



Putting North Texas Style into Freeway Celebrations and Openings

On September 30, 1948, Houston observed the opening of the first freeway in Texas with a gathering of a few hundred people and a brief statement from the mayor. Minutes later, vehicles were driving on the Gulf Freeway. By North Texas standards, was Houston's observance worthy of something as important as a freeway opening? No way!

In North Texas and particularly Dallas, ordinary ribbon cuttings and speeches didn't do justice for an event of such importance. The freeway was something to be celebrated, and North Texans would open their freeways with huge celebrations, crazy stunts, high-tech gadgets and big-name

politicians.

The standard was set with the opening celebration for the first freeway in North Texas, Central Expressway in Dallas, on August 19, 1949. Over 7000 gathered for the event which featured a band performance, aircraft flyover, official christening and dances which lasted late into the night. A month later Fort Worth officially dedicated its first freeway with an opening event attended by thousands. As freeway openings reached a peak in the 1960s the freeway-opening stunt moved to the forefront, allowing officials to distinguish openings which may otherwise have been routine.

1949
Aug 19

The official ribbon cutting for the opening of Central Expressway took place on a scale model of the freeway positioned on the event stage. Mrs Edith Wemple, wife of Texas Transportation Commission Chairman Fred Wemple, cut the miniature ribbon to symbolically open the freeway. Shortly afterwards the freeway was officially christened by Dallas Mayor Wallace Savage's wife Dorothy who broke a bottle of cologne over the model.¹

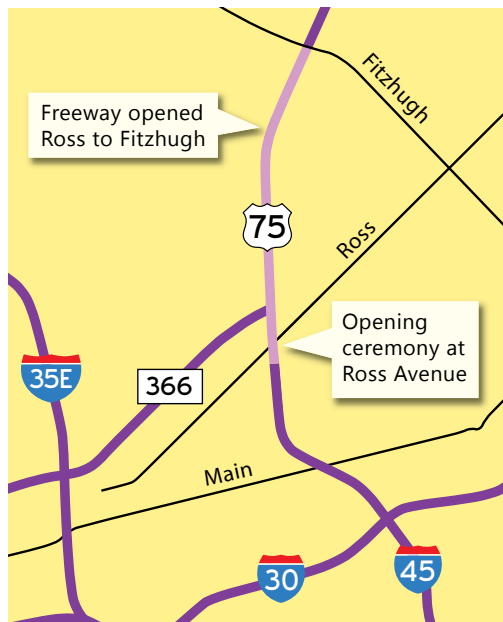
Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, the University of Texas at Austin²



first freeway opening DALLAS



Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, the University of Texas at Austin⁴



The new freeway was the product of decades of effort which began with the original proposal for Central Boulevard in 1911. The freeway had been the top civic priority in Dallas since the late 1930s and its realization called for a huge celebration—a party which set the standard for Dallas freeway openings in the following decades.

This view of the Central Expressway opening celebration at the Ross Avenue overpass shows the large crowd estimated at 7000 gathered around the event stage. The lit spire of the Mercantile Building in downtown Dallas is visible in the background. After the ceremonies there were two dances, a “mammoth” square dance for whites and an “old-fashioned street dance” for blacks sponsored by the Negro Chamber of Commerce. The freeway opened to traffic the following morning, August 20, at 7 AM.³

For additional coverage of the Central Expressway opening celebration, see pages 83 and 84.

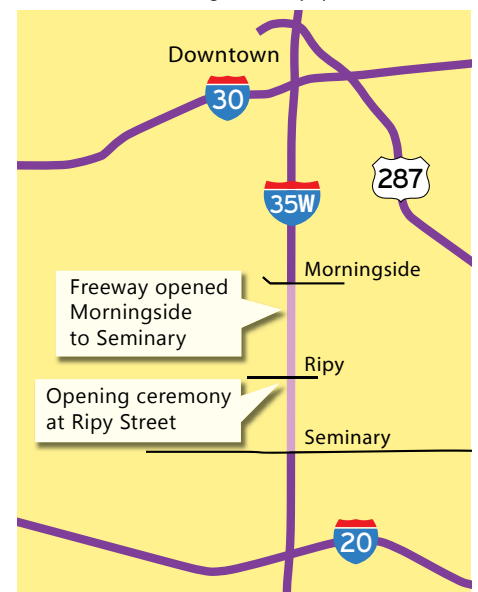
first freeway opening Fort Worth



UT -Arlington Library Special Collections⁶

1949
Sept 14

Less than a month after the opening of Central Expressway in Dallas, Fort Worth officially dedicated its first section of freeway, present day Interstate 35W south of downtown from Seminary Drive (then signed as Kellis) to Morningside Drive, in an evening ceremony on September 14, 1949. Several thousand attended the ceremony which featured Fort Worth Mayor F. Edgar Deen cutting the ribbon, shown above. Traffic cruised on the freeway immediately after the ceremony. While Dallas would continue to observe its subsequent freeway openings with ceremonies and stunts, the original Fort Worth freeway opening in 1949 was the only large event in the entire history of Fort Worth freeways. Fort Worth was not nearly as excited about freeway openings as Dallas, and subsequent Fort Worth openings were marked with small, informal events or with no observance at all.⁵





the most celebrated freeway in North Texas

the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge

It would seem reasonable to assume that the largest freeway celebration in North Texas took place in the freeway-crazed 1950s or 1960s. But it turns out that modern-day Dallas can get just as excited about a freeway as the first generation to see freeways, especially if the new freeway includes a stunning bridge designed by a renowned architect. The largest celebration for a North Texas freeway took place for the Margaret Hunt Hill bridge, culminating on March 2-4, 2012, with a three-day grand opening weekend of festivities. Organizers reported that over 40,000 people participated in events on the bridge during the weekend. Separate from the festivities on the bridge was the Bridge-O-Rama festival in west Dallas featuring

Superstar architect Santiago Calatrava, designer of the bridge, watches from the podium as children fire confetti at the end of the formal groundbreaking ceremony on December 9, 2005. The list of attendees at the frigid-temperature event included virtually all local political officials, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and the Spanish ambassador. Former Dallas mayor and U.S. Trade Representative 2009-2013 Ron Kirk is second from the left on the back row. A several-minute fireworks display ended the evening, which was preceded by a full day of events including a private lunch with project donors, a lecture by Calatrava and tribute to Calatrava.³⁹



2005
Dec 9



over 30 events with nine signature events. It was perhaps the ultimate opening extravaganza for a freeway, inspired of course by the bridge.

The official bridge opening party started on Friday night with 2000 attending a sold-out, \$200-per-ticket gala on the bridge which featured Lyle Lovett and his Large Band as the headlining entertainment and a finishing fireworks show. Saturday began with a fun run across the bridge and was followed by a full day of entertainment and parades on the bridge, including the "Parade of Giants" of large puppets of historical west Dallas figures. The evening ended with another fireworks display. Sunday morning featured an official dedication with top local political officials and bridge architect Santiago Calatrava, concluding with a ribbon run of hundreds of local boy scouts and girl scouts. It was an amazing weekend of festivities, and even Calatrava was impressed.

The bridge opened to traffic on March 29, 2012.



Dallas Morning News

2010
June 9

In June 2010 Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert, the members of city council and other city officials held an informal steel-signing event for the placement of the final section of steel for the 400-foot-tall arch.⁴⁰

the opening celebration March 2-4, 2012



On Sunday, February 26, the *Dallas Morning News* published an eight-page special section for the bridge opening.



Jay Barker

The weekend's festivities began with a \$200-per-ticket, sold-out Friday night gala on the bridge. Dallas DJ Lucy Wrubel wore a fantastic hat with a model of the bridge. The evening's headline performer was Lyle Lovett and His Large Band, shown on the stage on the westbound lanes near the center of the bridge.



Jay Barker



Author, March 2012

Bridge architect Santiago Calatrava attended the main events of the weekend and is shown here during Saturday's parade of builders on the bridge.

Calatrava, born in 1951 in Valencia, Spain, is one of the world's most well-known figures in contemporary design. His architecture and engineering firm, headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland, with offices in Valencia and Paris, is known for its graceful bridge designs and buildings suggesting elaborate animal skeletons. The Margaret Hunt Hill bridge is Calatrava's first vehicular bridge in North America, giving the structure some extra cachet.

The project's financial backers, including Margaret Hunt Hill, paid most of the \$6.3 million in design fees for the bridge.

Also see: Opening celebration photos page 254



The Bridge-O-Rama celebration in west Dallas in conjunction with the bridge opening featured over 30 events, with everything from art exhibits to a lowrider rally. After the celebration was complete, the event organizers' web site thanked the community for the big success, "We want to thank the thousands and thousands of you, whose attendance at our events made this once-in-a-lifetime festival so special for us."

Saturday's events on the bridge included the Parade of Giants, a procession of fifteen large puppets representing historical figures who were influential in west Dallas. This puppet is Bonnie Parker of the notorious Bonnie and Clyde gangster duo who were actively involved in criminal activity in west Dallas in the 1930s. The puppets were sponsored by local organizations and built by artists at the La Reunion TX artist residency in Oak Cliff.



Author, March 2012

The dedication ceremony was held early Sunday morning on the bridge with Mayor Mike Rawlings hosting. Instead of a traditional ribbon-cutting, the dedication featured a ribbon running by hundreds of local scouts. The boy scouts lined up on the west side of the main span and the girl scouts assembled on the east end of the main span, running with ribbons to meet at the center of the bridge where the ceremony took place. Below, fireworks completed the day's events on Friday and Saturday.



