company. His work included buildings for Texas Tech in Lubbock; Texas Christian University and Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth; the University of North Texas in Denton; and a very large number of public school buildings.[47]

[44] Information provided by Nancy L. Sparrow, Curatorial Assistant, Alexander Archives, University of Texas Libraries, Austin; material in Archives possession list previously sold drawings and names of building projects from the Sanguinet, Staats and Hedrick Collection; furnished January 15, 2014.
[45] Liles, p. 64.
[46] Long, Christopher; "Hedrick, Wyatt Cephas"; *Handbook of Texas Online* (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fhe51) accessed November 25, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
[47] Ibid.

Herman Paul Koeppe (1876-1941)

Wyatt Hedrick was ably assisted by his chief designer, Herman P. Koeppe, who worked with Wyatt from 1925 until his death in 1941.[48] Koeppe was born in Leipzig, Germany on January 1, 1876.[49] The family emigrated through Galveston in the late 1880s. His interest in architecture led him to visit Europe in the 1890s where he toured the larger cities for part of a year[50] and attended a few classes at the Sorbonne. He did not receive a degree.[51] Returning, he first worked for Galveston Architect D.M. McKinsey around 1898 and next for the Santa Fe Railroad.[52] The family was among the few to survive the 1900 hurricane that wiped out most of the city.

In 1904, he attracted the interest of visiting Marshall R. Sanguinet of the Sanguinet and Staats architectural firm in Fort Worth. Recognizing his talent, Sanguinet talked him into coming to work at his office. Hedrick promoted him to chief designer in 1925 for the large majority of projects. He was constantly studying foreign and domestic architectural journals, keeping himself abreast of the latest design trends. His forte was the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles. His individual and distinct touches can be found on all the buildings in which he had a part. Koeppe's work continued to evolve, developing and maturing.[53] Keoppe became the designer of fourteen new large Fort Worth buildings including the Petroleum and Electric Buildings; Elks Club; T&P Terminal; T&P Warehouse; Baggage Express addition; TCU Stadium; Hollywood Theater; Central Fire Station; Fire Alarm Signal Building; the Aviation, Fair and Sanger Buildings; Central Post Office; and Lone Star Gas Building. Later, he would be responsible for the Will Rogers Coliseum and Tower, and for the exterior of the Auditorium, followed by the City Hall.[54]

Herbert M. Hinckley, Sr. (1897-1938)

Architectural engineer Herbert M. Hinckley, Sr. was born in Dallas, Texas, July 6, 1897.[55] His father was reasonably prosperous with his own sheet metal firm in Dallas. Herbert worked as a blueprint boy at a local architectural-engineering firm until he was 21.[56] He enrolled in the Army in 1918 and was honorably discharged in 1919. He first worked for Mosher Steel and Machinery in Dallas as draftsman and checker. Hinckley taught himself math and calculus, and by 1920 had enrolled in an engineering extension course offered by the University of Wisconsin in Madison.[57] Released by Mosher during the depression, he went to Houston and was hired as an engineer with Robert J. Cummins.[58] After working for the CCC, Hinckley brought his family to Fort Worth in 1934. He worked for architect Wiley G. Clarkson, for several months and then worked for the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad.[59] It is said that his inspiration to solve the problem of unobstructed stadium seating came when he took his eldest son to a boxing match at a local theater. Columns and roof structures frequently interfered with sight lines at these venues.[60]

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[48] Ibid.; p. 25.
[49] Cohen, p. 22.
[50] Ibid.; p. 22.
[51] Conversation between Paul Koeppe and Arthur Weinman, January 17, 2014.
[52] Cohen, p. 22.
[53] Liles, Deborah M.; "Wyatt Cephas Hedrick: Builder of Cities," p. 26.
[54] Ibid., p. 67.
[55] Hinckley, Herbert McDonald, Jr.; Under the Dome - A Biography of Herbert McDonald Hinckley, Sr.; Carlton Press, New York; 1968, p. 130.
[56] Ibid., p. 31
[57] Ibid., p. 35.
[58] Ibid., p. 64.
[59] Ibid., p. 84.
[60] Ibid.; p. 88.

