

Outdoor Drama On the Old Brazos

AN OUTDOOR THEATRE
for a
HISTORICAL DRAMA

Freeport Municipal Park

February 1975

Sponsored by The City of Freeport
and
The Old Brazos Drama Association

PROSPECTUS

AN AMPHITHEATER: At the diversion levee heading the "Old Brazos" harbor channel, just off State Highway 288 near the Freeport Municipal Park, is a site proposed for construction of a 2,000-seat amphitheater consisting of waterfront stage and structures, a 27-foot elevation curving berm to provide "bowl" seating, concession and ticket housing and auxiliary facilities. This is to be a permanent, year-round open-air theater for multiple use, with its principal attraction each year to be

A PLAY: Birth of a Giant, written and co-produced by Dr. Kermit Hunter, dramatizes the events which took place in this area in 1832, when the young Brazos and Trinity colonies in Texas first took up arms against the Republic of Mexico at the Battle of Velasco. The play touches on the events before and after, from the early colonization of the Brazos valley by Stephen F. Austin's settlers to the eventual full-scale revolution in 1836, when Texas freed itself of Mexican rule. At the place where these early conflicts occurred,

A HERITAGE: The "Giant" is Texas. It was born here. The amphitheater site is located at approximately the point where Texian land and water forces diverged to launch an attack on Old Fort Velasco June 25, 1832.

BACKGROUND

The Brazos River, referred to by some early settlers as the Texas Nile, was the point of entry for Stephen F. Austin's "Old 300", the group of settlers who spearheaded Anglo-American colonization of Mexico's Texas wilderness. It was also the point of entry for many other settlers, some legal and some not. Within a few years of initial colonization the upper Texas coast was becoming a rich and productive land, far removed from the seat of government in Mexico.

In 1830 Mexico commissioned three military forts - - - at Velasco, Anahuac and Bolivar Point, to collect tariffs and customs on the commerce of the Texians. Shortly thereafter, revolution struck in Mexico and a renegade American officer in the Mexican army seized the occasion to clamp strict military rule on the young Texas settlements. Trouble quickly developed, and a group of Texians were imprisoned at Anahuac.

The settlers at Brazoria, upriver from Velasco, went to Anahuac to assist and met with total rebuff. They returned to Brazoria for cannons, to be transported to Anahuac by ship. But the fort at Velasco blocked the way, and refused passage.

What occurred then, on a stormy night in 1832, shaped the ultimate history of Texas in a way no other event could have. This is the subject of Birth of a Giant, and the heritage of lower Brazos valley - - - and of Texas.