Author, March 2012

Author, March 2012



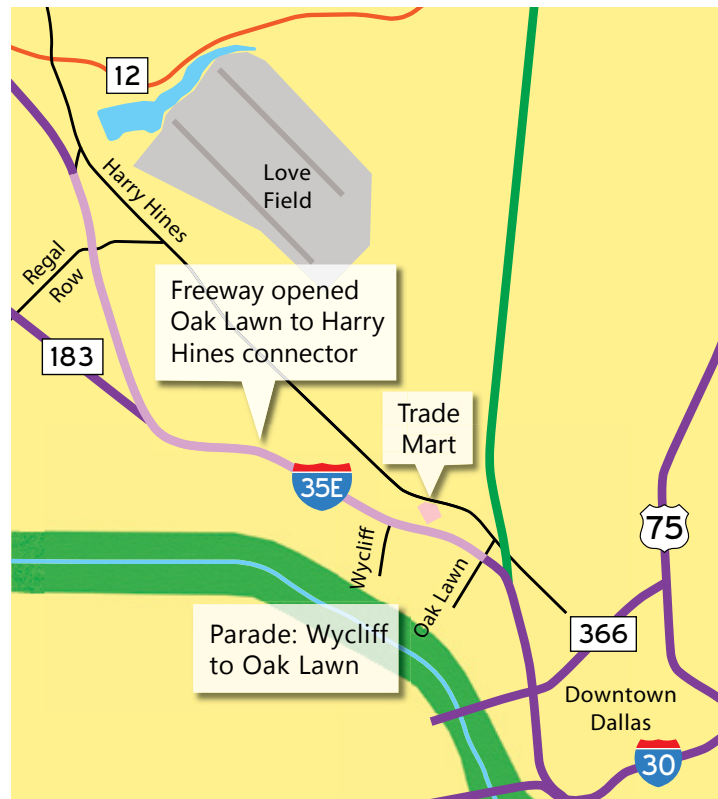
second largest freeway celebration **Stemmons Freeway**

1959
Dec 4-5

The opening of Stemmons Freeway on December 4 and 5, 1959, was the largest freeway opening celebration held in North Texas until it was eclipsed by the celebration for the Margaret Hunt Hill bridge in 2012. The Stemmons celebration began with a Friday night dinner and gala at the Trade Mart attended by 2400 including Hollywood celebrities. The main event was the parade on Stemmons Freeway which began when officials gathered in the bed of a pickup truck to smash through a ceremonial wood-beam barrier as fireworks popped and balloons were released. The following two-hour-long parade with 300 items on display was the longest and largest parade in Dallas up to that time, featuring the usual marching bands and just about everything that could be paraded including classic cars, military equipment, missiles and an airplane.³³

Also see: Additional opening celebration photos page 190

Political and highway officials gathered in the bed of a pickup truck for the ceremonial barrier smashing to open Stemmons Freeway. With the freeway open, the parade could begin.





UT-Arlington Library Special Collections³⁴

The huge opening-day parade took place from Wycliff Avenue to Oak Lawn Avenue with the freeway west of Wycliff (in the far distance) used for staging. Here the parade passes in front of the Dallas Trade Mart, which was the scene of the opening gala the night before.

Three floats representing Interstate 35E, Mexico and Canada were specially built for the parade. Political officials from Ontario, Canada, and Nuevo Leon, Mexico, were in attendance in recognition that Interstate 35, when complete, would connect from the Mexican border to Duluth (Minn.), near the Canadian border. There are no surviving photographs of the Interstate 35E float, but the newspaper clipping at right and video frame

capture provide us with a glimpse of this classic freeway opening prop. The newspaper clipping shows the float on display prior to the parade with its float queens Earline Brown (front),

Janis Baker (left) and Lou Ann Holsomback.³² The Mexico-themed float (lower left) featured a floral replica of a Spanish comb. The Canadian float, with its large snowflake and floral replica of a dog sled team, was deemed most appropriate for the day due to the 40-degree cold and strong north wind.



Dallas Morning News

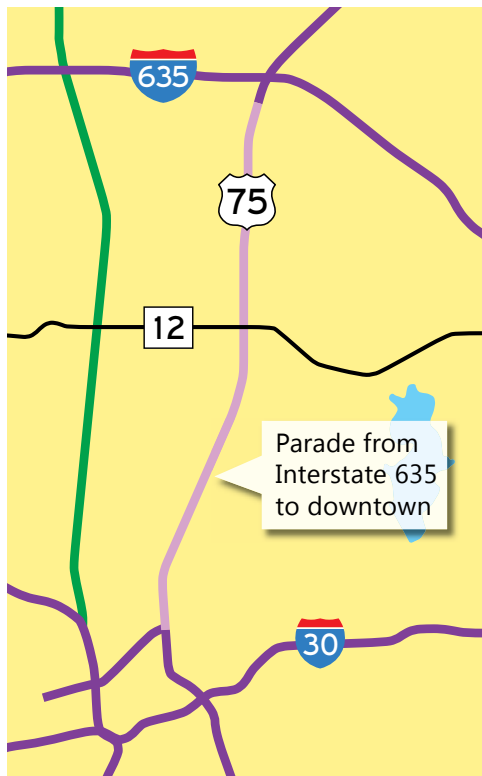


Two celebrities in the parade were Kirby Grant and Yvonne de Carlo. Kirby Grant (1911-1985) was a television and B-movie actor best known for his lead role in the television series *Sky King* (1951-1959) in which the storylines featured Grant's character using an airplane to perform heroic deeds. The aircraft in the parade is the same model used in the television series, a Cessna 310B. De Carlo (1922-2007) was a film and television actress with a career spanning from 1941 to 1995. Her best-known roles were opposite Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and as Lily Munster in the television series *The Munsters* (1964-1966). Photos: Industrial Properties Corporation

freeway parades **Central Expressway**



Dallas Morning News



1999
Dec 5

The completion of the reconstruction and widening of Central Expressway between Interstate 635 (LBJ Freeway) and downtown was the culmination of twelve years of debate from 1974 to 1986 and 14 years of construction from 1985 to 1999. On December 5, 1999, the opening of the final section was celebrated with a vehicles-only parade in the southbound lanes featuring classic and custom cars. This was only the second freeway parade in the history of North Texas freeways, and coincidentally it was the fortieth anniversary of the first parade on Stemmons Freeway.³⁷

largest Fort Worth celebration **Chisholm Trail Parkway**

RUN & RIDE THE CHISHOLM TRAIL PARKWAY

1

chance

before it opens to the public

RUN & RIDE A PRISTINE ROAD

hours before the NTTA opens the 28-mile tollway to traffic



benefiting



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

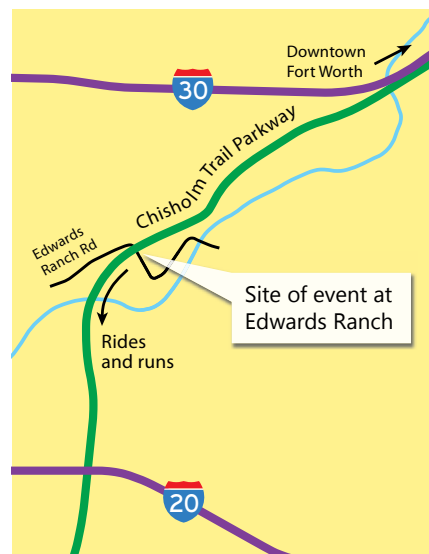
CASA of Tarrant County and
CASA of Johnson County

date **scheduled for**
MAY 10, 2014

runs **5K, HALF MARATHON,**
1 MILE KIDS FUN RUN

rides **12, 30 & 50 MILES**

www.ctprunride.org



2014
May 10

After a 65-year hiatus from large freeway-opening events, Fort Worth returned to the big league on May 10, 2014, when it held its largest-ever freeway celebration for the opening of the Chisholm Trail Parkway toll road. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the public to run, bicycle or walk on the tollway, and the event attracted a crowd of at least 5000 for the day's events.

The main celebration took place on a Saturday with beautiful weather at the Edwards Ranch real estate development

near the north terminus of the parkway. The tollway main lanes served as the path for several running and bicycling events throughout the day, including a 5K run, half marathon, kids fun run and three bicycling distances. All events were at capacity, with the 5K run and bicycle rides each accommodating 2000 registered participants, and many more were in attendance for the kids events, half marathon and festivities. One day later the Chisholm Trail Parkway opened, and the only traffic from that point on was cars and trucks.

All opening photos by author, May 2014





Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, a participant in the bicycling event, welcomes the crowd and reminds everyone to ride safely.



Below, participants in the 5K run headed southbound to the Arborlawn overpass turnaround point. At left, runners returning northbound cross the bridge at the Clear Fork Trinity River.



politicians and freeways **George W. Bush**

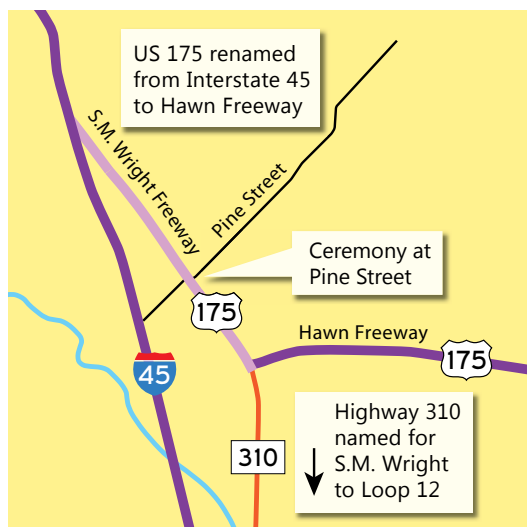
Local political leaders are virtually always in attendance at freeway ceremonies, and occasionally state- and national-level politicians make an appearance when it is politically advantageous. Some of the biggest names in national politics have been on hand for freeway events in North Texas, including the most influential politician associated with North Texas, George W. Bush.

Bush, a native of Midland, originally moved to Dallas shortly after his father's victory in the 1988 presiden-

tial election, purchasing a home in the Preston Hollow neighborhood of north Dallas. He first became the focus of local media attention when he led an investor group which purchased a controlling interest in the Texas Rangers baseball team in March 1989. Bush entered politics in 1994, winning the election for Texas governor and earning a second term in 1998 before winning the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. Bush returned to reside in Preston Hollow after exiting the White House in January 2009.

