

PART TWO: PAST

Introduction to Site History

Chapter 8: Living with Water, Prehistory–1690

Chapter 9: Managing the Water, 1691–1844

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Period Plans

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History is a messy enterprise. It's not simply an account of events in the past but rather one of change over time. History provides context and informs the future.

Claudia R. Guerra,
"300 Years of San Antonio and Bexar County"

We have no city, except, perhaps New Orleans, that can vie, in point of the picturesque interest that attaches to odd and antiquated foreignness, with San Antonio. Its jumble of races, costumes, languages and buildings; its religious ruins, holding to antiquity, ...its remote, isolated, outposted situation, and the vague conviction that it is the first of a new class of conquered cities into whose decaying streets our rattling life is to be infused, combined with the heroic touches in its history...

Frederick Law Olmsted,
A Journey Through Texas, 1857

INTRODUCTION TO SITE HISTORY

Parks hold histories—natural and cultural—in and on their grounds. Stewards of the nation’s parks bear the challenge and responsibility of determining how to preserve these stories—how to lift the hidden ones from unseen places and how to translate the more complex ones into relatable retellings and physical spaces—in order to invite people in to a more dynamic understanding and experience. To preserve a park’s histories is to protect and interpret its grounds for future generations and the stories they will impart.

Nine distinct periods of occupation and development mark the Brackenridge Park landscape.

12,000 BCE – 1690 CE	Prehistoric Human Occupation and Early Exploration
1691 – 1775	Missionary Development and Acequia Construction
1776 – 1844	Secular Development
1845 – 1898	Texas Statehood, German Immigration, Civil War, and City Development
1899 – 1914	The Brackenridge Vision: A Driving Woodland Park
1915 – 1929	The Lambert Period: Cultural and Recreational Development
1930 – 1949	The WPA Era and a New Direction in Flood Management
1950 – 1967	Early Preservation Efforts and the Civil Rights Era
1968 – Present	Archaeological Investigations and the Next Generation of Flood Management

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

In the site history, the nine periods of occupation and development are discussed across five chapters.

No written documentation exists for the prehistoric periods. Chapter 8 draws instead from reports of material archaeological evidence and interpretation of pictographic documentation to provide insight into the Indigenous people of the area. Three prehistoric periods are discussed together—Paleoindian, Archaic, and Late Prehistoric. Collectively, the prehistoric periods demonstrate a long continuum of egalitarian Indigenous American bands who inhabited the landscape seasonally. These bands spoke multiple languages, but they shared a commonality—their cultures formed in direct response to nature and its fluctuations and rhythms. The transitional period, technically referred to as the Protohistoric period and discussed in Chapter 8, is marked by the arrival of Spanish explorers to what was the northernmost territory of Mexico.

Chapter 9 opens with the christening of San Antonio and its river. It discusses construction of the missions and their extensive acequia system, beginning between 1719 and 1724. The first acequia would leave a lasting mark on the Brackenridge Park site. The chapter narrates the use of the missions to secure territory and resources for the Spanish Crown through the act of converting Indigenous people to Christianity, and it touches on the use of Indigenous labor for the construction of acequias. The major shift from humans adapting their lives to the water to humans managing water to adapt to their needs is highlighted.

With the early establishment of infrastructure via acequias, the suburban development of San Antonio began around 1776. But the spread of waterborne illness would severely impact the human population, even as Spanish regulatory structures related to water and land resources began to shape the landscape that would become San Antonio as people experience it today.

Chapter 10 covers only fifty-three years, but it is a period that encompasses numerous social and political changes. Texas incorporated into the Union. The Mexican-American War broke out and established a new Mexico-US border defined by the Rio Grande River (although the Tejano culture would persist on both sides). The new American city, along with the entire Texas Hill Country, attracted pioneer German immigrants and entrepreneurially minded Americans. They arrived not with the desire to expand territory or resources for an imperial European power but with the aim of individual attainment. Among these settlers was a Midwesterner of Scottish origins named George Brackenridge. A few years after his arrival, the Civil War broke out.

These events ushered in an era of rapid urban development—including the transition from the ancient acequia system to a well system; the development of major infrastructure, including water services, gas lighting, and streetcars; and an increase in commercial activities. All of these laid the groundwork for the city's first major municipal park.

Chapter 11 details the making of Brackenridge Park over roughly fifty years, from the turn of the century to 1950. The chapter highlights the amalgamation of influences that formed the park's regional vernacular character. It highlights the impact that cycles of drought and

flooding had on the park's development. Finally, it discusses the park's development as it reflected national trends. This span of time is marked by a new vision of how San Antonians would live with water and forge the city's place in the American tourism economy.

Chapter 12 discusses the park's entry into the modern era, when preservation arose out of policies related to urban development. These policies, such as those relating to the expansion of the transportation system, were also developing at the national level. The period is also marked by changes to integration policies at parks throughout San Antonio.

The most recent developments in Brackenridge Park are also discussed. The present is marked by major population shifts and, globally, more frequent and severe climactic events of the type San Antonio has long endured. These shifts are leading to new approaches and directions in the preservation of public spaces while also ushering in new approaches to water conservation and flood prevention.

At the end of the Site History, a series of period plans and diagrams are included to illustrate the most significant changes in this landscape over time.

NARRATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Defining the periods of occupation and development helps convey the site history chronologically, but there are always degrees of overlap. Time is not static, and the same is true for nature and human beings. Likewise, many social, political, and economic forces inform events, policies, and trends and how those spread, translate, and take hold across geographies.

The site history chapters are narrated according to the lenses that set the Brackenridge Park landscape apart from other municipal park landscapes. Each chapter is intended to convey a larger story that may be related to one or all of the following:

- The evolution of how humans have lived with, adapted to, or tried to adapt water for survival
- The evolution of municipal park development and design in the United States
- The amalgamation of cultural imprints that have defined Brackenridge Park's character

Belying each of these lenses is the critical awareness of new directions in cultural landscape preservation and ecological conservation and—most importantly—the inherent connection between the two.



CHAPTER 8. LIVING WITH WATER, PREHISTORY–1690

Inscribed on a west-facing wall of a cliff in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands of southwest Texas approximately two hundred miles west of San Antonio, an elaborate ancient mural, twenty-six feet long and thirteen feet tall, illustrates a developed pictographic language and set of Indigenous traditions that is at least two thousand years old (**figure 8-1**). Evidence of human habitation in this region stretches ten thousand years beyond the mural's estimated date.¹ The White Shaman Rock mural's imagery suggests that Indigenous populations journeyed seasonally using waterways as a guide, and their destinations included the area that is today San Antonio and, particularly, the San Antonio River headwaters and the landscape of Brackenridge Park.

Early Indigenous populations are labeled prehistoric because they lack a “contemporaneous written account” of their cultures, but the label is misleading. The layperson often imagines Indigenous people in terms of fictional depictions associated with old Western films and television shows or through clinical textbook terminology. But the White Shaman Rock mural paints a revelatory and humanizing story of the earliest inhabitants of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands. Central to this story is the water.

“Stories about the origins of springs often involve Indian tales of discovery. Occasionally, they reflect the romantic notion of the noble savage who through a primitive unity with the forces of nature discovered the waters’ powers.”³ Indeed, the mural illustrates that Indigenous Americans understood that water was the source of life, but it also demonstrates a complex civilization.

In her 2008 archaeological summary of early occupation in the San Antonio River valley, Kristi Miller Ulrich turned to the work of M. B. Collins and E. R. Prewitt. Both researchers developed chronologies that now serve as the basis for early timelines related to Texas

1 Brad Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk,” *Texas Observer*, December 2016, accessed November 16, 2019, texasobserver.org/if-these-walls-could-talk/.

2 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

3 Janet Mace Valenza, *Taking the Waters in Texas: Springs, Spas, and Fountains of Youth* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 2000), 47.



FIGURE 8-1. The White Shaman Rock Art Panel in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands west of San Antonio. Some interpret the four-thousand-year-old, twenty-six-foot-long pictograph as depicting cosmic beliefs and seasonal migration to the San Antonio River. Source: Rock Art Foundation White Shaman Preserve, Witte Museum Collection

prehistory. There are three discernible periods of prehistoric human occupation in the region—Paleoindian, Archaic, and Late Prehistoric. The Protohistoric period is considered a transitional period between the three prehistoric periods and the historic period—so called because it signifies the beginning of written accounts.

What is known about the prehistoric periods suggests a continuum of nomadic hunting and gathering practices in the region. The White Shaman Rock mural, considered “one of the most significant archaeological sites in North America,”⁴ is dated to the second of the three periods—the Archaic period. It documents hunter-gatherer seasonal patterns, traditions, and belief systems in greater depth.

This chapter provides a distilled account of the prehistory of the larger region, with consideration for how the earliest human occupation of Bexar County, the city of San Antonio, and Brackenridge Park fit into this geographical context. It briefly narrates the regional landscapes of southwest Texas that Indigenous people would have inhabited. It distinguishes the three prehistoric periods and the Protohistoric period of human occupation and shows that each would have impacted Brackenridge Park and its wider surroundings. Thus it illustrates the continuum and then the disruption of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. The chapter also summarizes the prehistoric culture that would have existed in the area. To make the discussion of culture more vivid, the chapter draws from archaeological interpretation of the White Shaman Rock, which came under the ownership and protection of the Witte Museum in January 2017.

4 “Rock Art Foundation White Shaman Preserve of the Witte Museum.” The Witte Museum, accessed November 20, 2019, wittemuseum.org/rock-art/wittemuseum.org/rock-art/.

THE PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE

The emergence of culture—the way people live on the land and with the water and in the process develop belief systems and conventions related to food, dwellings, and even pleasure—is inextricable from the larger landscape. Therefore, it is helpful to have an image of the environment that the first humans of South Texas encountered.

Twelve thousand years ago... south Texas enjoyed a cooler and wetter climate. The result was a mixed environment of grassland and forest features. This relatively lush environment was home to grass-eating mammoths and tree-browsing mastodons.... Smaller game animals such as deer and camelids, and fish, as well as a wide range of localized plants, many of which were edible, were found in the area....

The environment changed ten thousand years ago with global climate change. In south Texas, the Holocene environment was marked by warmer temperatures and reduced rainfall.... With the change in climate and the rise in sea level, the rivers slowed down and allowed for the creation of oxbow lakes. In the interior, waterholes formed.... The dry and arid landscape we know today was fully developed by 300 B.C.⁵

It is the latter environment, the Holocene, that coincides with knowledge of the earliest inhabitants of southwest Texas.

The Lower Pecos Canyonlands and Bexar County are joined by the Edwards Plateau ecoregion. The Pecos River flows southeasterly, eventually running into the Rio Grande River, and it “marks a transitional zone to the Edwards Plateau, which defines Texas Hill Country.”⁶ The canyonlands are situated at the eastern edge of the Edwards Plateau, and Bexar County is situated at the southwestern edge of the Edwards Plateau. Geographically and symbolically, the Edwards Plateau bridges the Lower Pecos Canyonlands and Bexar County (**figure 8-2**). Some desert conditions of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands can also be found in San Antonio, but the city’s geography is more closely related to the Hill Country’s geography and is also impacted by its neighboring coastal environment.

In simple terms, multiple geographies converge in San Antonio. A micro-occurrence of this convergence remains present and visible in Brackenridge Park, where the Balcones Escarpment, which bounds the Edwards Plateau, cuts directly through the northwest portion of the park. In this area of the park, a striking and discernable semiarid desertlike condition abuts a more humid subtropical climate and ecological conditions (**figure 8-3**).

5 Bobbie L. Lovett and Russell K. Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” in *Native American Peoples of South Texas*, ed. Bobbie L. Lovett et al. (Edinburg, TX: CHAPS at the University of Texas—Pan American, 2014), 22, utrgv.edu/chaps/_files/documents/native-american-peoples-of-south-texas-pdf.pdf.

6 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

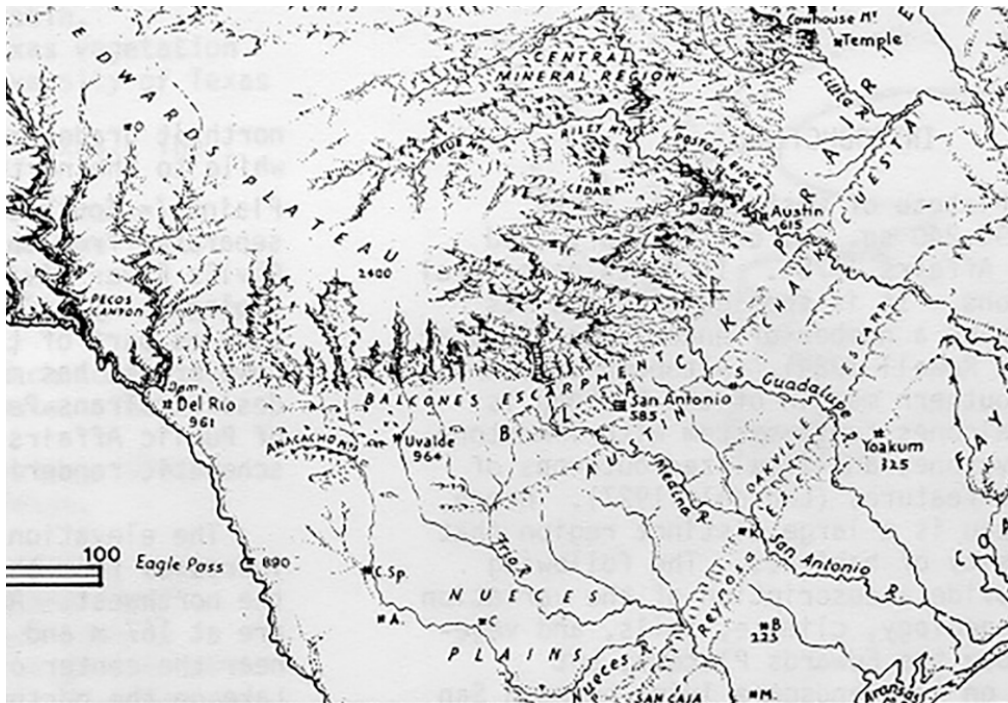


FIGURE 8–2. Detail of a geologic landform map of southwest Texas shows the relationships between the Pecos Canyonlands, Balcones Escarpment, San Antonio, and the San Antonio River. The map, by cartographer Erwin Raisz, was first published in *Landforms of the United States*. Source: The Walter Geology Library, University of Texas at Austin

The Lower Pecos Canyonlands landscape, then and now, includes “plateaus...sparsely vegetated with cactus, mesquite, lechuguilla [an agave species] and ocotillo [a desert shrub].”⁷ Prior to the 1800s, the area would also have contained native grasses, which declined here and in the San Antonio area due to ranching.

Three rivers water the region...the Rio Grande, the Pecos, and the Devils, the latter two largely contained by limestone canyons pocked with ledges and shallow caves. Springs percolate through the porous limestone, feeding the rivers during drought. Then, as now, flash floods scour the channels with unpredictable regularity.⁸

Just as the canyonlands contain springs that percolate through limestone, springs in north and northwestern San Antonio percolate through the limestone that forms the Edwards Plateau.⁹ Major drainages associated with Brackenridge Park are the Olmos Creek Basin north of the park; the San Antonio River, with its headwaters located north of the park and south of the Olmos Creek Basin; and several smaller springs within the park, usually in proximity to the river.¹⁰ These drainages are all born of the Edwards Aquifer, which lies beneath the Edwards Plateau. The San Antonio River eventually flows into the Guadalupe River just before the latter empties into San Antonio Bay, which then opens into the Gulf of Mexico. “In one year, San Antonio may experience desert-like conditions and in the next

7 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

8 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

9 Kristi Miller Ulrich, *Archaeological Services Associated with Improvements to Miraflores at Brackenridge Park, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas* (San Antonio: Center for Archeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 2008), 1.

10 Ulrich, “Archaeological Services,” 1.



FIGURE 8–3. Alpine Drive pedestrian trail in the northwest portion of Brackenridge Park, with century plants and other desert plants shown at right and desert shrubs left and in horizon, June 2018. Source: Reed Hilderbrand

year receive a deluge of precipitation.”¹¹ Drought punctuated by flood events is also persistent in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands.

During the prehistoric periods in San Antonio, “bear, cougar, and wolf would be usual and common residents. Buffalo or bison would be regular visitors to the area,” and “alligator, large snapping turtles and gar as well as abundant fish of many species” would have lived in the streams.¹² The same animals would have been present in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands.

Descriptions of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands and the Bexar County landscapes convey an inhospitable environment. Yet Indigenous people repeated seasonal journeys through these landscapes, always guided by the water.

PREHISTORIC HUMAN OCCUPATION, 12,000 BCE – 1690 CE

PALEOINDIAN PERIOD, 12,000 BCE – 8800 BCE

The earliest period of human occupation in Texas was that of the Paleoindian. It was during this period—at the end of the last ice age—that “humans first appeared in archaeological record in North America.”¹³ Early on, these migratory populations were hunter-gatherers who subsisted on megafauna,

large prehistoric animals of the early American continents. In Thomas Hester’s 1975 report “Archaeological and Historical Resources in the San Antonio Guadalupe River Basins,” he wrote that the Paleoindian period “was a time in which there was at least some degree of dependence on large game animals, including mammoth and a now extinct species of bison.”¹⁴

In 2013, as part of a study titled “The San Antonio River Mammoth Site,” archaeologists reported on findings that “interpreted the site as yielding evidence of human-mammoth interaction, a rare occurrence in the Americas.”¹⁵ The discovery occurred along a stretch of the San Antonio River south of the park and downtown San Antonio but within city limits. Currently, there is no evidence within the park of human interaction with megafauna such

11 Char Miller, *On the Border: an Environmental History of San Antonio* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2005), 21.

12 Mickey Killian, “History of the Native People,” Texas Mission Indians, accessed November 20, 2019, texasmissionindians.org/.

13 “Paleoindian Period: 12,000-10,000 BC,” National Parks Service, April 10, 2015, accessed November 20, 2019, [nps.gov/fosm/learn/historyculture/paleoindian.htm](https://www.nps.gov/fosm/learn/historyculture/paleoindian.htm).

14 Thomas R. Hester, *Archaeological and Historical Resources in the San Antonio Guadalupe River Basins: A Preliminary Statement. Regional Studies No. 1* (San Antonio: Center for Archaeological Research/University of Texas at San Antonio, 1975), 2.

15 Stephen M. Carpenter et al., “The San Antonio River Mammoth Site: Archaeological Testing Investigations for the Interstate 37 Bridge at the San Antonio River Improvement Project, Bexar County, Texas. Texas Antiquities Permit 4531” (Austin, TX: SWCA Environmental Consultants, 2013), 111.

as mammoths. There is evidence in the park, however, of manmade tools dating to the same period, suggesting that the possibility exists and may eventually be discovered.¹⁶

During the late Paleoindian period, the extinction of megafauna occurred and signaled a shift in the Paleoindian diet. The population remained hunter-gatherers, but they introduced small game and plants to their diets. This diet would be the predecessor to the diet of Archaic hunter-gatherers.

ARCHAIC PERIOD, 8000 BCE – 1200 BCE AND NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES

The Archaic period is generally subdivided into the Early (8000 BCE – 4500 BCE), Middle (4500 BCE – 2400 BCE), and Late (2400 BCE – 1200 BCE) Archaic periods. Hunter and gathering practices continued during this time, but the period also included major transitions, such as a megadrought that occurred between 6000 BCE and 3000 BCE, roughly during the middle of the period.¹⁷ This may have impacted the existence of megafauna and created the circumstance for a new generation of Archaic hunter-gatherers, who, unlike their Paleoindian and Early Archaic predecessors, primarily hunted small game.

There seems to be a relative dearth of archaeological artifacts, both faunal and prehistoric human, during this period. Discoveries have been made of resources dating back to 9000 BCE, but then there is a large gap before activity resumed after the megadrought ended. During the last two thousand years of this period, the Late Archaic period, a transition toward material culture and exploitation of the local environment occurred.¹⁸

Although archaeological artifacts are inconsistent for this period, this is the period to which the White Shaman Rock mural is dated. Beyond showing that the Indigenous populations were hunter-gatherers, the White Shaman Rock suggests a more in-depth understanding of Indigenous cultures. Interpretation of the mural and its implications about Indigenous cultures will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

LATE PREHISTORIC PERIOD, 1200 BCE – 1250 CE

The people who lived during the Late Prehistoric period made significant technological advancements, including the bow and arrow, beveled stone knives, and the use of domestic wares and pottery for cooking and storage. A significant change in faunal patterns also occurred in the Late Prehistoric period. Anthropologist J. A. Huebner concluded that there was a “sudden return of bison to South and Central Texas during the Late Prehistoric” period that “resulted from a xeric climate in the plains north of Texas and increased grass production in the Cross-Timbers and Post Oak Savannah in north-central Texas”¹⁹ (**figure 8-4**). It is possible that the changes that occurred, both in faunal patterns and in human technology, were the result of “adjustments to environmental change associated with a period of cooler weather.”²⁰

¹⁶ Clinton McKenzie, staff archaeologist, UTSA Center for Archaeological Research, “Brackenridge Park,” email correspondence with author, July 9, 2019.

¹⁷ Ulrich, “Archaeological Services,” 5-6.

¹⁸ Ulrich, “Archaeological Services,” 5.

¹⁹ Ulrich, “Archaeological Services,” 7.

²⁰ Bobbie L. Lovett et. al., *Native American Peoples of South Texas* (Edinburg, TX: CHAPS at the University of Texas—Pan American, 2014), utrgv.edu/chaps/_files/documents/native-american-peoples-of-south-texas-pdf.pdf.



FIGURE 8-4. A painting representing two semi-nomadic groups of the San Antonio area trading goods. The Indigenous groups appear to not yet be impacted by Spanish exploration and settlement. Advanced tools and the hides of large animals are depicted. "Trade." Acrylic on canvas board. Source: Frank Weir, 2018, Witte Museum Collection

During these three periods, the major transition that occurred is that nomadic hunter-gatherers developed several advancements in technology. This effectively transformed the ways they hunted as they continued to journey according to seasonal changes and the "map" of the river systems. Changes in wildlife also demonstrate evolutionary shifts, from the presence of megafaunal creatures, to their disappearance, to the return of large animals such as deer and bison. Extreme flooding and drought are believed to have been present throughout these periods.

PROTOHISTORIC PERIOD, 1250 CE – 1650 CE

The Protohistoric period is considered a transitional period between the prehistoric and historic periods. Identifying this period archaeologically is problematic, because a clear material culture associated with this period is lacking. Instead, archaeological sites often contain a mixture of artifacts dating from the Late Prehistoric and early historic periods. This is because the period coincides with early European exploration of the area. During this time, in 1528, the first European contact in the region occurred.²¹ This began a major transition for the Indigenous people. A nomadic hunter-gatherer way of life, which had been responsive to seasonal fluctuations, allowing for their basic survival and larger cosmic belief systems, began the sharp turn to a fixed-site agricultural way of life, a new Christianity-based belief system, and the first attempts to manage water.

21 Harbert Davenport and Joseph K. Wells, "The First Europeans in Texas, 1528-1536," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1918): 111, [jstor.org/stable/41784623](https://www.jstor.org/stable/41784623).

INDIGENOUS CULTURE

The prehistoric people who occupied Bexar County and its surrounding areas have collectively been referred to as Coahuiltecan for over a hundred years, and they were “a clearly surviving Archaic culture.”²² Their population has been estimated to be as few as two thousand people and as many as one hundred thousand people, but there is no definitive knowledge of their numbers.²³ The term *Coahuiltecan* was derived “from the state of Coahuila, Mexico, and refers to the language spoken by a large number of Indian groups in southern Texas and northeastern Mexico during the Spanish colonial period.”²⁴ Coahuiltecan did not comprise a single tribe or nation, however. Evidence suggests that “more than five dozen ‘polities’...were scattered across a wedge- or triangular-shaped region,”²⁵ with the San Antonio area representing its northern tip. These “small autonomous bands”²⁶ of people

occupied southern Texas below the Edwards Plateau to the Gulf coast as well as parts of the Mexican states of Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas east of the Sierra Madre Oriental.... The natives followed a hunting and gathering existence...which was subject to regional and temporal variations.... Intraregional cultural diversity resulted from spatially- and temporally-localized resources within the area....²⁷

Coahuiltecan did not speak one language, and “no archaeological evidence suggested these groups were the same archaic peoples living in the area.”²⁸ Rather, “languages within this ‘Coahuiltecan family’ were as disparate as English, German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish.”²⁹

In the early 1950s, archaeologist Frederick Ruecking characterized the Coahuiltecan groups as “a semi-nomadic people with a wide territorial range whose culture was based on subsistence economy” and noted that they “successfully adapted to their environment, developing the necessary technology for procurement of food, clothing and shelter.”³⁰ The groups were “egalitarian peoples” and “the only distinctions within the groups were based solely on age and sex.”³¹ They “subsisted on the wild edible resources of the area,” but “neither food nor water was in abundance.”³² To survive, “small family groups...followed a seasonal foraging rhythm.”³³

Ethnoarchaeological research on catchment areas suggests that hunters and gatherers living in groups of about a hundred or fewer exploited an area that could be traversed in two hours or about a ten kilometer (6.2 mile)

22 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 13, 14.

23 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 17.

24 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 13.

25 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 14.

26 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 15.

27 Lovett et al., *Native American Peoples*, 2014.

28 Tiffany Tanya Terneny, “A Re-Evaluation of Late Prehistoric and Archaic Chronology in the Rio Grande Delta of South Texas” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, May 2005), accessed July 9, 2019, citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.392.2537&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

29 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 13.

30 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 16.

31 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 17.

32 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 17.

33 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 17.

radius. The size of the area could vary to include larger areas which would be seasonally exploited....

The many inland groups which comprise the Coahuiltecan entity within the western Gulf region were forced to utilize almost every edible plant and animal food available.³⁴

The groups developed a system of trading that meant materials available in one location could be obtained in exchange for materials originating in another location. “The Coahuiltecan neither made nor used ceramics...which were heavy and fragile and not conducive to a mobile lifestyle. Instead more durable containers of basketry, as well as bags of skin or fiber were preferred.”³⁵ Habitations also needed to be mobile; thus they were “constructed of pole and thatch or woven mats. These were easily dismantled and seasonally moved.”³⁶

Based on the Coahuiltecan groups’ seasonal migrations and the system of trade they practiced, it is plausible that they encountered and intermingled with other native groups, including those of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands.

The environment of south Texas is considered to be a harsh one, even prior to modern times, when it was cooler and moister. It is a semiarid landscape crossed by rivers and streams which offer the only secure sources of water.... The rivers and streams acted as funnels for the movements of human and animal populations across the landscape.³⁷

Over and over, research states that water guided the Indigenous people. So what can be gleaned from the White Shaman Rock mural about the role of water, the complexity of the native Pecos culture, and the native people of southwest Texas as a whole?

Over the years, there have been various scholarly interpretations of the White Shaman Rock mural’s creation and meaning. Some believe that it was painted “over an extended period,” and interpretations dating to the early 1950s claim the imagery was “linked to a hunting cult that ritually consumed mescal beans.”³⁸ Dr. Carolyn Boyd, a muralist and anthropologist who specializes in iconographic analysis, has spent thirty years studying and painstakingly documenting the White Shaman Rock mural and other Pecos River mural sites, and she has published two books on the subject. Boyd has developed an extensive and complex interpretation of the painting.

According to Boyd, whose interpretation “draws parallels between the mural’s depictions and the narratives of the Aztec and the Huichol,”³⁹

It was long believed that these murals represented numerous painting episodes executed by different artists over hundreds or even thousands of years. Although over-painting exists, through detailed analysis of these panels, we now know that most are not a random collection of images

34 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 18.

35 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 18.

36 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 18.

37 Lovett and Skowronek, “Coahuiltecan of the Rio Grande Region,” 4.

38 Eric A. Powell, “Reading the White Shaman Mural,” *Archaeology*, November/December 2017, accessed June 24, 2019, [archaeology.org/issues/274-1711/features/5996-reading-the-white-shaman-mural](https://www.archaeology.org/issues/274-1711/features/5996-reading-the-white-shaman-mural).

39 Carolyn Boyd, Shumla Endowed Research Professor, Texas State University, “San Antonio Springs and White Shaman Mural,” email correspondence with author, July 10, 2019.

painted over the course of time, but rather well-ordered compositions, planned arrangements of elements in a work of art to communicate an idea.

The most simplistic summarization of Boyd's analysis of the mural's layered meaning, in her own words, is this: "It's a narrative about the creation of time...but the imagery also depicts the sun's daily cycle and records the changing seasons."⁴⁰

Gary Perez, director of the Sacred Sites Institute of San Marcos, Texas, and a member of San Antonio's Native American Church of Yanaguana, has also studied the iconography of the mural. Perez "is descended from the Hokan speaking peoples of South Texas, and was educated in his heritage largely by his grandmother," who was instrumental in founding the one-hundred-year-old church.⁴¹ Perez's work supports Boyd's interpretation that the mural represents a creation story. But his analysis, which deciphers mathematical, astronomical, and geographic aspects of the imagery, directly links it to a Coahuiltecan creation story and related ritual. He also links it to a geographic representation of the headwaters of the San Antonio River, originally called the Yanaguana, or spirit waters.⁴²

Perez's interpretation is that "the panel depicts the four fountain springs of Texas: Comal [in New Braunfels], San Marcos, Barton, and...[the] Blue Hole" (**figure 8-5**). Scholars, including Boyd and Perez, believe the mural depicts "a celestial and cosmological map, one that may have guided people long ago in their pilgrimages to the fountain springs."⁴³ According to Perez, "When I was invited to look at the rock art and it was explained to me in a narrative, I thought wow, they're talking about our ceremony...but I also think you're looking at a map of Texas..."⁴⁴ The ceremony Perez refers to is an Indigenous retelling of the creation story. In the story, the sun chases a deer into the underworld, where

they traveled...in search of the first [summer] sunrise. The sun wasn't a very powerful sun—it was...cold, dark, and wet...the winter sun, when it's the lowest in the sky.... When the sun is the lowest in the sky, the moon is the highest in the sky, especially a super moon.... The story says that on the full moon—the super moon, Mother Earth's water broke.⁴⁵

The Coahuiltecan were then born from her breaking waters, the Yanaguana. Finally, after the first sunrise, the sun kills the deer and feeds it to the people.⁴⁶

As part of the ceremony, water is gathered from the four fountain springs of Texas, after which it is taken to the pilgrimage site, Yanaguana, the headwaters of the San Antonio River, "the waters of which my people were born from, according to our creation story."⁴⁷

40 Powell, "Reading the White Shaman Mural."

41 Matt Sirgo, "Gary Perez: Timepieces of the Ancestors," Downtown San Antonio, December 29, 2017, accessed November 2, 2019, downtownsanantonio.org/stories/44/gary-perez-timepieces-of-the-ancestors/.