In 1935 Hinckley was hired by Wyatt Hedrick as the Hedrick firm commenced the Will Rogers Memorial Center. Hinckley solved the structural problem of eliminating supporting columns by having large arched steel trusses span domed spaces. Pinned flexible joints at the top center of the span solved the problem. These allowed the different segments of the dome or arch to move independently as required by their differential expansion and contraction, with solar daily and seasonal heating. But there was skepticism about his design. Submitted first to local engineers and then to an engineering consultant in Oklahoma by Hedrick, all had their doubts. Hinckley defended his design and finally convinced Hedrick to move ahead.[61] Because of the unusual nature of the design, B.L. Sneed of the Virginia Bridge Company invited Hinckley and his family to temporarily relocate to Roanoke, Virginia during fabrication of the work in spring 1936.[62] Once steel fabrications were delivered, there was similar skepticism about the design from the erecting contractor, James T. Taylor. He again had to convince the contractor that there was no reason to adjust the length of the fabricated members.[63]

After the project was completed, Hinckley was next contacted by the State of Louisiana who desired a similar domed Coliseum for the LSU campus in Baton Rouge. Moving to New Orleans, he completed a similar dome for LSU.[64] In 1937 the Virginia Bridge Co. offered him employment.[65] After re-locating his family and commencing his new position he died on June 27 1938. His family returned to Dallas where he is buried.[66] Hinckley's design solutions are still important and are carried in current engineering textbooks. All current large steel domed athletic buildings, from the Will Rogers to the Astrodome, New Orleans Superdome and others, are all based on his principle of providing flexible joints in large members to allow differential thermal movement.

Elmer George Wither (1881-1938)

Architect Elmer Withers was born in Caddo Peak, Texas, in 1881. There is no record that he received a formal education in architecture, but may have learned the practice as an apprentice or through correspondence courses. Withers moved to Fort Worth in 1910 to establish his practice. Early projects included the Jones County Courthouse, Marion County Courthouse and Armstrong County Courthouse. He travelled to small communities throughout the state through the 1910s and 1920s looking for work, selling his firm to local communities and entrepreneurs. Successful, he received numerous commissions for schools, civic buildings, stores and service stations.[67] Withers incorporated his firm, Elmer G. Withers Architectural Company, Inc. in 1928 in Fort Worth. Over the next decade his work included the Blackstone Hotel (in association with Mauran, Russell and Crowell of St. Louis) and the Firestone Garage as well as many small commercial buildings, automobile showrooms and garages.[68] His firm designed works in a wide variety of styles including neo-classical, Spanish Renaissance and Italian Renaissance, as was common practice at the time. As the popularity of Art Deco and Art Moderne gained in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Withers also promoted the style. Withers was associated with Wyatt Hedrick for the Will Rogers Memorial Center (1936) and the Art Moderne Fort Worth City Hall (1938).[69] In the later 1930s Withers also designed two additional County Courthouses for Ector County and Upshur County. The City of Fort Worth hired Withers along with five other

[61] Hinckley, p. 99, 100..
[62] Ibid., p. 103.
[63] Ibid.; p. 106.
[64] Ibid., p. 121.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Hinckley, p. 130.
[67] Long, Christopher; "Withers, Elmer George"; *Handbook of Texas Online* (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fnejz) accessed December 26, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
[68] Cohen, Judith Singer, p. 24.
[69] Ibid.; p. 156.

Architects in the late 1938 for a new public housing project for the Housing Authority of Fort Worth, but he died December 30, 1938 during preparation of documents.[70]

Summary of Significance

The Will Rogers Memorial Center is nominated at the state level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the largest, grandest and best-designed of the Art Deco and Art Moderne works in Texas by the nationally-prominent Wyatt Hedrick architectural firm. As a key component of the Texas Centennial celebration (second only to the Centennial's primary exhibition at Fair Park in Dallas), the Will Rogers Memorial Center is nominated at the state level of significance in the area of Entertainment/Recreation as an important and permanent legacy of the state's ambitious program, which was supported with state and federal funding.

The architecture of the Will Rogers Memorial Center is the chief subject matter of Judy Singer Cohen's book, *Cowtown Modern*e. The distinct street façades with the two large glazed clay tile murals depicting southwestern and Texan historical images, which are seen by thousands annually. The Coliseum, although promoted during construction as a general civic performance and exhibition space, was focused on future use for the annual livestock show and rodeo. The adaptable facility has proven its worth, and it has been used for a large variety of other events, including agricultural displays, car shows, boxing matches, and beauty pageants. The Auditorium was Fort Worth's first large municipal public performance center, with a large stage, rigged fly loft, and professional lighting. It was designed for symphonic acoustics, was suitable for opera, and has hosted legions of well-known artists. Until the Tarrant County Convention Center was constructed in the 1970s, it was the only place where symphony, opera and ballet could perform and was the only large hall for artistic performances.

