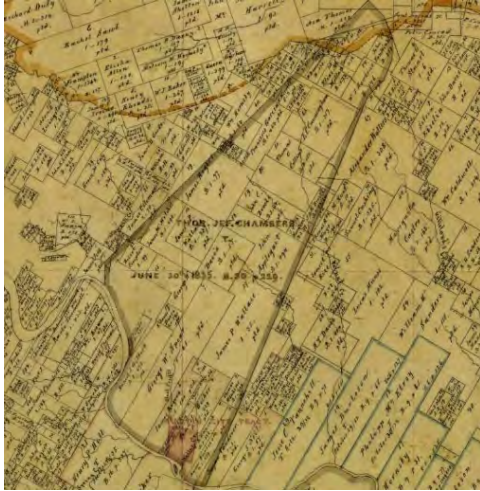


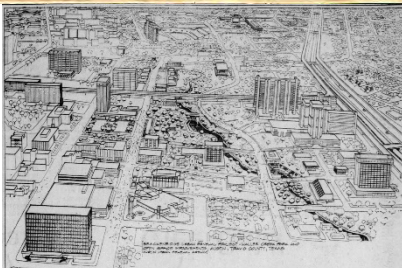
# Historic Context Study of Waller Creek

Waller Creek Conservancy

December 6, 2018



**Prepared for  
Waller Creek Conservancy  
Austin, Texas**



Prepared by  
HHM & Associates, Inc.  
Austin, Texas

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2018, HHM & Associates, Inc. (HHM) entered into a contract with the Waller Creek Conservancy (the Conservancy) to complete a historic context study of Waller Creek. Since the Conservancy's preservation and development efforts at present focus on the creation of a Waller Creek Parks District from Waterloo Park at East 15th Street to Lady Bird Lake, this historic context focuses on those limits. Project historians dubbed the study area—which encompasses several blocks east and west of the creek, roughly from Trinity Street to Interstate Highway 35 (historically East Avenue)—the “lower Waller Creek corridor.”

As defined by the Conservancy, the purpose of the historic context study is to:

- Honor the communities that have lived, worked, and played, in and around Waller Creek.
- Capture the stories and personal experiences of former residents, park users, business owners, patrons, school children, and others.
- Document community events and traditions held in areas throughout the Waller Creek district, including Palm Park & School, Waterloo Park, and Symphony Square.
- Capture milestones of adjacent cultural centers, districts, and businesses that have influenced the development of the Waller Creek area.

## Methodology

### ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Beginning in February 2018, HHM conducted archival research at several repositories including the Austin History Center, Center for American History, and Texas State Library and Archives. The online archives of the Travis County Clerk's Office and the Texas Historical Commission were consulted as well. Project historians also gathered historic photographs primarily from The Portal to Texas History (an online collection of resources from repositories throughout Texas) and historic maps from the Texas State Library and Archives, the Texas General Land Office, and the Perry-Castañeda Map Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. The project team also conducted online newspaper research about certain individuals, resources, and events through Newspapers.com and Newspaperarchive.com. Primary source research was augmented with secondary source material including, but not limited to, books and articles about the history of Austin and Waller Creek, government documents, and cultural resource management surveys and reports. Given the rich history of Austin and Waller Creek, several online blogs also proved useful for obtaining lesser-known information that could be substantiated via other sources.

In a supplemental to the original contract, the lead project historian conducted additional intensive-level archival research to explore the naming of Waller Creek and Edwin Waller's history as a slaveowner.

### ORAL HISTORIES

The scope of work for the project also involved conducting oral history interviews with subjects identified by the Conservancy or recommended by other interested parties. The list of interviews conducted by the lead project historian and by Conservancy volunteers at Waller Creek Conservancy public meetings and a brief summary of topics discussed during each interview is presented in the following table.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

Interviewee	Affiliation	Topics
Kevin Anderson	Coordinator, Austin Water – Center for Environmental Research	History of Austin creeks; natural history of Waller Creek; Joseph Jones
Sinclair Black	Principal, Black + Vernooy Architects; Professor – UT-Austin School of Architecture	1970s plans for Waller Creek redevelopment; Bicentennial projects; Reconnect Austin; Design Waller Creek competition
Bob Edwards	Former UT-Austin graduate student	UT-Austin relationship with Waller Creek; Joseph Jones; ecology of Waller Creek
Harrison Eppright	Manager of Visitor Services/Tour Ambassador, Visit Austin	Remnants of African American and Mexican American communities on Red River and Sabine Streets in the 1950s; area businesses; Waller Creek interpretive strategies
Girard Kinney	Principal, Kinney & Associates Architecture; former employee at Wukasch & Associates	Preservation of Waller Creek Bridges; water quality; Symphony Square development; Waterloo Park development; Waller Creek protests regarding athletics, Vietnam War, and tree removal
Alice Reinarz	Descendant of homeowners of house formerly located at 407 East 16th Street	German immigration; life and residence on East 16th Street; Waterloo Park development
Lori Renteria	Co-founder East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Planning Team; Project HELP	Homeless community along lower Waller Creek corridor; Austin Convention Center; Homer the Homeless Goose
Sabino Renteria	City of Austin Councilmember; former Palm School student	History of Palm School and the neighborhood; relationship between lower Waller Creek corridor and “East Austin”
Nailah Sankofa	Founder, Designer, Executive & Creative Director - RunWay Underground Fashion Production Group	Waterloo Park and Waller Creek as community gathering space; performance art; relationship between lower Waller Creek corridor and “East Austin;” displacement of African American and Mexican American communities
Kirk Watson	Texas State Senator; former Mayor of Austin	Live performances at Symphony Square/Waterloo Park; Preservation of Waller Creek; “10 in 10 Initiative;” sense of community along Waller Creek/Red River Entertainment District
Ted Whatley	Independent Education Management Professional	Family history in the lower Waller Creek corridor; sense of community; trajectory of Waller Creek development; displacement of African American and Mexican American communities

Project historians also consulted oral history interviews in the collection at the Austin History Center and from related projects completed by HHM.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

In support of efforts for the historic context study, the lead project historian prepared and gave a PowerPoint presentation for a Waller Creek Conservancy board meeting on June 5, 2018. She also prepared a visual presentation for and attended a public meeting held by the Conservancy at the Austin Public Library on June 6, 2018. The general purpose of the meetings was to serve as a subject-matter expert to assist the Conservancy and provide content as to the process and research methods behind the historic context study project and answer questions posed by interested parties.

## Interpretive Themes

The goal of this historic context study is to serve as an interpretive planning tool for the Waller Creek Conservancy. Below is a list of themes, presented by the time periods by which the report is organized, based on historical trends and events related to the lower Waller Creek corridor that the Conservancy can explore as part of future efforts.

- Naming of Waller Creek
- Entertainment
- Education
- Music
- Residential and Commercial Development
- Ethnic heritage, including:
  - Native American
  - African American
  - German/German American
  - Swedish/Swedish American
  - Lebanese/Lebanese American
  - Mexican/Mexican American
  - Chinese/Chinese American
- Major flood events
- Urban development and renewal
- Demographic change and displacement
- Construction of Interstate Highway 35

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## List of Abbreviations

HHM	HHM & Associates, Inc. (formerly Hardy·Heck·Moore, Inc.)
IH	Interstate Highway
THC	Texas Historical Commission
US	United States
UT	University of Texas
WCC	Waller Creek Conservancy

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Figure 4-9. A view of Palm School Park along East Avenue taken after the park was completed in 1933. Source: Michael Barnes, “Filling out the long history of Austin’s Swante Palm School,” *Austin American-Statesman*, January 30, 2016, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://www.mystatesman.com/lifestyles/filling-out-the-long-history-austin-swante-palm-school/p6iN5coMkHFXKzIHob6D8I/>.

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Figure 4-23. View of the 1939 flood taken at East 1st and Red River Streets. Source: Andrew Weber, "Austin's History of Floods," June 8, 2016, accessed July 14, 2018, <http://www.kut.org/post/austins-history-floods>.

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2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

Figure 5-1. Location of African American households in the Austin city limits in 1940. Source: Jeremiah Spence, *et al.* "Structuring Race in the Cultural Geography of Austin," in *Inequity in the Technopolis: Race, Class, Gender and the Digital Divide in Austin*, edited by Joseph Straubhaar, *et al.*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012.

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Figure 5-11. Lung's Chinese Kitchen on Red River Street. Source: Douglass, Neal. Chinese Kitchen Restaurant, photograph, March 22, 1946; ([texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht34194/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht34194/); accessed July 18, 2018, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

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Figure 5-13. El Matamoros Restaurant located in the 500-block of East Avenue. Source: Douglass, Neal. El Matamoros, photograph, June 18, 1957; ([texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph33457/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph33457/); accessed July 19, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

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Figure 5-15. 1958 View of East 6th Street. Source: Michael Barnes, "An arresting shot of Sixth Street in the 1950s," <http://austinfound.blog.statesman.com/2017/01/21/an-arresting-shot-of-sixth-street-in-the-1950s/>, accessed September 20, 2018, crediting the Hans Beacham Estate.

Figure 5-16. Austin Body Works on East 7th Street. Source: Douglass, Neal. Austin Body Works, photograph, April 30, 1948;([texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph62837/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph62837/); accessed July 18, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

Figure 5-17. The New Orleans Club on Red River Street. Source: Douglass, Neal. The New Orleans Club - exterior shot; interior shot - Ernie Mae Miller at the piano, photograph, January 1, 1950; ([texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph33789/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph33789/); accessed July 18, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

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Figure 5-23. Last streetcar on its route down East 1st Street. Source: [Last streetcar in front of Palm School, Austin, Texas], photograph, February 7, 1940, accessed September 21, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht124369/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht124369/), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu/); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

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Figure 6-4. 1959 Aerial view of Austin from the south. Source: Austin Aerials - misc. downtown, auditorium, photograph, October 1, 1959, accessed September 24, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht33367/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht33367/), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

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Figure 6-15. Aerial view of the lower Waller Creek corridor from East 1st Street to East 8th Street. Source: Douglass, Neal. Austin Aerials - Downtown and Capitol, photograph, June 22, 1963; ([texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht33344/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht33344/); accessed September 24, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](https://texashistory.unt.edu); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

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# INTRODUCTION

Identified as “Austin’s Spring Creek” in an 1838 map of the area before the City of Austin’s founding, present-day Waller Creek has played an important role in the development of East Austin and the downtown area over the last 80 years. The following historic context narrative presents a broad study of the lower Waller Creek corridor from 1839 to the present. In general, the historic context study captures the cultural and built history of the lower Waller Creek corridor from Native American settlement to the present. This context includes the establishment of the City of Austin; chronicles development of communities and businesses along the creek; highlights the public policy processes that created Palm Park, Waterloo Park, and Symphony Square; and documents the traditions and community culture within the study area. The context presents historical events, development and demographic patterns, and cultural and architectural trends in chronological order within several time periods. The context’s organization is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1. Early Settlement and Founding of Austin to 1839
- Chapter 2. Growth Along Lower Waller Creek, 1840–1899
- Chapter 3. Early Twentieth Century, 1900–1927
- Chapter 4. Austin’s 1928 *City Plan* and its Effects, 1928–1939
- Chapter 5. Lower Waller Creek in the Mid-Twentieth Century, 1940–1957
- Chapter 6. *The Austin Plan* and Urban Renewal, 1958–2017

Prior to the settlement of the future townsite of Austin, the waterway now known as Waller Creek was a natural resource that was beneficial to Native American tribes that moved through the area. The creek and other nearby streams also attracted Anglo settlers in an around the area and encouraged the establishment of the community of Waterloo. A prominent resource, the creek also influenced the selection of Waterloo as the capital of the Republic of Texas, a city to be named Austin. This decision likely prompted the first known written identification of the stream—Austin’s Spring Creek—with the as-yet platted city in 1838. Edwin Waller, President Mirabeau B. Lamar’s selection as the government agent to lay out the new seat of government, played a significant role in the development and planning of the Austin townsite, thus the creek was given his name. In the city surveys drawn by L. J. Pilié, Charles Schoolfield, and William H. Sandusky, Waller Creek served as a guide for the eastern boundary of the new town. Waller Creek would go on to figure prominently in the development of what was then East Austin—all of the city east of Congress Avenue and the Texas Capitol building.

In the late nineteenth century, the lower Waller Creek corridor saw significant commercial, residential, and institutional growth as increasing settlement by Anglos, formerly enslaved African Americans, and European and Middle Eastern immigrants who called Austin home. The area continued to grow in the early twentieth century even while increasingly plagued with devastating flooding such as the events that occurred in 1900 and 1915. A significant demographic and developmental shift occurred as a result of Austin’s 1928 *City Plan* which recommended changes to land use, transportation infrastructure, and municipal services that resulted in the displacement of the minority communities that comprised a significant portion of the population along lower Waller Creek. By the 1940s, the African American and Mexican American communities—as well as the businesses and institutions that served them—were replaced by an increasing number of other commercial and industrial enterprises. Various geographic and political factors influenced land-use recommendations in the City of Austin’s 1958 master plan, which continued the trend of demographic change and displacement that was further exacerbated by urban renewal in the form of encroaching development by the City of Austin, the State of Texas, and The University of Texas at Austin. With the bicentennial celebration of US independence in 1976, various improvements to Waller Creek commenced and have continued to the present

day in the form of various flood control and beautification efforts. Although no longer the nucleus of East Austin and populated with new constituencies across the broader economic and social spectrum, the lower Waller Creek corridor saw a rebirth as an entertainment and cultural district from the 1970s onward. Today, the impact of public policies and private and public stewardship continue to affect the changing character of the area but also recognize the need to publicly and openly honor the lower Waller Creek corridor's diverse and complex history while embracing newly emerging traditions.

# 1. Early Settlement and the Founding of Austin to 1839

## 1.1. NATIVE AMERICAN SETTLEMENT

Native American tribes inhabited the prairies surrounding the future Austin townsite long before Europeans and Americans claimed ownership of the land. The creeks and the Colorado River provided fish, while the prairie offered abundant game, such as buffalo and deer.<sup>1</sup> The Lipan Apache and the Tonkawa hunted, gathered, and fished this land during the seventeenth century, often coming into conflict with one another. The Tonkawa's numbers had dwindled by the time the Comanche swept southward on horseback, expanding from the area surrounding the Rocky Mountains into the southern plains. The Tonkawa migrated to the Great Plains through the eighteenth century; their use of the horse allowed them great military advantage and the ability to follow buffalo herds. The Lipan Apache were pushed into southern Texas and northern Mexico, though many sought shelter at the Spanish missions that were being established in the region. The Tonkawa, who had at this point lost much of their access to buffalo, sought protection by allying themselves with Anglo settlers like those who had arrived to settle near Austin.<sup>2</sup>

*Comanchería*—the vast territory attained by the Comanche—stretched across Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas to the Balcones Escarpment, just west of the future site of Austin.<sup>3</sup> University of Texas professor Joseph Jones discovered a flint artifact in Waller Creek on one of his explorations near The University of Texas at Austin. Jones believed this flint, a useful resource in the making of traditional stone tools, was physical evidence that native tribes may have come to the area to quarry the resource.<sup>4</sup> Twenty blocks north of the lower Waller Creek project area, arrowheads have been found along the creek, and there is evidence of a Native American campground behind present-day 602 East 43rd Street in the form of a twisted oak tree – a signal tribes used to identify the presence of a fresh water spring along a trail (fig. 1-1).<sup>5</sup> In his discourse of his explorations and contemplations of the stream known today as Waller Creek, Jones noted that “to begin with, then, the Creek ‘belonged’ to the Indians, who nevertheless would not have thought of possession in the way we do.”<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2. EARLY ANGLO SETTLEMENT

After the Mexican War of Independence ended Spanish rule in 1821, the new Mexican government encouraged some American colonization in the areas of Northern Mexico that would become the Republic of Texas. The topography and geography of present-day Austin were among the features that attracted Anglo settlers to the area during the nineteenth century. The first Anglo involvement at the future site of Austin occurred when the Mexican government offered a third settlement contract to *empresario* Stephen F. Austin.<sup>7</sup> Headquartered at Bastrop, the grant—known as Austin’s “Little Colony”—was situated on the east side of the Colorado River and featured numerous streams.<sup>8</sup> However, some early maps of the colony—such as one compiled by Stephen F. Austin in 1838—do not indicate the creek that would later be known as Waller Creek (fig. 1-2). Austin and two surveyors scouted the grant in the spring of 1830. Austin planned to claim a portion for himself and retire on what he called “the most attractive spot in all Texas.”<sup>9</sup> In 1832, Austin ordered Samuel M. Williams to survey “at the upper line of Tannehill League about five *varas* beyond the Big Springs at the foot of the mountain [Mount Bonnell].”<sup>10</sup> It was here that Austin had plans to “fix [his] residence on the Colorado at the foot of the mountain to live.”<sup>11</sup> Austin never cleared the Mexican titles for others who were previously granted property within the land grant and, for various reasons, Austin’s claim was never solidified or recognized by the governments of Mexico or the Republic of Texas.<sup>12</sup> On June 20, 1835, the Mexican government awarded Thomas Jefferson Chambers an eight-league grant within the “Little Colony” which encompassed the site of modern-day Austin. The record includes a hand-drawn survey highlighting two

geographic features – *Arroyo Cascadero* (or Cascade Creek; present-day Bull Creek) and the “Foot of the Mountains” (hills of the Balcones Escarpment just west of present-day Shoal Creek) (fig. 1-3).<sup>13</sup>

Prior to this time, the only Anglo settlements were Bastrop and the headright (grants given to potential colonists on the condition that the grantees meet specified requirements) that Reuben Hornsby—a colonist living in the “Little Colony”—established on the east side of the Colorado River 30 miles north of Bastrop in 1832.<sup>14</sup> Several other families settled there, and the settlement came to be called Hornsby’s Bend. Tennessee native Jacob Harrell left Hornsby’s Bend in 1835 and erected a tent encampment at a low crossing on the Colorado River, just west of the mouth of present-day Shoal Creek.<sup>15</sup> By 1838, Harrell had built permanent buildings at his homestead and moved his family from Hornsby’s Bend.

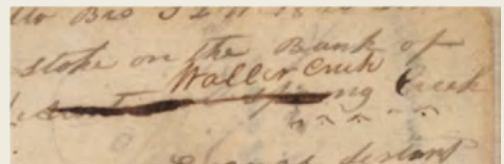
### 1.3. WATERLOO

When the Republic of Texas was established in 1836, it gave residents and newcomers a sense of permanence that encouraged settlement in the interior of the new country. Anglo settlement was also prompted by the efforts of the Texas Rangers, who provided safety from native tribes, particularly the Comanche, whose territory and way of life were threatened by the newcomers. Many families began to move from the familiarity and relative safety of established communities, such as Bastrop and Hornsby’s Bend, further northwestward along the river toward the “foot of the mountains.”<sup>16</sup> By the later months of 1837, the area that would become Austin began welcoming a growing number of settlers. In the spring of 1838, Jacob Harrell and several immigrants purchased first-class headright grants near Harrell’s original settlement.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Mays, Deputy Surveyor for the County of Bastrop, surveyed the parcels. His February 25, 1838 documentation of George Hancock’s grant provides written reference to “Austin’s Spring Creek” – later renamed Waller Creek.<sup>18</sup> (See sidebar “What’s in a Name?” for more about the naming of Waller Creek.<sup>19</sup>)

Additional settlement in the area occurred when Fort Colorado, located near Walnut Creek between Hornsby’s Bend and the new grants on the Colorado River, was abandoned in April 1838; some of the men who had served there settled near Harrell’s homestead.<sup>20</sup> In August 1838, the *Matagorda Bulletin* reported that the area between the Colorado River and the bluffs on the western edge of what is now modern-day Austin was home to a rapidly growing concentration of plantations and villages.<sup>21</sup> Considering this rapid growth, the area became a likely site for the establishment of the Republic’s capital. Texas Ranger Edward Burleson, a native of North Carolina who emigrated to Texas in 1830 and served important roles in the Texas revolutionary military, was determined to

#### “What’s in a Name?”

Edwin Waller figures prominently in the naming of landmarks and features in Austin, most notably that of Waller Creek. But, explorers, settlers, and colonists—Native, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo—named rivers and streams long before Waller and his crew set out to survey and establish the town of Austin. What, then, was Waller Creek called before the spring of 1839? Research does not yield any government or Texas land grant maps that gave the stream a name. In fact, it is not even depicted on some maps. It would seem odd, however, for neither of the streams that figured so prominently in early Anglo settlers’ memory of Austin to not have been identified. The answer that had eluded many historians comes by exploring documentation of the headright grants that the Republic of Texas condemned to create the City of Austin. Nineteenth-century property surveys include very specific boundary descriptions. Surveyor Thomas A. Mays charted George D. Hancock’s parcel—the land through which lower Waller Creek flows—on February 25, 1838. A portion of the boundary description as originally written read, “...to a corner at stake on the Bank of the River [40 varas] above **Austin’s Spring Creek...**” [emphasis added].<sup>19</sup> This indicates that, at least by February 1838, Anglo settlers had given the stream a name. Shoal Creek is, likewise, identified in the April and May surveys of the Rogers and Harrell grants, respectively. Clearly, some unidentified individual named the body of water on Hancock’s property “Austin’s Spring Creek,” likely for the *empresario* responsible for the Anglo settlement in the area because the Republic had yet to authorize the establishment of the capital city or new townsites which was to be given his name.<sup>19</sup>



Detail of Field Notes, File No. 338, Bastrop First Class survey. Source: Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.

take advantage of the thriving region.<sup>22</sup> In June 1838, Burleson wrote to James F. Perry, the administrator of Stephen F. Austin's estate, informing Perry of his decision to plat a town within Austin's original grant on the Colorado, called Waterloo. Secure that Perry would be able to support this development of the property which held no clear title, Burleson platted his town that July (fig. 1-4).<sup>23</sup> An anonymous visitor to Waterloo that same month described the many springs in the area which offered good drinking water. Surely "Austin's Spring Creek" was among those he admired.<sup>24</sup>

In the fall of 1838, Republic of Texas presidential candidate Mirabeau B. Lamar visited the Upper Colorado region to campaign for the upcoming election. At the site of Waterloo, he visited Harrell and other area residents. After a successful buffalo hunt one morning, as Lamar gazed down from a hill north of Harrell's homestead across the prairie, the streams that watered it, and down toward the Colorado River beyond, he supposedly exclaimed, "This should be the seat of future empire!"<sup>25</sup>

## 1.4. THE FOUNDING OF AUSTIN AND NAMING OF WALLER CREEK

By the time the Texas government approved Waterloo's incorporation, President Lamar's plans to seat the Republic of Texas's government there were already underway, and would cause the town of Waterloo and the properties which comprised it to be condemned or purchased and taken over by the Republic for its use. The Republic's newly planned capital was to be named Austin. After two failed attempts set in motion by the Texas Congress's first joint resolution on the matter on October 19, 1837, President Lamar signed into law a third resolution, "An act of the permanent Seat of Government," on January 14, 1839. This legislation doomed the development of Burleson's Waterloo, which was incorporated the following day on January 15, 1839.<sup>26</sup> The act authorized a five-member commission to carry out the site selection in three months' time and that the site for Austin should be between the Trinity and Colorado Rivers above San Antonio Road.<sup>27</sup> An amendment to the resolution authorized funding and stipulated that the construction should be complete for the government to move to the new capital by October 1, 1839.<sup>28</sup> Even before the commission's decision was publicly announced, several events occurred that would cement the founding of Austin and history of Waller Creek. First, the site selection commission members petitioned Bastrop County officials to condemn the town of Waterloo, and then authorized purchase of land belonging to property owners in and around the town. On March 7, 1839, through eminent domain, the Republic of Texas acquired parcels from James Rogers, Jacob Harrell, James Dunn, Samuel Gocher, George Hancock, Aaron Burleson, Logan Vandever, and George Neil to comprise a 7,735-acre "Government Tract" for the City of Austin (figs. 1-5a and 1-5b). Second, on April 12, 1839, President Lamar selected Virginia native Edwin Waller as government agent for the seat of government.<sup>29</sup>

It was not until April 13, 1839, however, that the commission formally announced and sent a written report to President Lamar declaring its selection of Waterloo, chosen for its central location in the Republic and for its natural beauty, including various springs.<sup>30</sup> They wrote that they had "selected the site of the Town of Waterloo on the East Bank of the Colorado River."<sup>31</sup> Then went on to say that the site was:

"intersected by two beautiful streams of permanent and pure water, one of which forms at its debouche into the river a timbered rye bottom of about thirty acres. These rivulets rise at an elevation of from Sixty to one hundred feet on the back part of the site or tract, by means which the contemplated city might at comparatively small expense be well watered...."<sup>32</sup>

The commission members did not refer to either stream by any name much less as Shoal Creek and Austin's Spring Creek – the names by which surveyor Thomas Mays had called them the previous year.

Edwin Waller and a convoy of workers and supplies arrived at the site of Austin by May, 20, 1839, when he wrote to Waller that he concluded a contract with surveyors L. J. Pilié and Charles Schoolfield to survey and lay off the land by marking out streets, alleys, and lots for the 640-acre "Town Tract" within the larger

“Government Tract.”<sup>33</sup> (See sidebar “L. J. Pilié” for more on the surveyors of the Austin townsite.<sup>34</sup>) Whether it was actually Waller or one of his surveyors who should be credited with the townsite’s layout has been debated.<sup>35</sup> It is known that a plan with a central town square (traditional to Mexican urban planning) was abandoned in favor of a plan that would take advantage of and highlight the

### ***The Enslaved at Austin’s Founding***

The 1840 Census counted 850 people living in Austin, 145 of whom were slaves. More than a third of families in Austin owned slaves on the eve of the Civil War, though only 6% of enslaved people in Texas lived in urban centers. Like in more rural areas, Austin slaves tended livestock, cooked, and tended homes. They would have also learned to labor in manufacturing and building trades. Unlike in plantation territory, Austin area slave owners sometimes found they had more labor than they had work to complete. In contrast, the burgeoning City of Austin had a shortage of labor needed.

Due to the short span of time in which Waller had to construct buildings for the new capital, he needed a large and readily available work crew. Slave owners in and around the new town hired out their slaves and collected a fee from the Republic of Texas, through Waller, for their slaves’ work. Among the individuals who Waller paid:

- Owners of Mack, Adam, and Ned: \$450
- James Cox for several enslaved workers: \$460
- Henry Jones for several enslaved workers: \$254

While still bound to their masters and forced to labor, working in Texas cities allowed enslaved people a more autonomous lifestyle. The *Texas State Gazette* reported that “nearly half the Negroes in town hire their own time,” with some even allowed to keep a small portion of their earnings and congregate in the evenings. Living in towns like Austin allowed enslaved people to meet a more diverse community of people. This community laid the groundwork for the culture that grew in post-Civil War freedmen communities, which expanded rapidly as freed slaves arrived in cities after emancipation.<sup>[37]</sup>

townsite’s natural geography and topography, siting the capital on the highest hill and framing the east and west boundaries with the two parallel streams that flowed from north to south into the Colorado River.<sup>36</sup> The western stream, Shoal Creek, retained the name assigned to it in February 1838. (See the sidebar “*The Enslaved at Austin’s Founding*” for more information on the slave labor Waller used.<sup>37</sup>)

Tradition credits one of Waller’s surveyors with naming the eastern stream Waller Creek.<sup>38</sup> The names appear in print on the map that Pilié drew of his and Schoolfield’s survey of the townsite (fig.

1-6). William Sandusky, another of Waller’s surveyors, also drew a map identifying Waller Creek in 1839. His version, however, showed a truncated version of the Austin “Town Tract” within the larger “Government Tract” (fig. 1-7). As building construction commenced in Austin after the August 1839 sale of townsite lots, Sandusky wrote of Waller Creek and Shoal Creek: “two beautiful streams of limestone water flow throughout the upper and lower parts of the town; taking their source in the hills from springs which can by little expense be conducted to any part of the city.”<sup>39</sup> While the Waller Creek did not form a boundary of the city’s eastern limits, it was influential in framing or establishing life and development on the east edge of the original townsite.

Those traveling to the early settlements located on the eastern bank of the Upper Colorado from Houston, including Waterloo and then

### ***L. J. Pilié***

The “Creole surveyor” L. J. Pilié was likely from the prominent family of surveyors and planners by that name in New Orleans. In March 1839, Pilié was at work as the superintendent of a project clearing the bayou between Houston and Harrisburg. A local newspaper reported his successful supervision of that project. On April 15, 1839, Pilié applied directly to President Lamar to serve as a surveyor and draughtsman for the new seat of government. Waller had been assigned the task of organizing and supervising the men laying out the streets, clearing land, and constructing the new landscape of Austin. However, he had no experience platting new townsites himself. Pilié’s application was accepted, and Waller agreed to pay him \$5,000 to work on platting Austin.

Before joining up with Waller, Pilié conducted the survey with Charles Schoolfield, and it was Pilié who completed the drawing which provides the basis of Austin’s existence. Pilié left Austin for Houston on May 31, 1839, where he drafted the map. In competition with fellow surveyor William H. Sandusky, he agreed to do the job for only \$400. Pilié returned to Austin before the first sale of the town lots on August 1, 1839, for which his map was necessary. During this visit, he succumbed to temptation and stole some of the auctioneer’s profits. Pilié was captured, flogged, and driven out of the town which he planned and presented to the world on paper.<sup>[34]</sup>

Austin, would have crossed Waller Creek upon arrival. Jeffrey Kerr summarizes the *Texas Gazette's* chronicle of that important event:

“At eleven o'clock in the morning of October 17, 1839, every man in Austin, Texas, able to procure a horse saddled up and rode east. Following East Pecan Street (present-day East 6th Street) to Waller Creek, the men urged their mounts through the cool water, up the opposite bank and across East Avenue.”<sup>40</sup>

The group met the president's party two miles outside the city and returned the way they came to welcome him to Austin.<sup>41</sup> The arrival of President Lamar and his party in Austin in October 1839 marked the beginning of Waller Creek's status as the crossroads of eastern Austin.

## 1.5. EARLY ACTIVITY ALONG THE CREEK

In the mid-nineteenth century, Waller Creek was a deep, running stream “teeming with fish.”<sup>42</sup> The creek ran through a terrain of rye grass, bluebonnets, and wildflowers, and was forested with various types of trees, including walnut, pecan, elm, hackberry, post oak, and live oak.<sup>43</sup> Although Waller Creek was closer to Congress Avenue and the commercial and governmental core that started to develop at Austin's founding, builders relied instead on Shoal Creek, where logs were cut from adjacent cedar trees and floated down to the Colorado River before being dragged to the sites where they were needed.<sup>44</sup> Still, timber from Waller Creek was probably also used in the construction of Austin's early buildings, as one of the camps for Waller's workforce was located on Waller Creek.<sup>45</sup> While convenient to the task of building a city out of the frontier and the natural resources that the creek provided, the camp's distance from the center of activity was a safety issue. A Ranger company protected the work crews from attack but, during construction in the summer of 1838, the Waller Creek camp was raided by Native Americans, likely Comanche, and two workers were killed.<sup>46</sup> Their burial place, along the east side of Waller Creek near Sabine Street between Hickory (East 8th) and Mulberry (East 10th) Streets, became the city's first cemetery.<sup>47</sup>

As the new city found its footing, settlers and entrepreneurs established themselves along Waller Creek. After he arrived in 1839, Francis Dietrich and early settler Jacob Harrell operated a butcher pen on Waller Creek, where it crossed College Avenue (East 12th Street). The business partners sold beef to the work crews building Austin at \$0.14 to \$0.16 per pound (fig. 1-8).<sup>48</sup> Harrell and his brother James also had a blacksmith shop near the butchering pens—which they built—and provided valuable services such as and shoeing animals, making nails, repairing tools, and creating hardware.<sup>49</sup>

Though few records of early residences along Waller Creek have survived, Louis Koch created a map of the original township in 1933, based on maps from the Austin Chamber of Commerce, written articles, deeds, and original grant purchases. The map, titled “Original Township, City of Austin, Texas,” shows a number of residences and homesteads adjacent to Waller Creek (fig. 1-9).<sup>50</sup> Whether these homes were those of previous settlers, Waller's workmen, or newcomers to the city of Austin is unknown.



## CHAPTER 1 FIGURES



Figure 1-1. This signal oak on the grounds of a private home located at 602 East 43rd Street on upper Waller Creek indicates that the site served as a Native American campground. Michael Barnes, "Austin's graceful old Inshallah fires the imagination," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 14 2015, accessed July 3, 2018, <https://www.mystatesman.com/entertainment/austin-graceful-old-inshallah-fires-the-imagination/p9aIkekzFC6i2bXGpQHFB0/>.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



Figure 1-2a. This 1838 map of Texas indicates land grants and depicts various waterways important to settlement. Stephen F. Austin's "Little Colony" is depicted at the center of the map. The approximate location of the future site of Austin is shown at the star. "Map of Texas With Parts of the Adjoining States, compiled by Stephen F. Austin," (Philadelphia: H.S. Tanner, March 17, 1830), accessed July 6, 2018, <https://bostonraremaps.com/inventory/1830-stephen-austin-map-of-texas/>.





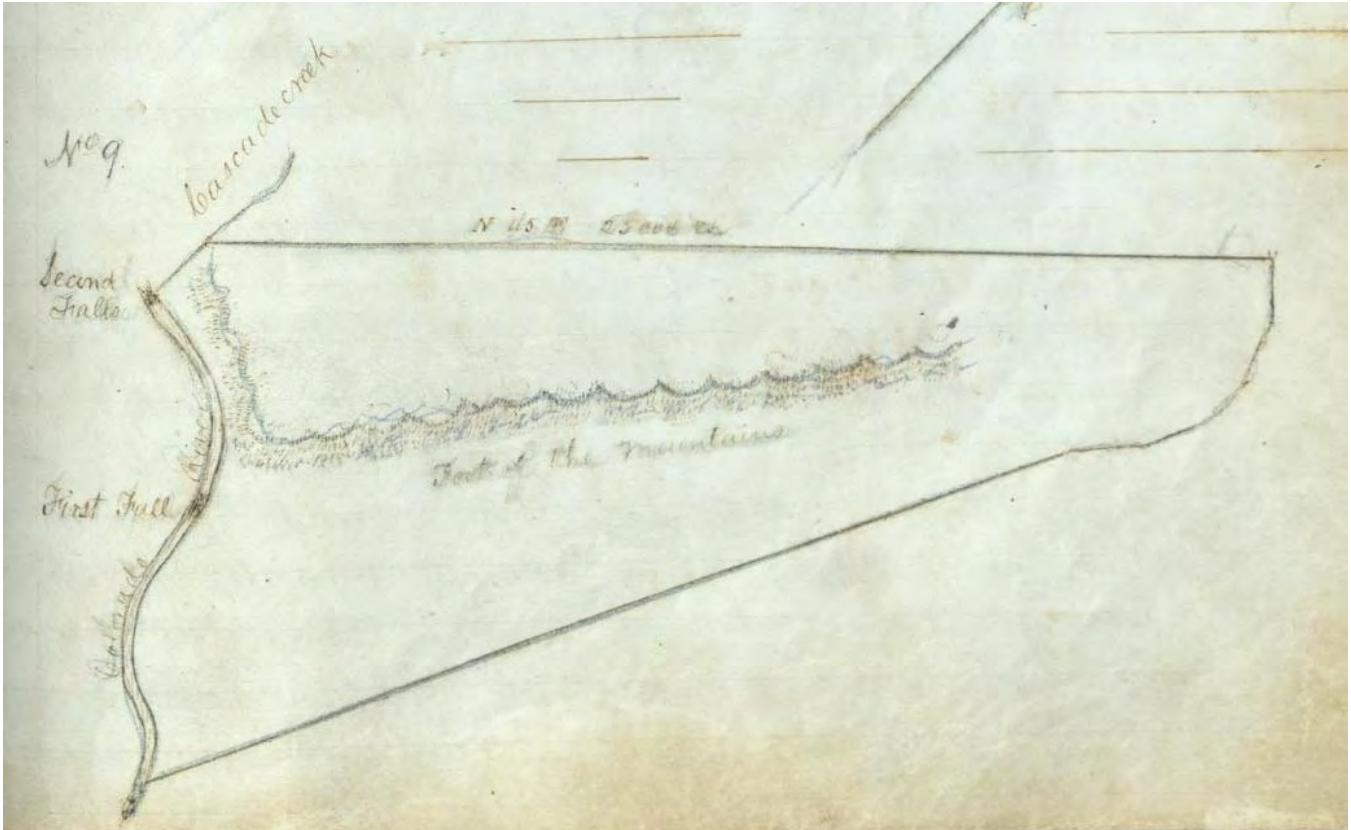


Figure 1-3. This 1835 survey of Thomas Jefferson Chambers's grant depicts several natural features that figured in siting the future site of Austin and illustrate naming conventions of those features. The "Foot of the Mountains" are the hills that make up the edge of the Balcones Escarpment. The "First Fall" marks the location of the shoals or ford at the mouth of Shoal Creek. Neither Waller nor Shoal Creeks are identified in this survey. See figure 1-5 for the location in context with the siting of the city of Austin and Waller Creek. Source: Travis County Clerk's Office, Travis County Deed Records, accessed June 28, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph746154/>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



Figure 1-4a. This copy of a March 1838 map shows a portion of the Bastrop District. It depicts grants that had been surveyed to that time and the town of Waterloo (encircled in red) as well as those of Bastrop and Comanche further downstream on the Colorado River. Source: Bartlett Sims, "Bastrop District," [map]. Austin: Texas General Land Office, March 9, 1838, [Map no. 83006](#), Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.

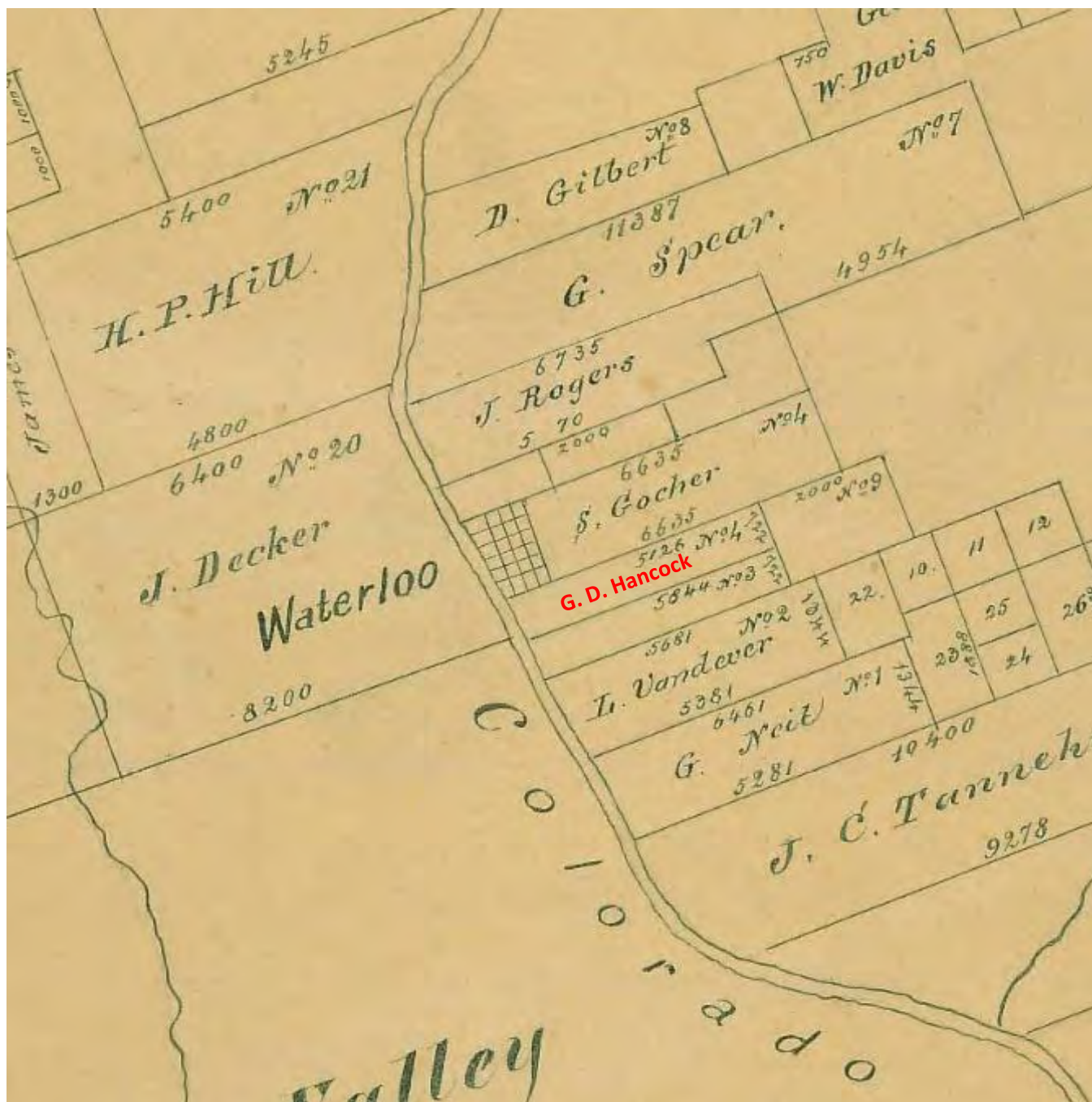


Figure 1-4b. This detail of the March 1838 map of the Bastrop District shows the grid of Edward Burleson's plat for the town of Waterloo in the parcel belonging to S. Goocher. Waterloo is at the location where the Austin "Town Tract" would be surveyed one year later. Although Austin's Spring Creek was drawn and named at Thomas Mays's survey of George Hancock's adjacent parcel (identified in red) in February 1838, the stream is not depicted on this later map. Source: Bartlett Sims, "Bastrop District," [map], Austin: Texas General Land Office, March 9, 1838, [Map no. 83006](#), Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



Figure 1-5a. This map of Travis County shows the location of the Thomas Jefferson Chambers Survey and the Original Town Tract of Austin. "Map of Travis County," [map], compiled by W. von Rosenberg, May 15, 1861, Map no. 4088, Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



Figure 1-5b. This section of historic Travis County map (shown in full at Figure 1-5a above) shows the location of the "Government Tract" (light pink shading) as well as the town or "City Tract." Waller Creek is located in the G. D. Hancock parcel (highlighted in yellow). The thick gray outline marks the boundary of Thomas Jefferson Chambers' 1835 survey, the original survey of which is illustrated at Figure 1-3. Source: "Map of Travis County," [map], compiled by W. von Rosenberg, May 15, 1861, Map no. 4088, Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas. See the following figure for an enlarged version of the tracts.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



Figure 1-6. L. J. Pilié's 1839 *Plan of the City of Austin* clearly identifies Waller Creek running through the easternmost portion of the platted city. While the creek did not form a hard boundary of the city's eastern limits, it was influential in framing or establishing Austin's eastern boundary. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

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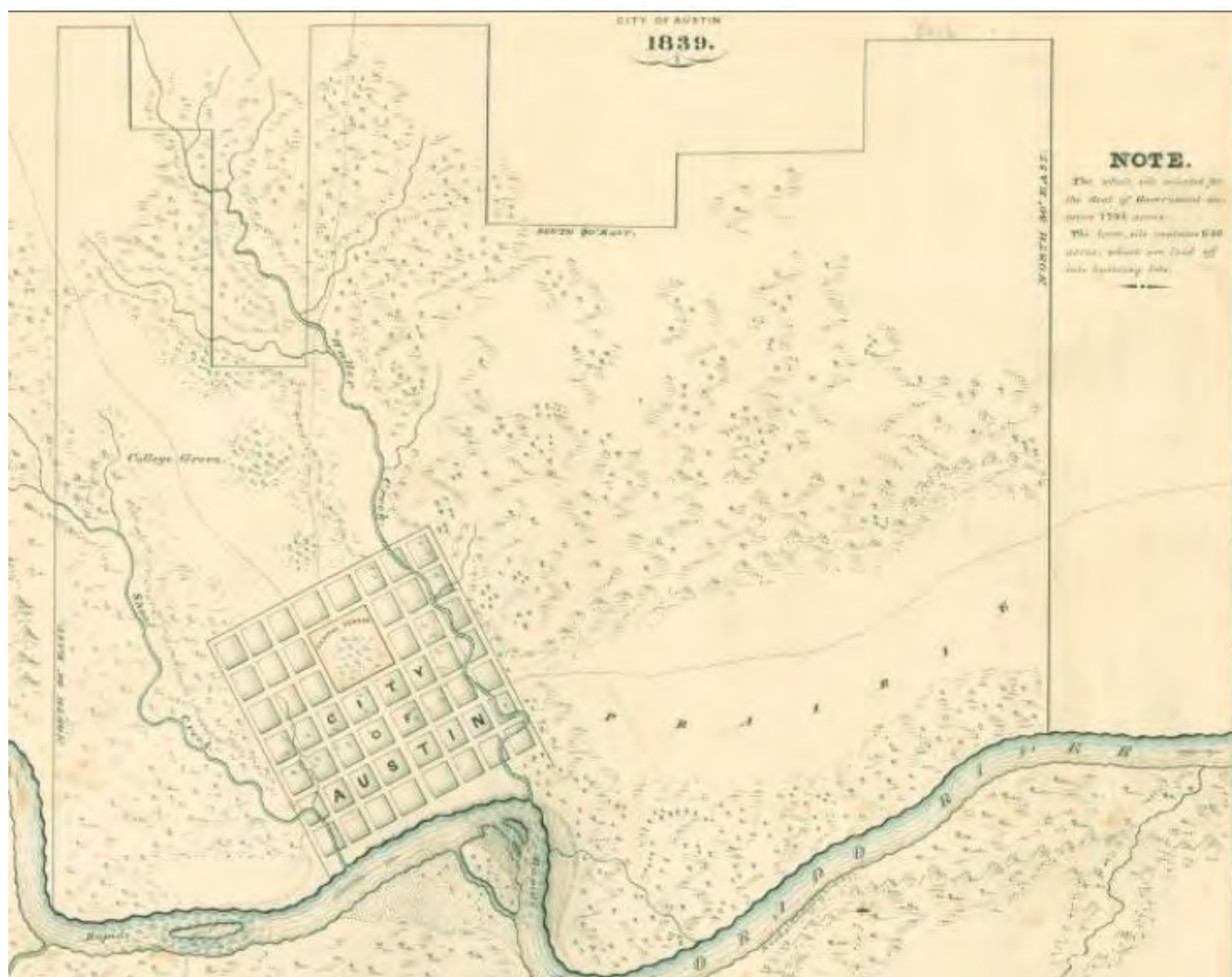


Figure 1-7. Surveyor William H. Sandusky also drew a map of the recently surveyed city, but included an abbreviated version of the "Town Tract" as well as the entire "Government Tract." Again, Waller Creek is clearly identified. Source: W. H. Sandusky, "City of Austin and Vicinity," [map], Austin, 1839, Map no. [3149](#), Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.



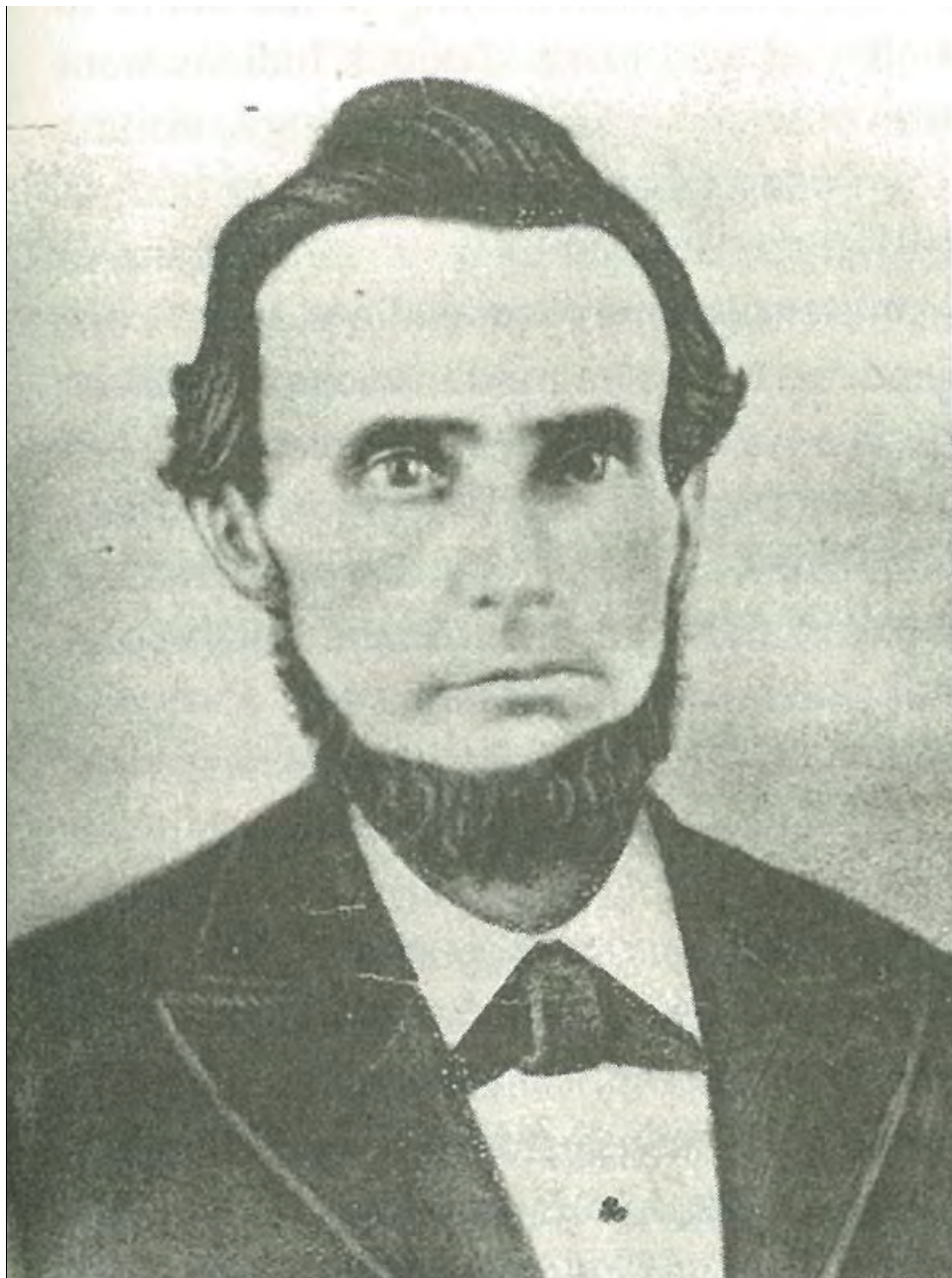


Figure 1-8. Francis (Franz) Dietrich (1815-1860) was a German immigrant who arrived in Austin via Refugio shortly after the city's founding. He operated a butcher pen on Waller Creek with early settler Jacob Harrell and acquired a number of properties along lower Waller Creek (see Chapter 2).<sup>51</sup> Source: Jeffrey Stuart Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press), 140, crediting Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; Joseph Jones, *Life on Waller Creek* (Austin: AAR/Tantalus, Inc.).

# HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

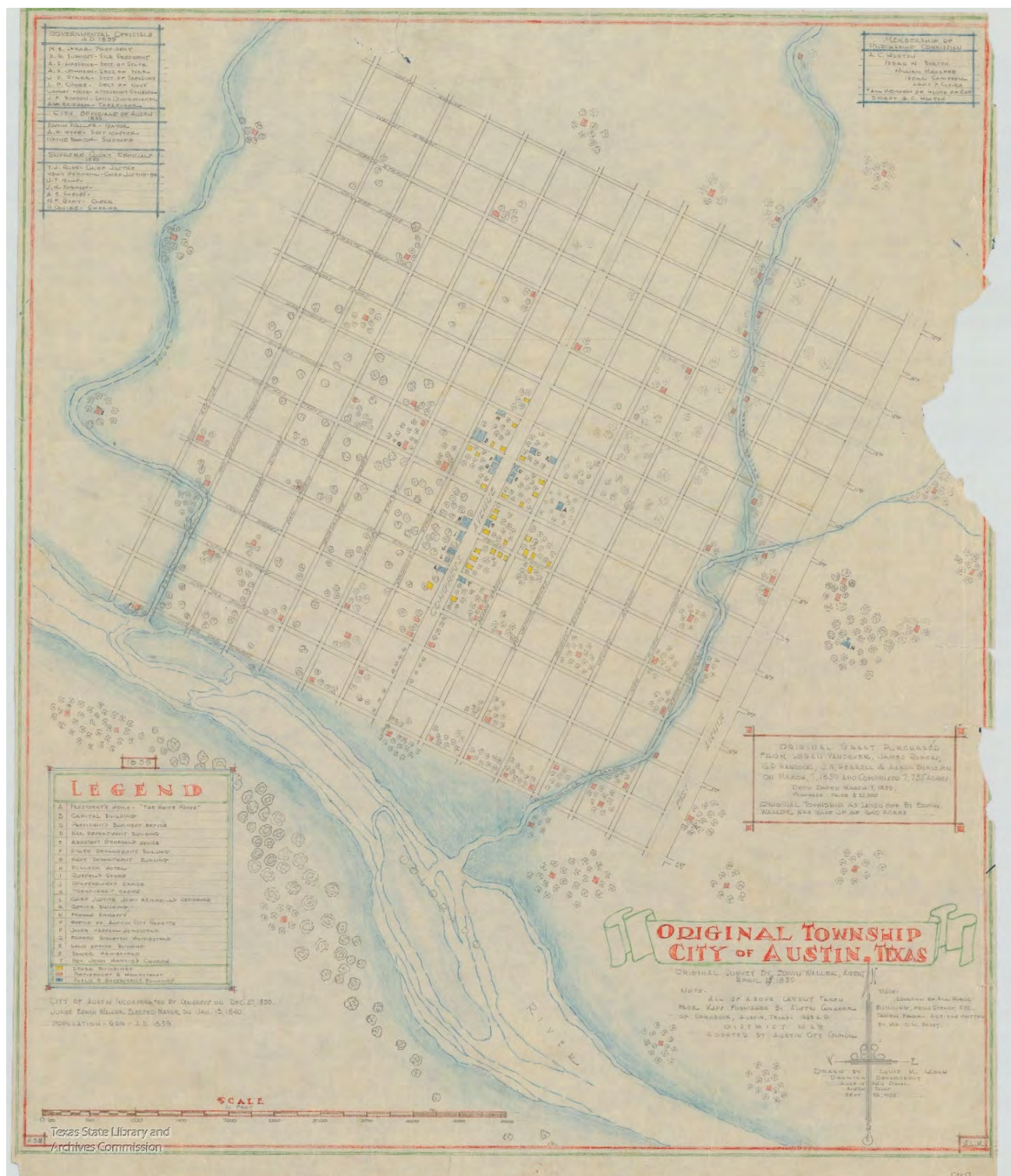


Figure 1-9. Austin High School Student Louis Koch created this map in 1933, based on maps from the Austin Chamber of Commerce. Koch placed buildings on the map based on an article written by Lawrence K. Smoot, and grants purchased by Logan Vandever, James Rogers, G. D. Hancock, J. W. Herrell, and Aaron Burleson. It was published in 1939. Source: Koch, Louis. "Original Township, City of Austin 1839," [Map]. In Original Survey by Edwin Waller, 1939, accessed April 17, 2018, <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/apps/arc/maps/maplookup.php?mapnum=00927>.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Hancock Neighborhood Association, "The Hancock Neighborhood: An Urban Oasis," <https://www.hancockna.org/www/node/18>, accessed June 21, 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Stuart Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press), 140; Joseph Jones, *Life on Waller Creek* (Austin: AAR/Tantalus, Inc.), 16.
- <sup>3</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 140.
- <sup>4</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 59.
- <sup>5</sup> Michael Barnes, "Austin's graceful old Inshallah fires the imagination," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 14 2015, accessed July 3, 2018, <https://www.mystatesman.com/entertainment/austin-graceful-old-inshallah-fires-the-imagination/p9alkekzFC6i2bXGpQHFB0/>; Hancock Neighborhood Association, "The Hancock Neighborhood: An Urban Oasis," "Significant Sequential Events in the Urbanization of Waller Creek," from Austin History Center, Austin Files Collection, File AF-C9060(25)(a) – Creeks – Waller Creek."
- <sup>6</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 31.
- <sup>7</sup> Dick O'Dennehy, "Trails and Tales of Old Austin and Travis County: "The Other Montopolis," accessed June 28, 2018, <http://txcompost.blogspot.com/2016/01/the-other-montopolis.html>. *Empresario* is Spanish for entrepreneur.
- <sup>8</sup> The Coahuila and Texas legislature under the Mexican government changed the town's name to Mina in 1834; the Republic of Texas changed it back to Bastrop in December 1837.
- <sup>9</sup> Clarence Wharton, *The Republic of Texas: a brief history of Texas from the first American colonies in 1821 to annexation in 1846* (Houston: C. C. Young Printing Company, 1922), 172.
- <sup>10</sup> A *vara* is a Spanish unit of measure used to describe length or area. The Texas *vara*, equal to approximately 33 inches, was used to describe the land in the early surveys and land grants in Mexico and Texas; 5,645.5 square *varas* equals one acre. "VARA," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed September 12, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pfv02>; Wharton, *The Republic of Texas*, 173.
- <sup>11</sup> Wharton, *The Republic of Texas*, 173.
- <sup>12</sup> See Sam A. Suhler, "Stephen F. Austin and the City of Austin: An anomaly," *The Southwester Historical Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 3 (January 1966): 265-286.
- <sup>13</sup> Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record book C (1847-01/1849-12), 421; ([texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth746154/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth746154/); accessed June 28, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu), crediting Travis County Clerk's Office; Dick O'Dennehy, "Trails and Tales of Old Austin and Travis County: The Other Montopolis," accessed June 28, 2018, <http://txcompost.blogspot.com/2016/01/the-other-montopolis.html>.
- <sup>14</sup> Aldon S. Lang and Christopher Long, "LAND GRANTS," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed October 24, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mpl01>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on January 29, 2016, published by the Texas State Historical Association; Thomas W. Cutrer, "HORNSBY, REUBEN," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 28, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fho60>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, published by the Texas State Historical Association; Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, "HORNSBY BEND, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 28, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hnh41>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- <sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Kerr, "Jacob Harrell: Pioneer, Blacksmith, and Mayor of Austin," [http://www.jeffreyskerr.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=18:jacob-harrell-pioneer-blacksmith-and-mayor-of-austin&catid=1:jeff&Itemid=3](http://www.jeffreyskerr.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18:jacob-harrell-pioneer-blacksmith-and-mayor-of-austin&catid=1:jeff&Itemid=3), accessed June 28, 2018; Seymour V. Connor, "HARRELL, JACOB M.," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 28, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fha77>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- <sup>16</sup> Both Stephen F. Austin's and Thomas Jefferson Chambers reference the "foot of the mountains."
- <sup>17</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 70; Texas General Land Office, "A New Seat of Government—the Original Survey of the City of Austin," July 13, 2017, accessed June 26, 2018, <https://medium.com/save-texas-history/a-new-seat-of-government-the-original-survey-of-the-city-of-austin-f9b6993c5d02>.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Field notes, file no. 338, Bastrop County File No. BAS 1-338, Texas General Land Office, accessed June 28, 2018, [http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCS/archives\\_webfiles/arcmeps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/4/9/149118.pdf](http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCS/archives_webfiles/arcmeps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/4/9/149118.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> The first was also called Fort Coleman after Colonel Robert M. Coleman who built the fort. Barkley, 6; Thomas W. Cutrer, "FORT COLORADO," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 29, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qcf01>, uploaded on June 12, 2010, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>21</sup> John H. Jenkins and Kenneth Kesselus, *Edward Burleson: Texas Frontier Leader* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1990), 159.

