

Texas Stadium

1971-2010

Inside the Freeway Loop



Dallas Public Library¹⁹

Surrounded by freeways This 1977 view looking northeast shows Texas Stadium and its surrounding freeways—SH 183 at the bottom, Loop 12 on the left and SH 114 on the top right. The Texas Stadium Drive-in cinema screens, operational from December 1972 to November 1982, are visible to the right of the stadium.

Texas Stadium Freeways

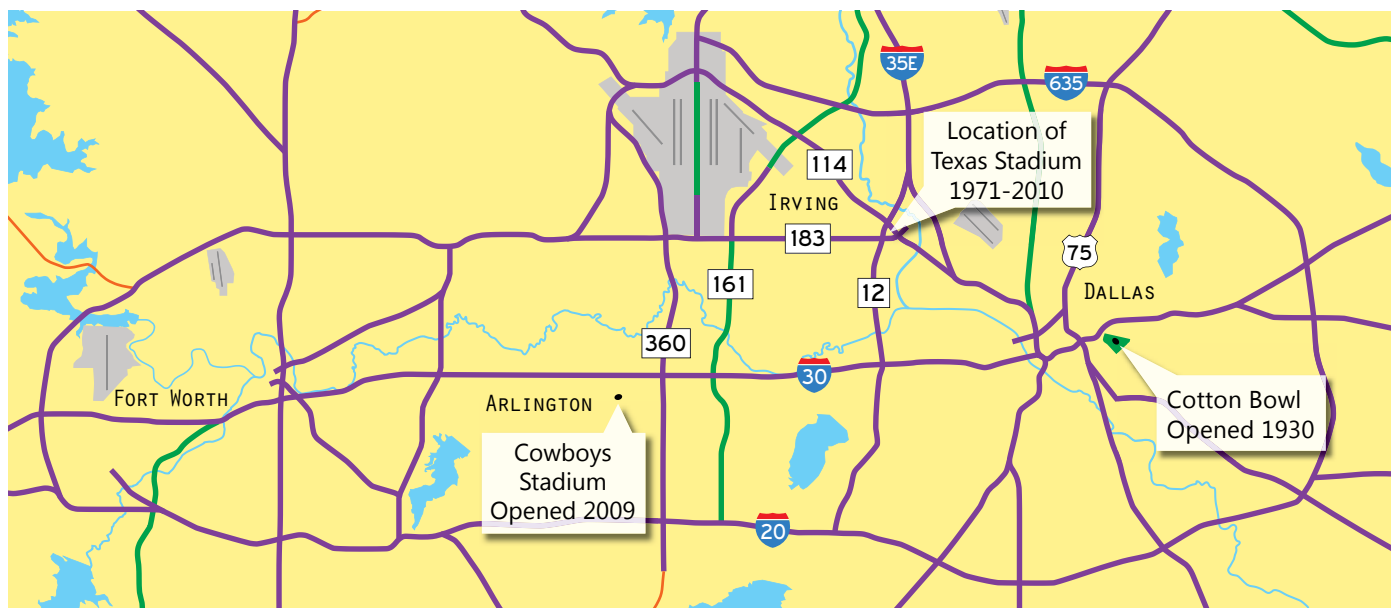
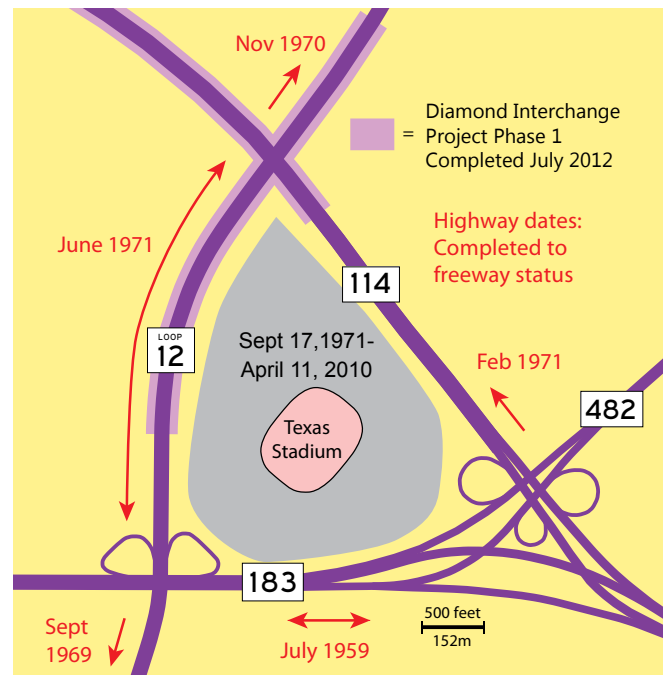
When people look back on the history of Texas Stadium they'll remember the great legends who played there, the five Superbowl championship teams and the great moments like Emmitt Smith setting the all-time NFL career rushing record. But from the perspective of freeways, Texas Stadium was also very distinguished. No other stadium in the United States has been as closely surrounded by freeways as Texas Stadium. You could walk about 500 feet in nearly any direction from the stadium and you would be at a freeway.