SEASONAL USE

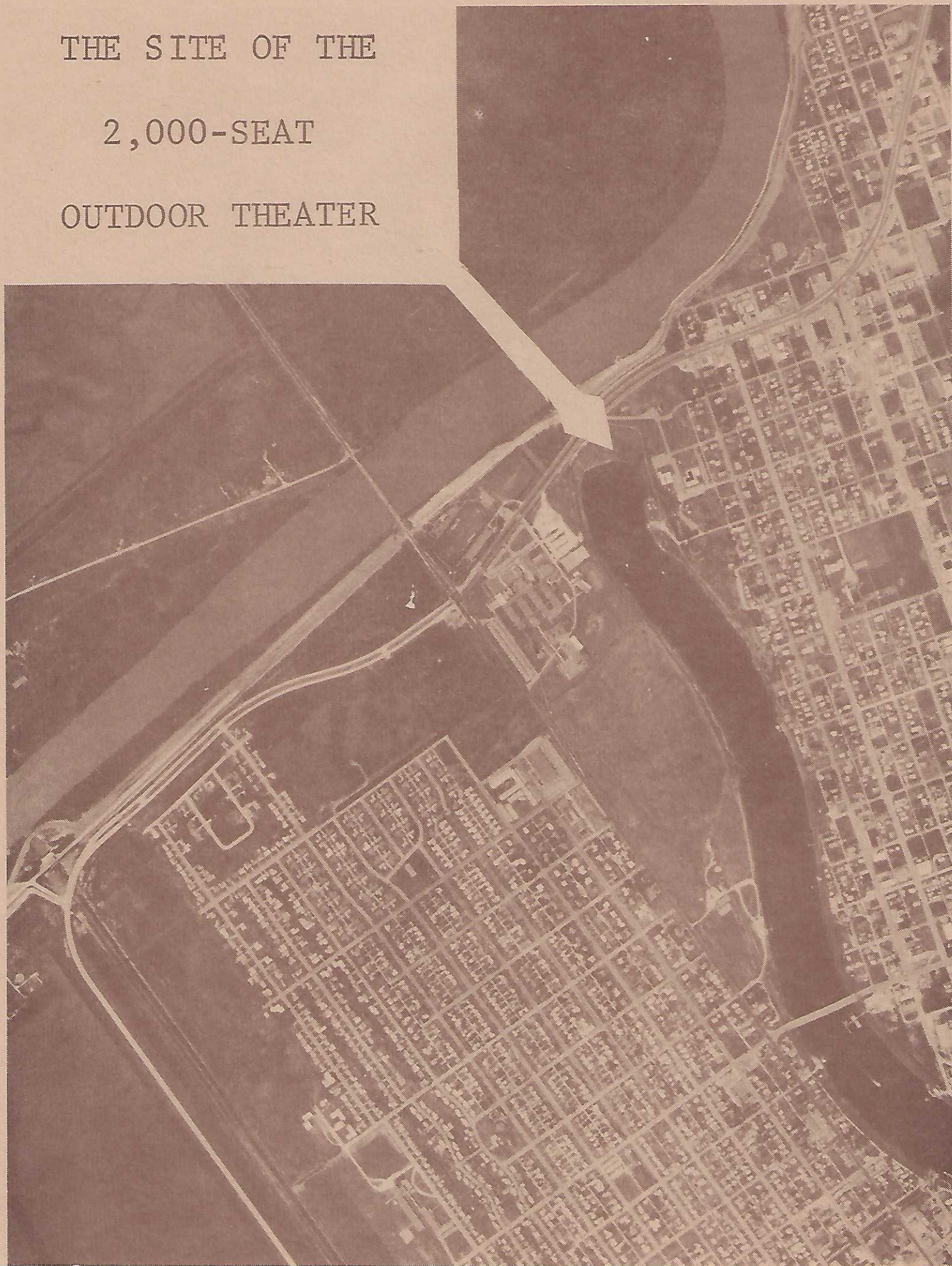
The amphitheater will be occupied for three months each year, during the summer, with production of Birth of a Giant. This annual season will include one month of rehearsal and two months of performance of the play.

During the remainder of the year, the facility can be used almost constantly for community events such as additional plays, choir and band concerts, pageants, spectator seating for water sports on the "Old River", sporting events, and so on. As a community facility it could be made available for any appropriate event properly sponsored, and will be so designed as to allow maximum flexibility for multiple uses.

SURROUNDINGS

The amphitheater site is protected on all sides by dedicated public lands in uses compatible with the amphitheater. To the east, adjoining, is a large municipal park. North is a park road and landscaped area, west a public library with substantial grounds and a highway, from which the theater will be sound-proofed by contour berm and landscaping. And to the south, beyond the river channel, is a picturesque park, golf course and one of the community's two high schools. Several of these facilities, and a stadium just across the highway to the south, offer auxiliary parking area for the amphitheater.

