

Travel



Thursday, January 24, 1985 O&E

(F-15C, R-60, L-P, C-11C, W, G-5B) ★ 130

Like J.R., Dallas skyline just keeps on going

I FLEW HOME from Dallas during the Deep Freeze last Sunday and flew out again for Nassau, Bahamas, yesterday. That may sound like good planning, but it was just good luck, a bit of warm-weather serendipity I will pay for in full when I try to start my car next week, after it has been sitting for several days in an airport parking lot.

I'll tell you about the restoration of Cable Beach when I get back from sunshine land. Today I want to tell you about the skyline of Dallas. I say "skyline" in the plural because the building boom seems to be all over J.R. Ewing's city: downtown, just out of downtown in "Trammell Crow" country along the Simmons Freeway, in North Dallas, and in Las Colinas in Irving, near the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport.

The eagle may be our national bird, but what flies over Dallas these days is the building crane. If you are a fan of the CBS-TV series "Dallas," you know the opening shot of the show, where the cameras follow converging expressways toward the high-rise skyline of the city. They plan to reshoot that scene soon because it's so out of date.

We photographed Dallas only three years ago, and we'll have to throw all our skyline pictures away. They're obsolete. The "Ewing Oil Co.," really InterFirst Two, is no longer the top of the town.

TOUR GUIDES love to say that J.R. is trying to move his headquarters to InterFirst Plaza because he wants to be in the tallest building in town. Just in case you don't know how tall it is, they've put numbers on the outside walls every ten stories so that your eyes can follow them up 10, 20, ... 60, 70. Other new high-rises on the skyline include Lincoln Plaza, the LTV Tower, the Atlantic Richfield Co., Thanksgiving Tower, First City Center ... etc. A Big ETC!

What does all this mean to the traveler. It means a lot to the business traveler, who has new hotels and new services available all over Dallas. Let's just consider hotels:

Hotel tours are part of a travel writer's business, but I seldom find as many new or renovated grand hotels as I saw in Dallas last week. This town of almost-a-million people has 14,000 hotel rooms within the 16-mile radius of the metropolitan city, with 1,500 more to come by 1986.

IT'S SYMBOLIC that the Adolphus Hotel should be at the beginning of the city list, not because it is number one in alphabetical order but because beer baron Adolphus Busch built it in 1912 to top the Dallas skyline.

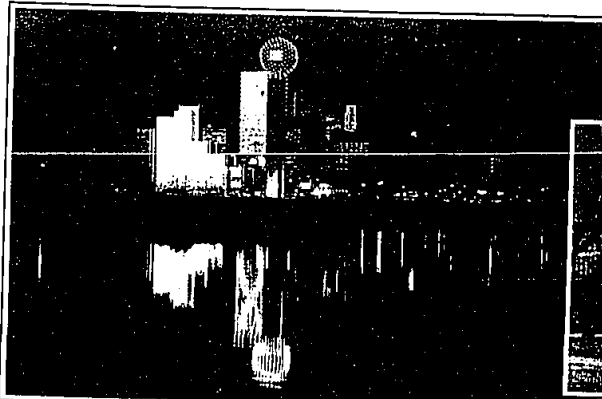
You can't get far enough back from it now to photograph its baroque facade, and its rooftops are certainly not on the skyline any more, but its glorious renovation makes it one of the poshest and most elegant hotels in the country.

Two other old-world hotels, booming and expensive, are the Fairmont downtown and Mansion on Turtle Creek. The Mansion is everybody's idea of "staying with rich friends" and the Fairmont has the kind of nightclub, with dinner and live stage, that you used to see in old movies.

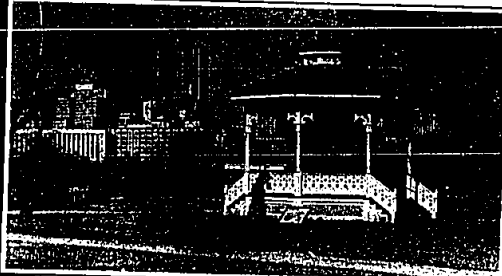
Not so noticeable, but still interesting, is the restored Ambassador Park Hotel, built long ago as an apartment hotel, and now literally overlooking Old City Park, the Greenfield-Village-style complex at edge of downtown.

THE HYATT Regency isn't new any more, but its glass face still dominates downtown because of the acres of glass on its face and the Reunion Tower next door. From the top of the Tower you can see it all, from the log cabin and the John F. Kennedy Memorial in Historical Plaza to the other grand hotels around town — the Bradford Plaza and the Plaza of the Americas among them.

You can also identify the restoration of the West End Historic District, the restored Art Deco build-



Thanks to the regular weekly opening of the television show "Dallas," the Dallas skyline is a familiar sight, but few viewers get to see the city's night skyline. Below is the view from Old City Park. Dallas is one of the fastest-growing finance, communications, insurance, computer service and printing centers in the U.S.



ings in Fair Park, the new Dallas Art Museum and the Union Station-plus-Visitor's Center at the foot of the Tower itself.

All that is enough to make a Detroitier jealous, but it's only the beginning in Dallas. Our convention stayed at Loe's Anatole Hotel, just off the downtown map in the Dallas Market Center area, known locally as Trammell Crow country.

Crow is one of five Dallasites recently listed among the 10 richest business entrepreneurs in the country. Some people say that it is a battle of egos between these billionaires that makes the skyline change so fast, each working on the theme of "anything you can build I can build bigger."

CROW OWNS most of what I see from my hotel window: the building run by Wyndham hotels across the freeway, the market center and the brand new Infomart, a replica of London's legendary Crystal Palace. Infomart opens tomorrow, Jan. 25, with 1.5-million square feet of market space dedicated to information processing.

If you have driven Dallas' freeways, you don't need to be told about the cranes flying high above the high-rolling office towers and retail centers of North Dallas. One Friday afternoon traffic jam tells all.

The Westin people built a hotel at one end of the Galleria and plan to build another one at the other end, just as they did in Houston. One hopes that Dallas is not as overbuilt as Houston turned out to be; it is said that Houston's downtown hotels sometimes average 30-percent occupancy, which is a good way to go out of business.

The Sheraton Park Central is up there in North Dallas along with a dozen other hotels that seem to

have opened their doors in the last two or three years. The other area of special interest to business travelers is Las Colinas, near Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. Las Colinas is a controlled community in Irving where the cranes and bulldozers are so busy they look like industrial art. (For real art, check out the bronze horse running into and out of the fountain at Williams Square.)

FOUR SEASONS manages the beautiful Mandalay hotel in Las Colinas with its canal walk, shopping area and gondolas. It also manages a complete and expensive private sports complex called Las Colinas Sports Club open to Mandalay guests.

After four or five days of this, in and out of new, expensive architecture, you begin to wonder what can possibly be going on here or whether the boom can last. Dallas is not an oil city, J.R. Ewing aside. It's a city based on banks, insurance companies, high tech and financial services. Can it really be explained by saying "everybody's moving to the sun belt?"

Sun Belt. Magic words this week. It was 60 degrees and sunny during the day while I was there, but a Blue Norther came in and dropped the temperature 50 degrees Saturday night. By Sunday morning, when I flew out of town, Dallas was shivering at 10 degrees.

I had been warned that I would find cold weather and snow at home, but I didn't realize how bad it was until the shuttle dropped me at my car in the Long Term Parking Lot at Metro Airport and the driver said, "If your car starts it will be the first one today."

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