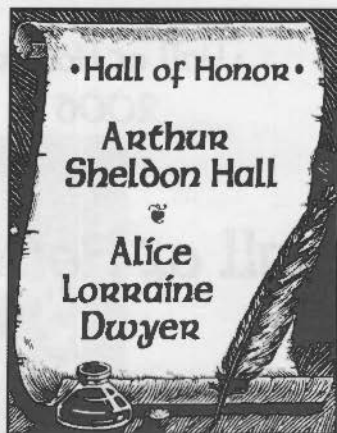


• Hall of Honor •
2006

Arthur Sheldon Hall



An agent for change and preservation—those words describe Sheldon Hall who was inducted into the 2006 Hall of Honor of the El Paso County Historical Society. He is responsible for so much—history, culture, and even convenience, for it was his persistence and hard work

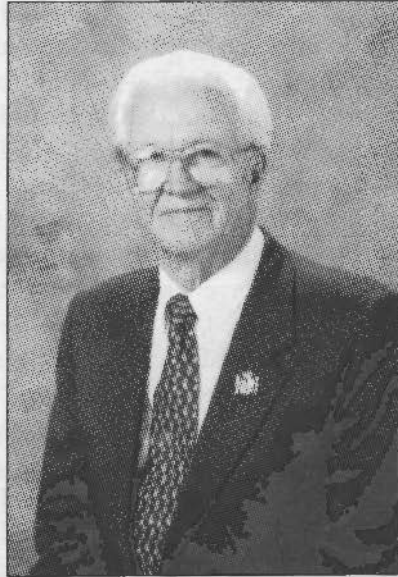
that gave us the “right turn on red” law.

His passion for history led to a life of historical preservation that has made El Paso famous for more than gun fights. He was the founder and life member of the Mission Trail Association and arranged for the program which designed plans for the restoration of the Presidio at San Elizario and the Socorro Mission. Governor Bush appointed him to the chairmanship of the Quadricentennial Commission which donated \$50,000 to initiate the restoration of the Socorro Mission.

Sheldon brought national and international celebrity to El Paso when he led a group of Conquistadores to Plymouth, Massachusetts, traditionally the home of the first Thanksgiving in 1620. They made the trip in order to declare that the history was not accurate—that El Paso was the REAL site of the first Thanksgiving in the year 1598. The vision of Conquistadores in full regalia marching around the ornate portico under which lies Plymouth Rock is most fascinating!

Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1917, he attended Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. During his college years, Sheldon captained the 1938 state championship cross-country team and was an active member of Sigma Chi Fraternity. He graduated from Miami University with a bachelor of science degree in industrial management.

In 1941 he enlisted in the United States Army Corps and served as a test pilot at Wright Field. He was also commander of training for a dive bombing squadron in Brazil. Discharged from the service in 1945, he founded Blair Hall Company which specialized in building commercial buildings. Marriage and a family also occupied his time as did the many boards and charitable organizations of which he was a part. He also became involved with historical groups.



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Sheldon has served many charitable, historical, and health-related groups. He has served as president and chairman of many boards of directors including the Salvation Army, American Heart Association, and the El Paso Cancer Treatment Center and has served on the Texas Historical Commission. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Mended Hearts Club and the Stroke Club. There are now programs which offer blood pressure screening and CPR education to the general public which owe their existence to Sheldon Hall's work.

Our ability to "turn right on red" which saves gasoline and time is the product of Sheldon's work. He worked for three years to convince the state legislature to enact the law. His campaign to have street numbers prominently displayed on houses and places of business seems to have taken hold, at least in El Paso. He is also behind the campaign to have the name "Lower Valley" changed to "Mission Valley" and indeed, little by little, "Mission Valley" is being used more often.

History seems to be his preeminent passion. He is a founder and life member of the Mission Trail Association, and as such arranged for John White, professor of architecture at Texas Tech, to have students design plans for the restoration of two of our "icons," the Mission at Socorro and the Presidio Chapel at San Elizario.

Probably the mission which earned for him not only local but national renown was his campaign to have the thanksgiving celebration near the Rio Grande celebrated as the FIRST Thanksgiving. Don Juan De Oñate and his followers did indeed celebrate a thanksgiving in 1598—fully twenty-two years before the “Pilgrims” invited the Indians to their celebratory feast on the shores of the Atlantic at what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts. Sheldon has made this so obvious that surely writers of history textbooks have had to revise their thinking. To enlighten the remainder of the nation he led a group of “Conquistadors” to Plymouth during a thanksgiving celebration to emphasize that the Texas “First Thanksgiving” is the legitimate one!

He holds membership in the El Paso Historical Alliance, the Sons of the Colonial Wars, the Sons of the American Revolution, and *Los Caballeros de Oñate* of which he serves as president. It is through his affiliation with this group that he has been instrumental in bringing artistic and historical groups to El Paso for the *Siglo de Oro* festivals at the Chamizal Memorial. Sheldon has received many honors in Spain as well as in Texas. As a member of the *Granaderos de Gálvez* he has had several audiences with King Juan Carlos of Spain and was awarded the *Cruz de Caballero de la Orden de Isabel la Católica* by his majesty. He was also named *Académico de Mérito* by *Academia Balear de la Historia* in Spain. In 2005, Sheldon received *El Adelantado* Award in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Working with Leon Metz and others, Sheldon was a driving force in the selection of don Juan de Oñate as one of the Twelve Travelers whose statues are and will be erected in El Paso.

Having contributed his work and talent to many of the charitable and health-connected organizations in the area as well as most of the historical organizations, the influence of Sheldon Hall will be seen and felt for many years. El Paso history and indeed the history of the entire area would be much poorer without the leadership, guidance, and the vision of Arthur Sheldon Hall.

