



Elia Petty cozies up to a dinosaur fossil

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE

Sugar Land's Houston Museum of Natural Science Welcomes Families

Written by Julie Battelle

DBuilt in 1939 and known as “Central Two Camp,” the building that was home to Texas inmates for decades is now home to a Sugar Land branch of the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS). With nearly 50,000 square feet of space, the historic building, constructed from red bricks fired at the nearby Jester Unit plant, housed inmates until 1969 when it then became a warehouse for the prison system until its transfer of ownership in 1999 as part of the Telfair development.

Making History during its Heyday

At its completion, the now historic landmark was surrounded by fields of cotton and oats. Set quite a distance from the main unit of the Central State Prison Farm, the structure is from an era when inmates were housed near the fields where they worked. With the death of the agrarian era of prison systems, inmates began to be housed in sprawling, institutional facilities.

Even in its day, though, the building was unique, since most prison housing buildings of the time were made of wood. “This building marks the era when TDCJ [Texas Department of Criminal Justice] began to modernize; when they began to build brick structures as opposed to the old wooden ones,” says Don Hudson, a former industrial supervisor at Central. Renovations at the facility included replacing once bricked-in windows and adding oak doors and special touches such as ironwork.

Discovering New Horizons

Bringing history back to life, the HMNS celebrates the opening of its Sugar Land branch with permanent exhibits featuring all things interesting from the mighty T. Rex to tiny, live frogs. Explore the wonders of science and nature with interactive labs and classes, featuring museum specimens, artifacts, and lab equipment.

Photo by Joey Thomas



Experience the magic of Narnia as you sit in the chair of the White Witch.



Discover the mythical world of Narnia on display at the museum

Take a tour through time at the museum's dinosaur exhibit



Hands-on activities like the fossil dig site help bring history to life

Explore the wonders of nature at the museum's natural science exhibits



Photo by Joey Thomas

Daytime museum classes cover a variety of topics from electricity, enzymes, and wildlife, to pirates, dissection, and bubbles. Discover the mysterious destruction of the city of Pompeii or take a taste of what the ancients ate for lunch. Whatever topic piques your adventure-seekers' interest, there's a class for it. Labs run once a month and are \$10 per person.

Exploring Exciting Worlds

Traveling exhibits punch up the fun, bringing bits of popular culture to Sugar Land. The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition allows you to tour scenes from the mythical world of Narnia. Through authentic costumes, props, and set dressings from the magical films, you and your family can step through the back of the wardrobe and immerse yourselves in the enchanting world of Narnia, full of the wonders of science and the fascination of fantasy.

Also on display will be artifacts from the tale's author, C.S. Lewis, including exciting interactive environments such as the famous attic and wardrobe, actual falling snow, and frozen waterfalls. Feel the chill while you sit in the throne of the White Witch or create mythical creatures in King Miraz's castle.

The Sugar Land HMNS is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Regular admission prices are \$12 for adults and \$9 for children. Visit hmns.org. SLM

JULIE BATTELLE is a Sugar Land native, freelance writer, and single mom extraordinaire to her awesome daughters, Bailey and Allie.

EXPLORE UPCOMING EXHIBITS

Catch these new museum features in spring

Paleontology

Experience life on Earth during the Cretaceous period through intriguing fossils.

Physical Sciences

Unlock the secret of how things work while learning about simple machines, energy, light, and sound.

Space Science

Discover space with a virtual space odyssey, images from the Hubble Telescope, and meteorites.

Demonstration Theater

Learn the mysteries of magical illusions and the science behind every good act with live performances.



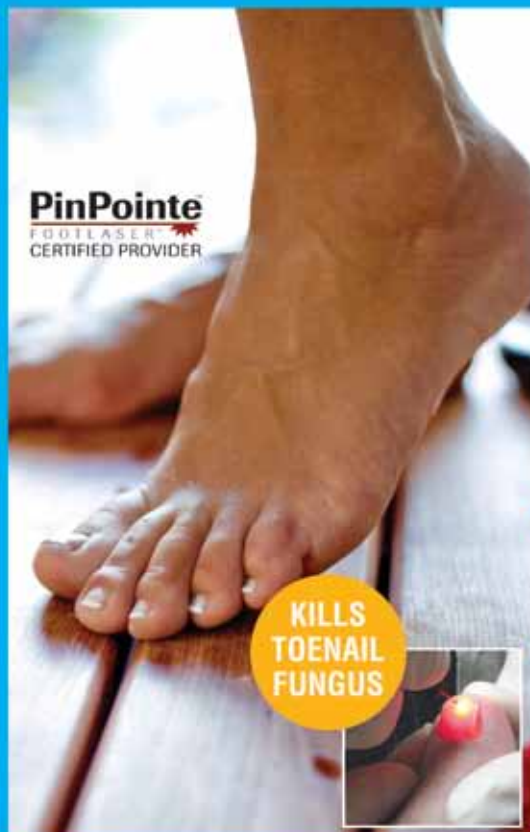
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