<sup>22</sup> Helen Burleson Kelso, "Edward Burleson," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 27, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fbu40>, uploaded on August 31, 2010, modified on April 14, 2015, Published by the Texas State Historical Association; Jenkins and Kesselus, *Edward Burleson*, 159.

<sup>23</sup> Jenkins and Kesselus, *Edward Burleson*, 160.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>25</sup> This hill is the site of the present Texas State Capitol building. Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 10; Kerr, *Republic of Texas*, 37-39; Mary Starr Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin, 1839-1899* (Austin: Austin Printing Company, 1981), 11-13.

<sup>26</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 50-54.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Republic of Texas, official bond, Reprinted in P. E. Peareson, "Reminiscences of Judge Edwin Waller," *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, vol. 4, no. 1 (July 1900): 47.

<sup>30</sup> Undated document, from Austin History Center, Austin Files Collection, File AF-P1200 (27) – Parks – Waterloo Park; Letter from A. C. Horton, *et al.*, to Mirabeau B. Lamar, April 13, 1839, from Austin History Center, Austin Files Collection, File AF-P1200 (27) – Parks – Waterloo Park; Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 57, 81.

<sup>31</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 28-29.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Ernest William Winkler, "The Seat of the Government of Texas," *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, volume 10, no. 3 (January 1907): 227; Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 81.

<sup>34</sup> Telegraph, March 20, 1839, reprinted in Flora Agatha Davie, "Early History of Houston, Texas, 1836-1845," master's thesis (Austin: The University of Texas, 1940), 70; Michael Robert Green, *Calendar of the Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, Austin: Texas State Library, 1982; Katherine Hart, "Creeks Part of Austin's Heritage," March 16, 1974, *Waterloo Scrapbook, 1973-1974*, 24, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas; Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 81, n. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Barnes, "The Puzzlement of Austin's Original City Plan," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 18, 2014, accessed April 16, 2018, <https://www.mystatesman.com/entertainment/the-puzzlement-austin-original-city-plan/rZTDxYsOURfyIYig15tMRJ/>.

<sup>36</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 78.

<sup>37</sup> Joanna Labor, "A History of Slavery in Austin and Surrounding Areas," *Lone Star Legacy: African American History in Texas*, 2011; Maggie Tate, "Austin, Texas, in Sociohistorical Context," in *Invisible in Austin: Life and Labor in an American City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 31; Eric Walther, "Enslaved Women," *Texas Women: Their Histories, Their Lives* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 79.

<sup>39</sup> William H. Sandusky to H. J. Jewett, August 1839, reprinted in K. F. Neighbours, "William H. Sandusky in Texas: A Polish Descendant," *East Texas Historical Journal*, volume 36, no. 1 (March 1998): 28.

<sup>40</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 112.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 17

<sup>43</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 71.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> "History of Austin's Growth from Frontier Post to Proud Capital Full of Romance," March 8, 1914: 64, from Newspapers.com, accessed April 5, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>47</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 143.

<sup>48</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 207; Williamson County Historical Commission, "Harrell Cemetery Historical Marker, Round Rock, Texas," accessed June 25, 2018, [http://www.williamson-county-historical-commission.org/Round\\_rock/harrell\\_cemetery\\_round\\_rock\\_texas.html](http://www.williamson-county-historical-commission.org/Round_rock/harrell_cemetery_round_rock_texas.html).

<sup>49</sup> Jeffrey S. Kerr, "Jacob Harrell: Pioneer, Blacksmith, and Mayor of Austin," accessed June 28, 2018, [http://www.jeffreyskerr.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=18:jacob-harrell-pioneer-blacksmith-and-mayor-of-austin&catid=1:jeff&Itemid=3](http://www.jeffreyskerr.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18:jacob-harrell-pioneer-blacksmith-and-mayor-of-austin&catid=1:jeff&Itemid=3).

<sup>50</sup> Louis Koch, "Original Township, City of Austin 1839," [Map,]. In Original Survey by Edwin Waller, 1939, from Texas State Library and Archives, accessed September 10, 2018, <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/apps/arc/maps/maplookup.php?mapnum=00927>.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Struve, *Germans and Texans: Commerce, Migration, and Culture in the Days of the Lone Star Republic* (Austin: University of Texas Press), n.p.



## 2. Growth along Lower Waller Creek, 1840–1899

### 2.1. DEMOGRAPHICS AND DEVELOPMENT

#### 2.1.1. Antebellum Growth

In the decades after the city’s initial development and construction, Austin experienced rapid and consistent growth. Austin’s establishment as the permanent state capital and the formation of several institutions of higher learning contributed to the city’s appeal and resultant population increase. The new capital quickly outgrew its small village size. As projected by the 1839 view of the original townsite (refer to fig. 1-9), the bulk of development in the city continued along Congress Avenue and to the east, where it concentrated along Waller Creek. The town’s growth was more scattered west of Congress Avenue.<sup>1</sup> This trend was spurred by the town’s incorporation on December 27, 1839, as well as an act of the Texas Republic Legislature on January 5, 1840, authorizing the division and sale of the outlots within the “Government Tract” – the property outside of the “Town Tract.” To prepare for the sale of properties, William Sandusky drew *Topographical Map of the Government Tract Adjoining the City of Austin* (fig. 2-1). This detailed survey contrasts with the map that he had prepared the year before (refer to fig. 1-7). Not only does the more expansive map depict the entire extent of Waller Creek north of the “Town Tract” boundary at North Street (East 15th Street), it also includes the city property south of Water Avenue (later East 1st Street and East Cesar Chavez Street). Additional features include a “River Walk” along the east bank of the Colorado between Congress Avenue and Neches Street. The map also shows the large stands of timber at the mouth of Waller Creek that the early settlers encountered when they arrived.

In 1840, the expanded and rapidly developing townsite was home to 850 inhabitants, 145 of whom were enslaved men, women, and children. At that time, the lower Waller Creek corridor remained largely undeveloped, as can be seen in Edward Hall’s rendering of the city on January 1, 1840 (fig. 2-2). What development there was seems to have been limited to the city’s stable and stockade, located at East Pecan (6th) Street and Waller Creek, and William Ward Thompson’s hotel on the banks of the creek.<sup>2</sup> However, the area between the president’s house on its promontory hill west of Congress Avenue and the creek was open for development.<sup>3</sup> Through the 1840s, current residents and newcomers continued to purchase inlots in the original town tract – many of them adjacent or within a few blocks of Waller Creek. Establishing residences and homesteads in this area allowed for proximity to Austin’s expanding commercial center at Congress Avenue and 6th Street as well as ease of access to farms beyond East Avenue. Thompson, Francis Dietrich, and Tom Green purchased property roughly in the nine-block area bound by Pecan (East 6th), Neches, and Ash (East 9th) Streets and East Avenue. Dietrich also acquired three lots on Trinity Street between College Avenue (East 12th) and Peach (East 13th) Street (fig. 2-3). On average, these lots in the lower Waller Creek corridor sold for \$10.00 each.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, a lot that Dietrich purchased on Water Avenue (present-day 300 block of Cesar Chavez Street) in 1848 sold for \$65.00.<sup>5</sup>

Table 2-1. Selected list of City of Austin lots patented or purchased along lower Waller Creek, 1840–1849.

Grantee	Date	Block	Lot(s)	Price
W. W. Thompson	December 14, 1840 <sup>P</sup>	92	6 and 7	unknown
	February 10, 1841 <sup>P</sup>	93	1-3	unknown
	May 6, 1841 <sup>P</sup>	90	2-4	unknown
Francis Dietrich	June 4, 1849 <sup>S</sup>	88	7 and 8	\$20.00
		94	4	\$33.00
		146	5-7	
Tom Green	September 6, 1848 <sup>S</sup>	63	1-8	\$40.00

P = date patent ordered; S = date of auction

This indicates that property along lower Waller Creek was available for a lower rate and easier to attain by individuals of varying means, possibly because of the risk of flooding, or perhaps due to the area's distance from the concentration of commercial and government buildings along Congress Avenue. This trend continued in the 1850s, although property prices grew higher.<sup>6</sup> Stephen Cummings purchased a total of 8 lots in blocks 164 and 165 for an average of \$30.00 per block in May 1850 and October 1855.<sup>7</sup> At auctions in 1850 and 1853, Waller Creek-area resident Francis Dietrich acquired additional lots outside of the lower Waller Creek corridor ranging from \$35.00-\$40.00 each.<sup>8</sup> The municipal government's continued sales of property in the 1850s encouraged continued development and resulted in a building boom in the city. This included the construction of permanent government buildings such as a new capitol building in 1853.<sup>9</sup>

Although Austinites purchased lots in the Waller Creek corridor, some purchases were speculative as not all were immediately developed. A view of Austin in 1860 (fig. 2-4) illustrates that much of the lower Waller Creek corridor remained unimproved (buildings closer to the creek would not have been included from this vantage point). The advent of the Civil War curtailed significant development in the Waller Creek corridor. Exceptions included military-related enterprises (see "Educational, Religious, and Institutional Buildings" in this chapter).

### **2.1.2. Influence of the Houston and Texas Central Railway**

The 1870s saw significant growth along lower Waller Creek. The Houston and Central Texas Railway arrived in Austin, crossing Waller Creek from the east, on December 25, 1871. The city then became an important trading center; construction boomed, and the population grew to 4,428.<sup>10</sup> A freight depot was erected beyond East Avenue on East 5th Street, and as a result, a "considerable village sprang up in the vicinity of the freight depot, east of Waller creek, between Fourth and Fifth streets. East Sixth street was extended across the sand hill and rapidly became lined with buildings. East Avenue lots were in demand."<sup>11</sup> An 1873 view of Austin shows that development on Waller Creek was then on par with the rest of the original townsites; growth concentrated evenly along Waller and Shoal Creeks (figs. 2-5). At the Waller Creek corridor, residential development was consistent from Willow to North (East 15th) Streets with commercial nodes forming at Pine (East 5th) and Pecan (East 6th) Streets. Connection between these areas and the rest of the city was facilitated by a number of bridges of various types across the creek. Ease of access and real estate prices that continued to be lower than elsewhere in the city prompted the establishment of an ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood. Even areas in the southern part of lower Waller Creek saw diverse residents – in the early 1870s, Austinites who had settled in the area before the Civil War were joined by Anglo and African American tradesmen.

### **2.1.3. Ethnic Character of Waller Creek in the 1870s**

Several factors contributed to the diversity of Austin and the Waller Creek corridor by the mid-1870s, among which were the emancipation of enslaved African Americans after the Civil War and new railroads that brought not only European immigrants via other parts of the United States and Texas, but also Anglos who continued to migrate from other states. In 1875, Austin's population was 10,636 among which were 3,497 African Americans as well as residents born in Germany (757), Mexico (297), Ireland (215), and Sweden (138).<sup>12</sup> These ethnic groups intermingled throughout the Waller Creek corridor. Austinites of Mexican heritage at this time lived in communities along lower Shoal Creek, and those from Ireland were scattered around the city.

#### **2.1.3.1. THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

African Americans began settling along lower Waller Creek after the Civil War. Following nationwide trends, freedmen in Austin settled in areas considered less desirable by other residents. In 1875, a significant concentration of African Americans lived along the lower Waller Creek corridor, especially in the area bound by Red River, Hickory (8th), Sabine, and Peach (13th) Streets (fig. 2-6).<sup>13</sup> While the lower cost of less desirable, flood-prone land prompted African Americans, many of whom had limited financial means, to purchase less

expensive land along the creek other factors were at play. The area around Waller Creek satisfied the needs of urban African Americans to live in close proximity to their places of employment as laborers, domestic servants, janitors, hostlers, carpenters, and porters.<sup>14</sup> African Americans living on lower Waller Creek also lived in alleys and rear houses behind their places of employment as did urban blacks across the country. Further, living along lower Waller Creek afforded African Americans the opportunity to work as day laborers or rent farmers in eastern rural areas, but allowed them to have access to city amenities.<sup>15</sup> Among them was Joseph Carter, who sold his undeveloped lot at the northeast corner of Red River and Mesquite (11th) Streets to another African American entrepreneur, Joseph Aheart, in 1869. A few months after his purchase, Aheart sold the property to Texas State Representative Jeremiah J. Hamilton, former slave, who built a combination house and store on the property; he lived there during his tenure in the legislature but sold it to Italian immigrant Michael Paggi in 1873. (See the sidebar “*Jeremiah J. Hamilton*” for more information.<sup>16</sup>) Hamilton remained an active community figure in Austin and resident of lower Waller Creek; he was living at 602 East 14th Street in 1897.<sup>17</sup>

In her work on Austin’s freedmen’s communities, historian Michelle Mears called this settlement within a close geographic area the “Red River Community.”<sup>18</sup> The grouping of freedmen living along Waller Creek on the east side of East Avenue should be considered part of the Pleasant Hill freedmen’s community that sprang up on that branch since they shared schools and churches for a time (fig. 2-7).

### ***Jeremiah J. Hamilton***

Jeremiah J. Hamilton played an important role not only in the African American community surrounding Waller Creek, but also in politics and activism following the end of the Civil War. Hamilton was born into slavery in Tennessee in 1938 and came to Texas with this then-owners in 1847. After emancipation, Hamilton became very active in advocating for freed-slave communities, working with the Freedmen’s Bureau—an organization meant to help African Americans who had been displaced or left homeless by the tumult of the Civil War—including those who had previously been enslaved. After successfully running for office in 1869, Hamilton came to Austin to serve in the Texas House of Representatives. He was the first black man to serve in the Texas legislature. He remained in Austin after he left office, working as a carpenter and constructing a unique triangular house at 1101 Red River Street, where he lived with his family (see discussion of the Hamilton house in section 6.2.2.2 about Symphony Square, page 175). Hamilton also was involved in publishing, including assisting in the production of three local newspapers that circled widely in African American and Freedmen Communities: the *Austin Citizen*, the *National Union*, and the *Watchman*.<sup>[16]</sup>

### **2.1.3.2. THE GERMAN COMMUNITY**

Some German immigrants, like Francis Dietrich, had been in Austin since the city’s founding. German immigration to Texas occurred in large numbers during the antebellum era as a result of organized colonization projects.<sup>19</sup> Christopher C. Stremme, who immigrated to Texas in 1849, became a draftsman at the Texas General Land Office in 1855. Stremme designed the first Land Office Building and the State Lunatic Asylum. A bachelor, Stremme resided alone at his dwelling near Waller Creek at the corner of 10th and Red River Streets.<sup>20</sup> Henry F. Hofheintz was another early German settler who immigrated to Texas in 1845. Ultimately relocating to Austin, he purchased two lots in the original town survey in 1854 and constructed a two-story limestone dry goods store at 202 Red River Street. Hofheintz also hosted those in the German community using the small shed on his property as a “Sunday House,” or a place for rural German families to stay in town when they traveled to attend church.<sup>21</sup> His son-in-law built an adjoining salon after 1866, and the complex was known as the Hofheintz-Reissig Store, or the Waterloo Complex.<sup>22</sup> In 1857, a two-story school building was constructed at 507 East 10th Street, overlooking Waller Creek near the German community in the area. The Texas legislature recognized it as the first chartered school in Austin on January 19th, 1958.<sup>23</sup> Still another enterprising German immigrant was August Scholz, who in 1862, purchased property at the north edge of lower Waller Creek (1600-block of San Jacinto Street) and opened a boarding house – likely for fellow German

immigrants.<sup>24</sup> By the late 1870s, the grocery of Aloes Wulz at the northeast corner of Red River and Mesquite (East 11th) Streets anchored the German community along lower Waller Creek.<sup>25</sup>

With the lifting of the Union blockade after the Civil War, Germans again came to Texas in large numbers, many settling in urban areas or outside of already established German communities. Scores of German immigrants made Austin home in the 1870s. In 1875, many of these families settled in the uppermost areas of lower Waller Creek (figs. 2-8 and 2-9) and had close ties with another German enclave across East Avenue, called the “Winn Community.”<sup>26</sup> The Pecht family lived on Red River Street between Hickory (East 8th) and Ash (East 9th) Streets; daughter Ida married Andrew Zilker in 1888.<sup>27</sup> The newlyweds moved into a two-story home at the corner of East 2nd and San Jacinto Streets. Butcher E. P. Haigler, who became a city alderman in the 1880s, lived nearby at 611 East Water (East Cesar Chavez) Street.<sup>28</sup> The continued immigration and ultimately permanent residency of many German immigrants in the lower Waller Creek vicinity was promoted by the establishment of an “Immigrant’s Home” for German newcomers to the city at 500 East Avenue, called the “*Deutch Emigraten Ho.*”<sup>29</sup> Railroad companies often erected or sponsored this type of housing.<sup>30</sup> The proximity of the German Immigrant’s Home to the Houston and Texas Central Railway line and freight depot suggests that this was the case for this building. It appears to have remained so for much of the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

### **2.1.3.3. THE SWEDISH COMMUNITY**

Due to the efforts of Swen Magnus Swenson and his uncle Swante Palm, Austin became home to the earliest and largest concentrations of Swedes in Texas.<sup>32</sup> Swenson immigrated from Sweden to the United States in 1836, and Palm in 1844. In Austin, the two men became prosperous businessmen and arranged passage for Swedish families from their homeland of Småland, Sweden, to join them in Texas; these families paid off their debt to Swenson and Palm by settling on and purchasing property in the two men’s possession (for more information about Swante Palm’s contributions, see section 3.2.2 on page 70 and section 4.3 on page 99 regarding the school and park later named after him). In Austin, the primary enclave of the Swedish community, which extended into the lower Waller Creek corridor, ran along both sides of East Avenue and was roughly bound by Waller, East College (East 12th), and Red River Streets, and North Avenue (15th Street) in an area known as *Svenska kullen*, or Swede Hill (fig. 2-10).<sup>33</sup> Among the Swedish immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century were Bernard Knappe and Alice Fäst who each came separately to America through Ellis Island in the 1890s. The couple met in Austin and built a large home at 407 East 16th Street (demolished; see demolition of the Knappe home for the construction of Waterloo Park in Chapter 6). Swede Hill became home to most of Austin’s Swedish population, but a few German families also resided there.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.1.4. Growth Patterns in the Late Nineteenth Century**

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company first produced maps of Austin in 1877. Though the first edition concentrated on Austin’s commercial core along Congress Avenue south of the capitol building, it did delineate the small commercial district near Waller Creek at East Avenue and East Pecan (East 6th) Street (fig. 2-11), where several businesses took advantage of their proximity to the Houston and Texas Central Railway freight depot. The commercial development that occurred in the lower Waller Creek corridor along East Pine and Pecan Streets deviated from the original townsite plan in which the arrangement of lots called for commercial development to grow outward from Congress Avenue.<sup>35</sup> The arrival of the Houston and Texas Central Railway in Austin in 1871 also encouraged commercial growth. While the railroad’s freight depot was located on Pine Street east of East Avenue, a map of Austin from 1872 shows that a passenger depot was to be erected on the site of the “Market” north of the public square on Pilié’s 1839 plan (north side of Pine Street between Trinity and Neches Streets adjacent to the tracks) (fig. 2-18). Historic maps indicate that a depot was never built there.<sup>36</sup> Instead, the hotel that Carl Schaeffer commissioned architect Abner Cook to build one block east

(present-day 504 East 5th Street) served as the depot from 1871 to 1872.<sup>37</sup> The railroad shifted Austin's commercial development toward the east, and residential development occurred around religious and community institutions spread throughout the lower Waller Creek corridor. In the 1870s, middle-class residents—lawyers, merchants, planters, and clergymen—increasingly settled in the growing neighborhood south of Cedar Street.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the lower Waller Creek corridor, especially south of Pine Street, houses occupied large lots in a semi-rural fashion, but with the growing middle class, were soon subdivided into smaller lots with rental houses or new residential subdivisions.

Such development occurred south of Water Avenue (later East 1st Street and East Cesar Chavez Street) in the late nineteenth century. Before this time, the area remained largely unimproved, due in large part to the natural barriers presented by Waller Creek and the Colorado River.<sup>39</sup> In 1884, cattle baron Jesse Driskill and physician Frank Rainey developed this area with a 16-acre plat for the creation of the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision (fig. 2-12). The neighborhood—bound by Waller Creek, Water Avenue, and East Avenue to the line of present-day Red River Street—wrapped around the homestead of Edmund J. Davis (1827–1883), governor of Texas from 1870 to 1874 (see fig. 2-7). Although the residential growth continued to occur throughout the lower Waller Creek corridor, Sanborn maps of the 1880s focus on the commercial and industrial expansion on East 6th Street at Waller Creek (fig. 2-13). In 1884, the city changed the east–west-running streets from the names of native Texas trees to street numbers – a recommendation that Edwin Waller had made in 1839. This change was not reflected in the survey of the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision but was indicated at the 1887 bird's-eye view of Austin. The creek's meandering path, the Houston and Texas Central Railway, and the International–Great Northern Railroad spur along Cypress Street (built in 1876) all influenced development in the area (fig. 2-14).

The end of the decade saw expansion into the remaining undeveloped area at the southernmost part of the lower Waller Creek corridor. In 1892, Dr. Josephus Cummings, Austin city physician from 1879 to 1883 and “a large property holder,” filed a plat for the Bridge View Subdivision. It was located south of the residence and brick yard of William Thaison (fig. 2-15).<sup>40</sup> The area along the banks of the Colorado River at the mouth of Waller Creek, not included in Pilié's 1839 survey but later identified with a “River Walk,” remained a peripheral part of lower Waller Creek. In 1886, the city was leasing land to tenants, but around 1893, the State of Texas claimed the property and attempted to collect \$7,200 in taxes that the city had collected.<sup>41</sup> By the 1894 Sanborn map (fig. 2-16), the variety of commercial, institutional, and residential development along lower Waller Creek reflected the growth of the city as a whole as well as the continued dependence on the stream.

## 2.2. LIFE ALONG THE CREEK

Native Americans resisted private land ownership in Austin as they did throughout Texas and the United States. Many stories telling of conflicts between tribes that called this area home and the Anglo newcomers were recorded in books and newspapers of the day. Given the relatively isolated character of lower Waller Creek, many of those events happened at or near the creek. In the spring of 1840, Native Americans stole the horses from the town's corral along Waller Creek.<sup>42</sup> Also that year, Swiss immigrant John Wahrenberger was attacked while obtaining meal from the grist mill on Waller Creek to take to Colonel Louis P. Cooke's home, where he worked as a gardener.<sup>43</sup> Julia Lee Sinks recalled attending a ball at the president's house one block east of Congress Avenue on August 15, 1841, when “Suddenly, amid the other sounds came the clattering of hoofs [sic] in the valley toward Waller Creek” – what the party guests surmised was a group of Native Americans moving rapidly through area.<sup>44</sup> Two years later, in 1843, Caddo Native Americans attacked Captain Coleman and William Bell as they traveled out of Austin at present-day 5th Street and Waller Creek.<sup>45</sup> Others encountered the Native Americans in the vicinity of the Robertson home and pursued them back across the creek and westward out of Austin. Even in the 1860s during the Civil War, Native Americans came to get water

from the spring on the Scholz property.<sup>46</sup> In the early days of the city, scenes of daily life along the creek still resembled that of an unsettled frontier.

Sometimes, uncertainty of life along the creek struck closer to home. In the summer of 1851, Austinites searched for an enslaved man named Lucky who had run away and subsequently murdered William Baker at his home on Shoal Creek. After a two-week long search, “Lucky was captured on July 28, [1851], discovered by a black woman hidden in Judge Stephen Cumming’s corncrib on Waller Creek” which would have been near the creek’s intersection with Peach (13th) Street or Walnut (14th) Street (fig. 2-3).<sup>47</sup> Thirty years later, residents of the lower Waller Creek neighborhood would have been on guard as an unknown serial killer attacked Austin residents. One of the victims was Eliza Shelley, who was a cook in the household of Dr. Lucien Johnson at 300 East Cypress (3rd) Street. Another victim, 11-year-old Mary Ramey, lived at 300 East Cedar (4th) Street where her mother was a domestic servant in the household of Valentine O. Weed (owner of a livery and stables at the southeast corner of Pecan and San Jacinto Streets).<sup>48</sup>

### 2.2.1. Residences

Early homes along Waller Creek would have been reminiscent of Jacob Harrells’s log cabin and split-log stockade.<sup>49</sup> At the city’s founding, most private residences were located on Congress Avenue, Pecan Street, and Waller Creek, and were built from lumber and logs.<sup>50</sup> Among the first buildings along the creek was the large, two-story home and inn of William W. Thompson. Although the city streets had not yet been cut, Edward Hall’s 1840 drawing of the new state capital shows the inn located on Waller Creek at the northeast corner of Hickory (8th) and Neches Streets (refer to table 2-1 and fig. 2-2 for information about Thompson’s ownership of the property).<sup>51</sup> Frank Brown recalls the large dwelling and tavern, dubbed “Thompson House,” when he and his family immigrated to Austin in 1846:

“The hotel was a three-story structure, basement of stone, the two upper stories frame; contained some twelve [to] fifteen rooms, and was the best house at the time anywhere in the interior. The wooden material of which the building was constructed came from the Bastrop pinery.”<sup>52</sup>

Another popular home was that of Tom Green and his wife Mary Wallace Chalmers, located just across Waller Creek off East 7th Avenue (in block 63; see fig. 2-3, table 1). In 1859, Judge Amos Morrill built a home at the foot of Red River Street near the Colorado River that, in 1870, became the residence of legislator and future Reconstruction-era Governor of Texas Edmund J. Davis.<sup>53</sup> Near Waller Creek, the house “stood in a tract of ground guarded by a functioning watch tower, from where a sentry could have observed any intruder” (fig. 2-17).<sup>54</sup> The Davis home served as a good example of the character of lower Waller Creek and Austin at this time—still vigilant of its status as a frontier environment via its watch tower, yet addressing modern needs through its design in a then-modern Folk Victorian style. George Washington Paschal, editor of Austin’s *Southern Intelligencer* newspaper and a supporter of Sam Houston against secession, lived in a large two-story home near Red River Street until he left Austin in 1869.<sup>55</sup> Ridge Watie Paschal, G. W. Paschal’s half-Cherokee son from his first marriage to Sarah Ridge, became a prominent lawyer and government official and continued to live in the home until the early 1870s.<sup>56</sup> The Paschal home was a “center of entertainment;” it, and other antebellum homes, contributed to this part of “East Austin” being considered “the fashionable and wealthy part of town.”<sup>57</sup>

By the mid-1860s, the city’s postwar population increase resulted in a shortage of housing. Austinites of limited means, like newly emancipated African Americans, made unique opportunities for themselves along Waller Creek. An October 1865 article from the *Southern Intelligencer* noted that freedmen were crowded into stables, sheds, and shanties along Waller Creek.<sup>58</sup> Later that year in December, the paper lamented “rents are enormously high in this city.” It went on to say, “Business houses on the main street demand prices never dreamed of before the war. Houses and shanties of every description are in constant demand.”<sup>59</sup> The next

year, the situation was much the same. In an 1866 description of a house on East 6th Street, the newspaper noted, “Every available spot was occupied by a bed, and men, women, and children were strewn about the floors, and others sitting up, in grand disorder.”<sup>60</sup>

By the 1870s, rental housing addressed some of these issues, and more Austinites of various backgrounds and means were able to erect homes that reflected the popular architectural styles of the day. A timeline of Waller Creek at the Austin History Center lists important homes constructed in the area in the late nineteenth century:<sup>61</sup>

*Table 2-2. Important homes constructed in the Waller Creek area in the late 1800s.*

Construction Date(s)	Home/Building	Address
1871	Greek Revival home of Isaac V. Jones	105 Neches Street <sup>62</sup>
	Unique corner store-house for freedman Jeremiah J. Hamilton who was one of nine African Americans in the 12th Texas Legislature (1869–1871)	1101 Red River Street
	Home of carpenter Henry Hauke	1409 Trinity Street
	Folk Victorian home of carpenter, entrepreneur, and future Austin Mayor Joseph Nalle	409 East 2nd Street <sup>63</sup>
	Home of P. Thompson, commission merchant	105 Neches Street <sup>64</sup>
1887	Home of Charles J. Wilson, dry goods dealer	1123 Red River Street <sup>65</sup>
	Home of Edward Hauke, night watchman at the Texas Blind Asylum	1407 Trinity Street <sup>66</sup>
1890s	Home of Damon Brown, African American laborer	1111 Red River Street
	–	204 Red River Street
	Home of Louisa Huston, widow of surgeon and Confederate veteran James Huston	606 East 3rd Street <sup>67</sup>

## 2.2.2. Businesses and Industrial Enterprise

As early as the city’s founding, Austinites took advantage of the opportunities to establish businesses along Waller Creek. Among the first was Thompson’s inn and tavern at Hickory (8th) and Neches Streets. Pre-Waterloo resident Jacob Harrell, in partnership with Francis Dietrich, operated butcher pens near where College Street (12th) crossed Waller Creek.<sup>68</sup> They not only served the men who worked with Edwin Waller to lay out and construct the new capital, they also “slaughtered a beef occasionally and delivered the meat to inhabitants.”<sup>69</sup> Commerce in the city slowed down when the capital of the Republic was moved from Austin in 1842. When it returned to Austin in the fall of 1845, Dietrich was among those to capitalize and reenergize commercial development on lower Waller Creek. Upon his return to the city, Dietrich purchased Thompson’s inn and tavern promising “good service and reasonable prices.”<sup>70</sup> Dietrich operated the business until the building burned to the ground on March 1, 1847. By the mid-1850s, entrepreneurs of all types began to establish businesses in other areas along lower Waller Creek. Many of the owners erected buildings that housed a store at ground level and a residence above. Among these was the dry goods store that German immigrant Henry Hofheintz built on his property at 202 Red River Street in 1854.<sup>71</sup>

In 1857, European immigrant John Grinninger fabricated the first barbed-wire fence known to have been used in Texas. Grinninger lived on Waller Creek and worked in an early iron foundry (location undetermined). He grew vegetables and flowers on his property and ran barbed wire on top of his fence to protect his produce. Joseph Jones noted, “The famous Austin peace officer (and sometime outlaw) Ben Thompson is said to have recalled years later that as a youth he tore his jeans on that fence.”<sup>72</sup>

The 1850s and 1860s saw the beginnings of industrial commercial development along lower Waller Creek to take advantage of water power. The Houston and Texas Central Railway continued to encourage commercial



growth in the lower Waller Creek area. With the improvement of the economy in the 1870s, agricultural pursuits also prospered. Frank Brown recalled that, as a result of the “considerable wheat sown in Travis County,” a flour mill was built on Waller Creek in the fall of 1871.<sup>73</sup> Another small mill, the Eagle Grist Mill, also backed onto Waller Creek between Pine (5th) and Pecan (6th) Streets, according to the 1877 Sanborn map. This mill was operated by Jacob Stern and David Weinberger, who likely lived on its second floor.<sup>74</sup> Other enterprising Austinites worked in the commercial core along Pine or Pecan Streets but lived closer to the banks of Waller Creek. G. W. Harrison worked at a blacksmith and wheelright shop at 511 East Pecan Street but lived at 1507 Sabine Street. Johann Mueller owned a mercantile at the northwest corner of East 6th and Trinity (322 East 6th Street), but his family lived at various locations along and outside of the Waller Creek corridor.<sup>75</sup> African American blacksmith Abe Shaw’s father was also a blacksmith at the Sawyer, Ficklin & Scott’s shop at the corner of Bois d’Arc and Trinity Streets.<sup>76</sup> The presence of African American tradesmen and businessmen in the lower Waller Creek corridor, particularly on Pecan Street closer to the creek, marked the beginning of a period of racial diversity on Pecan Street (see Chapter 3).<sup>77</sup> Lebanese immigrants fleeing the rule of the Ottoman Empire started arriving in Austin the late 1800s; several families established businesses on East 6th Street.<sup>78</sup> Among them were the Kouri family who sold groceries, and Haikel Makhool “Michael” Daywood (arrived in in 1882) who opened a dry goods and mercantile on East 6th Street.<sup>79</sup> Closer to the river, Cater Joseph and his brothers opened a confectionary in the front of their two-story home down the street from where Ida and Andrew Zilker lived (present-day site of the Four Seasons Hotel).<sup>80</sup>

### **2.2.3. Military, Education, Religious, and Government Institutions**

From the city’s early days, Austin had a strong military presence. The original townsite plan reserved a block for an “Armory” at the southeast corner at East Avenue and Water Avenue (East 1st, East Cesar Chavez). The city’s first telegraph wires ran from the Republic of Texas arsenal and garrison to the temporary capitol building.<sup>81</sup> When it was first built, the armory “embraced a block, east of Waller Creek” and contained an octagonal magazine built of “cut stone.”<sup>82</sup> The site remained in use as the US Armory when Texas was granted admission to the United States. During the Civil War, the Confederacy utilized a site a few blocks west as a foundry. In 1862, the Texas Military Board, Confederate Texas, established a foundry in a large wood building along Waller Creek at Water Avenue (East 1st, East Cesar Chavez) between Trinity and Neches Streets.<sup>83</sup> Water power from the creek was used for Confederate manufactures, namely producing cannons, guns, and sabres.<sup>84</sup> The state paid for enslaved men hired out by slaveowners to erect the buildings and run the machinery, and at one time an enslaved man ran the steam engine at the foundry.<sup>85</sup> Two African American men—Bob White and Tom Hill—were paid independently for general labor and work as a stonemason, respectively.<sup>86</sup> The Confederate foundry was destroyed by fire near the end of the war, so it does not appear on late-nineteenth-century maps of Austin, while the US Armory does. However, in the 1887 bird’s-eye view, the site is not identified and does not appear to be operational.<sup>87</sup>

Schools were among the first community institutions established for residents of lower Waller Creek. In 1857, the von Rosenberg family donated property on East Mulberry (10th) Street overlooking Waller Creek for other German-Texan Austinites to construct a school where their children could be educated in the absence of a public-school system.<sup>88</sup> Figure 2-19 illustrates the German Free School in 1872, after a large two-story addition was added. Having been legally denied from pursuing educational opportunities during slavery, newly emancipated African Americans sought them as well. Sometime between 1865 and 1870, the Freedmen’s Bureau established a short-lived school at the former site of the Confederate foundry for the children of freedmen.<sup>89</sup> Eventually, a school for African American children was constructed at the southeast corner of Trinity and East Ash (9th) Streets. By 1881, the school was referred to as the Evans Community School after its first principal, Elizabeth Mary Evans. (See the “*Elizabeth Mary Evans-Garland*” sidebar on the following page for more information.<sup>90</sup>)

The creation of Austin's public-school system in 1881 resulted in some changes to these early schools along lower Waller Creek. The German Free School closed in 1881. By 1885, the Evans Community School had been renamed Central Grammar School. Just before the turn of the century, the school was renamed the Trinity Street School. The school was forced to close by 1895 after the Austin school district made all other schools for African American children available only in the predominantly African American neighborhoods located east of East Avenue.<sup>91</sup>

The public school system also created other schools for white children along lower Waller Creek. In the north part of the area, the East Austin Public School opened in 1883 on Mesquite (East 11th) Street between Sabine Street and East Avenue in temporary buildings constructed by C. F. Millett.<sup>92</sup> The *Austin American-Statesman* described its location on Waller Creek and East Avenue as being "one of the most picturesque situations in the city."<sup>93</sup> As such, the school was described as having "the appearance of a school village. The exterior of these walls, though less imposing than that of their West End sisters, has an elegance of rudeness, that harmonizes well with the beauties of surrounding scenery."<sup>94</sup> A permanent 12-room school building designed by architect Burt McDonald was built on the site by George Lockwood in 1894 (fig. 2-20).<sup>95</sup> In 1902, the East Austin Public School was renamed the Bickler School, after German schoolmaster Jacob Bickler who had been instrumental in early education in Austin.<sup>96</sup>

At the southern part of the lower Waller Creek area, the Arsenal Block School opened in 1892 on the site of the former US Armory. The US Congress had donated the property to the City of Austin "for educational purposes" in 1888.<sup>97</sup> After the conveyance was clear, the Austin public school system tore down the buildings not suitable for "school purposes," and had the others "put in good condition as soon as possible for the accommodation of the schools."<sup>98</sup> The school board oversaw the construction of a new two-story, eight-room brick school building in 1892 (fig. 2-21).<sup>99</sup>

Churches were just as important to communities and ethnic groups along lower Waller Creek. One of the first churches in the area was the Swedish Methodist Church, which was organized in 1873 by the Reverend Carl Charnquist. In 1874, the congregation built a sanctuary at Red River Street and North Avenue (15th Street) on a lot purchased in Swede Hill for \$450.<sup>100</sup> Newly freed African Americans founded Wesley Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church in 1865. The congregation met in the basement of the 10th Street Methodist Episcopal Church

### **Elizabeth Mary Evans-Garland (1840–1902)**

Elizabeth Mary Evans, born in Wales in 1840, taught in Austin for the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association, two organizations instrumental in establishing, funding, and staffing schools for African American students in the United States. She taught at Evans Community School from 1876–1882 and is listed as living on the north side of College Avenue (12th Street) between Neches and Trinity Streets in the 1877–1878 city directory. Interestingly, she is also identified as African American. But, the American Missionary Association described her as "one of the first white women who had the courage to teach in a colored school in Texas." Elizabeth married Judge and US Commissioner Charles Thompson Garland in 1877. The Garlands resided at the southeast corner of Red River and Mulberry (10th) Streets in 1881 but were located at the corner of East 9th and Comal Streets in 1889. In 1889, she was teaching at the First Ward Public School on West 2nd Street where she later became principal. By 1900, Elizabeth was widowed and serving as principal of the Garland School at 200 Nueces. She died in Austin in 1902; her death and funeral—"One of the Most Remarkable Funerals Ever Held in Austin"—were covered in the *Austin American-Statesman*.<sup>[90]</sup>



Views of the Evans Community School/Central Grammar School in the northwest corner of the block from the 1873 (top) and 1887 (bottom) Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps. Note the school's proximity to Wesley Chapel Methodist Church (no. 17 and no. 35 on the maps).

and at 4th Street and Congress Avenue.<sup>101</sup> In 1882, they erected a two-story stone church at the southwest corner of Ash (East 9th) and Neches Streets (fig. 2-22). The move closer to Waller Creek allowed the congregation to be near the members it served. In 1893, the congregation of St. Paul's Lutheran Church erected a church building at Red River and 13th Streets.<sup>102</sup> The Swedish Methodist Church congregation moved out of the lower Waller Creek area in 1898.

Toward the end of the century, German-Texans Henry Hofheintz and Adolph Scholz undertook endeavors to aid social life in the lower Waller Creek area. To make it easier for German families who lived in more rural areas outside of the city limits to attend church services and take care of other business during their trips into Austin, Hofheintz offered a corn crib and storage warehouse as a place where families could lodge overnight, called the "Sunday House."<sup>103</sup> That same year, Scholz opened a saloon and beer garden in his boarding house on San Jacinto Street between Cherry (16th) and Linden (17th) Streets.<sup>104</sup> Scholz Garten became a hub for Austin's German community with Sunday concerts, a bowling alley, and a meeting place for various organizations, including the Austin Germania Society (fig. 2-23). While located slightly north of lower Waller Creek and the original townsite, Scholz Garten functioned as an important gathering place not only for German immigrants and German-Texans but also for Anglo and African American residents. Amidst an area heavily populated by African Americans, Scholz Garten hosted a spring picnic for the African American community in the spring of 1875.<sup>105</sup> As they remained wide-open spaces, the two public squares in the lower Waller Creek area were undoubtedly for communal gatherings. In 1888, the City of Austin named its public squares.<sup>106</sup> The public square bound by East 4th, Neches, East 5th, and Trinity Streets was named Brush Square after prominent Austin merchant Seba Bogart Brush (1827–1874) who may have stored cotton on the site. However, from the late 1890s to 1905, Brush Square served as the home of the Alliance Cotton Yard.<sup>107</sup> The square bound by East 9th, Neches, East 10th, and Trinity Streets was named Hamilton Square after any number of notable Austinites with that name.<sup>108</sup> Although these two public squares soon saw non-recreational development (see Chapter 3 for development of Hamilton Square), around 1890, an undeveloped area south of the Tenth Ward School served as a baseball field and circus grounds.

When he originally oversaw the platting of Austin in 1839, Waller designated a parcel of land near Waller Creek for a hospital (city lot bound by present-day East 14th, Sabine, and East 15th Streets and IH-35 Frontage Road). However, no hospital would be established in Austin until after the Civil War. In 1874, the *Austin Daily Statesman* published a plea for the construction of such a public hospital. It argued that "Austin needs a great many things, and one of the most important of them is a city hospital," and "the fact that Austin has no City Hospital brings a blush to our cheek."<sup>109</sup> Alderman Schubert called for the erection of a hospital on the city hospital block at the earliest date possible, and his ordinance was passed by the Austin City Council on October 15, 1883.<sup>110</sup> By the time that the City-County Hospital was finally commissioned in 1883, Austin was the only state capital without one.<sup>111</sup> In 1884, the new city physician, Dr. Burt, sought the furnishing of the hospital, and the City of Austin and Travis County split the cost.<sup>112</sup> As a public facility, the modest City-County Hospital at 1405 East Sabine Street was quickly overwhelmed trying to meet the needs of a growing city (fig. 2-24). Qualified nurses were hard to find, and the hospital would seek to and succeed in expanding in the early years of the twentieth century.

## 2.3. FLOOD EVENTS

Austin's founders and planners knew little of the hazardous floods on the terrain they so admired. The state's location between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean placed it in a path where, when certain conditions are met, weather systems can produce large amounts of rainfall. Further, the Balcones Escarpment—the "mountains" that many early settlers described—has rocky soil and a deep land gradient that contributes to factors that produce flash flooding.<sup>113</sup> One of the first flood events recorded in Austin occurred in February

1843 when the waters of the Colorado River crested at 36 feet.<sup>114</sup> Another catastrophic flood occurred after three days of rainfall from July 3 to July 6, 1869.<sup>115</sup> After 64 hours of rain, the Colorado River crested at 51 feet. In his *Annals*, Frank Brown recalled, “the mass of waters rushed down from the narrow and confined channel between the mountains above, to the wider one below, with such fearful velocity that the middle of the stream was higher than the sides, and the aspect it presented was appalling.”<sup>116</sup> Flood waters reached past the site of the US Armory, and the Hannig family, who lived on the bend of Waller Creek between East 2nd and East 3rd Streets, had to be rescued from their home (fig. 2-25).<sup>117</sup>

Torrential rains on October 18, 1870, resulted in flash flooding on October 19. Brown noted that the precipitation produced “almost unprecedented rises in all the creeks in this part of the country. The local papers reported serious losses. The pontoon bridge across the river at Austin [at the foot of Congress Avenue] was carried away.” Along Waller Creek, three buildings were lost after they floated away. The home of Judge Price, who lived at the corner of Red River and Hickory Streets, was surrounded by water on the rear and sides as the creek-water rose. Floodwaters swept away all of Judge Price’s fences.<sup>118</sup> At that flood Brown claimed, “Shoal and Waller creeks were higher than ever known before....”<sup>119</sup>

In 1873, citizens made complaints about flooding along Waller Creek as a result of rainwaters coming from a stream that followed into Waller Creek. This stream, which Austinites dubbed “Rio Brado,” extended from Steiners Block down Congress Avenue to the Avenue Hotel, then down the alley to Pecan (6th) Street and over to Waller Creek.<sup>120</sup> Ferry owner John Stone supposedly sailed a skiff down “Rio Brado” over to Waller Creek then down to his docks at the mouth of the creek into the Colorado River.<sup>121</sup>

## 2.4. BRIDGES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

In the late nineteenth century, various types of infrastructure was incorporated into the lower Waller Creek area to not only alleviate flooding but also to improve the quality of life and ease of transportation. With increasing density, fires were often a problem. In 1866, the city built cisterns for water to battle fires throughout the city including on Red River Street between 9th and 10th Streets.<sup>122</sup> These were in place until 1875, when a city water system was established.<sup>123</sup> Fire companies also serviced the area. From 1874 to 1877, the Central Engine Company No. 3 was based at East Avenue and Cedar (4th) Street.<sup>124</sup> The Juvenile Hook and Ladder Company No. 4, formed in 1880, met at the home of Captain Thomas E. Sneed on the northwest corner of Trinity and Hickory (8th) Streets.<sup>125</sup>

### 2.4.1. Transportation

As Austin’s population grew and the city boundaries expanded further beyond the original townsite, the need to establish connectivity between various parts of the city and its outlying areas grew. John Stone’s ferry across the Colorado River from the mouth of Waller Creek operated from 1846 to 1880. In November 1869, a pontoon bridge was built across the river at the foot of Brazos Street, just three blocks east of the mouth of Waller Creek.<sup>126</sup> Austin City Railroad Company, established on September 7, 1874, began providing mule-powered streetcar service on January 15, 1875.<sup>127</sup> These tracks were joined by the International–Great Northern Railroad in 1876. A spur linking the new rail line (which bypassed the city center) extended eastward along Cypress (3rd) Street where it connected with the Houston and Texas Central Railway tracks at Pine (5th) Street, just west of Waller Creek. A third railroad arrived in Austin in August 1881. The Austin and Northwestern Railroad Company originated in downtown Austin and extended eastward along East Cypress (3rd) Street for three blocks, where it made a short northeast bend across the eastern edge of the Waller Plan to join and parallel the route of the Houston and Texas Central.<sup>128</sup> On February 26, 1891, the Monroe Shipe Company became a competing electric-powered streetcar line that soon merged with the mule-powered service; this resulted in the creation of the Austin Rapid Transit Railway Company.<sup>129</sup> An 1891 map of Austin

illustrates the various streetcar and railway lines in Austin and through the lower Waller Creek corridor (fig. 2-26). On East 6th Street, the old streetcar route was enhanced with the construction of tracks to accommodate electric-powered (as opposed to mule-powered) cars (fig. 2-27).

### **2.4.2. Waller Creek Bridges in the Late Nineteenth Century**

Even more significant in connecting the lower Waller Creek area to other parts of the city in the late nineteenth century was the construction of numerous bridges throughout the corridor. In 1866, the first stone bridge over Waller Creek at Pecan (6th) Street was completed.<sup>130</sup> It was the second bridge built within the then-Austin City limits, the first being a foot bridge over Shoal Creek at West Pecan Street the previous year.<sup>131</sup>

After the arrival of the Houston and Texas Central Railway, a period of semi-industrialization occurred around lower Waller Creek.<sup>132</sup> A railroad bridge crossed Waller Creek on East Pine (5th Street) (fig. 2-28). The first iron bridge over the creek arrived in July 1871. It was routed along East Pecan (6th) Street, which was the primary route between Congress Avenue and the Houston and Texas Central freight depot on East Pine Street.<sup>133</sup> The framework of the iron bridge was placed across the creek, supported on abutments, on January 3, 1872; the stone floor was laid on the next day.<sup>134</sup> The 1873 bird's-eye view of Austin (fig. 2-5) depicts the iron truss bridge where Pecan Street crosses Waller Creek. The image also illustrates how Waller Creek affected development and hindered the flow of traffic between the original town and areas to the east. The Pecan Street Bridge facilitated transportation across Waller Creek and no doubt played a major role in the development of Pecan Street into Austin's primary commercial node at that time. The map also depicts two smaller bridges over Waller Creek. A bridge at Red River Street provided the most direct route into Austin from the armory. Cedar (4th) Street was the only thoroughfare that extended beyond East Avenue on the map, so the Cedar Street bridge provided a secondary route between the railroad, the East Avenue commercial area, and downtown.

In 1882, a high bridge was erected over Waller Creek at East College (12th) Street to transport the granite that was being shipped for construction of the new, postwar state capitol building.<sup>135</sup> Citizens were very concerned about the presence, location, safety, and functionality of bridges at this time. In 1884, Austinites petitioned for a bridge over the creek near the East Austin Public School (former Bickler School on East 11th Street).<sup>136</sup> One newspaper reader commented, "To a casual observer it appears that railings are needed at that stone bridge over Waller Creek, on Mesquite Street, near the East Austin school buildings."<sup>137</sup> The city continued its efforts to satisfy residents by building a bridge over Waller Creek at Bois d'Arc (7th) Street, which opened for travel on April 10, 1886.<sup>138</sup> Also in 1886, the iron Pecan Street bridge was replaced with a stone bridge. The old iron bridge was relocated to the Waller Creek crossing at East Pine (5th) Street; it was later removed and replaced with a stone, arched bridge in 1900.<sup>139</sup> The relocation of bridges from one crossing to another was common. When the Austin City Council passed an ordinance for a new bridge over Shoal Creek from West Pecan (6th) Street on March 21, 1887, they also stipulated that the iron bridge currently in place would be moved to Waller Creek at East Water (East 1st, Cesar Chavez) Street at the cost of \$1,593, although the council had previously suggested that the bridge be moved to East Cedar (4th) Street.<sup>140</sup> The contract for the project, however, stated that it be moved to East Cypress (3rd) Street over Waller Creek. Citizens instead wanted the bridge to be placed over East Magnolia Avenue (19th Street). The relocation of this particular bridge was clearly problematic; its eventual fate is unknown.<sup>141</sup>

One thing that the Austin City Council and Austin residents did agree on was the necessity of a dam that would serve as a reliable source of electricity and power for streetcars and lights in the city. In 1890, Austinites approved \$1.4 million in bonds for the construction of the Austin dam which was completed northwest of the city in 1893. With the availability of consistent electrical power, the city erected moonlight towers—160-foot-tall lighting structures that provide a 1,500-foot radius of illumination—in 1894. One of them was erected in

the lower Waller Creek area at the corner of Live Oak (2nd) and Neches Streets.<sup>142</sup> In addition to providing this type of amenity, it was hoped that the dam would also help to alleviate flooding in the next century.



## CHAPTER 2 FIGURES

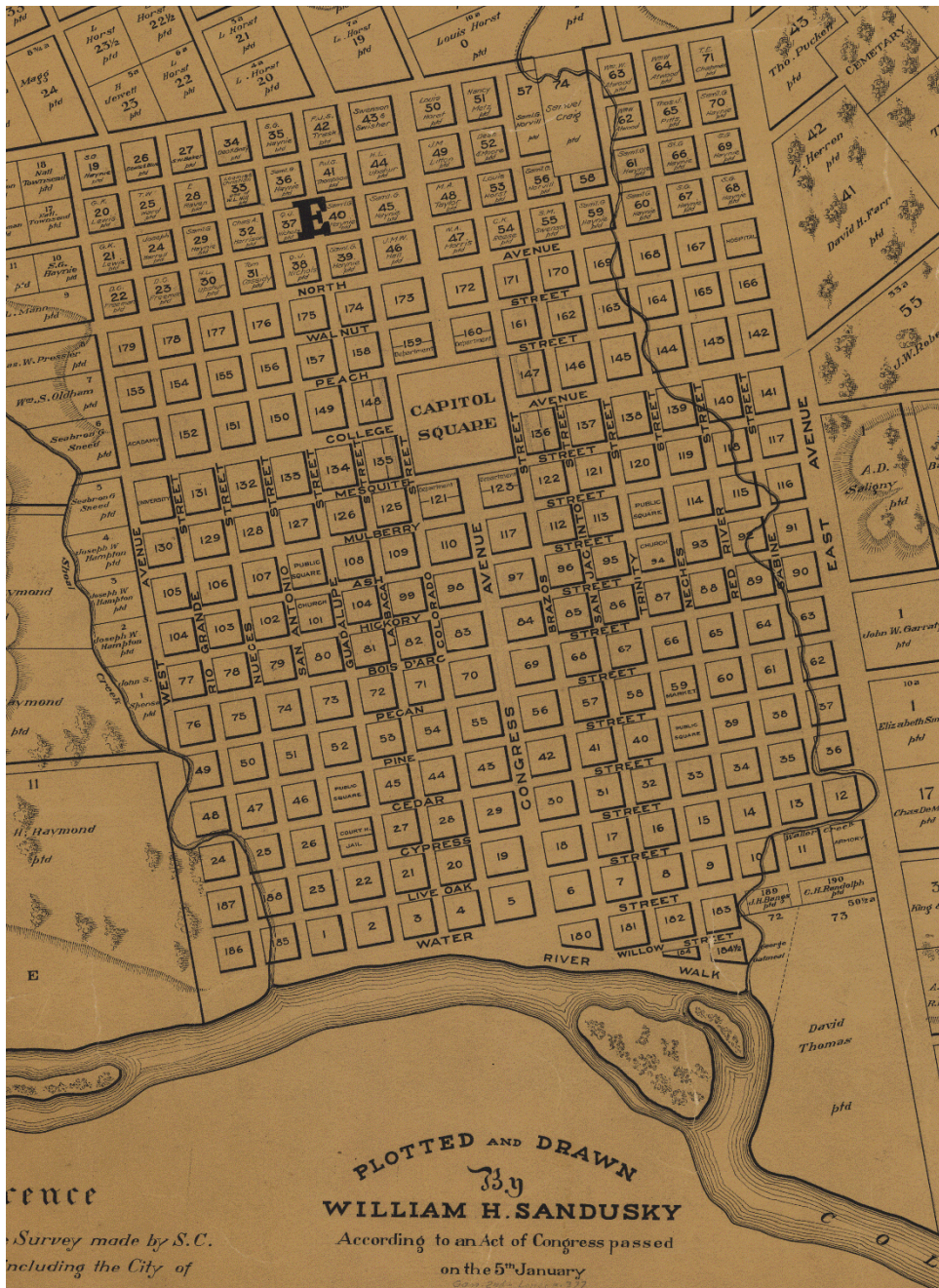


Figure 2-1. William H. Sandusky drew his *Topographical Map of the Government Tract Adjoining the City of Austin* when the Republic of Texas authorized the sale of the outlots surrounding the original townsite. The city boundaries are extended south in the lower Waller Creek area. Source: William H. Sandusky, "Topographical Map of the Government Tract adjoining the City of Austin, Austin," [Map.] 1840 (1931), Map [no. 2178](#), Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.





