

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preservation Central, Inc. appreciates the people and organizations who have contributed to the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association Historic Resources Survey. In particular, we wish to thank Cory Walton for his perseverance and assistance in keeping us on track through a challenging survey season. We also wish to thank volunteer Trude Cables for her dedication to getting the survey completed and for her stamina doing field work in August and September when the temperature soared, as well as for her data entry service. Finally, we wish to thank the members of the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association who voted to fund this project to identify and minimally document all cultural resources (buildings, structures, objects, and sites) in the project area boundaries. This effort has resulted in the survey of 1,306 cultural resources, 694 of which date to the historic period (c. 1850-1965).

ABSTRACT

In January 2015, the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association retained the services of Preservation Central, Inc., an Austin historic preservation consulting firm, to conduct an architectural survey within the association's boundaries, an area roughly bounded by Barton Springs Road on the north, Oltorf on the south, S. Congress Avenue on the east, and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the west. Preservation Central first conducted a "windshield" or driving survey of cultural resources within the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood. The windshield survey identified a slightly smaller area for a reconnaissance survey due to fewer concentrations of historic properties, particularly in the area between S. Fifth Street and S. Lamar Blvd. The revised survey area was roughly bounded by Bouldin Creek on the north, the north side of Oltorf on the south, S. Congress Avenue on the east, and the west side of S. Fifth Street on the west.

Preservation Central then conducted a comprehensive reconnaissance-level survey that minimally documented every substantial cultural resource within the survey boundaries. A total of 1,306 resources were identified and minimally documented. Of the total, the great majority – 983 – date to the historic period (c. 1850-1965), indicating that the neighborhood retains a significant amount of historic fabric. Another 315 resources postdate 1965. Most of the new construction – approximately 173 buildings – has occurred in the past 15 years. Of the total number of surveyed properties, 687 were determined to be contributing elements of a potential historic district, and 611 were determined to be noncontributing – either modern resources or historic resources that have been severely modified. Eight were not clearly visible from the public right-of-way and could not be assessed. From these figures, Preservation Central has determined that the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood has sufficient contributing resources to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and may be a candidate for a Local Historic District.

In addition, 25 properties may be potentially individually eligible for

listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) based on their architecture alone. Other properties may be elevated to High priority status once their histories are known.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey was conducted as part of an effort to determine whether all or part of the neighborhood is eligible for designation as one or more local or National Register historic districts. This survey resulted in a comprehensive inventory of all buildings, structures, objects, and sites within the central portion of the neighborhood. All properties were assessed as High, Medium, or Low preservation priorities. High and Medium properties are considered contributing elements of a potential district, while Low priorities are either nonhistoric (1966-present) or historic-age (c. 1850-1965) resources that have been significantly modified within the past 50 years and thus no longer convey a sense of their history.

In January 2015, the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association retained Preservation Central, Inc., an Austin-based historic preservation consulting firm, to complete a comprehensive reconnaissance level survey within the association boundaries to survey each and every resource, regardless of age, alteration, or condition. The consultants first conducted a windshield (vehicular) survey to define survey area boundaries by concentrations of historic resources. Project area boundaries were revised to include all resources existing roughly from Bouldin Creek on the north, to Oltorf on the south, and between S. Congress Avenue on the east, to the west side of S. Fifth Street on the west. These boundaries were used for the comprehensive reconnaissance level survey.

The Scope of Work for the current effort mandated that:

a windshield survey be conducted within the neighborhood association.

all built resources in the proposed district(s), regardless of age, condition, or architectural merit, be surveyed within the revised survey area boundaries.

all surveyed resources be assessed for their ability to contribute to the historic character of one or more proposed district(s).

the largest possible historic district(s) be defined within the project area.

smaller districts with good concentrations of historic properties would also be defined.

the results of the survey would be compiled into this survey report.

SURVEY

The Bouldin Creek Neighborhood planning area boundaries extend from Lady Bird Lake on the north, to Oltorf Road on the south, and from S. Congress Avenue on the east, to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the west. Within those boundaries, the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Survey Area ranges from Bouldin Creek on the north to the north side of Oltorf on the south, and from S. Congress Avenue on the east, to the west side of S. Fifth Street on the west. This smaller area was selected for the comprehensive reconnaissance level survey based on concentrations of historic resources and the lack of cohesive historic fabric outside of those areas. Within the survey area boundaries, every visible cultural resource – buildings, structures, objects, and sites – regardless of age or condition, was identified and minimally documented on a Field Survey form. They were identified by street address, approximate date of construction and dates of alteration, preservation priority, number of stories, exterior materials, style, if any, and condition. This section addresses the research and documentation methods used in this survey.

Previous Surveys in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood

As part of the research methodology for the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood

survey, Ms. Myers, principal investigator for the project, identified and reviewed previous historic surveys and documentation in the area. At least two previous cultural resource surveys exist for the project area. The initial survey within the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood boundaries was completed in 1983 as part of a citywide survey entitled “The Cultural Resources of Austin” (published 1984). Conducted as a joint venture by consultants Bell, Klein and Hoffman and Hardy Heck Moore, it provided a comprehensive survey of properties inside the 1935 city limits. This survey is now out of date and as it does not recognize properties built after 1935 as historic resources. The National Parks Service has established a 50-year time period for determining “historic” status. Thus, the new cut-off date is approximately 1965. That year was used to identify historic properties within the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood survey area.

A second, more detailed survey was conducted for historic properties along S. Congress Avenue in 2003 as part of a city effort to identify historic patterns and attributes of the SOCO district for inclusion in a Preservation Plan for the corridor. Terri Myers, a consultant to McGraw, Marburger & Associates, conducted the survey and historical narrative associated with it. It identified and minimally documented all extant historic properties along S. Congress Avenue from Riverside Drive to Ben White Blvd. As part of the assessment, Ms. Myers analyzed the resources and assigned preservation priorities to each discrete property. It was found that, while many of the buildings had been altered since their original construction, overall they conveyed a good sense of history and might be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. At that time, Austin did not yet have a vehicle for listing local historic districts.

The consultant also reviewed the 2002 Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Plan. The document did not include a comprehensive inventory of properties in the

district but set historic preservation objectives and action items for such a survey. Objective 1.4 was to pursue historic designations as a means of preserving the character of existing properties. Action Item 13 recommended conducting a historic survey to determine the neighborhood's eligibility as a local and national historic district. Action Item 16 specifically called for historic designations for the Boys and Girls Club (211 W. Johanna) and Becker Elementary School (906 W. Milton).

Preservation Central reviewed relevant passages from the 1984 survey report and found that current preservation philosophy and methods for identifying and assessing historic properties warranted a new, comprehensive survey of Bouldin Creek Neighborhood resources. The SOCO document assessed the historic and architectural merit of individual properties and found that the east side of the 200-1700 blocks of S. Congress Avenue may have a sufficient ratio of contributing to noncontributing properties to be considered for designation as a National Register District. A reading of the 2002 Neighborhood Plan indicated that a comprehensive survey of the neighborhood had not yet been undertaken but was desired. This survey was conducted to accomplish that goal.

Windshield Survey

Ms. Myers first conducted a "windshield" (vehicular) survey of the entire neighborhood association boundaries, essentially driving every street within the district to determine where concentrations of historic buildings existed and where they were lacking. She recorded notes for each block of each street within the general neighborhood and found that the most cohesive historic portion of the neighborhood lay between Bouldin Creek on the north and the north side of Oltorf Street on the south, and from the rear property lines of the west side of S. Congress Avenue on the east and the west side of S. Fifth Street on the west.

Some historic properties lie outside those boundaries but they are not in sufficient numbers to offset the amount of noncontributing buildings that are also in those area.

Comprehensive Reconnaissance Level Survey

Upon defining the project area boundaries, Ms. Myers embarked on a comprehensive survey of all cultural resources (buildings, structures, objects and sites) within the revised zone. The survey was intended to include minimal documentation at the reconnaissance level but ultimately included much more information than that usually found in such a survey. As originally designed, the survey would have identified only the address, approximate date of construction, and preservation priority (High, Medium, or Low). Instead, documentation included the property type, number of stories, construction materials, roof form, style, if any, and physical condition. Thus, the documentation lies somewhere between a reconnaissance and an intensive level survey. No photographs were taken in this survey.

