

## MOST ENDANGERED PLACES 2015

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### TOP O'HILL TERRACE

**Address:** 3001 W. Division, Arlington, Texas 76012

**Construction Date:** c.1930s

**Owner:** Arlington Baptist College

Named for its spectacular view and 1000 foot elevation, Top O'Hill Terrace was first built along the Bankhead Highway in the early 1920s as a Tea Room serving afternoon teas and dinners. The second owners, Fred and Mary Browning, extensively remodeled the property in the late 1920s, excavating a basement and tunnels to use for an illegal gambling operation. The site was a destination for the rich and famous in the 1930s and 1940s, and the grounds surrounding the casino were quite beautifully landscaped. The site's secret rooms and tunnels allowed the owners and patrons to escape law enforcement raids for many years, but the casino was finally closed down in the late 1940s. In 1956, Top O'Hill Terrace was purchased by Bible Baptist Seminary, now Arlington Baptist College—the school founded by the casino's most outspoken opponent, Dr. J. Frank Norris.

The Tea Garden is all that remains of the property now. Erosion and time are taking a toll on the almost 90-year old sandstone structures. The retaining wall on the hillside's edge has collapsed, and the Tea Garden's corner pillar and steps have large cracks and seem in imminent danger of collapse as well. The site is being nominated in an attempt to locate public or private funding for much-needed structural repairs to the stone masonry work of the Tea Garden pillar and the supporting retaining wall. In recent years, the Texas Historical Commission has drawn attention to the transcontinental Bankhead Highway through a research project. With the necessary structural repairs, Top O'Hill Terrace would be an important waypoint on this American thoroughfare.



## **BARRON FIELD**

**Address:** 1180 Everman Parkway, Fort Worth, Texas 76140

**Construction Date:** c.1917

**Owner:** Weyerhaeuser Company

Fort Worth's aviation history is a unique treasure that is still not fully understood or interpreted. Among other distinctions, Fort Worth was home to the first commercial airline in the US, the site of the world's only helium production plant, was headquarters of the US Army Air Forces Training Command during World War II, and was the departure and arrival point for the first non-stop around-the-world flight. Fort Worth was also home to the most US Army Air Service pilot training fields during World War I, including Barron Field, constructed between September and November 1917. The one square mile flying field was a training site for American Air Service and Canadian Royal Flying Corps pilots.

Training at Barron Field ceased in mid-1919 and the field became an Army aviation equipment storage and disposal site. In August 1921, the government sold all but approximately 100 acres of the property along the west side of the field. The War Department maintained a lease on this property until 1924 and used it as a landing field to support cross-country flights by US Army Air Service pilots and the Post Office airmail planes. It was also used as Fort Worth's first municipal airport.

Buildings and hangars were constructed along what is now Everman Parkway and spanned the northern portion of the flying field. This property could contain significant remnants of Barron Field, including foundations for as many as 4 of the 15 hangars on the field as well as foundations for the water tower, aero repair, school, aero supply, quartermaster supply, fire station, administration building, oil reclamation building, guard house, and portions of two barracks and a mess hall. Remnants of two pump houses and the water and sewer system may also be present.

This 12-acre site may be the last remaining piece of any WWI flying field in the country. Though the buildings no longer stand, the site is pivotal to interpreting this chapter of Fort Worth's history. In addition to the physical connection to interpreting history, Barron Field is an important archaeological resource with the potential to help us understand what life was like for the pilots training on this site.



## **MEISSNER-BROWN FUNERAL HOME**

**Address:** 2717 Avenue B, Fort Worth, Texas 76105

**Construction Date:** c.1937

**Owner:** City of Fort Worth

The Spanish Eclectic-style Funeral Home at 2717 Avenue B is unique to the Polytechnic area and was designated as a City of Fort Worth Historic and Cultural Landmark in 1991. Constructed by the Shannon family in 1937, it remained the Shannon Funeral Home until 1941, when it became the Meissner Funeral Home. In 1974, the Brown Family purchased the structure and continued to operate the funeral home as well as an ambulance service out of it for several years. Joe Brown, who purchased the building, had been a funeral director for many years before purchasing the name and assets to the Gause-Ware Owens and Brumley Funeral Home, the first and oldest funeral home in Tarrant County. After 14 years of service, he moved his business away from East Fort Worth and 2717 Avenue B.

Most recently used as a church, the Spanish Eclectic style building is unique to the area and includes a domed bell tower, arched window and door openings, red tile roof, and decorative tile features. The structure includes a large chapel with exposed beams overhead. The structure was heavily damaged by a fire in the rear portions and is causing water damage to a neighboring property because of its proximity to the lot line. Because of these issues, Fort Worth Code Compliance requested demolition of the building in January 2015. They have been unable to find a buyer willing to rehab the structure. However, the original portion of the structure retains its integrity and is an excellent candidate for the use of preservation tax incentives. This building needs a more creative solution than the City is able to provide.

