

PEROT
THEATRE



Mrs. Perot

The portrait of Mrs. Perot symbolizes the generations of Texarkanians who patronized this theatre. The portrait was done by Felix De Cossio, one of America's leading portrait painters, from a group of photographs taken of Mrs. Perot in the 1930's, the period during which this theatre flourished.

This generation of Texarkanians and those who came before them had the strength, vitality, love of state and country, courage and optimism to clear the land, build the roads and lay the rails that created this city and region.

Their faith in God, themselves, their neighbors, this country, and their optimistic outlook for the future is an example to our current generation who have benefitted so greatly from the labors, struggles and sacrifices of our ancestors.

Several of the selections played by the Dallas Symphony during the formal opening of the restored theatre reflect the strength and optimism of the people who created and developed this region.



—What verse better summarizes the philosophy of the original pioneers than these verses from the “Sound of Music”?

*Climb every
mountain, ford every
stream
Follow every rainbow
'Til you find your
dream*

*A bell is no bell 'til
you ring it
A song is no song 'til
you sing it
Love in your heart
isn't put there to stay
Love isn't love 'til you
give it away.*

—The early years in this region were hard, requiring an optimistic outlook and faith in the future. The song, “Tomorrow”, from the musical, “Annie”, reflects these traits.

*When I'm stuck with a
day that's gray and
lonely
I just stick out my
chin and grin and say:
Oh, the sun'll come
out tomorrow,
So you got to hang on
till tomorrow come
what may!
Tomorrow, tomorrow,
I love you, tomorrow,
You're only a day
away!*

*The soft browns and ivory colors
in these columns attract the eye
and highlight the contrast of rich
gold leaf and antique gold.*

The thoughts expressed so well by this music are representative of Mr. and Mrs. Perot's philosophies and those of the people who populated this area of Texas and Arkansas.

This restored structure serves as a reminder of our heritage. If our faith in the future equals that of our ancestors, and if we are willing to work, sacrifice and labor as they did to make the future a reality—then surely, the best is yet to come.



*The Grecian architecture, which
is apparent in the overall design
of the theatre, is predominate in
the gold leaf moldings.*



An evening of splendor in a luxurious setting—the massive area of the theatre's interior is drawn together by perfectly coordinated colors, design, and appointments.

Dedication

This restored theatre is dedicated to the memory of two Texarkanians, Gabriel Ross and Lulu May Perot.

Mr. Perot moved to Texarkana from New Boston, Texas in 1918. He was an independent cotton broker.

Mrs. Perot, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ray, lived in Texarkana.

They met in Texarkana and were married in 1923.

This theatre was the principal source of formal entertainment for Mr. and Mrs. Perot, their children, Bette and Ross, and the people who lived in Texarkana during this period.

Mr. Perot died in 1955, prior to the births of the five Perot grandchildren. On one occasion, his son, Ross, was asked what changes he would make if he could relive his life. He replied, "I would want my children to have the wonderful times with their Grandfather Perot that Bette and I had."

The Perot family considered having a portrait of Mr. Perot painted for the theatre, but decided that he would not have wanted it. Mr. Perot loved people and his many friends in this area still repeat the wonderful jokes and stories he used to tell. No doubt he would have dismissed the idea of a portrait by declaring, "I don't want to be hung in public."

On Mr. Perot's death, the *Texarkana Gazette* wrote, "We suppose Mr. Perot had as many friends as any man in Texarkana...People like Ross

Perot are good for the world. They help the morale of those who are easily discouraged and for that reason they are sorely missed when the time comes for them to pull down the curtain on their particular act."

Mrs. Perot, although small in size, was a powerful, loving influence in the lives of her family and friends. She embodied the finest qualities of the traditional American mother.

Bette, Ross, and his wife, Margot, and the five Perot



The detail of the gold leaf molding—so precise in its craftsmanship and design—is highlighted by coordinating shades of blue.

grandchildren; Ross, Nancy, Suzanne, Carolyn and Katherine, adored Mrs. Perot. Her close relationship with her grandchildren added significantly to the growth and development of their character and sense of responsibility.

During the last years of her life, Mrs. Perot lived in Dallas, surrounded by her children and grandchildren.

Mrs. Perot served as one of the initial directors of Electronic Data Systems Corporation. For the first few years of EDS' existence, she kept the books and prepared the payroll.

Her great inner strength was demonstrated in 1979 just before her death, when two EDS employees were taken hostage in Iran. She was intensely interested in the fate of these two men at a time when she was in great pain and knew she was dying. She considered it the company's responsibility to gain the release of these two men, and urged Ross to go to Iran to make the final arrangements for their escape, fully recognizing that in her condition, she might not see him again.

Her exact words were—

"These are your men. You are responsible for them. The government won't do anything to gain their release. It's your responsibility to get them out."