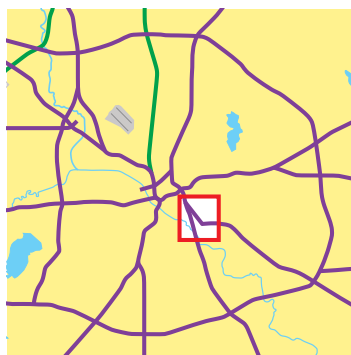


Dallas Public Library⁸



1995
July 12

In 1995 the Texas Legislature designated the S.M. Wright Freeway in south Dallas in honor of the Dallas civil rights leader and longtime pastor of Peoples Baptist Church who died in November 1994. For complete information about S.M. Wright and the freeway, see page 295. The freeway was



formerly South Central Expressway, which extended south from IH 45 and included the adjacent section of SH 310. Governor George W. Bush was the featured speaker at the July 12, 1995, dedication ceremony and is shown above as the official sign was unveiled. The S.M. Wright Freeway is scheduled to be demolished and converted into an arterial street prior to 2020.⁷



Dallas Morning News

1996
May 2

On May 2, 1996, Governor Bush attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Bush Turnpike, named for his father. Bush praised the cooperative efforts of local and state governments which made the project happen and expressed support for toll roads in general. Tossing the first ceremonial shovels of dirt are, from left to right, Jere W. Thompson Jr, chairman of the Texas Turnpike Authority, Bush and Texas Transportation Commission Chairman David Laney.⁹



politicians and freeways **George H.W. Bush**

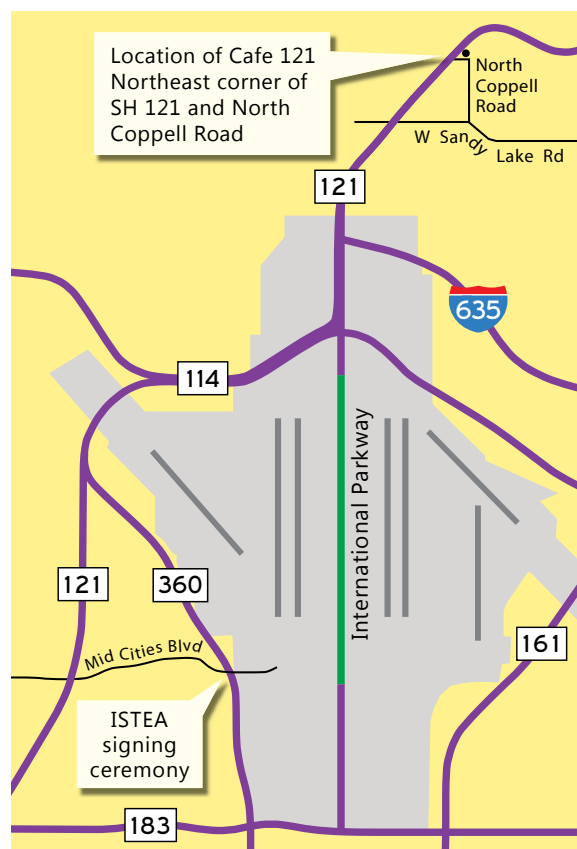
1991
Dec 18

President George H.W. Bush came to North Texas in December 1991 for an event of national significance—the signing of the \$151 billion Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, federal legislation which extended federal highway and transit construction funding for the next six years. The bill's funding promised the creation of thousands of jobs in the recession-stricken economy, so the bill signing was a nice publicity opportunity. The Bush White House chose a construction site on SH 360 at Mid-Cities Boulevard just southwest of DFW Airport in Euless. The construction project was building the SH 360 frontage roads and the Mid-Cities Blvd overpass. Recent rains had turned the construction site into a muddy mess, but the crowd carefully dodged the mud for the ceremony which featured Bush and key congressional leaders who crafted the bill.

Also see: Biographical profile of George H.W. Bush on page 262

President Bush inspects the message sign which greeted the delegation from Washington DC.

Bush Presidential Library¹⁰





Bush Presidential Library¹²

Bush signs the ISTEA legislation with the Mid-Cities Boulevard overpass as the backdrop. At left is construction worker Arnold Martinez, who introduced the president for the bill signing. The congressional leaders who crafted the bill also attended the ceremony and were featured on the platform for the signing. From left to right to the right of Martinez are Pennsylvania Congressman Bud Shuster, Bush, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York (in back wearing a hat), Congressman

John Paul Hammerschmidt of Arkansas (partially obscured), Congressman Robert Roe of New Jersey and California Congressman Norman Mineta, who later became Secretary of Transportation under the administration of George W. Bush. Senators Lloyd Bentsen of Texas and Harry Reid of Nevada were also influential in the bill and in attendance but are not visible in this photo.¹¹



Bush chats with employees of Austin Bridge & Road Company, the contractor on the construction project. Austin Bridge is headquartered in North Texas.

Bush Presidential Library¹³



Bush Presidential Library¹⁵

After the bill signing the president made an unscheduled visit to the Cafe 121 diner at the northeast corner of SH 121 and North Coppel Road in Coppell. Cafe 121 was a blue-collar hangout with a trailer park immediately behind the restaurant, making it a good place for Bush to show his concern for ordinary Americans during the economic hard times. Construction workers from Austin Bridge & Road joined Bush at the table, and in the above photo Bush gives the pen used for

the signing to Arnold Martinez as Donald Towles, center, looks on. The president ordered chicken-fried steak with mashed potatoes, french fries and corn as he listened to songs from his favorite country artist Randy Travis playing on the jukebox. Bush did most of the talking with the topics including hunting, fishing and football. After lunch Bush covered the tab, said goodbye to the table guests and then jumped in the limousine waiting to take him back to Air Force One for the return trip to Washington.¹⁴



At the time of the presidential visit SH 121 had just been upgraded from a rural two-lane highway to a four-lane divided highway. There are no available records to pinpoint the closure date of Cafe 121, but it occurred sometime in the mid-to-late 1990s and by 2001 the entire property had been cleared, leaving no trace of the restaurant or trailer park. The property remained vacant until it was redeveloped with housing in 2012.

Bush Presidential Library¹⁶

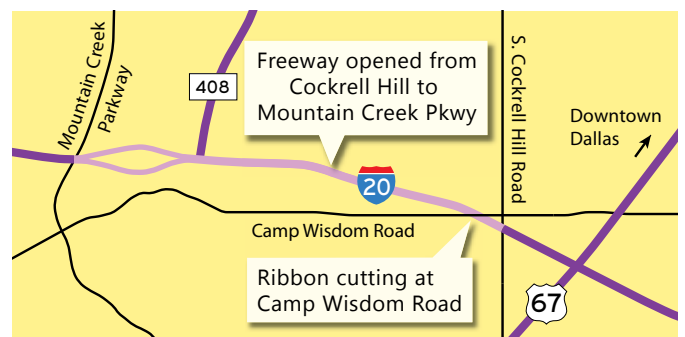
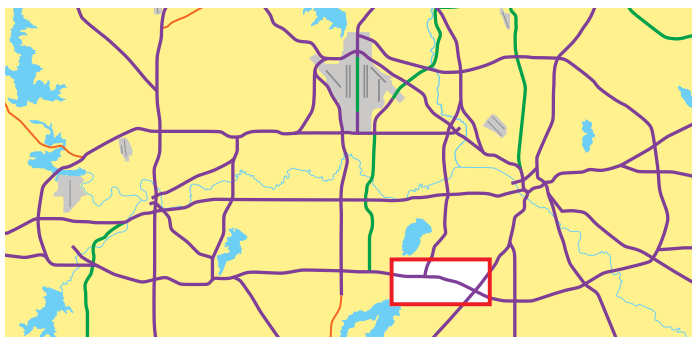
politicians and freeways **Lloyd Bentsen**

1975
Aug 27

Senator Lloyd Bentsen and his wife Beryl attended the August 27, 1975, opening of the final section of Interstate 20 between Dallas and Fort Worth. The ceremony took place underneath the Camp Wisdom Road overpass with Mrs Bentsen having the honor of the ribbon cutting. Bentsen (1921-2006) was a prominent figure in Texas and national politics from 1970 to 1994 and the last Texas Democrat to have an impact at the federal level. Bentsen was first elected Senator in 1970, defeating George H.W. Bush, and went on to be reelected for three additional terms. Bentsen was the vice presidential candidate on the 1988 Democratic ticket with Michael Dukakis and is perhaps best known for his debate with Republican vice presidential candidate Dan Quayle. After the presidential election loss to Bush and Quayle, Bentsen returned to the U.S. Senate and was appointed Secretary of the Treasury by President Clinton in 1993, serving until his 1994 retirement from political life.¹⁷



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections¹⁸



politicians and freeways **Jim Wright**

Politicians often like to take credit for highway improvements even if they had little or nothing to do with the actual construction, but there is one politician who deserved all the credit he received: Jim Wright. In fact, Jim Wright has done more to promote highway projects in North Texas, and in particular Fort Worth, than any other politician. He began his advocacy in 1957 to help secure the designation of Interstate 20 between Dallas and Fort Worth. In the 1970s the completion of Interstate 820 became his personal crusade. First elected to the US Congress in 1954, Wright (born 1922) rose steadily up the Democratic party ranks and became Speaker of the House in 1987, where he remained until his resignation from Congress in 1989 amid controversy over business dealings relating to his book, *Reflections of a Public Man*.

In the years after his retirement his name was heard most often in reference to the Wright Amendment, part of the Air Transportation Act of 1979. The amendment, sponsored and pushed to passage by Wright, originally limited flights at Dallas Love Field to adjacent states only in order to protect Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, which is closer to Fort Worth and favored by Fort Worth interests. The amendment was the focus of ongoing ire from Dallas interests until it was repealed in 2006, with nonstop flight restrictions being lifted in 2014. However, a reduction in the number of gates at Love Field continued to provide protection for DFW Airport and its dominant airline, American Airlines.



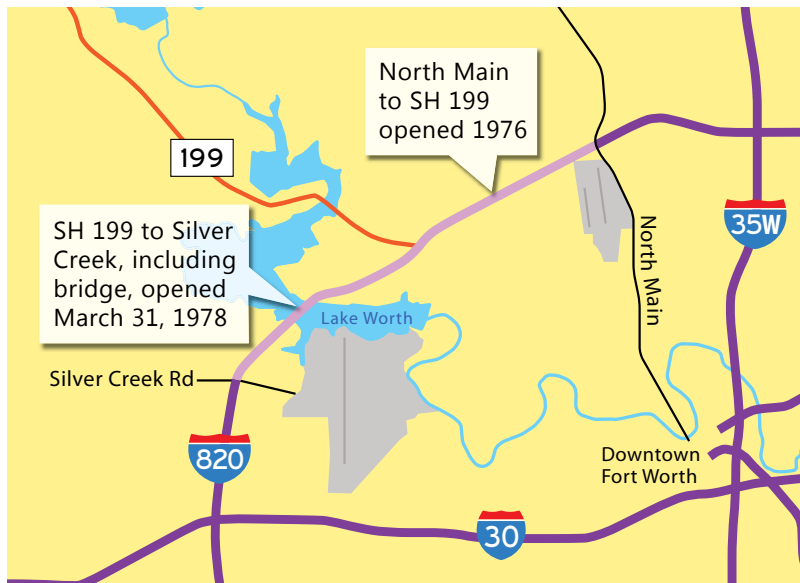
Texas Christian University¹⁹

1976
July 2

Jim Wright poses with road signs displaying his name at the July 2, 1976, ceremony to name a section of Interstate 820 in his honor. The northwest section of Loop 820, between IH 35W and IH 30, is the Jim Wright Freeway.