Figure 2-2. This 1840 view of the new capital city at Austin indicates that the lower Waller Creek area was largely undeveloped with the exception of Thompson's tavern. Drawn by Edward Hill. Source: Perry Castañeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin, crediting A. B. Lawrence, *Texas in 1840, or The Emigrant's Guide to the New Republic; Being the Result of Observations, Enquiry and Travel in that Beautiful Country*, New York, 1840.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

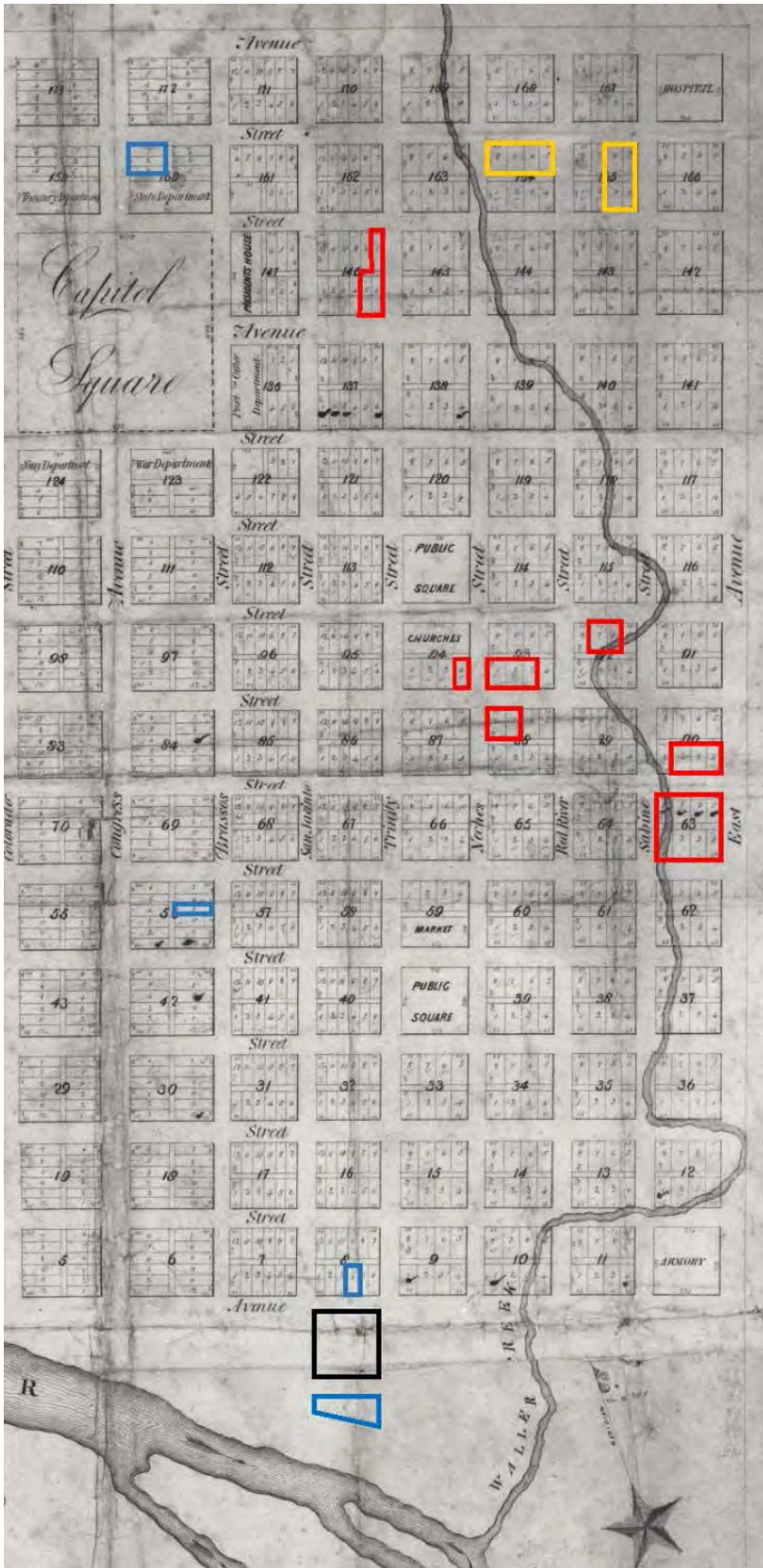


Figure 2-3. This 1853 map of Austin includes select lots in the lower Waller Creek area (and vicinity in blue) that William W. Thompson, Francis Dietrich, and Tom Green purchased in the 1840s (red) and in the 1850s (yellow) (refer to Table 2-1.). Source: Texas State Library and Archives. Overlay by HHM.

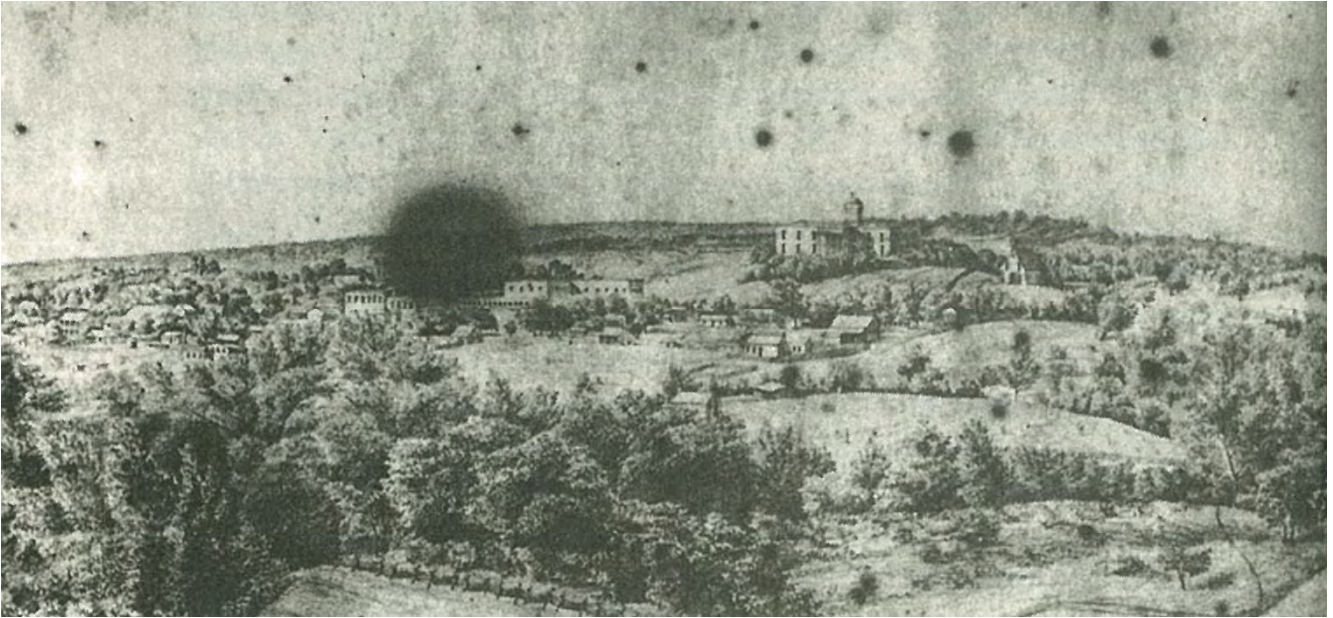


Figure 2-4. This view of Austin in 1860 is from the south side of the Colorado River. Waller Creek is depicted at the bottom right of the image. Source: Jeffrey S. Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, crediting The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.





Figure 2-5. Augustus Koch's 1873 bird's-eye view of Austin illustrates the development along the lower Waller Creek corridor at that time. Waller Creek can be seen running from the top left to the bottom right of the image. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, crediting the Amon Carter Museum.



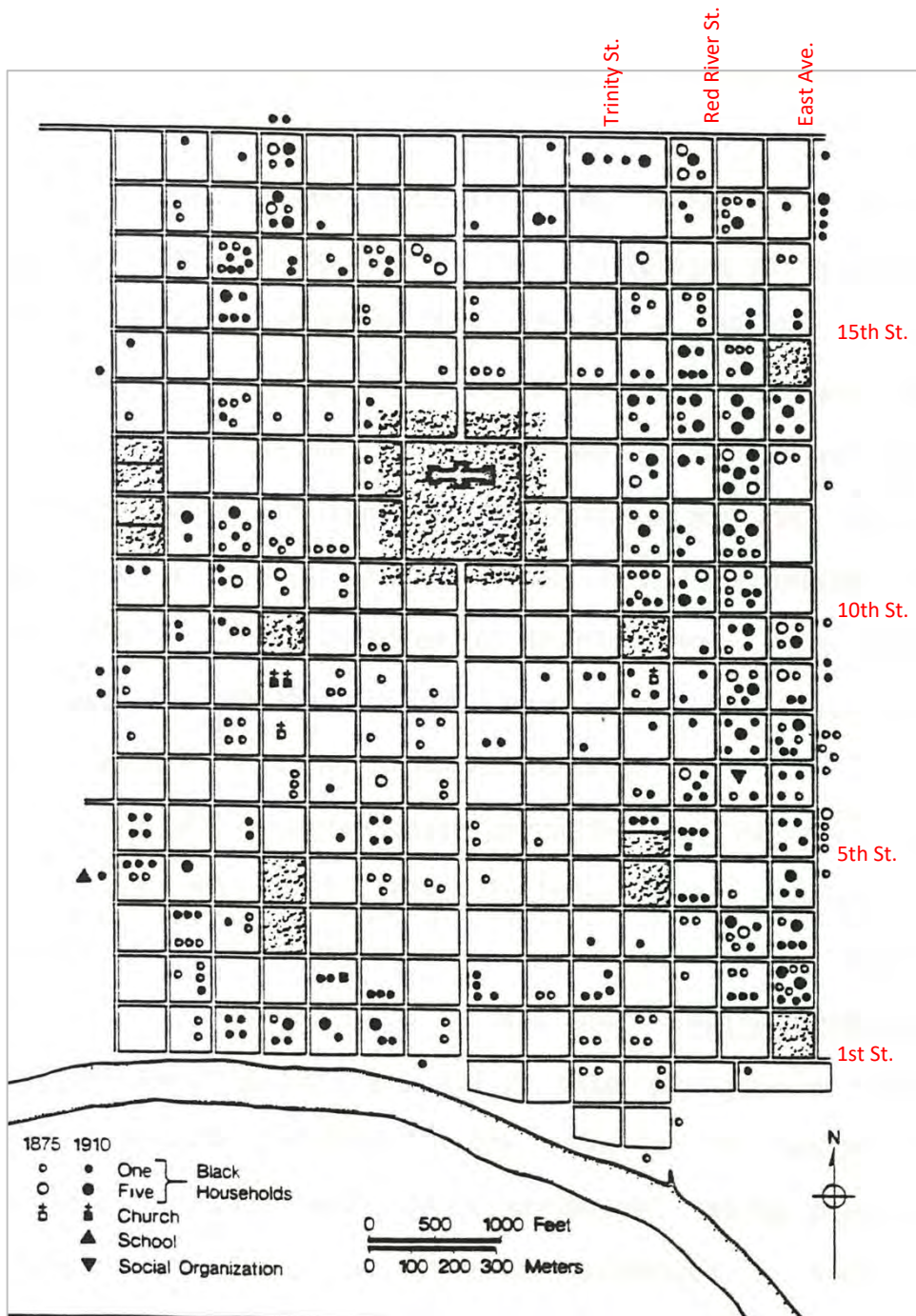


Figure 2-6. This map illustrates the density of African American households within the Austin original townsite in 1875 (clear circles) and 1910 (filled circles). Note the concentration of households along the areas where Lower Waller Creek runs. Source: Jane Manaster, "The Ethnic Geography of Austin Texas: 1875-1910," master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, May 1986.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

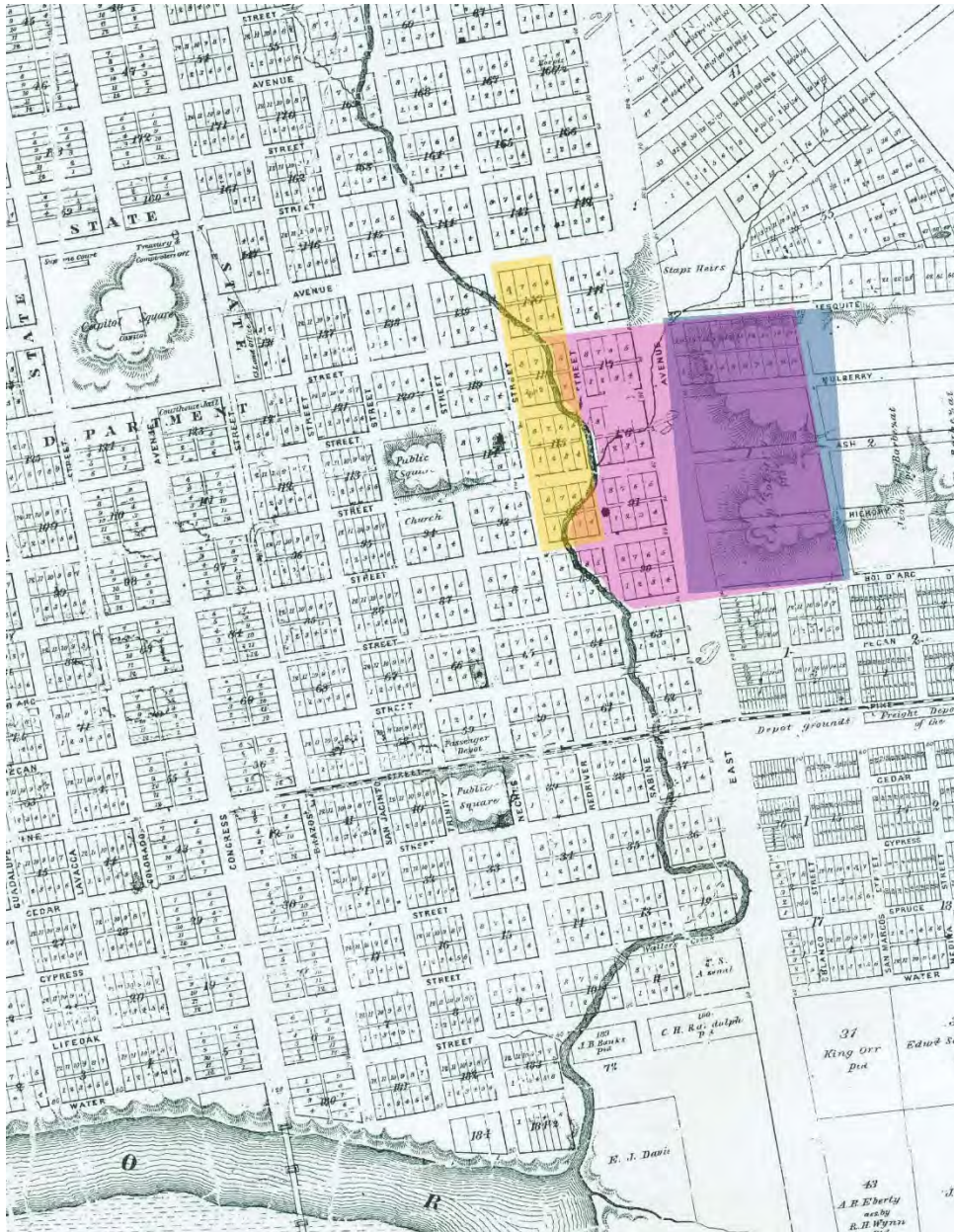


Figure 2-7. Louis Klappenbach's 1876 map of the city of Austin highlighting the boundaries of the Pleasant Hill freemen community as presented by various sources:

- Michelle Mears (blue)
- Austin Public Library (pink)
- Jane Manaster (yellow)

Map source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library. Overlay by HHM. Mears, Michelle M. *And Grace Will Lead Me Home: African American Freedmen Communities of Austin, Texas, 1865 - 1928*. Lubbock, Tex: Texas Tech University Press, 2009. Austin Public Library, "The Early Freedmen Communities," accessed July 7, 2018, <http://austinlibrary.com/ahc/downloads/FreedmanMapOptimized.pdf>. Jane Manaster, *The Ethnic Geography of Austin 1875-1910*, master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, May 1986.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



Figure 2-8. Map showing density of German households within the Austin original townsite in 1875 (clear circles) and 1910 (filled circles). Source: Jane Manaster, "The Ethnic Geography of Austin Texas: 1875-1910," master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1986.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

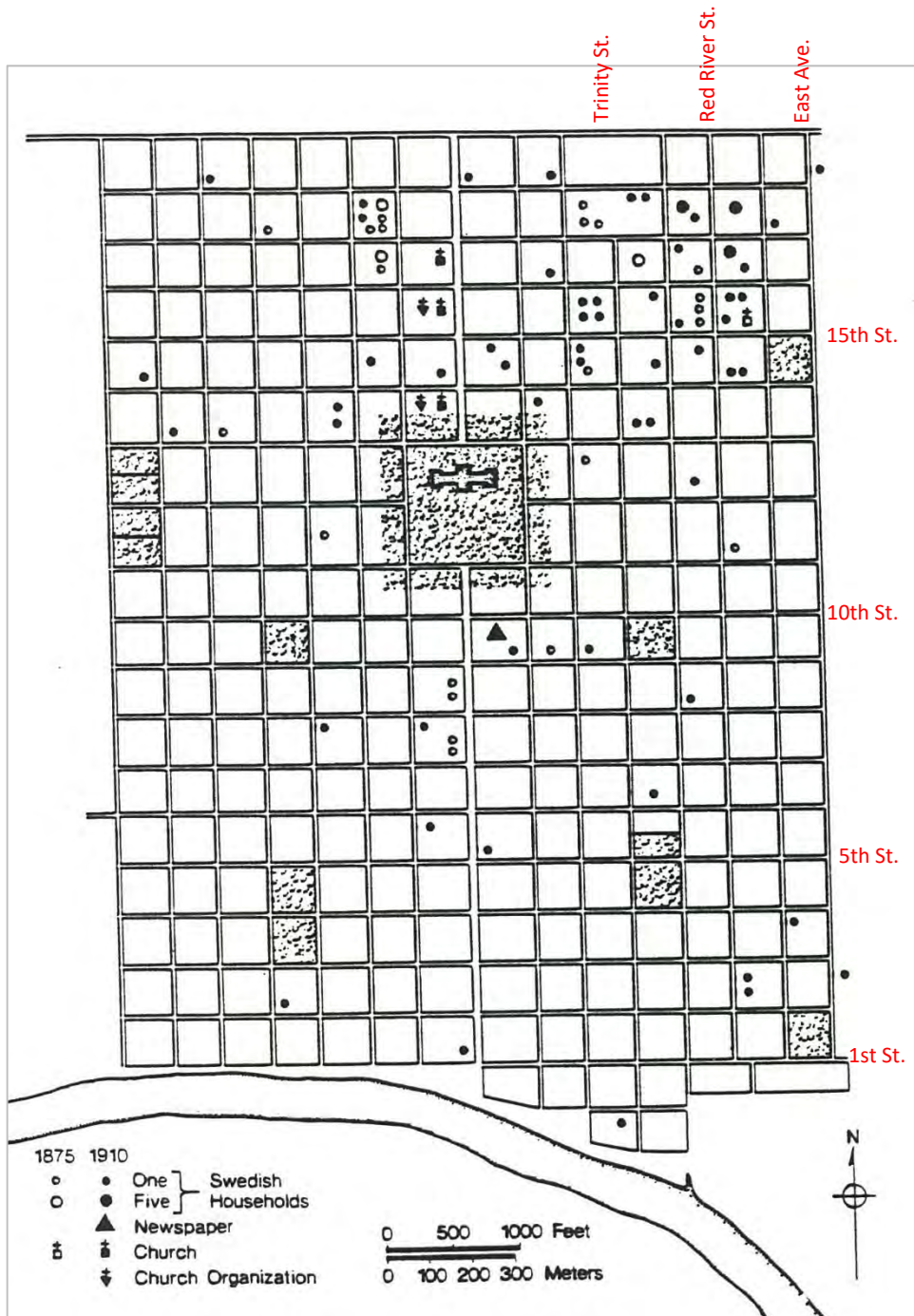


Figure 2-9. Map showing density of Swedish households within the Austin original townsite in 1875 (clear circles) and 1910 (filled circles). Source: Jane Manaster, "The Ethnic Geography of Austin Texas: 1875-1910," master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, May 1986.





Figure 2-10. View of Swede Hill taken from the Texas State Capitol. The Swedish Methodist Church at Red River Street and North Avenue is visible at the top of the hill at the center of the photograph while the City-County Hospital is depicted to the left of the Power House smoke stack. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

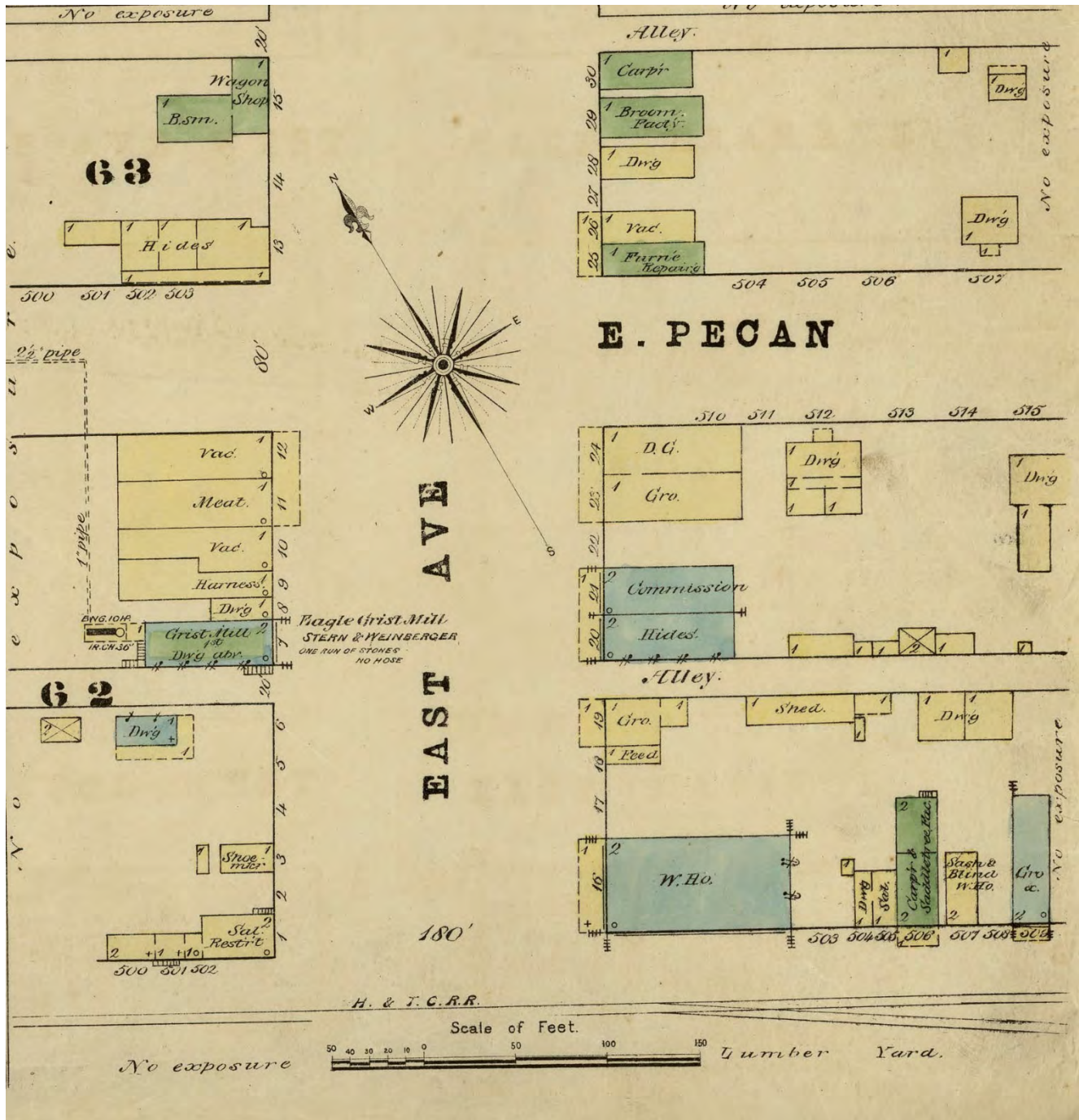


Figure 2-11. The first issue of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Austin was published in 1877. The area of lower Waller Creek depicted in the series was limited as it did not contain a significant amount of non-residential development for the publishers. The Sanborn maps did, however, depict the growing commercial core along East Avenue and East Pine (5th) and East Pecan (6th) Streets. Source: Perry Castañeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.



Figure 2-12. 1884 Plat of Driskill & Rainey Subdivision. Note the Edmund Jackson Davis homestead southwest of the platted neighborhood. Source: Travis County Clerk's Office.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

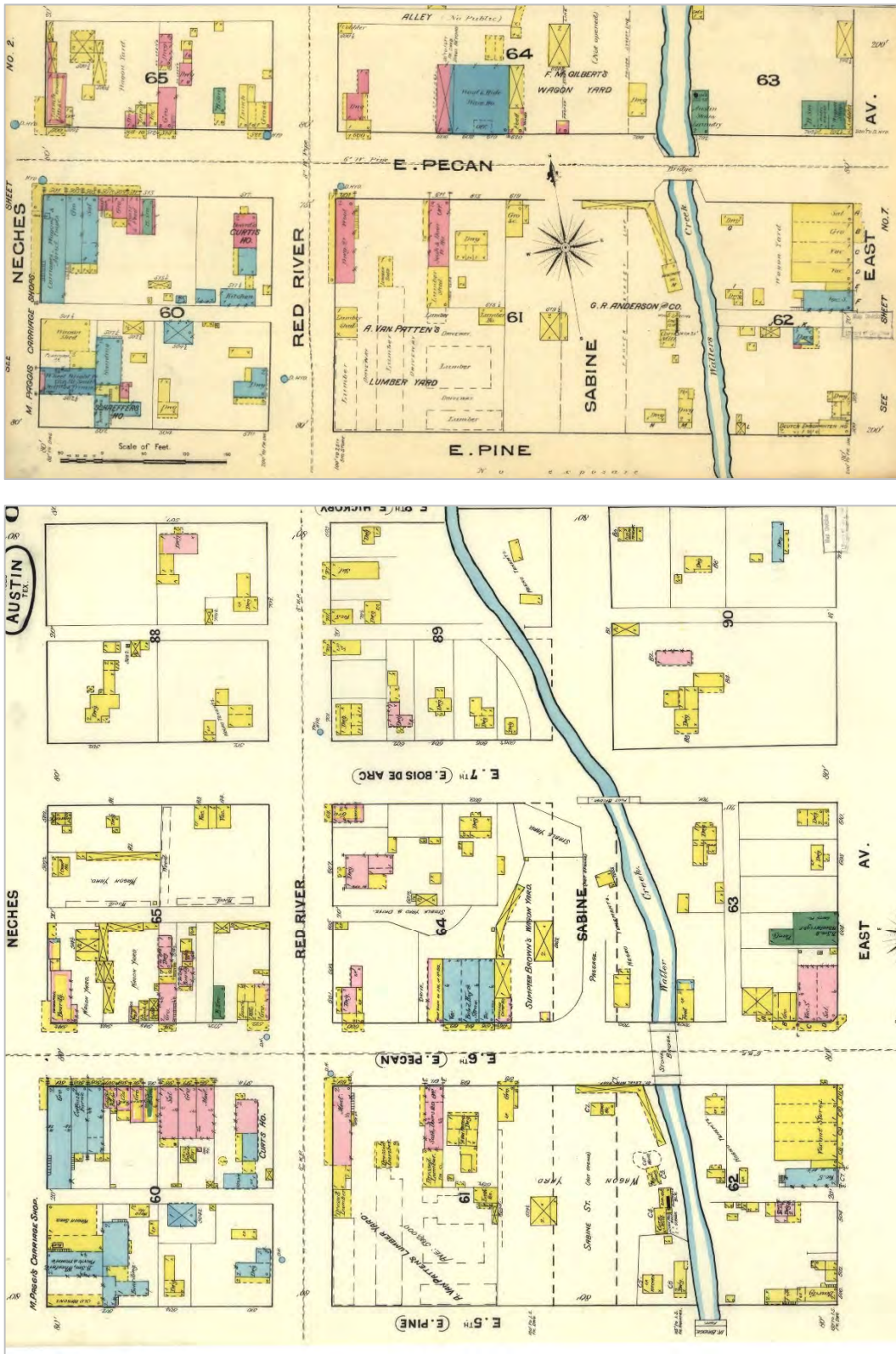


Figure 2-13. The lower Waller Creek corridor as depicted at the 1885 (top) and 1889 (bottom) Sanborn maps. Source: Perry Castañeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.





Figure 2-14. In Augustus Koch's 1887 bird's eye view of Austin, significant development along lower Waller Creek is visible from North (East 15th) Street to its termination at the Colorado River. Source: Perry Castañeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin, crediting the Amon Carter Museum.



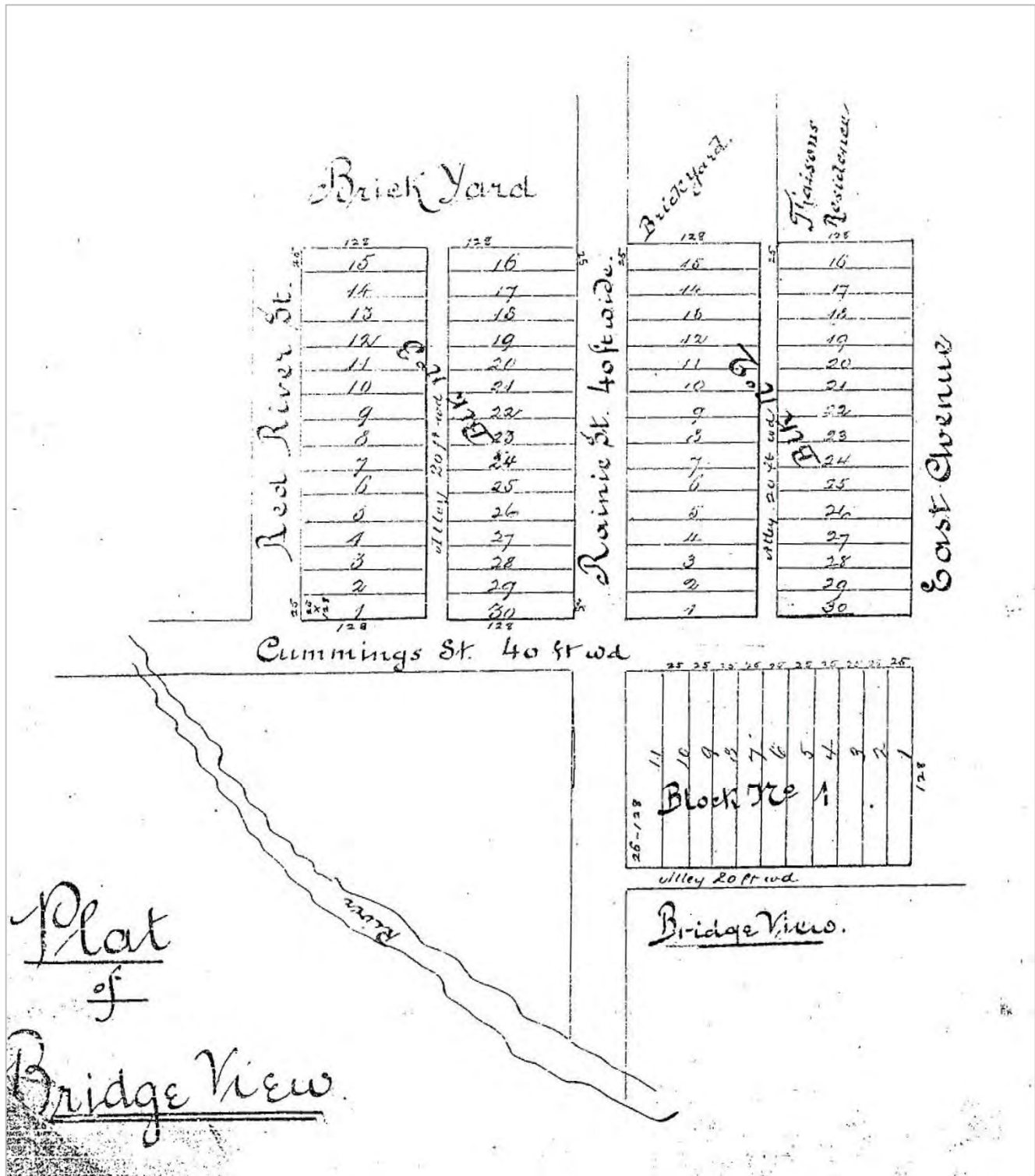


Figure 2-15. 1892 Plat of the Bridge View Subdivision. Source: Travis County Clerk's Office.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

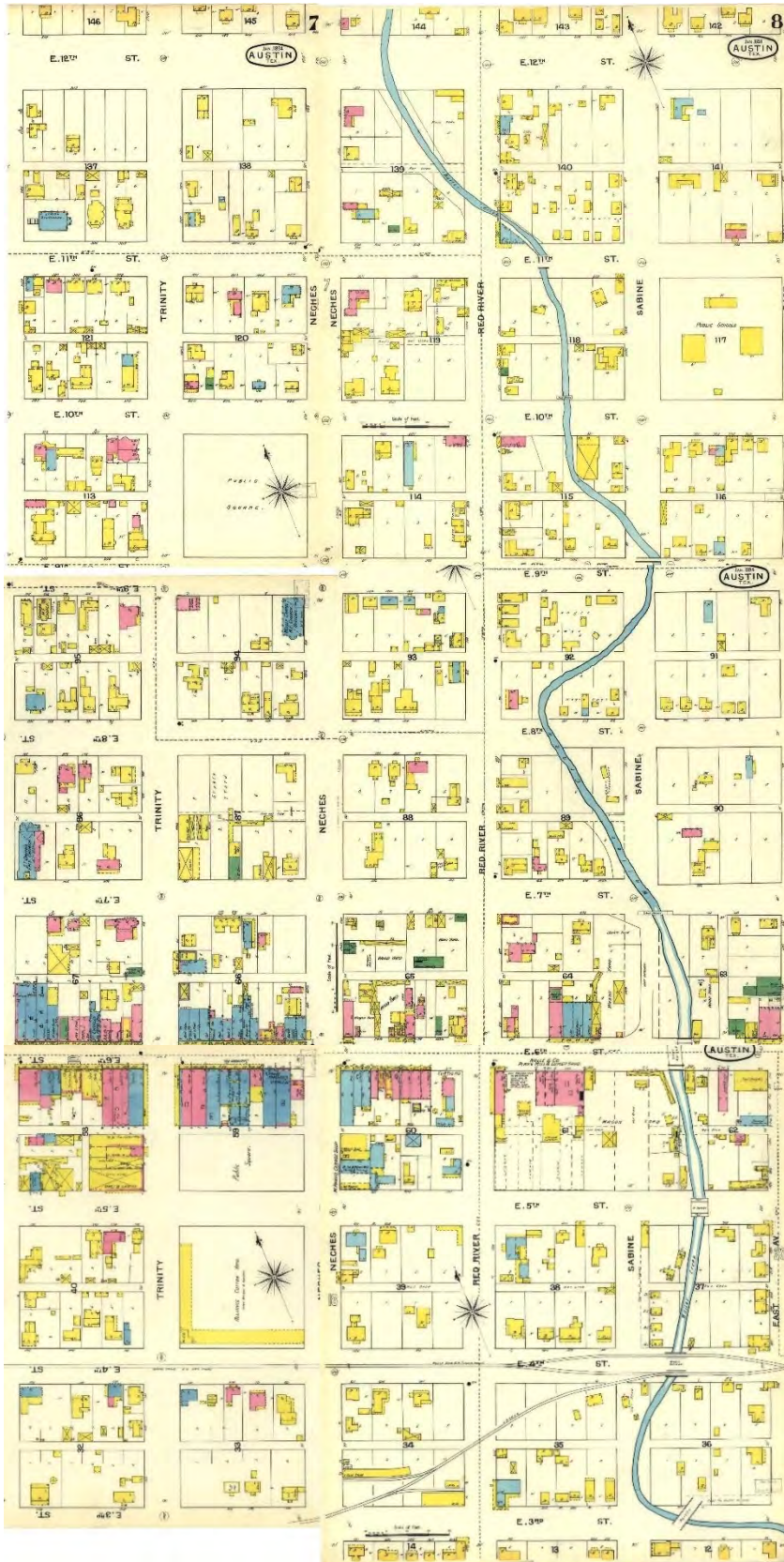


Figure 2-16. By 1894, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps included the majority of the lower Waller Creek corridor, indicating the area's growth and diversity of building types and property uses. Source: Perry Castañeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.



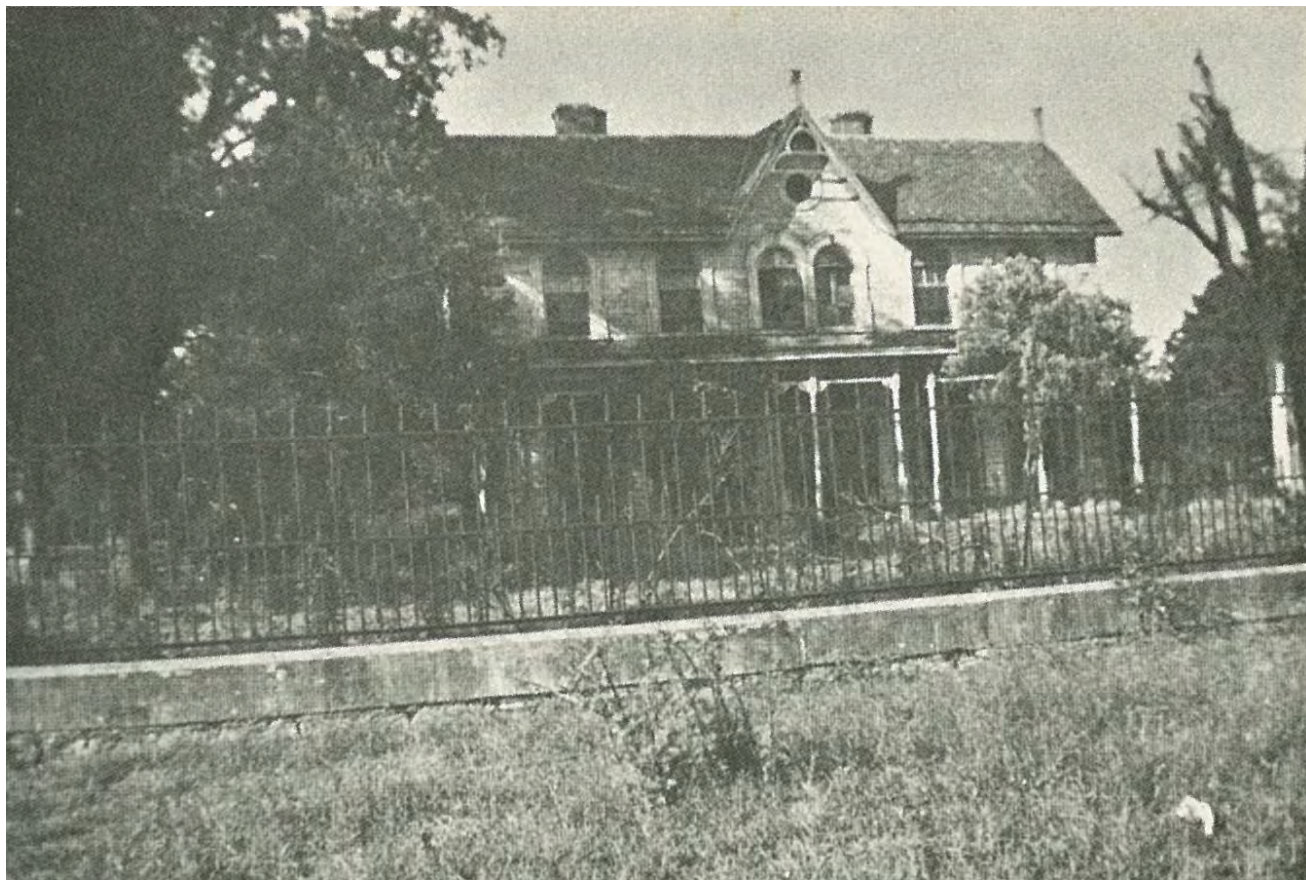


Figure 2-17. The home of Reconstruction-era Governor Edmund J. Davis was located southwest of the neighborhood that Jesse Driskill and Frank Rainey platted in 1884. Source: Mary Starr Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin, 1839-1899* (1981).



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

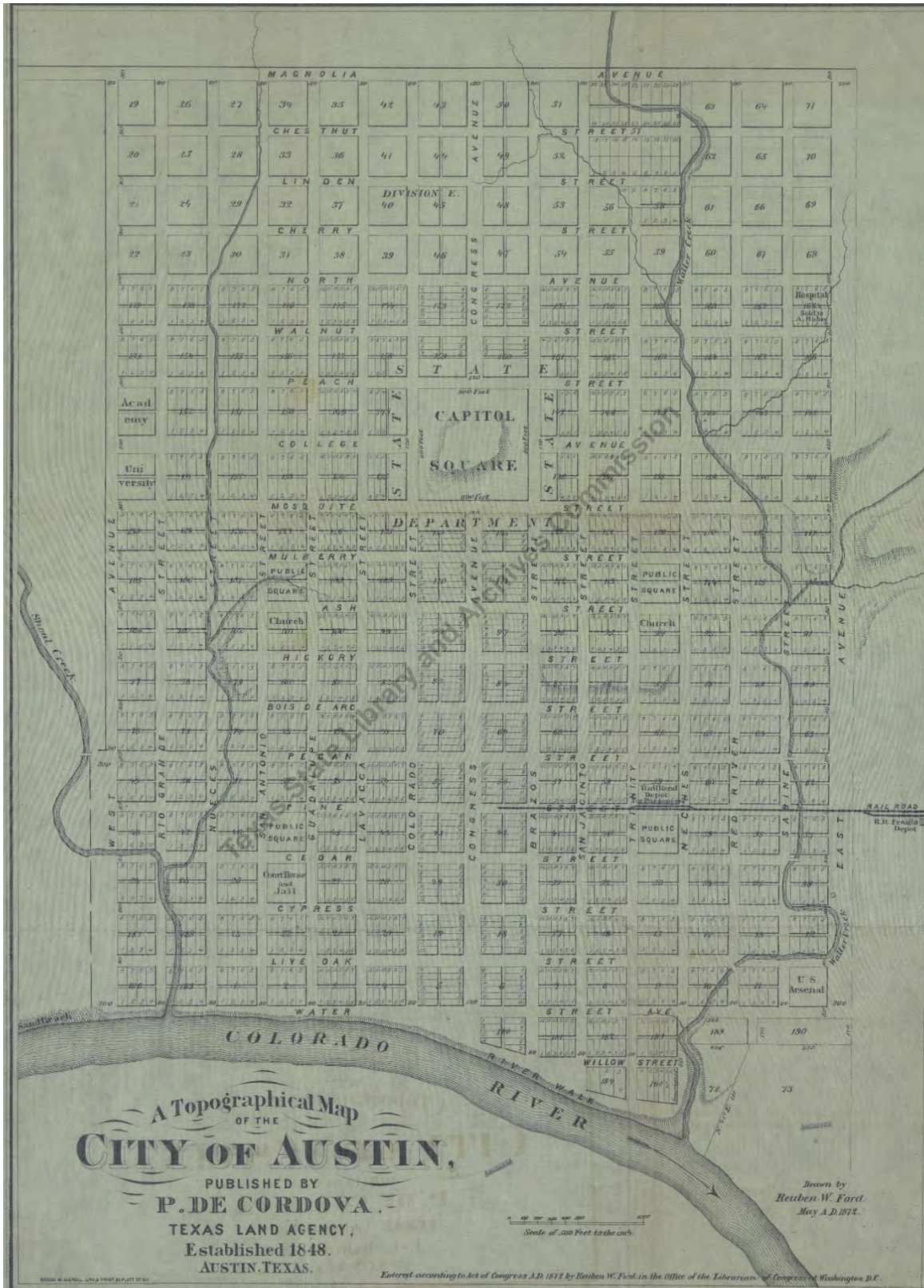


Figure 2-18. This 1872 map of Austin illustrates the path of the Houston and Texas Central Railway as it came into Austin from the east over Waller Creek. Source: Texas State Library and Archives.



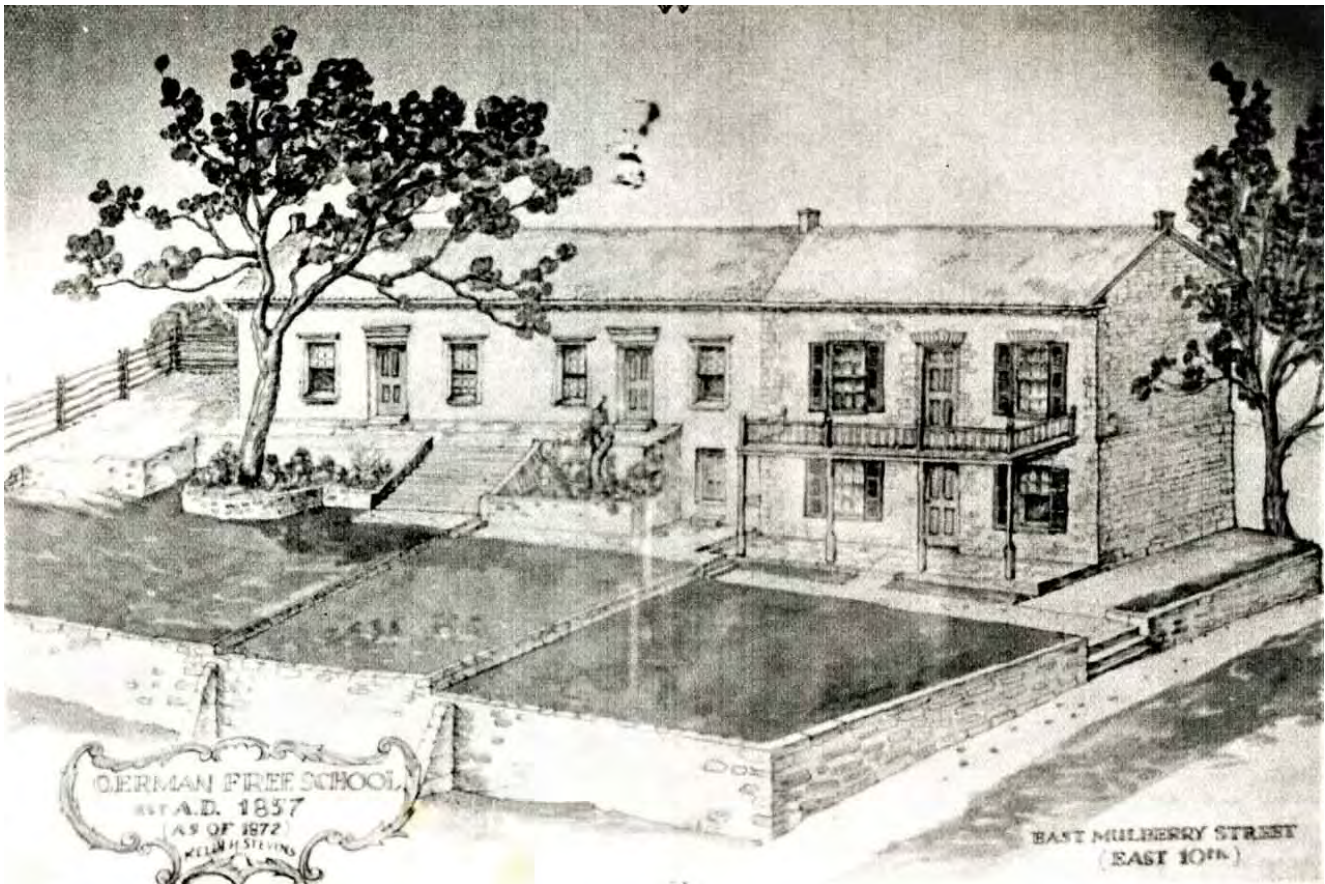


Figure 2-19. This drawing from 1872 illustrates the German Free School (507 East 10th Street) after additions were made to better accommodate the students and teachers. Source: <https://texastimetravel.oncell.com>, crediting German-Texas Heritage Society.



Figure 2-20. View of the Bickler School, formerly East Austin Public School, prior to its demolition (occupied 700-block of East 11th Street.) Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 2-21. The Tenth Ward School, also called the Palm School, on East 1st Street. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.



Figure 2-22. The new Wesley Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church building pictured around the time it was erected at the corner of Ash (East 9th) and Neches Streets in 1882. Source: *ΔΣΘ Presents the Black Heritage Exhibit: A Pictorial History of Austin, Travis County, Texas' Black Community, 1839-1920*.



Figure 2-23. The exterior of Scholz Garten around the time it opened on Red River Street in 1866. Source: *Portal to Texas History*, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 2-24. The City of Austin and Travis County governments shared the costs of constructing and operating Austin's first hospital. The Victorian building was erected in the block set aside for a hospital in the original city plan, facing Sabine Street between East 14th and East 15th Streets. Source: *Portal to Texas History*, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 2-25. This marker, located next to Buford Tower on Town Lake, indicates the height of the floodwaters that inundated the city in 1869. Source: <http://dailyaustinphoto.blogspot.com/>.

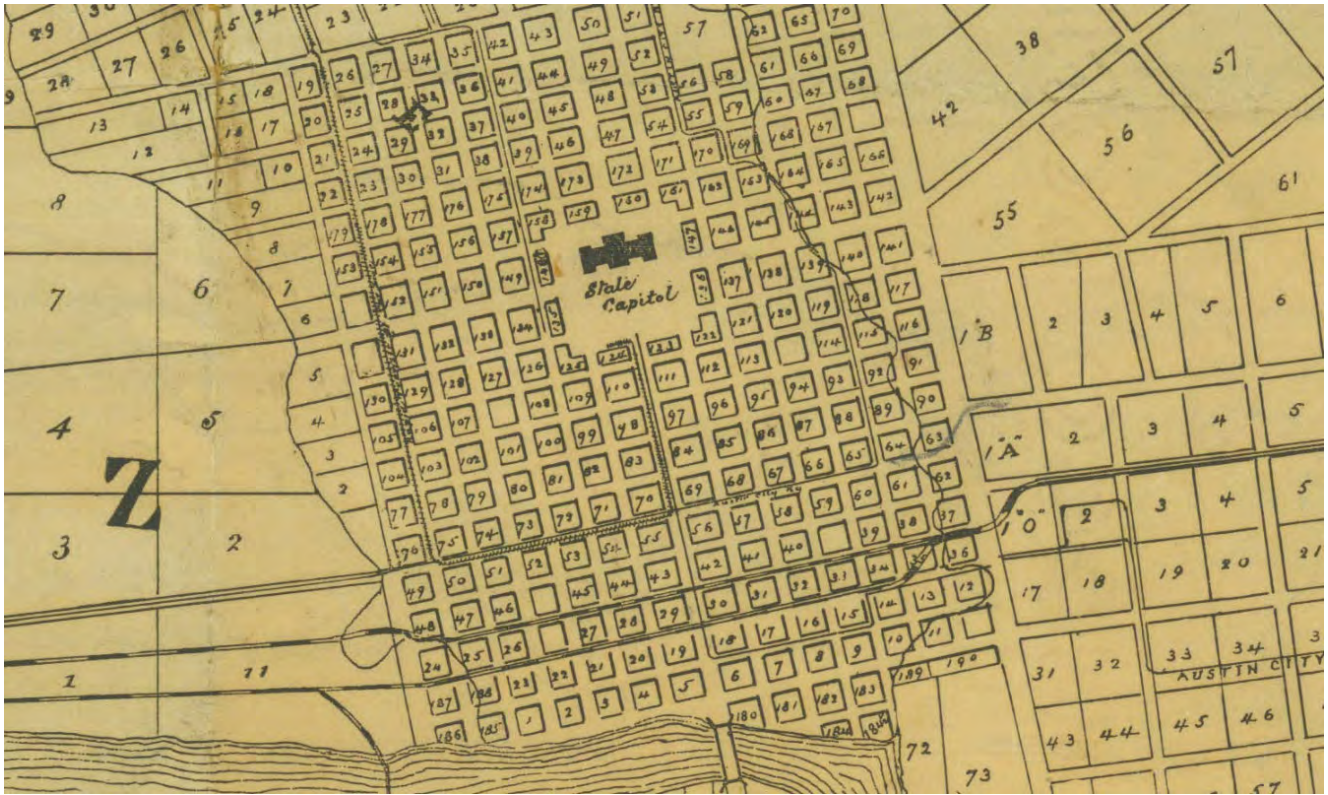


Figure 2-26. This 1891 map of Austin shows several transportation features that influenced development and growth in the lower Waller Creek area including three rail lines and the tracks of the Austin City Railroad Company. By the time the streetcar company merged with the Austin Rapid Transit Railway Company later in 1891, some of the earlier tracks were no longer in place. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 2-27. This photograph from the 1890s shows a crew of African American workers laying tracks for the new streetcar line in the 300 block of East 6th Street. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



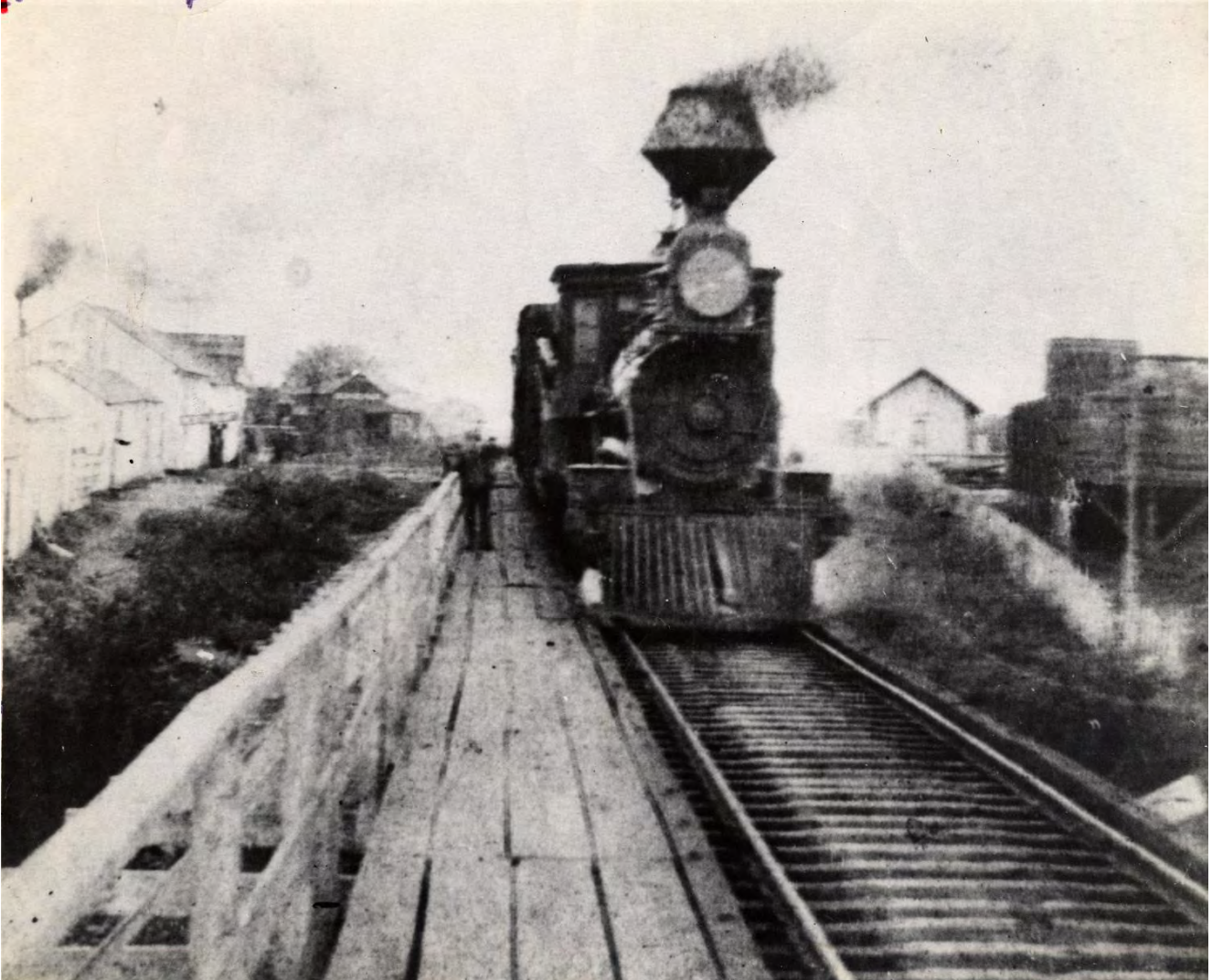


Figure 2-28. The first Houston and Central Texas Railway train arriving in Austin on the Waller Creek Bridge on December 25, 1871. Buildings on East Pine (5th) Street are visible on both sides of the bridge. The back of the photograph has a note that reads: "With a little steam left this forerunner of a soon-to-be speeding civilization has stopped on the little Waller Creek bridge in Austin to let the passengers from Houston and other points out at the Depot House, Christmas day, 1871." Source: PICA 18441, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Austin of the Past; Growth By Stages," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 2, 1906: 19, accessed March 26, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Starr Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin, 1839-1899* (Austin: Austin Printing Company, 1981), 49; "Significant Sequential Events in the Urbanization of Waller Creek," from Austin History Center, Austin Files Collection, File AF-C9060(25)(a) – Creeks – Waller Creek."

<sup>3</sup> When Austin became the Republic of Texas's seat of government, Waller was put in charge of the construction of several necessary buildings, including a temporary Capitol and a home for President Mirabeau B. Lamar. This home was constructed on a hilltop site, but burned in 1847. Caroline B. Bass, "PRESIDENT'S HOUSE," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ccplg>, accessed September 10, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> At this time, \$10 amounts to \$277.47–\$317.11 in 2018 based on average inflation rates calculated by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index.

<sup>5</sup> Calculated at \$2,103.29 in 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 74.

<sup>7</sup> File No. 580, Austin City Lots, [http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCs/archives\\_webfiles/arcmeps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/0/4/5/1045464.pdf](http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCs/archives_webfiles/arcmeps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/0/4/5/1045464.pdf), accessed June 28, 2018; File No. 693, Austin City Lots, [http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCs/archives\\_webfiles/arcmeps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/0/4/5/1045577.pdf](http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCs/archives_webfiles/arcmeps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/0/4/5/1045577.pdf), accessed June 28, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 73; Calculated at \$1,084.08–\$2,016.29 in 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 71.