Ms. Myers first surveyed the north-south streets from the lowest numbered addresses to the highest. The survey was conducted on foot on a block-by-block basis. Ms. Myers recorded information for every primary resource along the street, starting with Eva on the east, and ending with S. Fifth Street on the west. She then surveyed east-west streets throughout the district. At minimum, the surveyor sought to accomplish the following goals:

- to document each individual cultural resource—building, structure, object or site—within the defined survey area, regardless of age, condition or architectural merit.

- to record descriptive information about the property's physical appearance on a field form.

- to identify property locations on a site map.

- to render preliminary preservation priority assessments of High, Medium,

or Low for each property.

For each resource, the following information was recorded on a field form:

- Street Address
- Preservation Priority (High, Medium, or Low)
- Known or Estimated Date of Construction and Alterations
- Resource Type (Building, Structure, Object, or Site)
- Plan Type and/or Roof Form
- Architectural Style and/or Stylistic Influence, if any
- Number of Stories
- Exterior Materials
- Condition
- Notes on Distinctive Features and Building Integrity

Survey Assistant Trude Cables accompanied Ms. Myers during most of the field work which took place in the months of August and September, 2015. Once field investigations were completed by the teams, Ms. Myers retraced the entire district to ensure consistency in dates and preservation priorities for the properties. In June, Ms. Myers again field-checked the data and added to the individual property descriptions.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Preservation Priorities

While in the field, Ms. Myers assigned preliminary preservation priorities to all but eight substantial resources as she documented their physical characteristics. Based on a property's age, architectural merit, number and extent of nonhistoric alterations, and its level of historic integrity, she ranked it as a High, Medium, or Low preservation priority. The eight properties that were not evaluated were not sufficiently visible from the public right-of-way to adequately assess.

High preservation priorities are those that have significant architectural characteristics and retain a good level of historic integrity. The National Park Service has identified seven aspects of integrity to evaluate in determining

preservation priorities: integrity of location, setting, feeling, design, materials, workmanship, and association with relevant historic contexts for the area (See Historic Context). High priority properties are ones with outstanding or exceptional architectural merit or important historic significance and retain most aspects of integrity to a large degree. Such properties may be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and would be considered contributing resources in a potential National Register or Local Historic district. Twenty-five properties were assessed as High preservation priorities in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood survey area.

Medium priorities are properties that are good or typical examples of an architectural style or type, with few alterations since their construction, and which retain their historic integrity to a good or high degree. They, too, would be considered contributing elements of any potential historic district. Of the total 1,306 properties surveyed, 662 were determined to be Medium preservation priorities. All are historic-age resources with relatively few significant alterations.

Low priority properties are either nonhistoric resources (less than 50 years old) or historic properties that have been substantially altered since their date of construction such that they no longer convey an authentic sense of history. Historic age properties assessed as Low preservation priorities in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood survey generally lacked sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and/or feeling to warrant a higher rating. Of the total number of properties surveyed, 611 were determined to be Low preservation priorities. Low priorities include the 315 properties that were built after 1965. Low priorities also include 296 properties that date to the historic period but have been altered to a significant degree such that they have lost their historic integrity and no longer convey an accurate sense of history.

Feeling is, perhaps, the most difficult aspect of integrity to assess; it is generally up to the surveyor to determine to what degree a resource is able to

convey an authentic time period, architectural style or type, or contribute to our understanding of an area's historic development. A question many surveyors ask themselves regarding this aspect of integrity is: Would the original owner or builder recognize it as his own property or his own work if he were to see it today? If the answer is "yes", the resource likely possesses considerable integrity of feeling. If the answer is "no", then the property probably does not retain sufficient integrity of feeling to be considered a Medium or High preservation priority.

It should be noted that most properties identified as High, Medium, or Low preservation priorities were assessed according to their approximate age and architectural merit only. A few were originally assessed as Medium preservation priorities but subsequent research indicated that they should be considered High priorities due to their important historic associations. If significant historic people or events are discovered to be associated with resources in the survey area in the future, the property could be reassessed and its preservation priority adjusted accordingly.

Contributing Properties

National Register Guidelines define Contributing properties as those buildings, sites, structures or objects that "add to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archaeological values" of a district. Resources must contribute to or enhance a district's ability to evoke a sense of the past, most often to a specific period of time. Contributing properties are at least 50 years old and are either unaltered or have had relatively minor and reversible non-historic changes. They must retain sufficient historic and architectural integrity to be recognizable to their period of significance, in this case, to 1965 or earlier.

A total of 688 properties are considered Contributing elements of the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood. Both Medium and High priority properties fall into this category. These resources range from the exceptional properties that are considered individually eligible for National Register listing to the many good or typical examples of cultural resources found in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood project area. Of the 1,306 properties documented in this survey, 687 are considered to be contributing resources in any potential historic district.

To qualify as a Contributing element of a proposed historic district, a property should exhibit most of its original or historic-period architectural fabric. It should be on its original site and retain original character-defining features such as plan type, roof form and pitch, porches and fenestration patterns. Alterations should be minimal or compatible with the property's original design, materials, scale, and workmanship.

Typical alterations to historic buildings in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood include replacing weatherboard or wood siding with aluminum or vinyl siding, replacing wood sash windows with aluminum storm windows, replacing original wooden porch posts with wrought iron or aluminum posts, and small additions to the back or side of a property. If the replacement siding does not totally obscure or remove decorative details such as window moldings, and if window replacements do not alter the size and pattern of the opening, these changes may not significantly detract from the property's appearance and thus they may still be considered Contributing to the overall historic sense of the district.

Many properties, particularly houses, in the project area have been enlarged by additions over the years. If they are to the rear of the property, and do not interfere with the historic front façade of a resource, they generally do not significantly detract from its overall character. In general, the older or rarer a

property is, the greater consideration is given to its designation as a Contributing resource, particularly if it reflects important architectural or historic elements of the district. In such cases, a Contributing designation may be assigned to a property even though it has been altered to a moderate degree.

Noncontributing Properties

Noncontributing properties include those built after 1965 and represent more modern architectural traditions and those that, while dating to the historic period, have been so altered that they no longer reflect the building traditions and character of the original community. Of the 1,306 properties surveyed in this project, 611 are considered to be noncontributing resources in any potential historic district. This number includes the 315 nonhistoric properties and the 297 historic properties listed as Low priorities due to significant modification since their original construction.

Severe alterations include removing or enclosing front porches, enlarging, shortening or removing window openings, replacing original details with anachronistic details (such as replacing Craftsman architectural details with Victorian gingerbread), replacing historic wood features with nonhistoric materials, altering the roof form or pitch, and major building additions that are highly visible from the street and compete with the historic portion of the building to the point of distraction. While horizontal vinyl or aluminum siding may be an acceptable replacement for horizontal weatherboard in some cases, it is inappropriate to cover or replace original weatherboard with materials such as brick or stone. Such applications may render a property Noncontributing within the proposed historic district.

A total of 611 properties within the survey area are classified as Noncontributing elements of a potential historic district. All are assessed as Low

preservation priorities. A property that detracts from the district's historic character is classified as Noncontributing and includes a building, site, structure or object that "does not add to the historic architectural qualities, historic association, or archaeological" significance of the district because it doesn't meet the recommended 50-year age threshold or because it has been altered to such an extent that it no longer possesses historic integrity.

Data Encoding and Work Products

Following the field investigations, Research Assistant Trude Cables devised a database and entered the information collected on the identification forms into a Microsoft Access database to catalog, store, and analyze information on each property. Following data encoding and analysis by the consultant, this report was prepared to summarize the results of the survey and provide a basis for the preparation of a National Register historic district nomination for the Bouldin Neighborhood.

The Recommendations section specifies the criteria used in assessing National Register eligibility (Contributing and Noncontributing) and discusses the overall results of the survey. A comprehensive list of surveyed resources has been generated from the database and included as an appendix to this report. Also included as an appendix is an area map of the proposed historic districts created by Kristen Brown. Contributing and Noncontributing resources and proposed historic district boundaries are indicated on the map. In addition to this report, the map, and the inventory of properties, the database was copied onto a CD-ROM for use by the neighborhood association.