Texas Christian University¹⁹





1978
Mar 31

Jim Wright cuts the ribbon for the Interstate 820 Lake Worth bridge on March 31, 1978. Perhaps more than any other specific highway project in the history of North Texas freeways, the Lake Worth bridge was the focus of attention by a single politician who shepherded it to completion. The early-to-mid 1970s was a particularly turbulent and challenging period for highway construction in the United States as funding was in steep decline and new environmental rules made it very difficult to obtain approval for highway projects. In October 1973 TxDOT announced that the bridge was indefinitely delayed due to a federal court ruling requiring environmental impact statements for all new construction projects, and the federal approval process was expected to take years. To the rescue came Jim Wright. Wright was in regular communication with Transportation Secretary

Claude Brinegar in 1974 to move the project quickly through the federal bureaucracy. On a Friday in October 1974 Wright was able to reach Brinegar at his residence and obtain final approval. Wright commented, "I have tried to stay on top of it up here and cut through miles of red tape so that, together, we could finally get this vital link finished."²⁰

Texas Christian University²¹



politicians and freeways **Dallas Mayor Annette Strauss**



Dallas Morning News

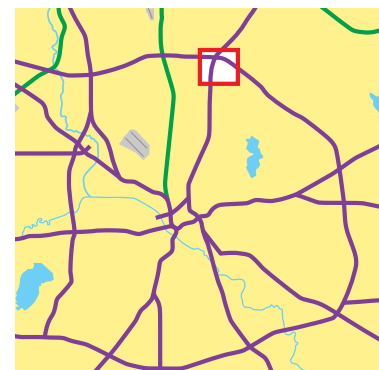
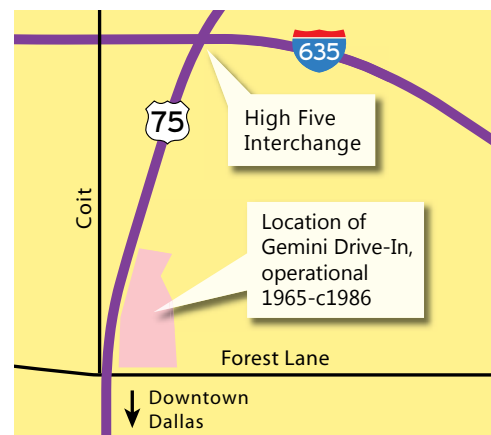
1988
Dec 22

A groundbreaking was held on a rainy December 22, 1988, when the final major parcel of property needed for the first Central Expressway reconstruction project in Dallas was acquired. The property was part of the former Gemini Drive-In cinema along Central just north of Forest Lane. Bart McLendon, representing the McLendon family which originally built the cinema and owned the property, shovels some dirt into a gift box for Dallas Mayor Annette Strauss, at center. Holding the box is North Central Task Force chairman Walt Humann. Strauss (1924-1998) served as Dallas mayor from 1987 to 1991.²²

The Gemini Drive-In opened as a twin-screen drive-in on April 15, 1965, and a third screen was added in 1969. Movie operations were curtailed in 1984 to summertime only on two screens amid expectations that the land would be redeveloped into high-priced commercial real estate. In 1986 the parking lot for one of the screens was used for American Airlines Airlink, a shuttle service to DFW airport; the AA Airlink sign is attached to the lower part of the main sign in the photo above. It appears that 1986 was the last year of movie operations. The property was used mostly for automotive sales until a specialty hospital opened on the site in 2009.²³



Lynne's Lens



first lady landscaping **Lady Bird Johnson**



TxDOT Dallas District Office

1976
April 3

Lady Bird Johnson, first lady during the presidential administration of her husband Lyndon B. Johnson from 1963 to 1969, grabs a shovel and gets to work installing landscaping at the intersection of LBJ Freeway (IH 635) and Central Expressway (US 75) on April 3, 1976. The landscaping project at the freeway interchange was organized by A Beautiful Clean Dallas. Lady Bird Johnson (1912-2007), born Claudia Alta Taylor in Karnack in East Texas near the Louisiana border, is viewed as the second most influential first lady in the history of the United States in terms of public policy, after Eleanor Roosevelt. Working with Interior Secretary Steward Udall, Mrs Johnson pushed more than 200 environmental laws to congressional approval and ensured her husband signed them all. The Highway Beautification Act of 1965 was her most influential legislation relating to highways, and wildflowers along Texas highways are a legacy of Lady Bird's efforts.²⁴

DEMOLITION PARTY

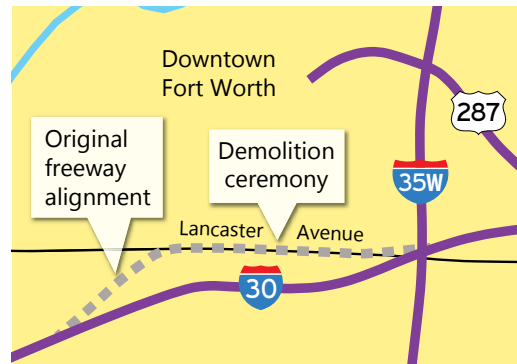
LANCASTER ELEVATED

2001
Aug 17

The Lancaster Elevated on Interstate 30 in Fort Worth was the subject of the most contentious controversy in the history of North Texas freeways and one of the most intense civic contro-

versies to ever occur in Fort Worth. The controversy raged for all of the 1980s with a lawsuit and appeal, and was not resolved until the plan to demolish the Lancaster Elevated was approved in 1989. When the replacement freeway was complete and the Lancaster Elevated could be demolished, a special event featuring pyrotechnics was held on August 17, 2001, to celebrate the end of the long ordeal. The weather outside was stormy, but the pyrotechnics fired as planned when the jackhammers started to demolish the freeway surface. A crowd of 350 attended a celebratory breakfast at the nearby Texas & Pacific Railroad terminal.⁵⁶

Also see: complete history of the Lancaster Elevated pages 491-502; ranking of the top freeway controversies in North Texas page 65



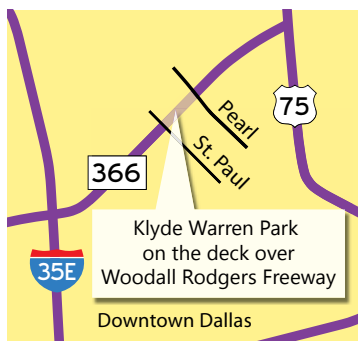
TxDOT Travel Information Division

The pyrotechnics fire as the jackhammers begin demolition of the Lancaster Elevated.

Klyde Warren Park opening celebration



Dallas Morning News (all three photos)



Klyde Warren Park on the deck above Woodall Rodgers Freeway opened with a weekend celebration on October 27 and 28, 2012. The above view shows fireworks on Friday night. Film actor and Dallas native Owen Wilson, shown at right with Channel 11 (CBS-KTVT) morning anchor Adrienne Bankert, was in attendance at the Saturday night Polyphonic Spree concert and at the "Evening Under the Stars" dinner on the park lawn on October 24. Dallas-based The Polyphonic Spree, led by frontman Tim DeLaughter in green, is known for wearing robes in concert. Also see photo page 259.²⁵

2012
October
24-28



frustration relief



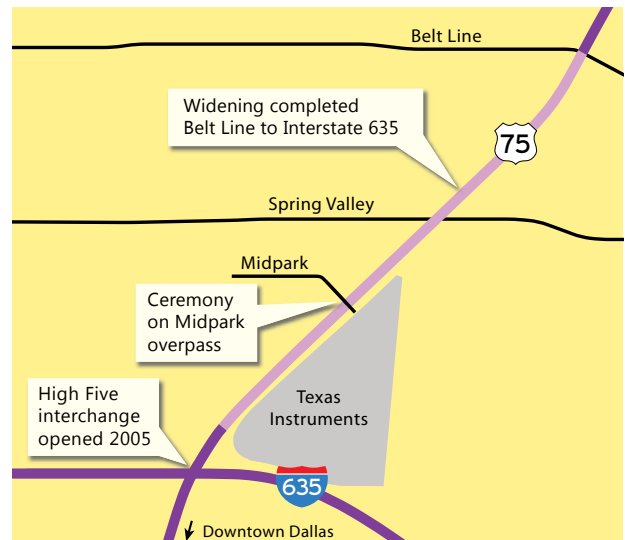
TxDOT Travel Information Division

1988
August

Officials relieved years of construction-detour frustration by using a sledge hammer to ceremonially destroy a barrel. Dallas billionaire philanthropist Robert Dedman was at the event and is on the right edge of this photo. The ceremony and barrel smashing took place on the Midpark overpass in August 1988. The widening of Central Expressway from Interstate 635 (LBJ Freeway) to Belt Line Road was the first major improvement project to be completed on Central Expressway. Below, officials cut the ribbon with Dedman second from the right.



TxDOT Travel Information Division





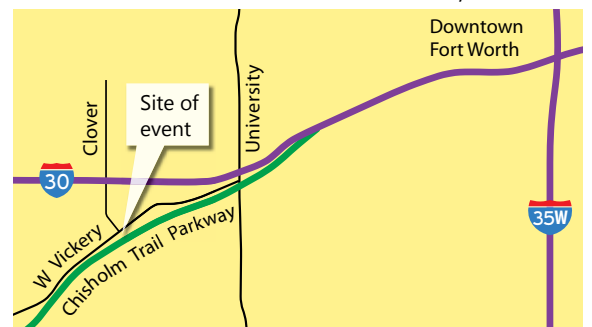
Marks the Spot



City of Fort Worth

2006
Dec 7

Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief, two city council members and other officials grabbed sledge hammers to take swings at the target to launch the demolition of the first building to be cleared on city-owned property for the Chisholm Trail Parkway, called the Southwest Parkway at the time of this event. Below, Mayor Mike Moncrief stands at the event podium and gives a high shake to Fort Worth Councilman Chuck Silcox (1943-2008) after breaking out a hole in the building wall. The Chisholm Trail Parkway toll road at this location opened in 2014.²⁶



Beauty Queen Openings

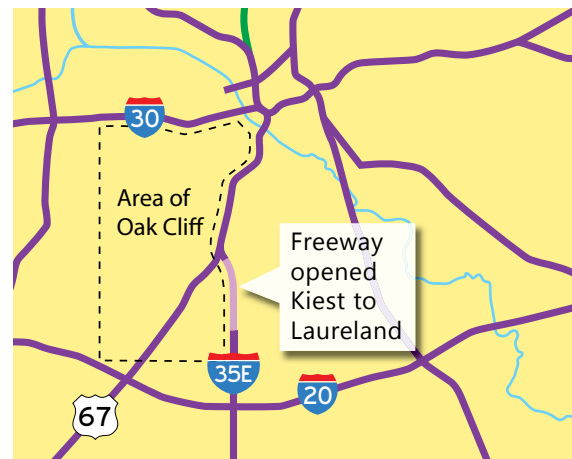
When officials didn't plan a stunt or major celebration for a freeway opening, local beauty queens were always available for ribbon cuttings. In the 1960s every city and even neighborhoods like Oak Cliff had beauty queens, so there was an ample selection of local talent to please the opening crowds which tended to be male dominated.