<sup>10</sup> David C. Humphrey, "AUSTIN, TX (TRAVIS COUNTY)," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 26, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hda03>, uploaded on June 9, 2010, modified on May 1, 2017, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Brown, *Annals of Travis County and the City of Austin*, vol. 11, n.d., 9, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Travis County Historical Commission.

<sup>12</sup> Humphrey, "AUSTIN, TX"; Jane Manaster, *The Ethnic Geography of Austin 1875-1910* (master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, May 1986), 60.

<sup>13</sup> Manaster, *Ethnic Geography of Austin*, 90.

<sup>14</sup> Thad Sitton and James Conrad, *Freedom Colonies: Independent Black Texans in the Time of Jim Crow* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 33.

<sup>15</sup> Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., City of Austin Historic Resources Survey, prepared for the City of Austin, 2017, I-18.

<sup>16</sup> Michelle M. Mears, *And Grace Will Lead Me Home: African American Freedmen Communities of Austin, Texas, 1865-1928* (Lubbock, Tex: Texas Tech University Press, 2009); Alwyn Barr, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "HAMILTON, JEREMIAH J.," accessed July 10, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fhacn>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>17</sup> Texas Historical Commission, [Historic Marker Application: The Jeremiah Hamilton House], text, 1978, accessed July 10, 2018; [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph491609/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph491609/), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, crediting Texas Historical Commission; Texas Genealogy Trails, "Travis County, Texas, 1897 Austin City Directory - Page 2," accessed July 10, 2018, [http://genealogytrails.com/tex/hillcountry/travis/1897city\\_directory2.html](http://genealogytrails.com/tex/hillcountry/travis/1897city_directory2.html).

<sup>18</sup> Mears, *Grace Will Lead Me Home*.

<sup>19</sup> Terry G. Jordan, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "GERMANS," accessed July 8, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/png02>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on March 7, 2016, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *Annals*, vol. 7, 38; Clinton P. Hartmann, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "STREMME, CHRISTOPH CONRAD," accessed July 8, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fst74>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on July 10, 2017, published by the Texas State Historical Association; Texas Historical Commission, "Old General Land Office," accessed June 29, 2018, <http://texastimetravel.com/content/old-general-land-office-now-texas-capitol-visitors-center>.

- <sup>21</sup> Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill, "Moonshine's Unique History," accessed July 11, 2018, [http://moonshinegrill.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Moonshine\\_History.pdf](http://moonshinegrill.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Moonshine_History.pdf).
- <sup>22</sup> The Hofheintz-Reissig store building is now home to the Moonshine Patio Bar and Grill. Barbara Nagel, "Hofheintz-Reissig Store," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, November 15, 1982.
- <sup>23</sup> Charles F. Kaltefleiter, "GERMAN FREE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTIN," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 11, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kg07>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on April 15, 2016, published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- <sup>24</sup> Alison Beck, "Scholz Garten," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, October 12, 1978; Nick Roland, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "SCHOLZ GARTEN," accessed July 11, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xds12>, uploaded on July 14, 2016, modified on April 13, 2017, published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- <sup>25</sup> Mooney & Morrison, *General Directory*, book, [1877], Houston, Texas, accessed July 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth46838/>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library; Michael Corcoran, "1,000-word history: Red River Street," accessed July 13, 2018, <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/6531>;
- <sup>26</sup> The boundaries of the Winn Community were roughly present-day North IH-35 Frontage Road, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Chestnut Street, and Manor Road. HHM, *Austin Historic Resources Survey*, I-23.
- <sup>27</sup> Michael Corcoran, "Lebanon Calling," *The Austin Chronicle*, October 4, 2013, accessed May 31, 2017, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2013-10-04/lebanon-calling/>; Michael Corcoran, "1,000-word history: Red River Street," accessed July 13, 2018, <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/6531>.
- <sup>28</sup> S. A. Gray and W. D. Moore, *Mercantile and General City Directory of Austin, Texas 1872-1873*, book, 1872, Austin, Texas, accessed July 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth38126/>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library. Haigler was elected as a city Alderman from the Tenth Ward in December 1887. "1120," *The Austin Weekly Statesman*, December 8, 1887: 5.
- <sup>29</sup> Morrison & Fourmy, *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Austin for 1889-1890*, book, 1889, Galveston, accessed July 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth39150/>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library. Per the 1877 Sanborn map, the building had previously been a saloon and restaurant.
- <sup>30</sup> Barbara J. Rozek, *Come to Texas: Attracting Immigrants, 1865-1915* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 150, 217, 218, no. 20.
- <sup>31</sup> The German Immigrant's Home building is identified as a boarding house on the 1889 Sanborn map of Austin.
- <sup>32</sup> Larry E. Scott, *The Swedish Texans*, revised (San Antonio: The University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio, 2000), 2.
- <sup>33</sup> Scott, *The Swedish Texans*, 156; HHM, *Austin Historic Resources Survey*, I-23.
- <sup>34</sup> HHM, *Austin Historic Resources Survey*, I-23.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, II-29.
- <sup>36</sup> The site was occupied by a public square in 1894 and by a blacksmith shop and feed and wagon yard in 1900.
- <sup>37</sup> Fermata, Inc., "Our Austin Story: Interpreting Austin's Historic Squares and Congress Avenue," April 2018, 6, 8-9; Joseph Jones, *Life on Waller Creek* (Austin: AAR/Tantalus, Inc.), 73.
- <sup>38</sup> *Beneath the Center: Nineteenth Century Life Along Waller Creek*, n.p.
- <sup>39</sup> Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc. *Interstate Highway 35 Corridor, Austin, Travis County, Texas, Historic Resources Investigations Intensive-Level Survey*, prepared for Texas Department of Transportation, 2004, I-1.
- <sup>40</sup> "The Progressive People of Austin Will Stand by Him," *Austin Daily Statesman*, June 15, 1884; "Dr. J. Cummings," *Personnel of the State of Texas with Sketches of Representative Men*, 671-672. William Thaison and Paul Hoppe were the managers of Lone Star Brick Works located at the corner of East Avenue and Sabine Street. Hoppe resided nearby at the rear of 28 Rainey Street, south of Davis Street. Thaison erected the 1888 building for the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Dumb School. Information from Morrison & Fourmy, *General Directory of the City of Austin for 1889-1890*.
- <sup>41</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 134.
- <sup>42</sup> Jeffrey Stuart Kerr, *Seat of Empire* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press), 140; Joseph Jones, *Life on Waller Creek* (Austin: AAR/Tantalus, Inc.), 143.



<sup>43</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 45. Jones notes, "Some of the very handsome hewn stones from the [mill] dam may be seen in use as a bank-wall opposite the old Weigl Iron Works."

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Stuart Kerr, *The Republic of Texas* (Austin: Waterloo Press, 2010), 61-62. The President's House was located in block 86 of the original townsite, bound by East 7th, East 8th, Brazos, and San Jacinto Streets.

<sup>45</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> Manaster, *Ethnic Geography of Austin*, 87.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Zelade, *Austin: Murder & Mayhem* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 13-14; File No. 693, Austin City Lots, accessed June 28, 2018, <http://www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/land-grants/landgrants.cfm?intID=637481>.

<sup>48</sup> Mary Ramey was the niece of African American businessman Edward H. Carrington (see Chapter 3). "About the Victims: Mary Ramey," accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.servantgirlmurders.com/about-the-victims/>.

<sup>49</sup> Alex W. Terrell, "The City of Austin from 1839 to 1865," *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, vol. 14, no. 2 (October 1910): 113.

<sup>50</sup> "History of Austin's Growth from Frontier Post to Proud Capital Full of Romance," March 8, 1914: 64, accessed April 5, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com>; "Here is Story of Austin from Days When Stockade was Protection from the Indians," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 19, 1913: 33, accessed April 4, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>51</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 265, no. 38; Kerr, *The Republic of Austin*, 81, 86, no. 1.

<sup>52</sup> In his history, Frank Brown includes this description of the "Thompson House," but confuses the location. Francis Dietrich acquired the house in 1845; it burned to the ground in 1847. Brown, *Annals*, volume 5, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 300; "Governor Davis Residence Offered for Sale," *San Antonio Light*, February 28, 1883: 4; Casey Monahan, "Lost From Austin," accessed July 11, 2018, <http://www.caseymonahan.com/>.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 71-72.

<sup>55</sup> Mrs. Fred Scott, "Austin Belles of Yesterday: Bessie Paschal—Mrs. T. P. O'Connor," *The Austin American*, December 17, 1916: 18; Amelia W. Williams, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "PASCHAL, GEORGE WASHINGTON," accessed July 11, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpa46>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on October 26, 2017, published by the Texas State Historical Association. The home appears to be the two-story edifice at the southeast corner of Red River and Pine (5th) Streets on the 1873 bird's-eye view.

<sup>56</sup> Although G. W. Paschal left Austin in 1869, the 1873-1873 city directory notes that his Cherokee son Ridge Paschal, resided on Red River Street between Cedar (4th) and Pine (5th) Streets. "Ridge Paschal," *The Indian Territory: Its Chiefs Legislators and Leading Men* (St. Louis: C. B. Woodward Company, 1892), 420; "Biography of Ridge Paschal," accessed July 9, 2018, <https://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/biography-of-ridge-paschal.htm>; Kevin Ladd, "PIX, SARAH RIDGE," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 11, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpi30>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on January 19, 2018, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>57</sup> Scott, "Austin Belles."

<sup>58</sup> Mears, *Grace Will Lead Me Home*, 26.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> "Sequential Events in the Urbanization of Waller Creek," AF-C9060(25)(a), Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.

<sup>62</sup> *Beneath the Center*. This house was relocated to the southeast corner of Red River and East 3rd Streets when the Austin Convention Center was constructed.

<sup>63</sup> The Nalle home was moved to Bear Creek near Manchaca when the Austin Convention Center was constructed.

<sup>64</sup> S. A. Gray and W. D. Moore, *Mercantile and General City Directory of Austin, Texas – 1872-1873*.

<sup>65</sup> Morrison & Fourmy, *General Directory of the City of Austin for 1889-1890*.

<sup>66</sup> Texas Genealogy Trails, "Travis County, Texas, 1897 Austin City Directory - Page 2," accessed July 10, 2018, [http://genealogytrails.com/tex/hillcountry/travis/1897city\\_directory2.html](http://genealogytrails.com/tex/hillcountry/travis/1897city_directory2.html).

<sup>67</sup> Historic Landmark Commission, September 28, 2017, Demolition and Relocation Permit, HDP-2015-0783, 606 and 608 E. 3rd Street.

<sup>68</sup> "Significant Sequential Events in the Urbanization of Waller Creek."

<sup>69</sup> Katherine Hart, "Waller Creek Area Became an Oasis of Natural Beauty," November 1, 1969, *Waterloo Scrapbook, 1968-1969*, 56, Austin Public Library, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas.

<sup>70</sup> Kerr, *Seat of Empire*, 214, 215, n. 48.

<sup>71</sup> Nagel, "Hofheintz-Reisseg Store;" Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill, "Moonshine's Unique History."

<sup>72</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 61.

<sup>73</sup> Brown, *Annals*, vol. 11, 55.

<sup>74</sup> The 1877-1878 city directory notes that the mill was called the Arlington Corn Mill and that both Stern and Weinberger lived in the same block, likely on the second floor of the two-story building, as the Sanborn map notes show a dwelling above the mill. Mooney & Morrison, *General Directory*, book, [1877], Houston, Texas, accessed July 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht46838/>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

<sup>75</sup> Leo Mueller, Jr., *The Life of Leo O. Mueller*, revised 2009, 4, from Austin History Center, Austin Files Collection, File AF-P1200 (27) – Parks – Waterloo Park.

<sup>76</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 230; S. A. Gray and Moore, W. D., *Mercantile and General City Directory*, 98.

<sup>77</sup> Joe R. Williams and Marie D. Landon, "Sixth Street Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, September 24, 1975.

<sup>78</sup> "Finding Refuge in Austin, 1848 – 1980," Exhibit, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas; Joe R. Williams and Marie D. Landon, Sixth Street Historic District National Register Nomination, September 24, 1975,

<sup>79</sup> Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 53; "Haikel Makhool 'Mike' Daywood," <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16346315/haikel-makhool-daywood>, accessed September 20, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Michael Corcoran, "Lebanon Calling."

<sup>81</sup> Kerr, *Republic of Austin*, 71.

<sup>82</sup> W. C. Walsh, "Austin in the Making," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 27, 1924: 2.

<sup>83</sup> Bob Cavendish, "Anvil of Ceres: The Confederate Foundry at Waller Creek," [https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/64860/Anvil\\_of\\_Ceres.pdf?sequence=1](https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/64860/Anvil_of_Ceres.pdf?sequence=1), published by the Texas State Historical Association, 562, 570; Brown, *Annals*, volume 8, 68-69; Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 60. The foundry was open for 93 years.

<sup>84</sup> Cavendish, "Anvil of Ceres," 560; *Austin Creeks*, 16.

<sup>85</sup> Cavendish, "Anvil of Ceres," 562, 564, 565.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 566.

<sup>87</sup> HHM, *Interstate Highway 35 Corridor*, I-8

<sup>88</sup> Charles F. Kaltefleiter, "GERMAN FREE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTIN," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 11, 2018, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kgb07>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on April 15, 2016, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>89</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 167.

<sup>90</sup> The Evans Community School is not listed in the 1872-1873 city directory but is found in the 1881-1882 city directory and appears on the 1889 and 1894 Sanborn maps of Austin. Elizabeth Evans-Garland's efforts at the Evans Community School laid the groundwork for the American Missionary Society's founding of Tillotson Collegiate and Normal Institute in Austin in 1877. "Sidewalk Notes," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 26, 1902: 15; "A Useful Life," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 1, 1902: 8; "Funeral Notice," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 2, 1902: 11; "Mrs. Garland's Funeral," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 3, 1902: 6; American Missionary Association, "Heroines of Early Days," *The American Missionary*, volume 56, no. 5 (May 1902): 228; Handbook of Texas Online, "TILLOTSON COLLEGE," accessed July 12, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kbt27>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on June 5, 2013, published by the Texas State Historical Association; Texas Archival Resources Online, Cheryl Smith, "City of the Dead: Journeying through the graves of Austin's oldest cemetery," *The Austin Chronicle*, April 21, 2006, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2006-04-21/359280/>, accessed July 10, 2018; "Early African American Education Research Materials Collection: An Inventory of the Collection," accessed July 10, 2018, <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/aushc/00357/ahc-00357.html>; Huston-Tillotson University; *Governance Policies and Procedures, Policy Manual*, volume 1, accessed July 10, 2018, [http://htu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Policy-Manual\\_Volume01\\_Revised\\_2\\_16\\_12.pdf](http://htu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Policy-Manual_Volume01_Revised_2_16_12.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> In the 1889 city directory it is listed as Central Grammar School. The vacant school building was used for younger students attending West Austin School (colored) for a brief period in 1895 when their school building was deemed unusable. Central Grammar School is not listed in the 1897 directory. In 1900, the school was not listed in the city

directory or depicted on the Sanborn map. "The Colored Schools," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 13, 1895: 3; Morrison & Fourmy, *General Directory*; Mears, *Grace Will Lead Me Home*, 44.

<sup>92</sup> Trustees of the Austin Public Free Schools, "An Address," *Austin Weekly Statesman*, November 29, 1883: 8.

<sup>93</sup> "The City Schools," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 28, 1883: 3.

<sup>94</sup> "The Schools," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 5, 1890: 9.

<sup>95</sup> In 1894, two of the original two-room buildings were moved to serve as the first buildings of the Gregorytown School in East Austin. "A Credible Improvement," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 1, 1893: 2; "In Session," *Austin American-Statesman*, March 23, 1894: 3.

<sup>96</sup> Ralph A. Bickler, "BICKLER, JACOB," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fbi02>, uploaded on June 12, 2010, modified on April 6, 2016, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>97</sup> "Of Interest to Austin," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 3, 1888: 1; Michael Barnes, "Filling Out the Long History of Austin's Swante Palm School," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 30, 2016.

<sup>98</sup> "The Arsenal Lot," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 11, 1889: 3.

<sup>99</sup> "Austin Public Schools," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 2, 1893: 8.

<sup>100</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 289.

<sup>101</sup> "A General Historical Statement," <http://wesleyunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/A-GENERAL-HISTORICAL-STATEMENT.pdf>, accessed June 26, 2018.

<sup>102</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 286.

<sup>103</sup> Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill, "Moonshine's Unique History."

<sup>104</sup> Beck, "Scholz Garten"; Katherine Hart, "Scholz' Song Tradition Revived," August 24, 1974, *Waterloo Scrapbook, 1973-1974*, 47.

<sup>105</sup> Manaster, *Ethnic Geography of Austin*, 93.

<sup>106</sup> "Austin's Parks," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 23, 1888,

<sup>107</sup> Michael Holleran and Dana Serovy, *Brush Square History and Design Study*, January 2008, 3-5.

<sup>108</sup> Hamilton Square may have been named for Austin banker and civic leader Frank Hamilton (1846-1896), US Senator Morgan Hamilton (1809-1893), or Texas governor Andrew Jackson Hamilton (1815-1875). Fermata, Inc., "Our Austin Story: Interpreting Austin's Historic Squares and Congress Avenue," April 2018, 18.

<sup>109</sup> "Local Matters; A City Hospital," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, July 30, 1874: 3.

<sup>110</sup> "Regular Meeting of the City Council," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, October 17, 1883: 3.

<sup>111</sup> Lisa Fahrenthold, Sara Rider, and Carolyn Bobo, *Admissions: The Extraordinary History of Brackenridge Hospital* (Austin, TX: Brackenridge Hospital, 1984).

<sup>112</sup> "Council: Appropriation of \$600 for Furnishing of the New City Hospital," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, May 7, 1884: 4.

<sup>113</sup> Michael Barnes, "Flash Floods Inundate Central Texas History," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 26, 2015, <https://www.mystatesman.com/lifestyles/flash-floods-inundate-central-texas-history/qGT0e4S02XGzup7GW0LU4M/>.

<sup>114</sup> Kevin Anderson, "Another Colorado: Rivertown Austin," [PowerPoint presentation], accessed April 6, 2018, [https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Water/CER/another\\_colorado\\_nov\\_2013\\_web.pdf](https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Water/CER/another_colorado_nov_2013_web.pdf).

<sup>115</sup> Jonathan Burnett, *Flash Floods in Texas* (College Station; Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 299.

<sup>116</sup> Brown, *Annals*, vol. 10.

<sup>117</sup> "River Two Miles Wide in Famous Flood of 1869, Says Old-Time Businessman and Banker Here," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 16, 1924: 7; "Cement Monument May Mark High Water Level of Flood Here in 1869," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 6, 1924: 5; "Would Mark Flood Height," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 7, 1924: 2.

<sup>118</sup> Brown, *Annals*, vol. 10, 30.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>120</sup> "Steiners Block" refers to the Steiner Building erected in 1860 at Congress Avenue between Hickory (8th) and Ash (9th) Streets (807 Congress Avenue). S. A. Gray and W. D. Moore, *Mercantile and General City Directory of Austin, Texas – 1872-1873*; "Significant Sequential Events in the Urbanization of Waller Creek."

<sup>121</sup> "Significant Sequential Events in the Urbanization of Waller Creek."

<sup>122</sup> Barkley, *History of Travis County and Austin*, 233.



<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Austin History Center, "Austin Beginnings: An Exhibit of Memorable Austin Firsts," accessed July 12, 2018, <http://ahc.library.austintexas.gov/begin/trans.htm>.

<sup>127</sup> HHM, *City of Austin Historic Resources Survey*, II-47.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., II-24.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., II-49.

<sup>130</sup> *Austin Creeks*, 16.

<sup>131</sup> Jimena Cruz Pifano and Gregory Smith, "West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, February 2014.

<sup>132</sup> Joseph J. Jones, "Waller Creek," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rbw11>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>133</sup> Brown, *Annals*, vol. 11, 40; HHM, *Austin Historic Resources Survey*, II-29; *Austin Creeks*, 16.

<sup>134</sup> Brown, *Annals*, vol. 11, 5.

<sup>135</sup> *Austin Creeks*, 16.

<sup>136</sup> "The Council," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 6, 1884: 4.

<sup>137</sup> "Local Short Stops," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 9, 1886: 5.

<sup>138</sup> "Thirty Years Ago Today," *Austin American-Statesman*, April 11, 1916: 6.

<sup>139</sup> Brown, *Annals*, vol. 11, 5.

<sup>140</sup> Pifano and Smith, "West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek."

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> *Beneath the Center*.

## 3. Early Twentieth Century, 1900–1927

### 3.1. DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The first quarter of the twentieth century saw the community along Waller Creek continue to thrive, as an important transitional area between Neches and Trinity Streets and East Avenue that connected downtown Austin (to the west) and Robertson Hill (to the east). The Waller Creek/Red River Community remained home to diverse ethnic groups who contributed widely to the growth and vibrancy of what was then considered part of East Austin. This large African American population was interspersed with white and Mexican households. The *Austin American-Statesman* noted the growing number of the latter group when noting “Brief Bits of City News” in April 1900. The city waterworks had been shut off after a recent heavy rainfall, so with no city water, “the large number of washerwomen plying their vocation along the banks of Shoal creek and Waller creek . . . together with the attendant children and dogs splashing in the shallow water, is strikingly suggestive of the primitive conditions existing in Mexico.”<sup>1</sup> According to Jane Manaster’s 1996 master’s thesis, the African American descendants of the Red River Community retained a stronghold in the area, however. In her analysis of a 1905 city directory, she noted a total of 193 African American Austinites living along Sabine, Red River, and Neches Streets between East 4th and East 14th Streets (refer to fig. 2-6).<sup>2</sup>

A picture of the physical appearance of the Waller Creek and its environs below East 15th Street at the turn of the century is presented in the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1900. The residential neighborhood established east and west of Waller Creek in the last quarter of the nineteenth century retained its density. Dwellings remained oriented towards the creek and some utilized the creek as a backyard for recreation and utilitarian purposes, sometimes with environmentally unsafe and unpleasant results that affected life for all along the creek. In the blocks along Waller Creek south of East 3rd Street, an area previously not depicted on Sanborn maps, both old and new residential development is apparent with houses occupying most lots except that immediately west of the Palm School. By this time, Jesse Driskill and Frank Rainey’s subdivision (1884) adjacent to the Waller Creek corridor was a well-developed neighborhood with late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century one-story, wood-frame bungalows and cottages.

Changing demographic trends throughout the 1920s—present in the city at large—slowly became apparent in the neighborhood. The downtown neighborhoods along Waller Creek began to slowly change as white middle-class families moved to suburbs outside of the central city. The minority population increased for a short time with African American families joined by increasing numbers of Mexican and Lebanese families. Mexican families were interspersed throughout the lower Waller Creek area in the first decades of the twentieth century. Many Lebanese families lived in and around the periphery of the Waller Creek area. Michael Daywood, who had arrived in Austin from Roumieh, Lebanon, began purchasing property along Waller Creek around the intersection of East 6th and Sabine Streets where he built a family compound in the early 1880s (fig. 3-1).<sup>3</sup> A larger concentration of Lebanese resided within close proximity to their growing downtown businesses but on the other side of East Avenue on East 7th and East 8th Streets. As such, that area was erroneously dubbed “Jewish Hill” or “Syrian Hill.”<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2. LIFE ALONG THE CREEK

#### 3.2.1. Businesses

East 6th Street remained an important commercial node for the neighborhood. By the 1900 Sanborn map, a greater concentration of businesses was established in new brick and iron buildings on the north side of the 500 and 600 blocks of East 6th Street, on either side of Red River Street. These businesses reflected the diversity of ethnicities in the lower Waller Creek area with Chinese, Mexican, Lebanese, and African American enterprises. By the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese immigrant Joe Lung was well-established on East 6th

Street. He had come to the United States as a laborer for the California railroads. When the work finished, Lung made Austin his home and opened a restaurant on East 6th Street (fig. 3-2). Lung “loaned money to his Mexican and black customers when banks would not, on nothing more than a handshake and ‘you pay me when you can.’”<sup>5</sup> Lung would go on to operate other businesses in the lower Waller Creek area (see Chapter 5). In 1908, 19-year-old Ben Garza opened a meat market in the existing building at 701 East 6th Street (fig. 3-3). With a second-story addition, it was likely the first building on the street to house Hispanic tenants.<sup>6</sup>

Various immigrants contributed to commercial development along lower Waller Creek. In the late 1910s, brothers Charles and Tofie Balagia founded Balagie Produce Company at 403 East 6th Street. The family business was relocated to several sites on East 6th and Trinity Streets before moving to 505 East 5th Street in 1927. After Michael Daywood built his family compound “on the unpredictable Waller Creek” near the intersection of East 6th and Sabine Streets, many Lebanese businesses clustered in the area.<sup>7</sup> In the 1910s, Lebanese immigrant Salem Hello lived in the 700 block of East Avenue and was a shopkeeper on East 6th Street.<sup>8</sup> Many other Lebanese and Lebanese-Americans established businesses on East 6th Street. Lebanese immigrant M. K. Hage purchased the building at 325 East 6th Street. Elias Ferris opened a drug store on East 6th Street.<sup>9</sup> The family of another Lebanese immigrant, Cater Joseph, opened several businesses in the downtown area including Joseph’s Men’s Shop, which operated on East 6th Street from 1925 to 1966.<sup>10</sup>

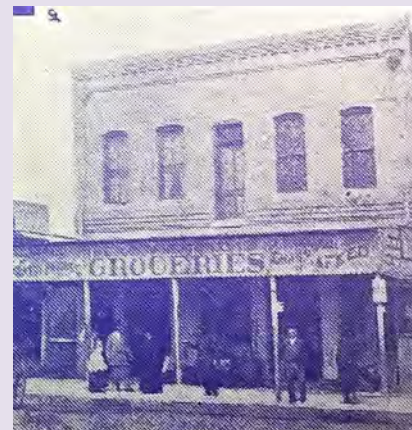
In the early 1920s, the two-blocks between Trinity and Red River Streets contained the shops or offices of over 30 African American-owned businesses (figs. 3-4 and 3-5).<sup>11</sup> See “*African American Businesses in Lower Waller Creek*” sidebar.<sup>12</sup> According to the 1922 city directory listings, most of the African American businesses present on East 6th Street in the 1906–1907 directory had been replaced by new businesses in the areas closest to the Waller Creek neighborhood.

Also during this period, Simon Sidle, the son of a couple formerly enslaved on a plantation in Brenham (Washington County), opened an antique store at 807 Red River Street around 1920. In 1929, he relocated to 1302 Red River Street.<sup>13</sup> Sidle’s business became a foundation for a district of antique stores along Red River Street that endured until the 1970s.

### ***African American Businesses in Lower Waller Creek***

The early 1900s marked the height of what historian John Mason Brewer termed the “Era of Progress” for African Americans in Austin. E. H. Carrington’s grocery at the northwest corner of Red River and East 6th Streets came under the stewardship of his son-in-law, Louis D. Lyons, in 1907. The Carrington/Lyons establishment served as an anchor for other black-owned and -operated businesses in the vicinity:

- Dr. E. W. D. Abner, 306 East 6th Street
- L. R. Watson grocery, 311 ½ East 6th Street
- Watchman Publishing Company, 500 East 6th Street
- Matthews & Perry, 504 East 6th Street
- C. C. Clayton & Co., 507 East 6th Street
- James Cofield’s Barber Shop, 508 East 6th Street
- Mattie Hudson restaurant, 510-12 East 6th Street
- A. W. Rysinger Central Millinery Emporium, 514 East 6th Street
- Albert Rysinger Shoemaker, 514 East 6th Street
- Wesley & Guest tailor, cleaners, and pressing, 514 East 6th Street
- A. H. Collins, rooming house, 521 East 6th Street
- W. M. Tears, Sr. undertaker parlor, 614 East 6th Street
- Ruben B. Lott, 714 East 6th Street
- W. H. McKinley Livery & Training Stables, 609 Neches Street
- William F. Fulcher, job printer, 509 East 7th
- Kirkpatrick Ice Cream Parlor, address unknown<sup>[12]</sup>



View of E. H. Carrington’s grocery at 522 East 6th Street in 1905. Mr. Carrington is standing next to the post at the center of the image. His grocery served as an anchor for African American businesses on East 6th Street that served the Waller Creek/Red River communities. Source: John Mason Brewer, *An Historical Outline of the Negro in Travis County* (1940).



### 3.2.2. Education, Religious, and Other Community Institutions

By 1900, a new city high school for white children was constructed at Hamilton Square (East 9th and Trinity Streets) after a fire destroyed the public high school housed in the former temporary state capitol building at 11th Street and Congress Avenue (fig. 3-6). The Austin High School joined older institutions still serving the neighborhood until the growing student body necessitated a move. Austin High School switched sites with the John T. Allan Junior High School, which was then located at 12th and Rio Grande Streets. The changes also affected the Tenth Ward School on East 1st Street; it was renamed after Swedish immigrant and Austin businessman Swante Palm in 1902. The Palm School educated white and Mexican youth who lived in the vicinity as well as across East Avenue. The school continued to grow, necessitating the addition of an east wing in 1910 and an extension at the front of the building in 1924.<sup>14</sup> Younger white children could attend Miss Dot Thornton's Austin Free Kindergarten located on Waller Creek at East 1st Street until the end of May 1915, when the school, damaged during the April 1915 flood, was relocated slightly westward at 500 East 1st Street.<sup>15</sup> Samuel Huston College, an institution of higher learning for African American students, was located on the east side of East Avenue at East 11th and East 12th Streets. That institution expanded westward into the Waller Creek corridor in the early 1910s, erecting an industrial building—the Science Hall—facing East Avenue between East 11th and East 12th Streets.

Residents of the Waller Creek neighborhoods also had access to various clubs and fraternal organizations located nearby. In 1901, Scholz Garten became the meeting place for the Austin *Saengerrunde*, the city's last surviving German singing club.<sup>16</sup> The *Saengerrunde* leased the property beginning in 1904. When the group purchased the property in 1908, they demolished the old meeting hall and built a new hall as well as a bowling alley; bowling is a significant part of German culture.<sup>17</sup> At the northern reaches of the downtown corridor of Waller Creek, Scholz Garten was conveniently located within an area that had been settled by German immigrants in the late nineteenth century. African Americans, however, came from all parts of the city to meet at their fraternal organizations. In 1905, all five black fraternal lodges or halls were located on East 6th Street near the Red River Community.<sup>18</sup> The area was a nexus for African American religious life as well – First Baptist Church (Red River at East 14th Streets) and Wesley Chapel A. M. E. (Neches at East 9th Streets) both remained in the neighborhood through the 1920s.<sup>19</sup> In 1904, St. Paul's Lutheran Church relocated to Red River and East 16th Streets. The congregation of Second Street Baptist Church moved the southwest corner of East 1st Street and East Avenue in 1908 in a new building as East Avenue Church.<sup>20</sup>

Institutional development in the lower Waller Creek corridor continued over the next several decades. In 1907, the City of Austin and Travis County ended joint control of the hospital on Sabine Street, and the institution became known as City Hospital. In 1915, a new facility with 45 beds was completed on the original site, but it was oriented to face East Avenue (fig. 3-7).<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2.3. Pastime and Leisure

Waller Creek, like Shoal Creek on the western edge of the original town site, was a natural area ideal for Austinites to enjoy native flora and fauna while pursuing various outdoor recreational and leisure activities. The waterways attracted locals and visitors alike. In the spring of 1910, the *Austin American-Statesman* noted:

"A number of people of Austin are getting a great deal of pleasure from their visit. Some of the enthusiastic students of bird life may be seen daily in Pease Park, on Shoal Creek or Waller Creek with their field or opera glasses studying, identifying and enjoying them."<sup>22</sup>

Newspaper articles from the time period indicate that the northern parts of Waller Creek that ran through the University of Texas at Austin campus, Eastwoods Park, and Hyde Park were the site of many picnics and social gatherings. Little to no mention is made of such events occurring below East 15th Street, however, possibly

due to the more urban nature of lower Waller Creek. Still, those who lived along the southern portion of the creek found many ways to enjoy it. Holidays were often occasions to enjoy the outdoors near lower Waller Creek. In the summer of 1903, young boys celebrating Independence Day too early were arrested “on a charge of discharging firearms within the city limits” for firing a small canon on Waller Creek.<sup>23</sup> The neighborhood and creek represented a crossroads between various ethnic groups and parts of the city, which was apparent in other celebrations. Among the most important of these were annual Emancipation Day (or Juneteenth) celebrations. African Americans from across the city traversed the creek and neighborhood to congregate at the state capitol and proceed to celebrations elsewhere in the city around June 19, celebrating the day enslaved Texans learned they were free. A newspaper article from 1904 states that the Emancipation Day Parade started at East 6th and Neches Streets, then proceeded westward on 6th Street to Congress Avenue, then to the Texas Capitol.<sup>24</sup> The park ground in the median of East Avenue also enjoyed proximity to Waller Creek and allowed Austinites from both sides of the thoroughfare to gather. The creek was not always sympathetic to such events, however. In the summer of 1914, a band concert scheduled to take place was postponed due to “a wire burning out across Waller Creek.”<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, newspaper articles show that the favorite pastime on hot summer days for youth living near Waller Creek was swimming, whether the activity was sanctioned or not. Austin policemen were often called to counsel swimmers after complaints from nearby residents. In July 1904, a “complaint was made at the police station yesterday that boys and girls were bathing in Waller Creek at Sabine Street and East Avenue.”<sup>26</sup> The following May, after complaints filed at police headquarters, police officers surprised some small boys swimming in the creek behind the Tenth Ward School.<sup>27</sup> Later that month, police took another group of bathers to the station to be “lectured by the chief” with the threat of 10 days’ jail time if it happened again.<sup>28</sup> Such disciplinary measures were rather commonplace, but the threats proved empty. In May 1908, the paper noted, “Officer Griffin yesterday morning discovered several boys swimming in Waller Creek near Ninth street. After administering a severe lecture, he allowed them to go without arrest.”<sup>29</sup> Oftentimes, young swimmers got creative by building a dam across the creek to creating a swimming hole.<sup>30</sup> On other occasions, Mother Nature aided water play, such as when recent storms created a swimming place south of East 15th Street. The paper noted that “boys in that vicinity have been enjoying great sport.”<sup>31</sup> Not all recreation at the creek ended so harmlessly. A young boy whose boat was docked on the creek was a victim of “river piracy,” and had his boat stolen.<sup>32</sup> In the late 1920s, a group of travelers made an appearance on Waller Creek between East 13th and East 14th Streets, taking residents’ clothing with the promise to “effect” some kind of healing cure, but made off with the personal items instead.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.2.4. The Risks of Living on Waller Creek

As much enjoyment that Waller Creek could offer, residents also had to deal with unpleasantities. (See “Dangers of Waller Creek” sidebar on the following page.<sup>34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40</sup>) Mosquitoes were perhaps one of the greatest nuisances. Stagnant pools frequently developed on the creek, serving as breeding grounds for insects.<sup>41</sup> In August 1907, the city sought to rectify the problem by covering the surface of the creek with a layer of oil.<sup>42</sup> In September 1908, warm weather resulted in dry conditions, leaving the creek almost dry and creating unpleasant and unsanitary conditions, as several drainpipes still emptied into the creek. The *Austin American-Statesman* reported little doubt that “Austin’s most strenuous mosquitos” were breeding in these conditions.<sup>43</sup> Newspaper articles indicate that the City of Austin drained the creek intermittently in other attempts to mitigate the problem, often with the construction of temporary dams.<sup>44</sup> The city also recommended that residents living there add screens to their doors and windows:

Waller [C]reek is also said to be the dumping ground for closets in the neighborhood, for dead dogs, cats and offal of every kind and character, all mingling in one common stench and feeding the flies which spread disease, and were it not for the screens which do protect the houses of many of the citizens, would spread disease much

more than they do. Many people, however, live in unscreened houses; possibly the majority of the people along Waller creek and in the Tenth ward have no screen to protect them.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Dangers of Waller Creek***

Waller Creek and its environs posed a variety of dangers to nearby residents, especially during heavy rains. The high bluffs surrounding the creek proved fatal to both humans and horses that lost their footing.<sup>[34]</sup> In 1910, vegetable peddler J. A. Littleton sued the city for failing to protect citizens from the creek after his horse spooked and ran into the ravine.<sup>[35]</sup> Several others drowned in the creek's rising floodwaters, or while swimming or bathing, including I. P. Robinson, a twelve-year-old African American child who drowned in 1917.<sup>[36]</sup> Some individuals nearly died in the creek but survived the ordeal, such as former city alderman D. Q. Winfield, whose unconscious and nearly frozen body was rescued by Policeman Payton, or Walter Wilson, son of city worker James Wilson, who fell 15 feet from a tree into the creek while playing ball, dislocating his shoulder.<sup>[37]</sup> A child playing by the creek discovered resident and fisherman Juan Abalos "with only his head protruding above the surface" of the creek. City employees hurried to save him and determined the man had stepped into a bed of quicksand.<sup>[38]</sup> The November 1923 drowning of "Leone Brice, pretty Corsicana girl" mesmerized the city as hundreds joined the nine-day search effort for her body. City officials set off dynamite and attempted to drain the creek in hopes of recovering her; one firefighter nearly drowned during the search. Victor Villegas eventually found her body in the Colorado River, reporting he was "told in a dream where the body was."<sup>[39]</sup> Snakes, finding the creek inviting, often spooked residents, including one who left a serpentine track so large that the *Austin American-Statesman* warned it could be blamed if anyone turned up missing.<sup>[40]</sup>

The city took other measures to fight mosquitoes and disease. The city placed placards "warning against the bathing or wading of children in Waller Creek" to avoid typhoid fever, which had spread during the summer of 1923.<sup>46</sup> Stagnant pools of water with waste of all types was a serious issue as many residents dumped waste in Waller Creek. In his 1913, report "A Social Survey of Austin," William Hamilton described the problem:

Waller Creek is an open sewer from Nineteenth Street to the river. This creek enters the thickly settled part of the city at Nineteenth and San Jacinto Streets; it crosses to Neches Street on Eighteenth; to Sabine on Eleventh Street; on First Street it goes back to Neches and then to the river. On both sides of this creek are jammed together small shacks, some of which sit on stilts out over the banks of the creek. A personal inspection of this creek from Nineteenth Street to where it empties into the river gave the following figures by actual count: Private drains emptying into the creek, twenty-three; wells within twenty-five feet of the banks, seven; number of open closets, from which compost drops directly into the creek, or where the closet sits within six feet of the creek bank, one hundred and twenty-two; residences within twenty feet or less, one hundred and six. At 705 East Sixth Street people live in houses which are built on stilts out over the banks of the creek. They are forced to breathe the foul air which the south wind drives up the walled sides of this filthy sewer. Fruit is offered for sale to the public at this place. At Ninth Street a small creek flows into Waller, forming a V-shaped bluff on which is located one of the ward schools of the city. The air which these children breathe is laden with the filth and foul odors from this creek.<sup>47</sup>

Residents regularly threw their refuse from daily household trash and from private sewers while business owners, particularly in the area between East 5th and East 6th Streets, threw their trash over the creek's steep banks into the water.<sup>48</sup> One resident protested the dumping of sawdust in Waller Creek between the free kindergarten and the Palm School.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes, such as after heavy rains, the waste and it's

evidence left the creek; in one case leaving an unidentified oil visible on Neches and Trinity Streets near the old St. Mary's Academy.<sup>50</sup> The dumping and waste problem was so widely recognized that a University of Texas student published a bulletin "A Social Survey of Austin," that "characterized Waller Creek as 'an open sewer' and suggested that it be parked."<sup>51</sup> In order to help alleviate the ongoing problem, the city and residents sometimes worked together through efforts such as community clean-up.<sup>52</sup>

Some areas of Waller Creek were plagued with criminal activity. The "Sabine Valley," an area of Sabine Street near Waller Creek, was an area where, as reported in 1924, "much crime has been committed."<sup>53</sup> Local African American churches banded together to try to combat the problem. A gospel singing group even held concerts from midnight to daylight in the "Sabine Valley" to deter criminal activity. Some, like area property owner J. H.



F. Wenzel, blamed the vice conditions on the lack of a bridge at East 9th Street which would make the area accessible.<sup>54</sup>

### 3.3. FLOODING AND RESULTING LAND USE

#### 3.3.1. Early Twentieth Century Floods

Nobody living along the banks of Waller Creek was immune to the problems that could arise from living along such a volatile waterway. Devastation from various flood events did not discriminate. Although the city and residents attempted to mitigate disasters, building bridges, rearranging the creek banks, or elevating the ground floors of buildings did not prevent flood damage.<sup>55</sup> One of the first rain storms of the twentieth century to hit Austin in April 1900 “wrought great damage all over the city,” and swept away all the bridges on Waller, Shoal, and Barton Creeks.<sup>56</sup> The resultant flood washed away the timber stand in the Colorado River at the foot of Waller Creek. Newspaper coverage noted that “Many of the residents on the Shoal [C]reek and Waller [C]reek valleys had to flee for their lives, but so far as known all escaped.”<sup>57</sup> Some of the city’s natural resources did not, however. The large stand of timber in the Colorado River at the foot of Waller Creek was washed away. More often than not, people living along the creek had to be prepared to combat flooding and plan to move to high ground in extreme weather. According to an article in the *Austin American-Statesman* on July 5, 1903, Waller Creek became “bank full,” and reported that:

“Sixth street, east from Brazos to Waller Creek, was flooded from side to side. The water flowed over the sidewalk in many places and into the stores. Brooms and mops were brought into requisition and large forces of men and boys were kept busy for hours to prevent the houses from being damaged.”<sup>58</sup> On less traumatic occasions, residents had to deal with water coming into their yards and several inches into their homes.<sup>59</sup> After one heavy rain storm, some Waller Creek residents sued the city after back water and mud came into their homes.<sup>60</sup>

#### 3.3.2. The Flash Flood of 1915

The most devastating flood of Waller Creek in the first quarter of the twentieth century occurred in April 1915. Newspaper coverage of the event was thorough (fig. 3-8):

“Two days of intermittent showers preceded the cloudburst, and the ground was well soaked before it came. Without any warning the floods came, the waters in Shoal and Waller Creeks coming in a surging mass before the people living along the banks had any inkling that death lurked near. Yesterday the city was happy, smiling laughter, filled with a host of visiting delegates to the greatest labor convention the State has ever held. Today it bows its head in sorrow for its dead, numbering two score.”<sup>61</sup>

During the flood, the Colorado River peaked at 45 feet, greatly affecting its tributaries. Reports indicate that calls for help came quickly after the waters came over the banks of Waller Creek:

“So rapidly did the calls come that it was impossible to keep any record of them. They numbered into the hundreds. One of the first reports to be received was that Waller Creek was full of floating houses, and that the people were in dire straits.”<sup>62</sup>

Local authorities and nearby residents sought to save some of their neighbors amid the danger:

“Firemen who valiantly found safe harborage for the refugees at Sixteenth Street and Waller Creek tell of hearing at least a dozen men and women cry for help as they were swished past in the whirlpool of the raging fest.”<sup>63</sup>

When the uncontrolled waters had died down, the search and rescue effort began in earnest.

“As soon as the grave danger of the flood was known, rescue squad of men dressed in bathing suits and raincoats banded together, and taking ropes to hold one another together, traversed the east side district along the banks

and intersecting streets of Waller Creek. From house to house the squad went and the marooned people were helped to safety.”<sup>64</sup>

These men were met with many obstacles.<sup>65</sup> Some areas became impassable, such as at East 6th Street, where the water rose three feet above the bridge there.<sup>66</sup> Business owners in that area were also affected, though not as much as expected. Among those who were badly flooded were grocer J. M. Easterling (1112 Red River Street) and the Eagle Saloon and Eagle Dry Goods Grocery (Red River Street).<sup>67</sup> A few blocks north, Jeremiah Hamilton’s former home, the corner building at Red River and East 11th Streets, flooded.<sup>68</sup> Waters had crested over the creek to the Austin Free Kindergarten, flooding the school and destroying its gardens; the school was forced to relocate.

In addition to loss of life and destruction of real property, livestock and other animals were washed down both Shoal and Waller Creeks. The city remained under water for hours and presented a “pitiable sight” the day after the flood (figs. 3-9 to 3-13).<sup>69</sup> Ultimately the flooding caused \$515 million in damages and took the lives of 35 Austinites; 12 of those deaths were along Waller Creek, mostly from water swirling inside the victims’ homes and carrying those buildings down the creek.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.3.3. Other Flood Events

In the next decade, various storms with prolonged rains caused Waller Creek to overflow, but none rivaled the 1915 flash flood. In April 1916, heavy downpour washed away the 150-foot-long retaining wall on Waller Creek at East 11th and Red River Streets, causing a loss of \$1000 to the city street department.<sup>71</sup> In September 1921, during another major flood event—“The Great Thrall/Taylor Storm”—18.23 inches of rain in Austin caused the city’s creeks to swell and wash out bridges and utilities.<sup>72</sup> After heavy rainfalls in April 1918, flood waters washed away the Waller Creek bridges at East 11th, East 12th, and East 13th Streets. At the latter, the road span above the creek was floated off the supporting columns.<sup>73</sup> On that occasion, families that had learned their lesson from the 1915 flood “left their homes for places of safety” after being warned of the impending danger by city policemen, firemen, and fellow citizens.<sup>74</sup> In September 1921, heavy rains again caused the creek to overflow, and its “turbulent stream” caused much damage:

“Water which broke over the banks of Waller Creek at Twelfth and Red River street flooded a store owned by E. B. Warren and did slight damage. Houses situated on the bank of the stream along the stretch extending from this point down to Tenth and Red River were flooded and inhabitants were forced to flee for safety. On the east bank of Waller, where dozens of houses are situated in the lowlands, people were forced to abandon their homes and spent the night in the Bickler School building on Twelfth street.”<sup>75</sup>

That flood damaged the retaining wall at Waller Creek and East 3rd Street at the rear of the Palm School. Many city officials and residents, such as Otto Stolley, felt that much of the damage was the result of the bridges over the creek “being too short and too low.”<sup>76</sup> Many of them were washed away by flood waters and improved over the next few years with “new and up-to-date structures of reinforced concrete and stone” while some new bridges were “constructed where necessary.”<sup>77</sup>

## 3.4. THE BRIDGES AND INFRASTRUCTURE OF WALLER CREEK

Area residents frequently petitioned the legislature to develop safe and efficient infrastructure for Waller Creek, both to mitigate the dangers of the bluff and floodwaters and to improve transportation through the town. To mitigate flooding from the Colorado River—which had devastating effects along Shoal and Waller Creeks—the Austin Dam was built upstream from the downtown area from 1890 to 1893; floodwaters destroyed the dam in 1900. The Austin Dam was partially repaired but heavily damaged again by floodwaters in 1915. For over two decades, the City of Austin would not replace the Austin Dam (see Chapters 4 and 5).<sup>78</sup>

Even though the creek could occasionally be traversed by foot, Austinites needed safer and more reliable connections not only within the neighborhood but also because the Waller Creek corridor connected Austin's downtown core and the more rural east Austin and farms beyond East Avenue.<sup>79</sup> Defective bridges impaired links for people and transportation; nonexistent or deficient walls endangered real estate.<sup>80</sup> In 1913, the relocation of the city street department, with its "complete and modern shop," to Block 7 in the Driskill & Rainey neighborhood made city resources easily accessible in an area where many bridge and other infrastructure improvements occurred in the early twentieth century.<sup>81</sup> In some cases, bridges had to be replaced as older structures proved to be structurally unsound. In many other cases, bridges and walls had to be repaired or reconstructed after flood damage, such as when the footbridges at Waller Creek and East 10th and East 12th Streets washed away in December 1915. The City of Austin street department was responsible for the repair of numerous bridges after the 1915 flood (fig. 3-16).

In some cases, the need for safety prompted the city to make infrastructure improvements with additional benefits for residents. The city street gang repaired a cave-in where Waller Creek intersected East 2nd Street and Waller Creek in 1902.<sup>82</sup> By the mid-1920s, beautification of both Waller and Shoal Creeks, in concert with the nationwide City Beautiful Movement, was also on the City of Austin's agenda.<sup>83</sup> One proposition was to create planted beds ten feet wide on each bank of Waller Creek.<sup>84</sup> Ideas such as this stemmed from the realization that contemporary plans for Shoal Creek should have occurred at Waller Creek years before, when property was less expensive and before the area was dotted with houses, many of them in very close proximity to the creekbank.<sup>85</sup> Another idea called for the addition of a River Walk along the north shore of the Colorado River from the mouth of Shoal Creek to the mouth of Waller Creek.<sup>86</sup> (See "*The River Walk*" sidebar for additional information.<sup>87, 88, 89, 90, 91</sup>) Many Austinites recognized the possibilities of Waller Creek. In his 1923 editorial, Gene Lawton posited: "Some day Waller [C]reek will be changed from a nomadic rivulet to a civic asset."<sup>92</sup> At the end of the 1920s, the City of Austin addressed some of these issues in its 1928 master plan. This plan would have far-reaching consequences for the demographics, character, and future development of the Waller Creek corridor and the city at large.

### ***The River Walk***

At Austin's establishment, the city's planners intended to create a planned outdoor recreation area along the north bank of the Colorado River between Shoal and Waller Creeks (refer to figs. 2-1 and 2-18). Just prior to the Civil War, the State of Texas granted the City of Austin narrow strips of land along Waller Creek to be developed as factory sites. When the factories never came to fruition, the state repossessed the land, citing the city's misuse. City maps from the first quarter of the twentieth century continue to depict the "River Walk" (fig. 3-14). In 1914, as a dam was being constructed into the Colorado River near the mouth of Waller Creek, Austin Mayor Alexander Penn Wooldridge began to lobby the state to regrant the land so that the city might create a "River Walk" where industrial use had once been intended. He argued that these efforts would help the city government succeed in "making Austin one of the most beautiful cities in the United States."<sup>[92]</sup> This proposed use of the land fit into the mayor's larger vision to beautify Austin, and he hoped the city would also purchase the nearby sand beach on the north shore of the Colorado River.<sup>[93]</sup> During the 1920s, various ideas were put forward in an effort to beautify Waller Creek and to enhance the creek's status in Austin. By 1921, Austin City Council began passing resolutions in preparation for the development of the "River Walk" informing tenants who had remained on the land despite their expired leases to vacate. One such tenant was Austin businessman A. J. Zilker and his Lone Star Ice Company. In 1922, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas advocated for the city to name the new green space Lamar Park, as they argued that "the city of Austin has never in any manner honored the memory of Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar, the man who first called attention to the wonderful beauty and natural resources [of Austin]."<sup>[94]</sup> The women emphasized how fitting it would be to name this park, bound by Shoal and Waller Creeks, after Lamar, since it followed the same east-west boundary he chose for the city. By the following year, the city took the Daughters of the Republic's suggestion, naming the proposed "River Walk" Lamar Park and endeavoring to make it a place filled with "beautiful trees, picturesque places and natural beauty."<sup>[95]</sup> The Austin City Council approved the removal of privately-owned buildings on the park site and appropriated funding for the "beautification" along the river front, complete with shrubbery and flowers.<sup>[96]</sup> By 1925, however, Lamar Park had been reduced to a small triangular area west of Congress Avenue (fig. 3-15).



## CHAPTER 3 FIGURES



Figure 3-1. The two-story building to the left formed the nucleus of the family compound that Lebanese immigrant Michael Daywood established on Waller Creek at East 6th Street. This view shows the home after flooding of Waller Creek in 1901 left the second story of the house sagging. The house survived, however, because Daywood used discarded cedar railroad ties and supports and sunk them deep into the banks of the creek. Source: Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (2010), crediting Carl Daywood.



Figure 3-2. A 1916 view of Joe Lung's café on East 6th Street at San Jacinto Street. Source: Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (2010), crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.



Figure 3-3. In this 1908 photograph, Ben Garza (at center, wearing an apron and holding the steer) stands outside his newly opened meat market on East 6th Street. Garza's market, as well as the boarding house on the second floor of the building, catered to the Mexican American community in the lower Waller Creek area. Source: Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (2010), crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.



HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



**KIRKPATRICK RESTAURANT**  
This Is A View Of The Kirkpatrick Bros.' Cafe,  
Once Owned By Mr. Charlie Lewis, Later By Mr.  
Scott. It Was Located On East Sixth Street.



**Grand Central Hotel Building And  
Barber Shop. Hon. L. W. Franklin,  
Prop., 211 W. 6th St.**



**Mrs. A. W. Rysinger, Milliner, Dry Goods And  
Dress Making, 516 E. 6th St.**



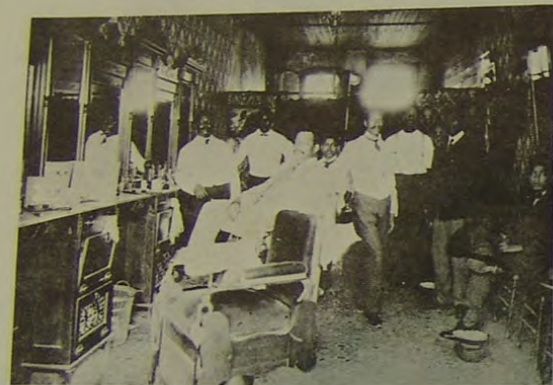
**Hugh Wormoth, Owner Wormoth Cafe  
East Sixth Street**



**Lawrence Watson, Proprietor Grocery, Fruit And  
Vegetable Store 311½ East Sixth Street**



**L. D. Lyons, Successor To E. H. Carrington,  
Grocer 518-520 East 6th Street**



**Matthews And Perry, Parlor Barber Shop  
416 East Sixth Street**



**James Cofield's Barber Shop  
East Sixth Street**

Figure 3-4. Pages from a booklet highlighting African American life in Austin from the city's founding to 1920 included many of the African American businesses that thrived on East 6th Street in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Source: *ΔΣΘ Presents the Black Heritage Exhibit: A Pictorial History of Austin, Travis County, Texas' Black Community, 1839-1920.*



Figure 3-5. This photograph shows employees, equipment, and carriages of William M. Tears's Funeral Parlor located at 614 East 6th Street. Source: <http://www.gentrysmith.org/Black%20mortuaries/Tears.htm>, accessed September 19, 2018.





Figure 3-6. A view of Austin High School after its completion in 1900. The building, which was erected on the original site of Hamilton Square (bound by Trinity, East 9th, Neches, and East 10th Streets), housed the high school until 1925 when John T. Allan Junior High School was relocated to the site. John T. Allan Junior High School was destroyed by fire in 1956; the remains of the building were demolished in 1966 (see Chapters 5 and 6). Source: The Portal to Texas History, accessed April 20, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124256/>, University of North Texas Libraries, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, PICA 08937.





Figure 3-7. In 1907, the City of Austin and Travis County ended joint control of the hospital on Sabine Street, and the institution became known as City Hospital. In 1915, a new facility with 45 beds—pictured above—was completed on the original site, but it was oriented to face East Avenue. Source:

[http://austinfoound.blog.statesman.com/2017/05/05/mapping-21-central-austin-hospitals-past-present/?\\_ga=2.265326223.1685022024.1543250682-986532997.1543250682](http://austinfoound.blog.statesman.com/2017/05/05/mapping-21-central-austin-hospitals-past-present/?_ga=2.265326223.1685022024.1543250682-986532997.1543250682).