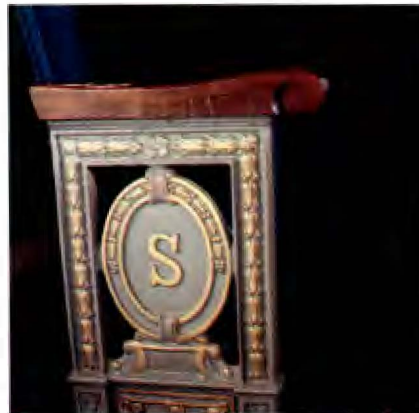
After Mrs. Perot's death in April 1979, Josh Morriss, Jr., representing Texarkana, discussed the restoration of this theatre with the Perot family, as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Perot. The Perot children and grandchildren felt that restoring this theatre would be a project that Mr. and Mrs. Perot would approve of, and assisted in the funding as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Perot.

During the past two years, Bette Perot has worked closely with Texarkana to see that the restoration, when completed, would fully recapture the original beauty of the theatre.

One of two inlaid ceiling designs—each measuring over eight feet in diameter—situated on either end of the stage.



Highlighting the top of the stage area and drawing the eye to the beauty even higher, these moldings show the varying shades of blue and gold—different, but perfectly blended.



A link to history: these original steel frames for the aisle seats are embellished with a gold "S," reminding patrons of the theatre's early days as the Saenger Theatre.



Crowds who watched movies in the old Saenger Theatre during the last four decades saw them projected from this same equipment. The original projector is retained, now totally restored and operating.



The outer lobby retains its distinctive flavor. The beveled mirror remains, and the black and white marble floor is the original—right down to the indentation in front of the ticket window where the lines of past patrons have left their historic touch.



Before restoration, much of the old plaster molding had been chipped, cracked, or completely removed. New plaster molding had to be redesigned and rebuilt to match the original, such as in this column bordering the stage.

This chandelier is one of the many elaborate light fixtures that were saved during the theatre's restoration.



The inner lobby is highlighted by the dramatic beauty of the theatre's new Wilton carpet. Looking exactly the same as the original carpet, this soft, thick wool carpet feels luxurious to the touch. The brilliant blue and gray floral design sets the tone for the rest of the color schemes in the theatre. The blue curtains to the left mark the entrances to the main theatre, which once included a concession area. Everything from curtains to columns to carpet had to be replaced.

Restoration

When the old Saenger theatre closed its doors in 1977, its original beauty was just a dim memory. But the elegance of 57 years ago has been restored as this historic building—now the Perot Theatre—makes its debut.



Ornate moldings with detailed designs of blue and gold are found throughout the theatre. This particular figure borders the elegant upstairs box featured on the cover.

The Perot Theatre is now a modern performing arts center. As patrons relax in the comfortable seats with an unrestricted view of the stage, they can enjoy the beauty and craftsmanship of crystal chandeliers, velvet curtains, Grecian architecture, and ornate painting, including application of gold leaf. The detailed plaster moldings were done by Plastocraft of Dallas.

At the same time, the theatre is a model of functional modern convenience. The air conditioning, automatic sprinklers, and the light, sound,

and stage systems have been replaced with the finest equipment available. In addition, the entire building has been rewired, replumbed, and new heating systems have been installed.

Many months of research by officials of the city of Texarkana went into planning this restoration before the construction contract was awarded to Lacy Enterprises Inc. of Texarkana. The Austin, Texas firm of Bell, Klein and Hoffman, specialists in historic preservation design, was retained as the design team.

During the full year's work, these professionals refurbished every inch, beginning with the original carpet in the lobby. This Wilton carpet, with its custom blue and gray floral design, was worn badly after 57 years. But under a stairwell, a piece was found which looked like new.

This handwoven wool carpet could not be duplicated by United States carpet makers. Mel Kusin, carpet contractor for the Perot Theatre restoration, sent a sample of the original to House of Carpets in London for matching and weaving. The present Wilton carpet in the Perot Theatre looks just as the carpet did in the 1920s.

The blue hues in the carpet set the tone for the rest of the theatre. The effect of perfect color coordination is evident as the softer blue shades give way to darker accent blues in prominent areas. The side walls are done in one of the softer shades, painted with a technique known as the Tiffany finish which appears to be wallpaper. The overall visual impact of the theatre's beauty and conscientious attention to detail

is due to the efforts of Mrs. Dorothy Lawrence of Texarkana. Mrs. Lawrence was responsible for the selection of colors, furnishings, and materials used in restoring the theatre.

The stage area has been completely refinished and new curtains added. The orchestra pit has been enlarged to accommodate 20 to 24 musicians, rather than the original 8 to 10.

The bulk of all the restoration efforts were on the inside. The completed work on the outside was entirely structural. The old neon sign was removed, but no other outside changes were needed to bring back the impressive appearance of the Neo-Italian Renaissance style building.



The shimmering beauty of the theatre's crystal chandeliers provide the perfect complement to the elegant surroundings.



Perot Theatre

219 Main

Texarkana, Texas - Arkansas 75501

(214) 792-4992