THE SITE OF THE
2,000-SEAT
OUTDOOR THEATER



ESTIMATED ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

	<u>HORN IN THE WEST</u>	<u>UNTO THESE HILLS</u>
Seasonal Attendance	29,486	122,034
Seasonal Ticket Sales	\$ 58,972	\$ 244,968
Economic Impact of Ticket Sales	412,804	1,708,476
Seasonal Tourist Sales	530,748	2,196,612
Impact of Tourist Sales	3,615,236	15,376,284
Total Economic Impact	\$4,128,040	\$17,084,760

	<u>HONEY IN THE ROCK</u>	<u>COMMON GLORY</u>
Seasonal Attendance	31,086	41,516
Seasonal Ticket Sales	\$ 62,172	\$ 83,032
Economic Impact of Ticket Sales	435,204	581,224
Seasonal Tourist Sales	559,548	747,288
Impact of Tourist Sales	3,916,836	5,231,016
Total Economic Impact	\$4,352,040	\$5,812,240

	<u>TEXAS</u>	<u>STEPHEN FOSTER STORY</u>
Seasonal Attendance	66,100	52,280
Seasonal Ticket Sales	\$ 132,200	\$ 104,560
Economic Impact of Ticket Sales	925,400	731,920
Seasonal Tourist Sales	1,189,800	939,744
Impact of Tourist Sales	8,328,600	6,578,208
Total Economic Impact	\$9,254,000	\$7,310,128

The above statistics are based on average attendance during the three seasons ending in 1969. They are intended to show the economic impact that outdoor drama has had on the surrounding area. They are based on \$20/person in expenditures and on a \$2 average ticket price. The average spectator spends one day in the area of the drama.

S359°17'W 161.86'

115.00' P. 2192.11

N08°14'W 92.00'

S53.45' P. 2207.11

N35°11'W 305.57'

BRAZOPORT BLVD. HWY. 288

LEVEE 13.5

N30°40'E 254.83'

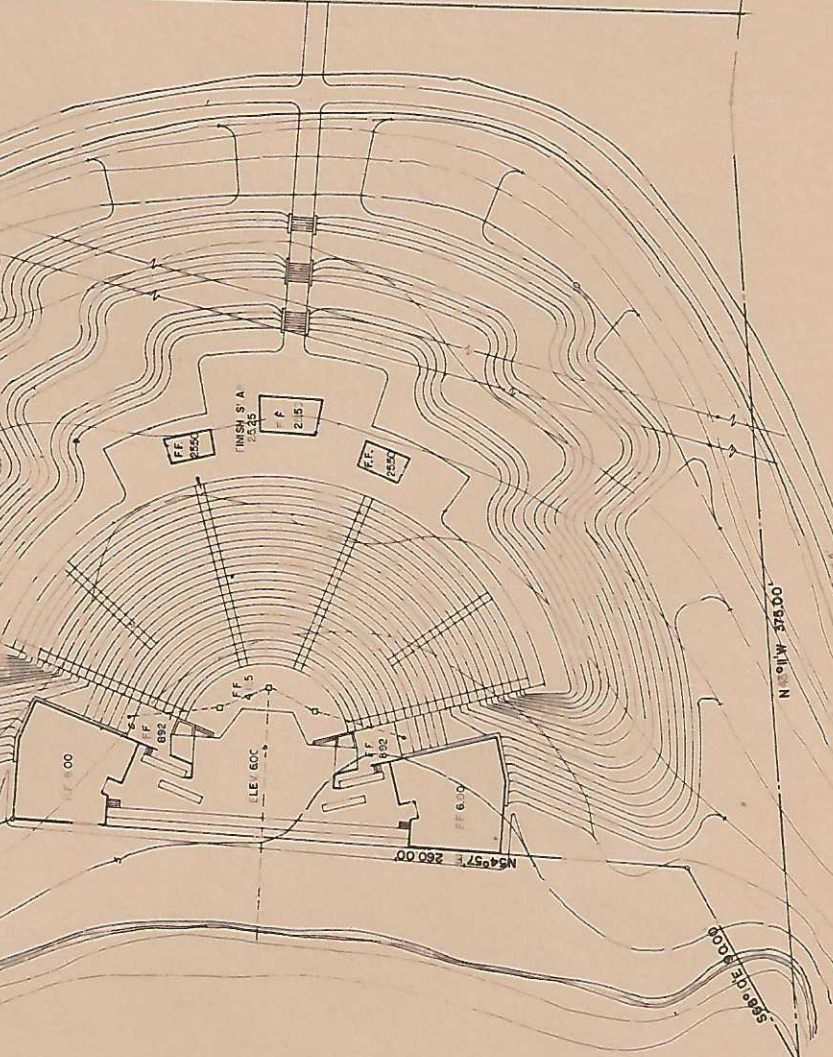
N54°57'E 260.00'