42 "Yanaguana, Lower Pecos Rock Art, and Indigenous History of San Antonio" (lecture, Headwaters at Incarnate Word, March 24, 2018), accessed November 20, 2019, headwaters-iw.org/new-events/2018/3/24/yanaguana-lower-pecos-rock-art-and-indigenous-history-of-san-antonio-lecture.

43 "Circle of the Springs: Headwaters Invites the San Antonio Community to Contribute to Building Our Circle of the Springs Garden," Headwaters at Incarnate Word, accessed September 25, 2019, headwaters-iw.org/circle-of-the-springs.

44 Sirgo, "Gary Perez: Timepieces of the Ancestors."

45 Gary Perez, "Barton Springs University—Indigenous Cultures and the Four Fountain Springs," YouTube video, September 23, 2013, accessed August 10, 2019, [youtube.com/watch?v=j_jS0dqJpl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_jS0dqJpl).

46 Perez, "Barton Springs University- Indigenous Cultures and the Four Fountain Springs."

47 Perez, "Four Fountain Springs."



FIGURE 8-5. Detail of the White Shaman Mural, interpreted as showing elements of water. A wavy white line, possibly representing a “watery underworld,” is seen bottom third, left to right. At lower center right, four black shapes along a vertical arc, possibly representing the four springs appear. Black dots drifting up (right half of image) are interpreted to represent peyote discs used rituals. Source: Rock Art Foundation White Shaman Preserve, Witte Museum Collection

In addition to developed cosmological beliefs, Boyd interprets other clues about the Indigenous population’s developed system of language, art, basic survival, and relationship with nature. Boyd has written,

It isn’t unusual for people to think of these prehistoric hunters and gatherers as being vastly different from us, and in some ways they certainly were. They didn’t have agriculture, houses with central air and heat, cars, or the internet. They were, however, more like us than they were different. These were anatomically modern humans with the same cognitive capacity and capabilities as you and I today. They had the same brain that put a man on the moon. And, yes, they had a language—likely one with a vocabulary far richer than we can ever imagine to describe life, death, the land and the heavens.⁴⁸

48 Carolyn Boyd, “Drawing from the Past,” *Popular Archaeology*, March 1, 2014, accessed November 1, 2019, popular-archaeology.com/article/drawing-from-the-past/.

Her research shows that the murals were devised through a complex process. Preparation for the murals would have been deliberate and time consuming, whereas the actual paintings would have taken far less time. They are composed of four-color pigments—black, yellow, red, and white. With the use of a digital microscope, Boyd discovered a pattern to the application of paint that showed that the black was, counterintuitively, always applied first,⁴⁹ indicating an advanced and preconceived mural technique. Archaeological brushes made of lechuguilla fibers offer evidence of how the paint may have been applied.⁵⁰ Boyd determined that “the artists would have needed time to gather the minerals, the plants, and the animal fats they used to make their pigments” as well as time to create scaffolding, “and a ritual would likely have accompanied each step.”⁵¹

It is worth noting that “in Mesoamerica the colors red, black, white, and yellow are freighted with densely layered associations.”⁵² Each color corresponds to a cardinal direction—red is east, black is west, white is north, and yellow is south. In addition, “red represents warmth: daytime, the sun, fire. Black represents cold: night, the moon, stars, water, the underworld.”⁵³

The mural’s imagery includes an “impaled deer with black-tipped antlers” that is surrounded by “fringed black dots that were also impaled by spears,”⁵⁴ which Boyd associated with a peyote ritual. As part of her research, she studied “the art of the Huichol, a people who live in isolation in the mountains of western Mexico, and whose traditions are thought to have changed little since the arrival of the Spanish, with whom they had minimal contact.”⁵⁵ She learned that the Huichol shamans embarked on an annual six-hundred-mile pilgrimage and that they are “metaphorically guided to their destination by deer, which are closely linked to peyote.... At the end of their journey, each pilgrim shoots an arrow at a peyote cactus before gathering the disk-shaped buttons.”⁵⁶ Supporting Boyd’s interpretation, peyote disks—created from a blend of peyote and other plant materials—that date to 5,700 years ago were found by archaeologists in the 1930s near the White Shaman Rock mural site.⁵⁷ Nearer to Brackenridge Park, archaeology has documented visits to the Olmos Basin by the Tonkawas of Oklahoma as late as 1929. The Tonkawas traveled down an ancient buffalo route to collect mescal beans in Olmos Basin for peyote ceremonies.⁵⁸

It was not just the creation of peyote disks that was labor intensive; the Pecos people also hunted deer, rabbits, and rodents “using atlatls to throw stone arrow points.” They also caught and ate fish and plants. “They went to a good deal of trouble—lots of pounding and steaming and roasting—to make a digestible meal out of almost indigestible lechuguilla hearts.”⁵⁹ In response to scholars who refute her research, Boyd points out that

“there’s this idea that hunter-gatherers wouldn’t have been so concerned with celestial events and tracking the seasons, but that’s just not true.” She

49 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

50 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

51 Powell, “Reading the White Shaman Mural.”

52 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

53 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

54 Powell, “Reading the White Shaman Mural.”

55 Powell, “Reading the White Shaman Mural.”

56 Powell, “Reading the White Shaman Mural.”

57 Powell, “Reading the White Shaman Mural.”

58 Karen E. Stothert, *The Archaeology and Early History of the Head of the San Antonio River* (San Antonio: Southern Archaeological Association, 1989), 3.

59 Tyer, “If These Walls Could Talk.”

remarks that even though they would have had no crops to harvest, hunter-gatherers' lives were also deeply impacted by the changing seasons, which they would have had to carefully observe.⁶⁰

In fact, Boyd adds, "Time is written into the White Shaman mural."⁶¹ It is not just time that is written on the mural; it is a way of life—the complex culture of a civilization and an early form of a written record. The White Shaman is only one among more than two hundred known murals "within a 90-mile radius around the confluence of the Pecos and the Rio Grande."⁶²

One other distinction the mural has is the way it interacts with the seeping limestone walls. A "section of the mural is on a natural water seep that has leached the paintings of their vibrancy, but whose association with the underworld motif," according to Boyd's research, "was probably a deliberate strategy."⁶³ If this was a deliberate decision, and if Perez's research is also accurate—that the mural depicts the Coahuiltecan origin story and maps the four major springs of the Edwards Aquifer—the concept of the San Antonio River as San Antonio's life source is, like the prehistoric water itself, remarkably clear.

Relying on the rivers and springs as a map that guided seasonal travel, the Indigenous people imbued mythic qualities to water and the springs from which that water flowed. They were not alone in creating such myths, however. Dr. Janet Valenza, professor of geography and author of *Taking the Waters in Texas: Springs, Spas, and Fountains of Youth*, notes that there are many origin stories related to water, including stories of Spanish origin. As she writes, "Springs, as openings to the underworld, represent an axis mundi, or center, that connects earth, sky, and underworld.... Myths revolving around Spanish settlement of Texas gave the waters a patina of age and hence a historical continuity to their value."⁶⁴ Knowledge of the culture that was present in southwest Texas before the arrival of Europeans and the notion that the Spanish imbued similar myths to the waters provide insight into the level of cultural amalgamation that would occur over time.

60 Powell, "Reading the White Shaman Mural."

61 Powell, "Reading the White Shaman Mural."

62 Powell, "Reading the White Shaman Mural."

63 Powell, "Reading the White Shaman Mural."

64 Valenza, *Taking the Waters in Texas: Springs, Spas, and Fountains of Youth*, 46.

SPANISH EXPLORATION AND THE BEGINNING OF WRITTEN ACCOUNTS, 1535 CE – 1690 CE

Nearly two hundred years prior to the establishment of the San Antonio Missions and presidio, early explorers recorded their first encounter with the San Antonio River. “On every early expedition...there was always a Native guiding the expedition. The expedition would not move without a guide because it was essential to be able to find the established trails and also find sufficient water and pasturage for the livestock and horses.”⁶⁵

Spanish explorer Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca crossed the river in June of 1535.⁶⁶ De Vaca became a captive of the Coahuiltecan for nearly a decade and kept a journal as he grew to understand the Indigenous tribal culture that held him captive.⁶⁷ He wrote about an inland group of Indigenous⁶⁸ known as the Coahuiltecans. This signifies the earliest known contemporaneous written record of the area’s Indigenous population.

Unlike the Pecos River murals, de Vaca’s accounts are told from an outsider’s perspective. Although they lack the level of nuance contained in the murals, they provide a written description of the people. According to de Vaca, the groups varied in build and skin tone but shared a common endurance and fortitude; de Vaca noted that “the men could run after a deer for an entire day without resting and without apparent fatigue.”⁶⁹

Contradicting the idea that the Coahuiltecans were strictly nomadic and confirming that they were seminomadic is the fact that as Spanish missionaries began to arrive in Bexar County in the late 1600s “they found several villages [rancherias] along the rivers and headwaters. Some seemed to be permanent. Villages tended to be formed either at the headwaters, nearby, or, at a convenient crossing or ford.”⁷⁰ The site of these villages is significant in that it is highly possible, and even probable, that some of them would have been located along the San Antonio River on the site of Brackenridge Park.

During the years that de Vaca was a Coahuiltecan captive, and as other European explorers arrived, other groups also entered the area with the ambition to conquer. “The native people were pressed by nomadic tribes encroaching from the north and south.”⁷¹ Arrival of the migrating Indigenous population, the encroaching Lipan Apaches and Comanche tribes, and European explorers and missionaries brought sweeping changes to the Indigenous lifestyle and culture that had previously persisted.

65 Killian, “History of the Native People.”

66 Helen Simons and Cathryn A. Hoyt, eds., *A Guide to Hispanic Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 230-31.

67 W. W. Newcomb Jr., *The Indians of Texas, from Prehistoric to Modern Times* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 33.

68 Newcomb Jr., *Indians of Texas*, 30.

69 Newcomb Jr., *Indians of Texas*, 37.

70 Killian, “History of the Native People.”

71 “The Native People,” San Antonio Missions, National Park Service, accessed June 24, 2019, nps.gov/saan/learn/historyculture/history3nativepeople.htm.

CHAPTER 9. MANAGING THE WATER, 1691–1844

Between 1691 and 1844, San Antonio transformed. Operating under *The Royal Orders for New Discoveries of 1573*, the Spanish Crown gave the church missionary system “the central role in the exploration and pacification of new lands.”¹ The landscape populated by egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups who migrated semi nomadically from one place to the next adjusting their lives according to the seasons and to fluctuations in drought and flood conditions became a landscape populated by people determined to lay claim to the land, to manage the water, and to implement a fixed way of life.

HISTORIC PERIOD BEGINS: THE MISSIONS AND ACEQUIA CONSTRUCTION, 1691 CE – 1775 CE

SAN ANTONIO IS CHRISTENED AND COLONIZED

On the feast day of St. Anthony in June 1691, more than one hundred years after Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s arrival in the area, Governor “Domingo Tera de los Rios and Father Damian Massanet arrived at a Payaya Indian village.”² They “asked the Payaya the name of the stream through an interpreter from the Pacpul tribe.”³ The two men were told that the name was Yanaguana. But Massanet, in honor of this holy day, named the river and its environs San Antonio. With this christening, the transformation of the area from an Indigenous landscape to a colonial landscape began (**figure 9-1**).

Over the next few years, increasing numbers of explorers and traders began to traverse the area and visit the springs of San Antonio. In Louisiana, French traders were pushing farther and farther west in order to increase their trading business and solidify land claims. Spain knew that in order to block French expansion, they would need to establish a series

1 Charles R. Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water: Early Development in San Antonio* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 23.

2 Maria Watson Pfeiffer and Steven A. Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” National Register of Historic Places, Texas Historical Commission, San Antonio, TX, June 15, 2011, 35.

3 Mickey Killian, “History of the Native People,” Texas Mission Indians, accessed November 20, 2019, texasmissionindians.org/.



FIGURE 9–1. A painting representing the 1691 meeting between Cabeza de Vaca’s Spanish expedition and the Indigenous Payaya of the present-day San Antonio area. “Who met the Spanish?” Acrylic on canvas board. Frank Weir, 2018. Source: Witte Museum Collection

of missions throughout Texas. Access to water was one of the key elements required for permanent habitation in an area of typically low rainfall. San Antonio Springs, which formed the San Antonio River, and San Pedro Springs, which formed the San Pedro Creek, were key elements in the establishment of the missions and in overall colonization.

As the Spanish arrived between 1600 and 1700, “they found several villages (rancherías) along the rivers and headwaters. Some seemed to be permanent,”⁴ confirming that the Indigenous population was seminomadic. “Villages tended to be formed either at the headwaters, nearby, or at a convenient crossing or ford,” indicating that some of these villages would have been located in the area of Brackenridge Park. More surprising is that some of the native people “were engaged in agricultural activities although those activities were of small scale,” with “terraces and irrigation ditches” located near the river, showing that “some of the Coahuiltecans were occasional farmers at least.”⁵ It is unclear whether these agricultural practices were native or whether they occurred after the earliest arrival of explorers in the 1500s through an exchange of cultural ideas.

In 1716, Domingo Ramón explored what was then northern Mexico. He noted the following in his diary:

This day I marched in a northeasterly direction seven leagues through some mesquite brush with plenty of pasturage, crossing two dry arroyos, and we arrived at a spring on level land which we named San Pedro. This

⁴ Killian, “History of the Native People.”

⁵ Killian, “History of the Native People.”

is sufficient to support a city. We entered a beautiful amenity of walnuts, grapevines, willows, elms, and other variety of trees, more than a quarter of a league from the San Antonio River. We were able to cross said river, which is large, but not deep, as it reaches our stirrups. We arrived upstream to look for a resting place and we found a good one, because it had a nice camping area with good trees and pasturage. We found the source of the river. Here, with the estimate of twelve ultramarines, hemp nine feet high and flax two feet high are found. Enough fish were caught for everyone and nets were used in said river with ease.^{6, 7}

Ramón's description of the plants, landscape, and supply of fish in the river provides a vivid picture of the environment he and his party encountered in 1716, just before construction of the missions and presidio began. He noted that they stayed an extra day in order to allow their horses to recover before they resumed their explorations across southern Texas.

The primary residents throughout the 1700s were still Indigenous groups and tribes.⁸ To successfully settle the area, the Spanish needed a more substantial labor force than could be found among the limited number of colonists. They needed the native population working the land, preparing food, and building infrastructure (**figure 9-2**).

Spanish colonization was deeply intertwined with Christian missionary conversion. Colonizers used Christianity as a tool for converting, civilizing, and exploiting the Indigenous for the benefit of the Crown; this system was called *encomenda*. "Conquest or violence" of or toward any natives was prohibited to ensure the successful conversion of Indigenous people into tax-paying Spanish colonists, as the country did not have enough Spaniards to colonize the American frontier. This gave the friars the important roles of exploring and claiming new lands peacefully and of "preaching the gospel," which the Spanish Royal Orders decreed was the "principle reason" for the expansion of territory and creation of new settlements.⁹

Some research indicates, however, that "few American Indians converted to the Catholic faith. Most were generally indifferent to the missionaries, and differences in languages, beliefs, and everyday customs made interactions between the two groups almost impossible."¹⁰ That said, the Indigenous and more recently arrived Lipan Apache and Comanche tribes formed a kind of interdependence with the Spanish. "Missionaries needed the Lipans to build and maintain the mission structures and to farm the land," while the missions provided safe haven to the Lipan Apaches from other invading tribes.¹¹

The Spanish Crown used three elements in colonizing San Antonio: "the mission, the presidio, and the municipality,"¹² in that order. The missions evangelized to the Indigenous to create New World Catholics. The presidio soldiers provided protection to the missions and maintained control, enforcing the laws that governed the Indigenous. The nonsecular

6 An "ultramarine" is a native of Spain.

7 Debbie S. Cunningham, ed., "The Domingo Ramón Diary of the 1716 Expedition into the Province of the Tejas Indians: An Annotated Translation," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 110, no. 1 (July 2006): 54, doi.org/10.1353/swh.2006.0017.

8 Kristi Miller Ulrich, "Archaeological Services Associated with Improvements to Miraflores at Brackenridge Park, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Archaeological Report, No. 387. Texas Antiquities Permit No. 4653. San Antonio, TX: Center for Archeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2008), 7.

9 Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water*, 21-23.

10 "The Native American Story," Bullock Texas State History Museum, accessed November 20, 2019, thetoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/native-americans.

11 "Native American Story."

12 Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water*, 21.



FIGURE 9–2. Engraving of Indigenous people building the acequia at Mission San José between 1720–1730. Source: Weckler, 1883, published in Charles R. Porter, Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water*

arm of the city, the municipality, established last, provided population growth and expanded infrastructure.¹³

The lifestyle of the native population changed drastically with the creation and enforcement of laws. Formerly, they “had followed the rhythms of nature....Their movements were dictated by the seasonal availability of food.”¹⁴ Now their lives were highly regulated. They submitted and welcomed the control and help of the new Spanish colonizers largely because of the “spread of European diseases that, in time, decimated their population.” At the mission, they found food, shelter, and protection. In exchange, they labored in the gardens and kitchens of the missions and adopted the Catholic religion.¹⁵

THE EARLIEST MUNICIPAL WATER SYSTEM—INTRODUCTION OF THE ACEQUIAS

The most important infrastructure for survival was the acequia system that was developed during this period. The acequias served as the municipal water system for the city and surrounding agricultural areas (**figure 9-3**).

San Antonio de Valero was the first mission in San Antonio, in 1718. It was originally located a short distance west on San Pedro Creek. Construction of the San Jose mission began in 1720, and the San Juan, Concepcion, and Espada missions began around 1731.¹⁶ Each of the five missions had an acequia, which was an irrigation canal that, in combination with a system of small dams and weirs, diverted a river for agricultural and domestic use.¹⁷ The network of

¹³ Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water*, 21.

¹⁴ “The Native People,” San Antonio Missions, National Park Service, accessed June 24, 2019, nps.gov/saan/learn/historyculture/history3nativepeople.htm.

¹⁵ “The Native People.”

¹⁶ Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water*, 27.

¹⁷ “The Acequias and River Systems,” San Antonio Missions, World Heritage Office, accessed November 20, 2019, www.worldheritagesa.com/Missions/The-Acequias.

San Antonio's Acequías 1778



FIGURE 9-3. Illustration of the Spanish and secular acequias of San Antonio from Brackenridge Park, south to the Mission Espada. Source: Frank W. Jennings, *San Antonio: the Story of an Enchanted City*

five acequias enabled irrigation of lands that were not directly adjacent to the river.¹⁸ Land between the acequia and river was controlled by the mission.¹⁹

The first acequia was constructed for the Mission San Antonio de Valero. This acequia was originally constructed between 1718 and 1719 and ran from San Pedro Springs, west of the San Antonio River, to the mission.

The engineering and manpower involved in building, maintaining, and managing the acequia system was labor intensive. Charles Porter Jr., adjunct professor of history in Austin, Texas, has studied the influence of water in the early development of San Antonio from the Spanish era through the present. In his book, *Spanish Water, Anglo Water: Early Development in San Antonio*, Porter emphasizes the importance of the Indigenous population to the acequia system.

The missions absolutely required Indian labor; without working Indians, the mission could not be self-sustaining. A working acequia system was labor intensive. It had to be tended to on a daily basis. Gates had to be opened and closed, and lateral ditches to the fields had to be prepared every time water was sent to them, or the water would not get to the plants. Not only did it take strength and time to prepare a field; for the irrigation

18 David Malda, "Landscape Narratives and the San Antonio River," in *River Cities: City Rivers*, ed. Way Thaisa (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018), 248.

19 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 35.

system to be effective, it also took both skill to coordinate gate openings and continual modification of the water's path once in the field. Irrigating large fields required teamwork by many hands working together so as to distribute the water evenly. It is an art to irrigate a field of any size so that all plants can enjoy the moisture without being overwatered while others are underwatered.²⁰

Clearly, a dedicated and large labor force was necessary to maintain the mechanics of irrigation, and irrigation was necessary to supply adequate food crops for the missions and presidio.

Flooding was a hazard from the beginning of the settlement of San Antonio. Just six years after the city was founded, a major flood in 1724 damaged Mission San Antonio de Valero. This catastrophe was the reason that the mission was moved to higher ground east of the San Antonio River and then to its present location, where it would eventually come to be known as the fort, the Alamo. Its acequia was also relocated. Archaeologist Wayne Cox states that the construction of the Acequia Madre de Valero began the same year the mission was moved and continued through 1744. It originated near the present-day Witte Museum, where it ran east of the San Antonio River, traveled south to the mission, and returned to the river. This acequia, which was associated with the first mission and was the first acequia originating at the San Antonio River,²¹ would be in continuous use until acequias were decommissioned more than a hundred years later.

THE PRESIDIOS AND THE BEGINNING OF A MUNICIPALITY

In approximately 1720, the King's Highway, or El Camino Real de las Texas, was formalized as a major transportation and travel route across Texas. The beginnings of the highway had long been in place under the pilgrimage system used by Indigenous people in their travels to the springs of the Balcones Escarpment and the Peyote Gardens to the southwest of San Antonio.²² As construction of the missions and acequias began, it was important to connect the settlements through an overland transportation route. The Crown authorized the building of the King's Highway, which connected San Antonio to the rest of Texas to the east and to Mexico to the south.

Therefore, shortly after the missions were begun it was important for protection of the settlement to establish and construct a presidio. Presidios discouraged settlement pressures from the French, who had colonized areas east of Texas. The Presidio de Béjar was begun in 1722 at the headwaters of San Pedro Creek.²³ It protected the existing and future missions in the San Antonio area.

Around 1730, fifteen families from the Spanish Canary Islands, off the coast of Morocco, were recruited to travel to the colony in New Spain and settle Villa de Béjar. The Spanish

²⁰ Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water*, 34.

²¹ "Acequias," Mission Trails, The City of San Antonio—Official City Website, accessed October 28, 2019, sanantonio.gov/Mission-Trails/Mission-Trails-Historic-Sites/Detail-Page/ArtMID/16185/ArticleID/4230/Acequias.

²² "Yanaguana, Lower Pecos Rock Art, and Indigenous History of San Antonio" (lecture, Headwaters at Incarnate Word, March 24, 2018), accessed November 20, 2019, headwaters-iw.org/new-events/2018/3/24/yanaguana-lower-pecos-rock-art-and-indigenous-history-of-san-antonio-lecture.

²³ Donald E. Chipman and Harriet Denise Joseph, *Spanish Texas, 1519-1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 117.

Crown recruited enlistees by offering “land grants, irrigation rights, horses, titles of minor nobility to heads of families..., subsistence allowances throughout the journey by sea and overland, tools for farming and construction of homesteads, and the opportunity to serve in the government (*ayuntamiento*) they were to initiate.”²⁴ They arrived in San Antonio in 1731. Cultural and ethnic blending was inevitable. Coahuiltecan groups, the original inhabitants of the area, began mixing with Spanish missionary settlers and Canary Islanders, who also included people of African origins. As colonists and settlers settled the municipality, they introduced diseases. By the end of the eighteenth century, many of the remaining native Coahuiltecan would die or would be absorbed into a mixed population.²⁵

At the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, France relinquished control of the Louisiana Territory to Spain. Texas had long served as the buffer between colonial France and Spain, with presidios along the eastern border of Texas serving as a military barrier. Without the need to stem French settlement, the Texas presidios were no longer needed. Colonial Texas had always been a drain on the Crown, and Charles III of Spain moved to reduce the financial burden associated with the staffing and operation of the presidios. In 1772, Spain issued the Royal Regulations, which selectively closed many of the presidios. With the end of European financial support for the presidios and missions, a period of secularization began.

SECULAR DEVELOPMENT AND THE FORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS, 1776 CE – 1844 CE

Structures and lands formerly owned by the missions were abandoned, returned to the Crown and government, or sold. This set the stage for further development in San Antonio. Lands formerly owned by the church and Crown were now available for farming and settlement.

Lands close to the city, located west of the San Antonio River between the head of the river and San Pedro, were especially important for the expansion of settlement. In particular, this area was developed for farming and pasture, which helped supply food to the growing city. With the growth in agriculture, there was the need for irrigation. Between 1776 and 1778, the Upper Labor Acequia was constructed and “twenty-six long, narrow parcels (*suertes*) running from the acequia to the river were awarded to those who financed the ditch.”²⁶ The Upper Labor irrigated this land west of the San Antonio River. Remnants are visible today in Brackenridge Park in the San Antonio Zoo, although they are not interpreted for the public. A portion of the acequia is also visible in Davis Park, suggesting that it ran the length of present-day Brackenridge Park’s western boundary.

The Crown also saw the need to relocate Spanish colonial refugees to the area. In 1793, “a total of 500 soldiers, missionaries, and settlers were sent to the San Pedro area of San Antonio”²⁷ after their presidio was abandoned. The group, known as *Adaeseños*, had been living in Los Adaes, west of present-day Natchitoches, Louisiana. They were comprised of “mostly poor peasants” originally from “various towns such as Saltillo, Selayla, and Zacatecas in what is

24 Armando Curbelo Fuentes, *The Canary Islanders in Texas: The Story of the Founding of San Antonio* (San Antonio: Maverick Books/Trinity University Press, 2018), xvi.

25 W. W. Newcomb, Jr., *The Indians of Texas, from Prehistoric to Modern Times* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), 37.

26 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 36.

27 David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 222.

today northern and central Mexico.”²⁸ Reluctantly, the refugees resettled in San Antonio on agricultural lands. Individual owners were granted land located between Mission San Antonio de Valero and the San Antonio River, in present-day Brackenridge Park.²⁹

UPHEAVALS AMID SECULAR DEVELOPMENT

Mission San Antonio de Valero came to be known as the Alamo around the beginning of the nineteenth century. The building, now a secular structure, would evolve into a contested military and prison site. The municipality remained under Spanish rule, but during the Mexican War of Independence, which began in 1810, the country sought its independence from the Spanish Crown. In this period the former mission became a contested site.

San Antonio contained many Spanish royalists, but there were also those who sided with Mexico. At the start of 1811, “a retired militia captain in San Antonio issued his own call for revolution,”³⁰ although the revolt failed. Almost two years later, near the end of 1812, “an army of three hundred or more Mexican revolutionaries and American volunteers entered Texas and captured Nacogdoches,”³¹ located near the Texas-Louisiana border. Eventually, “on August 18, 1813, the royalists and republicans clashed twenty miles southwest of San Antonio at the Battle of Medina,” where the army “crushed republicans, executing and pursuing rebels even to the Louisiana border.”³² For a year after, the royal army’s leader occupied San Antonio. There,

he continued to execute rebels, confiscate property, [and] imprison the women of San Antonio, who were forced to cook for his soldiers. During this time, some prisoners were held at the Alamo. Other expeditions were attempted but none were as serious as what occurred in 1812-1813. Their cumulative effects depopulated Texas and left it in economic disarray. Moreover, the drastic decline in population set the state for the opening of Texas to foreign immigrants as a way to repopulate the region.³³

The struggling municipality experienced a devastating flood on July 5, 1819. In his book *San Antonio: The Story of an Enchanted City*, Frank Jennings states that during this flood, the river became “a solid, overflowing stream roaring south, spread east and west from the walls of the former mission San Antonio de Valero all the way to San Pedro Creek.”³⁴ Alfred Rodriguez, former archivist of the Bexar County Spanish Archives, writes that:

rushing waters killed many residents and devastated dwellings, commercial structures, crops, bridges, [and] *acequias*, and ‘left the city in such condition that one might say the city did not exist.’ Many survivors faced hunger and destitution. Even the tillable lands were so badly damaged that nothing could be planted for some time.³⁵

28 “Los Adaes,” Texas Beyond History, accessed November 20, 2019, www.texasbeyondhistory.net/adaes/life.html.

29 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 35.

30 Bruce Winders, “San Antonio and the Alamo in the Mexican War of Independence,” Medium, September 18, 2018, accessed November 16, 2019, medium.com/the-alamo-messenger/san-antonio-and-the-alamo-in-the-mexican-war-of-independence-2db481c718db.

31 Winders, “San Antonio and the Alamo.”

32 Winders, “San Antonio and the Alamo.”

33 Winders, “San Antonio and the Alamo.”

34 Frank W. Jennings, *San Antonio: The Story of an Enchanted City* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 2002), 38.

35 Alfred Rodriguez, “Rebel Properties, Rebellion and Confiscation,” University of the Incarnate Word, accessed June 20, 2019, <https://www.uiw.edu/sanantonio/RebelPropertiesof1813.html>. Source does not cite the quotation within quote.

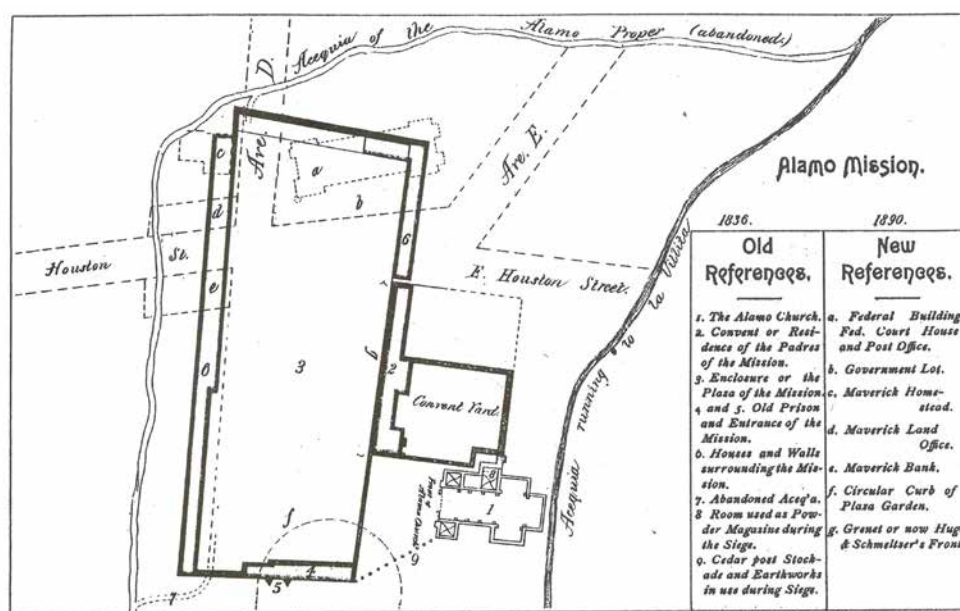


FIGURE 9-4. This survey compares the 1836 boundaries of the Alamo site with the 1890 map, showing the addition of city streets and other downtown structures. Note the delineation of the abandoned “Acequia of the Alamo,” referring to the Acequia Madre de Valero that originates in Brackenridge Park. Source: Frank W. Jennings, *San Antonio: the Story of an Enchanted City*

Flooding was an ever-present danger to those who risked living in the floodplain of the river. Not long after the 1819 flood event, Texas would become part of the Republic of Mexico. In 1821, the country gained its independence from the Spanish Crown. Another kind of flood would ensue.