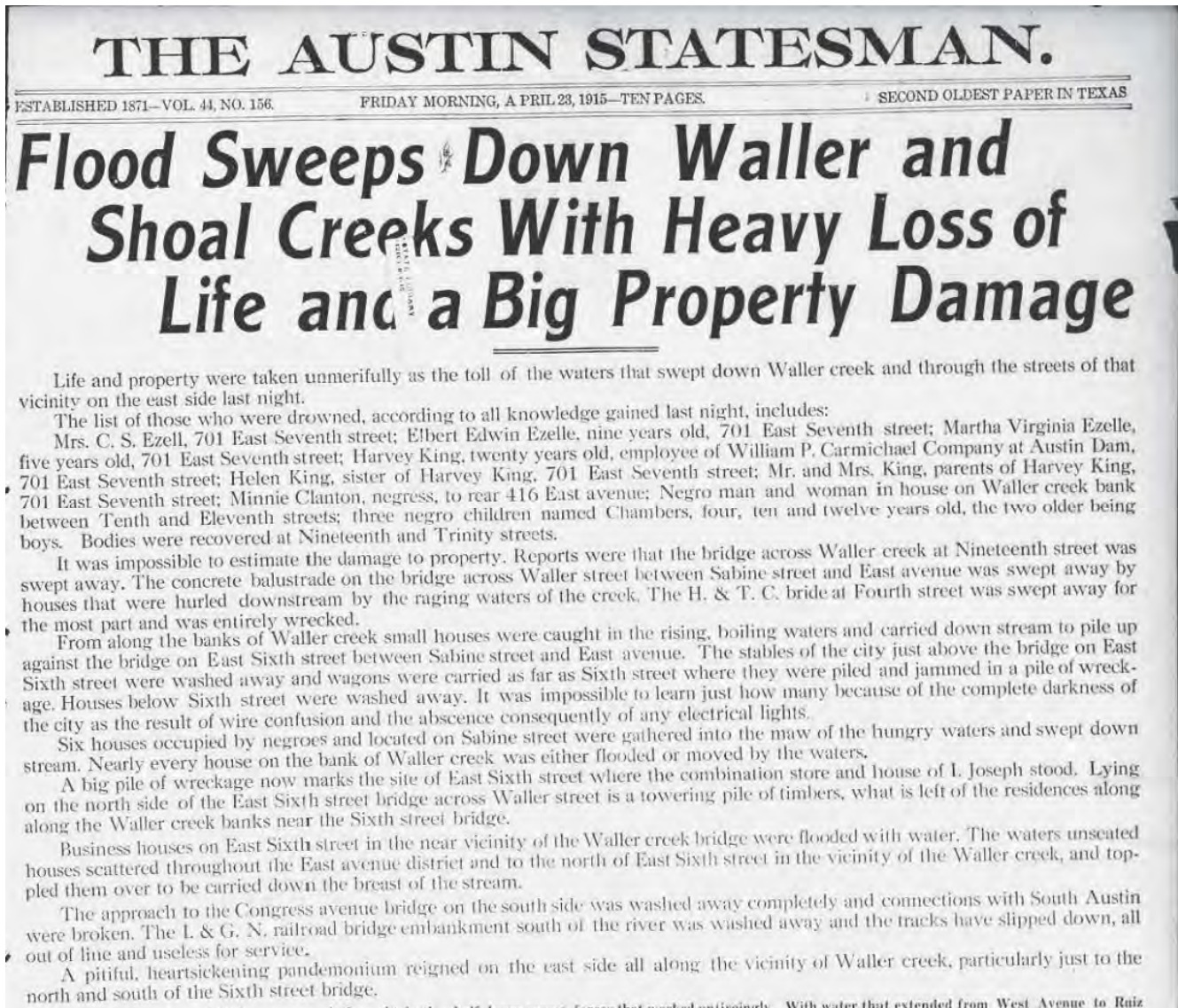


Figure 3-8. Local newspaper coverage of the April 1915 flooding in Austin was widespread and lasted for days as search and rescue efforts continued and damage estimates increased. At least 12 people were known to have drowned because of the flooding from Waller Creek. Rescue parties recovered the bodies of victims in several areas along Waller Creek. Houses all along the creek banks had some type of damage. Many were swept away; the force of the wreckage damaged or destroyed the bases of several bridges, most notably the Houston and Texas Central Railway bridge at East 4th Street as well as several footbridges along the creek. Source: *The Austin Statesman*, April 1915.



Figure 3-9. A view of the damage to the streetcar bridge over Waller Creek at Red River Street. Source: [Street Car Bridge over Waller Creek], photograph, April 23, 1915, The Portal to Texas History, accessed April 20, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124032/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124032/), University of North Texas Libraries, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, PICA 04632.





Figure 3-10. A view of the wreckage left behind after the April 1915 flood, looking north at East 6th Street. Source: [Aftermath of 1915 flood], photograph, 1915, The Portal to Texas History, accessed April 23, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht124016/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht124016/), University of North Texas Libraries, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, PICA 04088.



Figure 3-11. A view of homes on Sabine Street dislodged from their foundations by waters of the 1915 flood. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, PICA 04095.





Figure 3-12. A view of the damaged homes at Waller Creek and East 7th Street after the April 1915 flood. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, PICA 04074.





Figure 3-13. A view of the damaged 11th Street Waller Creek bridge, located below the Rosenberg store (location unknown) after the April 1915 flood. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, PICA 04091.

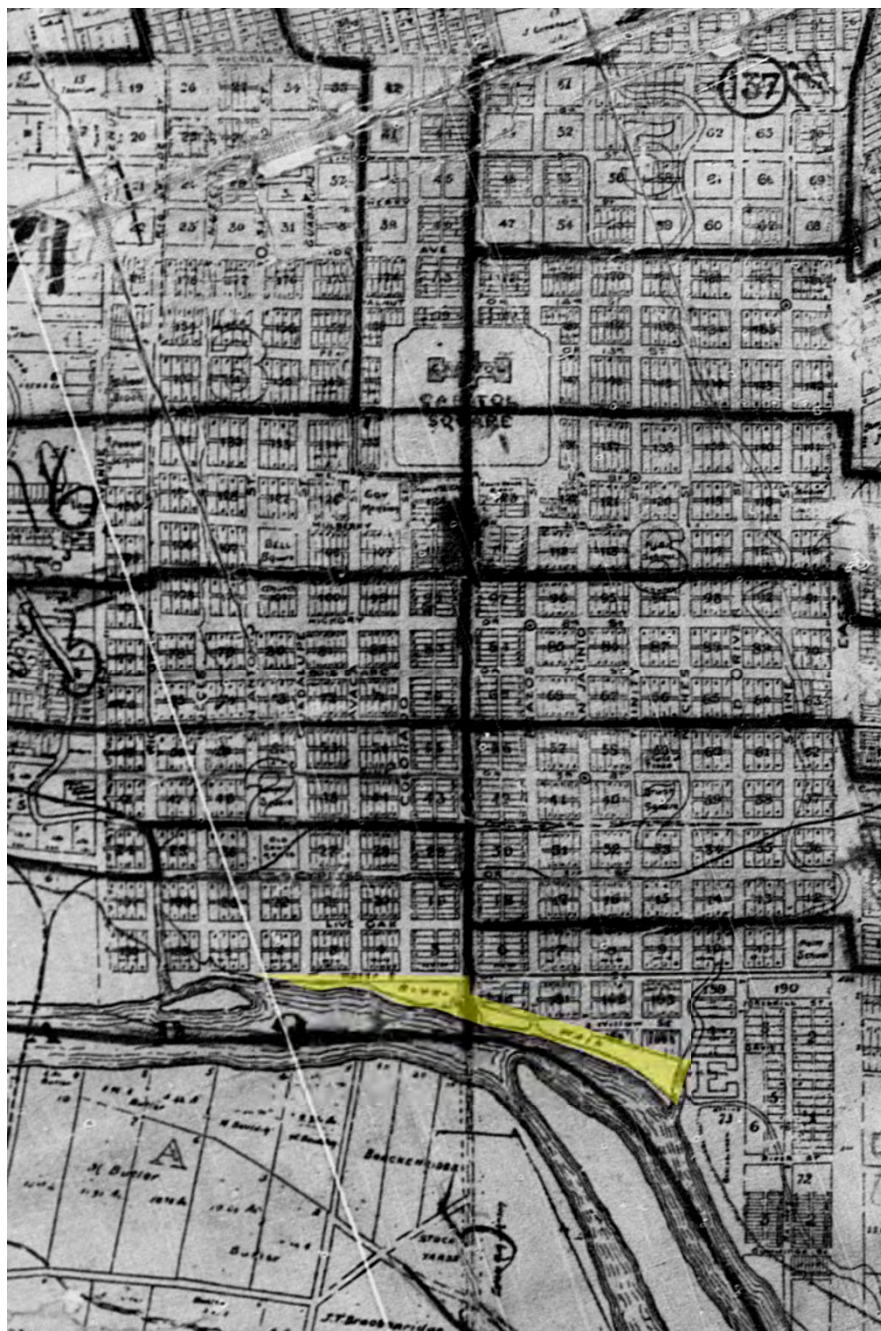


Figure 3-14. This map from the 1910 Austin city directory was annotated with census district boundaries. The extent of the River Walk along the north bank of the Colorado River from Shoal Creek to Waller Creek is highlighted in yellow. Source: Perry-Castañeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.



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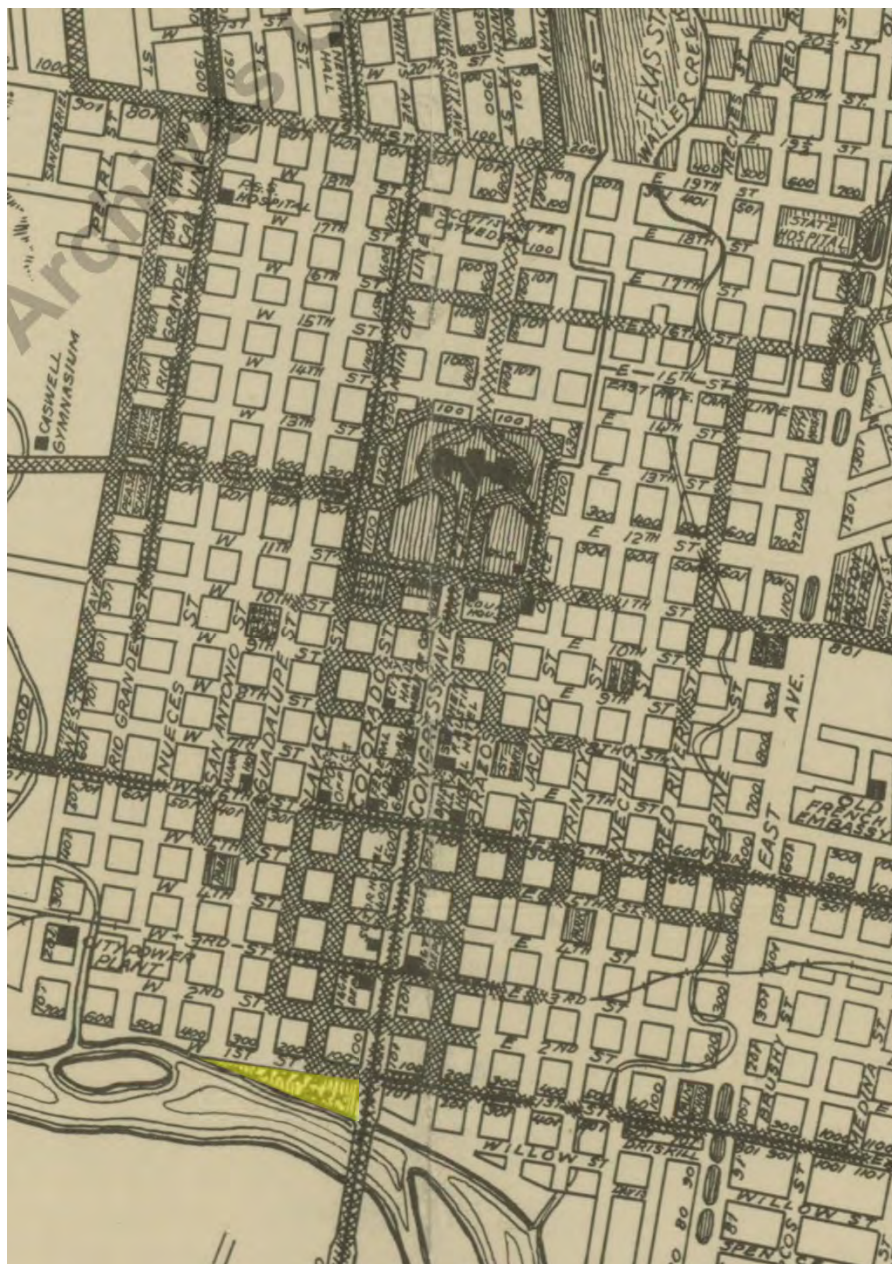


Figure 3-15. This 1925 map of Austin shows that the River Walk has been relegated to Lamar Park, a triangular area located on the west side of the Congress Avenue bridge (highlighted in yellow). Source: Dixon B. Penick, "The City of Austin and Suburbs," [Map.] 1925. Perry-Castañeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.





Figure 3-16. Retaining walls and bridges along Waller Creek were important for the safety of nearby residents and played major roles in maintaining physical ties between the neighborhood and various parts of the city. This view shows the East 6th Street Business District looking north at Waller Creek from the 5th Street bridge around 1920, the same view presented in Figure 3-9. Source: [Waller Creek at 6th Street photograph], 1920, The Portal to Texas History, accessed April 23, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht125273/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht125273/), University of North Texas Libraries, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, PICA 03659.

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- <sup>53</sup> "Negro Revival Makes Crime Wave in Sabine Street Its Objective," *The Austin American*, April 1, 1924: 7.
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- <sup>55</sup> Fry, 29.
- <sup>56</sup> "Austin's Great Loss of Life and Property," *Austin American-Statesman*, April 8, 1900: 4.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>58</sup> "The Rain Storm was Very Severe," *Austin American-Statesman*, July 5, 1903: 5.
- <sup>59</sup> "Many Light Globes Broken," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 18, 1914: 1; "University Campus Showed Effects of Recent Hail Storm," *The Daily Texan*, May 19, 1914: 1.
- <sup>60</sup> "Council Confers on Suits," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 3, 1914: 9; "Damage Cases are Settled," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 23, 1914: 10; "Local Courts," *Austin American*, June 23, 1914: 8.
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- <sup>63</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup> "Flood Sweeps Down Waller and Shoal Creeks with Heavy Loss of Life and a Big Property Damage," *Austin American-Statesman*, April 23, 1915: 2.



<sup>65</sup> "Traction Employees Have Narrow Escape When Car is Buried," *The Austin American*, April 23, 1915: 3.

<sup>66</sup> "Flood Sweeps Down Waller and Shoal Creeks with Heavy Loss of Life and a Big Property Damage," *Austin American-Statesman*, April 23, 1915: 2.

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<sup>68</sup> Hart, "Austin Woman Remembers 1915 Waller Creek Flood," February 5, 1972, 1971-1972, 19.

<sup>69</sup> Waller Creek Conservancy, "Timeline," accessed March 19, 2018, <https://www.wallercreek.org/about/timeline/>.

<sup>70</sup> *Austin Creeks*, 21; Waller Creek Conservancy, "Timeline."

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<sup>73</sup> "Austin Cloudburst Caused a Scurrying But Little Damage," *The Austin American*, July 22, 1919: 3; "Rain Total for July in Austin Is 11.56 In.," *Austin American-Statesman*, July 22, 1919: 8.

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<sup>75</sup> "Hundreds of People Driven from Homes on City's East Side," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 21, 1921: 2; "Waller Creek Out of Banks; Families Leave Homes in Lowlands," *Austin American*, September 10, 1921: 1.

<sup>76</sup> "City Commission Denies Sensational Reports of Damage," *Austin American-Statesman*, April 25, 1915: 16.

<sup>77</sup> "Concrete and Stone Bridges Replace Those Swept Away by Flood," *Austin American-Statesman*, August 31, 1916: 5.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce Hunt, "The Rise and Fall of the Austin Dam," <https://notevenpast.org/rise-and-fall-austin-dam/>, accessed July 13, 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Mears, "African American Settlement Patterns," 54.

<sup>80</sup> "Brief Bits of City News," *Austin American-Statesman*, April 30, 1900: 2.

<sup>81</sup> "The Ghosts of Developers Past," <https://www.austinchronicle.com/food/2012-05-25/the-ghost-of-developers-past/>, accessed April 18, 2018; "Building New Stables," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 13, 1913: 8; "Old Shed Being Removed," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 20, 1912: 5; "City's Blacksmith Shop Saver of Valuable Time," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 8, 1914: 3; "Picked Up About Town," *Austin American-Statesman*, March 18, 1912: 8.

<sup>82</sup> "Sidewalk Notes," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 26, 1902: 8.

<sup>83</sup> The City Beautiful Movement was a national movement regarding urban planning, landscape design, and architecture popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Advocates of the movement believed that beautifying public space created greater virtue among urban populations. William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

<sup>84</sup> "Park From River to 34th Street First Sought by C-C Workers," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 14, 1926: 16.

<sup>85</sup> "City Planning for Austin," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 26, 1926: 4.

<sup>86</sup> "City to Ask for Park Site."

<sup>87</sup> "What Austin Asks," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 12, 1915: 4.

<sup>88</sup> "City to Ask for Park Site," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 4, 1914.

<sup>89</sup> "Name it for Lamar" *Austin American-Statesman*, March 24, 1922.

<sup>90</sup> "Searight Expects to Open Lamar Park Early Next Spring," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 10, 1923.

<sup>91</sup> "Lamar Park Get Attention in Proposed City Budget," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 27, 1923.

<sup>92</sup> Gene Laxton, "The Tower Light," *Austin American-Statesman*, October 23, 1923: 4.

## 4. Austin's 1928 *City Plan* and its Effects, 1928–1939

### 4.1. KOCH AND FOWLER'S 1928 *CITY PLAN FOR AUSTIN, TEXAS*

Since Austin's founding in 1839, the plans of Pilié, Schoolfield, and Sandusky had been the city's only planning tools. With Austin's continued population growth and physical expansion, city officials and politicians were faced with more complex planning issues which they sought to rectify or alleviate. After adopting the council-manager form of government in 1927, the city council hired Dallas-based civil engineering firm Koch and Fowler to prepare a comprehensive city plan. In addition to recommendations for the planning and future development of parks, streets, and community institutions such as schools and fire stations, the plan that Koch and Fowler developed also analyzed existing land uses. The completed plan proposed that the City of Austin adopt zoning rules to manage growth. This component of the plan served as a way to legitimize institutional segregation and had far-reaching consequences for minorities living along Lower Waller Creek and throughout the city.

#### 4.1.1. Land Use and Zoning

Included in the 1928 *City Plan* was a property-use map that identified conditions in the lower Waller Creek corridor (fig. 4-1). Consistent with the development patterns since the city's founding, the blocks along East 5th and East 6th Streets are labeled as "business property." North of the business corridor, intermittent blocks are identified as "white residential property;" this categorization is much more prevalent south of the business corridor at the Driskill & Rainey and the Bridge View Subdivisions. The majority of the rest of the Waller Creek corridor was represented overwhelmingly as "miscellaneous property," indicating that African Americans lived on most of the property near the flood-prone Waller Creek.<sup>1</sup> Koch and Fowler's recommendations called for Red River Street to be zoned as a commercial district flanked by "Class B" residential neighborhoods. The lower Waller Creek area between East 2nd and East 4th Streets was to be re-zoned as industrial (fig. 4-2).

#### 4.1.2. Street Plan

The Koch and Fowler 1928 *City Plan* reported that Red River Street was the only north–south-running street in the lower Waller Creek corridor that was paved. The improved east–west streets were intermittent—East 1st, East 3rd, East 5th, and East 6th Streets were paved as well as East 15th Street from Red River Street westward. Recognizing Red River Street's importance as a route in the lower Waller Creek area and foreshadowing plans for it to become a major commercial route, the plan called for Red River Street to be widened to 56 feet.<sup>2</sup> The consultants "proposed paving of first importance" only on East Avenue, San Jacinto Street, and on East 2nd Street (except behind the Palm School; see "Parks and Boulevards" below), East 7th, and East 11th Streets between San Jacinto and East Avenue. East Avenue and East 15th Street were recommended as "boulevards to be used as major thoroughfares." The emphasis on East 15th Street was to draw people to the Texas State Capitol: "We have recommended that [15th] Street be made a boulevard and, with this boulevard as a northern boundary of the capitol grounds, the group of buildings could be made as beautiful and interesting from the north as the present location is from the south."<sup>3</sup> The plan also proposed that extensions of Congress Avenue and Red River Street converge at the mouth of Waller Creek to form a major boulevard—"Colorado River Drive"—hugging the north shore of the Colorado River. Koch and Fowler also proposed the "Waller Creek Driveway," a new thoroughfare running adjacent to Waller Creek from north of the lower Waller Creek corridor to East 9th Street. The "Waller Creek Driveway" was to provide "a convenient avenue for traffic from the northeast portion of Austin to the business district, and then south to the Colorado River Drive." Aside from important automobile routes, the plan also discussed Austin's streets in terms of the streetcar system. At the time of the *City Plan*, streetcar lines in the lower Waller Creek area ran only along on East 1st and East 6th

Streets and eastward across East Avenue. The consultants recommended extension of streetcar lines along East 5th and East 7th Streets, then along Red River Street to East 12th Street and East Avenue on to points further eastward.<sup>4</sup>

### 4.1.3. Parks and Boulevards

Koch and Fowler's 1928 *City Plan* "presented detailed plans for municipal parks along Austin's waterways because 'the natural beauty of its topography and the unusual climate [made] it an ideal residential city.'"<sup>5</sup> The consultants supported the City of Austin's purchase of property immediately north of the Palm School for use as a neighborhood park and playground. The path of Waller Creek would have to be straightened north of the school to open up the space.<sup>6</sup> The *City Plan* is also the first instance of a proposed system of parks, or greenbelts, along Austin's streams.<sup>7</sup> Along Waller Creek, the consultants proposed a parked boulevard—Waller Boulevard—with two branches starting at East 19th Street—one going north from San Jacinto Street, the other going south paralleling the creek to outlets at East Avenue via East 9th and East 11th Streets (fig. 4-3).<sup>8</sup> Waller Boulevard would be part of a loop of city roads providing a "tour of the waterfronts" of Austin.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the "picturesque landscape units" and "beautiful driveways" that the proposed parked boulevard would offer, Koch and Fowler also claimed that "The parking of the banks of Shoal Creek and Waller Creek will insure storm water drainage facilities a minimum expense which would be tremendous if it were attempted to handle this water in storm sewers."<sup>10</sup>

The *City Plan* pointed out that the only "neighborhood parks" that the city had at the time were public squares; three remained of the four delineated in the original survey of the city (see Chapter 1). The consultants lauded the maintenance of the squares as "beauty spots and breathing spaces" but lamented that "from a real utility point of view...Wooldridge Park is the only one which is really efficient, outside of the aesthetic value."<sup>11</sup> The plan recommended that the city acquire the state-owned land on the north banks of the Colorado River to create one large park between the mouth of Waller Creek to the mouth of Shoal Creek (accessible via a proposed "Colorado River Drive" which would run along the river).<sup>12</sup> The document also noted, "Several neighborhood parks should be developed throughout this park to serve the adjoining territory as local neighborhood parks and community centers."<sup>13</sup> One of these was a proposed playground on the enlarged grounds of the Palm School (fig. 4-4). As found in the 1928 *City Plan*:

At present Waller Creek cuts across private property and just south of Third Street has just practically destroyed East Avenue; and then it cuts back west in Second Street and continues across First Street to the river. The Palm School Grounds at present contains one block and the greater portion of said block is covered by the school building. The property immediately north of Palm School, on account of being isolated and cut up by Waller Creek, is very cheap property, and in a neglected state. However, this block contains quite a few wonderful trees. The block to the west of Palm School, excepting for its frontage on First Street, is also very cheap property and will remain so as long as Waller Creek is permitted to continue in its present condition. It is our recommendation that these tracts of land be acquired by the city, and that the course of Waller Creek be straightened. The excavated material can be used to fill up the channel - over the abandoned area. Second Street from Red River to East Avenue and Sabine Street from First to Third could be vacated and this entire tract converted into a very desirable neighborhood play ground.<sup>14</sup>

Over the course of the next decade, the City of Austin would implement many of the recommendations set forth in the Koch and Fowler *City Plan* using funds from the passage of bonds and, with the start of the Great Depression, various forms of federal aid.



## 4.2. SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

### 4.2.1. Displacement of the African American Community

For Koch and Fowler, and the City of Austin, picturesque and well-landscaped parks and boulevards would bring great value to Austin's citizens. However, the beautification movement also advanced the interests of those who would reinforce the racist Jim Crow policies accepted throughout the US and the American South. While the Koch and Fowler plan did present recommendations meant to enhance the city's natural resources and beauty, consistent with the City Beautiful Movement sweeping the country, it was an overt tactic to institutionalize race separation by strategically locating essential services, institutions and amenities.

The 1928 *City Plan* notes:

There has been considerable talk in Austin, as well as other cities, in regard to the race segregation problem. This problem cannot be solved legally under any zoning law known to us at present. Practically all attempts of such have been proven unconstitutional.

In our studies in Austin we have found that the Negroes are present in small numbers, in practically all sections of the city, excepting the area just east of East Avenue and south of the City Cemetery. This area seems to be all negro population. It is our recommendation that the nearest approach to the solution of the race segregation problem will be the recommendation of this district as a Negro district; and that all the facilities and conveniences be provided the negroes in this district, as an incentive to draw the negro population to this area. This will eliminate the necessity of duplication of white and black schools, white and black parks, and other duplicate facilities for this area.<sup>15</sup>

Virtually every aspect of the *City Plan* reinforced this strategy to dislocate African Americans who had historically lived along lower Waller Creek, and had remained there while white families moved into new suburbs. When the 1928 *City Plan* was published, Red River Street served as a critical corridor for the African American community that still lived in the eastern segment of the original townsite. Red River Street's proposed function as a major thoroughfare zoned for commercial development was one component of the plan meant to drive African Americans completely into East Austin, where they had begun to settle in the late nineteenth century as the city naturally grew. The recommendation for a "Waller Creek Drive"—a parked boulevard that was proposed along Waller Creek—was another calculated move, again intended to incentivize African American Austinites to move further east. The 1928 *City Plan* explains:

The completion of this drive will entail the acquisition of certain cheap property along the banks of Waller Creek from Eighth Street to Nineteenth Street. Most of the property which will be needed is at present occupied by very unsightly and unsanitary shacks inhabited by Negroes. With these buildings removed to provide for the trafficway, most of the remaining property will be of a substantial and more desirable type.<sup>16</sup>

### 4.2.2 Mexican American Community in Transition

Just as freed slaves settled on Waller Creek due to its convenient proximity to the city center, cheap land, and affordable rent, Mexican immigrants arriving in Austin—many of them emigrating due to the unrest of the Mexican Revolution—settled in the bottomland along Shoal Creek on the west side of the city. This southwest part of town became known as "Old Mexico" and, later, the "Warehouse District." A few Mexican families did establish households along Waller Creek, however. Among them was the family of Arturo Alemán. His parents left Mexico following the Mexican Revolution and met when both of their families settled near Austin. The couple married in 1919 in Del Valle, Texas, and later moved to the lower Waller Creek area where they resided at 607 East 9th Street. The Sifuentes family was another family that settled along Waller Creek. Antonio Sifuentes immigrated to Texas in 1910 with his wife and children. Eventually, the family settled along Red River

## Spanish Village Restaurant

The little house that became the Spanish Village Restaurant, and later Jaime's Spanish Village, was built in 1915 and expanded in 1920. The restaurant opened at 802 Red River Street in the 1930s, and according to advertisements placed in the *Austin American-Statesman*, they served "Mexico's Famous *Platillos Mexicanos*" and offered an "old Mexico atmosphere."<sup>[17]</sup> The restaurant also catered to special events, including offering a 1939 Thanksgiving Day turkey luncheon and dinner, and entertaining Texas authors during the 1955 Writers Round-Up.<sup>[18]</sup> Its proximity to the University of Texas also meant it was a common gathering space for generations of sorority and fraternity members, university students, and their families. Several other Mexican restaurants lined Red River Street in the 1940s, including La Fiesta and Old Mexico, but the Spanish Village Restaurant was the longest standing "Tex-Mex" establishment. When Jaime Thames purchased the restaurant in the 1970s, he renamed it Jaime's Spanish Village and decorated the walls with images of his past career as a bullfighter in Mexico. Jaime also filed for a patent on his self-titled margarita, the "Margarita Jaime," which was a frozen margarita with a sangria floater on top. His nephew Charlie Thames, who would go on to own the restaurant before its closure in 2010, remembered working as a busboy at the restaurant after he and his mother moved to Austin from Mexico, before he spoke English. In 2012, restaurateur Doug Guller opened a new Tex-Mex restaurant in the building, and though the interior has been completely remodeled, the project sought to retain much of the restaurant's original character, and visitors can still drink a margarita beneath the same old live oak tree.<sup>[19]</sup>



May 30, 1939 advertisement for Spanish Village Restaurant. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.

Street in a small home next to an aged live oak tree that would go on to become the longstanding Spanish Village Restaurant. (See "Spanish Village Restaurant" sidebar.<sup>17, 18, 19</sup>) Sifuentes enjoyed the move from Austin's First Ward (an area roughly bound by the Colorado River, Congress Avenue, Guadalupe Street and East 4th Street) where he had long felt treated as a second-class citizen. While the 1928 *City Plan* did not specifically mention Mexican and Mexican American citizens, its segregationist policies had a similar effect on that community. As with efforts to draw African Americans out of other parts of the city, the 1928 *City Plan* recommended that schools and other community institutions for Mexican Americans be built in East Austin, attracting the growing Mexican population further away from downtown. Another factor in the displacement of the Mexican American community was the completion of the Austin Dam (1893 and 1915) and, finally, the Tom Miller Dam (1940). The dams decreased the risk of flooding in "Old Mexico," resulting in rising property values, and Mexican American inhabitants were forced to move out of the neighborhood and head eastward. Most settled beyond East Avenue south of the Houston and Texas Central Railway.

Depression-era housing policies and programs also affected minority demographics in lower Waller Creek. The New Deal established the Housing and Loan Corporation in 1933 to assist struggling homeowners with low-interest mortgages. As part of their mission to work with local lenders and realtors, the Housing and Loan Corporation created color-coded security maps that ranked neighborhoods' risk levels. The neighborhoods considered "hazardous" were marked in red, hence the term "redlining."<sup>20</sup> Mortgage lenders discriminated against loan applicants based on the racial makeup of their neighborhood, regardless of their individual financial credentials. The process of "redlining" excluded minority groups from obtaining mortgages for many years. Austin's "redlining" security map from 1934 shows that the majority of the lower Waller Creek area was considered "still desirable," likely because of the numbers of Anglo and European immigrant families that still lived there, along with the large African American and moderately-sized Mexican American populations (fig. 4-5). In addition to denying minorities the opportunity to purchase and own homes in these

neighborhoods, "redlining" also encouraged "white flight," whereby white middle-class families moved from these older areas of the city to newer neighborhoods and suburbs. In the lower Waller Creek corridor, the Anglo and Swiss and German families who had lived in the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision relocated to other areas of the city; they were replaced by a significant low-income, working-class Mexican American population that was established in the neighborhood by the 1930s. Adjacent to areas where other families had relocated

on the east side of East Avenue, the neighborhood centered around Rainey Street was a larger part of the growing Mexican community in East Austin.

The passage of the Housing Act of 1937 and the following completion of modern, but segregated, public housing in 1939 (Rosewood Courts for African Americans, Santa Rita Courts for Mexican Americans, and Chalmers Court for Caucasian residents) in East Austin further encouraged African American and Mexican American families to move away from the lower Waller Creek corridor. The demographic shift in the lower Waller Creek area happened gradually in the 1930s, and its effect would be more even more visible in the next decade.

### 4.3. POST-PLAN DEVELOPMENT

After the publication of Koch and Fowler's 1928 *City Plan* and the onset of the Great Depression, development in the lower Waller Creek area took the form of various beautification projects. The city sponsored the clearing of underbrush and the straightening of several bridges on Waller Creek from East 6th to East 19th Streets.<sup>21</sup> The City also made efforts to beautify the north bank of the Colorado River and link the area between Shoal Creek and Waller Creek. In March 1928, the *Austin American-Statesman* reported, "at Lamar Park the north bank of the Colorado river is being leveled and rounded off as far east as Waller creek so that in the course of a year or two the park front will extend from Shoal creek on the west to Waller creek on the east."<sup>22</sup> The city council also elected to proceed with the beautification of the city hospital grounds at East 15th and Sabine Streets.<sup>23</sup>

When the city council proposed a bond program to implement the development projects recommended in the 1928 *City Plan*, labor unions in the city took a stance in support. One Austinite, J. P. Warren, "said he favored the bonds and believed that the administration should construct a through street in East Austin. He paid his respects to Waller Creek in East Austin characterizing it as an 'eyesore to the city, an unsanitary thing along which are located some cabins that are very unsightly.'" Warren went on to say, "I think one of the greatest things that the city can do is to remove that unsightly eye-sore that now exists between Congress avenue and East Avenue all the way from 19th street south to 7th street."<sup>24</sup> Austinites ultimately approved a \$4.25 million bond package on May 18, 1928. It funded projects in the lower Waller Creek area including new fire stations, new buildings at the city hospital, new storm and sanitary sewers, the establishment of playgrounds, enlargement of public schools, paving of streets, and the construction of a municipal market. Some residents along lower Waller Creek signed a petition proposing the extension of the "Waller Creek Boulevard" further south. J. T. Ward presented the petition, calling the creek "'unsightly and a menace to health."<sup>25</sup> The 281 petition signers wanted the creek to be terraced and for no homes to be built nearer than 50 feet from the high-water line.<sup>26</sup>

Street paving and sewer construction were among the first projects to get underway after passage of the bond package. In the lower Waller Creek area, the paving program for the first year included paving East 11th Street from San Jacinto Street to East Avenue and resurfacing East 6th Street from Colorado Street to East Avenue.<sup>27</sup> The council deferred paving on Red River Street from East 1st to East 5th Streets because of delayed construction on Waller Creek at East 2nd Street (during the creek rechannelization; see below) (figs. 4-6 and 4-7).<sup>28</sup> In June 1929, the city government also made plans to award a contract for construction of lateral storm sewer lines from Waller Creek on every street between East 3rd and East 11th Streets.<sup>29</sup> The following February, they announced additional laterals to be built on several streets in the area bound by East 7th, East 19th, Red River, and Brazos Streets.<sup>30</sup> Finally, in November 1930, a new storm sewer was to be laid in East 15th Street from Red River Street to Waller Creek.<sup>31</sup> These less visible improvements were important for the infrastructure of the lower Waller Creek area.



### 4.3.1. Waller Creek Rechannelization and Palm Park

The rechannelization of Waller Creek and the creation of what became Palm Park was a more visible undertaking; both were funded through a bond program passed in 1928 and with federal aid. It was one of several municipal parks created at that time.<sup>32</sup> An aerial view of the Palm School vicinity from around 1930 shows the area not long before the creek's rechannelization (fig. 4-8). The creek ran directly behind the Palm School and the block adjacent, limiting the grounds around the school and effectively cutting off East 2nd Street from a connection with East Avenue. The *Austin American-Statesman* reported, "Additional grounds are to be secured for Palm School by the city which plans to reclaim part of the waste territory in that section and convert it into a parked area as an addition to the Palm school campus."<sup>33</sup> The first step in the rechannelization and park project was the removal of houses along Waller Creek in the block bound by East 2nd, East 3rd, and Sabine Streets and East Avenue; the City accepted bids for this work in June 1928.<sup>34</sup> The City of Austin bore the expenses for materials and tools while the Civil Works Administration—which headquartered in the lower Waller Creek area in a block of buildings on East 6th Street—covered labor costs.<sup>35</sup> Plans for the beautification of what would become Palm Park included a replacement bridge over Waller Creek at East 2nd Street, which had washed away in the floods of 1915. The work was to be funded by the 1930 bond package.<sup>36</sup> In November 1930, the "Palm School playground plan" included two ball courts; two volleyball courts; two croquet courts; a double tennis court; a swimming pool; a pergola; and a brick gymnasium fit for community meetings, athletics, and theater performances.<sup>37</sup> That work was completed in the spring of 1931, and the city approved the budget allocating funds for development of the playground in September 1932.<sup>38</sup> The well-equipped playground and pool opened May 29, 1933 (fig. 4-9).<sup>39</sup> Palm Park and Palm School are among the few landmarks in the lower Waller Creek corridor that appear on the 1933 *Map of the City of Austin*; others include the Pasteur Institute, Allan High School, Bickler School, and City Hospital (see "Life Along the Creek" below).<sup>40</sup>

### 4.3.2. Depression-Era and Late-1930s Development

Relief-funded work continued in the lower Waller Creek area in 1933. In November of that year, 152 men were at work from East 6th Street to the north "cleaning out the streambed, straightening the channel by excavation, and spreading stone rip-rap in the bottom and along the edge of the channel."<sup>41</sup> Not all were in favor of such intrusions on the natural appearance of the creek. Waller Creek resident and writer J. Frank Dobie was vehemently opposed to such beautification projects. He wrote to the *Austin American*: "All this creek needs from its entrance into city property, through the country club, on through East Woods park, and down to the Colorado is to be let alone as far as rocks and growth are concerned. The nurseries can supply nothing that will live so well or look so in place, and therefore so pleasing, as the native shrubbery."<sup>42</sup>

Despite the disapproval of individuals like Dobie, work continued throughout the 1930s. One Works Progress Administration project in Austin was the construction of the City Market House on East Avenue between East 7th and East 8th Streets from 1934 to 1935.<sup>43</sup> Designed by architecture firm Page Brothers with W. J. Schwarzer as contractor, the City Market House had been part of the 1928 bond package, but the city was not able to move forward with the project due to financial circumstances made worse by the Depression. Finally, in October 1934, the city received a grant to cover part of the costs, and the market was completed on June 6, 1935 (fig. 4-10).

The 1935 Sanborn maps of Austin show that the city had implemented many of the recommendations of the 1928 *City Plan*. The city had successfully rechanneled Waller Creek, which allowed for the creation of Palm Park and provided a measure of flood control (fig. 4-11). East Avenue, East 11th Street, and East 15th Street had been transformed into boulevards to improve both their appearance and the flow of traffic.<sup>44</sup> Work on Waller Creek is apparent in the stone retaining walls depicted on the stream between East 5th and East 7th Streets. New construction (e.g. City Market House and Palm Park) and expansions to various institutions (City Hospital, John T. Allen Middle School, and Palm School) are also visible. While the lower Waller Creek area was

not as densely developed as other areas of the city (with the exception of East 6th Street), significant growth was apparent. By 1935, many residential properties had been subdivided to accommodate additional housing. Some of these homes appeared to be small shotgun houses that the low-income, working-class families who populated the neighborhood would be able to afford or that property owners could easily utilize as rental property. Several properties in the two blocks bound by East 2nd, Trinity, East 3rd, and Red River Streets functioned as boarding houses. The 1935 Sanborn maps also indicate an increased amount of commercial development, especially along Red River Street south of East 9th Street, much of which had replaced residential buildings. An increased presence of automobile-related business can also be seen, especially along Red River, East 1st, Neches Streets and East Avenue. For the first time, the Sanborn maps also delineate the well-populated neighborhood of single-family homes in the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision. While the Texas Highway Department's General Highway Map of 1936 does not have the same level of detail as the Sanborn maps, it does highlight the new boulevards in the lower Waller Creek corridor as well as the prominence of East Avenue which was, at that time, part of the route of State Highway 20 from Austin to Elgin (fig 4-12).<sup>45</sup> A 1937 aerial view of Austin shows much of the lower Waller Creek area, looking south from East 14th Street (fig. 4-13). The photograph depicts a well-populated residential neighborhood within walking distance of the Texas State Capitol.

## 4.4. LIFE ALONG THE CREEK

### 4.4.1. A Diverse Neighborhood

By the late 1920s, the lower Waller Creek area was a vibrant and diverse neighborhood. The diversity and sense of community are best reflected in the recollections of several individuals who recalled life along the creek as children growing up in the 1930s.

#### 4.4.1.1. DR. BEULAH AGNES CURRY-JONES

Dr. Beulah Agnes Curry-Jones was born in 1933. Her family lived in a rental house at 1203 ½ Red River Street along Waller Creek, among many other African American families. She recalls:

Persons who lived on Red River were various ethnicities and races. Right across...the alley from us were people who proudly let the rest of the community know they were Syrians. They had a hotel that was sort of like a boarding house. And...some of their descendants are still here in Austin. Their last name was Joseph.... I remember that they were very kind, friendly. And, they had a little walk-in grocery. They did not sell anything, that I recall, that [...] required extended refrigeration. You had a lot of canned goods, candy, bread, items like that. And, I think that they were very considerate of the neighborhood and the persons who lived there—from what I remember, most of them were African American. So, you had the store in the front; they lived in the back. And, then upstairs was room for boarders.<sup>46</sup>

Dr. Curry-Jones's memories of the area are clear. She felt that there was a "...sense of community, safety, camaraderie. It was like a community. It was like a neighborhood." Like many African American families living in the Waller Creek area after the 1928 *City Plan*, Dr. Curry-Jones's family moved to the Rosewood Courts housing project when it opened in East Austin in 1939.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4.4.1.2. LEO MUELLER

Leo Mueller, Jr. was the son of volunteer fire chief Leo Mueller and the nephew of Austin City Commissioner Robert Mueller (namesake of Mueller Airport). His grandfather had immigrated to Austin from Germany in the 1870s. Mueller grew up surrounded by other immediate family members in the 500 block of East 16th Street (between Red River and Neches Streets); his home was at 502 East 16th Street in the 1930s (fig. 4-14).<sup>48</sup> The Knapes, a family of masons, "lived across and west of the creek on 16th [Street]."<sup>49</sup> In his written memoirs, Mueller recalls his home at the end of the steep hill which ran from Red River Street to Waller Creek.<sup>50</sup> He

described the general character of the neighborhood, and some dwellings inhabited by the neighborhood's lower income African American families:

I believe that there were two Negro shanties [on the property]. While crawling around under the house, I came across an old cistern that was probably used by the Negroes.<sup>51</sup>

Growing up in a large house with a large back yard and being right next to Waller Creek was great, especially because of the creek, in this area, the City of Austin plat indicates that Neches Street was supposed to run up the area of the creek. However, the street was never opened, only existing as a foot trail.<sup>52</sup>

There was an alley in back of the house with a Negro shack [facing East 15th Street] immediately across the alley and behind our garage. Next to the shack (to the east) was a large vacant lot. Although I occasionally played in this vacant lot, the alley was really a dividing line for me. From 15th Street on south (or downstream in the creek), there were quite a few black families whose children were not exactly friendly to white folks. Consequently, I always stayed north, or upstream, from 15th Street.<sup>53</sup>

Mueller remained in his family home until he left home for college in 1950 (see Chapter 5). The backyard of what had been his family's home was taken when Red River Street was rerouted for the construction of the Frank Erwin Center, and the house was one of many demolished when Waterloo Park was developed.

#### **4.4.1.3. BEN SIFUENTES**

Ben Sifuentes recalled living on Red River Street in his youth, brewing beer in the basement of the building that would become the Spanish Village Restaurant. For Ben, his grandfather's recollection of the area was positive, even as he battled the segregation of Austin at that time. In an interview with the *Austin American-Statesman*, Sifuentes recalled being told of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church's move from its previous location near Republic Square to its new site on Lydia Street, and how his father had helped to move the church's bell.<sup>54</sup> At the time, most of the Mexican immigrants were settling east of East Avenue, so the community church relocated to a site in that area.

During the Great Depression, Sifuentes recalled climbing the live oak tree next to the house and seeing the way the Hispanic community around Waller Creek struggled. While Ben and his siblings had food, shoes, and new clothes for Easter Mass, the families around them had little. "My playmates who lived here didn't live the way we were living," he told the *Austin American-Statesman* in 2009. "The people who lived in those shacks didn't have curtains or shades or furnishings [...] they were hungry. The boys and girls were barefooted. They didn't have proper clothing or coats."<sup>55</sup> Even at a young age, he saw the economic divide between his family and those around him, even as they all lived in a segregated Austin. Ben remembers selling newspapers, working odd jobs, and helping his mother raise his younger siblings.<sup>56</sup>

The family patriarch Antonio Sifuentes died in 1936, and Ben's father Benito was killed in a bar fight outside a Red River Street tavern in 1938. The family moved to the Prospect Hill neighborhood sometime before 1940, when the US census recorded Ben's mother Clotilde working as a laundress.<sup>57</sup>

#### **4.4.2. Businesses**

In order to support the vibrant and varied lower Waller Creek neighborhood, many businesses came and went in the area. Important among the new types of commercial development during the 1930s were those related to the automobile industry and automobile travel. Corner filling stations, auto garages, tire shops, auto sales shops, and truck storage facilities appeared along lower Waller Creek with greater frequency. The city was not always welcoming of these enterprises, however. In April 1929, the city council declined Magnolia Petroleum Company's permit request to erect a filling station at the northeast corner of East 1st and Neches Streets. They



cited the filling station as a potential safety hazard to children traveling to Palm School and traffic interruptions on East 1st Street as reasons for the denial.<sup>58</sup> The municipal government reconsidered after a survey of the area and granted permission.<sup>59</sup> A few blocks south was a marble works operated by H. C. Griffin at 719-721 Red River Street (fig. 4-15).<sup>60</sup>

On Red River Street, Dr. Curry-Jones recalled various businesses interspersed with residences:

Also, on Red River, there was an antique collector who was black. And, around the corner from him there was a family whose last name was Cane. That was a black family. And, as you came south on Red River, on the west side, there were at least two...Mexican families and another black family. And, when you crossed 12th Street heading south, on the next corner was another little grocery. And, I think their last name was Pardue. And, they had a wider variety of grocery items.<sup>61</sup>

During this period, the number of entertainment-based businesses and restaurants began to grow. Many families were still attracted to venues on East 6th Street. Dr. Curry-Jones recalls walking from her house in the 1200-block of Red River Street to attend segregated shows at the Cactus Theater (521 East 6th Street) and the sense of pride she had seeing African Americans in the area:

My cousin and I could go to movies on Saturday, and my grandmother and parents always said, "Now go down three blocks [south on Red River Street] and turn right [on East 9th Street], and then go left [on Neches Street] to the show." Which took us around the 400 block [of East 6th Street], but we could look down there and see what was going on. Sometimes, if we got out of the movies early enough, we would go straight through the 400 block [of East 6th Street]. It was just a sea of people, a sea of our people."<sup>62</sup>

She also remembers a tavern at the corner of East 6th and Red River Streets (current site of Esther's Follies). "The outside of it always fascinated me, with mirror tiles. Then we would turn left at Red River and go home."<sup>63</sup>

East 6th Street was busy, yet safe enough for two young children to navigate alone even though Arturo Alemán said East 6th Street consisted of "nothing but Mexican and Negro beer joints and Jewish department stores."<sup>64</sup> With the repeal of Prohibition, several Lebanese businessmen established liquor stores on East 6th Street. Among them were brothers Arthur and Theodore Jabour who opened Jabour's Package Store at 415 East 6th Street in 1933.<sup>65</sup> The business was also a drug store and housed a soda fountain. Although East 6th Street remained a primary business district for lower Waller Creek area residents, restaurants were scattered throughout the neighborhood. In the 1930s, the Spanish Village Restaurant opened at 802 Red River Street and became a popular establishment for many (see "*Spanish Village Restaurant*" sidebar above).<sup>66</sup> Other restaurants in the area included El Matamoros Restaurant and El Monterrey Café. While he attended school at John T. Allan Junior High School, Arturo Alemán worked at New China Food Market at 714 Red River Street. New China Food Market was owned and operated by Fred Wong who was raised in San Antonio but moved to Austin in 1938 where he opened his store (fig. 4-16).<sup>67</sup>

German immigrants remained important contributors to life in the lower Waller Creek corridor. In 1935, German immigrant Fortunat Weigl moved his iron works from its location near the Colorado River, west of Congress Avenue, to 104 Red River Street.<sup>68</sup> Changes in zoning laws allowed him to operate on the end of San Jacinto Street, where Mayor Tom Miller "told him that the city owned 'a big hole on Red River on Waller Creek' which he could buy cheap." For his new establishment, Weigl constructed an iron shed supported by 16-foot cedar poles; the tongue-and-groove flooring was two inches thick to support the heavy equipment and stock. The area underneath the building was used for storage.<sup>69</sup> (See "*F. Weigl Iron Works*," to follow.<sup>70, 71, 72</sup>)

## F. Weigl Iron Works

When Fortunat Weigl and his family left Germany, they brought with them only what could fit in a single box, constructed out of timber from their dining table. Though Weigl had apprenticed and studied decorative ironwork, he left his tools in Germany and upon settling in Austin worked in construction for German-speaking tradesmen.

When Weigl met the accomplished woodworker Peter Mansbendel in 1917, the Swiss craftsman was looking for someone to create a set of light fixtures for a hotel in San Antonio. With Mansbendel's help, he was able to acquire a forge, anvil, and hammer, and complete the commissioned sconces. Weigl and Mansbendel were two in a community of Swiss and German craftspeople who shaped the architectural character of Austin after World War I.<sup>[70]</sup>

Prior to Weigl's arrival, ornamental wrought iron was a rarity in Austin. After he established F. Weigl Iron Works in 1922, Weigl's handicraft was selected by architects building ornate homes for their clients. The Iron Works produced ornamentation for important Austin landmarks, including the balconies and window grills for Hugo Kuene's 1933 Italian Renaissance Revival style library – now the Austin History Center.<sup>[71]</sup> The Iron Works relocated to 104 Red River Street adjacent to Waller Creek in 1935 and was flooded along with much of the Red River District on June 5th, 1935. While the iron shortages during World War II were hard on the family company, the foundry was able to expand after the war. As business picked up, Weigl cautioned his sons, who now worked alongside their father, to remember their roots. "We could have grown quite large," son Herbert told the *Austin American-Statesman*, "but papa thought we should stay small if we wanted to be independent."<sup>[72]</sup>

After Fortunat's retirement in 1955, sons Lee and Herbert kept the business going according to their father's vision until their own retirement in 1977. In 1978, the Iron Works BBQ opened in the old F. Weigl Iron Works building.



Austin Citizen photograph of the F. Weigl Ironworks in the 1970s. Source: Portal to Texas History.

While some downtown Austin areas prohibited industrial enterprises like Weigl's ironworks, weak zoning restrictions in the area surrounding Waller Creek did allow industrial enterprises, which began to push out residential neighborhoods and traditional commercial types that had historically been part of the area. The Southland Ice Company, a Dallas-based corporation, bought out the Austin Dixie Ice Company and opened an ice factory at 901 Red River Street in 1928 (fig. 4-17).<sup>73</sup> Industrial enterprises had previously been kept to areas along East 5th and East 6th Streets, but the 1928 *City Plan* weakened zoning restrictions in an attempt to relocate heavy industry from the downtown core to minority-populated areas and to East Austin. This change eventually led to businesses that were unsuitable for residential areas, particularly in the Rainey Street neighborhood, and hastened the relocation of residents over the years.<sup>74</sup> In 1939, the Austin Chamber of Commerce published a *Use District Map* that showed that the recommendations set out in 1928 were underway. In the lower Waller Creek area, Red River Street had become a commercial corridor flanked by low-valued residential property. The area south of the commercial core along East 5th and East 6th Streets had also transitioned to increased commercial use, though the areas south of East 1st Street remained residential (fig. 4-18).

### 4.4.3. Government, Education, Religious, and Other Community Institutions

Buildings associated with government activity had always been part of Austin's original townsite but had previously been limited to the blocks around the state capitol. This changed in 1928, with the construction of a building for the "State Hygienic Laboratory" in the half-block "Market" square on East 5th Street (fig. 4-19).

The Pasteur Institute for the diagnosis and treatment of rabies, which had previously been located on the campus of the State Lunatic Asylum, merged with the laboratories operated by the State Department of Health (Laboratory of the Pure Food Commission and Bacteriological Laboratory) to form the Bureau of Laboratories, or “State Hygienic Laboratory.”<sup>75</sup> A brick building costing \$25,000 was built on the site. This state-owned facility was joined by another municipal building during this period. The 1928 *City Plan* had called for additional fire stations to serve the business district.<sup>76</sup> In January 1939, the Austin Central Fire Station was completed with assistance from the Public Works Administration.<sup>77</sup> The 16,500 square-foot building occupied the northwest corner of Brush Square (fig. 4-20).

Religious and educational institutions in the lower Waller Creek corridor also saw some changes during this period. From 1932 to 1934, the Lebanese community that was growing around the lower Waller Creek area established an Eastern Orthodox congregation and erected a church—St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church—at 408 East 11th Street. While St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church and First Baptist Church remained active congregations in the neighborhood, Wesley Chapel Methodist Church moved to East Austin as a result of the trends put into motion by the 1928 *City Plan*. Churches that moved also sought to follow congregation members who increasingly moved east of East Avenue.<sup>78</sup> Wesley Chapel Methodist Church sold its property to the Austin School Board.

Part of the 1928 bond package consisted of funding for school improvements including gymnasiums. As such, in July 1929, the school board discussed conversion of the Wesley Chapel Methodist Church into the gymnasium for the proposed new junior high school to be built on the former Austin High School campus. The board also discussed improvements to the auditorium at Palm School.<sup>79</sup> The addition of four rooms—including an auditorium—at Palm School was also part of 1928 bond program. These alterations were made at a cost \$22,500.<sup>80</sup> Then, in 1936, Schwarzer and Barron made further additions to Palm School and constructed a school shop building at the Bickler School (see Chapter 2).<sup>81</sup> The Project Works Administration School Program also funded the addition of heating and ventilation at Palm School; the work was done by Young and Pratt.<sup>82</sup>

The City Hospital (refer to figure 3-7) was renamed Brackenridge Hospital in 1929, in honor of the local doctor and community member that strongly and successfully advocated for its expansion in 1915. However, the hospital continued to struggle to meet the needs of the indigent population of Austin. Brackenridge Hospital was also the scene of segregation and racial tension. When a group of Mexican American patients filed a petition with the city, alleging that they were being grouped with African American patients on the segregated wards, Mayor Tom Miller spoke of the need for more space at the hospital to accommodate and separate patients. He was quoted in the *Austin American* explaining that “we realize that with the growth of the city, sooner or later we will have to build an addition to the hospital. Conditions are crowded there now and we are trying to do the best we can.”<sup>83</sup> When his father lay dying in the hospital in 1938, Ben Sifuentes recalled wandering into the white part of the hospital, before being sent back by a nurse.<sup>84</sup> Further expansions included additions to wings on the south, west, and north sides of the building, raising the hospital’s capacity to 208 patients by 1941.<sup>85</sup>

#### **4.4.4. Pastimes and Leisure**

The diverse and growing population around Waller Creek found occasions to gather and celebrate together. In 1928, the Reverend A. E. Davis hosted an interdenominational revival in a heated tent at East 1st and Red River streets, inviting members and leaders from local churches to participate.<sup>86</sup> Another memorable celebration occurred when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited Austin in 1936. A citywide welcome party was held for the president, and the bandstand was positioned at East Avenue and 4th Street.<sup>87</sup> The festivities included three bands stationed along the parade route: 1) the municipal band between the bandstand and railroad tracks, 2) the boys’ playground band at Palm School playground, and 3) the Rosewood boys’ band (consisting



of African America youth) at 5th Street and East Avenue. Not to be left out, girls held a baseball game at the Palm Park playground.<sup>88</sup> Although the River Walk ceased to exist in the vicinity of Waller Creek by the 1930s, a small triangular-shaped pocket park appears at the corner of San Jacinto and Willow Streets on the 1935 Sanborn map.

Leo Mueller, Jr. lived with his family at the north edge of the lower Waller Creek corridor and recalls spending plenty of his time playing along Waller Creek. “There were no other children in the immediate neighborhood, so I spent many an afternoon wading in it catching crawfish, tadpoles, frogs, snakes.... My range on the creek was from the 15th Street Bridge to between 17th and 18th Streets.” He added, “Although the creek did contain some perch and many minnows, I did not often fish for them.”<sup>89</sup>

Mueller also related his memories of Scholz Garten, which continued to be an important entertainment and social venue for the German community. He saw the Gant Singers perform there in the 1930s.<sup>90</sup> Scholz Garten survived the Prohibition years because of its ownership by the Austin *Saengerrunde*, which continued to persevere despite anti-German sentiment in Austin and throughout the United States between the two world wars. The *Saengerrunde* sold non-alcoholic “Bone Dry Beer,” and food sales grew in importance. As Scholz’s is not listed in city directories between 1927 and 1937, public access may have been somewhat restricted during this time. During Prohibition, only members of Scholz Garten (of which Leo, Sr. was one) could drink beer inside the locked building and grounds.<sup>91</sup> In 1937, the *Saengerrunde* made plans to reopen the beer garden to the public.<sup>92</sup>

Not all memories of community gathering spaces were pleasant. Segregation and racial prejudice caused hardships for both children and adults. Arturo Alemán and his siblings attended Palm School, and he recalled one evening during the Great Depression when he was confronted by a group of white children on the four-block walk from his East 3rd Street home to Palm Park. As a Mexican American, he was not permitted to swim at the Palm Park pool, but he liked going to the park to see the fun from a distance. The boys told him he was not allowed in the park at all and threw rocks at his back as he ran away.<sup>93</sup>

When the City of Austin began to implement the 1928 *City Plan*, the sense of community that residents like Mueller, Alemán, and Curry-Jones described began to disband. Longstanding institutions relocated or ceased to exist, while new enterprises purposely left out portions of lower Waller Creek’s diverse population. Despite the contributions of these groups of people and the improvements that had been to the area in the 1930s, in 1938, newly elected US Representative Lyndon B. Johnson walked along Waller Creek and decried the “shanties” and “hot beds of crime” that he felt detracted from the area.<sup>94</sup>

## 4.5. FLOOD EVENTS

On several occasions in the 1930s, heavy rains totaling as much as 51 inches on lands upstream of Austin resulted in high water levels that flowed through Waller and Shoal Creeks and inundated portions of the city. Notable floods that affected the lower Waller Creek corridor occurred in 1935, 1936, and 1938.