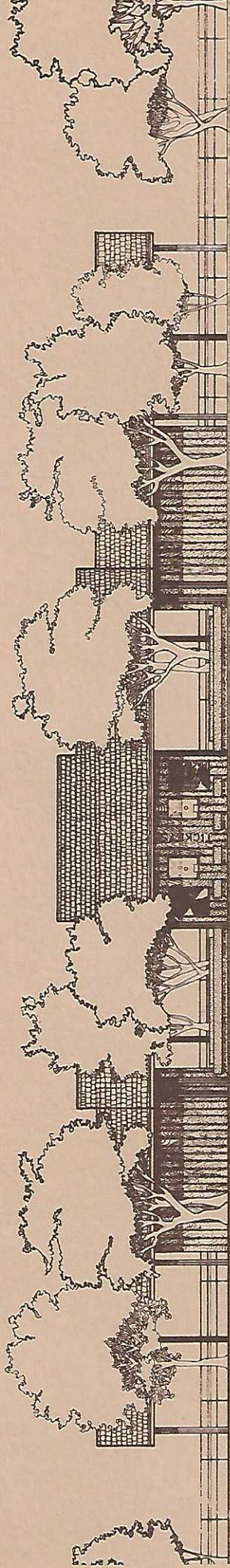
S89°02'E 100.00'

N 0°11'W 375.00'