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## COWBOYS & CULTURE

Fort Worth is known as the city of cowboys and culture and both identities are undergoing unprecedented change.



### FORT WORTH STOCKYARDS

**Address:** Various streets north, south, east & west of the intersection of North Main Street and Exchange Avenue

**Construction Date:** c.1910 and forward

**Owners:** Public and private owners

An agreement with Heritage Development LLC, a partnership between the largest landowner in the Stockyards and Majestic Realty of California, for a nearly 1 billion square foot, \$175 million redevelopment project has earned America's last intact stockyards a place on HFW's endangered list. The Council lined up \$26 million in tax abatements for the development company with another \$67 million to be awarded based on performance. Existing federal and state rehabilitation tax credits were not required to offset project costs; instead, the project is relying on taxpayer dollars from the city.

HFW is unaware of previous historic district projects by Majestic Realty. Although the majority of the buildings in the Stockyards are within a National Register Historic District, that designation does not protect buildings from demolition, as demonstrated in 2011 with the loss of the Armour Plant. It is local designation that protects buildings from demolition and less than 10% of the buildings in the area are locally landmarked.



## **FORT WORTH CULTURAL DISTRICT**

**Address:** Bounded by Montgomery St. on the West, 7th Street on the North, University Drive on the East, and I-30 on the South

**Construction Date:** c.1936 and forward

**Owners:** City of Fort Worth owns all of the land and some of the buildings. Private non-profits own the other buildings.

Fort Worth's Cultural District is the gold standard. With three world-class art museums, the Museum of Science and History, the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame, the Cattle Raisers Museum, the Community Arts Center (the location for 11 arts organizations), Casa Manana, the Will Rogers Auditorium, Coliseum and Pioneer Tower, the Botanic Gardens, BRIT, rodeos, horse shows, and the FWISD's art deco stadium across the street, visitors from all over the world flock to Fort Worth's Cultural District for creative inspiration, architectural enlightenment, and authentic western culture.

All of these groups and the nearby neighborhoods should be working together on parking solutions and master planning, but HFW and others are unaware of meetings for this purpose. Rumor has it that one group does have a master plan for the Cultural District, but because it was developed by a private non-profit, that plan cannot be shared with other stakeholders and the public.

During the 2013 legislative session the state legislature enabled the first tax increment financing district (TIF) based on increases in tourism-related taxes from businesses surrounding the Cultural District. Those funds are being used to build the new arena, but why can't they also offset parking fees in the Cultural District at least for weekends and evenings as is done by the downtown TIF (Downtown Fort Worth, Inc.) for Sundance Square? Paid parking disconnects donors and the public from the great arts and cultural institutions in Fort Worth's Cultural District. Funding is not the issue; planning together is.

## **Saved Buildings and Structures Previously on HFW's Endangered List**

- Knights of Pythias Hall, 900 E 2<sup>nd</sup> Street
- Max Mehl Building, 1228 S Henderson Street
- Tandy Wire & Cable, 3600 McCart Avenue
- Swift & Company Office Building, 600 E Exchange Avenue
- Thistle Hill, 1509 Pennsylvania Avenue, c.1904
- Forest Park Gates, 2300 Block Park Place Avenue, c.1917-1918
- Heritage Park Plaza, Bluff Street at Houston Street, c.1976
- Inspiration Point Shelter, 2300-2500 Roberts Cut-Off Road, c.1930s
- Ridglea Theater, Camp Bowie Boulevard, c.1950
- Tarrant County Medical Society Building, 3855 Tulsa Way, c.1945
- Getzendanner House, 760 Samuels Avenue, c.1890s
- Fuller House, 4161 Charron Lane, c.1953
- Public Market, 1400 Henderson Street, c.1930
- Chase Court

### **Historic Fort Worth, Inc.**

Established in 1969 and honored with the 2009 Governor's Award in Historic Preservation, Historic Fort Worth, Inc. is dedicated to preserving Fort Worth's unique historic identity through education, stewardship and leadership. Its headquarters, a museum, and a preservation library are located at the 1899 Ball-Eddleman-McFarland House at 1110 Penn Street. Its heritage tourism center and food truck park are located at the 1904 Wharton-Scott House (Thistle Hill), at 1509 Pennsylvania Avenue. Both properties are associated with cattle barons and are available for private events. Programs include heritage tourism, restoration/property management, children's activities, façade easements, awards, endangered lists, and education on preservation-based economic incentives.