TxDOT Travel Information Division

1965
Sept 21

Two "Oak Cliff beauties" in a convertible used cigarette lighters to burn through the ribbon for the opening of Interstate 35E south from Kiest Blvd to Laureland Drive on September 21, 1965. This was the final section of IH 35E in Dallas County to be completed. It was an occasion for big hair, and the beauty queens impressed with their huge beehive hairdos. From left to right are Texas Highway Commission Chairman Herbert Petry, Judy Benson, Patsy Mays and police captain P. W. Lawrence.²⁷





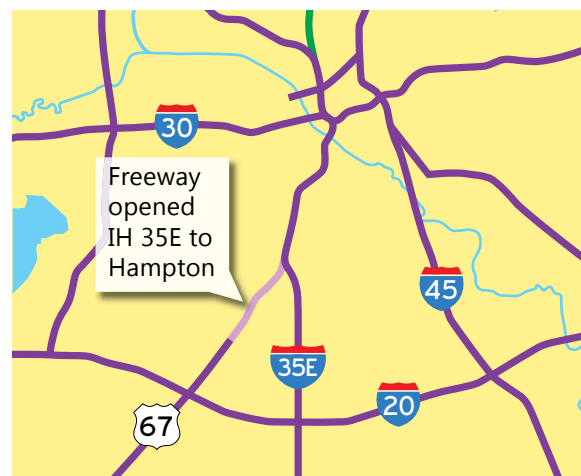
Dallas Public Library²⁹



Dallas Public Library³⁰

1969
July 29

The opening of the first section of main lanes of the US 67 Marvin Love Freeway from IH 35E to Hampton Road on July 29, 1969, attracted an all-star lineup of beauty queens and political officials. In the photo above the beauty queens are seated in Air Force weapon loaders from which they cut the ribbon. Governor Preston Smith spoke at the event and afterwards enjoyed one of the spoils of the office—a little attention from the beauty queens! Shown standing underneath the Led-better overpass from left to right are Miss Duncanville Charlotte Griffith, Governor Smith, Miss Dallas Jeanne Jones and Miss Oak Cliff Cindy Hodges.²⁸



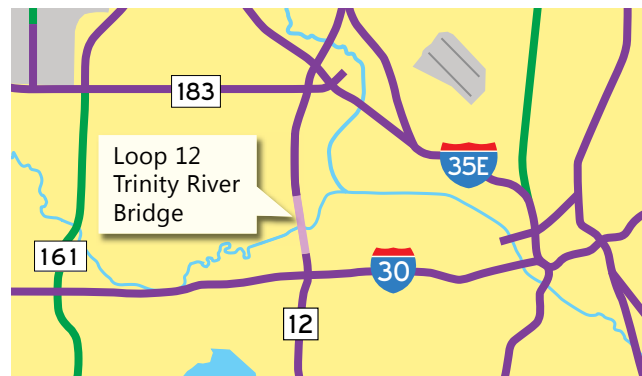
Beauty Queen Groundbreaking



Durline Dunham Melanson

1973
Mar 10

Miss Oak Cliff 1972-1973 Durline Dunham joined Dallas Mayor Wes Wise, left, and Irving Mayor Dan Matkin at the March 10, 1973, kick-off ceremony for the construction of the Loop 12 freeway bridge over the Trinity River. The original two-lane Loop 12 bridge was removed as part of the project, and the jackhammers were brought in to launch the destruction of the bridge. In the photos on the right, Mayor Wise assists Durline Dunham with the jackhammer and then activates it, startling her with a task that surely wasn't in the job description for Miss Oak Cliff. Dunham went on to become a local television personality, teaming with Don Hall to host the public affairs program *Reflect* on KXTX-TV channel 39 in Dallas in 1977.³¹



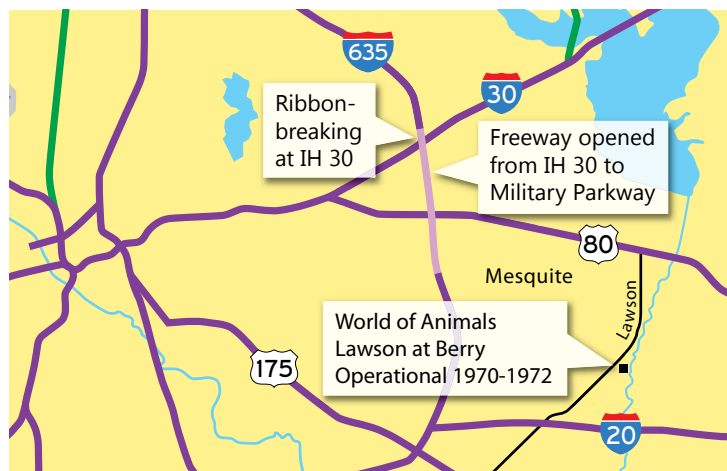
animal stunts

1970
Aug 4

The animal kingdom officially opened a section of Interstate 635 in Mesquite when Clyde the cheetah leaped through the ribbon to dedicate the freeway. Clyde was a resident of the World of Animals east of Mesquite, which was in operation from September 1970 to the end of summer 1972. The ceremony on August 4, 1970, opened the freeway from IH 30 to SH 352 (Military Parkway). The two four-level interchanges on this section, at IH 30 and US 80, were the first modern-design four-level interchanges in North Texas. Also shown in the photo, from left to right, are Dallas Mayor (1961-1964) and U.S. Congressman (1965-1973) Earle Cabell (1906-1975), World of Animals game warden Tex Chase, Miss Mesquite Karen Davis and Mesquite Mayor George Boyce.³²



TxDOT Travel Information Division

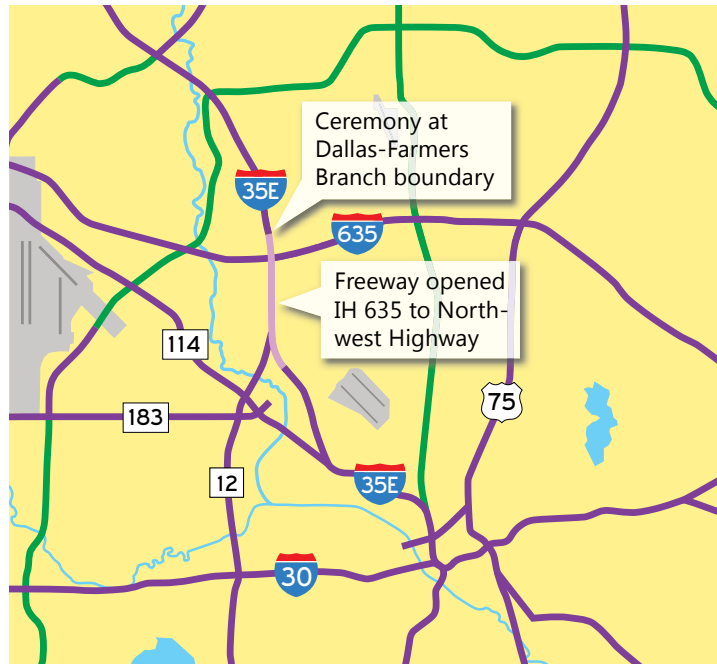


Stemmons Freeway final section opening

1963
Aug 15

The opening of the final section of Interstate 35E north Stemmons Freeway in northwest Dallas on August 15, 1963, featured a bizarre combination of nineteenth-century fashion and a high-tech stunt. The arriving public was greeted by women wearing prairie dresses performing a dance. This section of IH 35E was the final section to open between Dallas and the Oklahoma state line, and the prairie women apparently were celebrating the connection to Oklahoma and the prairie states to the north.

But the main event of the opening was high tech, featuring a ribbon cutting by electrical impulses sent from telegraph switches in Mexico and Canada, in recognition that IH 35, when complete, would stretch from Mexico to north Minnesota near Canada. At precisely 3:45 PM, Hector Livas, governor of Nuevo Leon, in Monterey and Fred Cass, attorney general of Ontario, in Toronto pressed telegraph buttons to initiate the ribbon cutting on Stemmons Freeway. After a few clicks, the ribbon was severed by an electrical current.³⁶



Women in prairie dresses entertained the large crowd, estimated at 500, which gathered for the Thursday afternoon opening.

Industrial Properties Corporation



At precisely 3:45 PM electrical signals were sent from Monterey, Mexico, and Toronto, Canada, to activate the ribbon-cutting device at the opening celebration on Stemmons Freeway. At right, Nuevo Leon governor Hector Livas awaits the precise moment to depress the button of the switch to send the signal. The switches used in Mexico and Canada resembled nineteenth-century telegraph keys, the device a telegraph operator used to send the pulses. However, the signal was sent using modern Western Union teletype technology. Teletype machines were the standard devices used in 1963 to transmit messages over telephone wires with a typewriter device on the receiving end to print the text.