[B]etween 1821, when Mexico became independent, and 1835, when the armed struggle between Mexico and the Texans began, some 35,000 Anglo Americans flocked across the border into Mexican Texas, outnumbering the Mexican Texans, or Tejanos, by a ratio of ten to one. Mexican Texans had become a relatively small minority and Anglo Americans showed a critical awareness of the distinct cultural differences.³⁶

As a result, there was growing strife between the governor in Mexico City and the increasingly Anglo residents of the Texas region. In March of 1835, the Republic of Texas declared independence from the Republic of Mexico. This set the stage for “the first major engagement of the Texas Revolution.” That engagement occurred two miles south of downtown San Antonio, on the grounds of Mission Concepción, by then known as the Alamo.

Historian J. R. Edmonson writes that shortly after Texas declared independence from the Republic of Mexico, on October 28, 1835, Mexican troops battled with a group of Texan insurgents, led by James Bowie and James Fannin. The thirty-minute battle resulted in heavy losses within the Mexican Army and only one casualty among the Texans.³⁷ In February of 1836, Santa Anna marched into San Antonio, with an attack on the Alamo that resulted in one of the most famous battles in American history. The Texas Revolution lasted until the

³⁶ Jennings, *Story of an Enchanted City*, 124.

³⁷ J. R. Edmonson, J. R. *The Alamo Story: From Early History to Current Conflicts* (Plano, TX: Republic of Texas Press, 2000), 224.



FIGURE 9-5. Circa 1860 oil painting entitled “Lavanderas (Wash Day on San Pedro Creek)” illustrates the common usage of San Antonio’s creek and acequia resources by a mix of residents, including Indigenous Americans, Mexicans, and Germans. The artist, French-born Texan Jean Louis Theodore Gentilz (1819-1906), painted scenes of daily life in Texas. Source: San Antonio Museum of Art, gift of The J Laurence Sheerin Family

spring of 1836, when Santa Anna and his army were defeated on April 21 at the Battle of San Jacinto, just south of Houston (**figure 9-4**). With the defeat of the Mexican Army, Texas became a republic and began the process of installing the mechanics of self-government.

In 1839, shortly after the Republic of Texas gained independence from Mexico, military soldiers from Galveston on a mission to seek out Comanches in West Texas visited the San Antonio River to obtain water for themselves and their horses and to rest under the shade of the trees along the river. The head of the contingent, William F. Wilson, and his Galveston Mounted Gunmen camped at the headwaters. Wilson contracted cholera and died within days.³⁸ The agriculture that had developed in the Olmos Basin to the north and on the lands to the west of the river was already contributing to reduced water quality and increasing health problems. Wilson’s death of cholera is evidence of the emerging problem.

In 1840, “Camp Cooke” was set up at San Antonio Springs by William C. Cooke. There he positioned a portion of his 1,200-man regiment. A few years later, Camp Olmos was established north of the springs by a local mounted militia along with a group of Texas Rangers under General Zachary Taylor of the US Army as it prepared for war with Mexico.

³⁸ Gregg Eckhardt, “Hydrology of the Edwards Aquifer,” The Edwards Aquifer Website, accessed June 3, 2019, edwardsaquifer.net/geology.html.

After the creation of the Republic of Texas, the region went through a period of organization and reorganization. Lands that had formerly belonged to the Mexican government were placed under the control of local authorities. They surveyed the land and then set aside parcels for auction. The hope was that the increase in available lands would stimulate investment and development.

During the initial sales and auctions in 1843, Samuel A. Maverick, a signatory of the Texas Declaration of Independence, purchased land on the east side of the San Antonio River. He placed the property in the name of his wife, Mary. He bought the property at auction for the sum of \$267.³⁹ This same tract of land was later purchased by George Brackenridge and would form the core of his first donation to the city of San Antonio for the creation of Brackenridge Park.

Between 1776 and 1844, the first acequia for secular usage (the Upper Labor acequia) was constructed to support the municipality. With its construction, the acequia system, initially begun in 1719 to serve the missions, remained the primary means of water provision for both agriculture and potable water (**figure 9-5**). Throughout this period, flooding, agricultural practices, and disease would impact the city's waters and the health of its people, and conditions continued to worsen.

³⁹ Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 40.

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CHAPTER 10. URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION, 1845–1898

At the end of 1844, the Brackenridge Park landscape was primarily agricultural. It was largely defined by the presence of the San Antonio River running through its center, the Acequia Madre de Valero to the east, and the Upper Labor Acequia to the west—each serving as irrigation corridors. Over the next fifty-three years, between 1845 and 1898, a primarily industrial landscape would emerge, reflecting the changes and growth in San Antonio.

STATEHOOD, NEW MIGRATION, TOURISM, AND THE CIVIL WAR

STATEHOOD AND NEW MIGRATION

At the end of 1845, as cholera threatened the lives of San Antonians, another sweeping political change occurred. The Republic of Texas was annexed into the United States of America. Texas's statehood coincided with political unrest in Germany and other parts of eastern Europe, and a flood of new citizens swept into Texas. The promise of cheap land and abundant opportunities for financial improvement attracted German, Italian, Polish, and Hungarian immigrants as well as more Anglo-Americans to the new state. In addition to land and commerce, "the political and artistic centers established [in San Antonio] by the Spanish made the area attractive to the German intellectual elite. From 1847 to 1861, a total of 7,634 German immigrants reached Bexar."¹

As this influx of people to San Antonio increased, cholera became a more common and recurring problem. Epidemics occurred in 1846 and 1849.² The 1849 epidemic was especially intense, resulting in the deaths of more than six hundred San Antonians.³ The combination of population growth and increased disease corresponded with the need to update, improve, and build infrastructure for the new residents. In order to provide for this, the city of San

1 Jordan Schermerhorn, "San Antonio's German Immigrants and Secession," *Journal of the Life and Culture of San Antonio*, University of the Incarnate Word, accessed November 30, 2018, uiw.edu/sanantonio/SanAntoniogsGermanImmigrantsandSecession.html.

2 Charles R. Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water: Early Development in San Antonio* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 96.

3 Gregg Eckhardt, "San Antonio Springs and Brackenridge Park," The Edwards Aquifer Website, accessed June 3, 2019, edwardsaquifer.net/saspring.html.



FIGURE 10-1. Stereograph of San Pedro Springs, circa 1869, taken by Ernst Wilhelm Raba. San Pedro Springs Park preceded Brackenridge Park as the city's first municipal park, but its size (under fifty acres) limited development. It did not achieve the scale or usage of an early nineteenth-century large municipal park, as Brackenridge Park would become. Source: *The Portal to Texas History*, University of North Texas Libraries



FIGURE 10-2. San Pedro Springs, circa 1877. The character of the park is evident in this image and in Figure 10-1. Source: *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association

Antonio needed to raise capital. In 1852, the city surveyed most of the public lands held by the government and began selling those lands to investors. That same year, the city created San Pedro Springs Park at the headwaters of the San Pedro Springs (**figures 10-1 and 10-2**). This development was a testament to the city's investment in public infrastructure. Consisting of forty-six acres, San Pedro Springs Park would become the primary public park in the city until the creation of Brackenridge Park. By 1863, San Pedro Springs Park contained a zoological display that would eventually move to Brackenridge Park, probably due to more available space for deer, elk, and bison.⁴

Laszlo Ujhazi, who fled Hungary during the tumultuous worldwide revolutions that circled the globe in 1848 and 1849, purchased land near the Olmos Basin in 1852, located north of the current-day Brackenridge Park site. There, he developed a farmstead. South of the Olmos Basin, city alderman James Sweet purchased the land containing San Antonio Springs, a complex of springs from which the San Antonio River is formed.

Around the same period, John Kampmann, who had studied “the craftsmanship and technical knowledge of building” and had apprenticed as a stonemason,⁵ immigrated from Germany to the United States, arriving in New Orleans and then traveling to Texas. He settled in New Braunfels and soon made his way to San Antonio, where he

found his first niche: variations of the simple vernacular German-Texas houses, combining the German hall and parlor house with the Texas dogtrot. These houses featured traditional German elements built with native Texas materials, coordinating masonry craftsmanship with wooden details.⁶

Kampmann would leave a legacy as “a craftsman, builder, contractor, stone-mason, construction supervisor, building designer, materials supplier, and business and civic leader for thirty-five years in San Antonio.”⁷ It would not be long before Kampmann and Ujhazi crossed paths. On the top of the hill above San Antonio Springs, Ujhazi contracted Kampmann to erect a dwelling that became known as the Old Sweet Homestead⁸ (**figure 10-3**). This home would eventually come to be owned by George Washington Brackenridge.

Brackenridge was also among the 1850s transplants to Texas. An American Midwesterner of Scottish heritage, Brackenridge and his family relocated in 1851 to Texana, Texas, near the Gulf Coast. Using money borrowed from his father, he began purchasing land in Bexar County around 1854, particularly along the Salado River in the eastern portion of the county.⁹ He would not make his move to San Antonio until 1866, but he would travel there frequently in the years between 1850 to 1857, “trading in merchandise and occasionally taking up a mortgage on the land.... Sometimes his duties took him to taverns and boarding

4 “San Pedro Springs Park,” The City of San Antonio—Official City Website, June 12, 2018, accessed September 30, 2019, sanantonio.gov/ParksAndRec/Parks-Facilities/All-Parks-Facilities/Parks-Facilities-Details/ArtMID/14820/ArticleID/2504/San-Pedro-Springs-Park?Park=216&Facility=.

5 Maggie Valentine, *John H. Kampmann, Master Builder: San Antonio's German influence in the 19th century* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2014), 8.

6 Valentine, *Kampmann, Master Builder*, 33.

7 Valentine, *Kampmann, Master Builder*, 33.

8 Steve Bennett, “‘Head-of-the-River’ Immersed in San Antonio History,” *San Antonio Express-News*, July 8, 2017, accessed May 31, 2018, expressnews.com/sa300/article/Head-of-the-River-immersed-in-San-Antonio-11274319.php.

9 Marilyn MacAdams Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973, 29.



FIGURE 10–3. Engraving of the Old Sweet Homestead. Source: Maggie Valentine, *John H. Hampmann: Master Builder*

houses,...”¹⁰ and he became familiar with the city. In 1857, the development of Central Park was underway in the northeast and the Civil War was on the cusp of erupting upon the nation. This Civil War and the failed era of Reconstruction became the national backdrop that influenced Brackenridge’s actions as a philanthropist, banker, and developer in San Antonio and elsewhere in Texas.

EARLY TOURISM TO THE SAN ANTONIO SPRINGS

It was also in 1857 that noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted visited San Antonio and toured San Antonio Springs. With the Civil War brewing, the *New York Times* had commissioned Olmsted to travel to the antebellum South and to write about his experience there and about his observations related to slavery. Olmsted turned this travel into three volumes of writing. Of San Antonio Springs, he wrote, “The whole river gushes up in one sparkling burst from the earth.... The effect is overpowering. It is beyond your possible conceptions of a spring.”¹¹ At the time San Antonio was known to have four fountain springs that gushed into the air. The other three were Comal Springs, San Marcos Springs, and Barton Springs.¹²

Two years later, traveler Richard Everett visited San Antonio and went to the two major springs in the city. He recounted the following description of his visit:

Two rivers wind through the city, flowing from the living springs only a short distance beyond the suburbs. One, the San Antonio, boils in a vast volume from a rocky basin, which, environed by mossy stones and

¹⁰ Sibley, George W. *Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 28.

¹¹ “Circle of the Springs: Headwaters Invites the San Antonio Community to Contribute to Building Our Circle of the Springs Garden,” Headwaters at Incarnate Word, accessed September 25, 2019, headwaters-iw.org/circle-of-the-springs.

¹² “Circle of the Springs: Headwaters.”

overhanging foliage, seems devised for the especial dwelling-place of nymphs and naiads. The other, the San Pedro, runs from a little pond, formed by the outgushing of five sparkling springs, which bear the same name. This miniature lake, embowered in a grove of stately elm and pecan trees, is one of the most beautiful natural sheets of pure water in the Union—so clear, that even the delicate roots of the water lilies and the smallest pebbles may be distinctly seen.¹³

In the same year, a journalist for *DeBow's Review* recounted his visit to San Antonio and the people he encountered.

The San Antonio river runs directly through the city. It has its source ten miles out of town. The Mexican population is gradually, by degrees, disappearing from this city, although the Mexicans now number some fifteen hundred in Bexar county. On a clear sunshiny day, on the banks of the river, scores of Mexican women may be seen washing.¹⁴

AN INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE EMERGES: THE LIMESTONE BUILDING BOOM AND THE CIVIL WAR

When the Civil War erupted in America in December of 1861, San Antonio experienced increased activity, although the area was not directly involved in any major battles. Most of the intense fighting during the war occurred in the southern states to the east. In San Antonio, agriculture, industry, military-home manufactures, domestic activities, personal hygiene, fishing, and residential development continued.

The new US city, experiencing a booming population and increased tourism, began leasing lands to meet budgetary needs. Among the leases, limestone quarries operated and helped meet the needs of the growing population. “Stone was needed to sustain the city’s building boom, and the City Council chose to lease the quarry to private interests.”¹⁵ The city retained its primary quarry tracts, but it also sold some of the quarry land. As an architect and a builder, Kampmann took advantage of the opportunity and purchased a nineteen-acre tract of land in 1863. He constructed a small stone building there, which dates to approximately 1870. Kampmann maintained his own mansion in the city, so it is believed that the small limestone house was built in conjunction with his quarry activities.¹⁶ These quarries were located on the Brackenridge Park landscape in today’s Brackenridge Park, in the Sunken Garden Theater, Japanese Tea Garden, and San Antonio Zoo. The Kampmann house, located southwest of the current First Tee and north of Mulberry Street, is extant today, but it is in ruins.¹⁷

The year that Kampmann purchased his nineteen acres, the Confederate States of America “purchased 75 acres on the San Antonio River in order to construct a tannery and sawmill—

13 Eckhardt, “San Antonio Springs and Brackenridge Park.”

14 J. D. B. DeBow, “Western Texas,” *DeBow's Review, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 26, No. 1 (January 1859):115-116, accessed September 25, 2019, name.umdl.umich.edu/acg1336.1-26.001.

15 Maria Watson Pfeiffer and Steven A. Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” National Register of Historic Places, Texas Historical Commission, San Antonio, TX, June 15, 2011, 37.

16 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 19.

17 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 36.

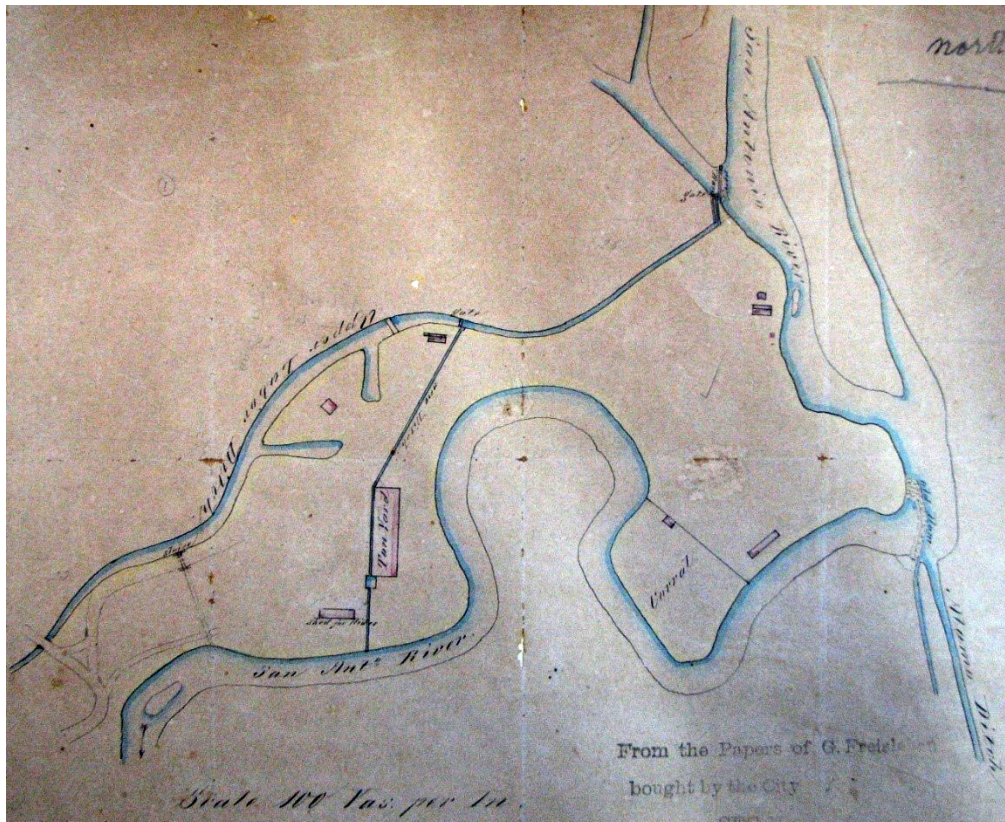


FIGURE 10-4. 1865-1868 map of Confederate tannery and surrounding features drawn by Gustave Freisleben, City Engineer. A “Tan Yard” and “Shed for Hides” are visible along a canal that supplied water to the tannery. The San Antonio River is represented at the right and bottom of map. The Upper Labor Ditch is shown above the “Tan Yard,” left side of map, and a “Corral” and the Alamo Ditch are shown at bottom right. It appears that water was diverted from the Upper Labor Ditch due to the gate location downstream from the canal. Source: Municipal Archives of the City of San Antonio.

part of their effort to establish ‘a system of home manufacturers.’”^{18,19} For its construction, the city council “granted permission for the Confederate government to quarry hard rock from No. 24 and 25 quarries at no charge”²⁰ (figure 10-4). Part of the labor force at the tannery and lumber mill was comprised of enslaved workers who built the structures, installed the machinery, and then worked producing the leather and lumber needed for the war effort.

The tannery and mill were reportedly capable of processing 15,000 hides annually and 3,000 feet of lumber daily. Water was provided by a hewn stone raceway that ran between the Upper Labor ditch and San Antonio River. When advertised for sale after the war in 1857, the facility consisted of “twelve stone lime vats, fifty-two wooden vats, seven stone pools..., one steam saw-mill capable of 3,000 feet of lumber daily..., [and] one small stone building.”

When the Civil War ended in 1865, the tannery and sawmill continued to be in operation briefly, and “the City Council became alarmed that the occupants were making unauthorized use of water flowing through the raceway.”²¹ In 1867, the United States Bureau of Refugees,

18 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 37-38.

19 Home manufacturers were comprised of boots, saddles, uniforms, bandages, and hats, and basically any item required to outfit units of war and care for soldiers.

20 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 38.

21 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 38.

Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands listed the property for sale. A year later, however, the property was damaged in a storm, and it “stood in ruins for two more years.”²²

After a protracted, years-long negotiation, the city of San Antonio purchased the seventy-five acres back from the federal government in 1870 for \$4,500.²³ San Antonio recovered more quickly than areas that had been devastated by war. Still, the end of the Civil War brought more changes the city. San Antonio would experience more industrial transformations.

GEORGE BRACKENRIDGE AND THE EARLY SHAPING OF A CITY AND ITS PARK

Several significant events coalesced in San Antonio in the years between 1866 and 1869. George Brackenridge, who had left Texas at the start of the Civil War, returned to the state and settled in San Antonio. With the quarries still in use after the end of the war and other activities on the horizon, Brackenridge founded the San Antonio National Bank. Yet another cholera epidemic struck the city. And a French immigrant named Jean Baptiste Lacoste established the San Antonio Ice Company, which paved the way for San Antonio Water Works and the end of the use of acequias in San Antonio.

In early 1866, with backing from his friend James Stillman, who by war’s end “was one of the richest men in America,”²⁴ Brackenridge opened the San Antonio National Bank. When he was away from Texas during the Civil War, three of his brothers enlisted in the Confederate Army. Brackenridge himself sided politically with the Unionists, but he was an opportunist. He “became a war profiteer in the Matamoros cotton trade and with his family and a friend, he formed the cotton firm of Brackenridge, Bates, and Company,”²⁵ although he refused to accept specie, the Confederate currency of the time. Nonetheless, his profiteering, along with his family’s ownership of enslaved people prior to the Civil War,²⁶ put him in an ethical quandary, for which he would later attempt to make amends through philanthropic endeavors.

San Antonio National Bank was an astute business response to the growth of the industrial Midwest, where the need for beef increased in cities such as Chicago and Pittsburgh and in other commercial corridors. The open ranges of West Texas provided extensive landholdings on which farmers produced huge herds of cattle. These herds were then driven by drovers to the large railroad yards of Topeka, Kansas City, and other cities with rail connections. Most drovers lacked sufficient capital to purchase large herds until they were able to get them to market and sell them to brokers before they were either shipped further north or butchered. The cattle range business became the core of Brackenridge’s revenue and substantial profits, and he developed personal connections with some of the most important cattlemen in Texas.

That same year, J. B. Lacoste established the San Antonio Ice Company.²⁷ According to an April 5, 1877, *San Antonio Express* article, Lacoste operated the company on the banks of the

22 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 38.

23 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 38.

24 “Brackenridge, George Washington,” *Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, August 19, 2016, tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fbr02.
“Brackenridge, George Washington.”

25 “Brackenridge, George Washington.”

26 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 166.

27 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 41.



FIGURE 10-5. Circa 1890 photo of a family using an acequia for laundering and daily water needs. The image, captured by Mary E. Jacobson, illustrates the common usage of acequias even after the development of a formal municipal water system in San Antonio. Source: Lewis F. Fisher Collection

San Antonio River, which was the source of fresh water for his ice-making machinery.²⁸ Lacoste's involvement in the ice-making business prepared him for the creation of the waterworks over the next decade. During this time, there were multiple floods on the river, which caused extensive damage. A major flood in 1865 and another flood in 1868 caused extensive damage to the federal government land on which the tannery had been located.²⁹ Finally, the cholera epidemic of 1866 caused local doctors to promote the establishment of "a safe municipal water system"³⁰ (figure 10-5). Over three hundred people died within a two-month period, and the outbreak was not completely eradicated until 1869.³¹ But Reconstruction politics and lack of public interest prevented progress on establishing a citywide municipal system.

Instead, two events occurred that would bring about a citywide municipal water system, and both events would also be instrumental to the future formation of Brackenridge Park. First, in 1869, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word came to San Antonio from France to provide support in fighting the epidemic. They founded what later became Santa Rosa Hospital.³² Second, the same year, George Brackenridge purchased, in his mother Isabella's name, the Old Sweet Homestead from George Barnes.³³ The "home was set on 108 acres at the head of the San Antonio River."³⁴ The family renamed the house Fernridge, derived from the portion of the family name "bracken," which is the Scottish word for fern.³⁵ With the Brackenridge family now in control of the headwaters and surrounding land, George Brackenridge began to consolidate his landholdings along the San Antonio River.

28 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 40.

29 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 38.

30 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 39.

31 Carmina Danini, "Early Primitive Conditions Led to Disease Outbreaks," *San Antonio Express-News*, February 14, 2015, accessed November 6, 2019, [expressnews.com/150years/education-health/article/Early-primitive-conditions-led-to-disease-6082054.php](https://www.expressnews.com/150years/education-health/article/Early-primitive-conditions-led-to-disease-6082054.php).

32 Bennett, "Head-of-the-River."

33 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 127.

34 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 127.

35 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 36, 39.

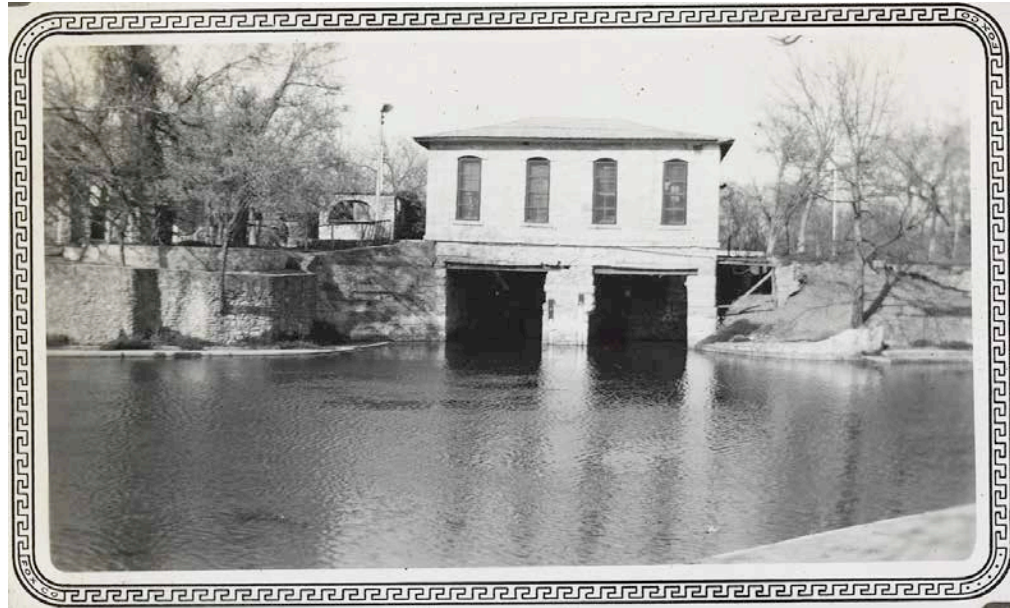


FIGURE 10-6. Circa 1940-1950s photograph of Pump House No. 1, perhaps the oldest intact industrial building in Brackenridge Park, constructed in 1878 and located on the San Antonio River in Brackenridge Park. Source: Witte Museum Collection

In 1872, two years after the city of San Antonio purchased the tannery tract land from the federal government, “a local newspaper began to campaign for repurchase of the head of the river property.” The city began negotiations with Brackenridge, entering into a \$50,000 contract.³⁶ But there was “public outcry over Brackenridge’s potential profit,” and the sale did not occur. When the city began partitioning and auctioning the tannery tract land in 1875, Brackenridge purchased “four of the upper five lots in the tannery tract adjoining and west of the river.”³⁷ Brackenridge and his brother also took an option on a two-hundred-acre tract owned by Mary Maverick, and they completed the purchase in 1876 for the price of \$25,000.³⁸ In this way, Brackenridge amassed the land that he would eventually return to the city for the purpose of creating a large municipal park.

NEW INDUSTRIES EMERGE IN THE AMERICAN CITY

THE MUNICIPAL WATER SYSTEM

With the cholera epidemic not yet eradicated and local physicians advocating for the city to address water sanitation, the stage was set for a more advanced water system. It was not the disease epidemic that spurred change, however. Instead, “the need for more water for fighting fires” is what finally prompted a new system. When the city of San Antonio voted to approve the contract for the creation of the municipal water system, J. B. Lacoste already had experience supplying waterworks in Mexico. His ice-making plants in Kansas City, Austin, and San Antonio also ensured that he had the technical knowledge necessary to transport water through the use of a network of pipes and pumps. On July 5, 1878, the city council formally accepted the permit to open the system to the public.

36 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 36, 39.

37 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 40.

38 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 40.