The Coliseum, Tower and Auditorium are substantially as they were constructed in 1936. The few changes made have reflected maintenance needs and legal requirements such as accessibility. The fact that these buildings have been subject to such outstanding preservation and use speaks of the value the Center has to Fort Worth and its annual statement of western heritage.

[70] Long, Christopher; "Withers, Elmer George"; *Handbook of Texas Online* n.

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CITY OF FORT WORTH - CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Fort Worth City Council Minutes, Vol. October 1946 thru November 1949, May 15, 1947, p. 212.

MAP LOG

Outline map placed over contemporary aerial photograph of vicinity; VanZandt map includes land sold to City of Fort Worth, 1936; land acquired by VanZandt from Scoggin(s) 1869; map prepared by Attorney Lee Christie with Cline, Farrell, Christie & Lee, LLP, law firm; date approximately 2004.

"Will Rogers Memorial Center" - Site Map of buildings and grounds, with brief description of facilities; prepared by City of Fort Worth; http://www.willrogersmemorailcenter.com/ ; date September 19, 2013; accessed January 6, 2014.

"Will Rogers Memorial Center Parking System in the Fort Worth Cultural District"; prepared by Standard Parking for the City of Fort Worth; www.culturaldistrictparking.com/wrmcmap.pdf; date unknown; accessed July 9, 2014.

DRAWING LOG

Hahnfeld Associates Architects/Planners; "Renovation of Will Rogers Auditorium"; August 9, 1991; sheets A1-1, A1-2, A1-3 and A1-4 from original document set; original set size unknown.

Hahnfeld Associates Architects/Planners; "City of Fort Worth Will Rogers Equestrian Center" (aka Burnett Building; and Justin Arena & Barns) Civil & Architectural set #1 and MEP set #2; October 27, 1986; Set #1- 65 sheets; set #2 - 63 sheets; complex set as sheets for two separate buildings are mingled within one document set.

Hahnfeld Hoffer Stanford; "Ticket and Office Building"; floor plan, October 6, 1997; excerpt from original construction document set.

Hedrick, Wyatt and Elmer G. Withers, Associated Architects; "Coliseum for Pleasure Grounds, Parks and Playgrounds for City of Fort Worth, Texas"; January 15, 1936; sheets A1, A-2, A-5 and A-8 of nine Architectural sheets.

Hedrick, Wyatt and Elmer G. Withers, Associated Architects; "Memorial Tower for Pleasure Grounds, Parks and Playgrounds for City of Fort Worth, Texas"; January 15, 1936; sheets A-1 and A-2 of two Architectural sheets.