Historical Research

After the completion of the survey, project director Terri Myers undertook

a research effort that included comparing historic Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps showing the footprints of buildings in the area over time. She also read Michelle Mears' book "And Grace Shall Lead Me Home" which identified the "South Side" "Brackenridge" and "South Austin" freedmens communities. Ms. Myers reviewed Internet documents on the history of the Bouldin Creek neighborhood and some of its early settlers and later residents. She perused the 2002 Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Plan and the Austin Cultural Resources Survey (1984) for additional information about the neighborhood and its development.

Ms. Myers adapted her own work for the Fairview/Travis Heights Survey Report and the SOCO Preservation Plan, as well as the 2002 Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Plan, to compile the following historic context within which the surveyed resources should be evaluated for historic significance.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Early history of South Austin

Among the earliest known Anglo settlers in Travis County were Josiah and Mathias Wilbarger, Jacob Harrell, Rueben Hornsby, John Webber and William Barton and their families. They are known to have settled in east and southeast Travis County by the 1820s and the small community coalesced around the Webber family homestead. Most remained in the eastern part of present Travis County but by the 1830s, Barton, who reportedly found Webberville too crowded, began looking further west for a new homestead. Barton traveled along the north bank of the Colorado River until he came to its juncture with Shoal Creek. Just west of the creek, he forded the Colorado to its south bank where he discovered the permanent springs that have since borne his name, "Barton Springs". Barton is credited with establishing the first "ferry" on the Colorado by leaving a canoe on the north bank of the river, west of entrance to Shoal Creek. Travelers could reach his spring - and the future location of his mill - by making use of the canoe. A few other settlers followed Barton's lead and by 1833, Austin's colony unofficially extended across the Colorado to what is now South Austin (Burr).

At the same time, a small settlement began to take shape on the north bank of the river. Jacob Harrell, one of the earliest settlers in southeastern Travis County, moved to a site near Shoal Creek by 1836. In the winter of 1837-1838, four families, including Jacob Harrell's, constituted the village of Waterloo on the north bank of the Colorado. It was Harrell who accompanied Republic of Texas President Mirabeau Lamar on a buffalo hunt along Waller Creek that winter. Lamar was enchanted with the site. He reportedly stood at the top of the hill where the capitol now stands, surveyed the landscape spread out before him and announced, "This should be the seat of the future empire" (Terrell 1910: 117, in Jones et. al. 1999: 59). Supported by the legislature, Lamar proclaimed Waterloo the capital of the Republic of Texas.

The name Waterloo was short-lived, however. The following year, Lamar directed Edwin Waller to survey and layout the streets, lots and blocks of the new capital

to be renamed for Stephen F. Austin. Waller platted a grid-like town site with the Colorado River as its southern boundary. His new townsite did not extend to the sparsely settled landscape across the river to the south. One of the noteworthy features of Waller's Townsite plan was the broad central avenue which led north from the river, dividing the town into eastern and western halves and terminating at the capitol square. Congress Avenue's breadth and unobstructed length created a grand visual promenade for visitors to the capital city.

While South Austin's few residents may have had an unimpeded view of the state capitol, they were often unable to reach it due to the difficulties involved in crossing the Colorado River. Accessible only by Barton's canoe through the 1840s, little traffic led to or from South Austin. By 1852, three outfits provided ferry access between Austin and its southern neighbor, but the short trip was expensive and unreliable as the ferries were limited to periods of low to medium rainfall. In 1853, Travis County commissioners recognized that ferries provided the only means to cross the Colorado and they set rates and levied taxes accordingly, an act that only raised the fees higher. Isolated as it was, South Austin's development languished while wild land speculation and unregulated growth ran amuck across the river in the capital city.

Early Settlers in South Austin

While politicians, lawyers, and land developers reigned in Austin, South Austin residents were almost entirely agriculturalists, identified as farmers, ranchers, and "plantation" owners in antebellum census records and official documents. James Gibson Swisher was among the first Anglo settlers on the south bank of the Colorado, having arrived in the area by 1847. He acquired a large parcel of land lying south of the river, straddling both sides of present S. Congress Avenue. In 1852, Swisher established a ferry on the south bank of the Colorado. He judiciously aligned his ferry station with Congress Avenue, Austin's most important street. He rightly surmised that travelers would prefer to pick up the ferry at the foot of Congress Avenue and travel directly across the river to continue their journey to San Antonio or points further south. Simultaneously, Swisher

donated a wide swath – 120' – of land to Travis County as right-of-way for a county road. The county accepted his offer and the San Antonio Post Road was born, right through Swisher's property. These were prudent moves for a man who anticipated developing his land in the future.

The San Antonio Road

When Swisher donated the right-of-way for a county road, he actually petitioned the Commissioners Court to build the road starting at his ferry station on the south side of the river and continuing south through his property to San Antonio. Swisher envisioned the road as an extension of Congress Avenue with his ferry connecting the two segments. The commissioners agreed and designated Swisher as the overseer of the road which was laid out on a direct line with Congress Avenue. According to Texas law, counties were responsible for the development and maintenance of roads outside city or town limits. County roads were required to be 40 feet wide (*Highway Development: A Concrete History of Twentieth Century Texas*, 1984). As overseer, Swisher may have supervised his slaves who actually performed the work of building the road from the river to the edge of his property and possibly beyond. The completed highway was alternately known as the San Antonio Road or the Post Road, for its role as a postal route between Austin and San Antonio. The road traversed Swisher's farm and made a sharp turn to the east at the crest of a hill; one fork headed east to Moore's Crossing in Southeast Travis County, while the other, the Post Road, continued through St. Elmo and on to San Antonio.

Swisher was an entrepreneur who sought to make the most of his location and resources. He immigrated to Texas from Tennessee in 1833 and lived in several Texas locales before arriving in Austin. In 1846, he, his wife Elizabeth Boyd, and their four children and their families, moved to a farm on a high bluff directly across the river from Austin. He must have foreseen the commercial possibilities in having a major road cross his land enroute to the city's main business district. Travelers coming to Austin from the south debarked from his ferry right onto Congress Avenue where Swisher also operated a tavern and hotel. Thus, he took full advantage of his road and

ferry service. Swisher died on November 14, 1862, but his wife Elizabeth owned and operated the ferry until her death in 1875. Her granddaughter recalled how the ferry income helped support her in 1932:

There was a great deal of travel on the San Antonio Road, and the ferry made quite a lot of money. I remember the coins poured into a tin box, which she pushed under her bed, and there it stayed without any further thought from her (Swisher Memoirs, 1932).

Swisher's neighbors in South Austin included Col. James Edward Bouldin and his wife Molinda (Sanders) who arrived in the area by the early 1850s. Bouldin purchased a vast swath of unbroken land in the Isaac Decker tract that ranged from the Colorado on the north to near present William Cannon Dr. on the south, and from near S. Congress on the east to S. Fifth Street on the west. Bouldin's property adjoined Swisher's land on the east. He built a mansion and established a cemetery on what are now the Herman Becker School grounds which cover the block between Monroe and Milton on the north and south, and between Bouldin Avenue and S. Fifth Street on the east and west. The Bouldin mansion was considered the height of fashion in its time but it was lost to history at some time after 1894. In 1930, Howard Boudin Sr., James Edward's grandson, visited the old Bouldin estate and found that nothing of the mansion remained on the site. At his death in 1876, Bouldin owned most of what people identified to as "South Austin" for another fifty years or more.

To the west of the Bouldin property lay the Goodrich Plantation. Like the Bouldins, Col. Stanley W. Goodrich and family came to Austin in the early 1850s. In 1853, Goodrich bought 1,010 acres of land out of the Isaac Decker League in South Austin. Goodrich had a brick Greek Revival style house (present Paggi House) built on a bluff close to the Colorado, just east of present S. Lamar Blvd. above Riverside Drive (200 Lee Barton Drive). The house was located near the west branch of Bouldin Creek which assured the pioneer settlers of a good water source. Goodrich operated a sawmill, a gristmill, and a cotton gin on his property. Barton Springs, which has a strong, steady

flow, may have been the source of power for his gins. Now known as the Paggi House, the former Goodrich home is one of the few extant South Austin properties dating to the antebellum period.