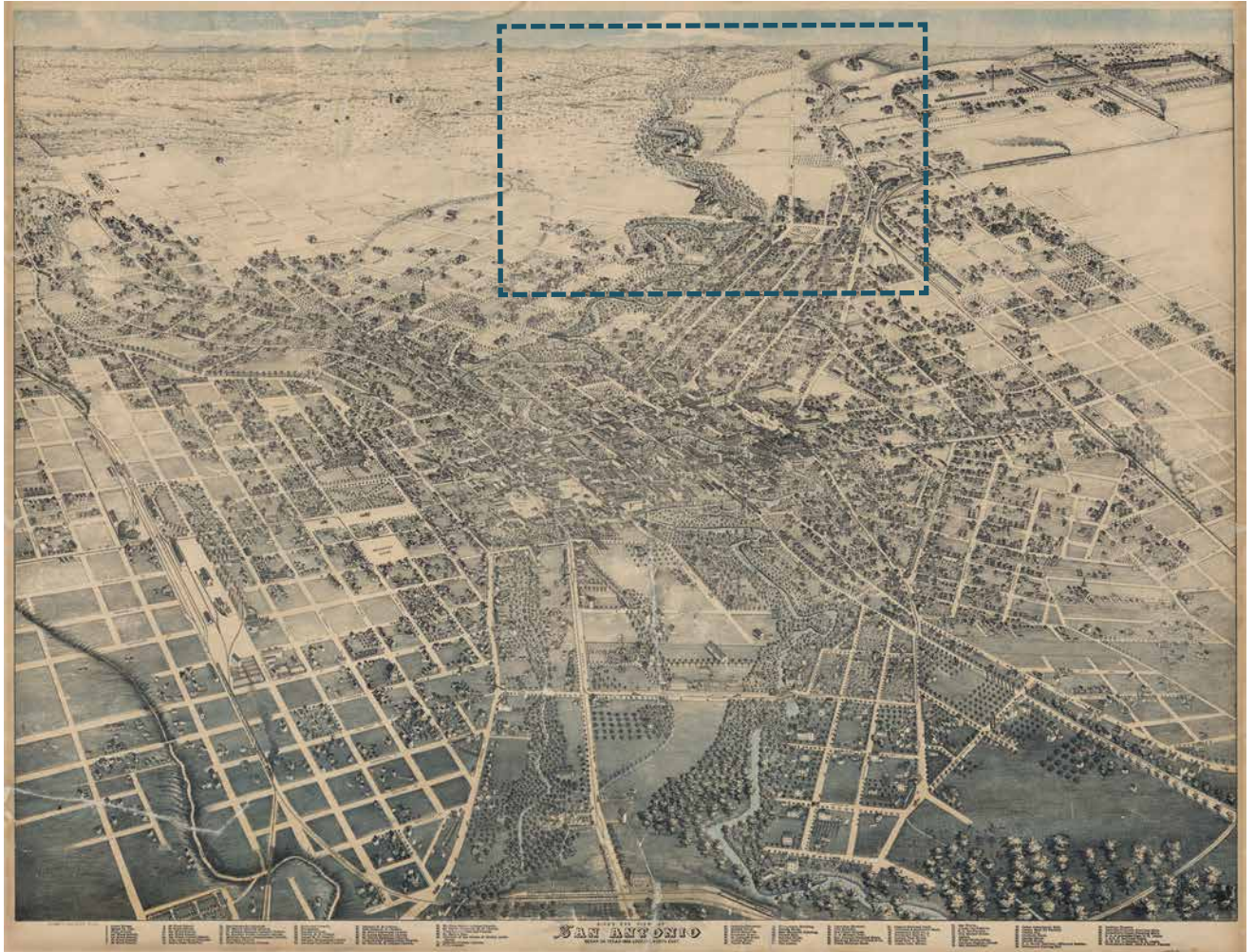
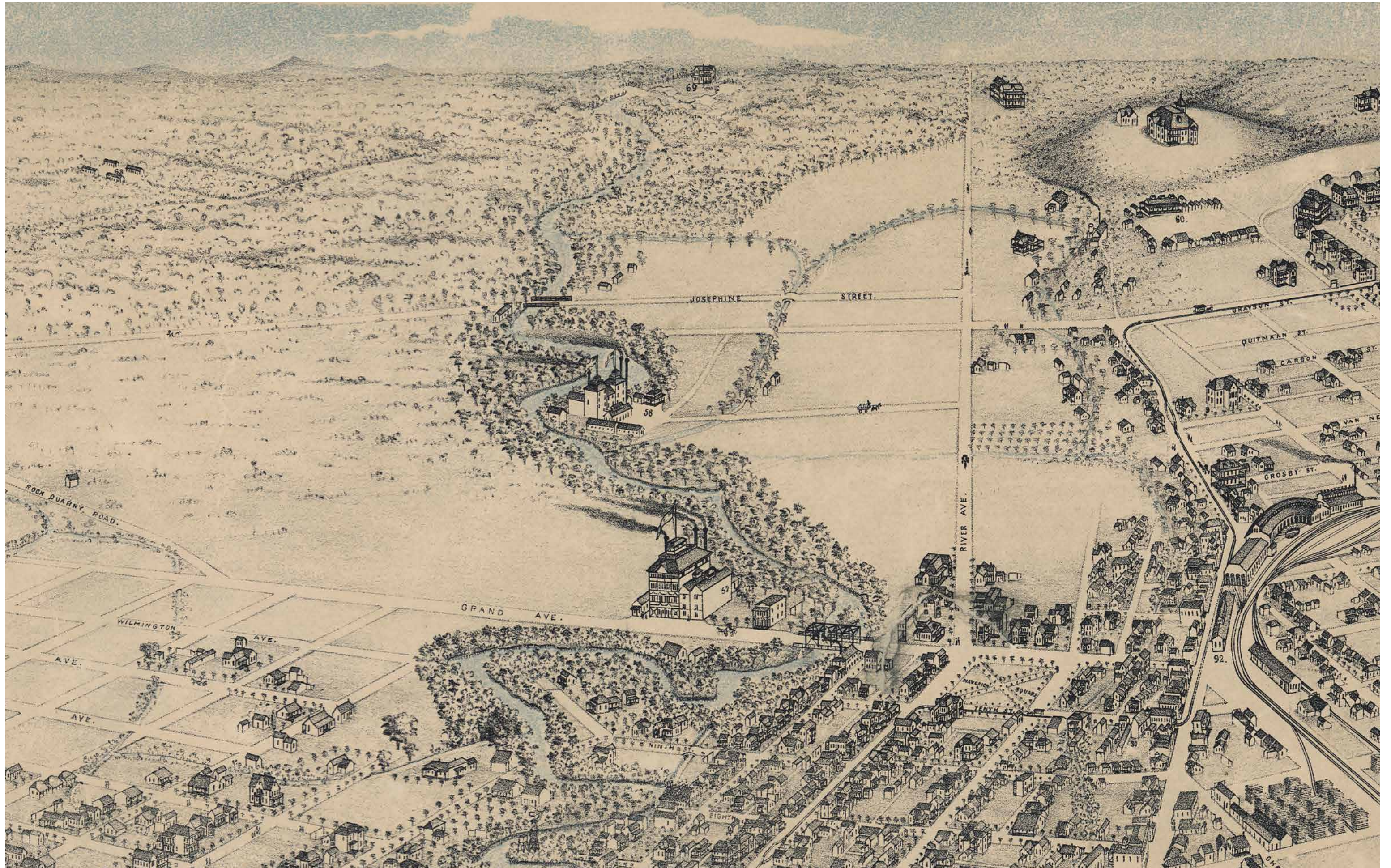


FIGURE 10-7. 1886 Bird's Eye View of San Antonio. The original image on left shows the growth and industrialization of the city. In the enlargement, Rock Quarry Road can be seen at center left; the Head of the San Antonio River and George Brackenridge's house can be seen at top center (69); the City Brewery (58) is visible at bottom right, with downtown San Antonio below. Josephine Street marks the southern end of Brackenridge Park, where the Tunnel Inlet is located. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy



Within the next two years, the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway was completed to San Antonio,³⁹ and J. B. Lacoste began planning for the construction of the municipal waterworks after the city council approved the contract.⁴⁰ He “was given permission to use the city’s rock quarry for building material.” In addition, “he was required to begin construction within six months of the railroad’s arrival in San Antonio”⁴¹ As part of the construction,

a raceway was excavated and a one-story stone pump house was built.... The 40-foot-wide raceway began on the river’s west bank near the dam of the Upper Labor acequia, crossed the old tannery property, and re-entered the river at the pump house approximately 650 feet to the south. The raceway’s nine-foot fall provided power to drive turbines and pumps.⁴² (figure 10-6).

Municipal utility systems are typically capital intensive. Lacoste attempted to keep up with the ever-growing demand of the public for fresh, potable water, which involved laying additional piping throughout the city. Lacoste’s water system lacked adequate capital to keep up with demand, however. He borrowed heavily from the San Antonio National Bank, pledging the waterworks stock as collateral.

ALAMO PORTLAND AND ROMAN CEMENT COMPANY

In San Antonio’s early history, stone was the primary building material used for the construction of the missions, for paving streets, and for building residential and commercial properties. A newspaper article from 1922 in the *San Antonio Light* discussed the use of rock from the quarries north of downtown, including those in present-day Brackenridge Park. Lots 20 and 27 were used for years as a city rock quarry:

Rock for paving Presidio street, now Commerce, for paving Flores street, building river walls and ditches, the old Menger Hotel and city hospital, and it is believed the old city hall, was obtained from this quarry.

The city at one time leased the quarry and a lime kiln and cement works were established there. The property in question is now the beautiful Alpine Drive and Japanese sunken garden, which was built by Park Commissioner Ray Lambert.⁴³

There most likely are many other residential and commercial properties whose material origins are related to the rock quarries in Brackenridge.

Around the same time that San Antonio Water Works formed, in 1879, William Loyd, a visiting hunter from Britain, discovered limestone rock that he believed suitable for the production of cement. Loyd worked with George H. Kalteyer, a local druggist trained in chemistry in Germany, and W. R. Freeman, an engineer who was involved with the design of Lacoste’s water system.⁴⁴ Kalteyer determined that the limestone contained the proportion of lime and clay ideal for the production of Portland cement. The following year, a group of investors organized the “Alamo Portland and Roman Cement Company,” later shortened to

44 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 43.

the Alamo Cement Company.⁴⁵

In 1880, the quarries closed, and the Alamo Portland and Roman Cement Company took their place, operating in the same industrial landscape (**figure 10-7**). The company operated from 1880 until 1908, when it outgrew the site and took advantage of a more favorable shipping location further north, outside the city and adjacent to rail lines. The smokestack chimney and brick kilns that were used during the production of the Alamo Portland and Roman Cement Company would eventually be incorporated into design elements of Brackenridge Park. They still stand at the edge of the Japanese Tea Garden in Brackenridge Park (**figure 10-8**).

TRANSITION TO THE TURN OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By 1880, the quarries were no longer in operation, and the Civil War tannery and sawmill complex was also no longer in use and had been abandoned. Brackenridge had been determined to make retribution for his family's ownership of slaves, almost as soon as he settled in San Antonio after the Civil War.⁴⁶ His father had owned two slaves, and his brother John Thomas had owned half interest in one slave, according to the 1860 census.⁴⁷ In 1881, Brackenridge "consolidated his ownership of the upper five lots of the tannery tract...and chose to sell those lots that were immediately east and north of the quarry."⁴⁸ He then "supervised the demolition of a Confederate armory and the building of a Negro school from the stones."⁴⁹ The original Freedmen's School building was "funded with \$4,000 from the proceeds of the sale" of the tannery.⁵⁰

These changes signify a transition to the nineteenth century. By 1880, one-third of San Antonio's population was German, and "a greater percentage of Germans lived in towns and cities than was true of the Texas population at large."⁵¹ Residential real estate was also available in the area close to what would become Brackenridge Park. In 1883, the city advertised the following property for sale:

8 city lots 20x60 yards, 2nd ward, on Dallas street, near Maverick's Grove crossing. Improvement: 1 small frame house, 5 rooms, 1 stable for horse and buggy and forage, 1 conservatory, good well of water. The whole half block well fenced and planted out with shade trees; fruit in variety, and



FIGURE 10-8. The Portland Alamo Cement smokestack, circa 1920s. Portions of the Japanese Tea Garden structure are visible behind the smokestack. Source: Witte Museum Collection, Image #1986-117G(5)

45 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 43.

46 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 166.

47 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 166.

48 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 44.

49 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 166.

50 Raymond Kresla, "A History of Douglass Academy," Douglass Academy, 2008, accessed November 19, 2019, schools.saisd.net/upload/page/9922/docs/A_History_of_Douglass_Academy.pdf.

51 Terry G. Jordan, "Germans," *Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, June 15, 2010, accessed June 25, 2019, tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/png02.

bearing: roses and shrubs, and all can be irrigated.⁵² (figure 10-9)

As San Antonio Water Works grew, Lacoste struggled with inadequate capital to be able to keep up with growing demand as the population of the city expanded, both in numbers

and in geographic extent. Brackenridge, through the San Antonio National Bank, had loaned Lacoste money to keep the struggling enterprise afloat. By 1885, Brackenridge gained controlling interest in the company. Brackenridge reorganized the company as the Water Works Company and invested an additional \$500,000. With adequate funding in place, the Water Works Company rapidly expanded. Brackenridge lay additional pipes and constructed a second canal on his own land.

The same year that he gained control of the water company, Brackenridge took steps to further consolidate his holdings along the San Antonio River. His brother John transferred his interest in 1,400 acres to George. This included 1.5 miles of frontage on the river and land north of Fernridge in the Olmos Basin. He also continued to buy additional property to consolidate his holdings.⁵³ In 1885, Brackenridge purchased the de la Garza family tract consisting of fifteen acres, which was located in the area that would become the north end of the park. The property

included the dam and head gate of the Alamo acequia [Acequia Madre de Valero] where the ditch was diverted from the San Antonio River. To the south, the de la Garza property included a return or waste channel of the Alamo acequia that joined the river below the park.⁵⁴

George Brackenridge thus became the sole owner of 1,600 acres in the vicinity of the San Antonio River and its tributaries.

With increasing interests in land along the river, Brackenridge not only expanded the coverage of the water utility but continued to improve the water plant. Beginning

at the original pump house, Brackenridge constructed an earthen canal and a second pump house, located today on the Brackenridge Park Golf Course. "The earthen canal left the river at a bend below the original pump house and culminated at the new pump house to the south. In addition, the old river channel that once ran east of the building was rerouted to the

LIST OF PROPERTY

FOR SALE BY

Herbert, Waites & Co.,

No. 7 Acequia St.

CITY PROPERTY.

- 1 A handsome stone residence, containing 8 rooms, all modern improvements, situated corner of Brooklyn, Augusta and Dallas streets.
- 2 One house and lot on Avenue D, containing 12 rooms, fine water, suitable for boarding house.
- 3 House and lot, stone house, containing 6 rooms, corner South Flores and Arsenal street, west side.
- 4 Frame house with 4 rooms, South Presa street.
- 5 One house and lot on Jackson street, one block from street car track, house containing five rooms, plenty of good water on the premises.
- 6 A good stone house and lot on Acequia street, corner Quincy street, house contains 5 rooms, good water, stable and kitchen, all in good repair.
- 7 One house and lot, corner Ave. C and Ninth street. Frame building, 4 rooms with outbuilding used as a shop, 18x30.
- 8 A stone house, 6 rooms, dining room and kitchen, stable, good well of water; lot 55 varas front by 100 varas deep; finely situated; shade trees.
- 9 20 acres of land, situated near head of river, never-failing spring of water, plenty of timber; well adapted to a heneery. Offered at a bargain.
- 10 6 city lots 20x60 varas, 2nd ward, on Dallas street, near Maverick's Grove crossing. Improvements: 1 small frame house, 5 rooms, 1 stable for horse and buggy and forage, 1 conservatory, good well of water. The whole half block well fenced and planted out with shade trees; fruit in variety, and bearing; roses and shrubs, and all can be irrigated.

LANDS.

1000 acres land in Grimes county, four

DIAMONDS, AND WATCHES

FIGURE 10-9. 1883 advertisement in *The San Antonio Light*, listing properties for sale near Brackenridge Park. Source: Newspapers.com, newspapers.com/image/36853181/#

52 "List of Property for Sale by Herbert, Waites & Co., No. 7 Acequia St." January 30, 1883, 3, *The San Antonio Light* at Newspapers.com, accessed November 19, 2019, newspapers.com/image/36853181/#.

53 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 42.

54 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 36.



FIGURE 10–10. Circa 1947 photo of the large Victorian mansion (left) George Brackenridge constructed immediately adjacent to the Old Sweet Homestead (right) in 1887. Brackenridge lived there with his mother and sister. Source: University of Texas at San Antonio, Libraries Special Collections, *San Antonio Light* Photograph Collection, MS 359

west,” leaving behind a dry channel that still remains.⁵⁵ The next year, he continued to make improvements, constructing a “Mill Race or Second Waterworks Canal” in 1886.⁵⁶

Also in 1886, Brackenridge constructed a large Victorian mansion directly adjacent to the Sweet Homestead. He imported rare materials from Europe and South America for its construction, built a large library to house his growing book collection, and created spaces adequate for large-scale entertaining (**figure 10-10**). Brackenridge was devoted to his mother and sister, and the three of them lived together most of their lives. Isabella Helena McCulla Brackenridge died in 1886 at the age of seventy-five, before the new Victorian mansion was complete. George and his sister Eleanor moved into the house, where they remained for the next decade before moving to a penthouse suite atop one of his banking enterprises.

Newspaper articles from the period between 1885 and 1890 contain references to “Brackenridge Park.” It would not be until 1899 that the park was formally established by the donation of the original section of land, but the local citizens must have considered the area in the vicinity of the house a park. A September 27, 1890, notice in the local German newspaper was signed by “Geo. W. Brackenridge.” The notice refers to “Brackenridge Park” and mentions the “Pumphouse.”

During the 1880s, there were weather extremes in San Antonio, with periodic droughts and

⁵⁵ Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 42.

⁵⁶ Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 34.



FIGURE 10–11. Circa 1880s, a trio of visitors standing on a makeshift crossing of the San Antonio River near the headwaters. The gentleman, believed to be George Brackenridge, is handing a filled glass to the lady facing him. Two men are perched in a tree on the far left. The photo illustrates human interaction with the river, a precursor to the low-water crossings built in the following century. Source: University of Texas at San Antonio, General Photograph Collection, Image # 088-0326

flooding throughout the decade. Some years, the river dried up completely. The acequias, which had been operable for over a hundred years, were no longer in use as the San Antonio Water Works Company took their place. Brackenridge found that in order to provide adequate supplies of water for his customers, he would have to drill wells and install pumping stations. Wells and pumping further reduced the flow of water from the various local springs.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Brackenridge noted that the San Antonio River was often dry and did not resemble the river that he had lived along for more than forty years. In 1897, Brackenridge sold his home at Fernridge and the land at the head of the river, including the headwaters, to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.⁵⁷ Sale of this land to the Sisters would be instrumental in separating the upper course of the river, which would flow through the future Brackenridge Park, from its impressive headwater spring complex.

Before the turn of the nineteenth century, the landscape had transformed. No longer

⁵⁷ Bennett, "Head-of-the-River."

serving agricultural needs, the Acequia Madre de Valero and the Upper Labor Acequia had become obsolete—they were both unhealthy and incapable of meeting the water needs of the population. In their stead stood remnants of a building industry reflecting major urban growth—limestone quarry walls, ruins of the Civil War tannery and sawmill, and the newer marks of municipal water management, including pump houses and a raceway and other associated ditches. At the same time, the general public was already using Brackenridge’s land as a park in the latter half of the nineteenth century (**figure 10-11**). For instance, in 1885, the “First Presbyterian church and Sunday-school held a very fine picnic at the McLane place, north of Brackenridge park, last Saturday.”⁵⁸

Brackenridge, perhaps in a reflective state and certainly in a philanthropic place in his life, must have recognized both the sweeping changes to this landscape the general public’s desire to use the land for passive recreation, and the site’s intrinsic beauty. Artesian wells drilled by his own water works were depleting the river. He wrote to a friend in the late 1890s, “I have seen this bold, bubbling, laughing river dwindle and fade away... This river is my child and it is dying...”⁵⁹ It was during this time that he “directed his attention to the preservation of the remainder of his riverlands in their natural state,” and as a result, the city’s first large municipal park would soon be formally created.

58 “Picnics,” May 18, 1885, 1, *The San Antonio Light* at Newspapers.com, accessed November 20, 2019, [newspapers.com/image/221348301/](https://www.newspapers.com/image/221348301/).

59 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 141.

CHAPTER 11. SAN ANTONIO'S MUNICIPAL PARK, 1899–1949

At the dawn of the new century, George Brackenridge made his initial donation of property to the city of San Antonio—199 acres and “the bulk of his riverland.”¹ The property was part of the real estate holdings he had amassed over the previous forty years through personal investment, banking, and waterworks ventures. With his donation, Brackenridge included the stipulation that the land, located along the east side of the San Antonio River, “could never be used except as a park.”² After San Pedro Springs Park, it would be San Antonio’s second public park, and the city’s largest.

Brackenridge Park is among a cohort of American municipal parks in major cities that arose in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. These parks—New Orleans’s City Park (1850–1861), Chicago’s Lincoln Park (1865), San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park (1870), Dallas’s Fair Park (1880), and Houston’s Hermann Park (1914), to name a few—trace their earliest influences to New York’s Central Park (1856) and the City Beautiful movement, which took root in America with the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition in Chicago and continued to have an influence through the 1920s.

Brackenridge Park was established in December 1899, officially opened to the public in 1901, and developed extensively between 1914 and 1949. All of the municipal “Pleasure Ground” parks that emerged between 1850 to 1899 were primarily designed using picturesque principles—utilizing the democratic informality of winding roads and walks and “an overall composition of smoothness, harmony, serenity, and order, with an occasional reminder of the awesome grandeur of a mountain, a deep crevasse, long waterfall, or steep crag.”³ In the case of Brackenridge Park, the San Antonio River would take primacy. The park landscape, with its form and boundaries so clearly derived organically according to the form of the river and the Upper Labor Acequia west of the river, would once again be transformed (**figure 11-1**). What had become a setting for largely utilitarian industrial purposes imposed on the

1 Marilyn MacAdams Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), 161.

2 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 161.

3 Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 24.

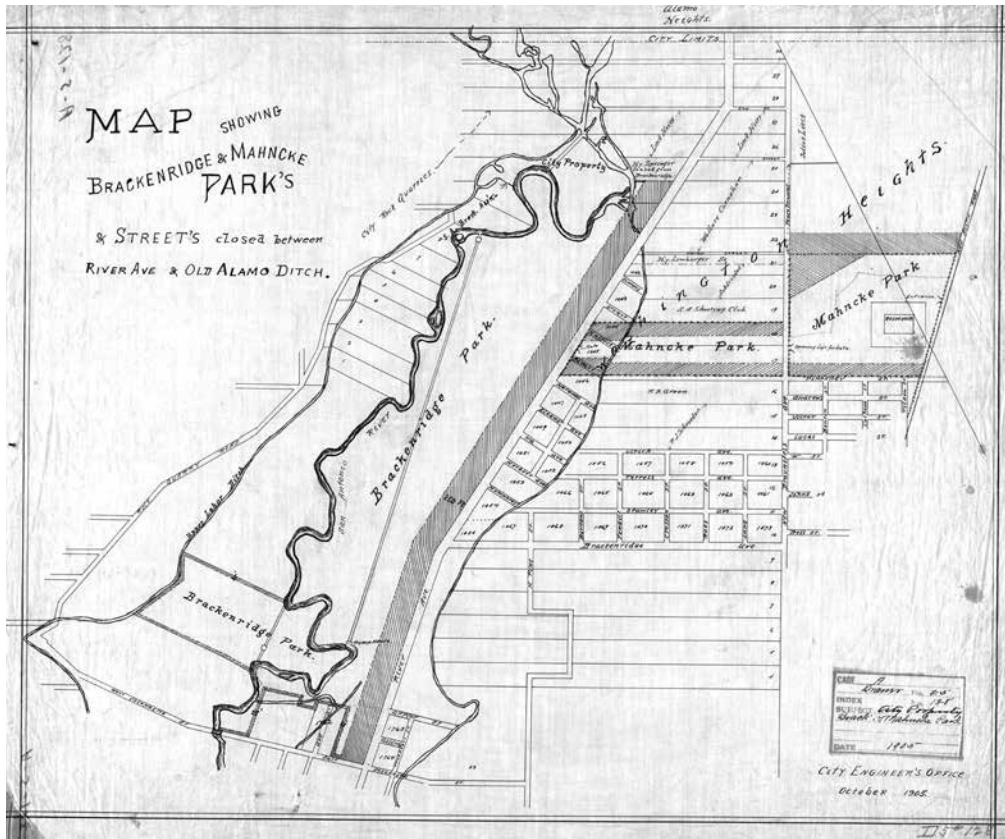


FIGURE 11-1. This 1905 map shows the overall layout of both Brackenridge Park and Mahncke Park to the east. Mahncke Park's limits encompassed the old reservoir that still served as the source of the city's drinking water. Source: San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department

canvas of a riparian setting would become a recreational setting impacted by the larger movements and trends in American park design but expressed through local materials, traditions, and cultural influences.

A DRIVING WOODLAND PARK: THE BRACKENRIDGE VISION, 1899 CE – 1914 CE

LUDWIG MAHNCKE LAYS OUT THE ROADS

As the city of San Antonio grew, pressure on the underlying aquifer had reduced the flow of the artesian springs throughout the city, most notably of the spring at the head of the river. Brackenridge bemoaned the river's declining health. At this stage in his life, he had started the process of divesting himself of property and money and sought to leverage his assets for the public good.

One of Brackenridge's best friends and business associates was the businessman Ludwig Mahncke. The two men had worked closely together on several issues and opportunities within San Antonio. Mahncke was involved in city government in addition to having business connections. After Brackenridge's donation was in place, Mahncke became acting superintendent of parks, and the first major change was enacted on the new park. "Under Brackenridge's watchful eye," a defining system of carriageways was conceived of, distinguishing Brackenridge as a driving park to be experienced from carriage or automobile.



FIGURE 11-2. This carriage way in Brackenridge Park demonstrates the informal and organic way that circulation was planned in the park. Infrastructure such as curbs and paving is limited or nonexistent. Source: Witte Museum Collection

Brackenridge's vision may have been influenced by Central Park, which popularized the concept of American parkways in the first half of the century. As a response to the dual ideal of the park surrounded by suburbs, Olmsted had envisioned parks and parkways as the thread that would stitch together residential developments, thereby inserting landscape ribbons and nodes to buffer housing density. Much of the Central Park budget was reserved for the circulation strategy of separating vehicular routes with pedestrian and equestrian paths. Bridges, tunnels, and underpasses eliminated crossings so traffic could flow unimpeded. The result was a "refined system of roads and paths, as well as places to congregate and promenade, all were combined in a single work of landscape art: the public park."⁴ By making movement through the park as effortless and carefree as possible, "the designers allowed for thousands of individual visitors to appreciate landscape scenery personally."⁵

In Brackenridge Park, Mahncke "laid out a drive that skirted the river and for which Brackenridge furnished an entrance and exit over his fringe. Brackenridge then built a sturdy fence all the way around the park except at the two entrances."⁶ From its inception, Brackenridge Park was a regional expression—distinctly San Antonian—of a larger park design movement. By late February 1901, the initial layout of the park's drives and walkways was complete. In a 1901 article titled "San Antonio's Lovely Breathing Spots," a writer for the *El Paso Herald* described the character of the park at the time of its opening:

Brackenridge Park, just inside the north edge of the city limits...is also one of the most beautiful natural parks to be found anywhere. It is traversed by a winding river and numerous ditches and with nice macadam driveways under the majestic oak, stately elm or everlasting pecan, it is a recreation spot fit for the Gods. Its beauty is beyond description and the greatest effort of the writer would but feebly portray its wonders. It has just been opened to the public."⁷

The following year, journalist and newspaper owner James Pearson Newcomb wrote about the park and the way its roads followed the natural topography of the land. Newcomb also

4 Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 18.

5 Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 22.

6 Sibley, George W. Brackenridge, *Maverick Philanthropist*, 162.

7 "San Antonio's Lovely Breathing Spots," *El Paso Herald*, February 25, 1901, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/77719234/.

commented on the surprising number of landscape experiences experienced by a visitor. He described Brackenridge as containing “primeval forest land”⁸ and wrote,

The drive wound “with the sinuosity of the river channel, curving and dipping with the natural lay of the land, care being taken not to disturb the throne of a single monarch of the forest.... What splendid old trees, with their crowns high in the sunshine and their trunks in the shade. At every turn there is a delightful surprise; now you are descending seemingly into a darker, more secluded portion of the forest, to rise again into an open.”⁹
(figure 11-2)

In addition to the road along the San Antonio River and through the woodland area of the park, Alpine Drive provided yet another experience. It further demonstrates the regionally specific manner in which the system of roads was implemented in Brackenridge as compared to those roads laid out for Central Park. “Lambert proposed a ‘winding driveway for motor cars and other vehicles on the cliff of the rock quarry.’”¹⁰

It may have taken several years for the entire system of circuitous roads to be implemented (figure 11-3). This is evident in a June 30, 1905, *San Antonio Express* article that commented on Brackenridge’s vision for a boulevard system that would “contain 800 acres and provide fifty miles of drives”¹¹ running through the park and surrounding it.

Brackenridge’s aptitude for foreseeing the future and capitalizing on opportunities may have been another part of his motive for envisioning a system of park roads and boulevards in the city. The first recorded horseless carriage in San Antonio was an electric vehicle used by the Staake Brothers Livery Service in 1899. The first gasoline vehicle arrived in 1901.¹² Mount Rainier National Park officially allowed automobile tourism beginning in 1907,¹³ and in 1908, Henry Ford introduced the Model-T to the country. “The San Antonio City Council introduced its first set of written road rules in March 1910, at more or less the same time the police department acquired its first automobiles and motorbikes.”¹⁴ Whatever the motivation was, the system of roads created by Brackenridge and Mahncke continues to shape the park today. Along with its roads, the park would come to be defined by its impressive tree canopy.

A PASTORAL PLEASURE GROUND SURROUNDED BY THE BUSTLE OF STREETCARS

Brackenridge Park quickly began adopting activities and amenities typical of picturesque Pleasure Grounds that had become popular in the United States after the emergence of Central Park. The San Antonio park was behind the national trend, but it was impacted

8 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 162.

9 Sibley, *George W. Brackenridge, Maverick Philanthropist*, 162.

10 Maria Watson Pfeiffer and Steven A. Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” National Register of Historic Places, Texas Historical Commission, San Antonio, TX, June 15, 2011, 53.

11 “...and Boulevard...may be given San Antonio,” *San Antonio Express*, June 30, 1905, PDF documentation from Maria Pfeiffer collection.

12 Hugh Hemphill, “Automobiles in San Antonio, 1899-1916,” Texas Transportation Museum, accessed May 22, 2019, txtransportationmuseum.org/history-car.php.

13 Donna R. Braden, “Automobiles Enter the National Parks,” Past Forward: Activating the Henry Ford Archive of Innovation, The Henry Ford Center, August 12, 2016, accessed May 22, 2019, thehenryford.org/explore/blog/automobiles-enter-the-national-parks.

14 Hemphill, “Automobiles in San Antonio.”

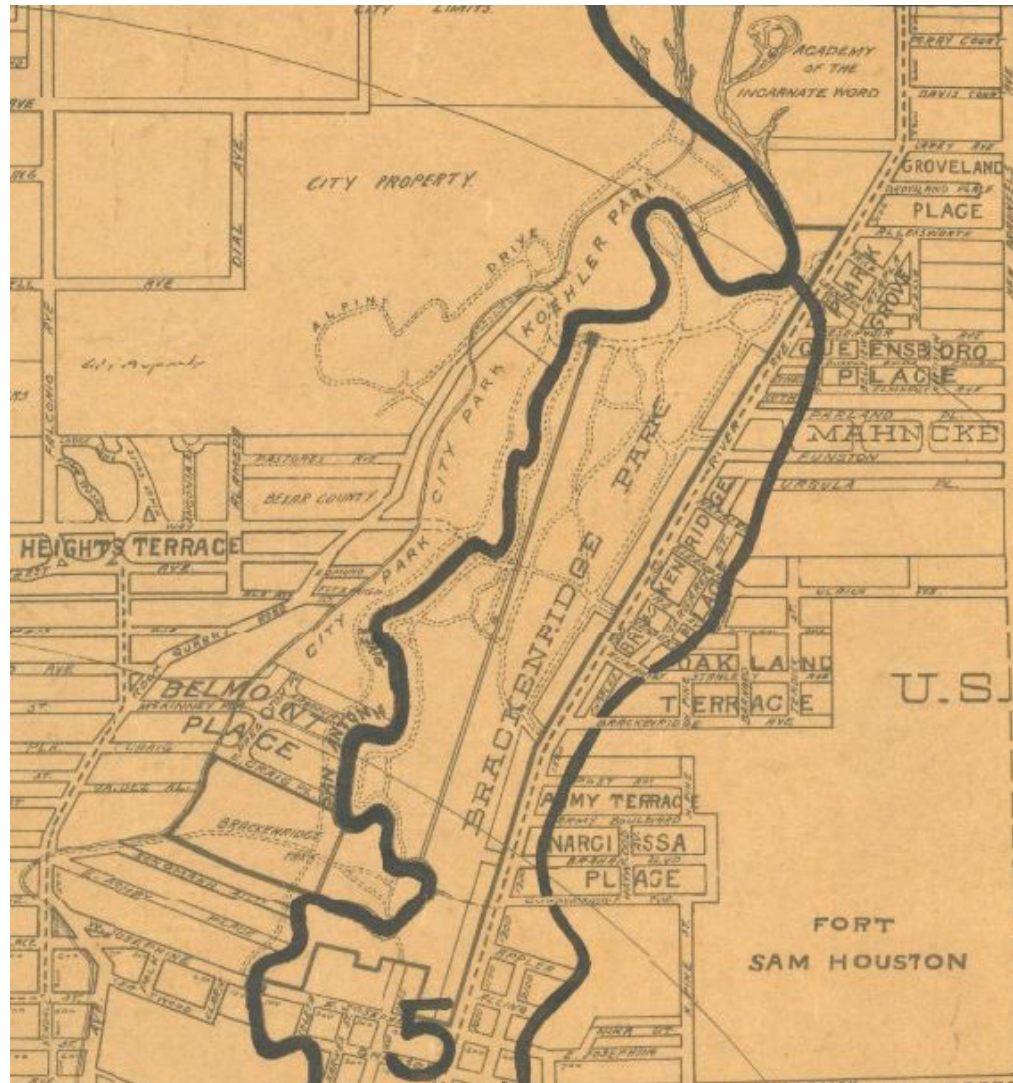


FIGURE 11-3. 1921 "Ward Map of San Antonio Including Suburbs Both North and South." This map is one of the most illustrative records of the carriage-way system within Brackenridge Park as it existed in 1921. Source: San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department

nonetheless. Meanwhile, areas surrounding the park developed more urbanized transportation infrastructure, which would eventually attract suburban development.