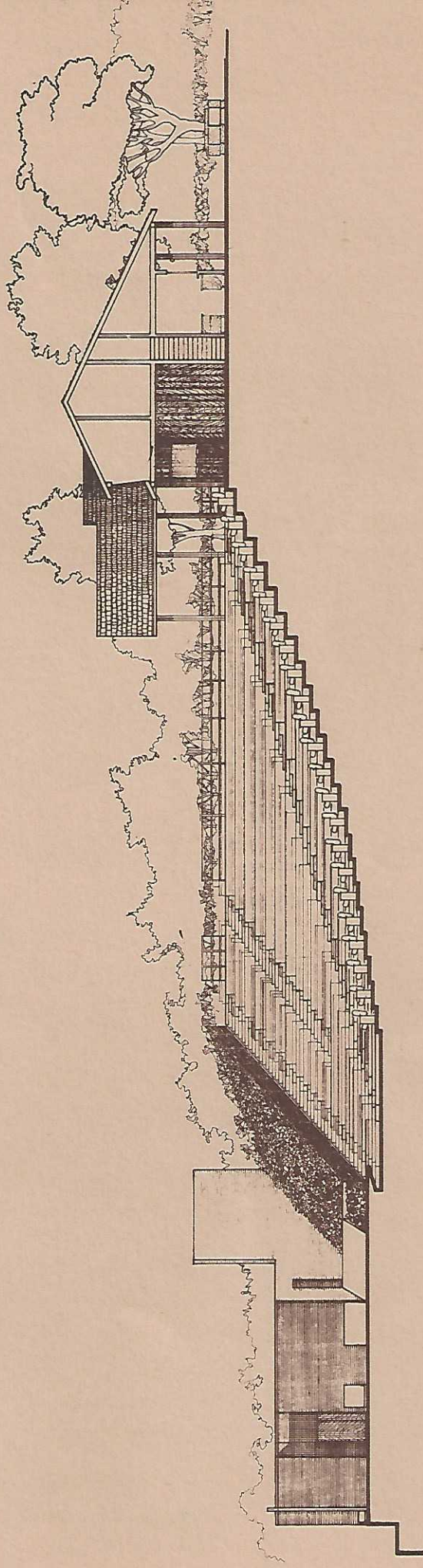
OLD BRAZOS RIVER





FRONT ELEVATION

GRAPHIC SCALE 0 5 10



TRANSVERSE SECTION

GRAPHIC SCALE 0 5 10

CONSTRUCTION BUDGET ESTIMATE

<u>LAND</u> - 2 acres	No Charge
<u>SITE WORK</u> - Including Compacted Fill, Utilities, Excavation, Paving and Building Slabs	\$ 91,000
<u>THEATRE</u> - Slab, Seats, Rain Shelter, Concession Stands, Buildings	178,700
Electrical - Buildings, Area, Parking Flood Lights, Spot Lights, Towers, Dimmers; Air Conditioning; Sound-Speakers, Volume Control, Microphones	77,000
Rest Rooms	40,000
Landscaping	30,000
Architect - Engineer Fee	<u>22,000</u>
	439,200
Contingency & Overhead @ 12.7%	<u>55,800</u>
	\$495,000

REV. B 1/25/75

HDS/lam
1/28/75

COMMUNITY RESUME

The composite community of Brazosport includes the cities of Freeport, Lake Jackson, Clute, Oyster Creek, Jones Creek, Brazoria, Richwood and Quintana as well as unincorporated areas of Surfside, Havenwood, Lake Farms, Turtle Cove and others.

One of the fastest-growing communities in Texas, Brazosport's population as of May, 1974, was 52,200, an increase of more than 50% in 10 years. Projections indicate the present trend of growth may reach more than 200,000 within the next two decades, stimulated by expansion of the area's high industrial economy, the opening of new major transportation facilities and the construction of Texas' offshore oil terminal here.

Brazosport, because of its clean, open beaches, its sports fishing and its climate, is one of Texas' major resort-recreation areas. Located within 100 miles of one-fourth of the state's total population, the community each year attracts tens of thousands of visitors totaling hundreds of thousands of tourist-days. Planned facilities for the benefit of these visitors, as well as local residents, include not only the Amphitheater, but several other projects - - - a new state park on Bryan Beach, now being developed; a planned resort-recreation complex at the mouth of the "Old Brazos", including a restoration of historic Fort Velasco on site; a series of picnic parks along the area's nearly 30 miles of seashore beach, and a series of "canoe trail" parks along beautiful Oyster Creek, which meanders for 27 miles through Brazosport.

Straddling the Brazos River at its juncture with the Gulf of Mexico, Brazosport and its neighborhood cities occupy virtually the only area of dry frontal mainland on the Texas coast, flanked on both sides by bays, estuarine systems and marshlands which front the Gulf all along the Texas shoreline - - - except at Brazosport.

The harbor channel on which the Amphitheater will be situated is about eight miles in length, created in 1930 by diversion of the Brazos' last few miles into a new, man-made channel. The harbor channel is the "Old Brazos" from the point of diversion to the Gulf. Its length is divided roughly into four parts:

- - - A deep-draft channel for ocean-going vessels extends about four miles inshore, to the "Port of Freeport" public docks.
- - - Industrial barge channel extends another mile or more inland, to the upper turning basin.
- - - Commercial waterway, housing one of the nation's largest shrimp fleets, extends from the upper turning basin for another mile, approximately to a point where all commercial use of the waterway is blocked by bridge obstruction.
- - - And nearly two miles of purely recreation waterway above the bridges, all the way to the Amphitheater site.

About two hundred yards west of the Amphitheater site, across Highway 288, is the big river itself, the Brazos - - - visible from the concession area of the completed theater.