Sitting in the middle of the nexus of northwest Dallas County freeways, Texas Stadium was the most freeway-focused stadium in United States history. The idea of combining so many freeways and so many parking lots with a stadium was a product of its place in time, the late 1960s. New stadiums still tend to be close to a freeway or sometimes even two freeways, but today the emphasis is more on integrating the stadium into a community to promote development and revitalization.

The Freeway Loop

The existence of a small-radius freeway loop away from a city center is very unusual in freeway systems, and the loop formed by SH 114, SH 183 and Loop 12 is the only such loop in North Texas. So how did it come to be?

SH 183 between Dallas and Fort Worth was originally opened as a two-lane highway in 1944 (see photo page 439). Loop 12 south of SH 183 opened in 1949 as a basic two-lane road. Both highways were later designated to become freeways. The freeway loop was formed when SH 114 was aligned through the area. SH 114 was first designated as a freeway

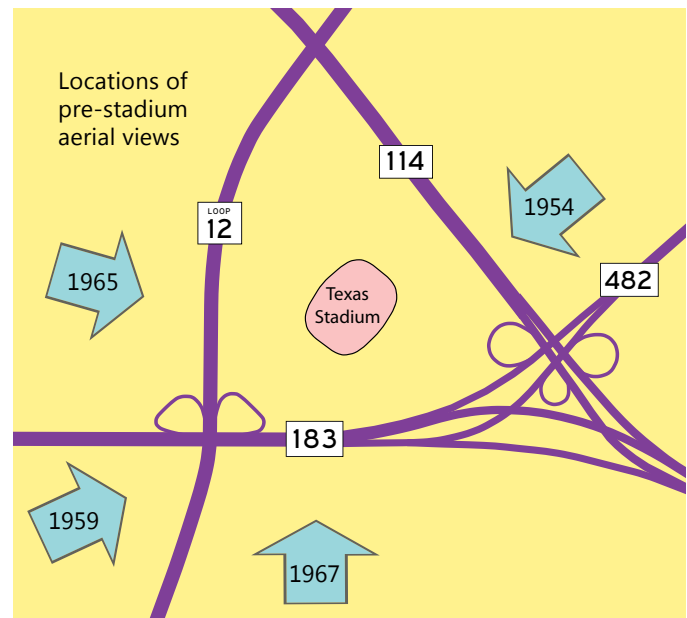




UT-Arlington Library Special Collections²⁰

Pre-stadium 1954 This view looks southwest with SH 183 crossing from left to right and Loop 12 in its original two-lane highway configuration. The freeway loop was not yet in planning documents at the time of this May 30, 1954, photo.

in January 1953 when TxDOT approved the Dallas County highway master plan. At that time SH 114 was envisioned to be along the alignment of present-day Northwest Highway, about 1.5 miles to the north. Influential civic leader John Carpenter owned most of the land northwest of Texas Stadium—land which was later developed into Las Colinas (see page 421). Carpenter offered to donate the right-of-way for the freeway to shift the alignment through his property, an offer eagerly accepted by local officials who were struggling to find sufficient funds to build the Dallas County freeway system. In recognition, SH 114 was named the John W. Carpenter Freeway in January 1960, seven months after Carpenter's death in June 1959. The first freeway planning map showing the realignment of SH 114 with the freeway loop in Irving was in July 1957. Formal agreements for the construction of SH 114 were completed in 1958 and a public hearing for the new alignment with the freeway loop was held in September 1959. The SH 183 segment of the freeway loop was completed in 1959, and the SH 114 and Loop 12 segments began construction in 1966 with completion in 1971. The timing for completing the freeway loop was ideal as Cowboys owner Clint Murchison began looking for a location for his new stadium in 1966.¹



Stadium Origins

By the mid-1960s the Cotton Bowl in Fair Park near downtown Dallas was no longer a suitable home for the Dallas Cowboys. The aging facility with virtually no amenities, splintering wood plank benches, a lack of restrooms and insufficient parking was barely suitable for any team or any major event. In 1965 State Fair officials were still studying the possibility of renovating the aging Cotton Bowl, much to the dismay of Murchison who wouldn't settle for anything less than a new, state-of-the-art stadium. First, Mur-



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections²¹

Pre-stadium 1959 This January 15, 1959, photo shows construction in progress to upgrade SH 183 to a freeway. The freeway opened in June 1959 as a four-lane freeway and was later widened to six lanes. The freeway loop had been adopted into the official regional plan by 1957, and the interchange at the upper right was designed to accommodate the future SH 114.