As soon as Brackenridge Park became accessible to visitors, public events were planned. In April 1901, a local businessman, Colonel E. H. Jenkins, hired a military band to perform in various places around San Antonio. One location mentioned was "Muth's garden," where they played "every Thursday night beginning April 11 and at one of the various parks every Sunday afternoon. The first [concert] was given yesterday in San Pedro Springs park. Brackenridge park will come next."¹⁵ Jenkins was the head of the San Antonio Traction Company, which constructed and maintained the streetcar lines in the city of San Antonio. Throughout the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, streetcars first drawn by mules and later powered by electricity were opening expanded routes throughout downtown and to the growing suburbs in the city.

15 "The San Antonio Street Railway Will Provide Free Recreation for the People," *El Paso Herald*, April 1, 1901, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/77727489/.



FIGURE 11-4. Image of a streetcar on River Avenue (today Broadway), near Brackenridge Park. Note the pastoral character that the curved roads and trees intermingling with newer urban development, represented by the streetcar. Source: Texas Transportation Museum

By 1905, the streetcar lines extended along what was then called River Avenue (and today is called Broadway Street) on the eastern edge of Brackenridge Park (**figure 11-4**). In 1905, an article in the *San Antonio Gazette* profiled the extent of the streetcar lines that were being constructed throughout the city. “The River avenue line reaches a magnificent rural hotel and passes alongside Brackenridge park, which contains two hundred acres of nature and her most beautiful products trained in systematic order by the hand of man.”¹⁶ The River Avenue line connected Brackenridge Park to Maverick Park, Convent of the Incarnate Word, Alamo Heights, the head of the river, and, according to wild speculation at the time, Davy Crockett’s home.

The article also includes references to growing herds of buffalo, elk, and deer at the park. The animals were “pastured along River Avenue near today’s Lions Field Clubhouse”¹⁷ (**figure 11-5**). In addition to building herds through natural increase, Mahncke was also bringing in buffalo and elk from other locations. In October 1902, “a number of buffaloes and Elks from the Goodnight ranch in the Panhandle [were] received at San Antonio for the Brackenridge park.”¹⁸

Throughout most of its early history, there were fishing opportunities at San Pedro Park. Following suit, the city promoted fishing at the newer Brackenridge Park.¹⁹ In May 1903,

16 “San Antonio Gas & Electric Company and San Antonio Traction Company,” *San Antonio Gazette*, August 12, 1905, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/38698596/.

17 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 49.

18 “Texas Notes,” *The Brownsville Herald*, Oct 23, 1902, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/70967402/.

19 “Black Bass Are Received,” *Austin American-Statesman*, May 21 1903, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/359469237/.



FIGURE 11-5. A small group of Elk browse and forage in one of the open areas of the park, circa 1910. Source: Witte Museum Collection

park managers stocked the San Antonio River with eleven thousand black bass. “Twelve thousand young black bass were received here today from the government hatchery at San Marcos. Eleven thousand will be placed in the San Antonio river at Brackenridge park and 1,000 will be placed in the West End lake.” At the same time, the *Austin-American Statesman* notes that the first elk ever born in San Antonio had arrived at Brackenridge Park.²⁰

In 1906, George Brackenridge sold the San Antonio Water Works company to a St. Louis, Missouri, capitalist named George J. Kobusch. Kobusch and his investors renamed the company the San Antonio Water Supply Company. They also blocked access to the park across the strip of land they owned on the east edge of the park.²¹ The action by the new waterworks owners exacerbated the existing schism between Brackenridge and Bryan Callaghan, which dated to Callaghan’s previous mayoral terms. Following his reelection, Mayor Callaghan was so outraged at Brackenridge that he renamed the park “Water Works Park” to exclude Brackenridge’s name. But Mayor Callaghan died in 1912, and the following year, the city council restored the name Brackenridge Park in recognition of the central contribution that Brackenridge had made to the city of San Antonio, not just in the park but also in the city’s education and health communities.

Ownership of the waterworks had now passed to absentee owners, but the developments at Brackenridge Park continued, albeit more slowly. The growing collection of animals at the park now encompassed “six buffalo, nineteen elk, forty-three deer, four goats, one sheep, four swans, three geese, forty-nine peafowls, thirteen white turkeys, twelve bronze turkeys,

20 “An Elk Born in San Antonio,” *Austin American-Statesman*, May 21, 1903, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/359469237/.

21 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 50.

two silver pheasants, two Mexican pheasants, and three guineas.”²² From the beginning Ludwig Mahncke had nurtured the existing collection and obtained more fowl and farm animals. But a dispute between Mahncke and Mayor Callaghan over finances resulted in Mahncke’s resignation in January 1906. Two months later, he died of pneumonia.

As the original park superintendent and a friend of Brackenridge, Mahncke had been instrumental in developing the park during its early years. He installed the circulation system in the park, and he acquired animal collections—some exotic to San Antonio. Mahncke served as an alderman from 1897 to 1906, so had a voice in city government that he used to promote parks development.²³ In the interim, the burgeoning suburban enclaves to the north of downtown, in an area of the city that was located on higher ground and less likely to flood, continued to expand in area and density.

SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT SURROUNDING BRACKENRIDGE PARK

In October 1906, a few months after Mahncke’s death, Henry Steingruber was named parks commissioner for the city of San Antonio. Steingruber was a horticulturist by training. The years of his tenure were characterized by grounds improvements and maintenance but did not include significant changes to the overall park, its layout, or its elements. A boom in development occurred in the areas surrounding Brackenridge Park, however, particularly to the north and east. Developers purchased tracts of land and advertised the new and expanding neighborhoods and their association with Brackenridge Park.

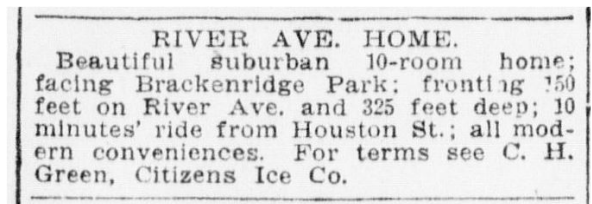


FIGURE 11-6. “River Ave. Home” facing Brackenridge Park for sale, October 9, 1906. Source: *The Daily Express* at *The Portal to Texas History*, University of North Texas Libraries

The residential lots close to the park were highlighted in sales promotions. The principle whereby property is more valuable because it is located close to a park, museum, or other amenities is called the proximate principle.

On October 9, 1906, Mr. C. H. Green of the Citizens Ice Company advertised a house for sale on River Avenue facing the park (**figure 11-6**). The ad read, “Beautiful suburban 10-room home; facing Brackenridge Park; fronting 150 feet on River Ave. and 325 feet deep.”²⁴ The lot must have been the site of a substantial home, as 150 by 325 feet translates to 1.12 acres.

Also in October 1906, the Halliday Sweet Company advertised lots for sale in the neighborhood of Park Grove on River Avenue. “Everything is lovely and looking better from day to day in our beautiful addition covered with grand and stately trees, fronting magnificent Brackenridge park and only two blocks from Mahncke park on River avenue.”²⁵

22 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 49.

23 David P. Green, *Place Names of San Antonio: Plus Bexar and Surrounding Counties*, 3rd ed. (San Antonio: Maverick Books, 2011), 80.

24 “River Ave. Home,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, October 9, 1906, accessed July 26, 2014, texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht441064/m1/8/zoom/?q=riveravehome&resolution=1.5&lat=4751&lon=1502.75.

25 “Halliday = Sweet Co., a Mountain Home,” *San Antonio Gazette*, October 20 1906, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/38699654/.

San Antonio Gazette. MAY 15, 1907

MONEY TALKS

\$156,950 Sales of building sites up to date of the Terrace. This tells what people think of Laurel Heights Terrace

Conceded by all who see it the most beautiful residence property in all San Antonio :-: :-:

ITS ADVANTAGES

Splendid location. An extension on the East of Laurel Heights, magnificent view of entire city.

Solid rock foundations, no twisted or settling walls.

Artesian water in front of every lot.

Four parks in the Terrace. Beautiful Brackenridge park adjoins Terrace on the East.

High class improvements. Building restrictions. No shades. No stores or saloons. No unsightly boarding houses. Concrete sidewalks.

Direct and rapid street car service, car line under construction. Macadam streets.

Near Public and Private Schools. No mud, no dust, pure air and a glorious view and refined neighbors.

As an investment it is sure and certain. For homes there is nothing to equal it in the city.

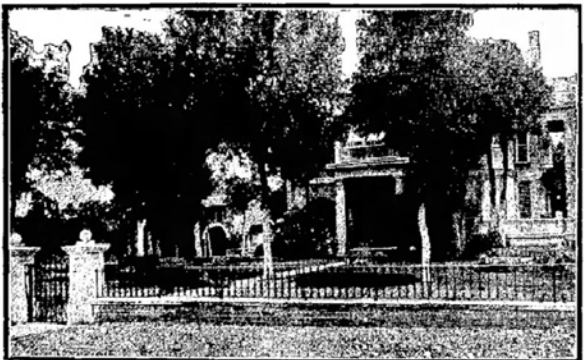
\$156,950 shows what the people think of the property. Let us take you not to see the Terrace.

A few hundred dollars invested here may mean a competency for old age.

Adams-Kirkpatrick Company
Hicks Building. San Antonio, Texas.

FIGURE 11-7. The Adams-Kirkpatrick Company advertised lots for sale in Laurel Heights, May 15, 1907. Realtors noted: "Four parks in the Terrace. Beautiful Brackenridge park adjoins Terrace on the East." Source: *San Antonio Gazette*, Newspapers.com

Most Complete Home in San Antonio



Beautiful Suburban Residence in the Neighborhood of the Country Club, the Rendezvous of Fashionable Society.

This splendid property—recognized as one of the finest homes in the South—is offered for sale at a great sacrifice to settle an estate. There are sixteen rooms exclusive of halls, bath rooms, storerooms, etc., with all the comforts and conveniences afforded by modern construction and the most perfect that money could buy, being equipped with light, heat, water, call bell service, etc. There is a large brick stable, a garage, ample servants' quarters, with two and one-half acres of ground shaded with a forest of native oak and pecan trees. The car line passes immediately in the rear of the property—and splendid macadam driveways leading into the city and country. The Country Club and Brackenridge Park are located adjacent to Alamo Heights, making this the choice residence part of San Antonio.

The beautiful Alamo Heights suburb is now undergoing great improvement and rapid development and is experiencing a steady increase in values. It is a most favorable time to acquire property in this picturesque suburb. For an ideal Southern home—for the winter home of a wealthy Northern man or for a high-grade select family hotel—no more charming site or more valuable property is to be found in the State.

FOR PRICES, TERMS AND ILLUSTRATED BOOKLET, WRITE
R. H. RUSSELL & CO., 315 Navarro St., San Antonio, Tex.

FIGURE 11-8. R. H. Russell & Co. advertises a suburban residence in the neighborhood of the Country Club, Feb. 29, 1908. The advertisement mentions proximity to Brackenridge Park as an amenity associated with the home. Source: *The Daily Express at the Portal to Texas History*, University of North Texas Libraries

The Adams Kirkpatrick Company advertised lots for sale in the Laurel Heights portion of the Terrace (figure 11-7). Realtors noted that there were "four parks in the Terrace. Beautiful Brackenridge park adjoins Terrace on the East."²⁶

In February 1908, R. H. Russell & Company advertised the "Most Complete Home in San Antonio," located in the Alamo Heights neighborhood (figure 11-8). The advertisement notes that the lot is

two and one-half acres of ground shaded with a forest of native oak and pecan trees. The car line passes immediately in the rear of the property—and splendid macadam driveways leading into the city and country. The Country Club and Brackenridge Park are located adjacent to Alamo Heights, making this the choice residence part of San Antonio.²⁷

Advertisements of this nature that specifically mention Brackenridge Park were found in local newspapers throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century. Neighborhoods such as Montclair, Army Terrace, Brackenridge Place, and many others were known for higher elevations and relative safety from flood events and for access to the kinds of amenities desired by the growing middle class. Access to good roads, public transportation, clean water, and park proximity were all touted as reasons to buy in these neighborhoods.

SLOW PROGRESS IN THE PARK, 1906 CE – 1915 CE

With Mahncke's death, the park entered a period of stasis, in which regular maintenance occurred but few significant elements were added to the park. In 1907, capital improvements and maintenance work were completed in several parks in San Antonio. The *San Antonio Gazette* ran a story stating, "The roadways and paths in San Pedro park were re-graveled, the lake cleaned, fences repaired, new turning gates and floating roosts constructed, ditches dug for drainage and this in addition to the routine work of park maintenance"²⁸ (figure 11-9).

26 "Adams = Kirkpatrick Company," *San Antonio Gazette*, May 15 1907, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/38700180/?terms=san+antonio+gazette.

27 "Most Complete Home in San Antonio," *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 29, 1908, accessed July 26, 2014, texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht442357/m1/8/?q=most%20complete%20home.

28 "More City Finance," *San Antonio Gazette*, April 20 1907, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/38699956/.



FIGURE 11-9. A photo shows the linear pool area at San Pedro Springs with a large number of visitors, both in the water and standing along the paved skirting. Source: Gregg Eckhardt, edwardsaquifer.net.

The fact that the majority of maintenance in Brackenridge Park involved clearing underbrush, maintaining the roads, and caring for the herds of animals underscores its continued pastoral setting. The same article in the *San Antonio Gazette* states that “cleaning underbrush and maintaining the several miles of driveway in Brackenridge park has been the principal work there, in addition to caring for the herds of animals and the flocks of fowls.”²⁹

A 1909 tour book of San Antonio states,

There is no one in San Antonio who does not speak with pride of Brackenridge Park, which may be reached by River Avenue Car, but as it contains three hundred and twenty-five acres, and more than twenty miles of winding roads, it is well for the visitor to take a cab or automobile. This park is one of the most perfect specimens of true sylvan beauty that the world affords.

The river winds and twists its sinuous way through the entire length of the park, affording many delightful rambles and pictures bits for “snap shots.” A stroll down Lover’s Lane, will make one feel that he has truly reached the Lotus land. Large live oaks, laden with Spanish moss, form graceful arches over the broad drive ways. Herds of deer, elk and buffalo, together with many herds and beautiful birds, already form the beginning of an interesting Zoo. (figure 11-10)

²⁹ “More City Finance.”

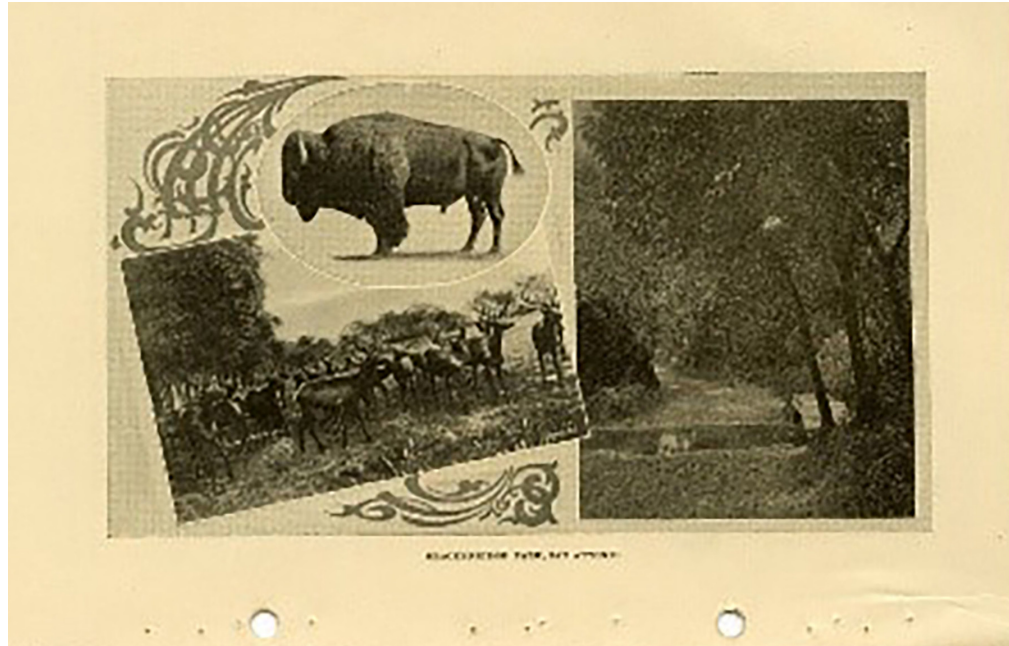


FIGURE 11–10. Bison, large numbers of elk, and a carriage way or bridle path are shown in this tourist brochure extolling the virtues of various San Antonio sites. Source: University of Texas at San Antonio, Digital Collection

DECLINE OF INDUSTRIAL USES, PARK ACCESS, AND INCREASED THREATS TO THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER

As the park landscape established itself firmly within ten years of its founding, the industrial activity occurring along the San Antonio River continued to decline. The Alamo Cement Company operated nearby until 1908. In need of better access to railroad lines, it outgrew its quarry location in current-day Brackenridge Park. The company moved to a three-hundred-acre site north of the city and began to transition to the new location over the next few years until finally abandoning the original site. That same year, “a survey revealed that as many as fifty-two ‘squatters’ were living in houses in the quarry area. Most were likely former quarry employees.”³⁰

At the same time, the city turned its attention to the park’s visibility and the community’s access to the site. An effort to provide defined entries took place over much of 1908. The aldermen and city council were concerned about a walled strip of land owned by the waterworks and its negative impact on public access to the park. That February, the city council passed an ordinance enabling the city to take by condemnation six passageways, allowing additional and quicker points of entry into the park; these included “five from River Avenue and one from Avenue A or Josephine Street.”³¹ In April of that year, the city made an offer to purchase the walled area owned by the San Antonio Water Supply Company. A *San Antonio Gazette* article noted that “at present the city owns only the interior” of the park and that “Mayor Callaghan has taken the stand that the city should own the entrances to the park as otherwise the park is in reality private property.”³² By July, the council had approved an

30 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 59.

31 “Pass Ordinance Condemning Land for Entrances: More Passageways Are Provided for Brackenridge Park-- Funeral Ordinance Passed,” *San Antonio Express*, February 4, 1908, accessed June 1, 2018, newspapers.com/image/30921797/.

32 “City Makes An Offer to Purchase Entrance to Brackenridge Park,” February 4, 1908, *San Antonio Gazette*, accessed June 1, 2018, newspapers.com/image/39229869/.

expenditure of \$6,700 to purchase 6.83 acres of this same land for the park, and “entrances were opened along the park’s eastern edge on River Avenue (Broadway) and to the south on Avenue A and Schomann Street.”³³

Southwest of Brackenridge Park, declining visitorship to San Pedro Park’s small, private zoological garden forced the zoo’s closure in 1911. Efforts to relocate animals and exhibits to Brackenridge Park would soon move forward with a new zoo making its home within the setting of one of the abandoned quarry sites.³⁴

As the park developed and the city grew, natural resources connected with the aquifer continued to be negatively affected. A drought in 1910 impacted the amount of water being carried through the Edwards Aquifer, and the “seemingly magical artesian wells” began to dwindle in capacity. Char Miller’s environmental history of San Antonio, *On the Border*, details the continuing impacts of the 1910-1911 drought:

It was reported that the river was reduced to only a faint trickle and was inadequate for conveying even the city’s waste. The headland springs were no longer contributing water to the river. The little water that flowed was the by-product of several breweries and industries along its banks. To combat this, the city installed several pumps over abandoned artesian wells north of downtown. The pumps extracted water from the aquifer and poured it directly into the river channel where it would flow toward the city.^{35, 36} **(figure 11-11)**

In his book *Riverwalk*, historian and San Antonio native Lewis Fisher profiles not only the downtown portion of the river and its transformation but also the relationship between the upper course of the river and its formative springs in the history of the city. The drought of 1910 continued into the next year. Fisher notes that “deep cracks opened in its dried mud.”³⁷ A citizens committee was formed and went before Mayor Callaghan in an attempt to spur the city into action. The mayor agreed with the committee and authorized the “installation of a fifty-horsepower pump at an abandoned artesian well by the river at the northern end of Brackenridge Park.”³⁸ Pumping began, and the amount of water pumped and the number of hours that the pump ran each day both quickly accelerated. Finally, the river began to flow again, and city residents visited the river to see the lush new growth and the return of fish.³⁹

In the summer of 1912, the long-serving Mayor Callaghan died suddenly, and the twenty-five-year political career and associated political machine that he controlled came to an end. Augustus H. Jones, a reform candidate familiar with ranching, banking, and the City Beautiful movement, was elected mayor.⁴⁰ Looking around the country, Mayor Jones sought to elevate San Antonio’s status to the level of cities such as Boston, Chicago, Denver, and

33 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 50.

34 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 51.

35 David Malda, “Landscape Narratives and the San Antonio River,” in *River Cities: City Rivers*, ed. Thaisa Way (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018), 251-52.

36 A comprehensive citywide sewage system was installed in 1893, many years after municipal water was available to San Antonio citizens. Nevertheless, the acequias continued to be used as depositories for various forms of refuse. An alderman in 1880 noted that the river and local creeks were “sewers provided by nature.” Char Miller, *On the Border: An Environmental History of San Antonio* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2005), 5.

37 Lewis F. Fisher, *River Walk: The Epic Story of San Antonio’s River* (San Antonio: Maverick Books, 2007), 28. Fisher, *River Walk*, 29.

38 Fisher, *River Walk*, 29.

39 Fisher, *River Walk*, 29.

40 Fisher, *River Walk*, 30.

Cleveland. Jones noted that “several dozen other cities already had formal plans.”⁴¹ In order to move San Antonio forward, the mayor created a City Plan Committee and appointed as its vice chairman architect Atlee B. Ayres of Ayres & Ayres.⁴² Ayres swung into action and “made river beautification his top priority along with upgrading facilities and rescuing dying trees in Brackenridge and San Pedro parks.”⁴³ Meanwhile the continuing drought was

taking its toll on the city’s tree canopy. With the induction of a new mayor and the formation of committees to study and improve the entire river, a new era of progress arrived in San Antonio.

The last quarter of 1913 began when the most serious flood in over ten years hit San Antonio. On October 1st, “a record twenty-four-hour rainfall of 7.08 inches began that sent waters of the San Antonio River and San Pedro and Alazan creeks rising two to four feet an hour.”⁴⁴ In December, a smaller flood struck the city and caused more damage. Two major floods in three months were of great concern to San Antonio residents. A committee studied the area north of the head of the river in the Olmos Basin, where previous recommendations dating as far back as 1845 had been made to manage the area to address flooding.⁴⁵ The 1913 study resulted in a recommendation that a dam be constructed on the south side of the Olmos Basin where it flows into the San Antonio River just north of Brackenridge Park. Interest in construction of the dam at Olmos ultimately waned, however, just as other solutions for the site had in the past. The project would finally move forward in the next decade, following yet another devastating flood.

CITY BEAUTIFUL MAKES ITS WAY TO BRACKENRIDGE PARK, 1915 CE – 1929 CE

Around the turn of the century, the City Beautiful movement emerged from the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair.⁴⁶ The exposition was intended to introduce America to “the products of



FIGURE 11–11. A photo captures part of the system of wells and pumps that was drilled in 1891. During a drought in 1910, it is possible that the city reopened these wells to restore flow to the river. Source: Charles R. Porter, Jr. *Spanish Water, Anglo Water*.

41 Fisher, *River Walk*, 30.

42 Fisher, *River Walk*, 30.

43 Fisher, *River Walk*, 30.

44 Fisher, *River Walk*, 34.

45 Lewis F. Fisher, *American Venice: The Epic Story of San Antonio's River* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2015), 18.

46 “The City Beautiful Movement,” New York Preservation Archive Project, accessed June 3, 2019, nypap.org/preservation-history/city-beautiful-movement/.

men’s handiwork and mechanical skill”⁴⁷ from around the world. Through its collection of exhibits at a grand scale—including art galleries, electrical light displays, demonstrations of agricultural and transportation advancements, horticultural displays, and replicas of statues, all set in stark white classical buildings and against a parklike backdrop—Americans were introduced to a new version of the world.

While programming for early municipal parks had primarily focused on passive uses, it became increasingly important to policy makers to provide more cultural activities within park grounds. During the City Beautiful movement, there was a shift in park aesthetics, as civic additions such as museums, conservatories, architectural memorials, and zoos were included within large municipal parks. Park settings were made for grand buildings and monuments rather than scenes of landscape beauty.⁴⁸ The Columbian Exposition “justified the museums, botanical gardens, zoological gardens, aquariums, arboretums, meteorology observatories, and music halls we see in parks today.”⁴⁹

It took several years for the City Beautiful movement to reach San Antonio. But in the sixteen years following the formal creation of Brackenridge Park in 1899, a sequence of events would occur that would set the stage for the multitude of City Beautiful-inspired projects in Brackenridge Park. Mahncke, the first park superintendent, died in 1906, and a series of commissioners followed that had short tenures and operated with tight budgets.

Elsewhere in the city, at San Pedro Park, the private zoological display closed in 1911, with some animals transferred to Brackenridge. The death in 1912 of the tight-fisted mayor and political operative Bryan Callaghan ushered in a new era of progressive politicians interested in the principles of the City Beautiful movement and a new emphasis on planning. Another big event happened in 1913, when two major floods struck the city in October and December.

Against this backdrop of fundamental changes, John Raymond “Ray” Lambert was elected commissioner of Parks and Sanitation in 1915.⁵⁰ When Lambert took office, he immediately requested a significant budget increase for his department—from \$27,000 to \$60,000, an increase of 220 percent. The new progressive era of city leadership had begun, and San Antonio searched for ways to improve the physical, cultural, and infrastructural quality of the growing city. The river and its scenic beauty became an important focus of citizen involvement. Most of the large-scale improvements in the park occurred during this twelve-year burst of growth. With the election of Lambert, new energy infused the parks department.

47 Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1978), 365.

48 Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 36.

49 Cranz, *Politics of Park Design*, 14.

50 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 51-52.



FIGURE 11–12. Post card illustrating the use of the quarry walls to create a dramatic backdrop and security for the bear exhibit at the zoo at Brackenridge Park. Source: Witte Museum Collection

LAMBERT LEADS THE CHARGE FOR CHANGES

Lambert's first two years as the park commissioner set in motion a new energy within the parks department. Having served as an alderman for many years prior to his election to the park board, he already knew the politics and financial constraints as well as and the civic leaders whose help he would need to move his ideas forward. During his twelve-year tenure, some of the most important and defining cultural institutions, park amenities, and features were added to the park. These include the Eleanor Brackenridge Playground, the Brackenridge Park Golf Course, the Brackenridge Park Zoo, the Japanese Tea Garden and tea pavilion, the Texas Star Sunken Garden, Lambert Beach, the kids' Donkey Ride and corral, the Donkey Barn, the Mexican Village, the automotive camping area, the relocation and installation of historic bridges from downtown San Antonio, the addition of multiple important pieces of art and sculpture—specifically the *faux bois* art of Dionicio Rodriguez—and, finally, the Witte Museum. The total effect on the park was comprehensive. By the end of Lambert's service, almost every area of existing parkland had been developed in some way.

THE BRACKENRIDGE ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN, 1915

When Ray Lambert took office as park commissioner, the city council had already set aside the land for the zoo. Lambert felt that the abandoned quarries to the west of the approved site had distinct advantages compared to the original twelve acres set aside by the city. As Lambert stated, "We can put a zoo here, which will be a world better and won't cost too much. Nature has done most of the work."⁵¹ Clearly, nature had been assisted by various commercial and industrial activities that had occurred on the site in the previous

⁵¹ Quoted in Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 51.



FIGURE 11–13. Works Progress Administration plaque located at Koehler Pavilion, 1935-1937. Source: Elizabeth Hilburn, published in “The Living New Deal”

century. The operations of the quarry and the extraction of blue argillaceous limestone for conversion to cement had played a pivotal role in the condition of the site that was chosen for the zoo. Using the existing quarry as a backdrop, additional installations and exhibits were built and more animals were acquired.⁵²

As a member of local government, Lambert understood the importance of building support with the community who advocated for the zoo. “Lambert gained the support of zoo advocates and began transforming the old rock quarry into the city’s zoological garden (figure 11-12). Additional deer, elk, and buffalo pastures were created, the old Upper Labor Ditch became the center of the bird exhibit, and quarry walls were terraced for animal displays.”⁵³ The San Antonio Zoological Society was founded in 1928 and began the process of transferring operational control of the Brackenridge Park Zoological Garden. This process was completed in 1931. “The society continues to operate the zoo today under agreement with the City of San Antonio.”⁵⁴

ELEANOR BRACKENRIDGE PLAYGROUND, 1915

Among Ray Lambert’s first projects in Brackenridge Park was the installation of a playground in honor of Eleanor Brackenridge, George’s sister. Eleanor was a leading advocate for child welfare in addition to being involved in the women’s suffragette movement and an early advocate for prohibition. The early form of the playground is not known. The playground has been rehabilitated many times during the last century, however, mostly due to advances in the safety of playground equipment and the need to provide more inclusive access.

52 Frank W. Jennings, *San Antonio: The Story of an Enchanted City* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 2002), 267.

53 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 51.

54 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 51.

KOEHLER PARK, 1915

Located on the west side of the San Antonio River south of the zoo, the eleven-acre parcel where Koehler Park is located within Brackenridge Park was donated to the city of San Antonio by Emma Koehler in 1915, shortly after the death of her husband. The Koehler family owned Pearl Brewery, and they intended that the consumption of alcoholic beverages would be allowed within the boundaries of their donated land, whereas alcohol is forbidden within the rest of the park. The entrance columns are believed to have been constructed at this time, before the pavilion was in place. The entrance columns are “massive red sandstone columns with decorative iron work set on each side of St. Mary’s Street.”⁵⁵ There is some evidence of an early pavilion that was rehabilitated in the mid-1920s, with the perimeter stonework pattern and material being used as an indicator of age.⁵⁶ The Works Progress Administration performed work on the Koehler Pavilion from 1935 to 1937, and a plaque commemorates the WPA’s contribution to the pavilion structure (figure 11-13). A patio was added in 1982 when the structure was renovated.⁵⁷



FIGURE 11-14. A. W. Tillinghast, noted early golf course designer, inspects the scene at Brackenridge Park in preparation for his design for the course. Source: Art Stricklin, Links, Lore, & Legends.

BRACKENRIDGE PARK GOLF COURSE, 1916

In the early decades of the twentieth century, golf was a sport growing in popularity around the country, and in order to promote tourism and additional recreational opportunities, George Brackenridge wanted a municipal course within the boundaries of the park. Brackenridge donated additional land for the creation of the first public course in Texas. The land had formerly been his hunting grounds and included an existing rustic lodge. Several private golf courses were already in operation in San Antonio, but winter visitors typically did not belong to the local private courses, so in effect they had nowhere to play golf while visiting the city. An organization called the San Antonio Hotel Men’s Association, which was the local branch of the Hotel Men’s Mutual Benefit Association of United States and Canada, encouraged Brackenridge to help create a public course. This group of hoteliers realized that by providing additional golfing opportunities to the general public, there would be a corresponding increase in occupancy (and thus profits) in their hotels.⁵⁸

Operating out of an office in Beverly Hills, California, and another location in New York City, A. W.