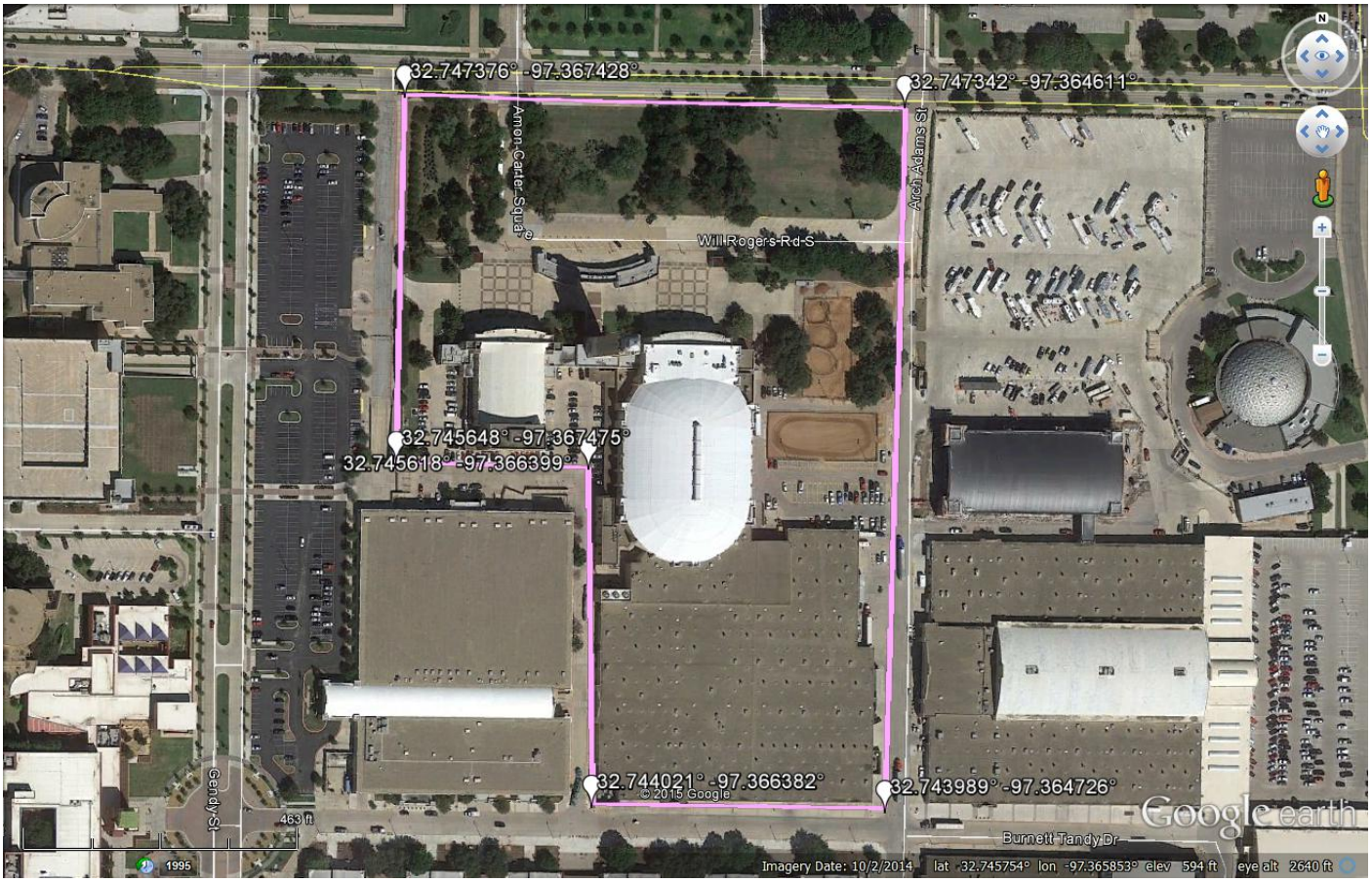
Hedrick, Wyatt and Elmer G. Withers, Associated Architects; "Auditorium for Pleasure Grounds, Parks and Playgrounds for City of Fort Worth, Texas"; January 15, 1936; sheets A-6, A-8, A-9, A-10 and A-11 of nineteen Architectural sheets.

Hedrick, Wyatt and Elmer G. Withers, Associated Architects; "Cattle Exhibit Building for Parks and Playgrounds for City of Fort Worth, Texas"; January 15, 1936; sheets A-1 thru A-7, sheet A-8 missing ; digital scans of original drawings furnished by City of Fort Worth, January 9, 2014.

Love, Freiberg & Associates with Elting, Havard, Recer Architects and Planners; "Additions and Alterations for Will Rogers Coliseum"; May 4, 1978; sheets #1 thru #37; digital scans of original drawings furnished by City of Fort Worth, January 9, 2014.

Arthur Weinman Architects, Trent Ulm, Senior Draftsman; "Combined Plan Drawing of Will Rogers Center Buildings", information taken from available working drawings; July 8, 2014.