Pre-stadium 1965 This January 1965 view looks southeast one year before work began on the north and west sides of the freeway loop.

UT-Arlington Library Special Collections²²





UT-Arlington Library Special Collections²³

Pre-stadium 1967 This October 14, 1967, view shows work underway on SH 114 and Loop 12 with the freeway loop clearly defined. Cowboys owner Clint Murchison had arranged options to buy most of the land within the freeway loop by January 1967 when the stadium location was first reported by the press. An official announcement of the stadium site was made on December 23, 1967.

chison needed to select a location for the new stadium.²

In 1966 there were proposals for new stadiums in downtown Dallas and at Fair Park to replace the Cotton Bowl. Murchison preferred a downtown stadium site but could not get Mayor Erik Jonsson's support. Jonsson had other priorities at the time, including building DFW Airport, a new city hall and the University of Texas at Dallas. In October 1970 Murchison directly blamed Jonsson for the demise of plans for a downtown Dallas stadium, and Jonsson responded that nationally recognized urban planners working on a master plan for downtown recommended against the stadium since it would be "dead space" the vast majority of time. Jonsson's tenure as mayor from 1964 to 1971 is viewed favorably for its civic accomplishments and Jonsson's effort to restore Dallas' image after the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy. However, many viewed Jonsson's lack of interest in the stadium as an opportunity lost.

Stadium speculation became the local sport of the day

in 1966, and Murchison had a new plan—a plan that involved the land surrounded by the three freeways in Irving. But being a businessman first and foremost, Murchison knew that to avoid land speculation and rising land costs, he needed to be stealthy about his plans.³

Perhaps taking inspiration from the legendary secretive land acquisition used by Walt Disney to acquire land in Florida in 1965 for Disney World, Murchison set up the Industrial Foundation of Irving to acquire property for the stadium. When news of the potential new stadium site was first reported in January 1967, Murchison had options to purchase 70 of the 86 acres in the freeway loop. The Irving stadium remained in rumor mode for the rest of 1967 until December 23 when Murchison officially announced plans for the estimated \$15 million stadium at the Irving site and its name, Texas Stadium. The stadium would be financed by bonds from the City of Irving which were partially funded by \$250 bonds purchased by fans for the right to buy season tickets. Bonds for 38,000 sideline seats



both images: Irving archives, Irving Public Library

Irving voters first voted in favor of Texas Stadium with 62% of the vote in a nonbinding referendum on April 2, 1968. The financial plan for the stadium stated that the City of Irving would issue bonds to finance construction without using tax funds, with much of the funding coming from bonds required for the purchase of season tickets. However, a lawsuit against the bond issuance was filed by Irving construction executive Howard Currens in December 1968, just before the December 31 deadline to issue the bonds. Currens maintained that the stadium would not be built as originally presented to the voters due to planned cost-saving measures to keep the stadium on budget. Currens' suit remained active as the deadline approached and the Texas Attorney General would not approve municipal bond issuance with litigation in progress. Late in the evening on December 31, with the deadline about to arrive without the issuance of the bonds, Irving and Currens reached an agreement in which Currens agreed to drop his lawsuit for a second vote on January 16, 1969. The images above are from the campaign to ensure passage on the January 16 vote. The hearse was parked along the south side of SH 183 just west of MacArthur. The stadium was reapproved by voters with 69% of the vote.

were slated to be sold, with prime seats between the 30 yard lines requiring the \$1000 purchase of four bonds. The \$1000 bond cost in 1968 is equivalent to \$6700 in 2013 dollars.⁴

In January 1968 Murchison announced that a sliding cover would be added to the roof to allow the stadium to be fully enclosed for non-football events. There was some grumbling from season ticket holders about the high price of the season ticket bonds and some season ticket holders filed a short-lived lawsuit, but bond sales proceeded well, with 15,827 bonds sold by the end of February. In April 1968 Irving voters voted 62% in favor of bonds to finance the stadium in a non-binding election. However, Murchison's hopes for a quick start of construction were thwarted by a series of problems and controversy which arose in 1968.⁵



Dallas Public Library²⁴

This summer 1970 photo looking southeast toward downtown Dallas shows the stadium under construction. Just visible at the bottom of the photo is Loop 12, which was substantially complete and opened in June of 1971. On the left side SH 114 was also nearly complete prior to its opening in February 1971.

An Ideal Location?