All of the major land owners mentioned thus far – Swisher, Bouldin, and Goodrich – owned slaves in the 1850s and 1860s. They likely built the large houses of the land owners, tilled the fields, harvested the crops, operated the gins, mills, and stone quarries, and built and maintained the roads, in addition to all of the domestic labor. Small dwellings were built on the property, relatively close to the main house in small clusters, according to the notes for the Paggi (Goodrich) House State Historical Marker. These dwellings, like the Swisher and Bouldin houses, are lost to history but were an important part of the antebellum development in South Austin until Emancipation.

The State Deaf and Dumb Asylum

Swisher's ferry and the San Antonio Post Road attracted only the most modest settlement in South Austin during the 1850s. One of the most noteworthy new arrivals was the School for the Deaf. In 1856, Governor Elisha M. Pease appointed a board of five trustees to find an appropriate site for a state school for the deaf. The trustees chose a 57-acre parcel about half a mile south of the Colorado River on the Post Road (S. Congress Avenue). At the same time, land for the state Insane Asylum was purchased on Guadalupe Street, about a mile north of the Colorado River.

Both institutions were located in semi-rural areas beyond the city limits. Selection of the rural sites was in keeping with the prevailing philosophy of the period which espoused the virtues of fresh air and country living for inmates and wards of the state – anyone requiring institutionalization. Poor farms, orphanages, state schools and other state or county-run institutions of the period typically operated farms where the inmates or students worked to supply their own food and pay their way. By locating near a town or city, any excess produce, eggs, meat, milk and other dairy products could be sold to further subsidize the institution. In hard times, the farms proved invaluable. During the Civil War, for instance, the School for the Deaf had no money for salaries and

both teachers and students supported themselves by farming and making woolen clothing from their own sheep (Smyrl, *The Handbook of Texas Online*).

Apparently, the School for the Deaf was at least partially developed before its purchase as it used the "existing buildings" when it opened with three students in 1857. In 1858, the Texas legislature appropriated \$5,000 to purchase the property and make improvements including the construction of two new buildings for classrooms and living quarters. During the first 13 years of operation, 60 students attended the school (Smyrl, *The Handbook of Texas Online*). Doubtless, the school attracted attention and visitors to South Austin but the area was only sparsely settled with scattered farmsteads until well after the Civil War.

Thus, as the 1860s dawned in South Austin, most of the land in the present Bouldin Neighborhood Association boundaries still lay in the hands of large property owners whose homes, slave dwellings, and farm buildings were found in small clusters on an otherwise agrarian or natural landscape. Some of the land was given to agriculture where corn, cotton, and some wheat were grown, but large tracts of land lay undisturbed, left in native grasses and timber. The Swisher, Bouldin, and Goodrich properties each totaled more than 1,000 acres but the land was only sparsely occupied with those few building complexes. Although the School for the Deaf occupied a comparatively modest 57-acre parcel it, too, presented a pastoral appearance with its own fields, farm buildings, and timber lots.

The Civil War

On the eve of the Civil War in 1861, the San Antonio Road remained a dirt highway through the rural countryside south of Austin with little development along its route. Traffic to and from San Antonio continued to flow along the road but there were few reasons to stop in South Austin other than to water the horses or stretch one's legs. With the outbreak of the Civil War, however, the road assumed strategic significance as the lifeline to the Texas capital.

Major General John Bankhead Magruder, one of the Confederacy's best strategists, feared a Union invasion into the Texas interior. His first goal was to fortify

the coastlands and he successfully drove the Union Navy out of Galveston, forcing them to attack 300 miles south at Matamoros. Having secured the coast, Magruder set out to build forts at Gonzales, San Antonio and Austin, all major south-central cities. In December 1863 he wrote:

Having good reasons to apprehend that Calvary raids will be attempted in the direction of San Antonio, and that a direct attempt will be made in force upon Austin, I have ordered both of these places to be strongly fortified, the first by Captain Schliecher the second by Major Kellersberg, and am now sending about 500 negroes to San Antonio and about 1000 to Austin for that purpose (Magruder 1863).

Magruder may have conscripted some of the local Bouldin, Swisher, or Goodrich slaves for the task. Magruder and Kellersburg built the fort on a hill overlooking the San Antonio Road, near the present northwest corner of South Congress Avenue and Ben White Boulevard. The fortifications consisted of earthen embankments and trenches with storage for gunpowder. While Magruder's predictions proved wrong, his instincts were well-considered; the hilltop location was a strategic point that would have given the Confederates good advantage in defending Austin from advancing cavalry.

Brackenridge

The end of the Civil War initiated a major development wave in South Austin due to the large number of freedmen who lived in the area after Emancipation. James Swisher, James Bouldin, and Sterling Goodrich, major landowners on the south bank of the Colorado River, all owned slaves who were freed at the end of the war. Some of the Swisher slaves reportedly stayed with the family for awhile after the war. Goodrich's slaves formed a small freedman's colony now marked only by a State Historical Marker for Barton Springs Baptist Church and Cemetery on the west side of S. Lamar near its juncture with Oltorf. J. E. Bouldin either gave or sold land to his former slaves in South Austin and a good section of the former Bouldin plantation grew into a large freedmen's community that spawned major African American institutions, residential development, and some commercial construction. The area became variously

known as “Brackenridge”, for the African American School of that name at 319 W. Elizabeth Street, “South Side”, or simply, “South Austin”. Located south of the Texas School for the Deaf, the African American neighborhood lay between S. Congress Avenue and S. First Street, and stretched as far as Oltorf Road on the south.

Major African American institutions in the area attest to the substantial development of South Austin’s black community in the eastern section of the former Bouldin plantation by the 1870s. Shortly after the Civil War, freedmen established twelve churches in African American communities in and around Austin. Three of those early congregations were formed in the Bouldin section of South Austin; they were the Friendly Will Baptist, Goodwill Baptist, and St. Anne African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches. Two built churches that have endured to the present: St. Anne’s AME Church, built about 1915, lies at the northeast corner of Newton and W. Annie, and Goodwill Baptist Church stands farther north in the same block of Newton at 1700 Newton/301 Milton. The third congregation, Friendly Will Baptist Church, only recently left their neighborhood church and is building a new building elsewhere. For many years, however, the congregation met at 414 W. Johanna, just a few blocks south and west of St. Anne’s and the Goodwill Baptist Church.

Already mentioned, Brackenridge School first appeared in the 1909-1910 Austin city directory, but it could have been built earlier as the directories did not include much of South Austin before that time. Brackenridge replaced an earlier frame church in the neighborhood. While most African American schools in Austin were small one-room affairs, Brackenridge was a large, well-built three-room frame building with board and batten siding, entry doors with overhead transoms, and large, multi-light (6/6) double hung windows. Its size, construction, and number of classrooms attests to the large concentration of African American families in the Bouldin neighborhood by the turn of the 20th century.

The growing African American population in South Austin at the turn of the century included many skilled craftsmen, masons, seamstresses, and laborers. The neighborhood also boasted professionals, such as ministers and teachers, and several black businessmen like Robert S. Stanley, who built a general store serving the

community from the turn of the 20th century into the 1930s. The Brackenridge section of the former Bouldin plantation remained almost exclusively African American until the 1940s (Census records, 1900-1940; Bouldin Neighborhood Plan, 2002: 12).

Early Subdivisions in South Austin

Reconstruction brought new river crossings on the Colorado. The first bridge – a pontoon bridge at Brazos Street – was built in 1869 but the fares were considered prohibitive. It cost a nickel for a pedestrian and a dime for a horse to cross the river. Eleven months after it was in place, the pontoon bridge was destroyed by a flood. The three ferries, Grumbles' on Barton Creek, Stone's on Waller Creek and Swisher's at Congress Avenue, resumed business until a new bridge was built. Travelers complained about the high ferry rates. Elizabeth Boyd Swisher's death in 1875 ended the family's 23-year ferry operation. The following year, a wooden bridge provided the first “permanent” crossing over the Colorado River.