Also see: Additional opening photos on page 192



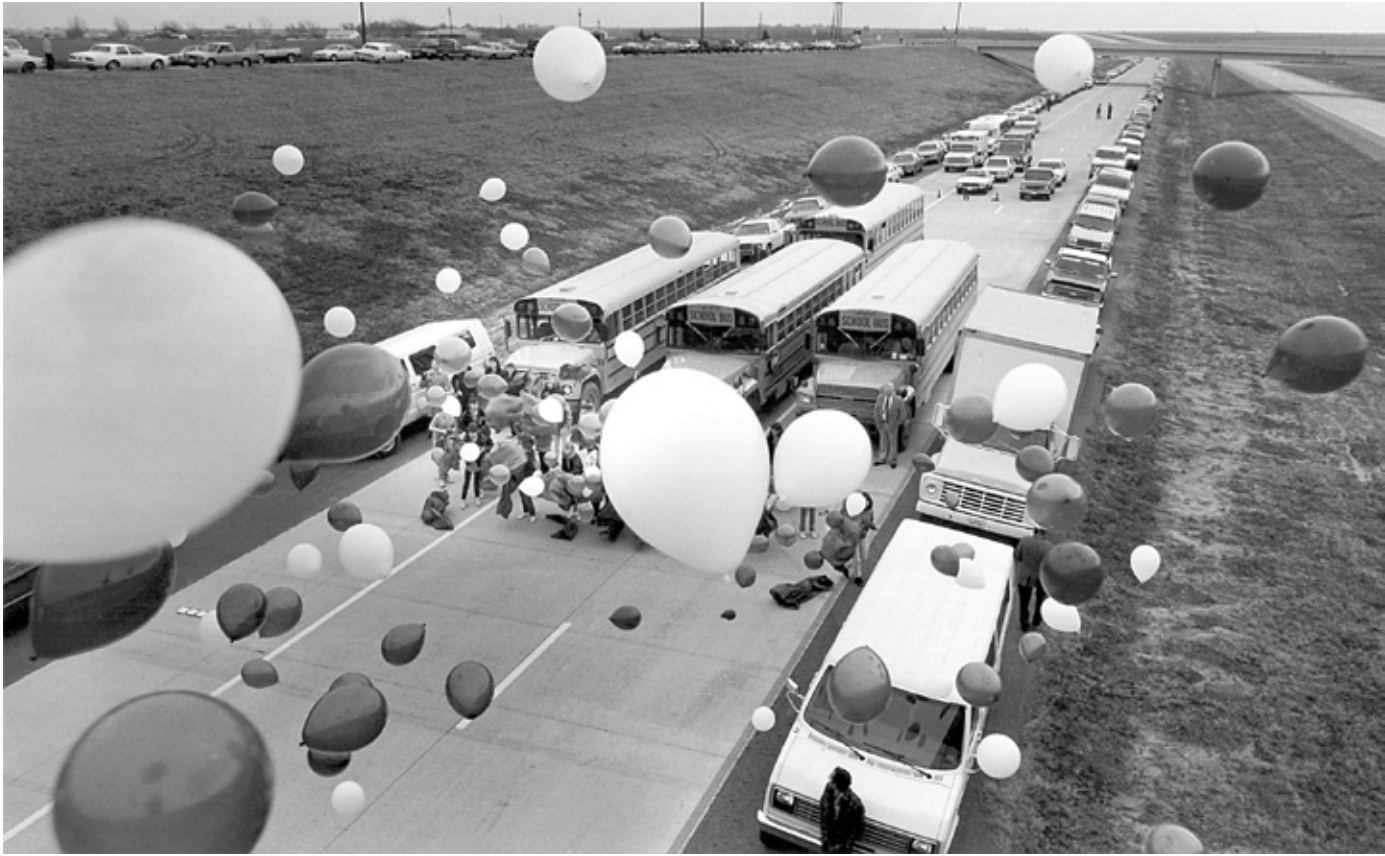
Industrial Properties Corporation

The ribbon cutting device is positioned on the table at the celebration on Stemmons Freeway.



TxDOT Travel Information Division

Freeways are cool if they get us out of school!



Dallas Morning News

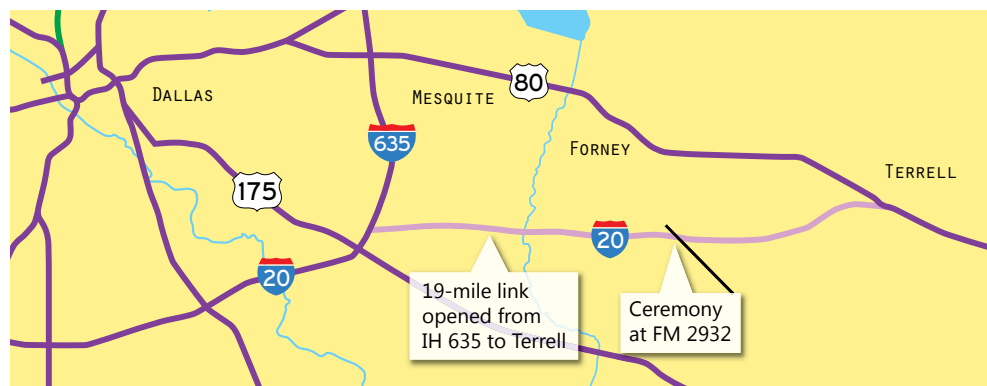
1989
Jan 27

These students from Mesquite and Forney surely had little or no interest in freeways, but if the freeway gave them an opportunity to miss class then freeways were definitely cool for a day. The students joined the celebration on January 27, 1989, for the opening of the final section of Interstate 20 in North Texas, a 19-mile link between Dallas and Terrell. Big-name grown-ups were also in attendance. Dallas billionaire philanthropist Robert Dedman, then a member of the Texas Transportation Commission, cut the ceremonial ribbon. The ceremony took place at the FM 2932 overpass.

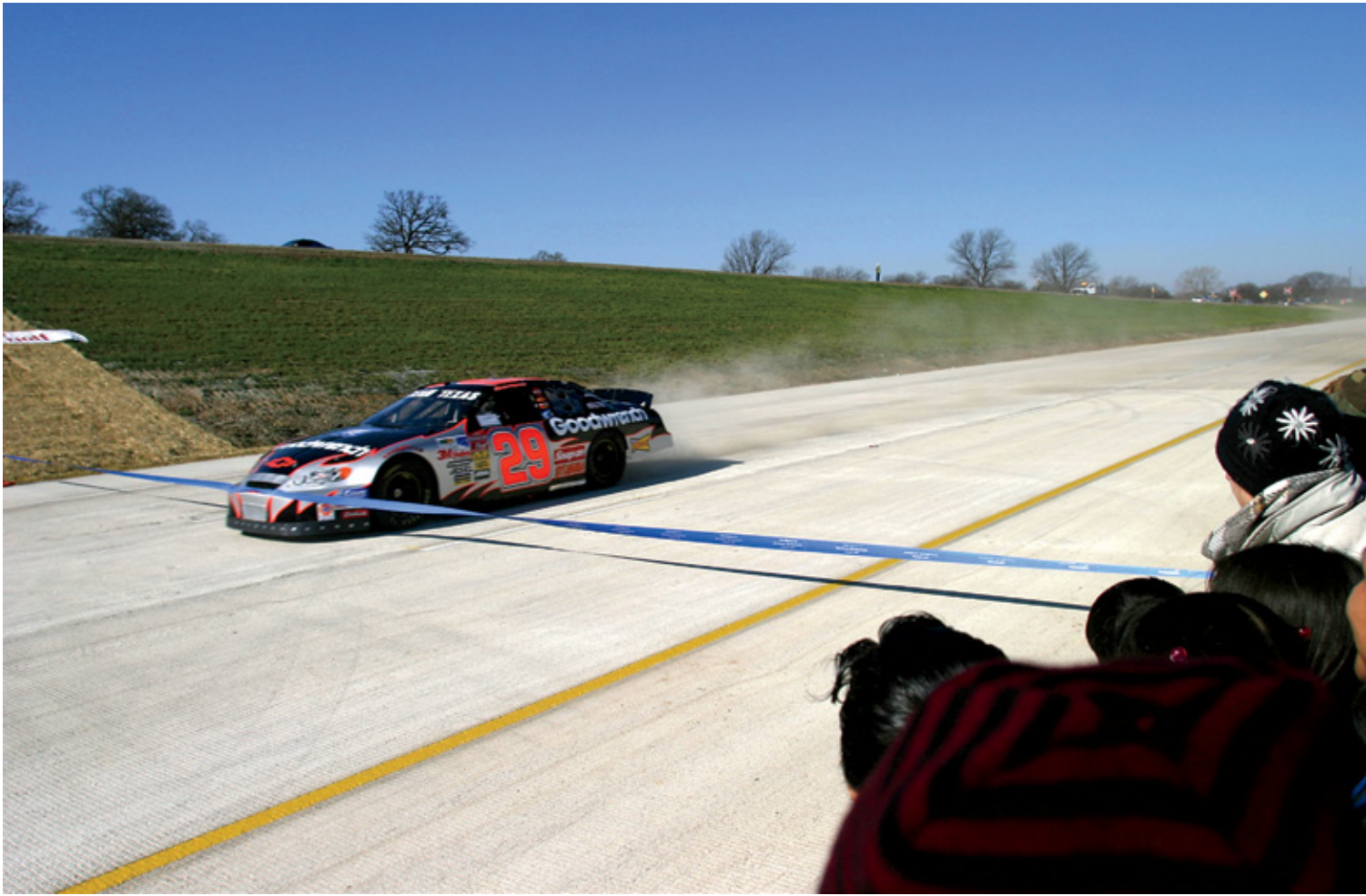
This section of Interstate 20 was the final interstate highway to open in North Texas. It was also the next-to-last interstate opening in Texas, followed only by a section of Interstate 27 in Lubbock in 1991. By 1991 only 263 miles of the originally planned 42,795-mile national system remained unbuilt. In 2013 the officially designated length of the Interstate Highway System is 46,876 miles.⁵⁰



TxDOT Travel Information Division



auto stunts SH 114 Southlake



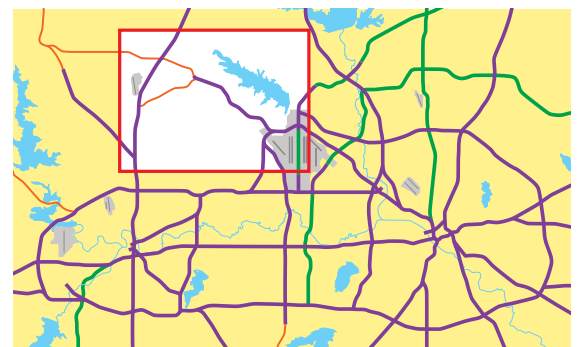
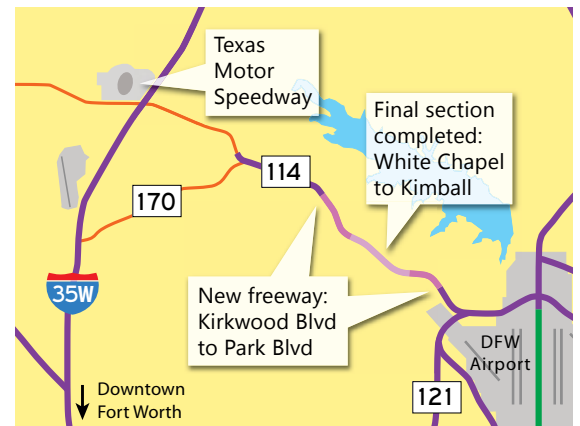
Mike Lewis Photography

2004
Feb 7

In the fastest opening event in the history of North Texas freeways, a NASCAR racecar from nearby Texas Motor Speedway breaks the ribbon at 150 miles per hour for the opening of SH 114 in Southlake on February 7, 2004. The celebration also featured a family-oriented party on the freeway and a parade of antique and vintage cars led by the racecar. Over five hundred attended the event at the Carroll Avenue overpass in spite of sub-freezing temperatures. See page 427 for an additional photo of the event.