It seemed like an ideal location for a stadium, with three freeways converging around the site to bring in fans from all directions and disperse them after the games. But to TxDOT, the site was far from ideal. In November 1968 TxDOT officially announced its opposition to the stadium location and urged Irving to find another site. TxDOT was concerned about gridlock on the freeways in the stadium area during events, blocking the main route to the planned Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. TxDOT's official statement went on to say, "We can confidently assure you that with the construction of this stadium at the present site it will create a colossal traffic jam at this critical location which will result in a complete breakdown of vehicular movement on the other traffic arteries within the area" Of course, it was really too late to change the stadium location since the land was purchased and the plans were made, and TxDOT was possibly looking to publicize the need for improvements to the freeways to handle stadium traffic and shift the cost to the City of Irving.⁶

Financial issues also arose in late 1968. The cost of the

stadium grew to exceed the budget and in November it was reported that some planned frills would need to be cut. In December Murchison stated that there never had been a definite design for the retractable roof and it was cut from the final plans. Murchison's own construction firm was the only bidder for the stadium, placing a bid of \$18.0 million. There were reports that the stadium had been watered down from its planned first-class status, with rumored cost-saving items including the elimination of seatbacks for about half of the seats. Concerns over cost-cutting measures prompted an Irving resident to file a lawsuit against the stadium financing plan. Irving was unable to issue the bonds before the December 31, 1968, deadline because the state attorney general would not grant approval with litigation pending. Late in the evening on December 31 a deal was struck in which the lawsuit was dropped for a second referendum on the bonds. On January 16, 1969, the bonds were approved with 69% of the vote. It was time to build Texas Stadium.⁷

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on January 25, 1969. In 1969 the Texas Transportation Commission



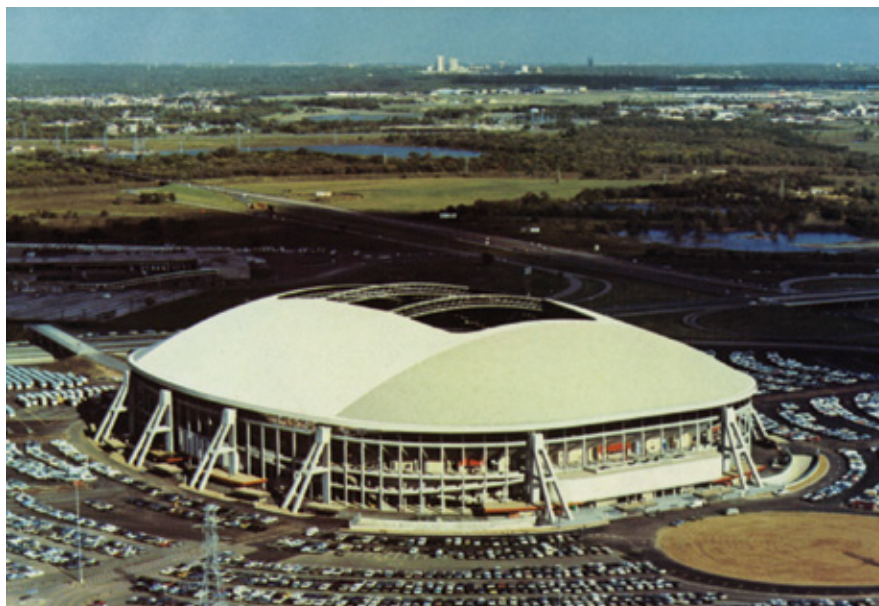
Dallas Public Library²⁵

Cowboys owner Clint Murchison (1923-1987), right, and Tex Schramm pose for a photo in the nearly-complete Texas Stadium in 1971. Texas Earnest "Tex" Schramm Jr (1920-2003), president of the Cowboys organization from 1959 to 1989, was a forward-looking football visionary who had a huge influence in the success of the Cowboys and in making the modern-day NFL what it is today. After being hired by Murchison in 1959 to build the newly founded Dallas Cowboys franchise, Schramm hired Tom Landry as head coach who went on to achieve twenty consecutive winning seasons from 1966 to 1985. Among his many accomplishments, Schramm is credited with the luxury boxes at Texas Stadium, the founding of the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders in 1972 and designating the Cowboys to play on Thanksgiving day. At the league level, Schramm originated the 1966 merger of the NFL and the American Football League in an April 1966 meeting with AFL owner Lamar Hunt at Love Field Airport. Schramm originated or was influential in many features of the modern-day NFL, including instant replay as an officiating tool, the wild card playoff system, moving the hash marks closer together to give offenses more room to operate, raising the goal post uprights, instituting sudden-death overtime for all games, giving wireless microphones to game officials and adding the wider white border around the playing field.