The year after the wooden bridge was completed, John Milton Swisher, son of South Austin pioneers James and Elizabeth Swisher, subdivided about 23 acres of the family farm on the east side of the San Antonio Post Road (S. Congress Avenue) as the Swisher Addition to South Austin. No doubt, Swisher was banking on the new bridge and better transportation to bring buyers to his new addition. The Swisher Addition was Austin's first suburban addition south of the Colorado River. An auditor and banker, Swisher continued his parents' occupation in transportation. After the Civil War and until 1870, John Milton Swisher organized and served as president of a stock company for the construction of the city's street railway system. He also owned the stage line that left Austin for San Antonio from Swisher's ferry. The one-way passage cost \$10.

Swisher's plat noted that it was an addition to "South Austin" rather than Austin, perhaps acknowledging South Austin's separate identity from the capital city. Swisher named the streets in the addition after neighbors and members of his family and neighbors: Milton, Monroe, James, Annie, Nellie, Elizabeth, Mary, Johanna, Eva, Newton and Brackenridge (*South Austin Advocate* 1939: 12). These names survive through the Bouldin neighborhood to the present.

Swisher's development plans were marred by the collapse of the wooden bridge under the weight of a herd of cattle in 1883. Travis County recognized the necessity for a more permanent bridge across the Colorado and in 1886 built an iron bridge across the river. It was said that the truss bridge was expected "to stand as long as time lasts," according to an article in the *Austin Daily Statesman*.

Encouraged by the bridge construction, Charles Newning in 1886 bought 200 acres of land in the northeast portion of the Swisher farm and platted an addition that he called Fairview Park. In contrast to Swisher's grid-style addition on the high, relatively flat ground of the area, Fairview Park was created over a hilly area with two creeks through it and numerous city views from its hillsides and terraces. Newning intended to sell his large, irregular-sized lots for grand homes in an attractive, tree-studded setting. Newning called his subdivision Fairview Park because of its park-like setting amid hills and streams, and its "fair views" of the city from atop the bluffs.

Although the bridge construction greatly improved transportation, neither addition was immediately successful. Transit for working people still eluded South Austin and, though Swisher strongly advocated for the construction of a streetcar line across the river (to his subdivision), it would take another three decades before that dream became a reality. In the meantime, it remained difficult to commute to downtown jobs and development in South Austin lagged as a result.

St. Edwards College

While Swisher and Newning tried their hands at residential development close to the river, the Holy Cross Fathers and Brothers were building St. Edwards College at the southernmost end of South Congress, between present Oltorf Road and Ben White Boulevard. Plans for the college had been in the making for more than a decade. In 1872, Rev. Edward Sorin, founder of Notre Dame (1842), purchased the site from James Doyle, a pioneer farmer and construction supervisor for the State Capitol. Two years later, the Holy Cross Fathers and Brothers assumed charge of St. Mary's Cathedral in downtown Austin and began operating a farm on the former Doyle homestead. In 1885, they chartered St. Edwards College and hired Nicholas Clayton, a prominent Texas

architect who designed St. Mary's Cathedral, to design the main building. Completed in 1887, the grand building dominated the landscape.

[This] great old building, gracing the South Austin skyline with its symmetrical silhouette, and visible for many miles, has to be one of the finest in all of Texas (Hoffman, 1982).

St. Edward's College was re-chartered as a university in 1925 and in 1966 women were admitted to the school for the first time. A successful college, St. Edwards was also a major attraction for tourists and Austin residents alike.

Subdivision in the Bouldin Tract

By the early 1890s, heirs of James E. Bouldin joined Swisher and Newning and subdivided part of the family estate as additions to South Austin. Increased access to the city and the lack of nearby housing for teachers, workers, and service providers for the growing School for the Deaf and St. Edwards University may have convinced them that the time was right to develop their land. The last inhabitant of the Bouldin Mansion, David W. Bouldin, died about 1893 and family members filed the Bouldin Addition the following year, in 1894. The addition stretched from East Bouldin Creek on the east to the railroad tracks on the west and from W. Elizabeth on the north to W. Live Oak on the south. That same year the family also platted the South Heights subdivision comprised primarily of present Gibson Street. The old Bouldin house lay in the midst of the newly subdivided tracts (Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Plan, 2002).

A number of Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, and Classical Revival style houses appeared on lots in the subdivisions by the 1890s. Among them were a large frame Victorian style house with a wraparound porch at 815 Annie, and the 2-story Victorian dwelling at 811 W. Live Oak, since 1945 the home of Green Pastures restaurant. Both encompassed all or most of a city block. The house at 815 Annie has since been demolished but Green Pastures has been designated as an Austin Historic Landmark and is currently undergoing restoration.

Development in the Bouldin subdivisions was largely piecemeal before

the turn of the century but Austin designer Nick Dawson bucked that trend. By the 1890s, Dawson purchased a tract of land along present Dawson Street at the western end of the Bouldin neighborhood (Wallace 1898). Dawson had become well known in Austin for his rusticated limestone Victorian houses, many with hexagonal window bays or rounded turrets. Dawson and his sisters Mary (Molly) and Nannie designed numerous such houses in West and South Austin, many of which survive to the present. Several c. 1890s stone houses built by the Dawsons are found in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood; one is on the west side of S. Lamar and another is found at 1001 W. Mary Street. Unfortunately, the Ruth Dawson House, a c. 1935 stone veneered dwelling at 901 Dawson, was recently demolished for new construction. The Dawson's surviving buildings in the neighborhood are among the area's most noteworthy architecture.

Civic Improvements

The 1890s saw a number of civic improvements in Austin and the surrounding area. In 1890, the Austin Dam was built on the Colorado River in the western part of the city. The dam created a 20 mile long lake – Lake Austin – and promised reliable electricity and protection from flooding.

In 1891, Mayor McDonald promised a stone bridge across Bouldin Creek at South Congress Avenue (*The Austin Statesman*, October 24, 1891). In 1895, the city installed its first public lighting system – the Moonlight Towers. Two of the original towers survive in South Austin; one is at South First Avenue at Monroe and the other is at Leland and East Side.

In spite of these advances, South Congress Avenue remained an unpaved country road. By 1891, only eight buildings stood on South Congress Avenue. There was a two-story house on one corner of Monroe and South Congress and a log house where the South Side Church was later established. Leonard Eck owned a two-story limestone store building at South Congress and Nellie, present 1202 South Congress. A Mr. Hart, a stonemason, lived off the Avenue near Live Oak Street and the Rain family lived at 1714 South Congress. C. T. Carson lived at 1514 South Congress where he also had a grocery. A Mr. Stoner had a grocery at 1500 South Congress. J. M. Crawford's

home and grist mill—now Guero's restaurant—were at 1412 South Congress (*South Austin Advocate*, April 28, 1939: 12).

Still, South Congress was the principal road in South Austin. It provided access to the city for students and personnel at St. Edwards College and the School for the Deaf, as well as all of the area's scattered citizens. And, it remained the only direct route between Austin and San Antonio.

The Bridge, the Automobile and the Streetcar

In 1907, a small club of South Austin men began discussions on replacing the old iron bridge across the Colorado. The "proposition was agitated and in the next year a bond issue was elected and the structure started" (*South Austin Advocate*, 6). The old bridge trusses were shifted to new temporary piers on one side of the site to maintain traffic during the construction of the new bridge. The new concrete bridge had a floor system 50' wide to accommodate roadway pavement and interurban railway tracks. The overhanging portion of the deck was devoted to sidewalks and ornamental concrete railings that also supported light standards.

The bridge was completed in 1910 and on its opening day, April 3, 1910, crowds of people walked and drove over the structure. With the new bridge in place, streetcar tracks were laid from the bridge to Capital Heights. For the first time, South Austin had reliable, convenient transportation to downtown Austin. Almost immediately, new residents moved to the area and new stores cropped up along South Congress to serve them.

Development in South Austin increased substantially with the construction of the bridge and the streetcar line in 1910. In addition, greater car ownership made it much easier to commute across the bridge to downtown jobs. As a result, more people moved to South Austin where housing was often less expensive than in the city. The Bouldin additions and other "close in" South Austin neighborhoods sustained their most significant growth during the 1920s and the 1930s. Scores of Craftsman bungalows and Period Revival (Tudor, Spanish Colonial) style houses from this period line the streets in the Bouldin Neighborhood. The Bouldin Creek Neighborhood also experienced a growth

spurt along major arterials through the neighborhood including S. Congress Avenue and along S. First Street where commercial development mixed with residential lots.