55 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 16.

56 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 13.

57 “Koehler Pavilion—San Antonio TX,” Living New Deal, accessed July 9, 2019, livingnewdeal.org/projects/koehler-pavilion-san-antonio-tx/.

58 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 54.

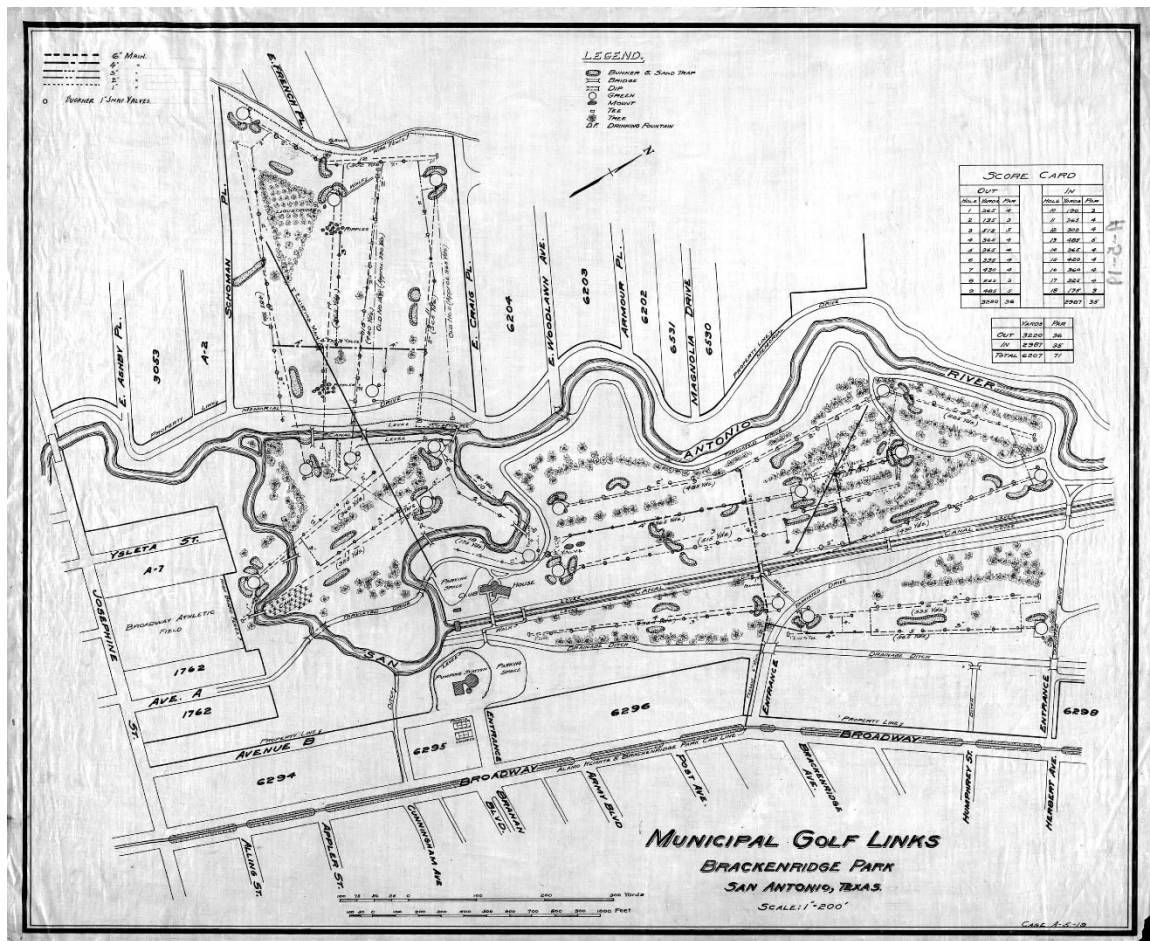


FIGURE 11-15. Undated map of the Brackenridge Park Municipal Golf Links after their completion. Source: San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department

Tillinghast was selected to design the course at Brackenridge. Tillinghast was considered the best golf course designer in the country at the time and throughout much of his career (figure 11-14). The course was designed with grass greens, which was considered a novelty at the time. In 1919, shortly after Tillinghast completed the course at Brackenridge (figure 11-15), John Bredemus—widely considered to be the father of Texas golf—arrived in San Antonio and became the golf pro at Brackenridge. He went on to design most of the early golf courses in the state of Texas.⁵⁹

Sports editor of the *San Antonio Evening News* Jack O'Brien was the original creator and of the idea for the Texas Open, a national showcase for the best golfers in the country. Working with John Bredemus at Brackenridge, he planned and organized the first event, held at Brackenridge in the winter of 1922. The Texas Open was held at Brackenridge until 1959. John Erwin, golf historian and former pro at the Brackenridge course, stated that “this is the most historic course in the state. Anybody who is anybody has played here.”⁶⁰ Tillinghast also designed the Oak Hills Country Club, which hosted the Texas Open twenty-four times from 1960 to 1994.⁶¹

59 Art Stricklin, *Links, Lore, and Legends: The Story of Texas Golf* (Lanham, MD: Taylor, 2005), 6-7.

60 Stricklin, *Links, Lore, and Legends*, 19.

61 Bill Mallon and Randon Jerris, *Historical Dictionary of Golf* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 294.



FIGURE 11-16. Bathers at Lambert Beach. The original pump house is partially obscured by a large movie screen attached to the side of the building. Chairs, benches, and diving boards provide multiple amenities for the visitors. Source: Witte Museum Collection

LAMBERT BEACH AND BATHHOUSE, 1915, 1917, 1925

While the newly acquired land for the golf course was being developed by Tillinghast in 1915, Lambert turned his attention to the construction of a large swimming area at what was to be called Lambert Beach. Lambert used rockwork to build platforms and sited the beach adjacent to the oldest of the two pump houses that were part of the San Antonio water system (**figure 11-16**).

The United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917. This set in motion the apparatus of war and the training of soldiers who then went across the Atlantic to Europe to fight. In order to accommodate the millions of soldiers in training, young men arrived at bases throughout the country, where they learned marksmanship, horsemanship, and the other skills required in war. In San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston served as the center of operations for the army. Recognizing the need to provide recreation and entertainment for the young men before they were sent overseas to Europe, city leaders in San Antonio planned improvements in parks and on city lands.

SAN ANTONIO BATHING BEACH TO BE ENLARGED. Special to The American. SAN ANTONIO, Texas, June 12. The bathing beach at Brackenridge park is to be extended half a mile so that it will provide facilities for 25,000 persons, was the announcement by Commissioner Ray Lambert at a meeting of the war recreation board at the St. Anthony hotel Tuesday noon. Mr. Lambert also said that a dam will be built immediately at Elmendorf lake and this will provide another bathing place. Mayor Bell said the city would do all in its power to provide amusements for the soldiers.⁶²

62 "San Antonio Bathing Beach to Be Enlarged," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 13, 1917, accessed May 22, 2019, newspapers.com/image/384470665.

WOODEN-LEGGED MAN IS HERO IN WORLD OF BOYS AND BURROS. IN BRACKENRIDGE PARK, SAN ANTONIO'S MUNICIPAL PLAYGROUND

It's "Peg" This and "Peg" That When Youngsters Go Donkey Riding.

"Peg's" business picks up in the afternoon. While an occasional patron drifts along in the morning and early afternoon, from 2 o'clock until dark is the busy time. But Saturday and Sunday are the busiest days; then the children are free and make the most of their freedom.

To the uninformed, it must be explained that "Peg" is the "donkey man" at Brackenridge Park. If he were had any other name, it is totally useless now, for "Peg" is as useful and affectionate a name for a wooden-legged hero as any child could think of, and so he is "Peg" to all of the children.

It is Peg this and Peg that and "Peg, hold my street-car ticket," and "Please keep my hat, Peg," and "Please let me ride Blue, Peg," and "Here's some gumdrops, Peg," and "I want to ride in front, Peg," and so forth and so on while the burros stand by patiently and the children yell and hoot and clamor for their ride.

A Rotary Club Hero.
Of course, everybody knows that these burros are the Rotary Club burros, or rather the Rotary Club purchased the burros to be ridden by the children of San Antonio last year, and ever since then they have been jumping around the park with one or two or three children on their backs. Everybody knows also where they are kept, in the corral just across the river from the historic bench.



"Peg," the keeper of the burros, regarded as a godfather, and he unflinchingly and playing the role of a saintly protector upon a ride, tends to their innumerable wants as "father" for their precious belongings, though they were his own beloved ones. By both boys and girls alike he is a hero, settling their differences.

FIGURE 11-17. Local man becomes the "donkey man" at Brackenridge Park. The donkeys and funding were supplied by the Rotary Club of San Antonio. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy

Soldiers training at Ft. Sam Houston regularly used the swimming area along with the polo grounds and other areas of the park for military training and recreation. Further improvements were made to Lambert Beach in 1925, when "concrete stairs and landings were added to provide easy access to the river, and a stone bathhouse replaced rustic dressing rooms."⁶³

RIFLE RANGE, DONKEY TRAILS, LIONS FIELD, DAVIS PARK, 1916

With these popular attractions in place, the park continued to accumulate land and amenities. In 1916, the city acquired several parcels of land that increased Brackenridge Park's acreage. The first property obtained during that year was a 1.33-acre tract of the Kampmann property. The municipal rifle range was then located on the property, where it remained in operation until 1927.⁶⁴ The donkey trail was also established in 1916, when the San Antonio Rotary Club donated twelve burrows for children to ride in Brackenridge Park⁶⁵ (figure 11-17).

With the increasing number of recreational opportunities in Brackenridge Park, visitation increased. The city purchased lands that now comprise Lions Field from the San Antonio Water Supply Company.⁶⁶ The Lions Club of San Antonio then raised funds and donated a children's playground on the land. Later, they constructed a clubhouse, which has been replaced with a newer Lions Field Adult and Senior Center (figures 11-18 and 11-19). Brackenridge himself donated the land that is now Davis Park, named in honor of county judge James R. Davis.⁶⁷

63 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 12.

64 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 37.

65 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 57-58.

66 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 56.

67 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 59.



FIGURE 11-18. Children ride the Merry-Go-Round at Lions Field. In the background is River Avenue (Broadway) and the neighborhood on the east side of the avenue. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy



FIGURE 11-19. An undated photo of the Lions Club Fieldhouse at Brackenridge Park. The building has since been expanded and updated. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy



FIGURE 11-20. An automobile drives through the low-water crossing at Tuleta Drive. Juxtaposed in the background is a small horse and carriage. The early configuration of the crossing shows random-sized stone as edge markers. Later, the stone was replaced with elevated concrete “pads” to allow pedestrians to cross in a safer manner. Source: Jay Loudon, WorkShop.

Brackenridge was nearing the end of his life, but he was not finished with his donations to the city to further develop the park. In late 1916, he purchased additional lots and reacquired lots that he had sold in 1878. In early 1917, he donated these acquisitions, totaling thirty-five acres, to the city “in recognition of the work done by the City of San Antonio under the supervision of the Honorable Ray Lambert, its commissioner, in developing the scenic beauty and usefulness to the public of the tract of land ... known as Brackenridge Park.”⁶⁸

Once several substantial park elements were in place and more land had been acquired and donated to the city for park purposes, the remaining quarry tracts provided the next opportunity for development, and Ray Lambert set about creating new elements and venues within Brackenridge Park.

LOW-WATER CROSSING, 1917

The low-water crossing is one of the iconic experiences at Brackenridge Park, and it was established early in the park’s development. Historically, low-water crossings are designed to provide a bridge across a water body; they are designed to be submerged during high water flows and to provide safe vehicular passage during low water flows.⁶⁹ The first low-water crossing in Brackenridge Park was constructed to connect people from the east side of the river to attractions located west of the river in Koehler Park.⁷⁰ A concrete base supports stones arranged across either side of the crossing, defining a lane across the river. These stone sections are spaced to enable water to flow (**figure 11-20**).

⁶⁸ Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 58.

⁶⁹ Kim Clarkin et al., *Low-Water Crossings: Geomorphic, Biological, and Engineering Design Considerations* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, October 2006), accessed November 22, 2019, fs.fed.us/eng/pubs/pdf/LowWaterCrossings/LoWholeDoc.pdf.

⁷⁰ Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 16.



FIGURE 11-21. Visitors traverse various elevated stone walkways in the sunken garden. The existing quarry walls and path markers along Alpine Drive are visible at the top of the photo. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy

JAPANESE TEA GARDEN, 1917

Originally called the lily pond, Lambert transformed abandoned quarry space into a sunken garden with significant water elements, stone paths and bridges, and a Japanese tea house and outdoor pavilion for guests to view the garden and purchase tea and food (figure 11-21). A Japanese tea garden was first seen in the United States at the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, where it was "among the finest in the whole exposition."⁷¹ According to an 1893 article on the event, the garden contained three different parts, and one could enjoy a traditional tea service ceremony. Included in the garden was

the Japanese temple of Hooden... situated on the Wooded Island, surrounded by the Japanese rose garden. None is permitted to enter its sacred portals but the fragile beauty of its decoration may be viewed from the outside. The decorations are beautiful, and are an evidence in themselves of the calm patience o [sic] this wonderful race. There are rare paintings and vases. Sculptured columns and carved walls....

In the Agricultural building Japan is not behind the kindred nations. The exhibit of course is much different from anything we would see in this country, consisting of teas, spices,

medicinal plants, curious woods and unknown shrubs—unknown to western minds—and many unsayable names....

It is an undisputed fact that the Japanese are the most polite, polished and mannerly people on earth. In genuine politeness the French are far behind the Japs, as barbarism is behind civilization.⁷²

America's early exoticism of Japanese culture is evident from this article, and the display must have impressed many. After the Columbian Exposition exhibit, the first permanent Japanese tea garden to appear in the United States opened in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park in 1894 (figure 11-22).

71 "World's Fair Letter," *Argonia (KS) Clipper*, June 30, 1893, accessed November 9, 2018, newspapers.com/image389451815.

72 "World's Fair Letter."

Over twenty years later, at Brackenridge Park, the Japanese Tea Garden became one of the most distinctive attractions.

Lambert worked with prison labor to build an irregularly shaped garden that measured approximately four hundred by three hundred feet. Rock from the quarry was used to build an island, two pools, bridges, and paths. The city nursery provided tropical plants and the Public Service Company donated the lighting system for the driveway and pond. A Japanese-style pagoda, roofed with palm trees from city parks, was built overlooking the polo field.⁷³ (figure 11-23)

The tea house itself was managed by a Japanese family, the Jingu family (figure 11-24). But the American climate toward the Japanese changed drastically after the beginning of World War II and the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and shortly after, the Jingu family was asked to leave. The space was renamed the Chinese Tea Garden. It was decided that the faux bois entrance columns and sign would not be changed, as they were created by Rodriguez, are culturally significant, and maintain their original integrity. In 1984, the original name was restored in a rededication ceremony.



FIGURE 11-22. Announcement of the installation of the Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Prior to the construction of the Japanese Tea Garden at Brackenridge, the popularity of these features had become a common in parks throughout the country. Source: *The San Francisco Call*, Apr. 13, 1901, Newspapers.com

THE TEXAS STAR GARDEN, 1917

Adjacent to the Japanese Tea Garden to the southeast is the Texas Star Garden, or Sunken Garden. The garden was designed with the lone star of the Texas flag as its organizing motif (figure 11-25). The upper right area of one historic photograph shows the original stage that was used for outdoor choral and theatrical performances. In the same photo, Alamo Heights is visible in the distance. The stage later became the site of the Sunken Garden Theater.

⁷³ Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 59.

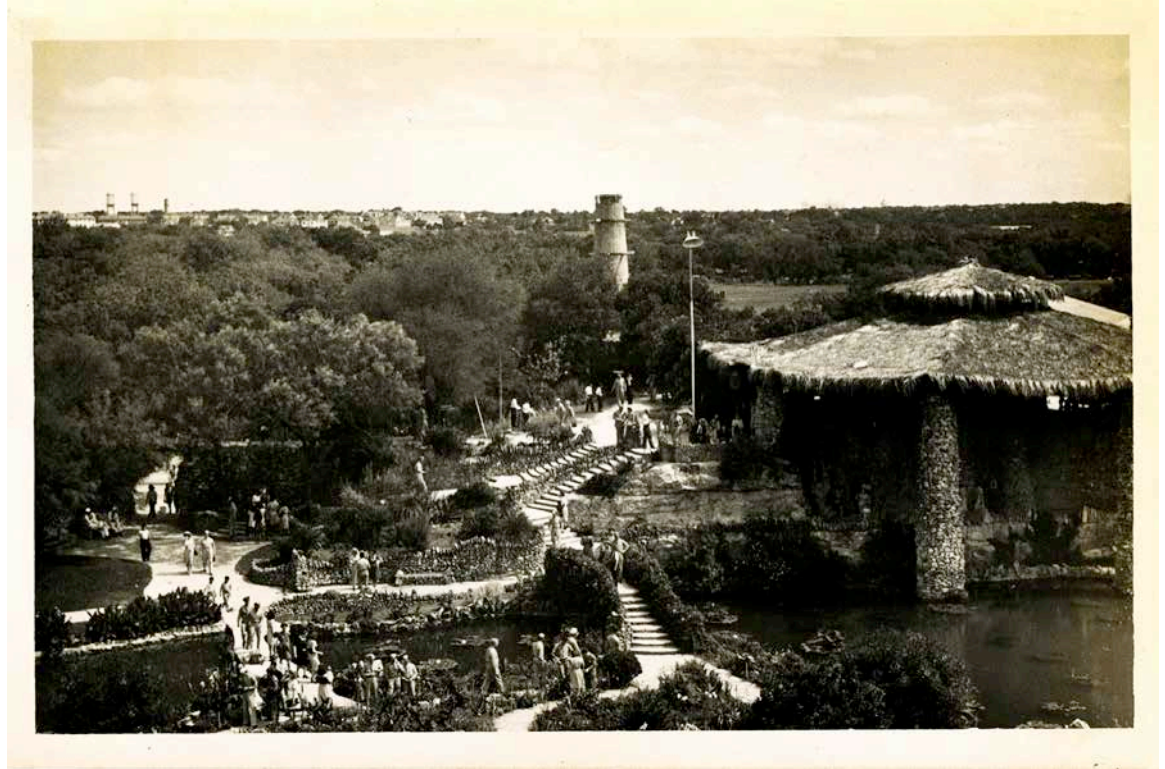


FIGURE 11-23. View of the Japanese Tea Garden. The Japanese Pagoda is visible, and well as the quarry walls and unique rockwork located throughout the garden. Source: Witte Museum Collection



FIGURE 11-24. Photo of the Jingu family members standing on a faux box bridge in the Japanese Tea Garden, taken in the 1930s. Note the family's western attire, indicating their own assimilation into American culture before being asked to leave after the December 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor. Source: Jingu family, published by KSTX-FM.



FIGURE 11-25. In the far right side of the postcard, you can see the original stage that was used for outdoor choral and theatrical performances. Later, the state became the site of the Sunken Garden Theater, which was enlarged and expanded during preparations for the Texas Centennial of 1937. Source: Witte Museum Collection



FIGURE 11-26. This photograph shows the condition of the buildings that Ray Lambert christened the "Mexican Village." This image was evidently captured before the buildings were renovated and used as a tourist destination. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy

MORE PARK LANDS, 1918

More land was added to the park in 1918, when the city purchased a “250-foot wide strip between Koehler Park and Josephine Avenue, the park’s southern boundary.”⁷⁴ Part of Ray Lambert’s logic was that the adjoining property owners who faced the park would “enjoy the advantage of park frontage and therefore cooperate with his plan.” Frontage on parklands generally results in an increase in property values, as the owner has easy access to the park and the advantage of borrowed scenery.

TOURIST CAMP, 1919 - 1934

With the arrival of automobile tourism and limited hotel and motel space, many parks around the country developed areas for campers to locate a campsite and stay overnight or longer. The tourist camp at Brackenridge was originally located on the northwest side of the park along the river. It was later moved to another site on the southern edge of the park. In 1934, the city council, under pressure from commercial hoteliers, closed the camp.⁷⁵

MEXICAN VILLAGE, 1920

Situated along the base of the quarry wall where the cement plant had been located are the abandoned structures of what Ray Lambert called the Mexican Village (**figure 11-26**). Merchants sold various Mexican foods, handiworks, and art. Artisans worked and sometimes lived in the small stone houses constructed for that purpose, and it is thought that some of these merchants had been employees at the quarry who remained in place after it moved.⁷⁶ After World War II, various artists occupied the structures where the village was located. These artists then combined with the Mill Race Studio, located in the Second Pump House. Together, they formed the cultural core of the wider art community in San Antonio at the time.⁷⁷

POLO FIELD, CIRCA 1921

The thirty-five acres of land that George Brackenridge donated to the city in 1917 became one of the largest open spaces in the park. Ray Lambert originally wanted the tract to be a large garden and had city engineer W. S. Delery draw up the plans for a botanical garden, but Delery’s plan was never installed. Instead, an alternate proposal by the Polo Club to locate their club and playing fields on the tract prevailed, and it became their home for the next sixty-five years⁷⁸ (**figure 11-27**).

74 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 57.

75 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 60.

76 Patsy Pittman Light, *Capturing Nature: The Cement Sculpture of Dionicio Rodríguez* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 41.

77 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 61.

78 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 62.

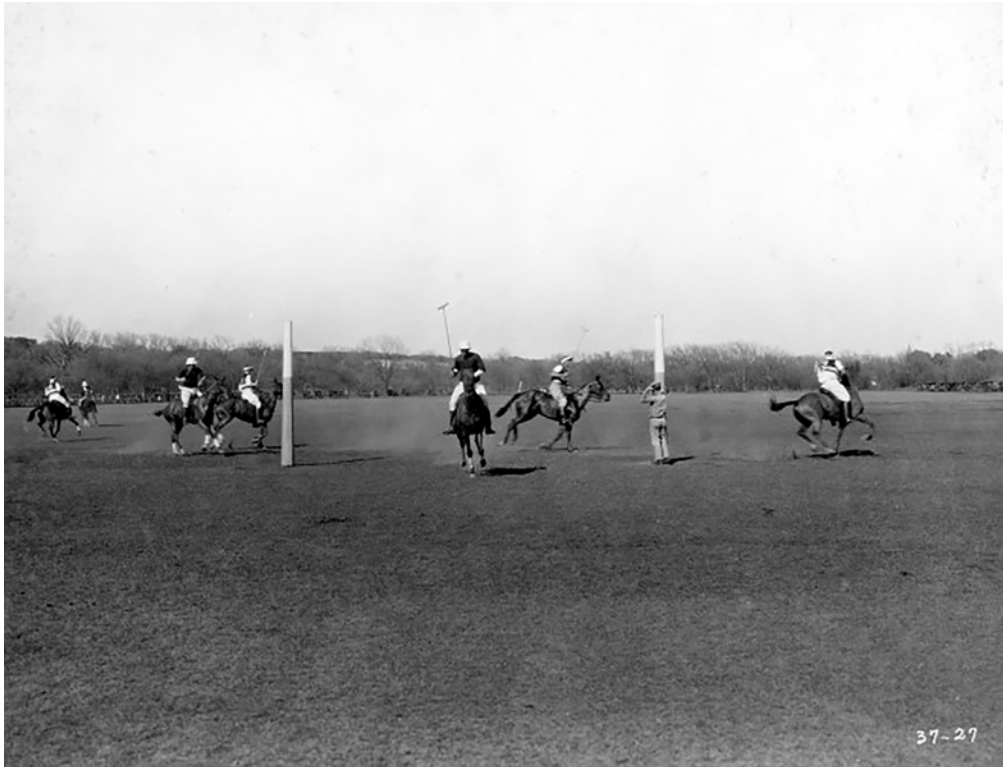


FIGURE 11–27. Polo players compete at the polo field at Brackenridge. The field opened in 1921 and remained operational until the late 1980s. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy

MIRAFLORES, 1921 TO 1930

Aureliano Urrutia was born in 1872 in Xochimilco, “once a unique agricultural area built upon a network of lake and canal systems, which is now a suburb of Mexico City and a World Heritage Site.” Urrutia was a noted surgeon who had been Mexico’s interior minister until he fled in 1914 during the Mexican Revolution. At the age of 42, he immigrated with his family to San Antonio, where he established and built a large medical practice and lived until his death in 1975 at the age of 103.⁷⁹

Urrutia loved the arts, history, and the community that he had left in his native Mexico. Desiring to “express his memory of his birthplace and his love for Mexico...Urrutia used Miraflores as his outlet for creative expression, and between 1921 and 1930 he fashioned the property into a fantastical garden of statuary, fountains, pools, and meandering waterways” (**figures 11-28 and 11-29**). His elaborate and somewhat decadent design for the garden used artistic elements to provide a “lesson in the uniqueness of Hispanic culture”; Urrutia may have envisioned the gardens as an eventual gift to his adopted city that would illustrate to its people the historic imprint of his native culture.⁸⁰ Certainly, one can see from historic photographs that the site referenced and paid homage to the waterways of Xochimilco. The preeminence of waterways in his adopted San Antonio may have reinforced his decision to make of the landscape composition a celebration of the beauty and power of water.

79 Elise Urrutia, “Miraflores: Dr. Urrutia’s Lost Garden,” *Rivard Report*, Institute for Nonprofit News, October 2, 2016, accessed July 12, 2019, therivardreport.com/miraflores-dr-urrutias-lost-garden/.

80 Urrutia, “Miraflores: Dr. Urrutia’s Lost Garden.”



FIGURE 11-28. Miraflores arch of Spanish Talavera mosaic tile. The structure originally stood near the corner of Broadway and Hildebrand Avenue and is now at the San Antonio Museum of Art. Source: Texas Public Radio, www.tpr.org/post/mystery-behind-san-antonios-miraflores-park-uncovered



FIGURE 11-29. American Institute of Architects members attending a national convention in 1931. Attendees are gathered in the elaborate setting of stone seats, raised pools, and stone walkways at Miraflores. Source: Bill Fisher



FIGURE 11-30. The St. Mary Street Bridge in 1921 during the flood that fall. From this original location, the bridge was disassembled and moved to Brackenridge Park. Source: Texas A&M, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/riverwalk/Pages/slide11.html

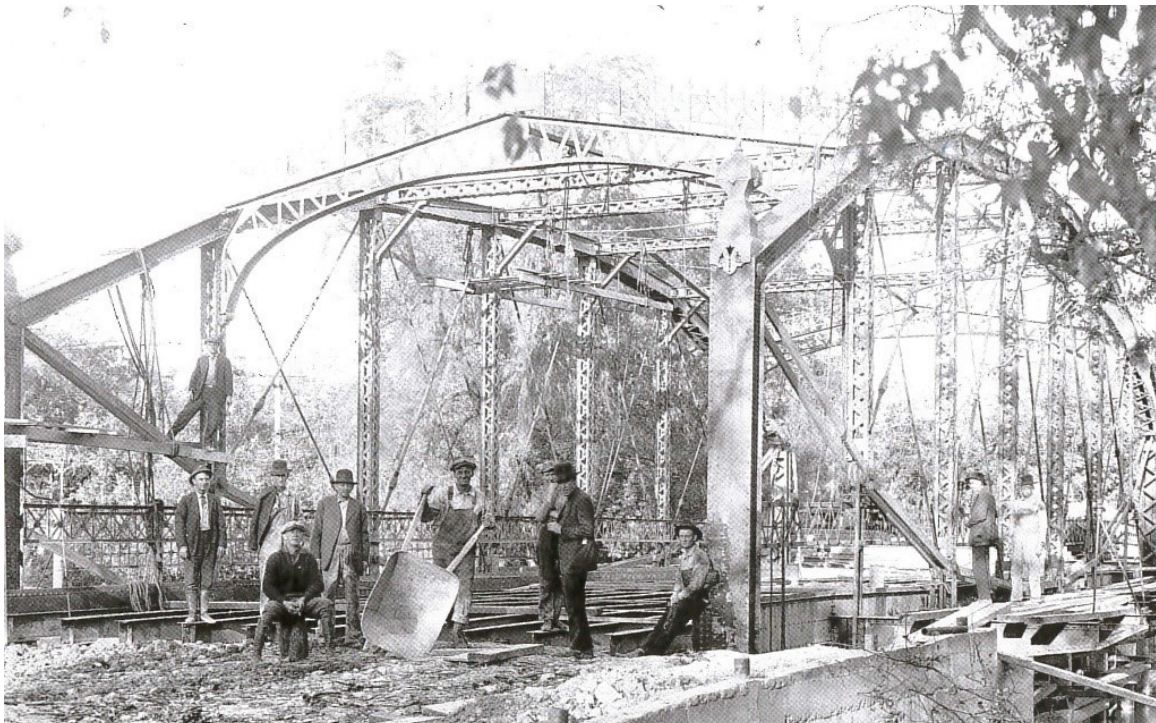


FIGURE 11-31. Workers reassemble the "Letters of Gold" bridge from its former location on South St. Mary Street. Source: Lewis F. Fisher

In 1960, at the age of 88, Urrutia retired and sold his homeplace. It suffered decay and abuse as it came under corporate ownership, which had no use for such a feature as an outdoor sculpture garden and water feature. Since 2005, a remnant parcel of Miraflores that contains the highest concentration of cultural artifacts has been owned by the city of San Antonio. Today the site is under the management of Brackenridge Park.

THE FLOOD OF 1921 AND INSTALLATION OF NEW BRIDGES

One of the most devastating floods to strike San Antonio occurred September 9–10, 1921. “The 1921 flood, loosed by a cloudburst in the Olmos basin north of the city, took forty-nine lives, left fourteen missing, and caused more than \$8 million in property damage. In the two catastrophic days, rainfall in the Olmos Creek watershed ranged from seventeen inches in the upper area to about eleven inches near San Pedro Avenue. The flood inundated parts of downtown San Antonio with eight to nine feet of water, even reaching the mezzanine of the Gunter Hotel on Houston Street at St. Mary’s. It was only one of fifteen deadly floods that had, with little warning, menaced and mauled San Antonians from time to time since 1819.”⁸¹ One of the most notable and lingering issues after the 1921 flood was that thirteen of the twenty-seven bridges that crossed the river—mostly in downtown San Antonio—were no longer safe after the floods.⁸² Some were quickly repaired, while others remained in place but were no longer usable. One of the bridges that could not be repaired in place was the Letters of Gold Bridge at South St. Mary’s Street (**figure 11-30**). The bridge was disassembled and reconstructed in 1925 just above the first pump house and Lambert’s Beach⁸³ (**figure 11-31**). The second bridge had been located at Fourth Street. This bridge was rebuilt on the southern edge of Lambert Beach and was designated a pedestrian crossing.