approved a \$2.2 million plan for highway improvements around the stadium, with the City of Irving covering \$1.8 million of the cost. Construction proceeded mostly on schedule but last-moment delays caused by a plumbers strike and wet weather dashed hopes of having the stadium ready for the 1971 season opener. The stadium officially opened to the public on September 17, 1971, with a Billy Graham Crusade religious gathering. The initial cost was reported at \$25 million, with construction of the actual stadium around \$19.4 million. Additional expenditures for scoreboards and contingencies pushed the final reported cost to \$29.5 million, with later reports placing the cost at \$35 million, about \$201 million in 2013 dollars.⁸

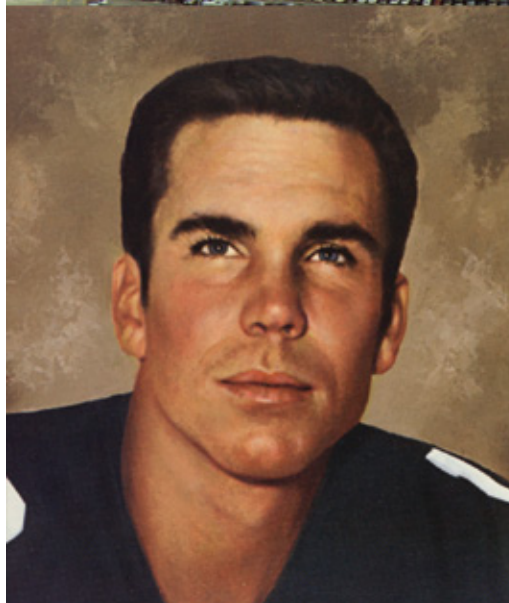
Finally it was time for the first Cowboys game on October 24, with the Cowboys beating the New England Patriots 44-21. Even better, traffic flowed in and out of the stadium parking lots relatively smoothly with far less traffic congestion than had been feared. The story for the first season at Texas Stadium ended perfectly when the Cowboys brought home their first Super Bowl championship.⁹

Texas Stadium and its hole-in-the-roof design went on to become one of the most iconic stadiums in professional sports in the 1970s and beyond. The Cowboys and their AFC rival Pittsburgh Steelers were the two most successful NFL



Beautiful TEXAS STADIUM

*The World's
Greatest
Football
Facility*



Roger Staubach Says...

"Although every football field is 100 yards long, there is something special about playing in Texas Stadium. I've played in many all over the country and to me none can compare.

"I know that the accommodations for players are superb. While I've never viewed a game from the stands (thank goodness), from what I can see, the fans are mighty impressed and enjoy their part of the Stadium too.

"Naturally, as World Champions, we Cowboys feel we have an outstanding team and are extremely happy to have a great facility such as Texas Stadium to call home."

STADIUM CLUB AVAILABLE FOR GROUPS

The luxurious Stadium Club at Texas Stadium is available for group luncheons, dinner-meetings and banquets. Tours can be arranged in conjunction with your meeting. The spacious Club overlooks the field providing a unique setting for your function.

For information pertaining to special group tours or scheduling an event in the Stadium Club, write to:

Stadium Tours, Texas Stadium Corp., Irving, Texas 75062, Telephone: 214/438-7676

Dallas Public Library

teams of the of 1970s, bringing frequent national television coverage to Texas Stadium for regular season and playoff games. Families gathering for Thanksgiving meals would see the Cowboys host the annual Thanksgiving Classic at Texas Stadium. Even television viewers with no interest in sports would see Texas Stadium in the opening sequence of the well-hyped hit television drama *Dallas* from 1978 to 1991. From the business and financial perspective, the success of Texas Stadium was driven by its luxury suites. The stadium had 150 suites in the original design, with strong demand prompting Murchison and subsequent owners to bring the total number of suites to 399 by 1996.¹⁰

The Beginning of the End

Texas Stadium reached the peak of its glory as the Cowboys won three Super Bowl championships in 1993, 1994,

and 1996. But even with all the success, recognition and emotion, the inexorable passage of time had exposed the shortcomings of the once state-of-the-art Texas Stadium. As early as 1990 there was consideration of adding a fully-enclosed dome to the stadium to make it suitable for all types of events year-round, including a Super Bowl. Talk of renovation, expansion and a fully-enclosing roof continued through the 1990s with Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and the City of Irving discussing a \$130 million plan in 1994 to increase seating capacity to 104,000, add a retractable roof and replace the artificial turf with natural grass. In 1996 Irving voters decided to remain in the DART mass transit agency, continuing to pay the 1% sales tax to DART rather than freeing the sales tax for potential stadium improvements. Year after year, Jerry Jones and the City of Irving were not able to develop an improvement plan which could



