



The new Pegasus will be an exact replica of this original, except the materials and lighting are being designed to last much longer.

Historic Red Neon & Porcelain Sign Restored for Dallas' 2000 Celebration

Dallas' double-sided red neon Pegasus is more than just a "sign" to its citizens. It's an icon that symbolizes the imagination of the city and its people. The Pegasus has been a part of the city's skyline for 65 years.

For the first 30 years, it marked the tallest structure in Dallas—the Magnolia Building. Over time, Dallas's modern skyline grew up around the sign's red glow, and it no longer sets atop the tallest building in the city. For years, it rotated and glowed in the city's skyline at night. Because of the energy crisis—about 1976—it was bolted in place to prevent it from turning, and its neon lights were turned out.

Thanks to a group of citizens and companies, the Pegasus is being restored as part of the rebirth of Dallas' Main Street as an urban neighborhood, which includes Neiman Marcus, the oldest store downtown, and the city's newest hotel, The Magnolia.

Pegasus & Dallas

In 1934, in anticipation of the American Petroleum Institute's annual meeting in Dallas, the Magnolia Oil Company (now Mobil Oil Corporation) contracted with Texlite, a sign company, to design and construct an image of Pegasus for the top of the company's headquarters

building. It was completed in six weeks and ready for the Institute's opening on November 8, 1934. It remained at the top of the building and quickly became a landmark to welcome travelers to the city.

The neon flying red horse set the tradition for night light displays that followed on other buildings. The sign was designated a city landmark in 1973, the same year that the energy crisis began. When Mobil Oil Corporation became an international corporation and moved from downtown in 1976, the company gave the building and sign to the City of Dallas. In 1979, the building was sold and, after having several owners, it

This picture of downtown Dallas was taken shortly after the rotating Pegasus sign was placed on top of the Magnolia Building where it decorated the tallest structure in the city for 30 years.



has been completely restored and recently re-opened as the Magnolia Hotel, complete with the flying Pegasus. In an unusual arrangement, the sign remains the property of the City of Dallas.

Restoration

The Pegasus consists of two back-to-back red neon signs that are 50 ft long and 35 ft high. Each is constructed from 18 panels of porcelain-coated steel and riveted to opposite sides of a 14-ft wide box frame. The entire structure and a circular track sit atop a 50-ft tower that resembles an oil derrick. The sign was designed to rotate around the circular track, which is a brush-and-ring assembly. The outside ring has brushes that transmit electricity to the sign to light the neon tubing. When first installed, a three-horse-power engine rotated the structure one and one-third revolutions per minute. The original Pegasus

contained more than 800 ft² of sheet metal, 2,500 lb of steel angles and a quarter mile of neon tubing. It is still the largest Pegasus in the world.

The sign has been disassembled and an exact pattern of each panel has been fabricated to duplicate the first Pegasus. Each steel panel will be fired with a modern, acid-resistant glass coating that will last much longer than the original panels. The framework to which the panels are attached are being rebuilt using aluminum, which is lighter, stronger and can withstand higher humidity. The derrick structure is being refinished and painted, and a new motor will be installed to rotate the new Pegasus. Two new sets of neon lighting are being created so that a second set can be stored for use during future repairs.

The restoration is being completed by the Pegasus Project, a community-wide initiative led by honorary co-chairs Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson

and Dallas' First Lady Matrice Ellis-Kirk. The lead corporate sponsor of the project is Mobil Corporation and several other Dallas businesses are participating.

Celebration Pegasus

The restoration is on schedule, and re-lighting the sign will be the main event for "Dallas 2000—The Downtown Celebration," the city's New Year's Eve event on December 31. The neon sign will be turned on at midnight and, once again, the Pegasus will light up the night sky of downtown Dallas and continue to serve as the city's icon. **P&SF**