The flood of 1921 changed the face of San Antonio. It catalyzed the citizens to finally act to construct the long-recommended dam at the southern edge of the Olmos Basin. Flood control was a critical issue that not only affected the residents and businessmen of the city but also negatively impacted tourism.

Flooding wasn’t the only issue the city had to address. “Beginning in 1920, the city attorney filed suits against the ‘squatters’” who had been living in the abandoned quarry areas. These squatters were thought to be former quarry workers, and it is believed that some were Mexican laborers who transitioned to administering concessions in the Mexican Village.⁸⁴ Lambert had begun developing these quarry areas, and the presence of squatters was not likely considered beneficial for attracting visitors. And as tourism increasingly became one of San Antonio’s chief economic drivers, protecting the city’s infrastructure and the image of the its amenities became increasingly important.

81 Steve Bennett, “‘Head-of-the-River’ Immersed in San Antonio History,” *San Antonio Express-News*, July 8, 2017, accessed May 31, 2018, pp. 38-39, expressnews.com/sa300/article/Head-of-the-River-immersed-in-San-Antonio-11274319.php.

82 Fisher, *River Walk*, 63-64.

83 Fisher, *River Walk*, 65.

84 Light, *Capturing Nature*, 41.

SAN ANTONIO AS A WINTERTIME DESTINATION, AND WATER AS A MANAGED RESOURCE

The arrival and popularity of the automobile radically changed tourism patterns throughout the country, and this was definitely true of San Antonio. Middle-class tourists now had access to many of the recreational opportunities that had formerly been available only to the wealthy. By the end of the twentieth century's first decade, tourism was thriving in San Antonio, and city boosters were quick to highlight the many opportunities for recreation and the pleasant, sunny weather that the visitor could enjoy during the winter months. For example, a 1917 promotional article titled "Ask the Flaglers, Huntingtons, Big Fellows of America to Spend Winters in San Antonio" proclaimed:

We have done much to capitalize our heritage; we have spread abroad the message that here are the most interesting missions, the best climate, the purest water, the warmest, most constant sunshine in all America.... And lately, when we began to lay the floor of the city, by well paved streets, inviting the Northern visitor to bring here his automobile we, realizing that good roads in the country offering long and enjoyable rides were not in themselves sufficient to pass entirely the time of these visitors, looked at our parks, laid out a magnificent municipal golf course, began making a thing of beauty of the old quarry by Brackenridge Park, started a zoological collection in this wonderful natural setting; laid out a Japanese garden, and offered another playground where when the blizzards blow and the sleet cuts and the cold numbs in the frozen North, summer days with green foliage, smiling red roses, and the musical tinkle of waterfalls, make as a bad dream to the sojourner from the North the cold weather of December and its succeeding months.⁸⁵

Clearly, the developers and city fathers of San Antonio saw their city and the recreational opportunities offered throughout the area—from the Gulf of Mexico to the "immortal story of the Alamo"—as enticing as any place in the country and even comparable to the French Riviera. The next week, another local paper followed its announcement that a new polo field was opening with a list of recreational amenities in the city: "MUNICIPAL POLO FIELD. A municipal polo field is now among the possibilities at Brackenridge park. This will give San Antonio a municipal baseball park, a municipal golf course, a municipal target range, a municipal bathing beach and a municipal tennis court."⁸⁶

With the success of the multiple recreational offerings in San Antonio, leaders in Austin, the state capital, began to take notice and began to promote Austin's Barton Springs as a public amenity. They then promoted new public golf facilities in Austin, recognizing that "it would be possible, also, to construct a nine-hole public golf course similar to the municipal golf course in Brackenridge Park at San Antonio, which has drawn thousands of winter tourists to the city."⁸⁷

85 "Ask the Flaglers, Huntingtons, Big Fellows of America to Spend Winters in San Antonio," *San Antonio Express*, January 21, 1917, accessed July 14, 2014, texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht433641/m1/29/?q=flagler.

86 "Municipal Polo Field," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 28, 1917, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/358050425/?terms=municipal+polo+field.

87 Charles G. Norton, "Dam Saves Flood Waters for Rice Growers' Benefit," *The Austin American-Statesman*, May 22, 1917, accessed August 23, 2018, newspapers.com/image/384463764.



FIGURE 11–32. An early photograph of the Witte Museum prior to the 1961 expansion. The original building was designed by the architecture firm of Ayres and Ayres. Source: Lewis F. Fisher and Maria Watson Pfeiffer. *San Antonio Architecture: Traditions and Visions*

As leaders throughout the state were looking at San Antonio's recreational attractions as a model for their own cities, the state of Texas was grappling with issues related to water availability and repeated flooding in other rapidly developing cities throughout the state—places such as Dallas and Houston. In 1917, the citizens of the state passed a constitutional amendment that gave authority to the legislature to create “special purpose political subdivisions of the State to serve regional areas ... generally coincidental with river basins and to be generally known as river authorities.”⁸⁸ This was the beginning of the multiple regional river and bayou authorities that serve to regulate and manage water as a resource for industry, tourism, and residents throughout Texas.

FAUX BOIS, THE WITTE, AND BRIDGEWORK IN THE PARK

The year after the 1921 flood, plans went forward to build a new clubhouse at the golf course. The city chose acting Brackenridge golf pro John Bredemus to assist them in the design and construction of the new building. Three years later, the famous sculptor Gutzon Borglum moved to San Antonio in 1924 to begin work on a statue in honor of Texas trail drivers. Borglum set up shop in Pump House #2 on the grounds of Brackenridge Park, where he remained for many years. Borglum's most important commission was for the design of the four presidents at Mount Rushmore.⁸⁹ Borglum did not win the commission for the trail drivers' sculpture, the commission that originally brought him to San Antonio, but he became an important force in development along the river and in the artistic community.

The city of San Antonio did not have a public museum in the first two decades of the twentieth century, but plans and construction were underway to create a museum at San Pedro Springs Park. In 1925, San Antonio businessman Alfred G. Witte died and left the city with a substantial bequest of \$75,000 to construct a museum. His bequest included two stipulations: that “a museum of art, science and natural history...be built in Brackenridge Park and [that it be] named for his parents.”⁹⁰ This significant donation, along with the restrictive requirements for the name and location, resulted in the immediate termination

88 “About San Antonio River Authority,” San Antonio River Authority, accessed June 6, 2019, sara-tx.org/about.

89 Fisher, *River Walk*, 77.

90 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 64.



FIGURE 11-33. The Rodriguez Wooden Footbridge has 33 pairs of vertical tree trunks and resembles an arbor. Source: University of Texas San Antonio.

of museum construction at San Pedro Springs Park. Subsequent plans for the location and for architectural changes to the new building were then updated for construction at Brackenridge Park (**figure 11-32**).

Around 1925, the city commissioned Mexican-born faux bois artist Dionicio Rodriguez to create several pieces for the park. Five of his projects, and possibly more, are located in the park.⁹¹ Among these is “the covered ‘wooden’ footbridge, located north of the large iron truss bridge.”⁹² The wooden footbridge

is a curved structure resembling an elongated arbor; it parallels a bend in the road and spans a flood channel of the San Antonio River. The design features thirty-three pairs of vertical tree trunks that support horizontal branches. Handrail branches are infilled with intertwined cross branches.⁹³

(**figure 11-33**)

Rodriguez created several pieces for Brackenridge Park in the 1920s and many other elements in San Antonio, Texas, and throughout the South. The magazine *Popular Mechanics* wrote about his work in 1927, noting that “‘stripped bark exposed the channel made by some wood borer, a spot where some industrious woodpecker sought a grub. Park attendants say this bridge even fools the woodpeckers.’”⁹⁴ The faux bois work in Brackenridge, that made by Rodriguez, and that made by his followers are some of the elements that give the landscape a playful, handmade feeling.

91 Light, *Capturing Nature*, 41.

92 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 63.

93 Light, *Capturing Nature*, 41.

94 Light, *Capturing Nature*, 41-42.



FIGURE 11-34. Lover's Lane walkway connected the Japanese Tea Garden and the zoo. Source: University of Texas San Antonio.

HISTORIC CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE PARK

By the close of the Ray Lambert era in 1927, many of the park's signature elements were in place. The Brackenridge Golf Course, the Japanese Tea Garden, Lambert Beach, the San Antonio Zoo, and the Witte Museum had been planned and constructed. A local photographer named Albert Schaal recorded scenes around San Antonio and published them in a book, *Beautiful San Antonio, Texas: And a Few Points of Interest near San Antonio, 1927-1931*. The original images for the book are now housed at UTSA in their digital Special Collections. Several photographs from this book show scenes in Brackenridge Park that no longer exist. Some of the most poignant show intentional and designed connections between various cultural institutions in the park, specifically between the Japanese Tea Garden and the zoo, and from the zoo, through the park's beach and softball areas, across the San Antonio River, and to the Witte Museum. Lambert's development of these institutions and the park, then, demonstrate his distinct intention that these institutions be considered *of the park* and not separate or apart from it.

A walkway called Lover's Lane connected the Japanese Tea Garden to the zoo (**figure 11-34**). Schaal's photograph of the same name portrays a wooden arbor of small tree trunks in a rectangular pattern, a sand or dirt path, rock edging, and vines growing up the sides and overhead to shade the visitors walking between the two attractions. It includes a person standing at the end of Lover's Lane, with the arbor extending into the distance.

Another important connection that no longer exists is the pedestrian bridge constructed of rock that crossed from the back of the Witte Museum over the river to the playground, the softball field, Lambert Beach, and eventually the San Antonio Zoo (**figure 11-35**). A map titled "Points of Interest" showing a half-mile and one-mile radius from the Witte Museum through Brackenridge Park also traces the path from the Witte, through the park, and to the zoo.

LAMBERT'S LEGACY AT BRACKENRIDGE PARK

In 1917, the *Austin American-Statesmen* published an article about Ray Lambert in its Who's Who in Texas and Why section (figure 11-36). Local businessman and politician J. H. Kirkpatrick was asked about Lambert as a potential candidate for mayor. Kirkpatrick noted Lambert's accomplishments and skills:

He had in mind the many beauty spots that have been created in the city under the administration of Ray Lambert as commissioner of parks and sanitation. Because of the peculiar lay of the city, due to the crooked streets and the still more crooked river there are many lots which run to a point with the result that in many places triangular plats are formed which are too small for [building] plots and which have lain idle merely as so much waste land.⁹⁵

The *Austin American-Statesman* went on to note that "he has devoted a great deal of time to Brackenridge park until it is today one of the finest parks of this kind in the United States, and a visit to San Antonio would not be complete without a drive through Brackenridge Park."⁹⁶ Lambert saw the odd-shaped parcels and abandoned limestone quarry walls as opportunities and planted them with ornamental plants and trees, and his additions are largely responsible for the park's continued regional vernacular development.

With many of his signature projects in place, Ray Lambert, already in failing health, succumbed to pneumonia on December 23, 1927. His contributions to the San Antonio park system and to Brackenridge Park are many. Most of the core features of the park were established during Lambert's tenure as park commissioner. With Lambert's death, a new commissioner stepped into the role that Lambert had so effectively navigated. Joseph Rubiola succeeded Lambert immediately upon his death, a position Rubiola held until 1941.⁹⁷



FIGURE 11-35. Madarasz Bridge between the back of the Witte and the Ilka Nursery site owned by the Madarasz family in the nineteenth century. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy



FIGURE 11-36. J. Ray Lambert was Superintendent of the San Antonio Parks Department from 1915 to 1926. His legacy in the park resulted in major progress when most of the elements of the park were put in place. Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation

⁹⁵ "Who's Who in Texas and Why," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 29, 1917, accessed September 30, 2019, newspapers.com/image/384475130/.

⁹⁶ "Who's Who in Texas and Why."

⁹⁷ Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 65.

THE NEW DEAL ERA AND CONSERVATION OF THE RIVER, 1930 CE – 1949 CE

The introduction of pastoral and picturesque landscapes and large urban municipal parks beginning in the 1850s gave birth to Brackenridge Park in 1899. The presence of the San Antonio River, portions of the Acequia Madre de Valero, the Upper Labor Acequia, and then the circuitous roadways that traversed the park served as its earliest defining frameworks. The park experienced its second major period of development when the City Beautiful movement found its way to San Antonio under the leadership of Ray Lambert. Regional vernacular layers continued to be expressed in the park.

With the advent of World War II, development and construction in the park began to slow. But prior to the advent of war, the Great Depression and New Deal legislation brought federal dollars to San Antonio, and this prompted the third period of major development in Brackenridge Park.

During the Great Depression, parks nationwide provided huge opportunities to employ hundreds of workers doing basic tasks with rudimentary tools under several New Deal programs. Headed first by the Reconstruction Finance Administration and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Depression-era projects updated infrastructure, installed new recreational areas and buildings, and virtually remade the landscape of some parks. Such changes are especially prominent in Brackenridge Park, where an extensive list of items was accomplished with the aid of WPA funds and workers. During this period, approximately \$90,000 was earmarked for projects to improve the infrastructure of Brackenridge Park and its zoo and of Koehler Park.⁹⁸ This layer of development was accomplished under the leadership of “Jake” Rubiola, who served as park commissioner from 1927 to 1941. Rubiola, taking advantage of the New Deal-era programs and funding, expanded development to include not just amenities but infrastructure along the entire river.

SUNKEN GARDEN THEATER AND ENTRY, 1930–1937

In 1930, the city requested plans from designers for the Sunken Garden Theater, and local architect Harvey P. Smith and sculptor Gutzon Borglum each submitted designs. Borglum was nationally renowned and had been making his studio in Brackenridge Park since moving to San Antonio in 1924, but Smith was chosen over Borglum. Located within one of the Brackenridge Park quarries, the rounded perimeter walls to the northwest side of the theater provide significant acoustical advantages for visitors.

A few years later, the Texas centennial celebration provided many opportunities for commemoration throughout the state. Because the celebration happened during the Great Depression, substantial federal funding was available to aid in building improvements, new construction, and the addition of landscape features as part of the New Deal. As part of the centennial celebration in San Antonio, the “Sunken Garden Theater was expanded and improved in 1937. Architects for the Centennial project, completed by WPA, were Harvey P. Smith, George Willis and Charles T. Boelhauwe.”⁹⁹ As part of the overall improvements to the theater, “dressing rooms and stage support buildings, restrooms, and seating were constructed”¹⁰⁰ (figure 11-37).

98 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 65.

99 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 66.

100 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 66.



FIGURE 11–37. The Sunken Garden Theater was expanded and improved as part of the Texas Centennial held in 1937. Source: Witte Museum Collection

Sometime in the 1930s, likely during or after World War II, an Easter tradition emerged in Brackenridge Park. Local historian Maria Pfeiffer has noted that St. John Lutheran Church helped sponsor the Easter sunrise service¹⁰¹ that took place in the Sunken Garden Theater. According to a 1950 *San Antonio Express* article, it was estimated that 2,000 people attended the service that year¹⁰² (**figure 11-38**). It is not clear whether this event was initially a primarily Mexican American event. However, by the 1950s, a substantial Easter tradition continued in the park and was embraced by the Mexican American community.

REPTILE GARDEN AND PIONEER HALL, 1933

On the other side of the park along Broadway, the Reptile Garden was constructed in 1933 just north of the Witte Museum. The Reptile Garden housed alligators, snakes, and turtles and was an early New Deal project under the National Youth Administration (NYA) program. Originally comprised of wood and wire fencing, the exhibit was moved twice before it was reconstructed of stone in 1937. The Reptile Garden closed to the public in 1975,¹⁰³ but the structures remained in that location until 2016, when an expansion of the Witte Museum called for their removal.

101 Maria Pfeiffer, historian, “Brackenridge Park Cultural Landscape Report,” email correspondence, November 19, 2018.

102 “Park and Zoo Draw Huge Crowd,” *San Antonio Express*, April 10, 1950, accessed November 12, 2019, newspaperarchives.com.

103 “Koehler Pavilion—San Antonio TX.”

Park and Zoo Draw Huge Crowd

Brackenridge park Monday was recovering from its biggest **Easter** celebration in history, Stewart King, park superintendent reported.

King and other **park** officials estimated that between 6 a. m. and 11 p. m. Sunday the grounds were visited by 75,000 to 100,000 San Antonians and out-of-town visitors.

At one time picnics spread from Hildebrand ave. to Josephine st.

TENTS PITCHED

Many families pitched tents at their **picnic** site.

All established **picnic** units in the **park** were occupied or being held for later use by 7 a. m. Sunday.

First scheduled affair was at 6:30 a. m. It was a sunrise service at the Sunken garden theater. Around 2000 persons attended.

The museum and reptile garden reported around 4300 visitors Sunday.

More than 5000 rode the boat in the San Antonio river and the miniature train. More than 17,000 attended the zoo.

Included in the zoo total were 6387 children under 12 who got in free.

King said he believed it was the biggest day on record at the zoo.

POLO AND BASEBALL

He estimated 6500 people attended a polo match and two baseball games.

King said all **park** crews were "snowed under" Monday by the confetti and eggshell litter in the **park**.

He said the Olmos Basin **park** and Concepcion **park** were also flooded with picnics.

FIGURE 11-38. April 10, 1950 San Antonio Light article noting the Easter celebration in Brackenridge Park. The article indicates that the tradition of camping at established sites precedes 1950. Source: Maria Pfeiffer Collection

The same year the Reptile Garden was completed, Pioneer Hall was conceived and constructed in preparation for the Texas Centennial in 1937. It is important to note that the full name of the memorial is the Pioneers, Trail Drivers, and Rangers Memorial in San Antonio. The pioneers were the early Texas settlers, the trail drivers were an important resource in Texas as cattle production increased following the Civil War, and the Texas Rangers are legendary for their responsibilities in maintaining law and order throughout one of the largest states in the country comprised of primarily rural land.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Mike Cox, "A Brief History of the Texas Rangers," Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum May 28, 2019, texasranger.org/texas-ranger-museum/history/brief-history/.



FIGURE 11-39. The Starter House at Brackenridge Park was constructed during the Great Depression by the National Youth Administration. Source: livingnewdeal.org

GOLF COURSE IMPROVEMENTS

The NYA program constructed several projects at the Brackenridge Park Golf Course. These included a starter shack constructed at the first hole of the course (**figure 11-39**). This structure was constructed with native limestone, like many other buildings in the park and around San Antonio.¹⁰⁵ NYA workers also constructed tee boxes, a caddy house, drinking fountains, and “three stone bridges, built to span both the old water works channel and river.”¹⁰⁶

NEW INFRASTRUCTURE: ROCK RETAINING WALLS, TULETA DRIVE, PICNIC AMENITIES, AND LOW-WATER CROSSING, CIRCA 1935-1940

Several infrastructure projects occurred in Brackenridge Park as part of the WPA and NYA programs of the New Deal. Perhaps the most important ecological and character-defining change was the construction of rock retaining walls along the San Antonio River, beginning south of the historic softball field and extending to Tuleta Drive. The park was now about thirty-five years old, and the riparian corridor was already beginning to experience erosion, impacting the trees that lined the river and the water quality. The rock walls fit the historic rustic, whimsical, and handcrafted aesthetic of the park and provided erosion control. In addition, “rock-curbed parking areas were constructed to protect tree roots and unsightly

¹⁰⁵ Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 56.

¹⁰⁶ Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 20.

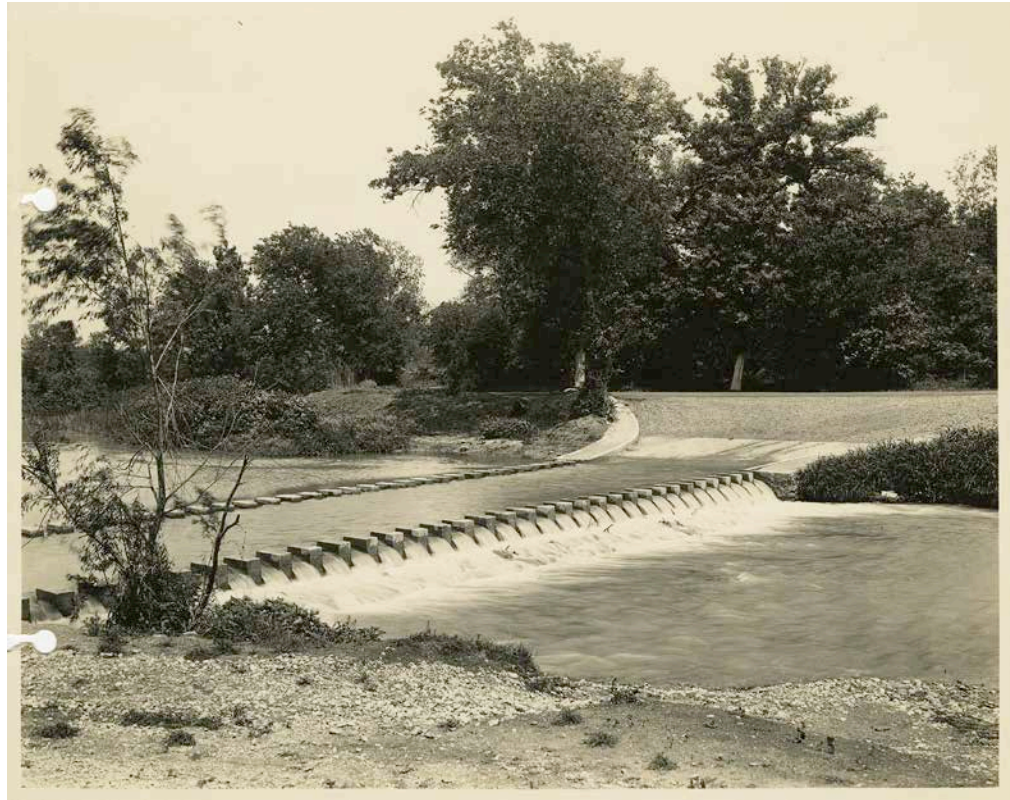


FIGURE 11-40. Undated photo of the Low-Water Crossing at Avenue A in the southern area of the park. Source: Witte Museum Collection

ball moss was removed.”¹⁰⁷ These limestone walls and rock curbs added another regional vernacular layer to the park’s physical appearance.

A picnic area, located south of Joske Pavilion and extending to Tuleta Drive, was also created. Nineteen picnic units were constructed, including “concrete and stone tables, benches, and barbecue pits—built by WPA workers.”¹⁰⁸ Each picnic table is inset with a glazed tile number, and some include bronze plaques.

The city forester, Stewart King, who became a noted landscape architect, supervised a project to build Tuleta Drive, from Broadway to the recreation area at Brackenridge.¹⁰⁹ This project complemented the newly constructed Witte Museum, and it served to create a strong interior vehicular connection between the museum and the rest of the park. A 1921 map shows a similar interior road extending from Broadway through the park that would have been lost with the construction of the Witte.

Perhaps because of the popularity of the original 1917 low-water crossing, a second low-water crossing was constructed in 1939 (**figure 11-40**). “Avenue A runs south from Mulberry Avenue between the golf course and the river’s east bank. It originally branched east through the golf course, and it also connected to River Road by way of a low water crossing.”¹¹⁰ The structure is closed today, but it remains in use by pedestrians and fishermen.

107 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 65.

108 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 13.

109 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 65.

110 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 21.

SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY

In 1937, the same year that the reptile exhibit and Pioneer Hall were constructed, the San Antonio River Authority was created to provide a comprehensive management organization for the entire San Antonio River and its watershed. Only by taking a holistic view of the river could management agencies continue to address repeated flooding and protect life and property along and adjacent to the river.¹¹¹ SARA's "jurisdiction covers 3,659 square miles—all of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad Counties."¹¹²

In 1946, another severe flood hit downtown San Antonio. After that flood, the various entities and businesses who had an interest in the river formed a coalition to address the continued flooding and damages. Flooding hurt tourism when businesses were closed during cleanup, repair, and rebuilding. Flooding cost money. And flooding caused loss of life, with the death of six San Antonio residents in the 1946 flood. It was increasingly clear that further steps would have to be taken to deal with repeated flooding. The construction of the Olmos Dam had helped, but even an engineered plan of that scale was not enough. Larger and more comprehensive interventions were needed.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE MODERN ERA

In the 1950s, the country would be impacted by the forces of the civil rights movement, and, in particular, integration of public spaces would occur widely. The federal urban renewal movement would create highway infrastructure projects that would later come to be seen as detrimental due to their negative impact on traditionally African American communities. Often, public spaces were also affected by these projects.

As these changes swept the nation, and after three generations of park development that emphasized programming and the addition of park amenities, the importance of open space with no programming or prescribed uses gained wider acceptance within urban park planning.¹¹³ In addition, movements increased toward park preservation and improving the ecological sustainability of parks. These trends would all play out in Brackenridge Park.

111 "The People's Waterway," San Antonio River Improvements Project, San Antonio River Authority, accessed June 8, 2019, sanantonioriver.org/river_history/history.php.

112 "About San Antonio River Authority."

113 Cranz, *Politics of Park Design*, 137.

CHAPTER 12. BRACKENRIDGE PARK ENTERS THE MODERN ERA, 1950–PRESENT

As the modern era began, the foundations of Brackenridge Park were in place. An extensive network of pathways and bridle paths existed within and around the perimeter of the wilderness grove. The presence of exotic animals, introduced at Brackenridge Park during its earliest years, had expanded, finding a dedicated home in the zoo located on park grounds. Playgrounds and ball fields were implemented throughout the park, and performance space was provided at the Sunken Garden Theater and Tuesday Morning Musical Club. The Japanese Tea Garden was an iconic attraction. Portions of the river were still being used for swimming and recreation. The Witte was firmly established, with its extensive collection of Texas ephemera and paintings, and the golf course was the home of the Texas Open. The regional vernacular feeling was rooted and expressed through the collection of rock-house buildings, faux bois, attractions set into former quarries, Works Progress Administration retaining walls, and other features. With these in place, priorities began to shift.

When World War II ended in 1945, American soldiers returned to a country and a world that were vastly different than they had been just four years earlier. The Great Depression had ended, and there was new energy in the United States. The economy boomed, and economic and social possibilities seemed endless.

Returning soldiers from minority communities came home with a more urgent desire for equality—financial, social, and political—than did their nonminority counterparts. Social unrest related to inequality bubbled up across the nation in the 1950s and began to take effect in earnest in San Antonio in the 1960s. As a result of the unrest, new policies were introduced in San Antonio. City policies became more deliberately inclusive of black Americans and of Mexican Americans who had both been discriminated against in the public realm.

The urban renewal movement also took shape, bolstered by federal funding that prioritized new highways and new suburbs and the demolition of older buildings and neighborhoods. This movement impacted Brackenridge Park in that a highway expansion project dovetailed with the preservation movement. Awareness of ecological resources also increased after the

1950s, and in Brackenridge Park, the river's primacy and poor health became more apparent. The growing interest in historic preservation and the rise in environmentalism enshrouded the pressing need for updated and new infrastructure within the park's boundaries. As projects began, the park's prehistoric and historic archaeological layers, along with the site's regional vernacular features, took on new meaning. In recent years, protection of archaeological, cultural, and ecological resources has become a pressing issue.

NEW FEATURES AND IMPROVEMENTS AT BRACKENRIDGE PARK

The 1950s through the present have brought little in the way of grand gestures such as those that had been completed prior to 1950. Instead, most improvements have been incremental and revolved around maintenance and rehabilitation. Two exceptions are the 1960s fight over the McAllister Freeway (US 281) and the San Antonio Tunnel Inlet on the southern end of the park, completed in 1997.

Between these two seminal events in park history, various improvements were made that added to park offerings. In 1950, the Tuesday Morning Musical Club building, designed by Atlee B. and Robert M. Ayers, and the Lions Field softball field were completed. The musical club itself, "established in 1901..., was reportedly the first music club for women in Texas."¹ The next year, in 1951, the Sheriff's Mounted Posse Building was constructed west of the polo field. The sheriffs used the building for a decade before moving southeast of downtown San Antonio in order to take advantage of a larger stable and more space for training.

The polo field was used seasonally, which allowed for the use of the land during the off-season. Frank Machock, a private concessionaire and San Antonio golf pro, "cleared and sodded the field and built a snack shop, putting green and miniature golf course."² Machock worked in San Antonio, Austin, and Houston during his lifetime. He was well-known within the golfing community statewide. The driving range was operated independently until 1988, when the city of San Antonio began management of the range.³ In the late 1980s, polo stopped being played at the park, which opened the way for a permanent change in use and management. This land was the last bequest for the park by George Brackenridge and now creates additional revenue for the golf association.

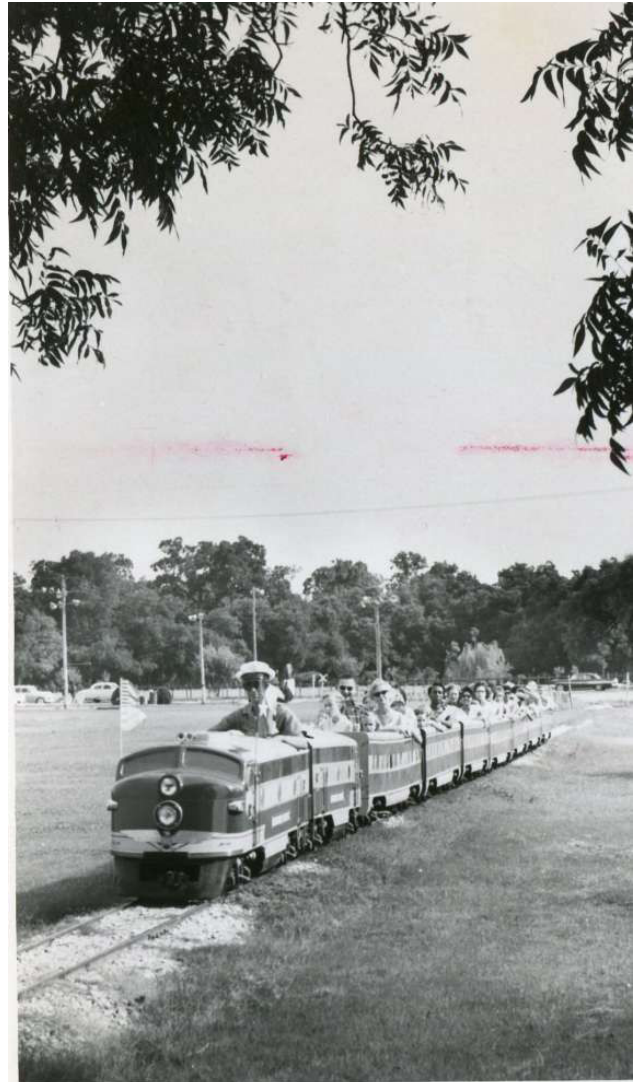


FIGURE 12-1. The Brackenridge Park Eagle, Dec. 01, 1959. Source: *San Antonio Express-News*, photo 7638970

1 Maria Watson Pfeiffer and Steven A. Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," National Register of Historic Places, Texas Historical Commission, San Antonio, TX, June 15, 2011, 69.