### 4.5.1. The Floods of 1935 and 1936

Late in the spring of 1935, Austin newspapers reported on flood events from around the state as heavy spring rains inundated cities and towns in central and south-central Texas. On June 15, 1935, an article in the *Austin American* warned Austin “dwellers in lowland sections” to move as water upstream threatened to “send the river here to a record high.”<sup>95</sup> With no flood management system in place after the destruction of the Austin Dam in 1900 (the Buchanan Dam was still under construction), water flowed 11 feet over the top of the damaged structure.<sup>96</sup> As floodwaters rose in Austin, many Rainey Street neighborhood houses near the mouth of Waller Creek were destroyed.<sup>97</sup> Fortunat Weigl had moved into his new Ironworks at East 1st and Red River

Streets just in time to be affected. The Colorado River “backed the Creek up until it was over the tops of the windows—‘up to the billy-goat’s nose,’ which is to say, up to a plaster cast of a goat’s head hanging on the wall at the time and left there for forty years as a marker and reminder.”<sup>98</sup> Waller Creek was level with the street at its intersection with East 5th Street, and East 2nd and East 3rd Streets were impassable at Red River Street and East Avenue.<sup>99</sup> The Palm Park playground was under six feet of water while the new Red River Street bridge over the creek was completely under water.<sup>100</sup> Many houses along the banks of Waller Creek between the Colorado River and East 3rd Street were flooded and furnishings damaged. Two families who lived in apartments at 68 East Avenue had to abandon hope of salvaging any of their property and relocated.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, considered one of the worst in Austin’s history, the flood “on the Colorado River reached levels not seen since the previous century,” cresting just a few feet under the 1869 floodwater height.<sup>102</sup> As a direct result, the federal government quickly approved funding for the Lower Colorado River Authority (established by the Texas Legislature in 1934) to undertake flood control, irrigation, and power development projects.<sup>103</sup>

The following fall, in September 1936, two major storms in the Hill County west of Austin poured through the Colorado basin for 20 days, and the Colorado River crested at 31.4 feet.<sup>104</sup> Austinites praised the half-completed Buchanan Dam for keeping floodwaters at bay.<sup>105</sup> Though damage on lower Waller Creek was minimal, floodwaters backed up to cover the Palm Park playground, water rose to East Avenue and Cummings Street in the Bridge View Subdivision, and East 1st Street was covered between Red River and San Jacinto Streets (fig. 4-21).<sup>106</sup> Damages in Austin totaled \$75,000, compared to \$4 million after the June 1935 flood.<sup>107</sup>

#### **4.5.2. The Flood of 1938**

After the floods in 1935 and 1936, the city made plans to rebuild the Austin Dam (which was not in operation) to be named after then-mayor Tom Miller. However, another flood struck only two weeks after construction started on July 5, 1938.<sup>108</sup> Again, heavy rains amounting to more than three million acre-feet of floodwater poured into Lake Buchanan, created by the first dam the Lower Colorado River Authority completed.<sup>109</sup> Officials authorized a controlled release of the floodwaters on July 23, during which 22 of Buchanan Dam’s 37 floodgates were opened.<sup>110</sup> As a result, many locales downstream were flooded, including Austin. The lower Waller Creek area was greatly affected, as seen in historic photographs looking north from the south side of the Colorado River (fig. 4-22) and at East 1st and Red River Streets (fig. 4-23). Many blamed the flooding on the lack of control provided by dams that were inadequate, incomplete, or nonexistent at the time.

### **4.6. BRIDGES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Funding from the May 1928 bond package and federal-aid programs assisted with infrastructure improvement and the construction of bridges at various crossings of Waller Creek in the 1930s. Civil Works Administration crews cleaned and deepened the channel of Waller Creek. They also constructed rock walls along the banks of the creek and a rock floor along the creek’s bed. The *Austin American* remarked, “The work done in 1934 removed one of the worst mosquito breeding grounds within the city and property owners along Waller Creek have been gratified by the improvement.”<sup>111</sup> In one project, Civil Works Administration workers used gravel from the excavation of the old Central Christian Church at 8th and Colorado Streets in a drainage project.<sup>112</sup> At Christmas 1933, the crew for Civil Works Administration project no. 22 on Waller Creek pulled together their own funds to purchase Christmas gifts for a heroic little girl who had saved her little sister’s life (fig. 4-24).

#### **4.6.1. Depression-Era Bridges of Waller Creek**

In promoting the 1928 bond election, the Austin City Council promised that “every important thoroughfare that leads either to Shoal or Waller creek is to be improved with the erection of a bridge in order to open the streets for through traffic.”<sup>113</sup> The construction of better bridges across creeks and other drainage areas along selected routes contributed to the street network’s improvement. With the growing population along the

creek and in East Austin, and increased automobile traffic through the lower Waller Creek area, functional bridges were necessary.<sup>114</sup>

#### **4.6.1.1. EAST 2ND STREET**

Part of the work to create a park at Palm School as proposed by the 1928 *City Plan* included construction of a bridge at East 2nd Street. Then-Mayor Paul McFadden noted:

One of the improvements the administration has in mind is the construction of a bridge over Waller Creek on Second street at Palm school. At present Waller Creek makes a sharp bend near East avenue and First street. The administration plans to straighten the course of the stream at this point and to reclaim the land embraced within the bend and enlarge the Palm School campus. This plot will also be beautified and converted into a park or playground.<sup>115</sup>

In addition to the bridge's role in the function of the park, the council was also concerned with connectivity and the need for bridges over Waller Creek into East Austin from downtown. The newspaper reported that "the lack of a bridge on Second street near Palm school has caused the chief [work] in this connection. The council plans to construct a modern concrete bridge, similar to the one on First Street, at this point to replace the bridge that was washed out in the flood of 1915."<sup>116</sup> This bridge would open up East 2nd Street as another transportation artery connecting the downtown business district to East Austin.<sup>117</sup> Likewise, residents were concerned with the lack of a bridge at that location. In September 1928, 193 residents and businesses submitted a petition for the erection of a permanent bridge on East 2nd Street.<sup>118</sup> The City of Austin accepted bids for the project in early June 1930. Finally, on September 11, 1930, the *Austin American* announced that after 15 years of waiting, work was nearing completion of the new concrete bridge across Waller Creek at East 2nd Street and Red River.<sup>119</sup> The bridge opened on September 25, 1930.<sup>120</sup>

#### **4.6.1.2. EAST 6TH AND EAST 12TH STREETS**

During the 1930s, bridge construction served not only a functional purpose, but was part of the citywide beautification program jumpstarted by the 1928 *City Plan*. Stone masonry was used on many federally funded work-relief projects but also on city-funded applications. In particular, stone was "considered the most 'artistic' choice for bridges with small or medium spans. A number of these bridges were constructed over crossings at Shoal and Waller Creeks in Austin. The single-arched, limestone Waller Creek Bridge on East 6th Street, constructed in 1930, is in one of these."<sup>121</sup> For a bridge project spanning a widened West 5th Street over Shoal Creek, City of Austin bridge engineer Carl Levander designed a girder-on-pedestal bridge. This form was used with several smaller bridge sites in Austin, including at the twin East 12th Street bridges constructed over Waller Creek in 1931 (fig. 4-25).<sup>122</sup>

#### **4.6.1.3. OTHER BRIDGES**

City officials discussed reconstructing the Waller Creek bridge at East 1st and Red River Streets—destroyed in the 1915 flood—as part of the first year of work under the 1928 bond package.<sup>123</sup> This bridge replacement was part of the work done in conjunction with the rechannelization of Waller Creek between East 2nd and East 3rd Streets and development of Palm Park. After publicizing a request for sealed bids for construction of a bridge across Waller Creek at East 4th and Sabine Streets in early September 1933, the city decided to construct the bridge itself to save time.<sup>124</sup> By late October 1936, newspapers published that a new bridge over East 3rd Street was complete.<sup>125</sup>



## CHAPTER 6 FIGURES



Figure 4-1. Detail of "Plan Showing Present Use of Property" from the 1928 *City Plan* indicates presence of a substantial African American residential community in the "dotted" areas that the consultants identified as "Miscellaneous Residential Property." The commercial cores along East 5th and East 6th Streets are visible at the solid black areas. "White residential property" is indicated by the "hatched" areas and was predominant below East 1st Street (where the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision and Bridge View Subdivision were located) but, otherwise, mixed in with other "uses" in the lower Waller Creek area. Source: Koch and Fowler, *City Plan* (1928).



Figure 4-2. This detail of the "Plan Showing Zoning Use Restrictions" from the 1928 *City Plan* illustrates Koch and Fowler's recommendations that a significant portion of the lower Waller Creek area be zoned as a "Commercial District" (solid areas) especially along East 5th, 6th, 7th, and Red River Streets. North of East 7th Street was recommended as a "'B' Residential District" while the areas south of East 5th were recommended as an "Industrial District" (hatched), a "'B' Residential District," and an "Unrestricted District" (dotted) This zoning plan would have long-term ramifications on the development of lower Waller Creek. Source: Koch and Fowler, *City Plan* (1928).



Figure 4-3. Detail of the "Plan Showing Park and Boulevard System" from the 1928 *City Plan* shows the proposed "Waller Creek Boulevard," transition of East Avenue to a boulevard, and a drive extended from lower Waller Creek and downtown to meander along the north bank of the Colorado River. All of these circulation routes were to be lined with parked areas that linked to one another and a citywide parked boulevard system – Austin's first "greenbelt." Source: Koch and Fowler, *City Plan* (1928).



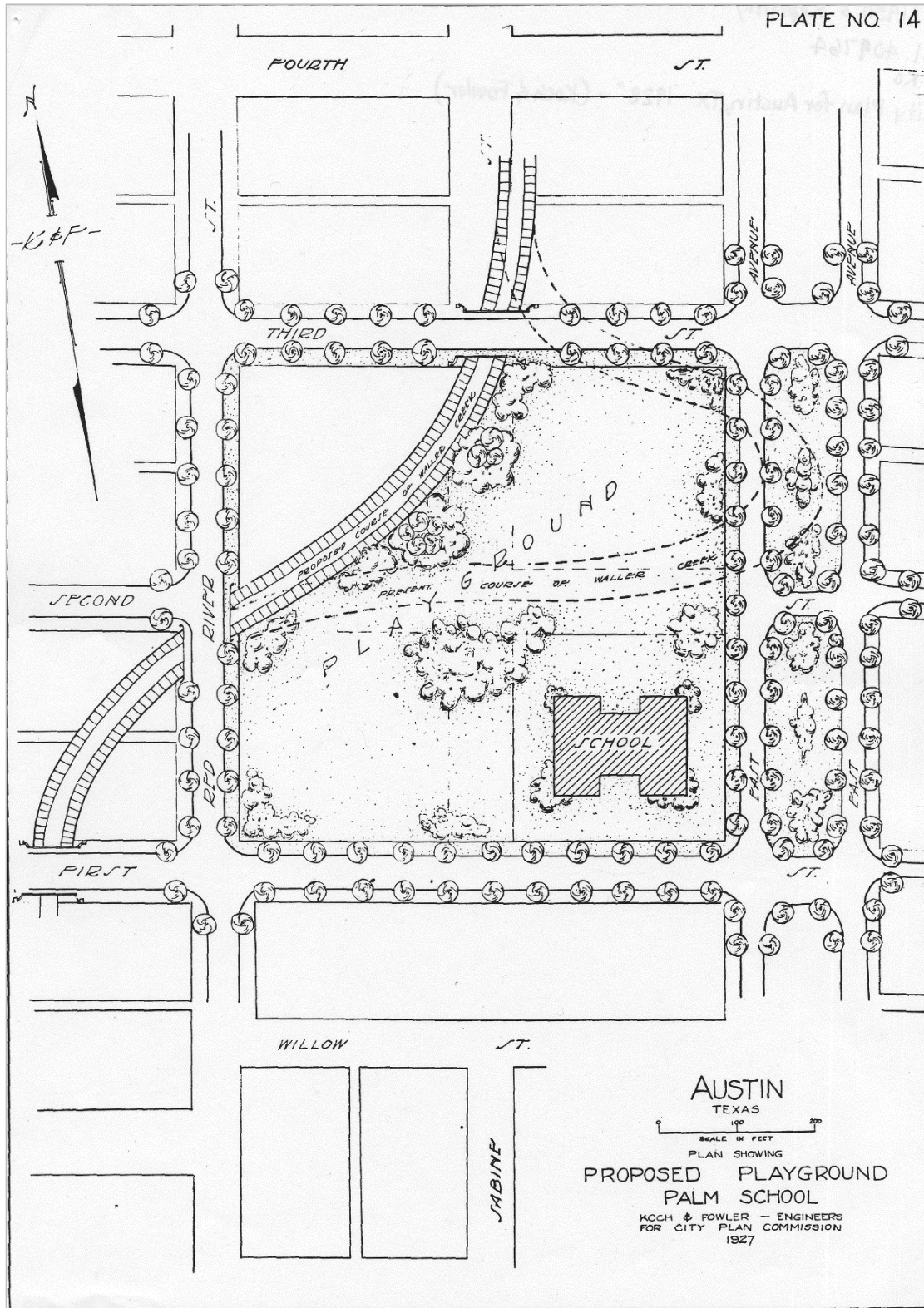


Figure 4-4. Koch and Fowler proposed the development of properties adjacent to the Palm School into a park with playground. This image illustrates the intent to rechannel Waller Creek in this area and line major thoroughfares with *alleés* of trees. Source: Koch and Fowler, *City Plan* (1928).



Figure 4-5. Detail of the Home Owner's Loan Corporation's "redlining" map of Austin that identified the lower Waller Creek area as "Definitely Declining." This diverse residential area contained a large African American population.

Source:

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/30.2756/-97.7471&opacity=0.8&text=intro&city=austin-tx>.



Figure 4-6. View of the lower Waller Creek area looking north around 1930. This photograph focuses on lower Waller Creek between East 6th and East 15th Streets. Note the importance of Red River Street and East Avenue as transportation routes as well as the connectivity between areas west and east of the neighborhood. East 11th and East 15th Streets have not yet been developed as boulevards at the time of this photograph. The empty block in the central foreground is the future site of the City Market House. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 4-7. View of the north portion of lower Waller Creek looking west around 1930. This photograph was taken after East 15th Street had been developed into a boulevard. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 4-8. This view of the lower Waller Creek area at East 1st Street was taken around 1930 before the rechannelization of the creek. Note the density of the residential area complete with amenities such as sidewalks. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 4-9. A view of Palm School Park along East Avenue taken after the park was completed in 1933. Note the landscaping and the accessibility of the park and playground to East Avenue and the neighborhood beyond. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.





Figure 4-10. The Art Deco City Market House (demolished) after its completion in 1935. The market was located on East Avenue between 7th and 8th Streets, the current site of the Austin Police Department. Source: <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/city-market-house-demolished-austin-tx/>.



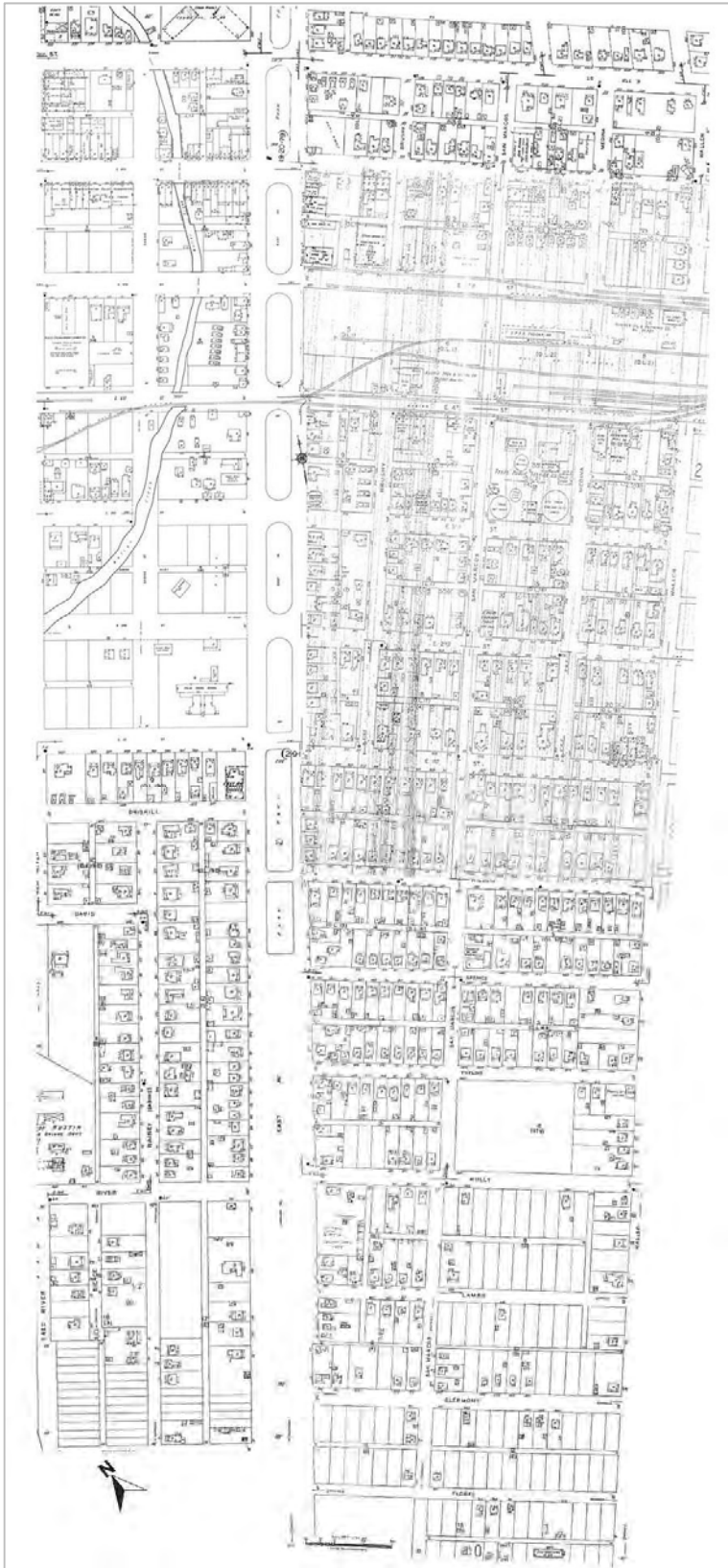


Figure 4-11. Composite of the 1935 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map shows the eastern portion of the lower Waller creek area to East 7th Street. Of note are the completed Palm School Park, the rechannelized creek in that vicinity, and the dense development in the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

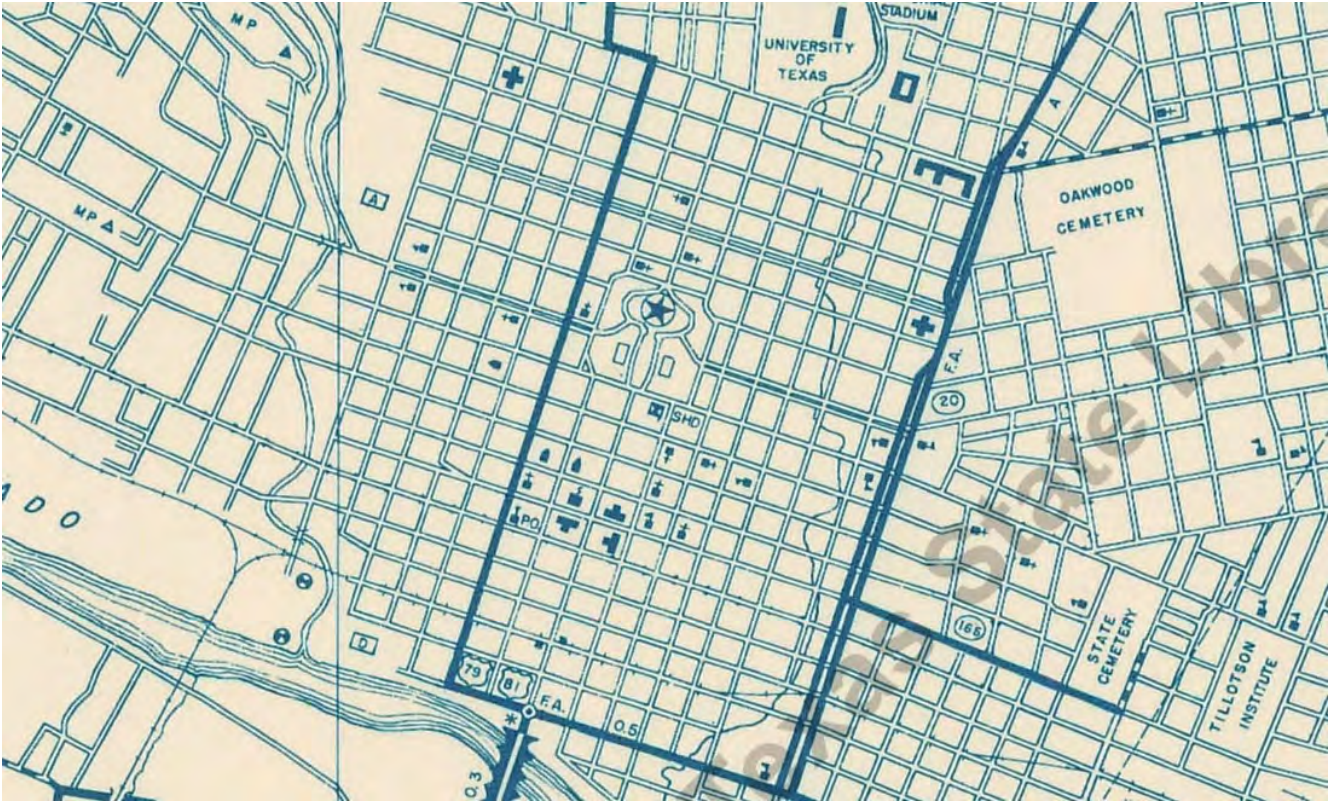


Figure 4-12. Detail of the 1936 Texas Highway Department *General Highway Map* shows the relationship of major transportation routes to lower Waller Creek. Source: Texas State Library and Archives.




Figure 4-13. View of the lower Waller Creek area looking south from East 15th Street around 1935. Red River Street (left center) appears to be in the process of re-paving. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 4-14. The Leo Mueller family standing in front of their home at 502 East 16th Street in the mid-1930s. Source: *The Life of Leo O. Mueller*.





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Figure 4-15. An advertisement of August 26, 1928, for H. C. Griffin's marble works which was located in the 700 block of Red River Street. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.



Figure 4-16. Fred Wong pictured in his New China Food Market at Red River Street. Source: Smithsonian Learning Lab.



Figure 4-17. Advertisement dated June 22, 1928 for Southland Ice Company located at 901 Red River Street. Southland was the precursor to convenient store chain 7-Eleven. Source: *Austin American*.



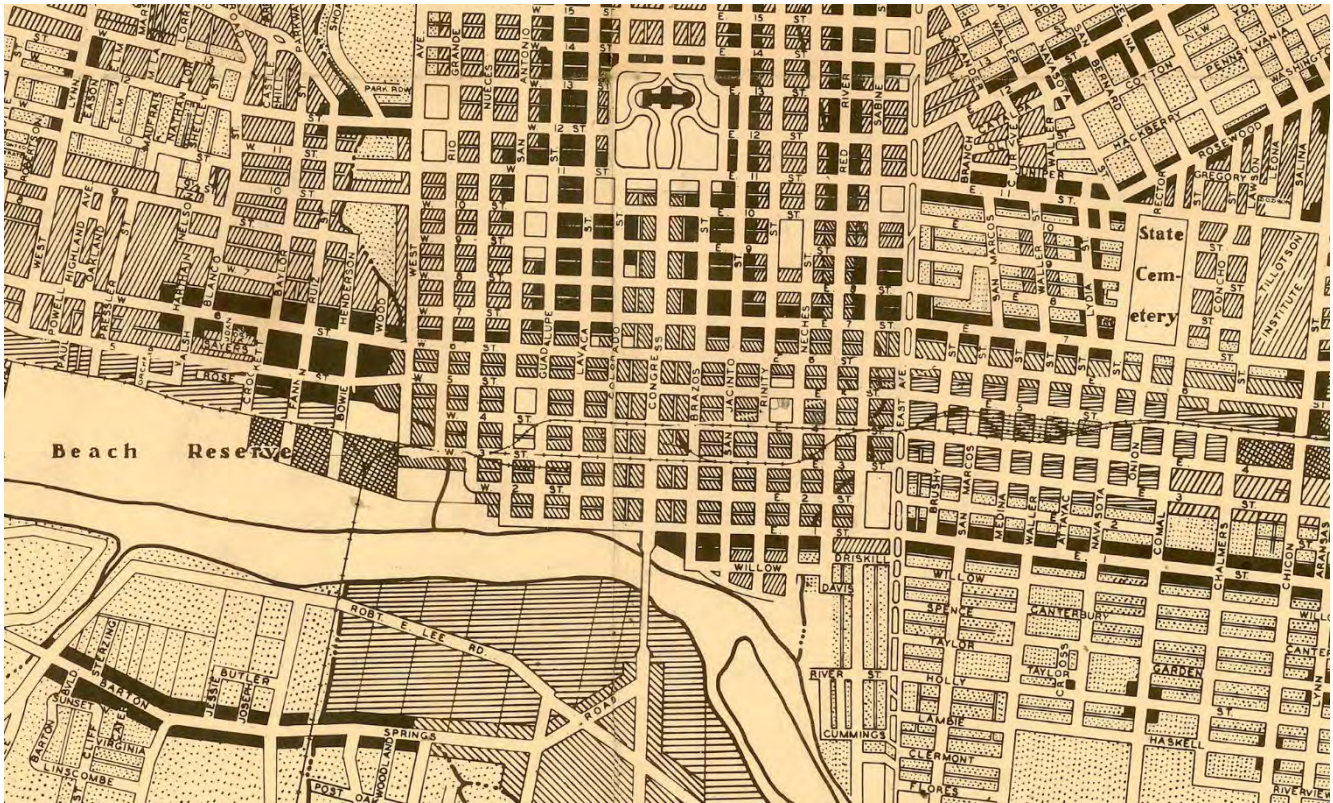


Figure 4-18. This detail of the Austin Chamber of Commerce's district-use map of Austin from 1939 illustrates some effects of the 1928 *City Plan*. Much of the lower Waller Creek area was identified as residential north of East 7th Street, while areas to the south had become predominantly commercial with the exception of the Rainey Street area and the city-owned property closest to the Colorado River. A new commercial district had sprung up on Red River Street by this time. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.



Figure 4-19. In November 1928, the Pasteur Institute at the State Lunatic Asylum merged with other state agencies to form the State Hygienic Laboratory. The state agency moved into a new three-story, brick building located in the former "Market" square on East 5th Street across from Brush Square. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.



Figure 4-20. The 1928 *City Plan* recommended new fire stations throughout Austin. In January 1939, a new Art Deco style fire station, funded with federal aid, was completed at the northwest corner of Brush Square. Source: <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/central-fire-station-austin-tx/>.





Figure 4-21. The Flood of 1935 devastated parts of Austin and caused damage to the homes and businesses in the lower Waller Creek area when the Colorado River backed up into the creek. The inundated mouth of the creek is depicted on the right edge of the photograph at the north edge of the floodwaters. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.



Figure 4-22. View of the 1939 flood looking northeast from across the Colorado River. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 4-23. View of the 1939 flood taken at East 1st and Red River Streets. Source: kut.org.



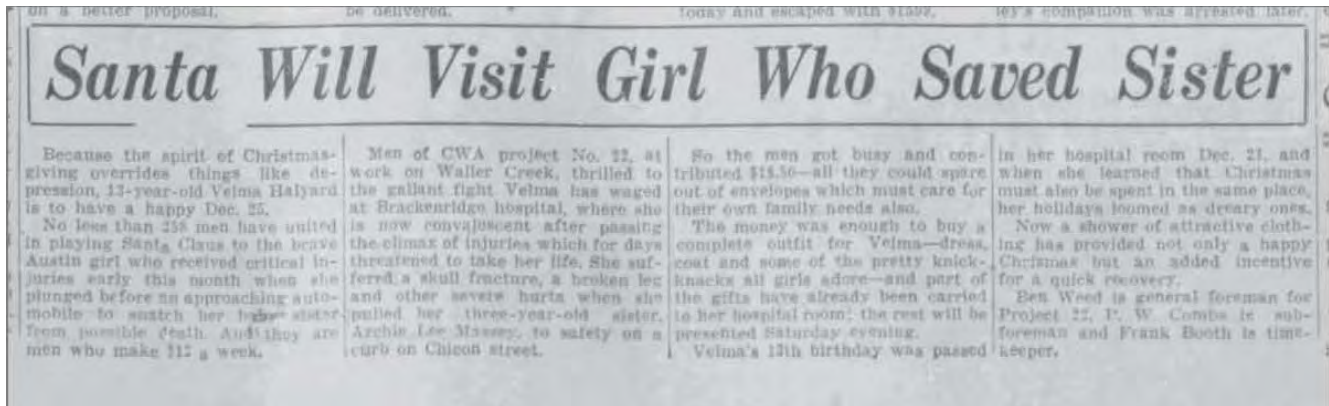


Figure 4-24. In late December, a Civil Works Administration crew that was assigned to work on Waller Creek projects got into the holiday spirit and helped a little girl who had saved her sister's life and was hospitalized. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*, December 23, 1933.



Figure 4-25. A new East 12th Street bridge over Waller Creek was completed with federal funding. The bridge was one of several designed by city bridge engineer Carl Levander throughout Austin. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Koch and Fowler, *A City Plan for Austin, Texas*, 1928; Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc. *Interstate Highway 35 Corridor, Austin, Travis County, Texas, Historic Resources Investigations Intensive-Level Survey*, prepared for Texas Department of Transportation, 2004, I-38.
- <sup>2</sup> Koch and Fowler, 15.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, 40
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, 49-50, plate 9.
- <sup>5</sup> Andrew Karvonen, *Politics of Urban Runoff: Nature, Technology, and the Sustainable City* (Cambridge: MIT Press), 66.
- <sup>6</sup> Koch and Fowler; HHM, I-38.
- <sup>7</sup> Austin's Creeks, 2.
- <sup>8</sup> "Future Civic Center located on West Third by Street Commission," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 4, 1928: 1.
- <sup>9</sup> "Bridges to Link All Sections."
- <sup>10</sup> Koch and Fowler, 22-23; "Bridges to Link All Sections of Austin in City Plan Program," *Austin American*, March 4, 1928: 41.
- <sup>11</sup> Koch and Fowler, 27.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, 27.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Koch and Fowler, 55-56.
- <sup>15</sup> Koch and Fowler, 57.
- <sup>16</sup> Koch and Fowler, 27-28.
- <sup>17</sup> "Old Mexico Atmosphere at Spanish Village," *Austin Statesman*, May 30, 1939, found online at <https://www.newspapers.com>; "Spring Graduates Are Feted At Small Dinners, Luncheons," *Austin American*, May 12, 1946, accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com>.
- <sup>18</sup> "Literary Folks," *Austin American*, September 21, 1955, accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com>.
- <sup>19</sup> John Kelso, "Another Austin Icon Cashes in Its Chips, Hot Sauce." *The Austin American-Statesman*, July 8, 2010; Gary Dinges, "New bar, restaurant open at site of old Jaime's Spanish Village," <https://www.statesman.com/business/new-bar-restaurant-open-site-old-jaime-spanish-village/3iJtTxMa5ac2PpWgr5xLjN/>, accessed May 11, 2018.
- <sup>20</sup> Eliot M. Tretter, *Progressivism, Zoning, Private Racial Covenants, and the Making of a Segregated City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 19, <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/21232>, accessed June 22, 2016; Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., *City of Austin Historic Resources Survey*, volume I, prepared for the City of Austin, 2017, 77.
- <sup>21</sup> "Immediate Beautification Work on Waller Creed Ordered by City Council," *Austin American*, May 10, 1930: 14.
- <sup>22</sup> "City Beautifies Barton and Parks," *Austin American*, March 14, 1928: 9.
- <sup>23</sup> "Waller Creek to Be Beautified," *Austin American*, June 21, 1929: 14.
- <sup>24</sup> "Labor Unions endorse All Bond Proposals," *Austin American*, April 21, 1928: 2.
- <sup>25</sup> "Extension of Boulevard South," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 2, 1930.
- <sup>26</sup> "Waller Creek Needs Cleanup, Ward Says," *Austin American*, January 30, 1930: 14.
- <sup>27</sup> "Street Work First City Bond Item," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 23, 1928: 13.
- <sup>28</sup> "Paving Doubled as City Lets Contracts," *Austin American-Statesman*, March 28, 1930: 1.
- <sup>29</sup> "Storm Sewer Work to Be Started July 1," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 2, 1929: 16.
- <sup>30</sup> "9 Sewer Contracts on March City Program," *Austin American*, February 25, 1930: 10.
- <sup>31</sup> "Storm Sewers Ordered Laid," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 19, 1930: 14.
- <sup>32</sup> Koch and Fowler; HHM, *Austin Historic Resources Survey*, I-38.
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- <sup>34</sup> "Rector's Park Plan," *Austin American*, June 16, 1929: 7; "Play Leaders to Meet Here in Spring," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 8, 1930: 2; "Extensive Park Work Set for 1931," *Austin American*, December 11, 1930: 2.
- <sup>35</sup> "Relief Payrolls to Top \$30,000," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 15, 1933: 1.
- <sup>36</sup> "Red River Street Park Work Planned for 1930," *Austin American*, November 5, 1929: 5.
- <sup>37</sup> "Improvement of City Parks Voted," *Austin American*, November 19, 1930: 1.
- <sup>38</sup> "Council to Study Budget for Parks," *Austin American*, September 8, 1932: 2.
- <sup>39</sup> "Palm Pool to Open Monday," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 28, 1933: 12.



<sup>40</sup> Austin Chamber of Commerce, *Map of the City of Austin* [map], November 1933, Perry Casteñeda Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

<sup>41</sup> “2226 Get Relief Jobs Here First Day at \$12 Weekly Cash Wage,” *Austin American*, November 17, 1933: 1.

<sup>42</sup> Mr. Dobie lived on Waller Creek at the north edge of The University of Texas at Austin campus; “Dobie Snorts At C. W. A. ‘Beauties,’” *Austin American*, November 26, 1933: 6.

<sup>43</sup> The Living New Deal, “City Market House (Demolished) – Austin TX,” <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/city-market-house-demolished-austin-tx/>, accessed June 10, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> HHM, *Austin Historic Resources Survey*, I-38.

<sup>45</sup> The route of State Highway 20 through Austin started at the Congress Avenue bridge then thence on East 1st Street and East Avenue before following the present-day routes of Manor Road and US Highway 290.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Beulah Agnes Curry-Jones, interview by Dr. Tara Dudley, May 4, 2016, Austin, Texas. At the 1940 census, head of household at the neighboring residence (1205 Red River Street) that Dr. Curry-Jones recalls was Mary Joseph, a widow, born in Lebanon about 1882. Mary’s married daughter and son-in-law lived with her as did a number of Hispanic and white boarders living upstairs.

<sup>47</sup> Dr. Beulah Agnes Curry-Jones, interview by Dr. Tara Dudley.

<sup>48</sup> Leo Mueller, Jr., *The Life of Leo O. Mueller*, revised 2009, 12, from Austin History Center, Austin Files Collection, File AF-P1200 (27) – Parks – Waterloo Park.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Barnes, “Grandson Recalls Austin’s Mexico,” *Austin American-Statesman*, January 17, 2013, <https://www.pressreader.com/usa/austin-american-statesman/20130117/282883728080093>, July 12, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Brad Buchholz, “Making grandfather’s lessons matter to Austin,” *Austin American-Statesman*, January 18, 2009: H1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> “Permit Refused,” *Austin American*, April 12, 1929: 8.

<sup>59</sup> “Mainly About People,” *Austin American*, April 12, 1929: 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Sunday Statesman*, August 26, 1928.

<sup>61</sup> D. S. Pardue Grocery was located at 1107 Red River Street.

<sup>62</sup> Dr. Beulah Agnes Curry-Jones, interview by Dr. Tara Dudley.

<sup>63</sup> Dr. Beulah Agnes Curry-Jones, interview by Dr. Tara Dudley.

<sup>64</sup> Arthur G. Aleman, *Memoirs of Arthur G. Aleman*, 3, <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=263553>, accessed May 11, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 55; “Our History,” <https://twinliquors.com/explore/about/#.W6RhaXtKhph>, accessed September 20, 2018; Ben Wear, “Man was inspiration behind Twin Liquors,” <https://www.statesman.com/news/man-was-inspiration-behind-twin-liquors/IPT2agI9CbSBtLEfEd6ZP/>, September 19, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Arthur G. Aleman, *Memoirs of Arthur G. Aleman*, 3; Dinges, “New bar, restaurant open at site of old Jaime’s Spanish Village,” Jaime’s Spanish Village, “Our Story,” <http://jaimesalsas.com/our-story/>; <http://alcalde.texasexes.org/2010/07/jaimes-spanish-village-to-close-after-80-years/>, accessed May 11, 2018; Michael Barnes, “Dining Scene, 40 years ago,” <http://www.pressreader.com/usa/austin-american-statesman-sunday/20151108/282488592611142>, accessed May 11, 2018.

<sup>67</sup> Austin History Center, “Pioneers from the East: First Chinese Families in Austin,” <http://www.austinlibrary.com/ahc/chinesepioneers.htm>, accessed July 9, 2018; Smithsonian Learning Lab, “Waves of Hope: Asian American History in Austin,” <https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/waves-of-hope-asian-american-history-in-austin/eYHUMHdADCMbN5UW#r/292043>, accessed July 9, 2018; Madeline Hsu, “Family Outing in Austin, Texas,” <https://notevenpast.org/family-outing-austin-texas/>, accessed July 9, 2018.

<sup>68</sup> John Fox, “The Weigls: Art Craftsmen in Iron” *Austin Homes & Gardens* (December 1979), 77; Jones, 180-181.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Jones, *Life on Waller Creek* (Austin: AAR/Tantalus, Inc.), 180-181.

<sup>70</sup> Jones. 181; "Weigl Family Ironsmiths Have Wrought Works of Art All Over Town," 30. *Austin-American Statesman*, December 14, 1980, <https://www.newspapers.com/>.

<sup>71</sup> F. Weigl Iron Works," *Austin American*, October 12, 1929, <https://www.newspapers.com/>; "History of Our Building," Austin Public Library, accessed July 06, 2018, <http://library.austintexas.gov/ahc/history-our-building>.

<sup>72</sup> "Weigl Brothers to be Honored," *The Austin American-Statesman*, February 21, 1975, <https://www.newspapers.com/>.

<sup>73</sup> "Southland Buys Local Ice Firm," *Austin American*, March 20, 1928: 14; "Contracts Let For Small Buildings," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 27, 1928: 19; Rajni Madan, "SOUTHLAND CORPORATION," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 16, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dhs02>, uploaded on June 15, 2010, modified on December 8, 2017, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>74</sup> James Rambin, "In the Rainey Street District, You Can Learn a Lot From a Sign," accessed April 20, 2018, <https://austin.towers.net/in-the-rainey-street-district-you-can-learn-a-lot-from-a-sign/>.

<sup>75</sup> "State Laboratory Building Approved," *Austin American*, March 30, 1928: 3; "\$25,000 Health Building Assured," *Austin American-Statesman*, March 31, 1928: 2; "State Laboratory Building Planned," *Austin American*, April 10, 1928: 3; "Institute Near Finished," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 2, 1928: 4; "New Home of Pasteur Institute," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 11, 1928; "Pasteur Institute Moves to New Downtown Building," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 26, 1928: 10; Texas Department of State Health Services, "History of the Austin State Hospital," accessed July 10, 2018, [https://www.dshs.texas.gov/mhhospitals/AustinSH/ASH\\_About.shtm](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/mhhospitals/AustinSH/ASH_About.shtm).

<sup>76</sup> Koch and Fowler, 61.

<sup>77</sup> The Living New Deal, "Central Fire Station – Austin, TX," <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/central-fire-station-austin-tx/>, accessed July 10, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Brewer, *Historical Outline*, 35; Wesley United Methodist Church, "Our History," accessed April 20, 2018, <http://wesleyunited.org/our-history/>.

<sup>79</sup> "School Board Figures as Finances Dwindle," *Austin American*, July 24, 1929: 14.

<sup>80</sup> "South Congress to be Made Uniform;" "Bonds to Provide Needed School Improvements," *Sunday American Statesman*, August 26, 1928: 7.

<sup>81</sup> Lathers Local No. 407 was one of the groups that provided labor. "Building Permits Soar in Austin," *Austin American*, January 19, 1936: 7; "Lathers Start Work on Newspaper Plant," *Austin American*, April 27, 1936: 3.

<sup>82</sup> "Young and Pratt Put in Heat Unit," *Austin American-Statesman*, July 19, 1936: 36.

<sup>83</sup> "Lulac Committee goes to Council with Complaint," *Austin American*, June 16, 1939: 13.

<sup>84</sup> Brad Buchholz, "Making Grandfather's Lessons Matter to Austin," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 18, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> James A. Marten, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "BRACKENRIDGE HOSPITAL," accessed July 14, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/sbb02>, uploaded on June 12, 2010, published by the Texas State Historical Association.

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<sup>88</sup> "Roosevelt Train in City Tonight," *Austin American*, June 11, 1936: 5.

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<sup>91</sup> Katherine, Hart, "Scholz' Song Tradition Revived," *Waterloo Scrapbook, 1973-1974*, August 24, 1974, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.

<sup>92</sup> Roland.

<sup>93</sup> At the time, the Aleman family lived at 1112 East 3rd Street. Aleman, 4.

<sup>94</sup> "Timeline;" *Austin Creeks*, 16.

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<sup>99</sup> "Flood Crest is Past in Austin," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 16, 1935: 2.

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<sup>101</sup> "Austin Damage Thought Millions," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 17, 1935.

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<sup>103</sup> "F.D.R. Gives Final Approval to CRA \$20,000,000 Project," *Austin American*, June 20, 1935: 1-2.  
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<sup>110</sup> "LCRA recounts devastating flood of 1930s."

<sup>111</sup> "Austin Benefits by Relief labor," *Austin American*, March 8, 1935: 12.

<sup>112</sup> "Gravel Haul Nearer," *Austin American-Statesman*, March 12, 1934: 1.

<sup>113</sup> "McFadden Wants Bonds Election Set for May 19," *Austin American*, March 21, 1928: 1, 2.

<sup>114</sup> HHM & Associates, Inc., *City of Austin Historic Resources Survey*, volume II, prepared for the City of Austin, 2017, 65.

<sup>115</sup> "McFadden Wants Bonds Election Set for May 19," March 21, 1928, 2

<sup>116</sup> "South Congress to Be Made Uniform," *Austin American-Statesman*, March 25, 1928: 2.

<sup>117</sup> "Red River Bridge Part of Bond Program," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 7, 1928: 12.

<sup>118</sup> "Waller Creek Bridge Asked in Petition," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 6, 1928: 14.

<sup>119</sup> "City to Reclaim Waller Creek Area," *Austin American*, September 11, 1930: 2.

<sup>120</sup> "Two Bridges Opened to Traffic," *Austin American*, September 27, 1930.

<sup>121</sup> Bruce Jensen, *Historic Road Infrastructure of Texas National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, 57.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>123</sup> "Waller Creek Bridge to be built Soon," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 22, 1928: 1.

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## 5. Lower Waller Creek in the Mid-Twentieth Century, 1940–1957

### 5.1. DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The 1940s opened with Austinites optimistic about the pending completion of the Austin Dam, renamed the Tom Miller Dam after the former mayor who had been a staunch supporter of the endeavor. The city and surrounding Hill Country community looked forward to low-cost electrical service, the restoration of Lake Austin, and flood control from the new upriver dams.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the diminished threat of flooding, land values in the lower Waller Creek area began to rise. As a result of this economic disenfranchisement and the continuing effects of planning policies rooted in institutionalized segregation, most African American and Mexican American families had relocated out of the lower Waller Creek area by 1940 and continued to do so. Over the course of the next two decades, land use in the lower Waller Creek area became decidedly more commercial and industrial.

#### 5.1.1. Shifting Demographics

Once a dense population group concentrated along lower Waller Creek, most African American households resided east of East Avenue by 1940. A few remained scattered in the vicinity of Waller Creek along Red River Street. Likewise, most Mexican American households in Austin were clustered further east, south of the enclave of African American families (figs. 5-1, 5-2). A significant concentration of Mexican American families still lived in the Waller Creek area in the Driskill & Rainey and Bridge View neighborhoods. Bridge View was closely connected to, and essentially undistinguishable from, the Mexican American neighborhoods to the east.

Economic and social forces continued to show prejudice toward minorities who still resided in the lower Waller Creek area, framing seemingly beneficial projects in ways that cast African Americans and Mexican Americans in an unflattering light. Just after World War II, the Travis County Tuberculosis Association conducted a citywide study which found:

Whereas Anglo-Americans have only 25.3 [tuberculosis] deaths per 100,000 population and Negroes only 41.5, the Latin-American rate is 125 deaths. This is six times the number of deaths among Anglos in the city. Highest incidence and highest death rate is found in the Waller Creek area, [predominantly] Latin-American, and can be traced to poor housing.... Crowded and congested living conditions result in rapid spread of the disease.<sup>2</sup>

The general area under discussion was from the Colorado River to East 15th Street and Neches Street to the eastern edge of the city, which encompassed the lower Waller Creek area. In conjunction with these findings, Robert G. Eckhardt, secretary of Inter-American Racial Affairs “expressed deep concern for the conditions in the Mexican district on Waller Creek, declaring it was a veritable breeding ground for disease.”<sup>3</sup> He called for enforcement of sanitary ordinances and that the city “make plans to secure sufficient amounts of the Waller Creek property and develop it into a park and playground for children” – never mind that segregated Palm Park was already only a few blocks away.<sup>4</sup> More specifically this “district” that Eckhardt referenced lay along Red River and Sabine Streets at East 11th, 12th, and 13th Streets. Austin tour ambassador Harrison Eppright recalls an enclave of cinderblock buildings in the 1200 block of Sabine Street well into the early 1950s.<sup>5</sup> They were inhabited primarily by African American and Mexican American families.<sup>6</sup> Small groups of homes inhabited by and businesses operated by minorities persisted along the lower Waller Creek corridor until urban renewal efforts in the 1970s.

### 5.1.2. Beautification Projects

While city officials proposed beautification schemes intended to disguise their prejudicial and discriminatory intents, some projects were straightforward attempts to continue the civic improvement that had begun in the 1930s. In the spring of 1944, city officials proposed projects in various areas of need, including work on the streets and recreation and parks in its publication titled “Inventory of Some Present and Future Needs for Austin and Its Territory.”<sup>7</sup> In the lower Waller Creek corridor, the inventory proposed a bridge over the creek at East 8th Street and that “Waller Creek Parks” be created along the stream by acquiring vacant and “slum” lands along Waller Creek from 19th Street to the Colorado River.<sup>8</sup> The inventory also said that Waller Creek should be beautified by improving and cleaning rubbish from the creek, mowing banks to eliminate all weeds, and planting trees and grass. Following the publication of this report in local newspapers, City Plan Manager G. S. Moore said “an investigation is being made of Waller Creek between 10th and the Colorado River, with eventual beautification of the creek as the objective.”<sup>9</sup> As a result, the city hired several crews for a clean-up job, cutting weeds, cleaning, and spraying Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (an insecticide also known as DDT) in the alleys in the “Waller Creek sector” from the Colorado River northward. The city warned residents to stop dumping garbage in the alleys, particularly while the clean-up work was happening, and threatened legal action if dumping continued.<sup>10</sup> In 1946, Hugo Kuehne of the city planning commission presented a seven-point program to reclaim and beautify Waller Creek, similar to work already being done on Shoal Creek, in order to clear up slum conditions.<sup>11</sup> An editorial from this period seems to have summed up the feelings of many Austinites:

Waller Creek could be made very beautiful but it seems “nobody does anything about it.” The San Antonio river in that city had been made a lovely stream. Why couldn’t Austin do the same thing for Waller Creek? The trash could be cleaned out of it **and it could be made accessible to the people of East Austin** [emphasis added]. There is nothing more beautiful than clear flowing water and Waller never goes dry.<sup>12</sup>

### 5.1.3. Early Re-zoning and Urban Redevelopment

Beautification was not the only type of development sought in the lower Waller Creek area. With the continued displacement of families from the area, property owners, businesses, and developers began to seek zoning changes. In the fall of 1947, the city reviewed an application of the Pepsi-Cola Company to change an area south of Davis Street between Red River Street and Waller Creek from “Residential A” to “Commercial C-2.”<sup>13</sup> In 1948, the City of Austin’s Board of Adjustment changed a number of properties on East 11th Street—on the north side between Red River Street and East Avenue and on the south side between Red River Street and Sabine Street—from a residential District to a commercial district. Among the reasoning for changing the residential zoning of these lots in the vicinity of the Huston College’s Industrial Building (now called the Science Hall) and the Bickler School, the applicants cited the presence of “sub-standard Negro and Mexican dwellings which virtually create a slum condition” which made the area “no longer desirable for residential purposes.”<sup>14</sup>

In 1950, under Title I of the National Housing Act of 1949, Austin City Council proposed four areas for urban development. One of them was in the lower Waller Creek area – 12 blocks on both sides of the creek from East 7th to East 19th Streets.<sup>15</sup> Under Title I, the federal government granted municipalities funds to buy areas that they determined needed redevelopment. After the sites were cleared, they could be sold to private enterprises for rebuilding. As such, federally funded urban redevelopment became key to continued land-use changes and displacement of minority communities in the lower Waller Creek corridor. In the 1950s, the area’s population continued to decline, especially along and south of East 1st (Cesar Chavez) Street, as commercial and warehouse structures replaced residences.<sup>16</sup>

### 5.1.4. The Interregional Highway

Another major factor in the development of the lower Waller Creek corridor during this period was the construction of the Interregional Highway over East Avenue. Plans for this expansion to the state's highway system and connection to other national routes were in place as early as the late 1940s.<sup>17</sup> The highway was intended to reroute vehicular traffic within the city and to relieve downtown congestion.<sup>18</sup> Some Austinites argued that the highway would serve as a physical barrier to further separate the large and growing minority community in East Austin from the rest of the city. Still, in May 1946, voters approved a \$940 million bond package to fund the building of the highway (see section 6.2.1. in Chapter 6 for a discussion of development of Interstate 35).

Work on the Interregional Highway began in the early 1950s. Initially, it consisted of a below-grade highway at strategic points so that the motorists could avoid cross traffic and stops at busy intersections. Overpasses were located at important intersections, such as East 1st Street in the lower Waller Creek area. Other areas of East Avenue remained largely unchanged; the roadway retained its medians as well as uninterrupted crossings and intersections. The original design and construction did not necessitate acquisition of large quantities of property. As recommended in the 1928 *City Plan*, much of the highway was built on existing right-of-way, notably the medians of East Avenue, which long had served as parkland (fig. 5-3).<sup>19</sup> A 1954 topographic map of Austin displays the prominence of the Interregional Highway but indicates that much of the lower Waller Creek area remained unchanged with its construction (fig. 5-4). By 1962, the highway would be dedicated as a part of the new US Interstate Highway System (read more about this transformation in Chapter 6).

## 5.2. LIFE ALONG THE CREEK

### 5.2.1. Residences

By the 1940s, the lower Waller Creek area retained a significant residential neighborhood east of the state capitol building. An aerial photograph after a snow storm in 1940 depicts the density of homes—most constructed from the late 1800s through the 1920s—in the area bound by East 9th, San Jacinto, East 15th Streets, and East Avenue (fig. 5-5). Many dwellings still abutted Waller Creek, especially north of East 11th Street. Although much of the African American and Mexican American populations that had formerly lived along the creek had migrated east of East Avenue by this date, small enclaves of minority families still called the area home. Austin tour guide Harrison Eppright recalls the remnants of the African American community from visits to the family physician, Dr. S. H. Dryden who relocated his medical office from 1801 Lavaca Street (present-day site of Cambridge Tower Condominiums) to the 1300 block of Sabine Street.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Dryden served many minority families that would have formerly lived along lower Waller Creek but that had been relocated to the “Negro District” across East Avenue.<sup>21</sup> Eppright's boyhood memories include, in particular, a group of cinderblock houses in the 1200 block of Sabine Street. The dwellings were home to African American and Mexican American families as indicted by examination of the 1940 US Federal Census. Because minorities inhabited that section of Sabine Street, the City of Austin left it unpaved into the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

### 5.2.2. Businesses

Although residential diversity was severely diminished just before World War II, owners of various ethnicities still operated businesses throughout the lower Waller Creek area, including on East 6th Street. By 1940, African American, Lebanese, Syrian, Jewish, German, Chinese, and Mexican American merchants were present in the neighborhood. Crown Tailors (408 East 6th Street) was a white business but advertised on African American radio shows (fig. 5-6).<sup>23</sup> Austin's Lebanese community had been growing since the turn of the century. By this time, several enterprising families had businesses of their own, including the Jabour family, who still operated Jabour's Package Store (415 East 6th Street). Antique and second-hand retail shops also

### ***The Lung Family***

Lung Zhou came to America from Hoi Ping, China in 1876 to serve as a contract laborer on the railroads in California. His family name was anglicized to “Joe” and switched to his first name at the immigration office in California. Joe came to Texas when the railroad was complete and married Dora Wong. After the couple settled in Austin in 1906, Joe went to work for his brother Fong who had established a café in 1897, eventually taking over the business when Fong returned to China in 1909. Like other early Chinese immigrants to the US, Joe Lung was an unskilled and uneducated contract laborer who was able to find a niche for himself in Austin’s urban economy in the laundry or restaurant business. Joe Lung Café was housed in several locations, including 507 San Jacinto (see Chapter 3 and fig. 3-2). Joe Lung died in 1926, and his son Sam took over the family business. Sam later opened Lung’s Chinese Kitchen at East 1128 Red River Street in 1945 (fig. 5-11). The third generation of the Lung family was represented by Sam’s son Joe (1940–2018). Joe attended John T. Allan Junior High School. He briefly went into the restaurant business on his own, opening a chain of sandwich shops called “Joe’s” throughout Austin—one was located East 6th Street not far from the original Antone’s. Joe also ran Lung’s Chinese Kitchen until the family business closed in 1974 under pressure from urban renewal development. The site is now a parking lot.<sup>[27]</sup>



*The Lung family, ca. 1950. From left to right: Meiling, Sam, Joe, Sandra, and Lorene. Source: PICB 21514, “Lung, Joe & Family” AF-Biography file, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas available from <http://library.austintexas.gov/ahc/lung-family-352534>.*

continued to prosper along Red River Street. Among established African American shopkeepers was Simon Sidle whose “Simon’s Antiques” has remained in the area until moving to East 12th and Chicon Streets in 1952. The elder Sidle was joined by his daughter Theresa Sidle Mays when she opened an antique store at 1204 Red River Street in 1946; her business relocated to 1122 Red River Street in 1954.<sup>24</sup>

Following changes in the demographics of the lower Waller Creek community and the city’s zoning laws, industrial enterprise became more prevalent, especially along East 1st Street and points south and closer to East Avenue/Interregional Highway. Southland Ice Company, founded at 901 Red River Street in 1928, was still an important business (fig. 5-7). After a year of

construction, Superior Dairies (600 East 1st Street) opened in 1942 (fig. 5-8 and 5-9).<sup>25</sup> A beer delivery company operated at 506 East 1st Street. In 1944, Leonard C. East moved his L. East Produce Company from Colorado Street on the west side of downtown to East 8th Street (fig. 5-10). The produce company sold groceries, meats, wholesale and retail turkey, chicken, eggs, butter, duck, pecans, guineas, geese, furs and hides. Under L. East Poultry, the family operated a separate company to distribute wholesale poultry to grocery stores. Dr. Curry-Jones recalls her experiences walking in the area of L. East Produce:

Some of my neighbors and my cousin would walk to the Pardue’s Grocery. But, if they wanted me to go back home since I was younger, all they had to do was just start walking and cross in front of L. East with all these chickens and ducks and stuff with all that noise and they knew that I would automatically turn around and go back home.<sup>26</sup>

The area’s diversity was also illustrated in the number and types of eating establishments in the neighborhood. The Lung family, who had operated the Joe Lung Café in different locations—Congress Avenue, East 6th Street, and San Jacinto Street—opened Lung’s Chinese Kitchen on Red River Street in 1945 (fig. 5-11). The new eatery offered traditional Chinese fare as opposed to the American food that the Lungs and other Chinese immigrants previously operated in Austin. (Read more in “*The Lung Family*” sidebar.<sup>27</sup>) Chinese Americans could still obtain supplies from Fred Wong’s New China Food Market at 714 Red River Street.<sup>28</sup> Monroe Lopez, Austin’s first



Mexican millionaire, opened *El Matamoros* on East Avenue in 1947 (figs. 5-12 and 5-13). Lebanese entrepreneurs also maintained a foothold in the commercial growth of the lower Waller Creek corridor. Brothers Thomas and Moses Kouri opened the Handy Andy grocery store (later renamed the Humpty Dumpty) on East 6th Street in 1947 (fig. 5-14).<sup>29</sup> A street view from 1958 illustrates a busy East 6th Street with a diversity of clientele and businesses (fig. 5-15).

The variety of business types in the lower Waller Creek area appealed to the consumers brought in by the increased vehicular traffic, thanks to improved roads and the introduction of the Interregional Highway. Austin Body Works (510–512 East 6th Street) was one of many auto-related enterprises—filling stations, tire shops, auto and body garages—that catered to automobile traffic in the lower Waller Creek area (fig. 5-16).