The Bungalow Craze

Vastly improved bridge and road improvements, along with widespread automobile ownership by the 1920s, spurred the greatest period of development in the history of the Bouldin Creek neighborhood. No longer was South Austin all but inaccessible from downtown Austin on the north bank of the Colorado River. Now, it was considered a “close-in” but still affordable section of the city.

With the transportation problem apparently solved, builders descended on South Austin in droves. Hundreds of new bungalows appeared on streets throughout the former Swisher and Bouldin plantations beginning in the early 1920s. Many replaced older frame homes along Newton, Eva, and Annie streets in the Brackenridge area. Others filled in the gaps between older houses in the area. Hundreds of bungalows, some with Craftsman detailing, others with Classical columns or posts, were built in the sparsely developed streets of South Austin from about 1920 through the 1930s.

The bungalow “craze”, as it was sometimes known, had its roots in California with the Craftsman style houses of brothers Charles and Henry Greene. The Greene brothers took their inspiration from the English Arts and Crafts movement and from Asian wooden architecture and by 1909 began designing and building what are now considered to be exceptional landmark houses in the Pasadena area. Other architects and builders adopted the Greene brothers’ “Craftsman” design palette and frame dwellings with distinctive wood details in the Craftsman tradition sprang up along both the West and the East coasts starting in the mid-1910s. National magazines such as *Western Architect*, *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal* gave the new style extensive publicity and the rest of the country quickly followed suit.

The bungalow house type is closely associated with the Craftsman style as the need for smaller, moderate-priced homes greatly increased after World War I. The bungalow grew up with the Craftsman style but they are not one and the same. The bungalow is generally a small, one-story frame house with two rows of rooms organized

by use: one row contains the public spaces (living room, dining room, kitchen in tandem) and the other row contains the private spaces (bedroom, bathroom, bedroom in tandem). Sometimes a hallway separated the two rows. Bungalows usually presented a horizontal rather than vertical profile under a wide, overarching roof. Front porches were an essential part of the bungalow plan with most covering half to two-fifths of the front façade. The plan type was a great departure from the Victorian L-plan and became the dominant American house form from the late 1910s into the 1930s.

The great wave of bungalow construction coincided with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers who poured into America's cities after the war hoping to find jobs and start families. Builders across the country followed pattern books featuring bungalow houses in the then-popular Craftsman style to build thousands upon thousands of small, one-story frame and brick veneer bungalows in every city in the country. The melding of the bungalow house form with the Craftsman style became ubiquitous and the "Craftsman bungalow" was born. Austin was no exception to the bungalow phenomenon. It is the single greatest house type in the Bouldin Creek survey area and the Craftsman style is the single largest style represented in the neighborhood.

Tudor Revival and "Rustic Styles"

As building in the Brackenridge section of the Bouldin Creek neighborhood surged in the 1920s, new, formerly vacant sections in the area west of S. First Street to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks came under development in the latter part of the decade. From the late 1920s through the 1930s, scores of bungalows were built in this section but other housing types and styles appeared, as well. Brick and stone veneer Tudor Revival style houses appeared in large numbers along Dawson, S. Fifth Street, Christopher, Briar, and other streets in the western section of the neighborhood. They also appeared in neighborhood's southeast quadrant which had only been sparsely settled prior to World War I.

The Tudor Revival styles seen in the Bouldin Creek neighborhood generally are one-story brick or stone veneered houses characterized by steeply pitched front gables.

There are frame examples but they are in the minority. Tudor Revival houses in the neighborhood generally adopted the bungalow plan type but without the prominent front porch. Most Tudor Revival style houses have only a small entry stoop or possibly an arched entrance with little or no porch.

Houses defined as “Rustic” are generally one-story bungalows or early Ranch plan houses with natural stone veneer, wood architectural details, and wrought iron handrails, light fixtures, and door hardware. Good examples are found along S. Dawson, Bouldin Avenue, and in 1930s and 1940s development areas elsewhere in the neighborhood.

Hispanic Presence in South Austin

By the first decades of the 20th century, the western part of the Bouldin Plantation, west of S. First Street, saw an influx of Hispanic families. Mexican immigration to Texas had increased in the 1900s and 1910s in response to revolution and upheaval in their homeland. Mexican households in Austin originally clustered around Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, built on Republic Square in 1907, in the southwest quadrant of the original city plat. The area became known as “Mexico” and by the early 1920s, it was almost entirely inhabited by Mexican and Mexican American residents. In 1926, the city embarked on a “slum clearance” project to remove the entire neighborhood. The city offered Our Lady of Guadalupe a new site in East Austin and many Latino families moved close to the church.

Others relocated in South Austin where they formed a new congregation. New arrivals from Mexico joined both communities and since that time, both East and South Austin have been home to large numbers of Mexican American citizens. Hispanic communities in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood were concentrated around two major churches. San Jose Roman Catholic Church, denoted as “Mexican” on early 20th century Sanborn fire insurance maps was one. The church lay at 711 W. Mary Street, several blocks west of S. First Street, a major north-south arterial that was fast becoming a commercial node through the neighborhood by the mid-20th century. The other was St.

Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church built in 1939 at 211 W. Johanna. It is now the Boys and Girls Club.

Tourist Travel Spurs South Congress Growth

In South Austin, both local and tourist traffic grew during the 1920s and 1930s. Automobiles had become available to the average adult and leisure travel by car had become commonplace by the 1920s. Congress Avenue remained the main travel route from San Antonio and points south into the capital city and roadside businesses and advertising sprang up along the highway. As the Texas capital, Austin had a number of "built-in" attractions including the capitol, the Governor's mansion, and other state offices as well as recreational spots like Barton Springs and shopping venues in the downtown district. During the 1920s, highway billboards began to appear along the highway to attract visitors. At the same time, tourist courts, restaurants and gas stations sprang up along travel routes including South Congress Avenue.

As South Congress Avenue carried increasing numbers of tourist travelers to the city, land uses along its frontage changed to meet the evolving economy. In 1909, business enterprises on South Congress were predominately grocery stores, bakeries and horse sales, blacksmiths and liveries. By 1930, both residential and tourist trade increased. Businesses provided many more services to local residents, such as barber and beauty shops and dry cleaners, but they also catered to tourists with numerous gas stations, tourist camps, and restaurants.

One of the most enduring businesses on South Congress was a hamburger stand near the south end of the Congress Avenue Bridge. Started by Harry Aiken in 1932, it later became the Night Hawk, famous as a gathering place for state politicians. By the end of the decade, numerous tourist courts had sprung up on the highways leading into the city – both on the north side (Guadalupe Street/Georgetown Road), and the south (South Congress Avenue/San Antonio Road). Citing "the expectation of many visitors to the city", the city adopted an ordinance to regulate the

growing number of tourist courts (City of Austin Ordinance March, 21, 1940).

Despite a poor economic climate nationwide in the 1930s, South Austin experienced a good deal of progress in its civic projects. In 1932, following the recommendations of planners Koch and Fowler, a new fire station designed by revered local architect Edwin Kreisle replaced an older one on the east side of the 1700 block of South Congress Avenue. By 1939 the South Austin Civic Association helped achieve numerous new civic improvements including the paving of West Mary Street and the construction of a post office, a theater and a junior high school. South Austin had its own newspaper, the *South Austin Advocate*, published by Ford Richie from his office at 1321 South Congress. This newspaper claimed that 10,000 people lived in South Austin in 1939 in 2,360 homes (*South Austin Advocate*, 1939:1).

Although many infrastructural improvements were made, none saved South Austin from the ravages of a major flood in 1935. The huge flood caused \$4,000,000 loss to the city, much of it on the south side of the river. The *South Austin Advocate* pressed for greater security for South Austin:

South Austin has always been the worst sufferer from flood damage when the Colorado went on a rampage . . . With the completion of the dams up-stream it is generally conceded that an end to these floods has arrived. . . . Those dams have got to be good (*South Austin Advocate*, 1939: 7).

