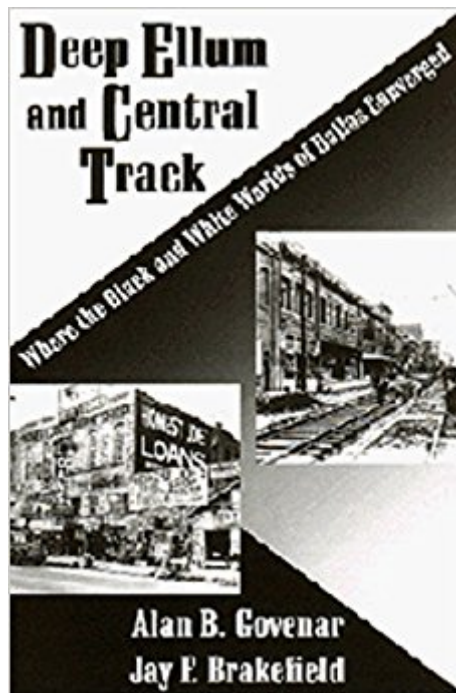


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Deep Ellum And Central Track: Where The Black And White Worlds Of Dallas Converged



Synopsis

A mile east of the School Book Depository in downtown Dallas lies a section of the city called Deep Ellum. Because of the area's long association with blues and jazz musicians, Deep Ellum has been shrouded in myth and misconceptions which obscure its actual history. Alan Govenar and Jay Brakefield - using oral histories, old newspapers and photographs, city directories and maps, as well as more traditional public records and secondary sources - reveal another side of Deep Ellum which includes Central Track, an area lined with black-owned business which served both black and white patrons during its heyday in the 1920s and 30s. In the Deep Ellum and Central Track areas, African Americans and whites - primarily Eastern European Jews - operated businesses from the late 19th to the mid- 20th centuries, creating a unique social climate where cultural interaction took place. Much of the information in the book is presented through the stories of remarkable individuals, including professionals, pawn-brokers and other merchants, police officers, criminals, and the blues and jazz musicians who had a lasting impact on American popular music.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When your typical blues fan thinks of cities that were important to the development of this great art form, he usually thinks of Chicago and maybe Memphis. However, Alan Govenar and Jay Brakefield make the case for Dallas, Texas as a major center for the development of the blues in no uncertain terms. Of course, Deep Ellum and Central Track is not a blues book per se, but rather a well researched historical and sociological treatise on the birth and development of Big D's Deep Ellum

and Central Track districts from the earliest days to the present. The authors use lots of primary source interviews with the surviving denizens of this fascinating area of town and paint a truly engaging picture of the lifestyles and business practices of these predominantly black and Jewish areas, particularly around the 1920's heyday of the earliest great blues artists. Such immortal founding fathers as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Willie Johnson and "Oak Cliff" T-Bone Walker were crucial to the growth of the art form, and these and innumerable lesser artists are covered in meticulous and loving detail. The authors also spend plenty of time covering contributors to the local jazz and country music scenes as well, particularly jazz hornman Buster Smith, and country pickers the Light Crust Doughboys, where western swing icon Bob Wills got his start. Even though the work has a decidedly scholarly bent, the numerous stories of such colorful characters as gambling mogul Benny Binion and mammoth shoeshine entrepreneur "Open the Door Richard", provide enough reading pleasure to keep even casual fans enthralled. Researchers will love the nearly one hundred pages of source appendices, and fans of history, sociology, music, and Big D will all want to read this book as soon as possible, for it proves, among other things, that Dallas, Texas was and is a fascinating city, as well as a major contributor to the history of the blues art form.

This is a well researched and well written description of a time and place in Dallas in the 20's and 30's that has long been overdue. The history of blues, jazz, gospel and country was written in Deep Ellum. It was a "good read", and I recommend it highly.

It was on time and exactly as promised. Love the book, interesting reading. I would order from this vendor again.

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