In the 1940s and 1950s, the lower Waller Creek corridor was considered the western edge of the 11th Street entertainment district. The New Orleans Club, housed in a former late nineteenth-century dwelling in the 1100 block of Red River Street, was a popular bar and nightclub that marked the beginnings of the Red River Street entertainment district (fig. 5-17). In 1951, musician and native Austinite Ernie Mae Miller began a longstanding residency at the New Orleans Club (fig. 5-18).<sup>30</sup> (Read more in sidebar “*Ernie Mae Miller and the New Orleans Club*.”<sup>31</sup>)

### ***Ernie Mae Miller and the New Orleans Club***

Ernest (“Ernie”) Mae Miller (1927–2010) is an Austin music legend who helped to usher in the beginning of Red River Street’s reputation as a live music venue. The descendant of formerly enslaved educators who themselves became prominent in Austin, Ernie was born in Austin in 1927. Her talent as a musician was discovered at age five. She graduated from L. C. Anderson High School (named after her grandfather) and Prairie View A & M University. In college, Ernie was a member of the Prairie View Co-ed Jazz Band in which she showed off her skills as a baritone saxophonist. The all-girl band had the opportunity to travel across the county performing on the same tickets with the likes of Bob Hope and Billie Holiday. When she returned to Austin, Miller pursued a career as a solo jazz pianist and vocalist. She became the featured performer at the New Orleans Club where she enjoyed a 15-year residency. As it was sited near Waller Creek, the club (then at 1123–1125 Red River Street and now located in Symphony Square) would flood from time to time. Miller recalled arriving one evening for her set and having to walk through the water in her brand-new red suede shoes, ruining them. Ernie Mae Miller recorded two live albums at the venue—both were titled *Ernie Mae at the Old New Orleans Club*.<sup>[31]</sup>



*The album cover for one of Ernie Mae Miller’s live recordings at the New Orleans Club. Source: Austin Chronicle.*

Not all businesses prospered in the area, however. As a result of the removal of the residential customer base to suburban areas outside the downtown core, the growth of supermarkets and grocers in and near downtown slowed. Improved roads in suburban areas made the traditional market less appealing to Austin consumers. The City Market House closed on February 15, 1952 – a harbinger of the changes in commercial growth and development that were to come.

### **5.2.3. Pastimes, Leisure, and Special Events**

Palm School and Palm School Park played important roles in the life of the lower Waller Creek community in the 1940s and 1950s. While white and Mexican American children frequented the park (fig. 5-19), only white children could swim in the pool, a popular spot during Austin’s hot summers (fig. 5-20). Austin City Council Member Pio Rentería fondly recalls his days as an elementary-age student at Palm School, which was enlarged in 1948 and 1949 to accommodate its growing enrollment. For Rentería, memories of free ice cream from Superior Dairies across the street are more pleasant to recall than those of having to watch swimmers outside the fence of the segregated Palm

Park pool.<sup>32</sup> Although the pool was available for some, children still swam in Waller Creek near Palm School and Park. A little further away, Emery Hogan and his son Douglas discovered 20 African American Austinites swimming near the mouth of Waller Creek in the winter of 1955.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes, children's pastimes were more destructive. Miss Emma Otto, resident at 203 Red River Street, complained that boys were digging caves on the bank of the creek below her home.<sup>34</sup> Loitering was not uncommon and those who wished to hasten the removal of minority communities from the lower Waller Creek area were quick to link the poor behavior of some with the neighborhood's declining residential and growing commercial character:

Inter-connected with delinquency are poor housing, residence near business or industrial sections, a mixture of races as to proximity of residences, poverty, and unattractive surroundings. A sufficient slum clearance program would first look at clearing the worse [sic] zones near the business-industrial area, namely the Waller Creek section and that collateral with the tracks to the east.<sup>35</sup>

Still, the presence of religious and educational institutions in the lower Waller Creek corridor, like Palm School (expanded in 1949) and Samuel Huston College contributed to the life of the community. In the late 1940s, Sam Huston College still held summer convocations in the median of East Avenue near the school's industrial building located between East 11th and East 12th Streets on East Avenue (fig. 5-21). The East Avenue Baptist Church also still had a viable congregation and presence in the 1950s (fig. 5-22).

### 5.3. BRIDGES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Whether welcoming travelers and consumers or ushering long-term residents out, continued improvement of road and bridge infrastructure remained important in this period. The increasing popularity of the automobile hastened the demise of Austin's streetcar system, which ceased in 1940 (fig. 5-23). On the other hand, increased auto usage encouraged new road projects including paving. In 1944, the remainder of East 8th Street from Sabine Street to East Avenue was paved (fig. 5-8). A few years later, the city made plans for a bridge at East 8th Street over Waller Creek, noting that "the Waller Creek bridge is a step in plans to make both East Eighth and East Seventh one-way thoroughfares all the way to East Avenue; both are now one-way only as far east as San Jacinto Boulevard."<sup>36</sup> Austin City Council appropriated \$50,000 to fund the project.<sup>37</sup> The bridge was completed in August 1953 to "help to spread the traffic load of Austin's streets somewhat thinner."<sup>38</sup> (See figs. 5-24 and 5-25.) Some infrastructure improvements were not so harmless. From 1945–1950, the City of Austin laid several sewage lines in the banks of Waller Creek.<sup>39</sup> University of Texas professor and Waller Creek advocate Joseph Jones heartily disapproved:

To 1945... no interference had been offered [Waller] Creek apart from the occasional dam for ponds or building too close to the banks. Then in the late 1940s occurred one of the major ecological disasters in the history of the Creek, when the City of Austin ran a sewer under the limestone bed, completing work in 1950. This operation resulted, inevitably, in destroying the natural character of the bed, not only by breaking up the limestone to begin with, but by replacing it with roughly poured filler of the crudest description.<sup>40</sup>

The post-World War II Era saw changes in the demographics, development, and character of the lower Waller Creek corridor in a trend that would continue into the late twentieth century.

## CHAPTER 5 FIGURES

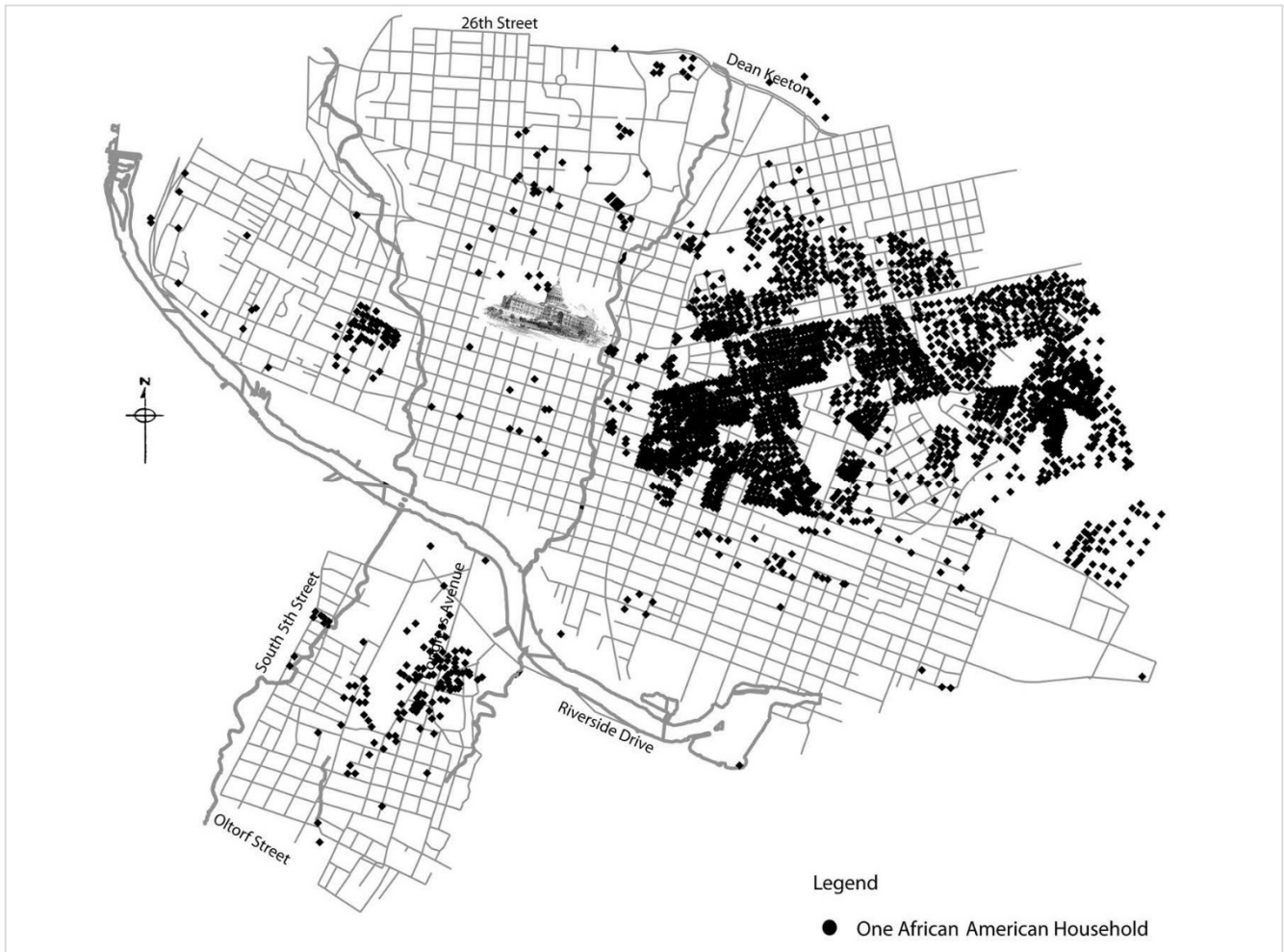


Figure 5-1. This map shows the location of African American households in the Austin city limits in 1940. Source: *Structuring* Jeremiah Spence, et al. *Structuring Race in the Cultural Geography in Austin*.



Figure 5-2. This map shows the location of Mexican American households in the Austin city limits in 1940. Source: *Structuring* Jeremiah Spence, et al. *Structuring Race in the Cultural Geography in Austin*.





Figure 5-3. A view of East Avenue looking south in December 1959 before construction of the Interregional Highway.  
Source: Texas Department of Transportation.



Figure 5-4. This topographical map of Austin from 1954 illustrates the location of prominent institutional buildings still in place as well as the new Interregional Highway (present-day IH-35) and its relationship to lower Waller Creek. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.





Figure 5-5. This January 1940 aerial of Austin indicates that residential land use was still dominant along the lower Waller Creek corridor between San Jacinto Street and East Avenue at that time. Note the proximity of residences to Waller Creek (highlighted in yellow). Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 5-6. Businesses such as Crown Tailors—where proprietor Hyman Samuelson hired Hispanic staff such as master tailor Eli Gonzales and catered to customers of all ethnicities—was reflective of the diversity of commercial enterprise in the lower Waller Creek area. Source: <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net>.





Figure 5-7. The Southland Ice Company (founded in 1928) remained a viable commercial enterprise in the lower Waller Creek area in 1940 as seen in this advertisement. Source: Samuel Huston College, *The Bulletin*, volume 9, no. 4 (May 28, 1940).



Figure 5-8. Superior Dairies on East 1st Street was indicative of the move toward industrial enterprise in the lower Waller Creek area in the 1940s and 1950s. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 5-9. This is a close-up view of Superior Dairies and its delivery truck on East 1st Street in the mid-century Austin. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 5-10. A view looking east on the newly paved segment of East 8th Street past Sabine Street. L. East Produce is pictured on the left at the end of the block. One of the wings of the City Market House is visible on the right. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 5-11. Lungs's Chinese Kitchen on Red River Street was one of the only venues serving authentic Chinese food in all of Austin. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 5-12. Monroe Lopez (pictured at the right) established El Matamoros Restaurant on East Avenue in 1947. "Lopez used his extraordinary culinary and marketing skills to bring the following firsts to Austin: takeout and delivery, an air-conditioned restaurant, tap beer in frosted mugs, and the irresistible crispy taco." Source: Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 64.



Figure 5-13. El Matamoros Restaurant located in the 500 block of East Avenue was a popular venue for Tex-Mex food. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 5-14. In 1947, the Lebanese Kouri brothers opened the Handy Andy grocery store on East 6th Street. The store is pictured here after the name was changed to Humpty Dumpty. Source: Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (2010), crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 5-15. In this 1958 view of East 6th Street, businesses like the East 6th Street Bar, New Look Beauty Salon, and Handy Andy grocery provided myriad services for a diverse clientele. Source: Michael Barnes, "An arresting shot of Sixth Street in the 1950s," <http://austinfound.blog.statesman.com/2017/01/21/an-arresting-shot-of-sixth-street-in-the-1950s/>, accessed September 20, 2018, crediting the Hans Beacham Estate.



Figure 5-16. Austin Body Works on East 7th Street catered to increased automobile traffic in the lower Waller Creek area. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 5-17. The New Orleans Club was an extension of the entertainment district that thrived on East 11th Street beyond East Avenue and signaled the beginnings of an entertainment district in the lower Waller Creek area. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



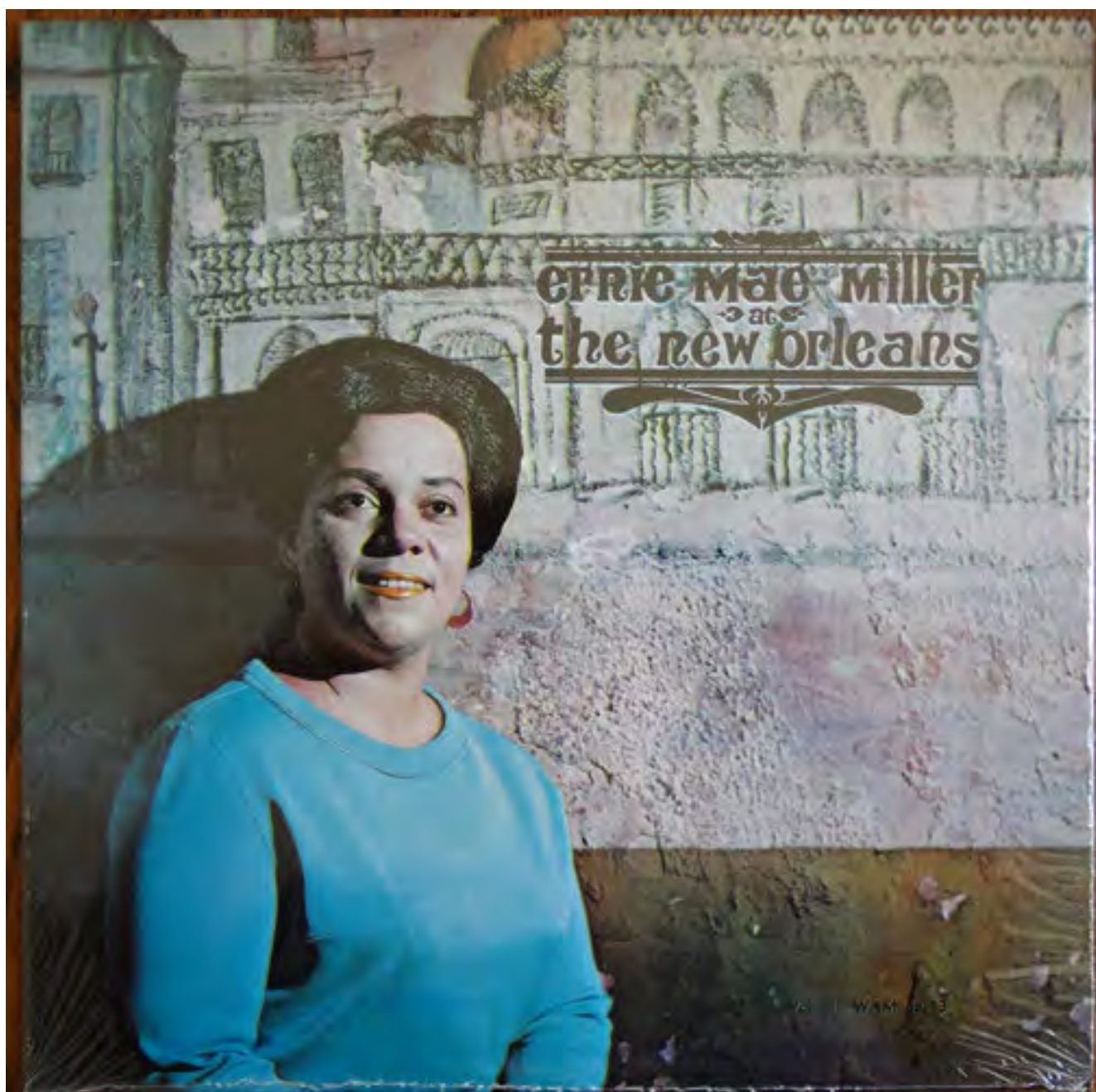


Figure 5-18. Native Austinite Ernest “Ernie” Mae Miller pictured in the New Orleans Café on her album cover. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 5-19. Mexican American girls enjoy jumping rope on a pad near the bathroom building at Palm Park in the 1940s. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 5-20. Children enjoy a swim at the Palm School Park. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 5-21. A large crowd enjoys the summer 1947 convocation of Samuel Huston College in the East Avenue median. The school's industrial building, which faced East Avenue between East 11th and East 12th Streets, is visible at the top right. Source: Down-Jones Library, HT History, [Samuel Huston College Summer Convocation, 1947], found online, accessed September 20, 2018, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/98797785553727572/>.

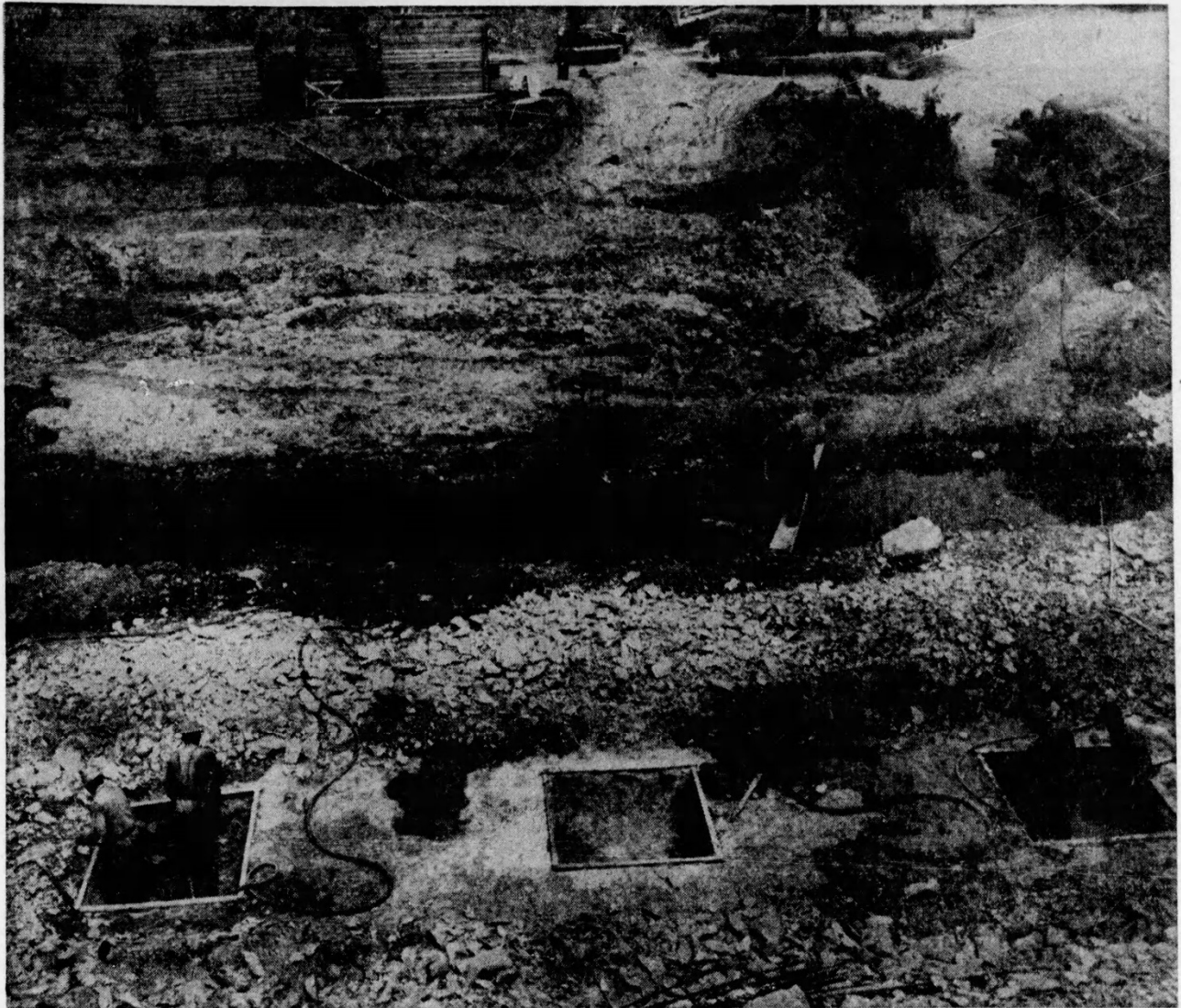


Figure 5-22. A view of East Avenue Baptist Church in 1953. A recent addition used as an educational building is adjacent to the original sanctuary. Source: Neal Douglass, [Street view of East Avenue Baptist Church], photograph, June 26, 1953, accessed September 21, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth19361/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth19361/), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





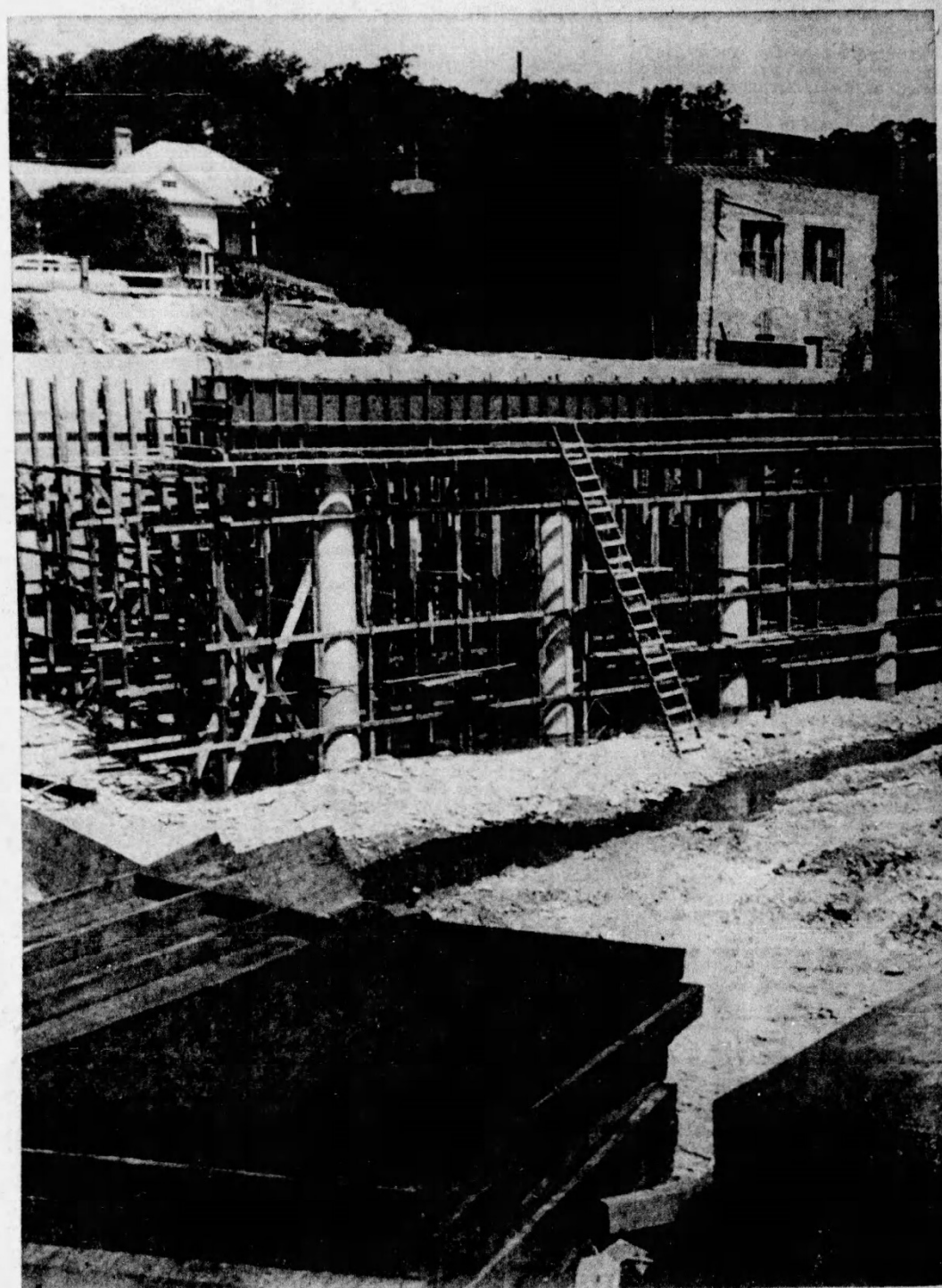
Figure 5-23. With the rise of automobiles, streetcar service became obsolete. In this February 1940 photograph, Palm School students watch the last streetcar on its route down East 1st Street. Source: [Last streetcar in front of Palm School, Austin, Texas], photograph, February 7, 1940, accessed September 21, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124369/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124369/), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](https://texashistory.unt.edu/); crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



**SLOW GOING** — Through stubborn rock workmen prepare foundations for another of the city's blossoming creek bridges, this one over Waller Creek on East Eighth Street just east of Red River. When completed the bridge will make East Eighth

a through street from San Jacinto Boulevard to East Avenue. Because of projects such as this, slowly the large number of creek-caused deadends is being reduced. But the cost is high, thus the pace is slow.—(Neal Douglass Photo.)

Figure 5-24. A photograph displays the construction progress of the East 8th Street bridge over Waller Creek. June 5, 1953. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.



**WORK SLOWED**—Millions of dollars in construction projects in Austin and Centex have been near paralyzed by a strike of union workers who are asking for a wage hike. Typical of the slowed-down projects is this

bridge over Waller Creek in the 600 block of East Eighth Street. Bargaining was continuing Tuesday but no progress toward settlement has been attained.—(Neal Douglass Photo.)

Figure 5-25. A photograph displays the construction progress of the East 8th Street bridge over Waller Creek. July 14, 1953. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> “Austin Drops Curtain on Booming 1939 with 1940 Like to Be Best Year in its History,” *Austin American*, January 1, 1940: 6.
- <sup>2</sup> “TB Death Rate Increases Here,” *Austin American*, October 24, 1946.
- <sup>3</sup> “Eckhardt Asks Aid From Club,” *Austin American-Statesman*, May 9, 1946: 9.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Harrison Eppright, interview by Dr. Tara Dudley, November 14, 2018, Austin, Texas.
- <sup>6</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940.
- <sup>7</sup> “Inventory of Some Present and Future Needs for Austin and Its Territory,” *Austin American*, March 12, 1944.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> “City Purchase of St. John’s Orphanage is Recommended by Austin Plan Commission,” *Austin American*, April 14, 1944, 5.
- <sup>10</sup> “5 Crews on Cleanup Job,” *Austin American-Statesman*, May 21, 1946: 6.
- <sup>11</sup> Homer Riley, “New Rail Terminal, Relocated Lines, in Austin Plan,” *Austin American*, March 6, 1946: 8.
- <sup>12</sup> “Personals,” *Austin American*, July 15, 1951: 6.
- <sup>13</sup> Specifically, this acreage was west of the extended west line of Red River Street, south of the extended south line of Davis Street, and east of Waller Creek north of the city barns. This is the present-day site of the Villas on Town Lake condominiums. “Boy Scouts’ Bid for City River Tract Turned Down as Illegal Transfer,” *Austin American-Statesman*, October 16, 1947: 12.
- <sup>14</sup> Minutes of the City Council, City of Austin, Texas, Regular Meeting, April 29, 1948, 6, accessed July 18, 2018, <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=88705>.
- <sup>15</sup> The other area was adjacent to the lower Waller Creek corridor’s Mexican American community, southeast of intersection of East Avenue and East 1st Street and soon to be divided by the Interregional Highway. “Four Sites Now Up for Redevelopment,” *Austin American-Statesman*, October 19, 1950: 25.
- <sup>16</sup> *Beneath the Center*, n.p.
- <sup>17</sup> HHM, *Interstate Highway 35 Corridor, Austin, Travis County, Texas, Historic Resources Investigations Intensive-Level Survey*, prepared for Texas Department of Transportation, 2004, I-44.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., I-20-21.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> *Austin American*, December 2, 1945: 7; “Clinic Approved,” *Austin American-Statesman*, April 10, 1953: 10; “Doctor’s Clinic Wins Approval,” *Austin American-Statesman*, May 12, 1953: 5; *Austin American*, September 6, 1953: 26. S. H. “Bud” Dryden (1914-2002) was later chief-of-staff at Brackenridge Hospital and served on the Austin City Council.
- <sup>21</sup> Harrison Eppright, interview by Dr. Tara Dudley.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Michael Corcoran, “Austin’s ‘Street of Dreams’: From Pecan Street to Dirty Sixth,” April 10, 2017, accessed June 17, 2018, <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/tag/sixth-street>.
- <sup>24</sup> Michael Corcoran, “When Red River was ruled by antiques and junk stores,” accessed November 20, 2018, <http://www.michaelcorcoran.net/archives/3231>.
- <sup>25</sup> “Heep Superior Plant Offers Fine Products,” *Austin American-Statesman*, August 8, 1942: 8; “Supply of Ice Cream Lowered this Season,” *Austin American-Statesman*, May 22, 1943: 8; “Heep Plant Offers War Time Service,” *Austin American-Statesman*, July 17, 1943: 8.
- <sup>26</sup> Dr. Beulah Agnes Curry-Jones, interview by Dr. Tara Dudley, May 4, 2016, Austin, Texas.
- <sup>27</sup> Yuanjing Du, “Lung House,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, July 2013; Michael Barnes, “Looking back on Joe Lung’s family and feats,” *Austin American-Statesman*, September 13, 2014; Joe Lung obituary, *Austin American-Statesman*, July 1, 2018, accessed July 15, 2018, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary-print.aspx?n=joe-lung&pid=189436339>; Allen Childs, *Sixth Street* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 57-61; Austin History Center, “Pioneers from the East: First Chinese Families in Austin,” accessed July 15, 2018, <http://www.austinlibrary.com/ahc/chinesepioneers.htm>; Hanna Huang, “Waves of Hope: Asian American History in



Austin,” online exhibit, accessed July 15, 2018, <https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/waves-of-hope-asian-american-history-in-austin/eYHUMHdADCMbN5UW#r>.

<sup>28</sup> Austin History Center, “Wong Family,” accessed July 15, 2018, <http://library.austintexas.gov/ahc/wong-family-352535>; Austin History Center, “Pioneers from the East: First Chinese Families in Austin,” accessed July 15, 2018, <http://www.austinlibrary.com/ahc/chinesepioneers.htm>; Hanna Huang, “Waves of Hope: Asian American History in Austin,” online exhibit, accessed July 15, 2018, <https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/waves-of-hope-asian-american-history-in-austin/eYHUMHdADCMbN5UW#r>.

<sup>29</sup> Tom Kouri obituary, *Austin American-Statesman*, December 23, 2007, accessed September 20, 2018, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary.aspx?n=tom-kouri&pid=100004979&fhid=4296>; Childs, *Sixth Street*, 53.

<sup>30</sup> Margaret Moser, “The Miller’s Tale,” *Austin Chronicle*, July 6, 2007, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2007-07-06/499211/>.

<sup>31</sup> The History Makers, “Ernie Mae Miller,” accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/ernie-mae-miller-41>; Margaret Moser, “The Miller’s Tale: Ernie Mae Miller still takes requests,” *Austin Chronicle*, July 6, 2007, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2007-07-06/499211/>; Ernie Mae Miller obituary, *Austin American-Statesman*, December 9, 2010, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary.aspx?n=ernie-mae-miller&pid=147056594>.

<sup>32</sup> Sabino “Pio” Renteria, interview conducted by Dr. Tara Dudley, April 18, 2018, Austin, Texas.

<sup>33</sup> “Tex’s Tips,” *Austin American*, January 27, 1955: 22

<sup>34</sup> “Referred to Police,” *Austin American*, May 26, 1945, 5.

<sup>35</sup> “Juvenile Delinquency,” *Austin American-Statesman*, November 6, 1940: 2.

<sup>36</sup> “Council Delays Engineer Okeh,” *Austin American-Statesman*, October 10, 1952: 13.

<sup>37</sup> “City Improvement: \$8 Million,” *Austin American-Statesman*, December 12, 1952: 1.

<sup>38</sup> “City Construction Totals \$8 Million,” *Austin American-Statesman*, August 4, 1953: 13.

<sup>39</sup> William J. Weeg, “1948 Austin Sewer Projects Slate at Cost of \$500,000,” *Austin American*, August 1, 1947: 8; “Talk of Hamburgers and Hot Dogs Keeps Council Session Busy,” *Austin American-Statesman*, August 28, 1947: 24; William K. Weeg, “City Faces Another Bread-Butter Year of Careful Spending,” *Austin American-Statesman*, December 31, 1948: 1; “Bland Bids Low on Sewer Line,” *Austin American-Statesman*, April 12, 1949: 16; “Blast Knock East Austin’s Power Down,” *Austin American-Statesman*, August 30, 1949: 12; “City Saved Money Doing Its Own Work,” *Austin American-Statesman*, July 26, 1950: 14; “Concrete Flooring Planned for Creek,” *Austin American-Statesman*, January 9, 1951; “Public Works Department Plans Projects for 1948,” *Austin American*, July 29, 1947.

<sup>40</sup> Jones, *Life on Waller Creek*, 277.

## 6. *The Austin Plan* and Urban Renewal, 1958–2017

### 6.1. *THE AUSTIN PLAN*

In the mid-twentieth century, the City of Austin devised zoning and planning strategies to displace certain segments of the population along the lower Waller Creek corridor in favor of commercial and certain types of institutional development. This trend continued over the next several decades, affecting the area's development, demographics, and landscape in various ways. Into the 1960s, the city continued to increase the density allowed by zoning and to raise property taxes. These maneuvers priced residents out and helped the city to avoid the legal obstacles to attaining land for slum clearance. In 1955, the City of Austin hired Harold F. Wise Associates of Menlo Park, California, to prepare a new comprehensive master plan. The firm published its report entitled *The Austin Plan* (under the name Pacific Planning and Research) in 1958. Referred to in city council minutes as the "Austin Development Plan," the report considered various topics and issues facing Austin's rapid growth during the postwar era. The plan's "Existing Land Use" map confirmed that commercial development had become dominant in the lower Waller Creek area, especially along Red River Street, as was intended by the 1928 *City Plan* (fig. 6-1). The proposed "Land Use Plan" includes the entirety of the lower Waller Creek corridor within a downtown core of consolidated commercial use (fig. 6-2) with no residential or industrial use, the latter relocated to East Austin, south of East 1st Street. The area along Waller Creek between East 12th and East 15th Streets was designated for "public" use. Although the plan did not discuss the displacement of residents, non-residential use is foreshadowed in the call for the removal of public amenities such as the schools, in this case Palm School, in the proposed "Public Facilities Plan" (fig. 6-3). One important component of the "Public Facilities Plan" was the development of interconnected linear parks along Austin's waterways. *The Austin Plan* noted:

Coupled with development of the riverfront is the development of greenbelts along the various creeks which run into the Colorado River. It is recommended that greenbelts be developed along the following creeks: Shoal, Waller, Williamson, Barton, West Bouldin, Little Walnut, Bull, Boggy, Blum, and Bee Creeks.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, the city council rejected *The Austin Plan* but used segments of it—land use, circulation/transportation, and public facilities—to form the basis of a plan drafted by City of Austin staff and approved in 1961. The 1961 *Austin Development Plan* included the concept of linear parks, or greenbelts, along the city's major inner-city creeks, including Waller Creek. Several master plans prepared after *The Austin Plan* of 1958 and the 1961 *Development Plan* "continued to emphasize the importance of urban nature."<sup>2</sup> Both industrial and landscape forces were at play when the construction of Longhorn Dam on the Colorado River resulted in the formation of Town Lake (present-day Lady Bird Lake) in 1960.<sup>3</sup> The lake was created to function as a cooling pond for the Holly Street Power Plant but formed an important link in the recreational greenbelt the city began to consider in earnest in the 1960s. As one of several streams that flows into the lake, future planning efforts began to consider Waller Creek's relationship to Town Lake and status in the city's proposed chain of greenbelts.

### 6.2. DEVELOPMENT ALONG LOWER WALLER CREEK

A 1959 view of the vicinity around the mouth of Waller Creek illustrates the increasing industrial and commercial use in the closest blocks east and west of Waller Creek south of East 6th Street – the north bank of the river between the Congress Street bridge and the mouth of the creek is largely undeveloped (fig. 6-4). Some of the major changes in the lower Waller Creek corridor after mid-century are apparent at the 1961 update of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of Austin. Businesses that were present on the 1935 map remain, but the Superior Dairy and L. East Produce/L. East Poultry complexes represent major non-residential

intrusions. So, too, is the Massengale Company poultry processing plant which relocated from 505 East 5th Street to 80 Red River Street in 1954.<sup>4</sup> The residential character of the area is still apparent, particularly north of East 12th Street and south of East 1st Street, but a significant number of vacant lots are also present. The map indicates that while occupied by various residences, the Bridge View Subdivision never fully developed. Increased commercial and auto-related development is visible along East Avenue, which was in the process of being transformed into Interstate Highway 35 and carried the routes of US Highways 79, 81, and 290 through Austin. This roadway development is shown in the Texas Highway Department's 1961 *General Highway Map* (fig. 6-5).

Although a residential neighborhood of late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century homes still made up the majority of the lower Waller Creek area in the late 1950s and 1960s, the blocks directly west of the state capitol building and closest to the University of Texas at Austin were characterized as being in a degenerative condition. While real estate listings for homes along Waller Creek around and north of the University of Texas were described as "in a Picturesque Setting," Austin resident and newspaper salesman Gordon M. Knight's editorial to the *Austin American-Statesman* described the area between East 12th and East 15th Street from San Jacinto to Waller Creek as a "large area of dilapidated structures" that should be "replaced by modern buildings" (fig. 6-6).<sup>5</sup> While some older homes and institutions south of East 10th Street were revered—such as the former German Free School restored by artist Kelly H. Stevens in 1957—Red River Street was lined with "mostly old junk or second-hand stores, antique shops (not the plushy kind), and a Mexican Restaurant or two."<sup>6</sup> Yet, the creek's importance to the city was recognized – in the early 1960s the *Austin American-Statesman* boasted on its header that it was "As Austin as Waller Creek."<sup>7</sup> Some developers promoted the creek's appeal due to its proximity to the state capitol building and to The University of Texas at Austin campus; advertisements for the opening of the Waller Creek Apartments at 406 East 15th Street in March 1964 highlighted that amenity.<sup>8</sup>

### 6.2.1. Interstate Highway 35

The designation and efficiency of primary transportation routes was a major component of *The Austin Plan* as well as previous planning documents. While the Colorado River (and Town Lake) served as a fixed boundary of the lower Waller Creek corridor, East Avenue was historically less so. That changed with the further development of the Interregional Highway into Interstate Highway 35 from late 1950 to the formal dedication on May 29, 1962.<sup>9</sup> Not long after the completion of the Interregional Highway through Austin, the federal government established the interstate highway system in 1956. To minimize costs of an interstate highway through Austin, Texas Highway Department designers took advantage of the existing infrastructure of the Interregional Highway so as to minimize land acquisition and avoid building completely anew. Residences such as the home of Reconstruction Governor Edmund J. Davis (600 Davis Street; demolished by 1963) as well as homes and businesses along East Avenue were razed to make way for the enlargement of East Avenue into the interstate (fig. 6-7).<sup>10</sup> The southbound lanes of the Interregional Highway were utilized for the southbound lanes of the interstate. But, the northbound lines required new right-of-way (figs. 6-8 to 6-10). Rather than a below-grade roadway, the interstate designers replaced the tree-lined section of East Avenue at East 6th and East 7th Streets with an elevated highway from approximately East 5th to East 8th Streets that included an overpass at the East 4th Street railroad crossing, and a continuous, column-supported segment from East 6th to East 7th Streets (figs. 6-11 and 6-12). The construction of the interstate over East Avenue essentially omitted connectivity between downtown Austin via the lower Waller Creek corridor; traffic flow was restricted to only a few streets that extended to the east side – on Holly, East 1st, East 6th, East 7th, East 8th, and East 15th Streets via grade crossings and on East 11th and East 12th Streets via overpasses.

The Interregional Highway and recently constructed interstate served to pull retail traffic from the downtown core—including streets within the lower Waller Creek corridor—to suburban areas. On the other hand, the

limitation of vehicular access to certain streets, especially East 1st and East 6th Streets, resulted in those thoroughfares becoming even more commercial in character; older properties located on them were demolished for construction of service stations, parking lots, convenience stores, or other non-residential uses. Aerial photographs from the early 1960s (figs. 6-13–6-16) and a 1966 topographic map (fig. 6-17) illustrate the extent to which IH 35 changed the landscape. The lower Waller Creek area had long been considered part of East Austin and is essentially where the eastern part of the city originated and from which it grew. Interstate 35 became a physical barrier that cut off the lower Waller Creek area from the rest of East Austin and served as a racial barrier separating the minority communities from the neighborhoods in which they had historically lived. The aerial photographs indicate how highway development on the east and governmental and commercial development to the west encroach upon the historic mixed-use fabric of the lower Waller Creek corridor. The topographic map also underscores the way the interstate functioned as a tool to move automobile traffic quickly through the city and, essentially, away from the lower Waller Creek area. Only East 7th Street, on which Business Route US 80 was routed into downtown, is noted as a “heavy duty” thoroughfare. Red River Street is identified as a “medium duty” roadway, superseding even East 5th and East 6th Streets which had long been the commercial core of the area. East Avenue, with its park-like medians, no longer had a relationship to Palm Park or served as an extension of the lower Waller Creek neighborhood.

### **6.2.2 Brackenridge Urban Renewal Project**

As federal programs and funding aided with the construction of IH 35, so too did they provide aid for development projects that would change the appearance and character of the lower Waller Creek corridor. A component of the Federal Housing Act of 1949 included offering municipalities the funding to demolish properties that seemed substandard to allow for the development of public facilities. After several failed attempts to receive such federal funding for slum renewal projects, the City of Austin received \$395,750 for slum clearance in 1960.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the presence of an established and viable residential community, the City of Austin proceeded with urban renewal in the name of slum clearance. To oversee these efforts, the city established the City of Austin Urban Renewal Agency. The agency met in 1962 to identify blighted neighborhoods in East Austin that would qualify for home demolition, and intended to use the vacant land for public parks, public housing, or schools. In the lower Waller Creek area, the agency identified the Brackenridge Urban Renewal Project. The project was initiated November 1968 and targeted the lower Waller Creek corridor north of East 9th Street. The Brackenridge tract of land produced several projects, including an addition to Brackenridge Hospital and the creation of a public space with two components—Waterloo Park and Symphony Square (fig. 6-18). Along with residences, commercial, social, and entertainment enterprises that supported the community were demolished or closed, as their clientele was displaced, and new projects were developed.<sup>12</sup> Some homes in the Brackenridge Urban Renewal Tract that were slated to be demolished were saved and relocated to other sites in the city or surrounding areas, including the 1871 Radkey residence (1208 Trinity Street) which was purchased by Franklin Federal Savings and Loan Association and moved to 3720 Jefferson Street to serve as their west branch.<sup>13</sup> In 1972, the Austin City Council donated a building at 1613 Sabine Street to be relocated to Elgin to serve as a community center.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, however, local newspapers advertised the Austin Urban Renewal Agency’s bids for property demolition and its auctions selling the contents of single-family residences, apartments, and commercial buildings in the urban renewal tract.<sup>15</sup> As the area had been “rezoned for offices,” the City of Austin sold properties that were not redeveloped for civic or governmental projects to private businesses.<sup>16</sup>

#### **6.2.2.1. WALLER CREEK PARK/WATERLOO PARK**

The Austin Urban Renewal Agency oversaw development of a Waller Creek park in a predominantly residential area bound by Trinity, Red River, East 11th, and East 15th Streets (fig 6-19).<sup>17</sup> The project was planned by



### ***The Waller Creek Riot***

On the morning of Wednesday October 23, 1969, bulldozers idled along Waller Creek near the UT campus. To expand Memorial Stadium, trees along the banks of Waller Creek were to be destroyed, much to the dismay of many students. Protesters climbed into the trees to stop their demolition, and Frank Erwin, the then-UT Regents' chairman reportedly told the authorities to "Arrest all the people you have to. Once those trees are down there won't be anything to protest."<sup>[19]</sup> The police and the fire department used ladders and nets to remove them. The *Austin American-Statesman* covered the tumult the next day, describing the scene as one of chaos and obscenity, as "youths clung tenaciously to the thick limbs. One scrambled frantically at the tree back as three husky officers hauled repeatedly at his shoulders and legs."<sup>[20]</sup> A total of 26 protesters were arrested, many of them UT students who argued there was a way to develop the creek more responsibly and wanted to participate in the plan.<sup>[21]</sup> That afternoon, another group of about 200 protesters hauled sawn tree limbs and branches from the shores of Waller Creek to pile them at the front entrance of UT's Main Hall.<sup>[22]</sup> The fury continued in the *Austin American-Statesman's* letters to editor section, as community members expressed shock and anger not only at the damage to the natural creek, but also expressed a scorn for modern construction and materials, including concrete and steel. "If this was done in name of PROGRESS," wrote Emily Halton in a published appeal to fellow Texas-Exes, "heaven help the poor students who are doomed to become as cold and ghastly as the concrete and steel gradually creeping over the whole area."<sup>[23]</sup> Another letter noted that the policemen called in to remove student protestors from trees wore no badges or nametags, and therefore constituted use of "anonymous authority."<sup>[24]</sup> Despite the controversy, the removal of the trees moved ahead the following Tuesday, under the watchful eye of students and approximately 25 campus police officers.<sup>[25]</sup>



*UT students drag destroyed trees to the Main Tower in protest. Source: Alcalde, October 1969.*

architects Eugene Wukasch (principal of Wukasch – Moellendorf and Associates) and Raymond McClure. Waterloo Park was developed as an urban park to provide respite for downtown workers and tourists in an arrangement of "scenic-recreational areas" complete with a hike-and-bike trail and restrooms with showers (fig. 6-20).<sup>18</sup> Red River Street was rerouted between East 12th and East 15th Streets to more closely follow the curve of Waller Creek. Unlike the controversial treatment of the Waller Creek landscape during the construction of the Frank Erwin Center in 1969 (see "*Waller Creek Riot*" sidebar<sup>19,20,21,22,23,24,25</sup>), the plan for the park called for the retention of all but three trees and the historic stone bridges over Waller Creek.

On the other hand, six blocks of homes were lost and their families displaced. (Figures 2-5, 2-10, 2-14, 4-6, 4-7, 4-13, 6-12, 6-13, and 6-15 show the residential area that was condemned for the project.) Among the many homes demolished were the Mueller (503 East 16th Street) and Knappe Residences (407 East 16th Street). (See fig. 4-14 and "*Knappe Family and Residence*" sidebar to follow.<sup>26, 27</sup>) In a nod to the history of the park's site, park planners and designers retained architectural and landscape elements such as garage pillars and gates, gate posts, gate-post ornaments, cisterns, and grape arbors into the park design (fig. 6-21).<sup>28</sup> One exception was the historic house in use by the Camp Fire Girls at the northeast corner of the park at East 15th and Trinity Streets; the building was retained and the organization allowed to continue using it.<sup>29</sup> Office buildings or fraternal lodges were erected in the lots left empty as a result of demolition or relocation.<sup>30</sup> Work in the park included construction of covered walkways, retaining walls, and bridges.<sup>31</sup> Parking for the park was across the new Red River Street alignment adjacent to Brackenridge Hospital, with future plans to connect the park and hospital "to allow hospital patients and their guests to enjoy the park" (fig. 6-22). In October 1974, The Lions Club of Austin proposed the name "Waterloo Park" to the board of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department.<sup>32</sup> Waterloo Park opened to the public in 1975; the Austin Urban Renewal Agency turned over the park to the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department for maintenance.<sup>33</sup> Over the years, Waterloo Park has hosted scores of concerts, festivals, and events. A select list (with dates, if known) includes:

- Austin Federation of Musicians concert series
- Austin International Festival
- Austin Jazz & Arts Festival

- Bayou Boogie (2000)
- Bob Marley Festival (1999)
- Earth Day
- East vs. West Family Game Day
- Fall Fiesta (1976)
- French Smith Ice Cream Festival
- FunFunFun Fest (2006-2015)
- Gay Pride Festival
- Greenpeace Festival (1991)
- Hot Sauce Festival
- Independence Day activities
- Keep Austin Weird Spamarama Cook-off
- KGSR Blues Festival
- Louisiana Swamp Romp & Crawfish Festival
- Mess with Texas Party
- Red, White and Blues Festival (2006-2007)
- Salsa Music Festival (2000)
- Swamp Romp (2000)
- SXSW parties
- Walk for Safe Families (2000)
- Woodshock (1980s)<sup>34</sup>

The park has also served as a staging area for other events such as the Trail of Lights and Austin City Limits music festivals. Artists like Nailah Akinyemi Sankofa, a native of Chicago who has resided in Austin for 30 years, utilizes Waterloo Park and areas of Waller Creek for art installations, spoken word performances, photography shoots for those installations and performances, and traditional ancestral performances.<sup>35</sup>

#### 6.2.2.2. SYMPHONY SQUARE

Symphony Square was planned as a southeastward extension of Waterloo Park on both sides of East 11th Street east of Red River Street starting in 1971. The “cornerstone of Waterloo Park,” redesigned to serve as the headquarters of the Austin Symphony Orchestra, the complex was formed by three historic buildings: the Jeremiah Hamilton House, the New Orleans Club, the William P. Hardeman House, and the Michael Doyle House (11th Door Tavern) (fig. 6-23).<sup>36</sup> The project included moving the New Orleans Club and Hardeman House from their previous locations to form a square behind the Hamilton House and erecting a stage and amphitheater in the square (figs. 6-24 and 6-25).<sup>37</sup> Austin architect Girard Kinney, who was employed at Wukasch and Associates at the time, recalls walking through the future square with his employer Eugene Wukasch and the Urban Renewal Agency’s director Leon Lurie; one of the two architects noted the site’s appropriateness for an amphitheater.<sup>38</sup> Kinney completed many of the drawings for the Symphony Square project—including the site

#### ***Knappe Family and Residence***

The Knappe residence that stood at 407 East 16th Street was one of the casualties of the City of Austin’s Urban Renewal Agency and the Brackenridge Urban Renewal Project. Swedish immigrant Bernard Knappe arrived in Austin in the 1890s (see Chapter 3). A stonemason and stonecutter, Knappe worked on many buildings in Austin including the original Main Library (present-day Battle Hall) of the UT campus. Sometime between 1900 and 1906, Knappe built the home on East 16th Street for his wife Alice (also a Swedish immigrant) and their growing family. When Knappe’s employees did not have any work, they would help build up the house, which resulted in it becoming a large residence. The two-story home was typical of many of the single-family dwellings that characterized this area of the lower Waller Creek corridor. After Knappe died in 1927, Alice was able to house boarders with ease and did so for many years. Soldiers returning from World War II lived in the home in the 1940s and 1950s. Family members also resided in the residence into the 1960s.

During the summer of 1972, the Urban Renewal Agency acquired the property via eminent domain “for slum clearance, redevelopment, and re-use purposes.”<sup>[26]</sup> Benjamin Franklin, the youngest of Bernard and Alice Knappe’s four children, was the brother-in-law of architect Eugene Wukasch, whose firm designed the Waterloo Park project. As such, the park’s architects salvaged the gate posts from the Knappe property and reinstalled them in Waterloo Park at East 12th and Trinity Streets where they are preserved (see fig. 6-21).<sup>[27]</sup>



*Knappe Residence. Source: Courtesy of Alice Reinartz.*

### **Jane Dunn Sibley Symphony Square**

The development of Symphony Square commenced in 1971. The following historic buildings were relocated to the area surrounding the Jeremiah Hamilton House to serve as a cultural arts center.<sup>[43]</sup>

#### **William P. Hardeman House**

The former residence was built in the 1850s. When moved from 401 East 16th Street, the house was placed over a newly dug basement. Austin architect Girard Kinney recalls that the location for the basement was excavated, the concrete structure built, and re-filled. After the Hardeman House was moved and laid on top of the new basement, the fill was dug back out.<sup>[44]</sup> The house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1976. A pavilion was added in the 1970s. Tex-Mex restaurant Serrano's operated in the building from 1987 to 2015. It will now house the offices of the Waller Creek Conservancy.

#### **Jeremiah Hamilton Residence**

The house was built in 1871 by Jeremiah Hamilton, a formerly enslaved African American man who served as a Reconstruction-era state representative from 1869–1871; he was the first black man to serve in the Texas Legislature (for more on Hamilton, see sidebar in Chapter 2). Hamilton possibly built the unique, three-walled limestone building where he operated a grocery store. Italian carriage maker and ice manufacturer Michael Paggi owned the property from 1873 to 1881. Over the years, a number of families owned the property; the Kingsberrys sold it to the City of Austin in the 1960s.<sup>[45]</sup> The Hamilton building became home to the Austin Symphony Orchestra's box office and facilities office, a function it will retain.

#### **New Orleans Mercantile Club**

This building was constructed at 1109 (later 1123–1125) Red River Street by the late 1870s where it initially served as the home and grocery store of coal dealer Charles J. Wilson until 1907. In the 1910s and 1920s it was occupied by a series of groceries and saloons. From 1927, the building housed the Acme Class Company, two different wholesale florists, and a pet shop. The New Orleans Club opened in the 1950s.<sup>[46]</sup> During Symphony Square's planning, the Urban Renewal Agency decided to save the building, but—despite efforts by musician Doris Miller, club operator Dr. Byron Smith, and property owner Reuben Kogut—not the nightclub.<sup>[47]</sup> The agency's director Leon Lurie said that the “beer joint” did not fit in with plans for the area. For some time, the building housed the Serrano's party room. It will now serve as additional event space for the Conservancy.

#### **Michael Doyle House**

The Doyle House, built in 1887 at 310 East 14th Street, is a unique example of a one-story, stone vernacular building in Austin. It was listed in the NRHP in 1975 and moved to Symphony Square. It was initially slated to serve as a rehearsal hall for budding musicians or a center for youth musical activities but ultimately became headquarters for the Women's Symphony League of Austin.<sup>[48]</sup>

As of fall 2018, the Waller Creek Conservancy will now serve as stewards for all the buildings in Symphony Square with the exception of the Hamilton House, which will remain in use as the box office of the Austin Symphony Orchestra.

plan drawings locating the New Orleans Club—and designed the bridge connecting the building with the stage and the Hamilton building. In 1974, the Austin Symphony Orchestra Society entered an agreement to lease the property and cluster of historic buildings from the City of Austin for a term of 50 years.<sup>39</sup> When Symphony Square first opened, the Hamilton building was earmarked as the main administration and ticket box office, the Doyle House for use as the Symphony's youth activities, and the old New Orleans club as an “Early Texas general store” selling crafts by local artists in the square.<sup>40</sup> Symphony Square's completion and grand opening was celebrated during a week of festivities in early April 1978.<sup>41</sup> “Symphony Week in Austin” included an opening luncheon and tour attended by various dignitaries as well as concerts and performances by diverse musical groups at Symphony Square, Waterloo Park, and Municipal Auditorium. The week culminated with the Waterloo Music Festival—a two-day crafts and music festival that served as the Austin Symphony's annual spring fundraiser; Willie Nelson headlined the festival.<sup>42</sup>

From its establishment and under the leadership of Jane Dunn Sibley, former head of the symphony's board of directors for whom the complex is now named, Symphony Square became an important venue for live music and other outdoor performances. (See sidebar “Jane Dunn Sibley Symphony Square.”<sup>43,44,45,46,47,48</sup>) In the early 1980s, Symphony Square hosted an Easter “Eggstravaganza” and weekly summer concerts such as the Classical Sunset Series, the Catch a Rising Star program featuring “Austin's best bands,” and the Friday Series.<sup>49</sup> From the 1980s, Austin Symphony hosted Children's Day Art Park on Wednesdays in June and July until the new Austin Public Library opened in 2018.<sup>50</sup> Texas Senator and former Austin mayor Kirk Watson credits the inexpensive, family-oriented events offered at Symphony Square as inducement that encouraged his family to remain in Austin after they moved to the city in 1981. He fondly recalls attending performances by clown-juggler Turk Pipkin, folk musician Eliza

Gilkyson, and country singer Gary P. Nunn, and many others. Senator Watson describes the atmosphere of both Waterloo Park and Symphony Square as having degraded physically and culturally in recent years and looks forward to their rebirth.<sup>51</sup>

In January 2017, the City of Austin agreed to split the lease for Symphony Square, dividing it between the Austin Symphony Orchestra Society and the Waller Creek Conservancy. The orchestra society will retain the portion of Symphony Square south of East 11th Street (Doyle House). In November 2018, the portion of Symphony Square north of East 11th Street (Hamilton House, Hardeman House, New Orleans Club) will become the Waller Creek Conservancy headquarters (see section 6.5). The Conservancy's Symphony Square restoration was designed by architectural and interior design firm Page and landscape architecture firm DWG; builders from Formed LLC are completing the construction work.<sup>52</sup>

## **6.2.3 Select Development Plans and Projects**

### **6.2.3.1. THE WALLER CREEK ACTION TEAM**

Just as the involvement of University of Texas students in the Waller Creek Riot awakened attention to the Waller Creek's importance in Austin's environment, the work of several School of Architecture students served as an impetus for development plans from the 1970s onward. In 1972, five students, under Architecture professor Sinclair Black, formed what they called the Waller Creek Action Team with the aim of developing a scenic creek from 34th Street to Town Lake.<sup>53</sup> Their plan had four points: 1) preserve the ecosystem, 2) have the city obtain the right-of-way for a greenbelt area, 3) the development of the greenbelt, and 4) upgrading the surrounding area. The Waller Creek Action Team sought to bring together the disparate parts of the creek and to create a creek system within a recreational loop of 10 miles.<sup>54</sup> The students' plan indicated that the creek corridor from East 10th to East 15th Streets should be beautified by the government (as stipulated by the "Public" proposed land use for this area in the 1958 *Austin Plan*). The students' work was published in the December 1972 issue of *The Texas Architect* and became the basis of the Horizons '76 (see below) project for Austin's celebration of the United States' bicentennial.