City of Irving

move forward. In January 1998 the first reports surfaced of discussions between the Cowboys and the City of Arlington. The wheels were set in motion for the Cowboys' departure from Texas Stadium and, ultimately, the end of the stadium.¹¹

In 2000 Jones said it was time for action, either a completely renovated Texas Stadium or a new stadium. By 2001 it was clear that Jones wanted a new stadium and by 2003 there was no doubt that the Cowboys would get a new stadium, the only question was when and where. Irving and downtown Dallas were the early leading contenders and Fair Park in Dallas became the leading contender in 2004. When stadium finance negotiations between the Cowboys and Dallas County broke down in June 2004, the Cowboys took another look at Arlington and in August a deal was reached to place a \$325 million finance package on the November ballot. When the vote was counted on November 3, 2004, it was finally official: the Cowboys were moving to a new stadium in Arlington.¹²

the HOLE in the Roof

The most distinctive design feature of Texas Stadium was the "hole in the roof" which made the stadium instantly recognizable in aerial views during television broadcasts. With the two truss beams spanning the hole (and two side trusses added later, after this photo), it almost appeared as if the 2.5-acre-sized hole was an afterthought in the stadium's design.

The roof hole inspired various lore over the years regarding its origins, including the much-repeated line that the hole was there to allow God to watch his favorite team. Was the hole the originally intended design? Yes, according to the stadium's architect A. Warren Morey. Cowboys owner Clint Murchison felt football was an outdoor game which should be exposed to the elements, but he wanted the spectators to be shielded from the elements. Morey says the idea of enclosing the stadium "was never discussed."²⁶

However, in January 1968 Murchison called a press conference to announce that the stadium roof would have a sliding plastic cover which would close the hole and fully enclose the stadium. Press reports in the *Dallas Morning News* and *Irving Daily News* showed diagrams with a design similar to the present-day Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, renamed AT&T Stadium in July 2013. The sliding cover was intended mainly for non-football events. It is unclear if the roof cover was fully studied for engineering feasibility or just a preliminary idea. If technical issues didn't cause the demise of the plastic cover, escalating costs and budgetary constraints surely did. By the end of 1968 the sliding roof cover was gone from the design, and the iconic hole would personify the stadium for its entire 39-year life.²⁷



Associated Press²⁹

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones paces the sideline during a December 3, 1995, game at Texas Stadium versus the Washington Redskins. Jones spent most of the 1990s trying to develop a plan to expand and improve Texas Stadium, but by 2001 Jones decided he wanted a new stadium. Downtown Dallas, Fair Park in Dallas and a nearby location in Irving were all candidates for the new stadium, but Arlington took the prize when its voters approved a package of tax increases including a half-cent sales tax hike in November 2004 to provide \$325 million in stadium financing. Jones decided to build the biggest, best and most extravagant stadium in the United States and probably the world. The final cost for the new Cowboys Stadium, opened in 2009 and renamed AT&T Stadium in 2013, was \$1.2 billion. The City of Arlington looked absolutely brilliant when all was done, paying just \$325 million to get the world's best stadium (see stadium photo page 410).

It became a virtual certainty that Texas Stadium would be demolished when the City of Irving announced plans in January 2007 for a major redevelopment of the stadium site. The Cowboys' final season at Texas Stadium in 2008 was a time for reflection and celebration of the Cowboys' great run at the stadium—the five Super Bowl championships, the great legends and the records that were set. Unfortunately there wasn't a perfect ending for the final Cowboys game on December 20 when the Baltimore Ravens defeated the Cowboys 33-24.¹³

Aging Freeways Turn Into a Diamond

The freeways around Texas Stadium were also aging, remaining in their originally constructed, bare-basic 1960s configuration. Motorists were still slowing to a crawl to make connections on the 1959-vintage cloverleaf interchange at Loop 12 and SH 183, and the intersection at Loop 12 and SH 114 remained a signalized frontage road connection with no direct-connection ramps. The growth of the nearby Las Colinas development, with around 100,000 jobs, and the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport had brought far more traffic than the freeway junction could handle.

The Most Memorable Moment at Texas Stadium



Dallas Morning News

With an 11-yard run on October 27, 2002, against Seattle at Texas Stadium, Emmitt Smith broke Walter Payton's 1987 record of 16,726 career rushing yards. The official farewell web site for Texas Stadium held a contest to determine the most memorable moment in stadium history, and Smith's record-breaking run easily took the prize. Emmitt Smith completed his career with 18,355 yards and one of the most commanding records in the NFL and all sports. In 2013 the record is not even slightly at risk from an active player and many observers believe Smith's record may never be broken, especially if the NFL maintains 16-game seasons. But, many records once deemed as unbreakable have fallen, so only time will tell.