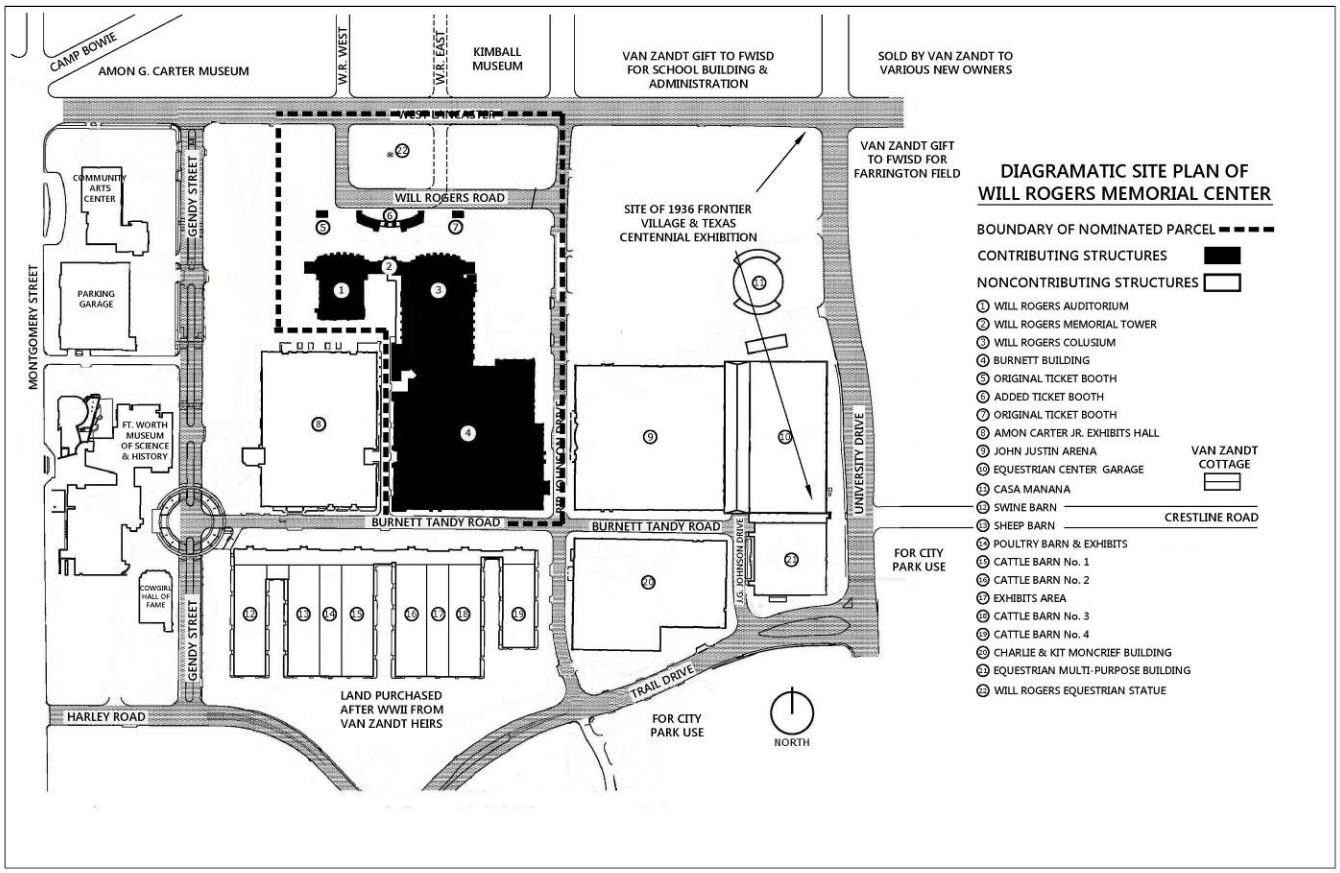
Google Earth, accessed March 12, 2015.



Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

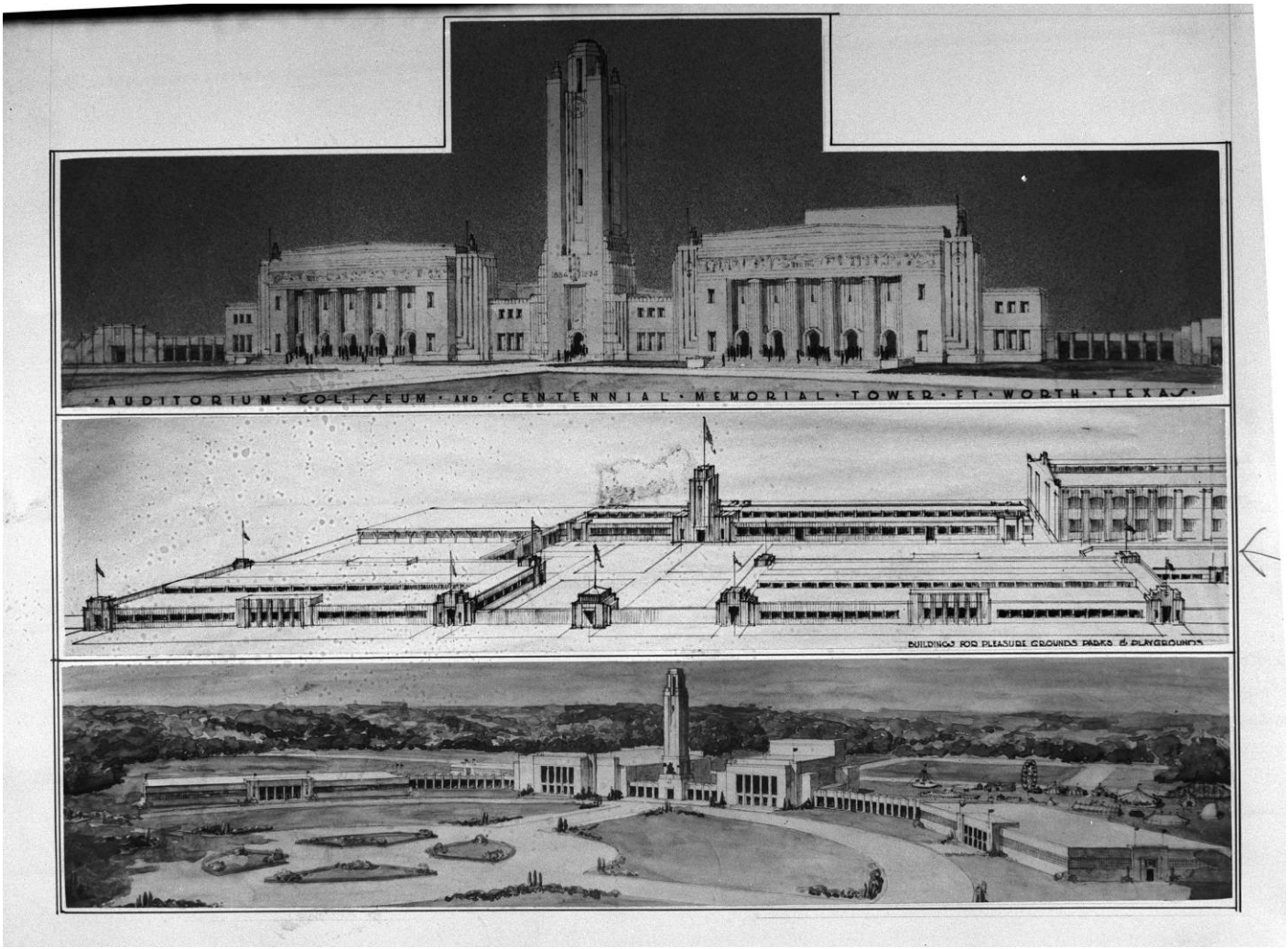
1. 32.747376° -97.367428°
2. 32.747342° -97.364611°
3. 32.743989° -97.364726°
4. 32.744021° -97.366382°
5. 32.745618° -97.366399°
6. 32.745648° -97.367475°

Site Plan.
Nominated property indicated by dotted line.



Renderings - three different proposed conceptual designs for Center

Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.