The opening celebration was for the freeway section from White Chapel Boulevard to Kimball Avenue, the final segment of the overall 6-mile-long project which extended from near Park Boulevard at the Southlake-Grapevine border to Kirkwood Boulevard at the Southlake-Westlake border. Prior to the freeway project, SH 114 was a traffic-clogged four-lane highway with numerous stoplights.³⁸

150
miles
per
hour



WESTERN-THEMED STUNTS

Although Fort Worth would be expected to take the lead in western-themed freeway stunts, Dallas delivered these two openings.

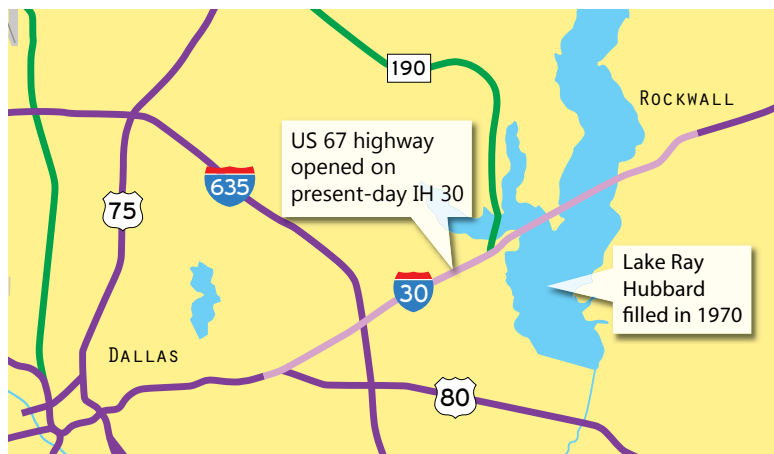


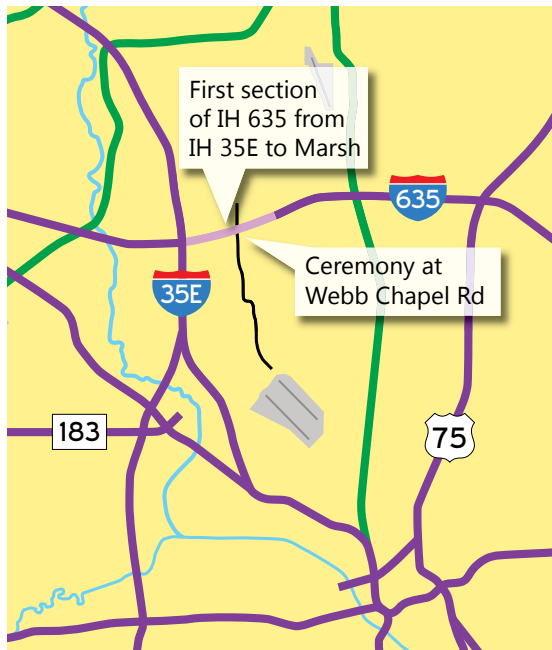
Dallas Public Library⁴²

1951
July 26

The horses seemed to watch with interest as the ribbon was cut for a 16.6-mile section of present-day Interstate 30 from Buckner Boulevard to Rockwall on July 26, 1951. Holding the scissors, which were labeled “Big D” and “Big R”, are Texas Highway Commission chairman E.H. Thornton Jr on the left and Rockwall County Judge Ralph Hall. At the time, the highway was signed as US 67. The ceremony was held at the Dallas-Rockwall county line.

The new roadway was a divided highway not meeting freeway standards but was still a huge improvement over the old Highway 67 route and was the most anticipated highway opening since Central Expressway in August 1949. The first vehicle on the highway was the covered wagon driven by a descendant of a pioneer Texas family. After serving as Rockwall County Judge from 1950 to 1962, Ralph Hall (born May 3, 1923) was elected to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1980. In December 2012, at the age of 89, he became the oldest person ever to serve in the U.S. House.⁴¹





TxDOT Travel Information Division

1967
Mar 23

The first section of Interstate 635 Lyndon B. Johnson Freeway, from IH 35E to Marsh Lane, was opened on March 23, 1967, with a ceremony on the Webb Chapel Road overpass. Students at R.L. Turner High School in Carrollton made a brand which matched a style used by the Johnson ranch in Stonewall (Tex.) The Johnson ranch, Lyndon B. Johnson's birthplace, home and final resting place, was known as the Texas White House during the Johnson presidency. Prior to the ribbon burning, a wood panel was branded to be sent to President Johnson in Washington. Performing the ribbon burning are Dallas City Councilman Frank Hoke on the left and Farmers Branch Mayor A.J. Airolidi.⁴³



TxDOT Travel Information Division

HIGH TECH STUNTS

Dallas' burgeoning technology industry in the 1950s and 1960s provided the brainpower for two leading-edge high-technology freeway opening stunts. Texas Instruments engineers handled the technical details to give opening ceremony crowds a glimpse of the future. A third stunt, while not high tech itself, was inspired by the largest technology effort of the 1960s, the Apollo moon-landing program.



Dallas Times-Herald

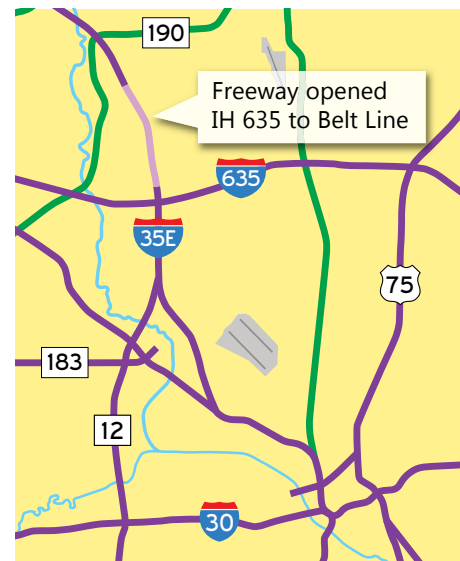
1957
Dec 14

The first high-tech stunt took place on December 14, 1957, on the Valwood Parkway overpass at the Carrollton-Farmers Branch borderline. There are no surviving photographs of the opening, only microfilm of the newspaper report.

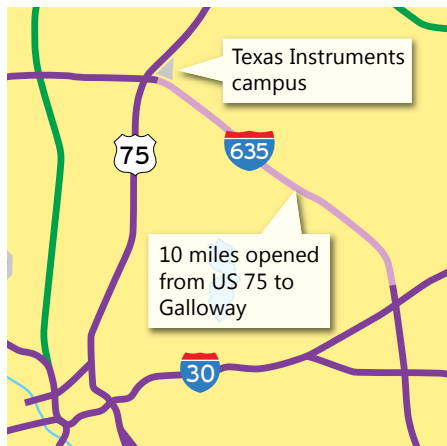
The ribbon-cutting device built by Texas Instruments (TI) engineers featured a photovoltaic cell, also called a solar cell, which converted sunlight directly into electricity. The first photovoltaic cell had been demonstrated in 1954 by AT&T Bell Labs and the silicon chip used in the device was made at the TI Dallas research lab. TI was the world's largest manufacturer of another up-and-coming technology, transistors, which were used to amplify the photovoltaic cell voltage to create an electrical arc similar to an automobile spark plug which burned through the ribbon. Thanks to bright sunshine the device worked perfectly, severing the ribbon as officials and the crowd watched.

Presiding over the ceremony wearing the white suit was Texas Transportation Commissioner Charles F. Hawn, namesake of the Hawn Freeway in southeast Dallas. To his right two grandmas watched the electronic stunt with interest, 85-year-old lifelong Carrollton resident Mrs C.E. Jackson at far right and 55-year Carrollton resident Mrs Belle Allen, who said her age was "nobody's business".⁵¹

Dallas Morning News



HIGH TECH STUNTS



1968
Nov 6

The opening of Interstate 635 LBJ Freeway alongside the Texas Instruments campus on November 6, 1968,

inspired TI engineers to deploy a research laser to burn through the ceremonial ribbon. Looking more like a cannon, the laser directed its energy on the ribbon which burst into flames, delighting the crowd of onlookers.⁵²



