It has hosted some of the more high-profile, non-Las Vegas fights in recent years, including Jorge Paez-Stevie Cruz in 1989; Orlando Canizales-Paul Gonzales (1990); Erik Morales-Daniel Zaragoza (1997); and Fernando Vargas-Wilfredo Rivera (2001).

However, El Paso's signature fight wasn't much of a fight. It was a sparring session.

On June 13, 1998, Oscar De La Hoya – then in the prime of his career and the defending WBC welterweight champion – fought unknown challenger Patrick Charpentier before more than 45,000 people in the Sun Bowl. That De La Hoya knocked Charpentier out in the third round wasn't the story.

The El Paso fans were the story.

The screaming women that showed up at De La Hoya press conferences. The hordes of cars that followed his bus. The overflow crowds that waited in long lines at local recreation centers, just to watch him spar.

The electricity that shot through the stadium when De La Hoya walked out of his dressing room dressed as a mariachi.

That was seven years ago. Even then, Texas boxing coordinator Lester Bedford knew that El Paso – a poor-but-passionate border town of more than 560,000 people on Texas' western tip, sandwiched between New Mexico and Mexico – would deliver if he brought in one of the sport's premier attractions. And while it took some doing to convince Top Rank boss Bob Arum to risk his cash cow in a virtual boxing outpost, there was no second thoughts once "Bottom Line Bob" saw the city's reaction upon De La Hoya's arrival.

Bedlam tends to make cash registers hum.

El Pasodidn't disappoint. De La Hoya-Charpentier was a stunning success – one of the largest boxing crowds in history, and one of the largest crowds in Sun Bowl history.

So, when the early-2006 Las Vegas boxing schedule began to fill up, Arum began to contemplate non-Strip venues in Texas for the rubber match between Jose Luis Castillo and Diego Corrales.

There was San Antonio, whose boxing fans reacted similar to El Paso's when it hosted a De La Hoya fight with David Kamau in 1997.

And there was El Paso.

Arum threw out the possibility of El Paso hosting Castillo-Corrales 3 to Bedford.

And Bedford gave an emphatic approval.

Within days, Castillo-Corrales 3 was good-to-go for the Don Haskins Center. The fight's co-promoter, Gary Shaw, certainly didn't have a problem with the fight venue. His fighter, Vargas, was greeted with De La Hoya-like enthusiasm in 2001.

So the "Sun City" will be the place on Feb. 4. And El Pasoans can hardly believe it.

"El Paso is one of the great fight towns in America and has always supported quality boxing events," Arum said. "With both Castillo and Corrales having fought there in El Paso in the past, and all the great support El Paso has shown, we felt this was the best place for the fight."

Shaw agreed.

"The Don Haskins may be one of the best boxing facilities in the world to watch a fight," he said. "With such a small arena floor and such steep elevated seating, the fans are right on top of the action. And with the fans in El Paso being so loud and enthusiastic, it should be a great scene there at the Haskins Center and a perfect setting for this great rematch."

Yes, the fight tradition is rich. Besides the aforementioned fights, Julio Cesar Chavez, Marco Antonio Barrera, Salvador Sanchez, Floyd Mayweather, Kostya Tszyu, Shane Mosley, and, as Arum pointed out, Castillo and Corrales, have all fought there.

The results have varied. Some of the fights were predictable blowouts. Barrera's knockout of Mzonke Fana; Others were competitive: Sanchez-Juan LaPorte; Mosley-Manuel Gomez. Some were surprising: Corrales' early knockout of Angel Manfredy; Mayweather's blitz of Luis Leija; Tszyu's domination of Rafael Ruelas; Cesar Bazan's shocker over Stevie Johnston.

And some were very good: Paez-Cruz, Morales-Zaragoza.

And, don't forget, El Paso is home to a couple of guys who came very close to winning world titles themselves: bantamweight Fernie Morales and lightweight Juan Lazcano.

But never has there been a fight of this magnitude. Not a legitimate superfight, where the eyes of the sport will be focused on one patch of canvas in West Texas.

None of El Paso's previous big-time fights had the combustible ingredients of Castillo-Corrales 3. None were so evenly matched. None were so primed for controversy. None had such a hearty, juicy, pre-fight storyline.

None were the completion of an epic boxing trilogy.

El Paso has a rich boxing history.

It will be much, much richer after Feb. 4.