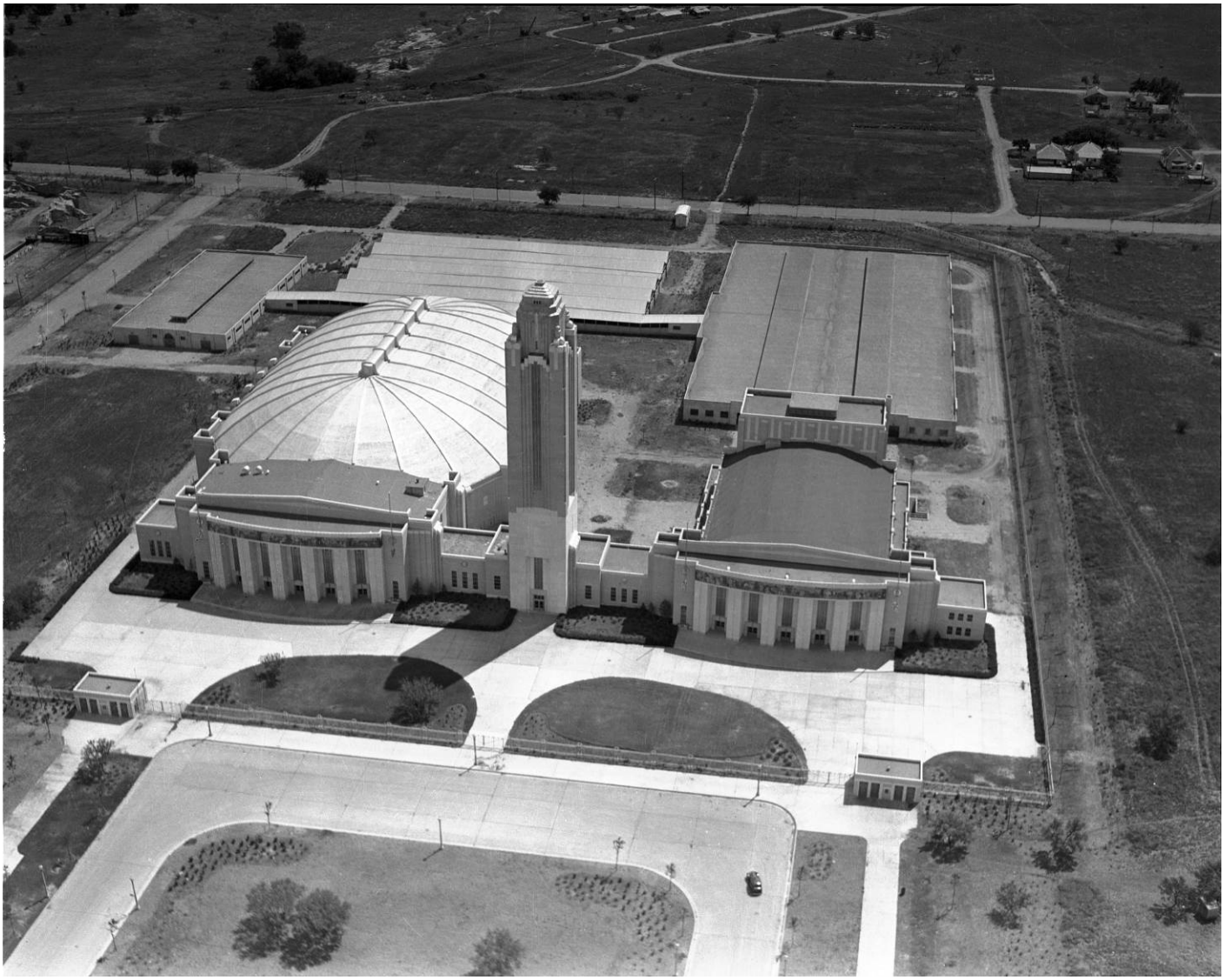
Groundbreaking Ceremony

Left to right: Amon G. Carter, Fort Worth Mayor Van Zandt Jarvis, Texas PWA Chief Engineer Uel Stevens, and Centennial celebration board member William Monning.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

Aerial view, 1937.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.



Will Rogers Memorial, c.1940.

Jack White Photograph Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

Will Rogers Memorial, 1942.

W.D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

Will Rogers Memorial, May 26, 1938

Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

Photo 1
West Elevation
Camera facing east

Photo 2
Tower detail
Camera facing east

Photo 3
Will Rogers Coliseum
From entry plaza on north side corner

Photo 4
Will Rogers Coliseum and Tower
From entry plaza on north side corner

Photo 5
Will Rogers Coliseum entry door, from west side, north end

Photo 6
Will Rogers Coliseum cast stone
Panel, from east side, south end

Photo 7
Will Rogers Coliseum at Burnett
Building dock, looking southwest

Photo 8
Will Rogers Auditorium, in service court, looking northwest at fly loft

Photo 9
Will Rogers Center, ticket sales building, northwest corner entry Plaza

Photo 10
East elevation, camera facing west

Photo 11
1936 Ticket Sales & Collection Booth from Burnett-Tandy Drive

Photo 12
Burnett Building, looking northeast from Burnett-Tandy Drive (formerly Crestline Street)

Photo 13
Tower lobby looking west with bust of Will Rogers in center

Photo 14
Tower lobby north entry doors with glass block over entry to dome

Photo 15
Auditorium lobby looking east at coat check window

Photo 16
Auditorium balcony looking at stage from top seating

Photo 17
Auditorium stage metal screens and wood paneling

Photo 18
Coliseum lobby looking west

Photo 19
Coliseum arena before rodeo opening performance

Photo 20
Coliseum looking down from cat walk at end pivots

Photo 21
Coliseum looking up at doubled arch trusses at pivots for stability

Photo 22
Coliseum lobby center, equestrian portrait of Will Rogers

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