TxDOT Travel Information Division



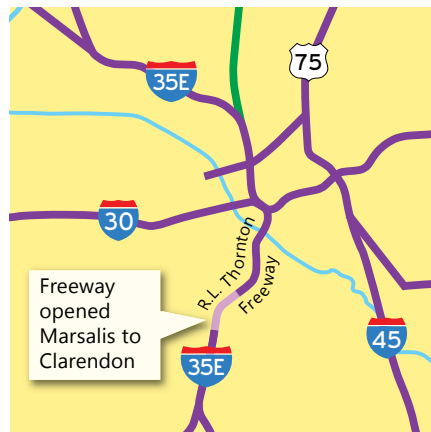
Dallas Morning News

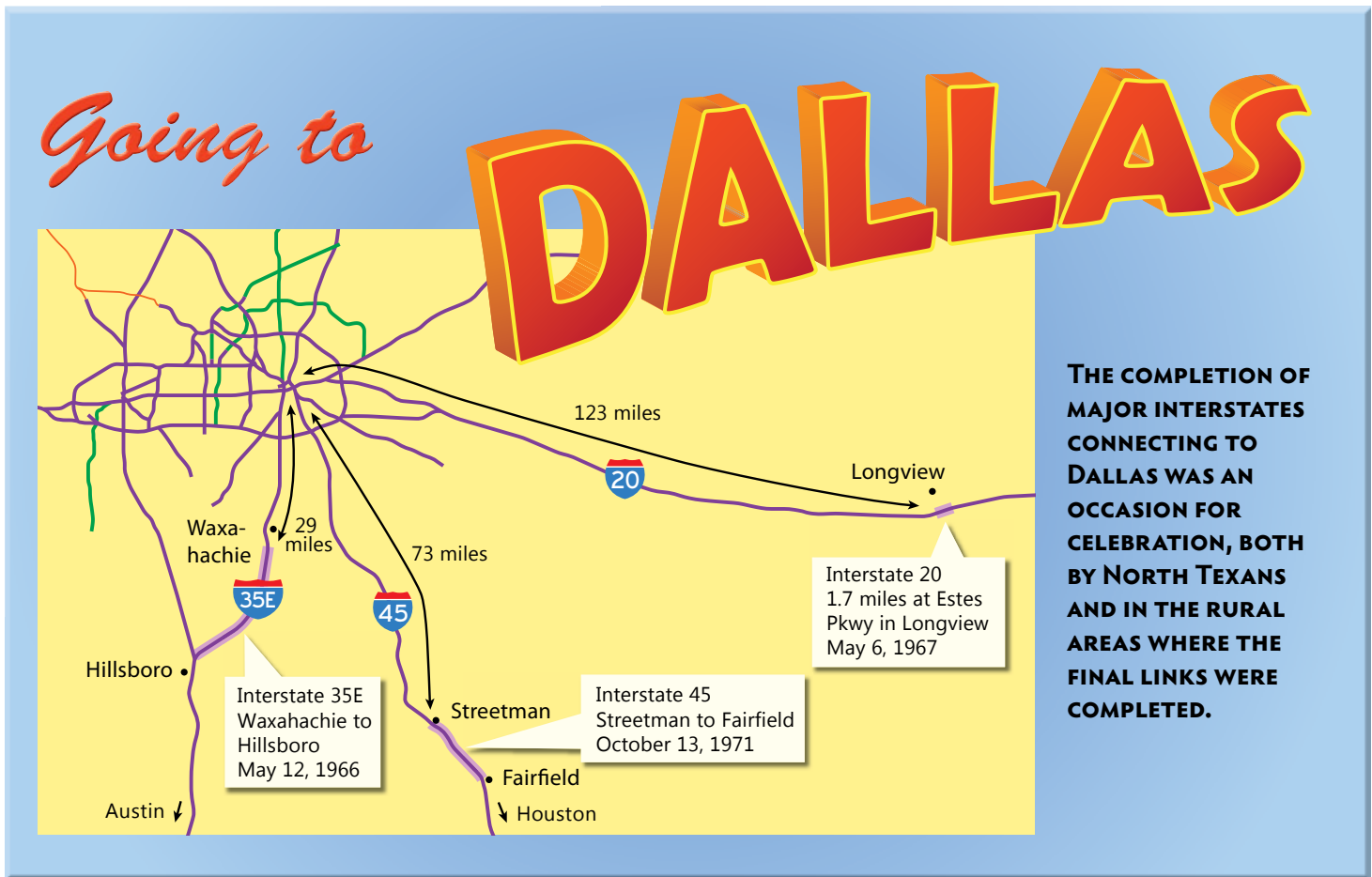
1962
Jan 31

"We're going to shoot for the moon," proclaimed R.L. Thornton just before he lit the fuse of the rocket attached to the ceremonial opening ribbon at the January 31, 1962, ceremony. Moments later the rocket shot out its launching tube in a plume of smoke, pulling the ribbon upward into the air. The space race between the United States and Soviet Union was red hot in 1962, with both countries launching the first humans into space in 1961 and President Kennedy calling for a moon-landing program in May 1961. This image is from newspaper microfilm, the only available photo.⁵³

Robert L. "Bob" Thornton was the man of honor at the ceremony on Interstate 35E south at Zang Boulevard for the opening of the 1-mile section of his namesake freeway from Marsalis to Clarendon. Thornton (1880-1964) was the most influential

civic leader in the history of Dallas and was informally known as "Mr Dallas" for his many leadership roles, including an 18-year tenure as president of the State Fair of Texas, Dallas mayor from 1953 to 1961 and president of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce from 1933 to 1935.⁵⁴





1971
Oct 13

Connecting the two largest cities in Texas was an occasion calling for something big. So for the opening of the final rural section of Interstate 45 between Fairfield and Streetman on October 13, 1971, officials erected the largest sign ever seen for a North Texas freeway opening. From end to end it measured around thirty feet long with a missing link just north of Fairfield symbolizing the final section of the interstate. The missing link was placed in position and the cover over the interstate shield burst into flames, igniting small flares which outlined the sign and the number 45.⁴⁴

Dallas Public Library⁴⁵



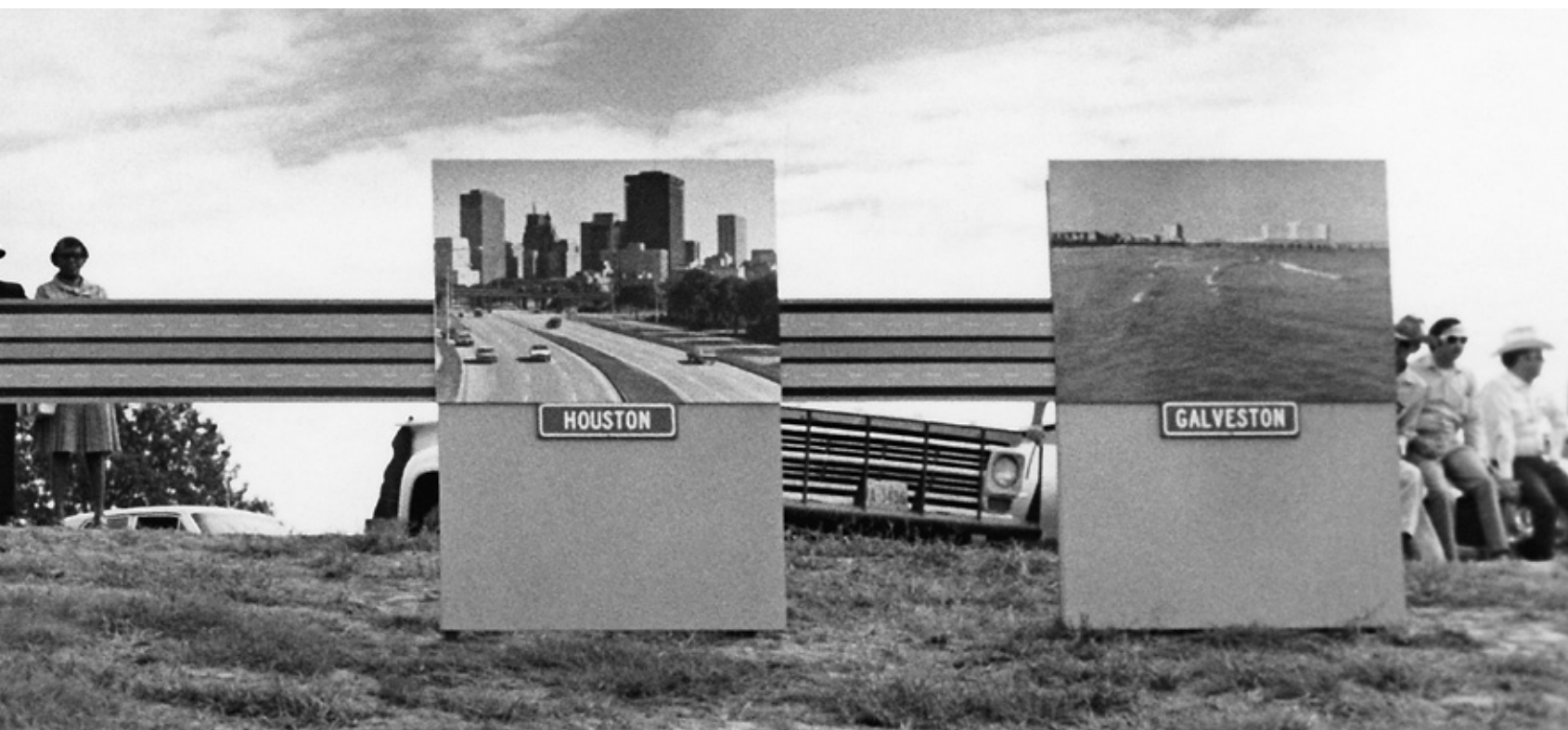


Dallas Public Library⁴⁷

Dewitt Greer, then chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission and widely regarded as the father of the modern Texas highway system, cut the ribbon at the formal ceremony underneath the US 84 overpass at Fairfield.

The completion of the final link of Interstate 45 was eagerly awaited by motorists who were forced to detour on the old US 75 (now Texas 75). The narrow roadway, heavy traffic and impatient motorists combined to make the 12-mile section of US 75 the deadliest in Texas, earning it the nickname "nightmare alley". After nine fatalities on US 75 between Streetman and Buffalo, 18 miles south of Fairfield, in the first six months

of 1969, TxDOT installed numerous warning signs, made most of the section a no-passing zone, banned oversized vehicles and upgraded the highway to have shoulders and a skid-resistant coating. Yet the accidents continued, with more than a dozen fatalities reported in the two years prior to the opening of the final section. Construction was expedited in the interest of public safety and there was a collective sigh of relief to have the final section open to traffic. Interstate 45 was not yet entirely complete, however. The freeway in south Dallas was still unbuilt, with the final section opening in February 1976.⁴⁶





TxDOT Travel Information Division

1967
May 6

The final section of Interstate 20 between Dallas and Shreveport, Louisiana, was opened at Longview on May 6, 1967. In East Texas, where Friday night football is king, the opening celebration was worthy of a game-style banner. As part of the celebration, the mayors of Longview and Shreveport joined Dallas Mayor Pro Tem Frank Hoke in a Cadillac which crashed through the banner.⁴⁸

TxDOT Travel Information Division

1966
May 13

The final section of Interstate 35E south of Dallas, a 28-mile section from Waxahachie to Hillsboro, was opened on May 12, 1966, with a ceremony at the Forreston Road overpass just south of Waxahachie. Dallas resident Kenneth Brewer, at the car door, drove his 1948 Lincoln Continental through the ribbon to officially open the freeway as a crowd of 300 watched. With the new section of interstate, a continuous highway without detours existed on the Interstate 35 corridor from the Oklahoma border to near the Rio Grande at Laredo, although several sections did not yet meet interstate standards.⁴⁹



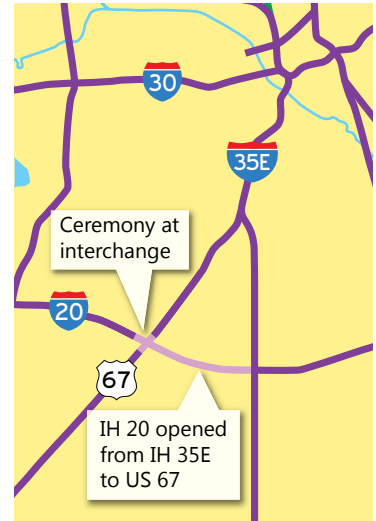
celebrity stunts

1974
July 12

Comedian Phyllis Diller was in Dallas for a series of shows at the Fairmont Hotel's Venetian Room in July 1974, perfect timing for her to make an appearance at the July 12 dedication for the section of Interstate 20 between IH 35E and US 67, including the



Dallas Times-Herald



interchange at IH 20 and US 67. Known for her crazy antics, Diller (1917-2012) performs the official ribbon biting, reportedly successfully severing the ribbon. This scan of a newspaper clipping is the only available image of the event.⁵⁵

Citations

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