### **6.2.3.2. HORIZONS '76**

In September 1973, the Austin City Council established the Horizons '76 Committee, one of three to plan and implement America's bicentennial celebrations.<sup>55</sup> Tasked to organize a project that would "provide for the future, be permanent in nature, and benefit the entire community, thus enriching the state and nation," the committee reviewed work of the Waller Creek Action Team, the Town Lake Committee, and the city's Parks and Recreation Department's greenbelt projects to create a "bold plan to protect, preserve and enhance our creeks and waterways."<sup>56</sup> The committee proposed a comprehensive plan centered around Austin's creeks and the Colorado River as organizing elements for recreation and transportation as well as addressing flood control and erosion.<sup>57</sup> The City of Austin and the Horizons '76 Committee presented a publication about their work, *Austin's Creeks*, as a bicentennial gift to the nation (fig. 6-26).<sup>58</sup> *Austin's Creeks* is a comprehensive study of Austin's natural waterway systems. Then, in January 1974, the Austin Bicentennial Commission approved the Waller Creek Development Plan as one of the projects chosen as part of bicentennial celebration efforts. The result was a plan for the redevelopment of Waller Creek from East 10th Street to Town Lake, concurrent with the projects happening at Symphony Square and Waterloo Park.<sup>59</sup> A collaboration between urban planners, architects, landscape architects and engineers, the plan included "recommendations for immediate, near future and long-range development through land use, circulation, landscape architectural design elements, and flood and erosion control systems."<sup>60</sup>

While various entities made plans for the development of the lower Waller Creek corridor as part of a citywide chain of parks, little came to fruition in the 1970s and 1980s. A comparison of topographic maps from 1973



and 1988 illustrate the effects of the various projects that were implemented on the development of the lower Waller Creek corridor (fig. 6-27). The layouts of Symphony Square and Waterloo Park are visible as is the rerouting of Red River Street, which allowed for the expansion of Brackenridge Hospital. New institutions replaced older ones. In 1969, First Baptist Church of Austin built a new house of worship in Hamilton Square where the John T. Allan Junior High School had been located. And, in 1982, a new Austin Police Department headquarters building was erected on the site of the former City Market cum police station.<sup>61</sup> While single-family homes were slowly replaced by commercial, institutional, and recreational development, zoning did allow for multi-family apartment complexes to be constructed in the undeveloped areas near the mouth of the creek adjacent to the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision.

### **6.2.3.3. AUSTIN CONVENTION CENTER**

Perhaps the most prominent development in the lower Waller Creek area in the 1990s was the construction of the Austin Convention Center, despite the slowing of the local economy from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s.<sup>62</sup> Plans had been in place for a new convention center for the city since the early 1970s. In 1970, Austinites voted for a \$14 million bond package for the city to finance a convention center.<sup>63</sup> Then, in 1971, the City of Austin appointed a committee tasked to recommend the type of convention center that the city needed to increase tourism and convention business (and the accompanying revenue) to the city. The committee was also to select a site and make recommendations for project schedule and funding.<sup>64</sup> The committee ultimately selected a 16-block area, dubbed Waterloo Square, just west of the lower Waller Creek corridor, bound by East 1st, East 5th, San Jacinto, and Lavaca Streets. The project was stagnant until the mid-1980s when the Austin City Council spearheaded new studies for the project and agreed in April 1988 that the new convention center should be at the southeastern edge of the central business district.<sup>65</sup> That July, Austin voters passed a new \$69 million bond package for the project. By December, negotiations were underway for the purchase and condemnation of properties in the five blocks that made up the site of the future convention center, many of them vestiges of the late-nineteenth-century neighborhood that once prospered there (figs. 6-28 and 6-29). The Austin Convention Center opened on July 4, 1992. The southeast corner of the building followed the curve of Waller Creek and was clad in rough-cut limestone to mimic the creek terrain.<sup>66</sup> The new convention center's location on East 1st Street and proximity to Interstate 35 refocused attention on this part of the city and created new developmental pressures. The Driskill & Rainey Subdivision was especially affected as property values exceeded that of the single-family homes that occupied them. Subsequent development resulted in the changing character of the neighborhood as developers took advantage of the area's economic potential.<sup>67</sup> Dramatic changes in the lower Waller Creek area along and south of East 1st Street, including the demolition of the Juárez-Lincoln University and construction of the Austin Convention Center, had a particularly strong effect on the Mexican American community (see sidebar "*Juárez-Lincoln University*" in section 6.3.2). As the area had once held such a significant population of Mexican Americans, East 1st Street was renamed César Chávez Street in 1993, after the well-known farm-worker rights advocate and founder of the United Farm Workers Union who died that year.<sup>68</sup>

## **6.3. LIFE ALONG THE CREEK**

### **6.3.1. Businesses**

From the late 1950s onward, commercial retail establishments and industrial sites were replaced with mostly large-scale hotel complexes and government buildings. As part of the Austin Urban Renewal Agency's acquisition of property for the Brackenridge Urban Renewal project, furniture stores, used goods retail shops, and restaurants were demolished. Many of them were longstanding businesses owned by minorities, such as the "antique row" of stores opened by former slave Sam Sidle in the 1910s and, later, his family.<sup>69</sup> In 1964, Ilesa Sidle Alexander opened an antique store next to that of her sister on Red River Street.<sup>70</sup> Both women were forced to close their stores and relocate when the buildings were slated for demolition in 1973.<sup>71</sup> Sam

Lung's Chinese Kitchen was also destroyed. (Refer to section 3.2.1 in Chapter 3 for more about Sidle and Lung and their businesses.)

During this period of urban removal and renewal, many other transitions took place. While African American-owned antique and secondhand stores closed, others like Snooper's Paradise at 704 Red River Street opened in the late 1960s.<sup>72</sup> The Von Boeckman-Jones Printing Company sold its building located at 700 East 11th Street to the Texas Motor Transportation Association and Oil Field Haulers Association, Inc.; the property is still occupied by the Texas Trucking Association.<sup>73</sup> In 1970, the Teacher Retirement System of Texas purchased a large tract of the Brackenridge Urban Renewal Area and built a new home office building (1000 Red River Street).<sup>74</sup> In 1974, L. East Produce Company moved from East 8th Street to far East Austin; that site on East 8th Street was developed by Travis County. One of the first major hotel intrusions was the Waller Creek Plaza Hotel and Executive Center, built in 1984 (present-day Hilton Garden Inn Austin Downtown, fig. 6-30). The hotel complex included a plaza featuring "cascading waterfalls and winding garden walkways along a revitalized Waller Creek" (fig. 6-31).<sup>75</sup> The Heep Superior Dairies plant on East 1st Street was demolished in 1989 after the company moved to a larger property in southeast Austin the previous year.<sup>76</sup>

Unlike many of the African American and Mexican American businesses that disappeared from the lower Waller Creek corridor when those populations were displaced into East Austin, several of the enterprises founded by Lebanese immigrants remained in operation beyond the 1950s, including Ferris Drug Company and Jabour's Package Store. Ferris Drug Company remained a commercial staple until it closed in 1980 (fig. 6-32).<sup>77</sup> Jabour's Package Store was open until 1981 (fig. 6-33).<sup>78</sup> The founders' children, however, opened a new store at the corner of East 7th and Red River Streets that became the flagship for the Twin Liquors chain.<sup>79</sup> Several Lebanese American businessmen also became important in real estate (the Daywood family) and the expansion of the entertainment industry in Austin (such as the Josephs, Hages, and Attal families).<sup>80</sup> Other businesses such as Raven's Garage at Red River Street (established in the 1920s) also remained in business (fig. 6-34). Enterprises such as these catered to other commercial clients in the lower Waller Creek corridor, the small residential base that had been relegated to the fringe or just outside of the corridor, and clientele that visited the area for its burgeoning entertainment and nightlife. (Refer to section 3.2.1 in Chapter 3 for more about these minority-owned businesses.)

#### **6.3.1.1. RED RIVER CULTURAL DISTRICT**

During this period, a variety of entertainment-based venues such as bars and nightclubs operated at what was then considered the western end of the East Austin's 11th Street entertainment district.<sup>81</sup> Many of these venues were housed in older buildings that were formerly business establishments like furniture stores. The New Orleans Club remained a popular venue where Ernie Mae Miller continued her residency and where rock groups also started to perform in the 1960s (see fig. 5-17).<sup>82</sup> The Sweetarts also played at the New Orleans Club in the 1960s.<sup>83</sup> Nearby was the 11th Door at Red River and 11th Streets where Janis Joplin sang between 1965 and 1966. Radio station KAZZ-FM often broadcasted live from the 11th Door or from the New Orleans Club. Both of the buildings that housed the 11th Door and the New Orleans Club were condemned by the Austin Urban Renewal Agency but were relocated to become part of the Symphony Square complex (see section 6.2.2.2).

One Knite was another live music venue and bar that was open at 801 Red River Street from 1971 to 1976 and hosted blues acts such as the Vaughan Brothers (fig. 6-35).<sup>84</sup> The former Raven's Garage at 605 Red River Street became home to Emo's nightclub in the early 1990s.<sup>85</sup> Some controversy surrounded the adaptive use of the bars and clubs on Red River Street and the type of character they presented of the lower Waller Creek area. The Austin Urban Renewal Agency had certain types of usage in mind, whereas others desired that the buildings retain some element of their past use as entertainment venues. The *Austin American-Statesman*

noted, “The Urban Renewal Agency is firm in its decision on the fate of the New Orleans Club on Red River Street – they will save the building, but not the night club that operates inside.”<sup>86</sup> The agency’s director Leon Lurie said, “It’s a beer joint in my opinion, not a club, and it just doesn’t fit in with plans for the area.”<sup>87</sup> Taking the place of venues such as the New Orleans Club and the 11th Door as dining establishments, were institutions such as Stubb’s Bar-B-Q—opened in the former One Knite Club in 1968—and, further south in the lower Waller Creek area, Ironworks Barbeque, which opened at the former Weigl Ironworks in 1978 (refer to section 4.4.2 in Chapter 4 for more on Weigl).

### 6.3.2. Community Institutions

With the erasure of residential neighborhoods in the lower Waller Creek area, many of the community institutions that serviced them relocated or closed. One church that remained viable was the First Baptist Church of Austin. Then located at West 10th and Colorado Streets, in 1966 the congregation purchased the site of John T. Allan Junior High School after it was bulldozed. The new church was completed in 1970.<sup>88</sup>

East Avenue Baptist Church on East 1st Street closed in 1964 but was given new life for a brief period as Juárez-Lincoln University.<sup>89</sup> Juárez-Lincoln University became the first fully-accredited Chicano College in the history of the United States. (See “Juarez-Lincoln University” sidebar.<sup>90,91,92</sup>) The curriculum focused on bilingual and multicultural students and lifestyles, and encouraged students to advance their education through work opportunities. Supported by Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, the school offered bachelor’s and master’s degree programs in areas including Liberal Arts and Education. The school opened in Austin in 1972 and was housed at St. Edwards University for a brief period. When enrollment at the university neared 200, the institution moved to 715 East 1st Street into the former East Avenue Baptist Church buildings. The *Austin American-Statesman* described the ideal student as one that rarely attended classes on campus since the university styled itself as a “university without walls,” and sought to give students’ academic credit for life experiences.<sup>93</sup> In 1976, the 160 students enrolled were all required to retain their jobs during their studies. It was a significant space for the Mexican American community surrounding Rainey Street. After the school permanently closed in 1979 when Antioch College withdrew its support, the landmark mural *Los Elementos* on the side of the building was a symbol in the

### Juárez-Lincoln University

The Mexican American Youth Organization voted to establish a southern Texas Chicano University during their 1969–1970 holiday meeting. In the midst of the Chicano Movement, also called *El Movimiento*, many activists saw education as a path to political power and the much-needed advancement of the Chicano community. Colegio Jacinto Treviño was established in 1970 in Mercedes, Texas. The core mission of the college was to educate teachers and work towards a Texas education system that could cater to the unique needs of multi-cultural and bilingual students, but political differences within the organization led to animosity, and Andre Guerrero and Leonard Mestas left the school in 1971. Determined to stay relevant in ‘the movement’ and to further the school’s original goals, Guerrero and Mestas founded the Juárez-Lincoln University in Fort Worth, Texas, before moving to Austin in 1972. For a time, Juárez-Lincoln University was housed at the St. Edwards University campus. With an enlarged student body, the school moved into the vacant East Avenue Baptist Church.<sup>[90]</sup> In 1977, Austin artist Raul Valdez painted a mural on the north-facing wall of the university building. The mural, *Los Elementos*, depicted a Chicana farmworker and two Chicano musicians in a field, under a shining sun. The university closed in 1979, and when the building sold in 1980, a prolonged and tempestuous feud began between the would-be developers of the property and the surrounding primarily Mexican American community. The community feared continued displacement if the new owners successfully developed an office building at the site. In December 1980, two “Molotov cocktails” (bombs) were thrown through a first-floor window and caused a small fire. After several unsuccessful attempts to have the building declared or zoned historic, it was demolished in 1983.<sup>[91]</sup> Artist Raul Valdez recalls the protests around the closed university as the wrecking ball arrived, claiming the outcry had little to do with the building itself, but instead the *Los Elementos* mural and what the Chicano Movement had meant to the community.<sup>[92]</sup>



Detail of *Los Elementos* mural. Photo by William Newton. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wnewton/albums/72157624587134625>.

fight to save the school from developers in the late 1980s (figs. 6-36, 6-37). Amidst significant public protest, Juarez-Lincoln University was demolished in 1983. In 1993, an International House of Pancakes restaurant was built on the site.<sup>94</sup>

Palm School was slated to be one of the public schools replaced according to the 1958 *Austin Plan* recommendation. The school survived for a time, but, the construction of Interstate 35 cut the school off from the community it served. Then, when George I. Sanchez Elementary School opened on the east side of the highway in 1976, many students in that neighborhood attended the new school. After almost two decades of falling into disrepair, Palm School closed in 1976. In January 1977, the school board leased the site to the Junior League of Austin; the organization operated Family Place, a site for social services for children. After Jim Berkey and Barry Gillingwater purchased the property in 1980, they used it as an office building. Travis County acquired the site in 1986 and has used it as Health and Human Services and Veterans Services offices. The county will vacate the former school to move to a larger campus in north Austin in 2019.<sup>95</sup> The Mexican American community lost important institutions in the lower Waller Creek area in the 1970s and 1980s amidst gentrification and continued residential displacement into East Austin. In the early 1970s, community members approached the City of Austin about establishing a cultural facility for the Latino community and artists. Efforts in the late 1980s and early 1990s were unsuccessful. The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, located southwest of the historic Rainey Street neighborhood with which so many families were affiliated, was completed in June 2007.

## 6.4. FLOOD EVENTS AND CONTROL

With flood control in place via the dams along the six Highland Lakes, catastrophic flooding of lower Waller Creek has been less frequent.<sup>96</sup> In recent years, however, on the day before Memorial Day on May 24, 1981, intense rainfall within a short duration caused severe flooding along many of Austin's urban creeks, including Waller Creek.<sup>97</sup> Thirteen lives were lost along Shoal Creek, the hardest hit area in the city.

### 6.4.1. Waller Creek Flood Control Tunnel

In 2008, the City of Austin commenced construction of a tunnel project to alleviate flooding of Waller Creek by removing 28 acres of the creek watershed from the floodplain. To the present day, the tunnel channels rainwater from the creek to Lady Bird Lake. The groundbreaking ceremony for City of Austin's tunnel project was on April 8, 2011. Another Memorial Day flood caused minimal damage along lower Waller Creek on May 25, 2015. The Waller Creek Tunnel was under construction, so various elements that would have diverted floodwater were not complete or not yet in place.<sup>98</sup> To date, several components of the project have been completed: the main tunnel, the 4th Street Creek Side Inlet, and the tunnel outlet to Lady Bird Lake. The Waterloo Park Inlet Facility and 8th Street Creek Side Inlet are still under construction.<sup>99</sup> The tunnel will contain water at all times because it is attached to Lady Bird Lake; this water will be pumped back into the creek, returning year-round water flow, once an important feature of the creek.<sup>100</sup> One goal pending successful completion is to encourage development closer to the creek.

## 6.5. WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

Separate from efforts by the City of Austin and private developers, the non-profit Waller Creek Conservancy was founded in 2011 "to create and maintain a chain of extraordinary urban parks around a restored Waller Creek, in partnership with the City of Austin, for the benefit of all."<sup>101</sup> On April 28, 2011, the Waller Creek Conservancy and City of Austin formed a partnership to fund the design and implementation of a new master plan for lower Waller Creek.<sup>102</sup> That fall, Waller Creek Conservancy launched *Design Waller Creek: A Competition*; the design team consisting of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. and Thomas Phifer & Partners was chosen. In April 2014, Waller Creek Conservancy and the City of Austin legalized their partnership



to develop lower Waller Creek with a chain of parks via a Joint Development Agreement.<sup>103</sup> The framework for the design of the Waller Creek parks was established in the 2015 Creek Corridor Framework Plan.<sup>104</sup>

The Waller Creek parks will include:

- Continuous pedestrian and cycling trail from the Butler Trail to UT Austin
- New pedestrian bridge across Lady Bird Lake
- Reconstruction and restoration of the lower one-and-a-half-mile of Waller Creek into a sustainable riparian ecological system
- Transformation of Waterloo Park and Palm Park into highly programmed urban destination parks
- Creation of new park space along Waller Creek between East 7th and East 9th Streets (“The Refuge”)

The Conservancy envisions Waller Creek Park as “the spine of a revitalized urban district on the east side of downtown Austin.”<sup>105</sup> Waterloo Park is currently under reconstruction and will be the first project in the Waller Creek Park to open in 2020. Plans for the design of Palm Park and the Waller Creek Delta are underway.<sup>106</sup> As part of its effort to transform Waterloo Park, within a string of other parks, the Conservancy is currently restoring the historic buildings in Symphony Square and will relocate its offices there in November 2018.<sup>107</sup> According to journalist Christopher Neely of the *Community Impact* newspaper, “The split gives Waller Creek Conservancy a strategic location for the future operation and maintenance of Waller Creek.”<sup>108</sup>

## CHAPTER 6 FIGURES



Figure 6-1. Details of the “Existing Land Use” (left) and “Existing Zoning” (right) maps from *The Austin Plan* of 1958 illustrate how the lower Waller Creek corridor was becoming increasingly commercial in accordance with zoning set forth in Koch and Fowler’s 1928 *City Plan*. Source: Pacific Planning and Research, *The Austin Plan* (Austin, Texas: The Austin City Planning Commission, 1958).



Figure 6-2. Detail of the "Land Use Plan" from *The Austin Plan* of 1958 indicates future commercial zoning for the entirety of the lower Waller Creek corridor as well as development of a greenbelt along the creek. Source: *The Austin Plan*.



Figure 6-3. Detail of the “Public Facilities Plan” from the 1958 *Austin Plan* shows recommendation for the closure of Palm School (crossed out blue circle). Source: *The Austin Plan*.





Figure 6-4. The 1959 aerial view from the south includes the mouth of Waller Creek (at arrow). The changing commercial character of the lower Waller Creek corridor is apparent with the presence of the several governmental, industrial, and commercial enterprises. Highlighted from north to south: Kuntz Sternberger Lumber Company, Calcasieu Lumber Company, Heep Superior Dairies, Massengale Company's produce plant, and the City of Austin Street and Bridge Department. Note the remaining residential enclaves through the lower Waller Creek corridor—along Willow Street, along the creek west and south of East 2nd Street, at the Driskill & Rainey Subdivision, and north of East 7th Street between Sabine and Trinity Streets. Source: Austin Aerials - misc. downtown, auditorium, photograph, October 1, 1959, accessed September 24, 2018, [texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph33367/](https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph33367/), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

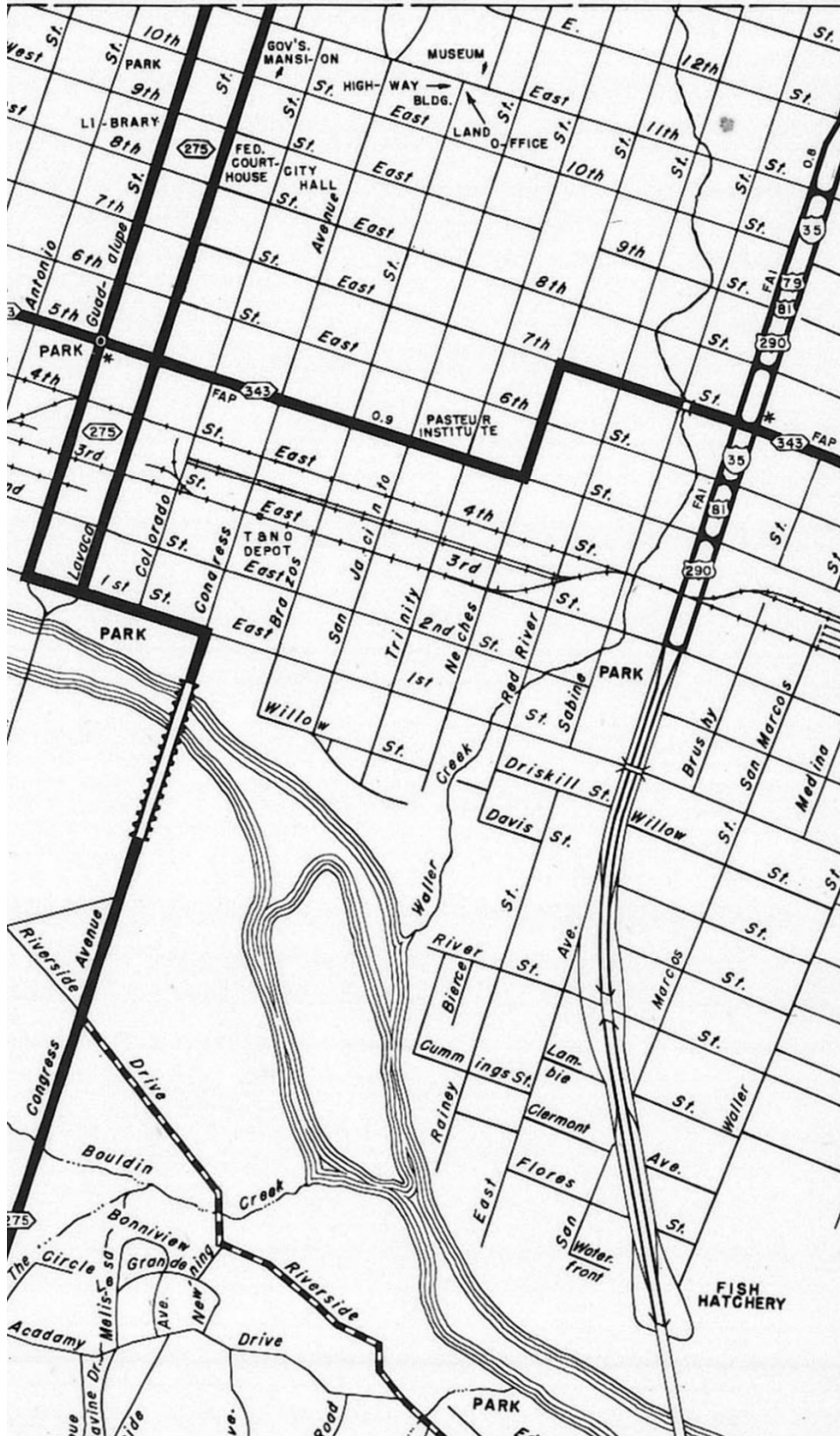


Figure 6-5. The 1961 *General Highway Map* shows major transportation routes through the lower Waller Creek corridor have been relegated to the Interregional Highway (under development as Interstate 35) and along parts of East 5th and East 7th Streets on which State Loop 343 (the Austin Loop) was routed. Source: Texas State Library and Archives.

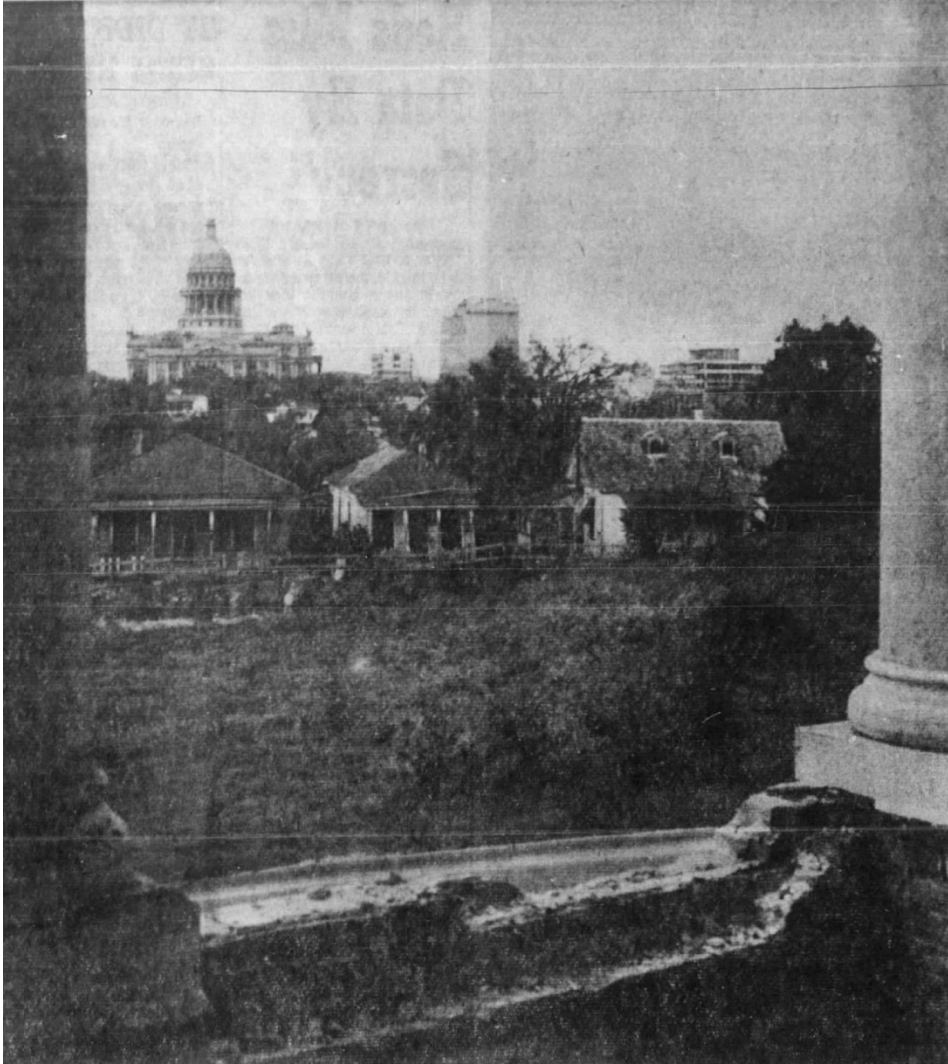


Figure 6-6. This view looking west from Samuel Huston College from a former dormitory building on the school's campus shows houses along the west edge of the lower Waller Creek corridor facing East Avenue before its development into an interstate highway. Also visible are several state buildings under construction around the capitol; the trend of constructing government buildings became characteristic of development in the lower Waller Creek corridor, especially north of East 11th Street from the 1950s onward. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*, November 19, 1958.





Figure 6-7. This photograph from 1961 illustrates the state of some areas of the lower Waller Creek corridor, particularly those inhabited by African American and Mexican American citizens who had been relocated to the “Negro District” and Mexican neighborhoods on the east side of East Avenue. These dwelling appear to be wood-frame shotgun houses on the west side of the 1300 block of Neches Street. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*, November 21, 1961.





Figure 6-8. View of conversion of the Interregional Highway into Interstate 35. Note businesses along the west side including *El Matamoros* restaurant. March 1960. Source: <http://texasfreeway.com/>.



Figure 6-9. View of conversion of the Interregional Highway into Interstate 35, taken from Brackenridge Hospital. May 1960. Source: <http://texasfreeway.com/>.





Figure 6-10. View of conversion of the Interregional Highway into Interstate 35, looking south from East 15th Street. Note the cupola and roof of the Bickler School at the right. June 1960. Source: <http://texasfreeway.com/>.



Figure 6-11. View of the elevated segment of the interstate, August 24, 1960. Source: <http://texasfreeway.com/>.





Figure 6-12. Dedication of Interstate 35 from the elevated portion of the highway between East 6th and East 7th Streets. Commercial buildings along East 6th Street are visible in the background at the right. Source: <http://texasfreeway.com/>.



Figure 6-13. Aerial view of Austin looking south over Interstate 35. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 6-14. Aerial view of the downtown area, looking northeast, in 1963. The highlighted area indicates the lower Waller Creek corridor between East 15th and East 3rd Streets and between Trinity Street and East Avenue. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 6-15. Aerial view of the lower Waller Creek corridor from East 1st Street to East 8th Street. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 6-16 Aerial view of the lower Waller Creek corridor from East 6th Street to East 15th Street. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 6-17. This 1966 topographic map of Austin shows the layout of Interstate 35 and its relationship to other roads. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

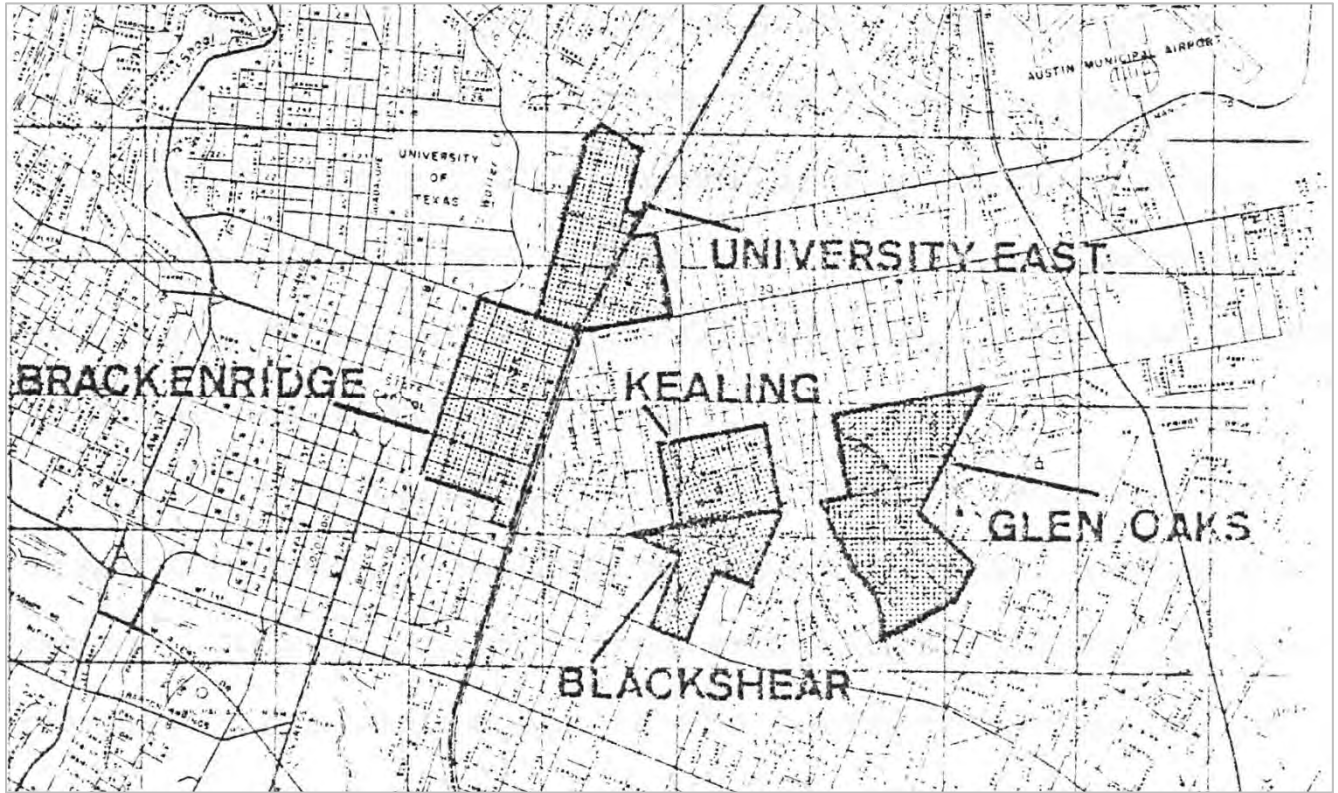


Figure 6-18. The urban renewal project tracts that came under the auspices of the Austin Urban Renewal Agency, outlined in black. Source: Robena Estelle Jackson, "East Austin: A Socio-Historical View of a Segregated Community" (master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1979), 114.

# HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY

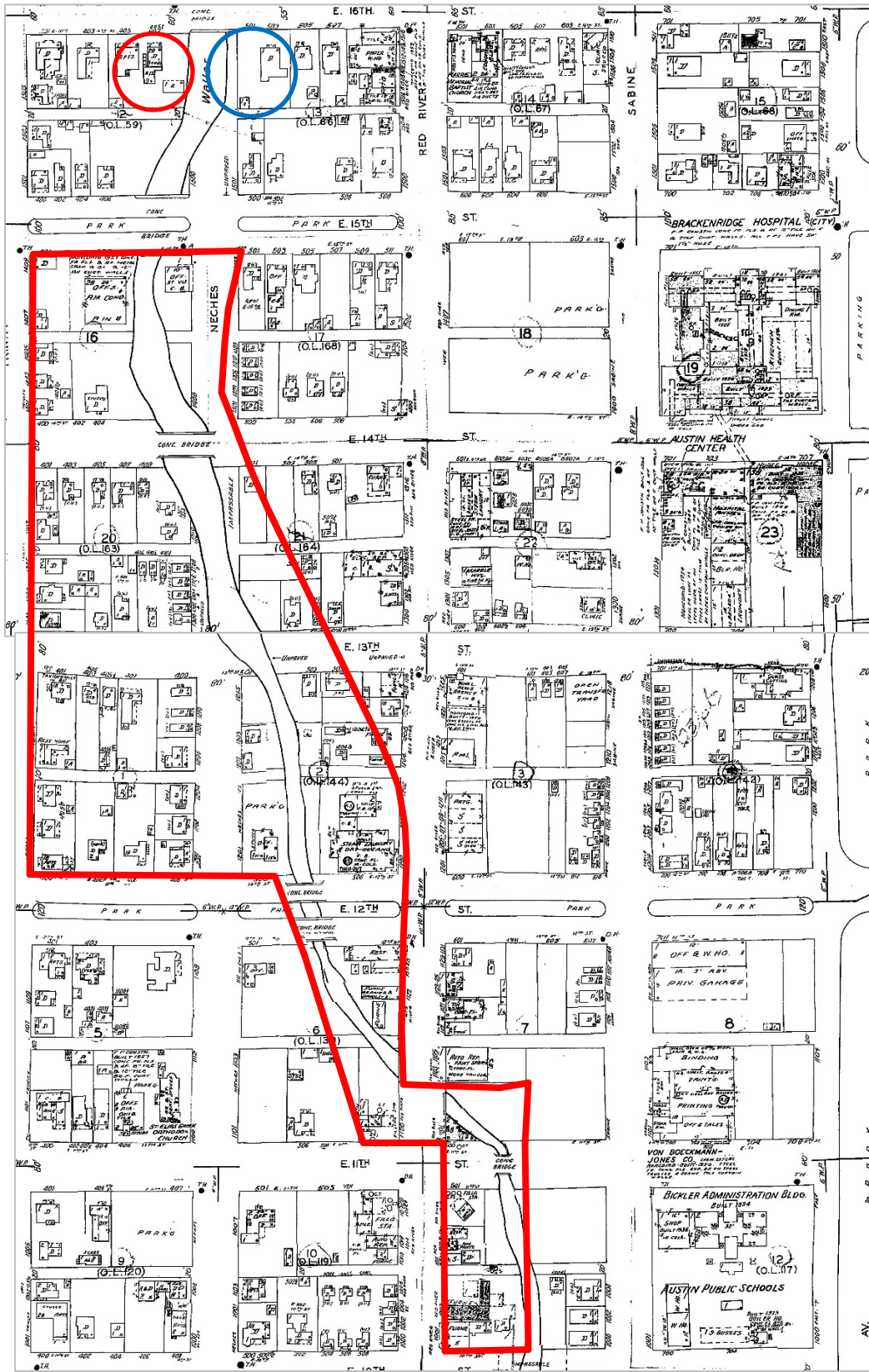


Figure 6-19. This graphic shows the approximate boundaries of Waterloo Park and Symphony Square on the 1961 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map to illustrate the residential properties condemned by the Austin Urban Renewal Agency. Many properties such as the Knappe Residence (407 East 16th Street, circled in red; see Chapters 3 and 5 as well as the sidebar in this chapter) and the Mueller residence (503 East 16th Street circled in blue; see chapter 5) were condemned, even though their sites were not ultimately included within park boundaries. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.



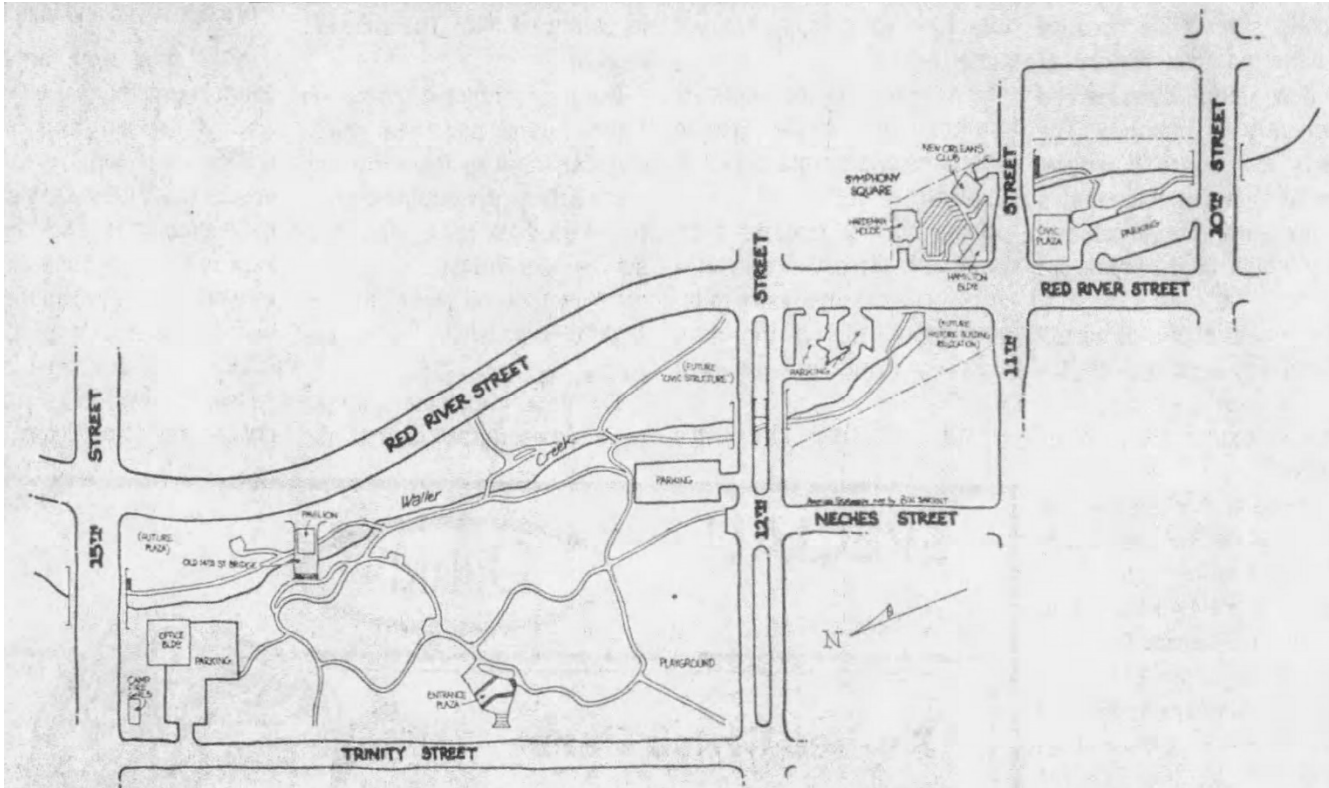


Figure 6-20. An article dated October 16, 1974, contained this sketch map of the proposed layout of Waterloo Park and Symphony Square. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.



Figure 6-21. These gate posts installed in Waterloo Park (left) came from the Knape Residence at 407 East 16th Street (right). Built around 1905, the house was condemned and demolished to make way for projects in the Brackenridge Redevelopment Area. Source: Photos courtesy of Alice Reinarz.

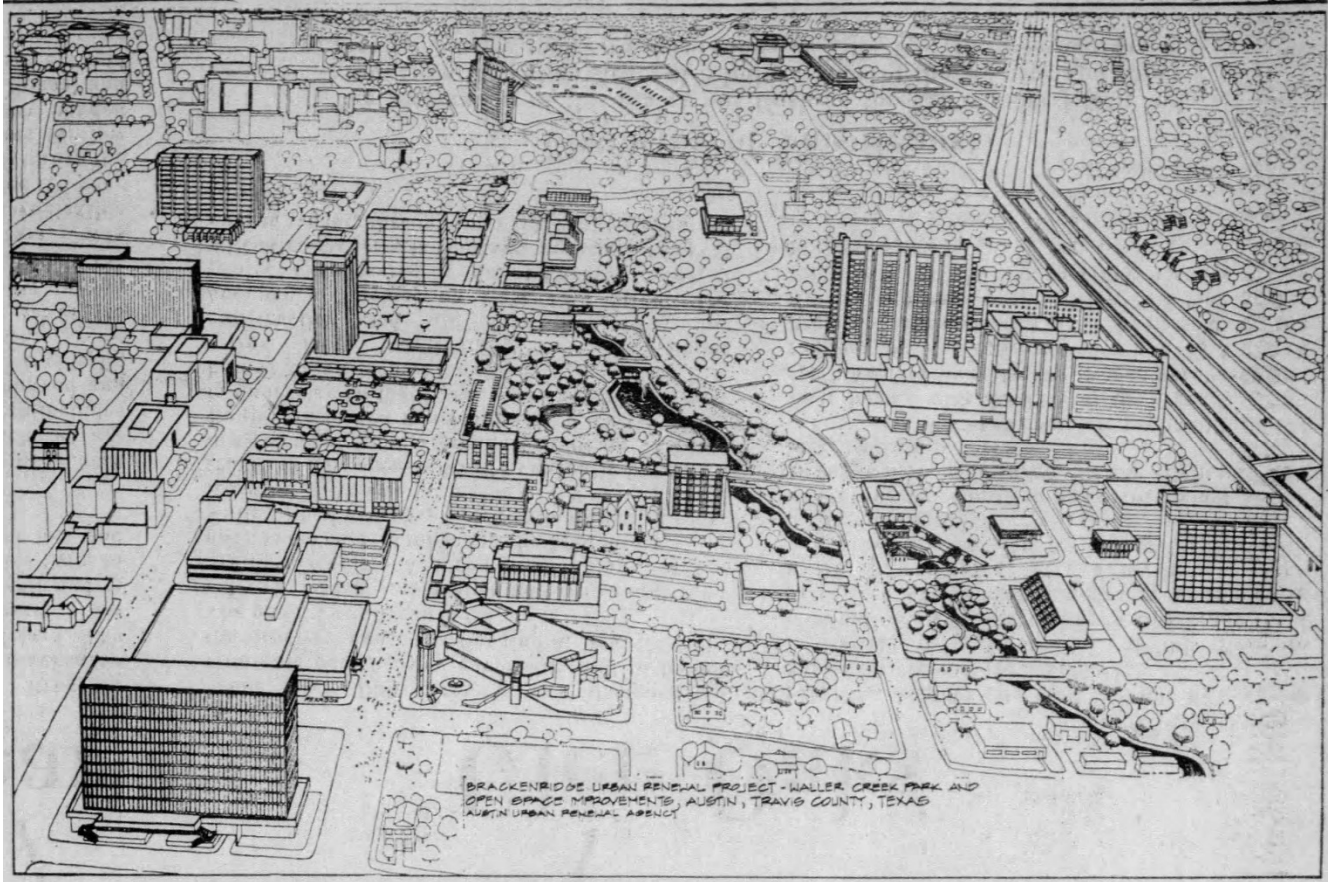


Figure 6-22. The 1972 "Projected View of Completed Brackenridge Urban Renewal Area" includes views of the newly completed Waterloo Park and Symphony Square as well as the governmental and institutional buildings that began to dominate the landscape of the lower Waller Creek corridor from East 9th to East 15th Streets. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*, August 27, 1972, page 189.

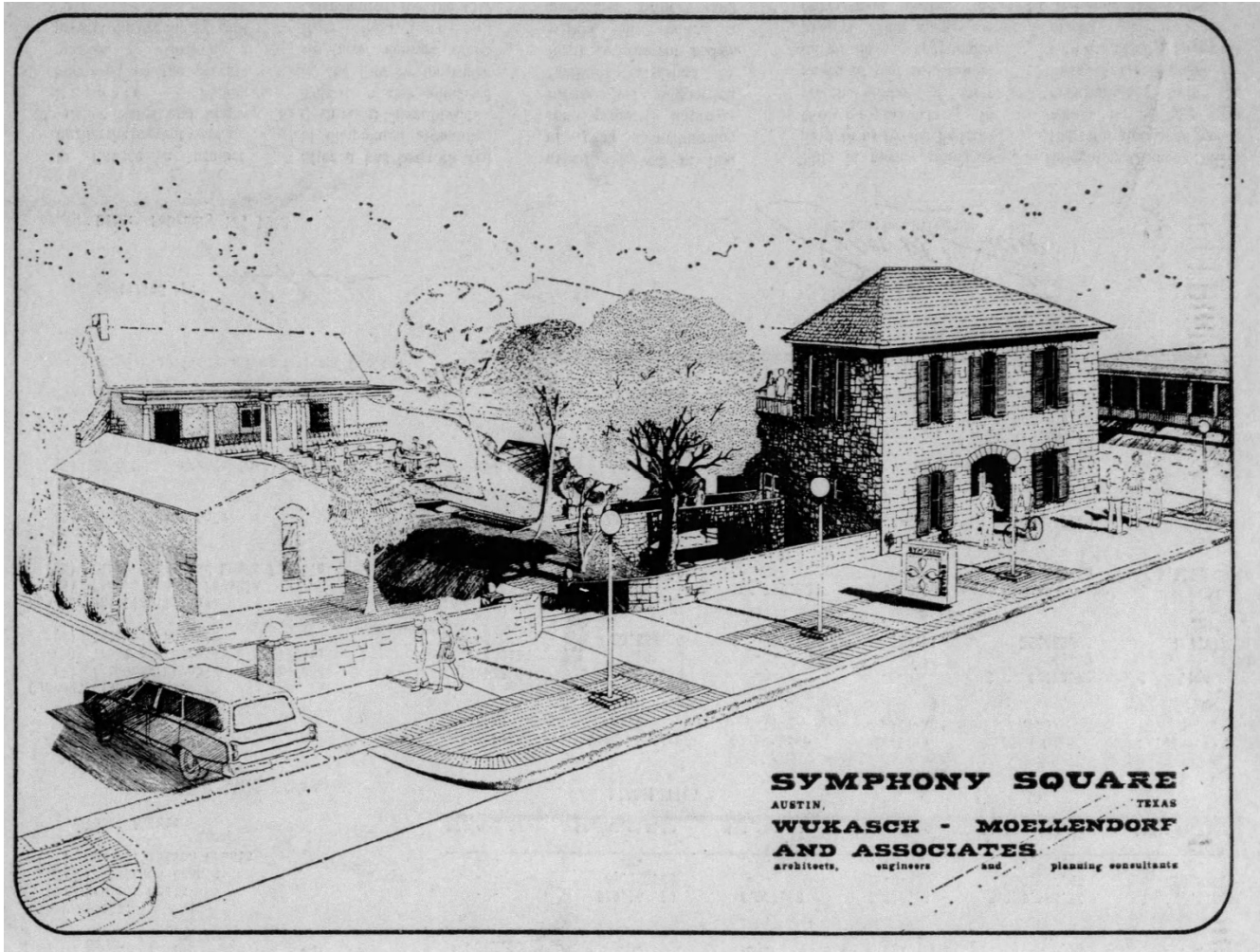


Figure 6-23. Architect's rendering of Symphony Square, August 27, 1972. Source: *Austin American-Statesman*.





Figure 6-24. Photograph of the Hardeman House being moved to its new location at Symphony Square. Source: *Waxahachie Daily Light*, September 5, 1977.



Figure 6-25. Photograph of the construction of the stage at Symphony Square behind the Jeremiah Hamilton house.  
Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 6-26. Rendering of Waller Creek from *Austin's Creeks*, illustrating the proposed greenbelt with parks and hike and bike trails in green. Source: Sinclair Black, et al., *Austin's Creeks* (1976).

HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY OF LOWER WALLER CREEK  
WALLER CREEK CONSERVANCY



Figure 6-27. Topographic maps of Austin from 1973 (left) and 1988 (right) indicate changes in the development of the lower Waller Creek corridor due to the presence of Interstate 35 and incorporation of zoning laws. Source: Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.



6 | The *Austin Plan* and Urban Renewal, 1958–2017

Figure 6-28. The City of Austin purchased property in these four blocks for the construction of the Austin Convention Center. Note the mix of industrial, commercial, and residential properties that were in the neighborhood at this time. Source: Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

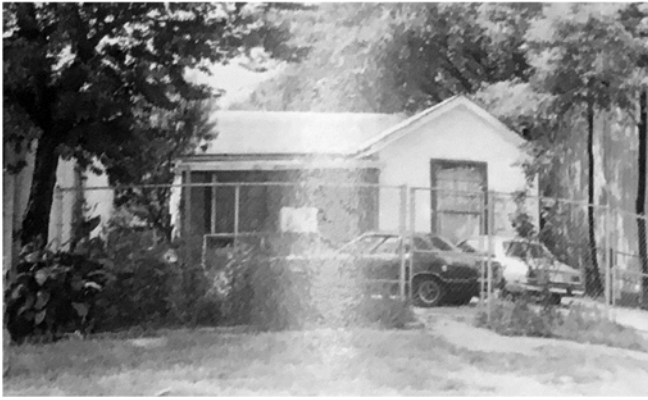
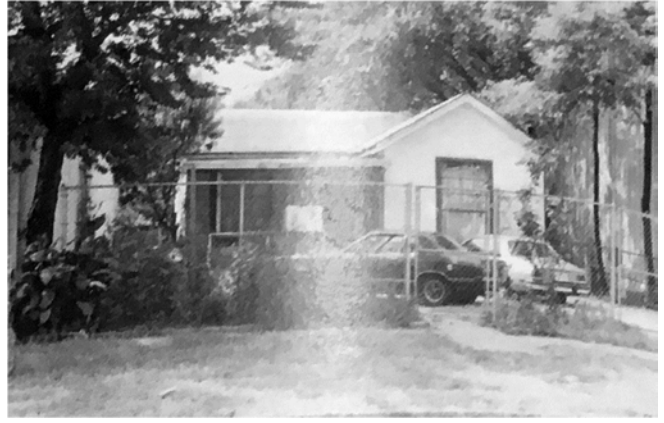


Figure 6-29. Examples of the types of single-family homes demolished for the construction of the Austin Convention Center. Source: Hicks & Company, *Beneath the Center: Nineteenth Century Life Along Waller Creek* (1990).

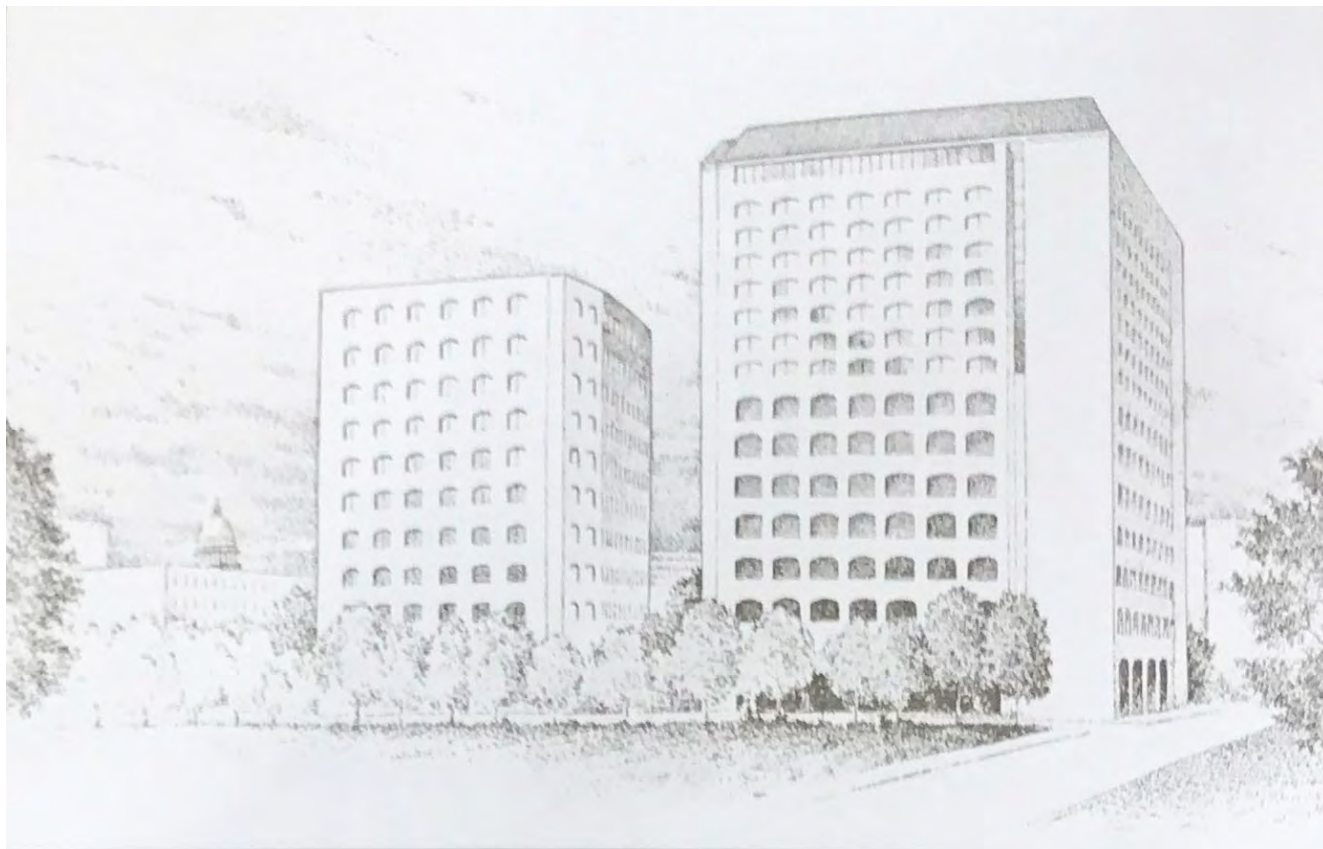


Figure 6-30. View of the early 1980s Waller Creek Hotel and Plaza from marketing literature. Source: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 6-31. Marketing literature from around the time the hotel opened in 1984 illustrated the walkways surrounding and connecting the two towers of the Waller Creek Hotel and Plaza straddled the creek. Source. Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Figure 6-32. Seen here around 1960, the presence of the Ferris Drug Company (founded in 1947) at the corner of East 6th Street and East Avenue signified the longevity of the Lebanese American community in the lower Waller Creek corridor. The business survived the construction of Interstate 35, but closed in 1980. Source: Allen Childs, *Sixth Street*.



Figure 6-33. Jabour's Package Store, founded by Lebanese immigrant and twin brothers Theodore and Arthur Jabour, remained a fixture on East 6th Street until 1981. His descendants opened Twin Liquors on Red River Street, continuing the family legacy and business presence in the lower Waller Creek area and Austin. Source: Allen Childs, *Sixth Street*.



Figure 6-34. Pictured here in 1975, Raven's Garage (605 Red River Street) remained a viable business, catering to customers in the lower Waller Creek corridor until it closed around 1980. In the area's transition into an entertainment district, the building then served as home to a bar called Raven's before becoming the home of Emo's nightclub in the early 1990s. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Texas Historical Commission.





Figure 6-35. One Knite was a popular blues venue during the 1960s. Source: Jesse Sublett, "One Knite Saloon," [http://www.jessesublett.com/2012/12/03/austin-walks-into-a-bar/29394\\_1433971485588\\_1121941907\\_31254503\\_1681858\\_n/](http://www.jessesublett.com/2012/12/03/austin-walks-into-a-bar/29394_1433971485588_1121941907_31254503_1681858_n/).





Figure 6-36. View of Juárez-Lincoln University from southbound Interstate 35 Frontage Road. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Figure 6-37. Protestors in front of Juárez-Lincoln University and the *Los Elementos* mural. Source: Portal to Texas History, crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

## ENDNOTES

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