On Saturday April 6, 1940, nearly fifty years after the first dam was built, three hundred people gathered to commemorate the newly completed Austin Dam. It would later be named for one of Austin's most notable public figures, Mayor Tom Miller. The new Tom Miller Dam created the 20-mile-long Lake Austin.

Postwar Construction in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood

Although domestic construction nationwide all but ceased during World War II, it exploded in the postwar period with new housing starts, schools, office buildings and highway construction. In the early postwar period, from the late 1940s

through the early 1960s, builders filled the remaining lots in the Bouldin Creek neighborhood with the early Ranch and Minimal Traditional style houses.

Some of the postwar construction occurred in areas that had not previously been developed or in areas that had been platted before World War II but not fully developed due to wartime restrictions on nonessential construction. The one-block long Fletcher Street is an example of development that platted and entirely developed in the postwar era. The for new Ranch style homes, all of which retain their original historic appearance to a remarkable degree. By about 1963, the entire landscape south of the river to Live Oak Street, and East Avenue to South Congress, on the east and west, was built out with only a handful of vacant lots remaining undeveloped.

In 1946, the City of Austin voted to approve \$940,000 in bonds to build a new highway under the Interstate Highways program and U.S. Highway 81 became Interstate Highway 35 (IH-35). This new route required using East Avenue north of the river and a new bridge, on a southeast diagonal across the river to the mouth of Harper's Creek, on the south side.

Although the new interstate highway provided for through-traffic at greater speeds, it lacked the significant quality that South Congress Avenue possessed as a visual gateway. Travelers fondly remember turning off the Interstate at the old San Antonio Road (Highway 81) because the view of the Capitol was more important than the speed they were traveling. "As we reached the point where the road widened and was on axis with the Capitol our eyes would open up to the great avenue in awe" (Marburger, October 5, 2002).

Despite the advent of the new interstate highway, tourist accommodations continued to be built along South Congress Avenue until the early 1960s. In 1952, South Congress counted 21 motels and motor courts stretching from the railroad (at the current Ben White Boulevard) to the river. It also possessed 14 restaurants and hamburger stands, 12 Gas stations, nine building material stores, and nine grocery stores. That year, the Terrace Motor Hotel was built on South Congress near Fairview Park and it became one of the foremost places to stay while visiting Austin. Designed in a modern style by architects Niggli and Gustafson, it had 256 rooms and was

the largest motel built on South Congress. It boasted two restaurants, two pools, and a banquet hall. Laid out over a steep terrain requiring terraces, it became known as the Terrace Convention Center.

Another major development of the 1950s was Twin Oaks Shopping Center, one of the city's earliest "strip" shopping venues. Odus Jung built Twin Oaks Shopping Center at the northeast corner of Oltorf Road and South Congress Avenue for \$500,000 in 1954. The complex was named for the large Live Oak trees that were preserved in the middle of the L-shaped center. With its off-street orientation and large parking lot, the Twin Oaks Shopping Center reflects the dependence on the automobile beginning in the early postwar era.

Modern Civic Endeavors Continue to Enhance South Austin

Major civic projects in the 1950s brought citywide interest to the south bank of the Colorado. In 1956 the Congress Avenue Bridge was widened to its full 44-foot width to accommodate more traffic. Four years later, in January 1959, the city auditorium opened on the south side of the river. It was connected by Drake Bridge to a site north of the river that was designated for a new city hall. In 1960, Longhorn Dam was finished at Pleasant Valley crossing. It was the last in a chain of Colorado River dams started during the Great Depression. Longhorn Dam created Town Lake and ensured a constant water level and the security needed to develop the sand beach beyond its previous potential.

Commercial Enterprises

South Congress has been home to a number of notable commercial endeavors. Among them are some of Austin's favorite restaurants. Abraham Kennedy, who emigrated from Linares, Mexico in 1944, opened El Gallo restaurant in a bungalow at 3310 South Congress in 1957. In 1969, he built a much larger new restaurant that is still in operation at the same site. Schlotsky's, a small sandwich shop that opened in the 1300 block of South Congress in 1970, still resides on South Congress but it went on to become a national chain. One entrepreneur shaped both the business and civic character

of South Austin. Harry Akin, owner of Night Hawk Restaurant, was appointed chairman of the first human rights commission after an impassioned plea for ending segregation. Akin is credited with breaking the color barrier by serving the first African American customer at the Night Hawk in 1958. In 1967, Akin was elected mayor and the City Council finally passed laws prohibiting segregation in public places.

Art, Music, Historic Preservation Fuel the Revival of Austin's Grand Gateway

Beginning in the 1970s, South Austin became a Mecca for musicians, artists, and the people who supported them. Among the most memorable music venues in South Austin was the much beloved Armadillo World Headquarters. Austinite Eddie Wilson and his friends opened the Armadillo World Headquarters in the National Guard Armory on Barton Springs Road, off Congress Avenue, in 1970. It was a world-renowned venue for many kinds of music, particularly rock and roll, but the operators lost their lease in 1980 and the building was demolished. In the 1990s, Eddie Wilson returned to the same corner with Threadgill's Restaurant. The restaurant not only continues the tradition of restaurants in the "Sand Beach" area, but also houses a vast array of photos and memorabilia from the Armadillo World Headquarters. It also boasts the large neon sign that once graced the Night Hawk Restaurant as well as other historic and nostalgic signs from the area. Another famous music venue in the area is the Continental Club which has been a fixture at 1315 S. Congress for more than 30 years. Today, many of the restaurants on South Congress Avenue including Guero's, El Sol y La Luna, and the San Jose Motel occasionally feature live music.

South Congress in the 21st Century

Although tourists never completely abandoned South Congress Avenue, the speed and convenience of IH-35 drew much of the tourist trade including motels and restaurants to the east in the 1960s and 1970s. As business slowed on South Congress during this period, buildings including restaurants and tourist courts fell into disrepair.

As commercial rents continued to decline in the 1970s, small retailers and artists were attracted to the South Congress Corridor. One group, Designers' Space, lost its

lease downtown and relocated to 1704 S. Congress in 1981. The organization adapted the building (originally a hardware store and "Caldwell's Apartments") to house three arts organizations, a number of art studios, studio/living spaces, and a gallery space for events and exhibits. Designers' Space gained some limited city funding for its programs. A fire in 1983 gutted the second floor and damaged the first floor. Owner, David Woodland, secured a City Corridor program low interest loan to rebuild and Designers' Space used the building until 1987.

Other artists, architects and small independent retailers continued to come to South Congress Avenue. Terra Toys, a toy store, and Simply Divine, a small clothing manufacturer and retailer in the 1600 block of South Congress, are two such businesses. Recently, the San Jose Courts motel was completely renovated. Renovation and adaptive use of historic buildings are key elements in revitalizing South Congress Avenue.

Largely due to the colorful and eclectic retail businesses, music venues, restaurants, and historic buildings, South Congress, or SoCo, is experiencing a renaissance. In fact, it has become a very popular shopping destination for both residents and visitors and it may enjoy more retail business than at any time in its past. Most of the stores sell antiques, collectibles, or unique items. Electric Ladyland rents costumes and Dragonsnaps sells specialty children's clothes. Many of the retail stores have extravagant decorative signs. Merchants stay open late one day a month and the street takes on a festive atmosphere on First Thursday.

The transformation of South Congress Avenue from a rural country road to the capital city gateway and, finally, to the vibrant shopping district that it is today, has been remarkable. Its enduring popularity is due, in part, to its magnificent and unobstructed view of the Texas State Capitol. Thanks to the James Swisher's vision, residents and visitors who come to South Congress Avenue to enjoy the food, music and unique shopping experience, are treated to an unsurpassed image of the Capitol. Indeed, it is one of the most important design elements in Austin's urban fabric.