A series of three transportation studies beginning in 1998, one each for SH 183, SH 114, and Loop 12, defined the future of the Irving freeway loop. By the early 2000s preliminary plans were in place for expansion of all three freeways, the addition of toll lanes to all three freeways, the construction of a modern interchange at SH 183 and Loop 12, and major improvements to the interchange at SH 114 and Loop 12. Final plans also integrated the new DART Orange Line light rail along SH 114. In 2008 the freeway interchange complex was officially designated as the Diamond Interchange project, recognizing the approximate diamond shape of the freeway loop and promoting a new image for the area, reflecting Irving's high hopes for

redevelopment of the site. The first construction project for the Diamond Interchange, at SH 114 and Loop 12, was underway in 2009 and completed in July 2012.¹⁴

It was perhaps ironic that the freeways which once brought Texas Stadium to Irving would later ensure the prompt demolition of the stadium. On January 22, 2009, the City of Irving officially entered into an agreement with TxDOT under which TxDOT would pay Irving \$15.4 million to use the stadium site for 10 years as a staging area for the planned \$518 million Diamond Interchange construction project. Just months after the last Cowboys game, construction equipment and a cement batch plant moved into the north side of the Texas Stadium parking lot.¹⁵

Heroes of the 1990s



Associated Press²⁸

On September 19, 2005, during the halftime of a Monday Night Football game, Emmitt Smith (left), Michael Irvin and Troy Aikman were inducted into the Cowboys Ring of Honor. The names of Ring of Honor inductees were displayed on a strip between the upper and lower seating sections. Running back Smith, receiver Irvin and quarterback Aikman formed the core of the Cowboys team which won Superbowls in 1993, 1994 and 1996.

The End of Texas Stadium

It was the stadium that was near-and-dear to the hearts of legions of loyal Cowboys fans. It was the home of five Superbowl championship teams. It was nationally and even internationally recognized for its iconic hole-in-the-roof design. And as its final act, the stadium would be imploded in one of the most anticipated and well-publicized planned destruction events in the history of the United States.

After the final Cowboys game it was only a matter of time before the stadium would be demolished. Exactly when and how, via implosion or piece-by-piece demolition, wasn't yet known. The final event on the stadium prop-

Also see: Photo of Tom Landry being inducted into the ring of honor at Texas Stadium, page 395

erty was a farewell festival and memorabilia auction on the parking lot on February 22, 2009. In March the City of Irving hired an engineering consultant to plan the demolition including specification of the method to be used. The verdict: implosion. Irving awarded a \$5.8 million contract for the implosion to Dallas-based Weir Brothers in September.¹⁶

The spectacle of a dramatic, explosive end to Texas Stadium opened up the potential for a major event in conjunction with the implosion. In December Irving designated Kraft Foods as the official implosion sponsor, and Kraft



Author, 2005

This May 2005 view looks southeast along SH 114. Seven months earlier Arlington voters approved a sales tax increase to finance the new Cowboys Stadium, sealing the fate of Texas Stadium.



City of Irving

Fans arrive at Texas Stadium for an event in this 2000s-era photo.



Author, 2008

This view shows Texas Stadium on April 5, 2008, the year of the final Cowboys season at the stadium. Here vehicles are making the connection from southbound Loop 12 to westbound SH 183. Future phases of the Diamond Interchange project will add a multilevel interchange at this freeway intersection.



Dallas Morning News

The Cowboys' last game at Texas Stadium was on December 20, 2008. The Baltimore Ravens spoiled the farewell party by defeating the Cowboys 33-24.



Author, August 2009

The Diamond Interchange Shortly after the final event at Texas Stadium, a farewell festival and memorabilia auction in February 2009, the north side of the parking lot became a staging area for the Diamond Interchange project, a \$518 million reconstruction and expansion of the freeways surrounding the Texas Stadium site. The first construction contract, completed in 2012, focused on the SH 114-Loop 12 intersection and adjacent sections of freeway.

named the event the “Cheddar Explosion” to publicize its new line of “cheesier” macaroni and cheese. Kraft launched a nationwide contest for 9- to 12-year-olds who could submit essays on how they had a positive impact in their community. The winner would have the honor of pushing the button to launch the implosion. It was somewhat unnerving to Cowboys fans that the winner could be a Redskins fan from Washington DC or a Giants fan from New York. But the result turned out well when 11-year-old Cowboys fan Casey Rogers of Terrell, just southeast of Dallas, was named the winner. Rogers had been helping the homeless in Dallas since he was eight years old and founded the charity Casey’s Heart.¹⁷