New Construction in the Historic Bouldin Creek Neighborhood

From the end of the historic period (post-1965) through the 1990s, new residential construction trickled into the Bouldin Creek neighborhood, filling the occasional vacant lot or replacing deteriorated older buildings in a relatively ad hoc manner. Thus, late Ranch style and Post-Modern style houses are seen in small numbers throughout the area. Starting in the late 1990s, and surging in the early 21st century, Contemporary, sometimes called “Metro Houses”, began to replace historic buildings on their lots. Most are two stories in height with flat or slanted roofs, large fixed windows, and great expanses of flat stucco and/or wood siding. Many feature unrelieved metal and/or glass panel construction. Most have no front porch though some have inset entries tucked under a second-story overhang or behind a wing. Though they have little first floor connection to the public environment, some have elevated or rooftop decks. These houses are generally characterized by their vertical, rather than horizontal, profiles, their asymmetrical massing, and their modern design. Such “Contemporary” or “Metro Houses” represent the predominant form of new residential construction in the survey area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Central, Inc. identified and documented 1,306 cultural resources within the revised project area in the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood planning area boundaries. A total of 983 properties were dated to the historic period. Of these, 688 were determined to be High or Medium preservation priorities which would render them contributing elements within potential districts. Another 315 properties were determined to be nonhistoric, relatively new construction built within the past 50 years. All nonhistoric properties are classified as Low priorities as they have not yet reached the required 50-year cut-off age. Other noncontributing properties are the 295 historic-age properties that have been altered to a significant degree so that they no longer convey a good sense of their own history. Eight properties could not be given a preservation priority because they could not be viewed sufficiently from the public right-of-way.

The results of the survey indicate that the entire survey area may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and/or as a designated Local Historic District as more than 51% of the properties are listed as contributing to the potential district. At this time, there are 687 contributing and 611 noncontributing properties in the area. Another eight properties are not determined as they were not sufficiently visible for assessment. Since the National Park Service recommends that districts possess 50 percent contributing resources, and the City of Austin requires 51% contributing properties, the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood survey area meets this criteria.

However, it may be more practical and more possible to nominate smaller areas with greater concentrations of historic properties than to undertake the entire 1,306-property neighborhood. Potential boundaries of such neighborhoods are listed in the Historic Districts section below.

Historic Districts

The following are the surveyor's recommendations for National Register and/or Local Historic Districts within the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood survey area. The district names are merely "place holders" to represent distinguishing historic or architectural characteristics found within each discrete area until further study can be made.

Bouldin Creek Historic District: 1860-1965

As noted above, the entire survey area may be eligible for designation as both a National Register and a Local Historic District as it contains slightly more than 51% contributing properties.

Brackenridge Historic District: 1860-1935

The most intact collections of historic properties within the neighborhood association boundaries are in the predominantly residential sections. The old Brackenridge section of the neighborhood, between S. Congress and W. Bouldin Creek, retains a good number of intact Craftsman bungalows and vernacular buildings, along with several historic churches and a noteworthy commercial building. In particular, virtually all of Eva Street and the east side of Newton contain blocks of historic buildings with little or no significant alteration after the end of the historic period (1965). The area breaks down somewhat from the west side of Newton to the creek but the 300-400 blocks of W. Monroe and the 300-400 blocks of W. Milton have good numbers of historic, relatively unmodified dwellings. W. Annie and W. Mary have more noncontributing properties than contributing ones but their low numbers may be overcome if partnered with adjacent streets. The north side of W. Johanna, in particular, has a good ratio of contributing to noncontributing resources.

Mid-Century Historic District: 1930-1955

Further south in the eastern half of the neighborhood, the area between Crockett on the north and Oltorf on the south, from the east side of Lindell on the east to Wilson Street on the west, has a very high ratio of contributing to noncontributing resources. Some block faces, including both sides of the 2200 block of Euclid and both sides of the 2300 block of Forest, are composed almost entirely of historic properties that retain their original architectural integrity to a large degree. Fletcher Street is a standout one-block long street with all contributing resources. Part of the reason for such intact historic fabric in this area is that they are filled with relatively late-historic resources and have not gone through successive layers of alteration. Most were built right before or right after World War II and were very solid houses from the start. This area is characterized by its number of unaltered Minimal Traditional and Early Ranch style houses.

South First Street Bungalow District: 1910s-1920s

One of the best arrays of historic properties in the western half of the neighborhood consists of 11 excellent Craftsman bungalows along the west side of S. First Street, in the 900-1100 blocks. These blocks contain some of the best, unaltered early 20th century architecture in the district and should be considered for preservation. Their history is yet unknown but their historic architecture is exceptional on a street that has received considerable alteration over time.

Becker School Historic District: 1890-1955

Another potential district in the survey area consists of properties all along adjacent blocks of Bouldin, Briar, S. Fifth Street and Dawson, including Becker School and the intersecting 700 block of W. Monroe and the 900 block of W.

Annie Street. This area might be combined with the short streets to the north – Daniel, Post Oak, Retama, Ebony, Ramona, Columbus, James, and Gibson – all of which have considerably more contributing properties than noncontributing ones. These streets also date to a later historic period, from the late 1920s through the 1930s and have received fewer alterations than the much earlier small frame houses associated with the late 19th/early 20th century Brackenridge section.

While there are good numbers of historic buildings in the 700-800 blocks of W. Johanna and, to a lesser extent, in the 600-700 blocks of W. Mary, the number of buildings with severe alterations may reduce the likelihood that these streets be designated as part of a historic district. Overall, Annie, Johanna, and Mary have suffered some of the greatest losses of historic fabric in the survey area. It may be that Newton and Eva streets, and the adjacent blocks of intersecting streets have the most cohesive architectural fabric to represent the old Brackenridge neighborhood.

South Congress Avenue Historic District: 1890-1965

S. Congress Avenue has not been fully evaluated as a potential historic district at this time. When last surveyed in 2003, it did not meet the 50% contributing level recommended by the National Register. Even so, that is only a recommended percentage and a case can be made that the surviving buildings in the 1200-1700 blocks of the avenue possess an overriding historical significance that should outweigh the generally-accepted recommendation. Because of its commercial nature, S. Congress Avenue was not evaluated along with the adjacent Eva and Newton streets as it has different property types, different architectural styles, reflects white history more than African American, and has different uses and historical associations than the residential neighborhoods to the west.

Individual Properties: National Register or Austin Landmark Potential

Exceptional properties that contribute significantly to local history or broader historic patterns were singled out as potentially eligible for individual listing in the NRHP. Because the Secretary of the Interior Guidelines discourage individual nominations for properties within a designated historic district, only 25 properties were initially determined to be individually eligible for NRHP listing due to their outstanding architectural significance. They are some of the oldest, rarest or best examples of building forms or architectural styles in Austin. They maintain their original architectural fabric to an outstanding degree and exhibit almost no alterations to their exterior appearance. All are High preservation priority sites and should be considered Contributing properties within proposed historic district. High preservation priorities follow:

High Priority Properties

1506 S. First dwelling	c. 1900	Classical Revival/Victorian
1600 S. First	1894	Moonlight Tower
1816 S. First	c. 1935	Commercial restaurant
1900 S. Second	c. 1900	Victorian
1014 S. Fifth	c. 1900	Vernacular: Cumberland Plan
1116 S. Fifth	c. 1900	Victorian
1714 S. Fifth	c. 1890	Victorian/Craftsman
1814? S. Fifth	c. 1890	Victorian
806 Bouldin	c. 1930	Art Moderne
901 Dawson	c. 1935	Tudor Revival/Rustic
907 Dawson	c. 1930	Tudor Revival/Craftsman
812 W. Elizabeth	c. 1890	Victorian
810 Jewell	c. 1890	Queen Anne
211 W. Johanna	1939	Vernacular/Spanish Colonial Revival

211 W. Live Oak	c. 1905	Classical Revival
811 W. Live Oak	c. 1895	Queen Anne/Victorian
200 W. Mary	c. 1935	Mission Revival (Herb Bar)
615 W. Mary	c. 1895	Victorian L-plan
305 W. Milton	c. 1940?	Exotic Revival (Moroccan?)
906 W. Milton	1936	Art Deco (Becker School)
200 W. Monroe	c. 1930	Craftsman/Rustic
1700 W. Newton	c. 1920	Gothic Revival (Goodwill
Baptist)		
1705 W. Newton	c. 1900	Vernacular (Willie Wells
House)		
1711 W. Newton	1915	Gothic Revival (St. Annie
AME)		
1811 W. Newton	c. 1930	Vernacular