The implosion was set to take place at 7 AM on Sunday, April 11, 2010. Spectators began to arrive on Saturday evening and continued to assemble throughout the night at the official viewing location north of the stadium and at other locations alongside the freeways. A crowd exceeding 20,000 was on hand by 7 AM for the main event and others watched from nearby office towers and hotels. First, a short fireworks display took place over the stadium. Then Casey pushed the button to start the implosion. Blasts from

the 2715 pounds of dynamite pierced the morning air as Texas Stadium crumbled into rubble, starting at the southwest side and then proceeding to the northeast side. When the dust cleared, only three buttresses remained standing. The stadium site was cleared of all debris and rubble in the following months, becoming a vacant lot by July.¹⁸

In June 2012 the first structure on the site of the actual stadium was built, a temporary casting yard for prefabricated beams for the expansion of nearby Interstate 635 (LBJ Freeway). In May 2014 TxDOT awarded an \$848 million contract for the first phase of work on SH 183 in Irving, including the addition of two connection ramps at the SH 183/Loop 12 interchange. Future phases of construction on the Diamond Interchange project will depend on the timing of future phases of the SH 183 project. A best-case scenario for completing the Diamond Interchange is by 2020; most likely it will take longer. When the Diamond Interchange is complete, the freeways will be positioned to provide service well into the second half of the 21st century. And sometime, maybe around 2050, a football stadium in Arlington will be old and outdated, possibly facing an appointment with an implosion crew.



City of Irving

Eleven-year-old Terrell resident Casey Rogers won a nationwide contest to earn the privilege of pushing the button to launch the implosion. Corporate sponsor Kraft Foods used the implosion to promote its new macaroni and cheese product, Cheddar Explosion. Kraft donated \$175,000 to local food banks as part of the sponsorship arrangement.

IMPLOSION

April 11, 2010

After the long formal farewell during the 2008 season and a year of anticipation during 2009, the implosion took place at 7 AM on Sunday morning April 11, 2010. Onlookers gathered throughout the night, reaching an estimated 20,000 before the moment when Casey Rogers pushed the button to bring an end to Texas Stadium.

A short fireworks display took place minutes before the implosion. The foreground of this photo shows construction in progress on Loop 12, part of the Diamond Interchange project which was underway.



City of Irving



Dallas Morning News

This aerial view looking north shows the implosion beginning at the southwest side of the stadium and proceeding to the north-east side. An explosive charge is visible at the right (east) side of the stadium at the moment of this photo. The smoke above the stadium was from the fireworks display which preceded the implosion.



Dallas Morning News

This crowd of explosion spectators was on the southwest side of the stadium along SH 183. The main viewing area was on the north side of the stadium alongside SH 114.



City of Irving

These views show the implosion from the main viewing area on the north side of the stadium along SH 114.



City of Irving



Dallas Morning News

This view looks southeast, a moment before the last standing structure crumbled.

When the dust cleared, all that remained standing were three buttresses on the northwest side of the stadium. The lore of Texas Stadium had become legendary over the years—such as the hole in the roof serving the purpose of allowing God to watch his favorite team—and the standing buttresses provided one last opportunity for embellishing the stadium's legend. One observer said they stood in honor of the three super bowls won under the ownership of Jerry Jones. Another said they symbolized the three most influential individuals in the design of the stadium—former team owner Clint Murchison, general manager Tex Schramm and coach Tom Landry. To others, the buttresses paid tribute to three heroes of the 1990s—Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin. The buttresses were propped up by nearby debris and were easily knocked down the following week.

Dallas Morning News





City of Irving

Stadium is gone, freeways remain The Texas Stadium site was cleared by July 2010, leaving a large vacant area inside the freeway loop shown in this October 2010 photo looking northeast. On the left side along Loop 12 work was in progress on the first phase of the Diamond Interchange project, which will eventually rebuild and expand all the freeways at the Texas Stadium site. Phase one of the Diamond Interchange completed construction in summer 2012. In June 2012 a casting yard for prefabricated concrete beams to be used in the expansion of Interstate 635 (LBJ Freeway) was built across the site of the stadium structure.



A year later, when grass was growing on the cleared site of Texas Stadium (visible in the background), very little remained. This weathered sign still stood near the stadium's main entrance, and the large triangular billboards owned by the City of Irving still stood at the three freeway intersections surrounding the stadium site.

Author, April 2011



City of Irving

This view looks northwest along SH 114, showing the cleared stadium site in October 2010. Future phases of the Diamond Interchange project will remove the three loop connectors at SH 114 and Spur 482 in the foreground.

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DMN=Dallas Morning News; DTH=Dallas Times Herald

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