2 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 69.

3 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 69.

In 1957, the track of the Brackenridge Eagle miniature train, which was later renamed the San Antonio Zoo Eagle Miniature, was expanded to a length of 3.2 miles (**figure 12-1**). The train carries passengers from the Witte Museum to the zoo, crossing the river in two locations. The Eagle can drop off and load passengers at several depots along its route, and it acts as

an important connection between the cultural institutions and the park. The zoo retains all ticket proceeds from the operation of the Eagle, however.

In 1968, the golf club was renovated by Johnson and Dempsey architects. The Mahncke bust, which had been located in Brackenridge Park for decades, was moved to Mahncke Park, land that George Brackenridge had donated to honor the life of Ludwig Mahncke.

In the spring of 1968 and continuing through early fall, San Antonio hosted a world's fair event called HemisFair. One of the features of the fair was a gondola sky tram, which went from the fair site, just northwest of downtown, north to Brackenridge Park (**figure 12-2**). Rising maintenance and operational costs and increased concerns about safety forced the city to remove the ride in 1999. Aerial circulation features are not common in parks, so this one was especially popular with the visiting public during the time of its operation.

In 1977, the Catalpa-Pershing drainage project was implemented along the western boundary of Brackenridge Park. It runs along Avenue B near Broadway. The open, concrete-lined ditch was constructed “to collect storm water runoff from the area northeast of Brackenridge Park including the Mahncke Park neighborhood and Fort Sam Houston.”⁴ Water carried in the Catalpa-Pershing “continues to flow down the channel until it empties into the San Antonio River near US 281. The length of the open

channel is approximately 5,300 ft.”⁵ The drainage ditch, its form dated, although this style of channelization remains popular to this day. The ditch represents one part of the continuum of the city's ongoing efforts to manage floodwater.

Overall, there have been mostly incremental changes in the park during the past fifty years, except in the areas in which the zoo and the Witte Museum are located. Zoos by their very nature require continuous change as best practices related to the keeping of animals are instituted and research provides data that encourages changes in habitat structure and maintenance. At the Witte Museum, more intentional connection between the building entry and Broadway, strategic management and development of its collections, and successful fund-raising have been instrumental to growth. On the east side of the park, a three-story,



FIGURE 12-2. This image shows overhead portions of the HemisFair skyride in place, while construction continued on the infrastructure at the ground level. Source: Brackenridge Park Conservancy.

4 Nesta J. Anderson, Maria Pfeiffer, and Brandy Harris, *Archeological Monitoring of the Catalpa-Pershing Channel Improvements Bexar County, Texas*, Texas Antiquities Permit No. 5739 (San Antonio: Atkins, 2012).

5 Anderson, Pfeiffer, and Harris, *Archeological Monitoring*.

350-car parking garage, designed by Lake Flato, was completed in 2009. It serves visitors to the Witte Museum and to other areas of the park at no cost. A notable feature of the garage is the eight-thousand-square-foot wire and galvanized-metal trellis, or “living screen,” that surrounds it and gestures to environmentally responsible practices.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPLEXITY IN SAN ANTONIO IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

The story of integration in San Antonio is fraught with complex views about the role of ethnic groups in the city. When African Americans and black Americans fought for full voting rights and economic equality through fair labor laws, places such as Selma, Alabama; Birmingham, Alabama; and Jackson, Mississippi, experienced major convulsions of violence and civic disruption. For the most part, San Antonio avoided the more violent aspects of the civil rights era. Yet, like every other southern community in the early 1950s, San Antonio followed the color line.⁶

There was no citywide segregation ordinance in San Antonio. But throughout the city, “custom and the Police Department enforced a racial separation that proved as binding. Blacks and whites patronized their respective municipal parks and playgrounds, rest rooms, drinking fountains, hotels, restaurants, and schools.”⁷ Because the city experienced a culture of segregation, which “was woven into the fabric of San Antonio life,” without impassioned violence related to white supremacy movements and organizations, “from the point of view of the majority of whites, segregation was simply a style of interaction that had been accepted from the past without thought and had continued into the present without protest.”⁸

In 1960, San Antonio was the third-largest city in Texas, with a population of 588,000. Only 44,605 black and African American people lived in the city—12,000 more than in 1950—constituting just 7 percent of the population. But approximately 40 percent of the population was comprised of Mexican Americans.⁹ Because

the black community was quite small..., whites did not perceive blacks as having the numerical base, and thus the power, to mount an effective challenge to their political, economic, social, or racial status.... A significant Mexican American population also obscured the dividing line of color. The Mexican Americans were considered nonwhite and were subjected to social and economic discrimination. Yet they enjoyed civil rights, had access to public accommodations, and were recognized as a legitimate constituency by the local political structure.

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND ETHNOGRAPHIC USES AT BRACKENRIDGE PARK

Use of the park for public celebrations by African Americans predates the civil rights era. But it demonstrates the adherence to separate spaces, as crossing this boundary was granted only when special consideration was requested. In May 1912, Commissioner Ray Lambert went before the city council and “outlined to the council his idea with regard to laying out

6 Robert A. Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965,” *The Journal of Southern History* 49, no. 3 (1983): 351, [jstor.org/stable/2208100](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2208100).

7 Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 351.

8 Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 351.

9 Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 350.

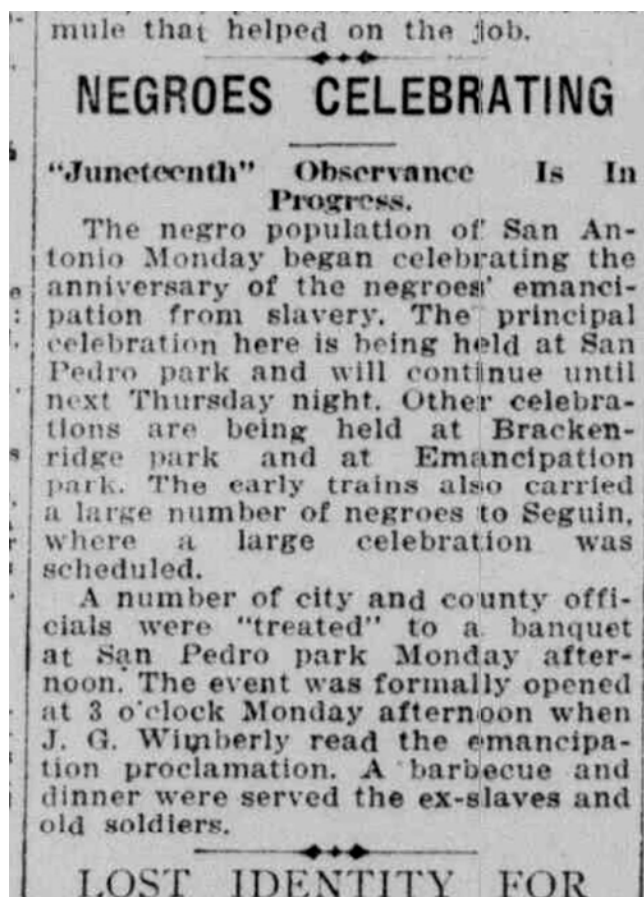


FIGURE 12-3. Juneteenth celebrations occurred in several places in San Antonio and at Seguin. While the primary gathering occurred at San Pedro Park, a group also gathered at Brackenridge Park. Source: *San Antonio Light*, Dec. 3, 1916. Source: *San Antonio Light*.

a park for negroes on that part of Brackenridge Park beginning at Josephine street, on the east side of the river, and extending several hundred feet north.”¹⁰ The end of the article states: “A petition from negroes to be allowed to use Brackenridge Park for the Emancipation Day [Juneteenth] celebration will probably be granted, provided the celebration is confined to this new park.”¹¹ In 1916, a *San Antonio Light* article notes that the principal celebration of Juneteenth in the city was happening at San Pedro [Springs] Park but that other celebrations occurred at “Brackenridge park and at Emancipation park” (figure 12-3). The article goes on to state that trains carried a large number of celebrants to Seguin, where a large celebration was planned.¹²

The Brackenridge Park Golf Course did historically allow Mexican Americans to use the course. As early as 1938, the Pan American Golf Association (PAGA) had formed; this group of Mexican American golf enthusiasts were regular players at the golf course.¹³ Although Mexican Americans were allowed to play on the course, they “weren’t invited to play in city-sponsored amateur events and the group was required to pre-pay rental fees.”¹⁴ But noted local landscape architect and architect and historian Everett Fly related that the course did not allow African American players; instead black and African American people were only allowed to be caddies. As early as 1944, African American golf caddies

at Brackenridge petitioned for the right to play golf on the public course where they already worked. It would take a decade before changes were made.

Around 1950, a distinct Mexican American tradition emerged in Brackenridge Park—one that persists today. Families began camping in the park along the banks of the San Antonio River over Easter weekend. They cook out and participate in a variety of games, such as piñatas, sack races, egg hunts, and cascarones—dyed and hollowed-out eggshells that have been dried and stuffed with confetti to later be cracked open over someone’s head. For many, the weekend concludes with a community prayer.¹⁵

The event actually originated in the 1930s, likely during or after World War II. From related news clippings, it is not clear whether the tradition was initially a primarily Mexican American event. Local historian Maria Pfeiffer has noted that St. John Lutheran church helped sponsor

10 “Engineers Want More Pay,” *San Antonio Light*, May 23, 1912.

11 “Engineers Want More Pay.”

12 “Negroes Celebrating,” *San Antonio Light*, June 19, 1916.

13 Eric Moreno and Chris Warren, “Brackenridge Park Golf Course Turns 100,” *San Antonio Magazine*, September 2016, accessed November 22, 2019, sanantoniomag.com/September-2016/Brackenridge-Park-Golf-Course-Turns-100/.

14 Moreno and Warren, “Brackenridge Park Golf Course Turns 100.”

15 Emilie Eaton, “San Antonio Family Has Celebrated Easter at Brackenridge for 66 Years,” *San Antonio Express-News*, April 21, 2019, accessed November 22, 2019, expressnews.com/news/local/article/San-Antonio-family-has-celebrated-Easter-at-13784182.php.

the Easter sunrise service¹⁶ that took place in the Sunken Garden Theater. According to a 1950 *San Antonio Express* article, the event had become a picnic and tent tradition, and that year, “75,000 to 100,000 San Antonians and out-of-town visitors” spend the day at the park, where “Many families pitched tents at their picnic site. All established picnic units in the park were occupied or being held for later use by 7 a. m. Sunday.”¹⁷ By the 1950s, a substantial Easter tradition continued in the park and was embraced by the Mexican American community. This is evidenced by published photographs and recollections belonging to San Antonio’s Mexican American community.

The event has become so steeped in the park’s identity and history that many families return generation after generation to the very same spot to camp each year (figure 12-4). This tradition informs the park’s identity, while it is also a reflection of San Antonio’s larger identity. Similar traditions exist throughout South Texas, but there are no known similar traditions in other cities with significant Mexican American populations, making it a distinctly San Antonio Tejano tradition. It is not clear why the Mexican American community took hold of this event in the 1950s, but the timing coincides with social changes that were underway in San Antonio related to equality in public spaces.

“This annual spring outing is reminiscent of the *Romerías*, the spring outings in Spain where the townspeople hike to a spot in the countryside to honor a saint or visit a hermitage with prayer and food.”¹⁸ Hand in hand with this tradition is the presence of the *cascarones*, which are found in other Mexican

American communities and throughout Mexico. Both the hike to the countryside around Easter that has taken root in South Texas and the *cascarones* likely came during Spanish missionary and colonial settlement of the area. While the camping tradition has outgrown Brackenridge and expanded into other parks, it seems to have first taken hold at Brackenridge.

Around the time that the Easter tradition became widely popular with the Mexican American community, “prodded by a lawsuit by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the City Council passed an ordinance desegregating municipal parks, golf courses, and tennis courts.”¹⁹ But the exclusion of African Americans from public swimming pools took a more insidious turn when the threat of polio was used throughout the South

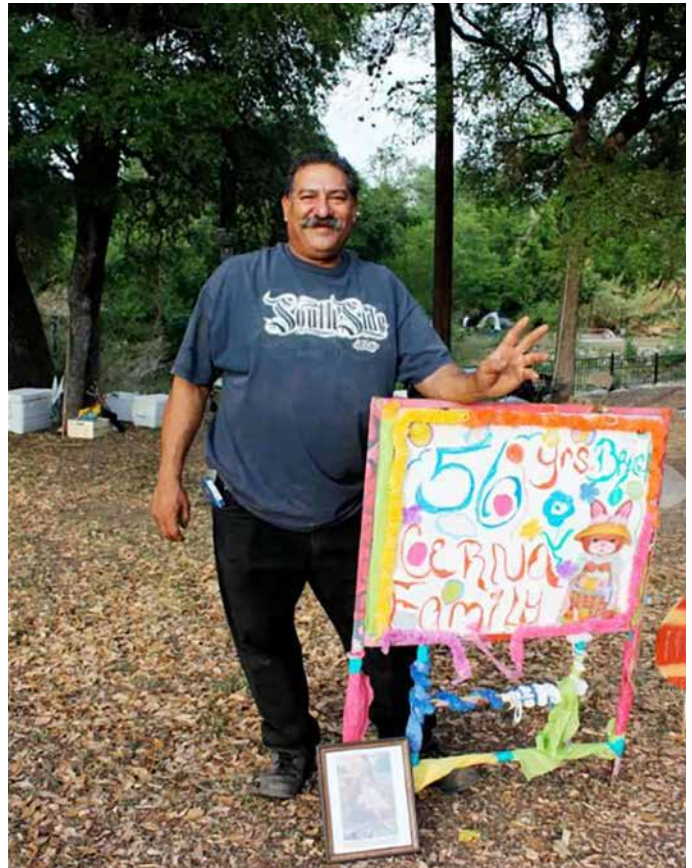


FIGURE 12-4. Photo of a member of the Cerna family standing near a handmade sign announcing fifty-six years of celebrating Easter at Brackenridge Park. Source: Ricardo Romo

16 Maria Pfeiffer, historian. “Brackenridge Park Cultural Landscape Report.” Email correspondence, November 19, 2018.

17 “Park and Zoo Draw Huge Crowd,” *San Antonio Express*, April 10, 1950, accessed November 12, 2019, newspaperarchives.com.

18 Norma Cantú, “Crack the Cascarón: A Texan Mexican Easter Tradition Continues,” *Folklife Magazine*, Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage, April 20, 2019. Accessed May 30, 2019. folklife.si.edu/magazine/cascarones-easter-tradition-continues.

19 Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 357.

as the purported excuse to close the pools. This effectively prevented full integration of facilities in many locations. Pools, buses, and railroad stations, as well as “all activities in municipal buildings” in San Antonio, would formally be integrated two years later, in 1955.²⁰

It would be eight more years before private businesses used by the public, such as stores and hotels, would also comply with desegregation policies, with “the city’s financial, governmental, and social establishments” signing “a public announcement published in all San Antonio newspapers” in June 1963. The announcement read:

Desegregation of publicly-used facilities is no longer a matter for debate. It must become a universal and immediate reality if San Antonio is to avoid the regrettable events of other cities across the face of the United States of America.²¹

The year that this formal announcement and its accompanying ordinance passed, the Brackenridge Park Golf Course, by law, opened city-sponsored golf events to its Mexican American community, “and in ‘63 PGA member Tony Holguin won the Texas Open at Brackenridge.”²² The same year, the course would begin to legally include African American golfers.

THE RISE OF PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION IN BRACKENRIDGE PARK

FIGHT OVER US 281 AND INCREASED PRESERVATION ACTIVITY

While the preservation movement in San Antonio had a long history, starting with the Alamo in 1879, it has been both galvanized and expanded in the modern era. Some have focused on the preservation of cultural resources, while others have focused on conserving ecological resources.

The end of the 1950s began with a pivotal fight over park property. As the population of San Antonio grew, more-efficient freeways and more driving lanes were part of the strategy to provide faster and safer routes to the suburban enclaves located north of downtown. The Texas Highway Department proposed the expansion of US 281, effectively carving off a portion of Brackenridge Park that included parts of the old quarry sites and adjoining built resources.

The fight over the taking of park property for highway purposes was spearheaded by the San Antonio Conservation Society (SACS). Founded in the 1920s by a group of city boosters during a period of rapid expansion in the city and upon the realization of the importance of the many historical buildings and landscapes in San Antonio, the organization was intended to protect the resources that were the key to the growing tourism industry in San Antonio. Originally founded by artist Emily Edwards and civic activist Rena Maverick Green, SACS “became the first [preservation organization] in America to seek preservation of both the historic built environment and the natural environment.”²³ The organization led opposition efforts to the freeway expansion, filing suit in 1967 to block the project. This resulted in a

20 Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 357.

21 Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery,” 358.

22 Moreno and Warren, “Brackenridge Park Golf Course Turns 100.”

23 Lewis F. Fisher, *Saving San Antonio: The Preservation of a Heritage*, 2nd ed. (San Antonio: Maverick Books, 2016), 2.

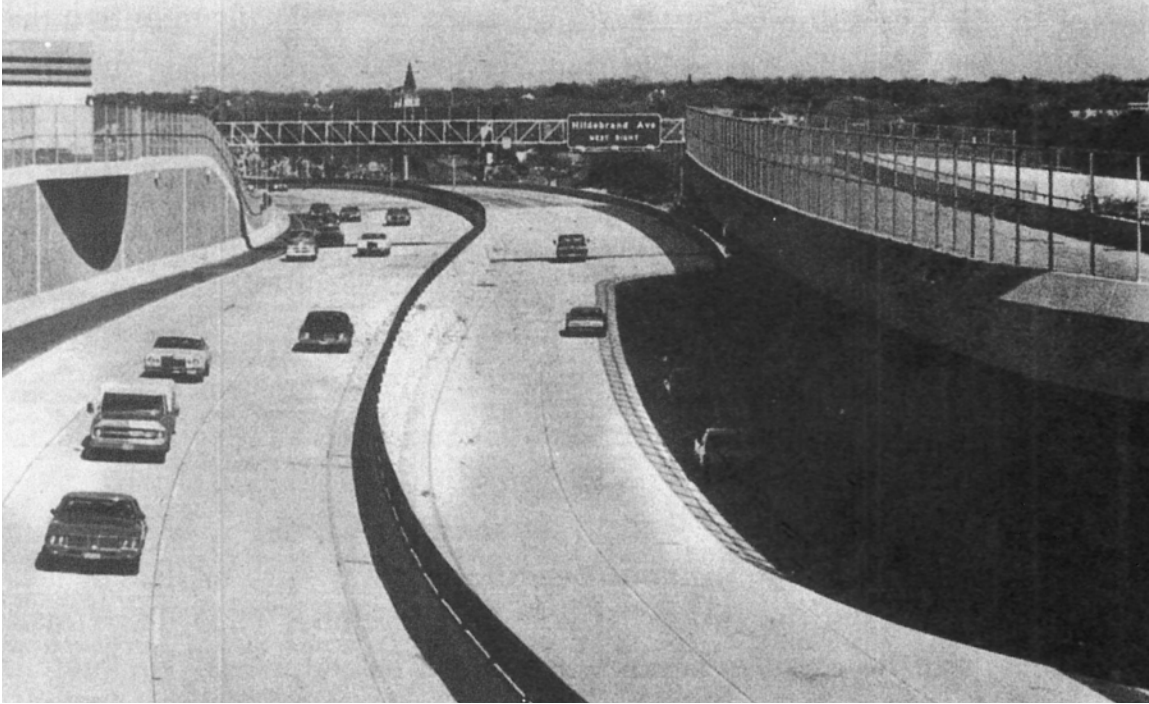


FIGURE 12-5. A view of McAllister Freeway. The completed new lanes are visible at the left. The elevated and cantilevered Alpine Drive, preserved as part of the McAllister Freeway fight, is visible at the right. Alpine Drive overlooks the Japanese Tea Garden. Source: Lewis F. Fisher

ten-year battle to reroute the planned expansion. The battle was ultimately lost with the exception of minor modifications. In the end, Alpine Drive was preserved in place by carving out an area underneath it for the new lanes of US 281. The effect was to maintain the drive as a cantilevered road with the freeway passing just below (**figure 12-5**). It is also worth noting that Brackenridge Park's original and iconic system of vehicular drives, implemented between 1899 and 1914 were largely diminished over time, with some converted to pedestrian paths (**figure 12-6**).

The decade of the 1960s was also a time when the National Park Service (NPS) began a nationwide effort to document sites and nominate them to the National Register. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 provided the legislation that created the National Register. At Brackenridge Park, the first element to be nominated to the National Register was the Alamo Portland and Roman Cement Works. The nomination was completed and accepted in 1976. This nomination included one acre and five contributing structures. The structures were the kiln chimney and four workers' cottages in the immediate vicinity of the kiln.

During the past fifty years, preservation efforts, though piecemeal, have occurred in Brackenridge Park, comprised of a series of renovations, rehabilitations, and simple repairs. The limestone rock that San Antonio is famous for is also somewhat porous, depending from which quarry the stone was extracted and the depth from which the stone was sourced. This fact necessitates the continuous monitoring of buildings, walls, and other limestone structures to ensure that they are safe. In 1981, the lower pump house, used by the Borglum Studio during the first half of the twentieth century, was repaired. Shortly thereafter, Koehler Pavilion was rehabilitated and updated to serve the changing needs of visitors. In addition



DRIVE COMPARISON

FIGURE 12-6. A comparison of Brackenridge Park's vehicular drives, showing the elaborate circuitous system in 1914 and its diminished state in the present. Source: Reed Hilderbrand

to the rehabilitation, “an adjoining concrete patio was constructed overlooking the river.”²⁴ The architectural firm of Carragone and Reyna supervised the work on the pavilion and overlook. The Sunken Garden Theater was renovated in 1984 at a cost of \$320,000. The theater’s seating was replaced, and ancillary structures were renovated or built.²⁵ The San Antonio Zoo at Brackenridge was further expanded in 1987. Its lease on forty-six acres allows it to expand, rehabilitate, and revise exhibits following formal requests for improvement submitted to and approved by the city. During the 1990s, the Upper Labor Dam was “partially excavated and documented and then covered for protection” of the resource.²⁶

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

As a result of the McAllister Freeway fight, awareness was heightened of the park as an important archaeological resource, and the need to document such resources took on a new urgency. In 1979, Susanna R. Katz and Anne A. Fox authored the “Archaeological and Historical Assessment of Brackenridge Park, City of San Antonio, Texas.” The survey work detailed in the report was completed in 1976 in preparation for a 1979 master plan for Brackenridge Park. The report employed a comprehensive view of the park’s resources and especially the potential that the land within the park had to provide additional information related to the prehistory, protohistory, and early history of San Antonio. This early survey identified “15 prehistoric and 27 historic sites and features within the boundaries of Brackenridge Park,”²⁷ and “reflect[ed] a variety of activities which have been carried out over a period of several thousand years.”²⁸

That same year, Fox authored a report on archaeological, architectural, and historical sites along the San Antonio River from Olmos Dam to South Alamo Street. This report also recorded important sites on San Pedro Creek from San Pedro Park to Guadalupe Street, and it provides a more comprehensive record of areas along both major water bodies within San Antonio. San Pedro Creek and the San Antonio River have provided important resources for the growth and prosperity of the city and region. Since Fox’s report, much more archaeological work has been conducted in Brackenridge Park. Most of it has been driven by development projects slated for the park rather than by research.

In 2011, remnants of the Acequia Madre de Valero and its associated dam were discovered near the Witte Museum. This resulted in an extensive survey and corresponding tests around the locations of the dams and acequias. A year later, during the construction of an ultraviolet water filtration system in the San Antonio Zoo, a “20-foot-long covered stone sluiceway” was unearthed and determined to be part of the original acequia system—namely, the Upper Labor Acequia, constructed beginning in 1760. “Buried under 5 feet of fill with its ends hidden by a decorative wall, heavy brush and mud,” an article reported, “the culvert looks like it was built for carrying excess water to the San Antonio River.”²⁹

24 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 13.

25 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 17.

26 Pfeiffer and Tomka, “Brackenridge Park,” 10.

27 Susanna R. Katz and Anne A. Fox, *Archaeological and Historical Assessment of Brackenridge Park, City of San Antonio, Texas. Archaeological Survey Report, No. 33* (San Antonio: Center for Archaeological Research/The University of Texas at San Antonio, 1979), 22.

28 Katz and Fox, *Archaeological and Historical Assessment*, 22.

29 Colin McDonald, “Piece of History Is Found near Zoo,” *My San Antonio*, November 22, 2012, accessed October 2, 2019, mysanantonio.com/news/environment/article/Piece-of-history-is-found-near-zoo-4060630.php.

New opportunities for preservation emerged as part of the identification and documentation of the resources. In 2013, Brackenridge Park was named a Texas State Antiquities Landmark, the highest designation within the state of Texas.³⁰ Changes within the Texas Historical Commission created the opportunity for Brackenridge Park to seek an elevated status. The Texas Historical Commission expanded the review standards to include standing structures as part of their overall assessment of the significance of a cultural landscape. This change allowed Brackenridge Park to include the historic bridges, the faux bois art of Dionicio Rodriguez, the remaining buildings of the Alamo Cement plant, and the buildings associated with the San Antonio Water Works, the Brackenridge Park Golf Course, the Witte Museum, Pioneer's Hall, and the San Antonio Zoo.

A NEW GENERATION OF FLOOD MANAGEMENT

The state of Texas has a history of devastating floods followed by severe droughts. The role that water management has played in San Antonio's development has been markedly evident from the inception of the acequia system in 1719. This system, while not evident today, continues to exist beneath the surface, and its original purposes remain relevant today (**figure 12-7**). The entire agricultural harvest for a year can be lost if drought lingers during the growing season. George Brackenridge learned this lesson during the drought of 1858, when he lost the majority of his financial assets due to agricultural losses from a dry-land farming venture. Likewise, nearly sixty years later,

in 1917, the voters of Texas, recognizing the necessity of developing and conserving the State's water resources and inspired by devastating floods of 1913 and 1914, passed a Constitutional amendment allowing the Legislature to create special purpose political subdivisions of the State to serve regional areas, generally coincidental with river basins and to be generally known as river authorities.³¹

A string of drought years between 1954 and 1956 created yet more urgency around this issue, which brought about the formation of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). Founded in 1957, the TWDB looks at water from a statewide perspective, coordinating between the various regional agencies to ensure an adequate and clean water supply for the state's growing economy. Roughly fifty years after the creation of the TWDB, the regional drought in 2011 created a new urgency within the TWDB. Many areas have recovered, albeit slowly, but increasing demand and population growth are putting pressure on state water supplies.³²

30 Eileen Pace, "Brackenridge Park Named State Antiquities Landmark," Texas Public Radio, October 24, 2013, accessed November 20, 2019, tpr.org/post/brackenridge-park-named-state-antiquities-landmark.

31 "About San Antonio River Authority," San Antonio River Authority, accessed June 6, 2019, sara-tx.org/about.

32 "What the Texas Water Development Board Means to You," State Impact Texas, NPR, accessed November 20, 2019, stateimpact.npr.org/texas/tag/texas-water-development-board/.

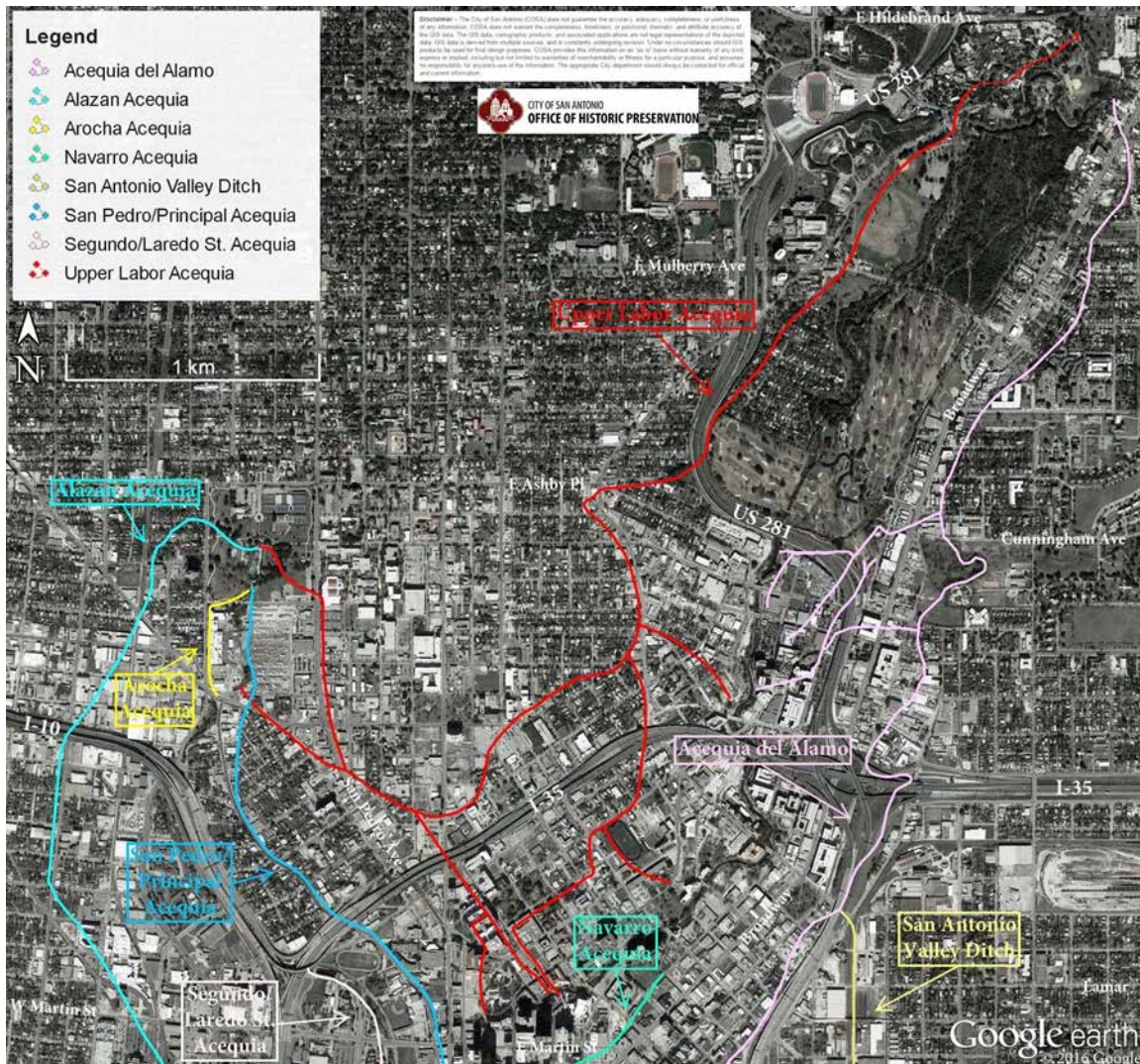


FIGURE 12–7. Overlay map showing San Antonio’s historic acequia system on the grid of the city today. Brackenridge Park is pictured in the upper right corner. Source: “San Antonio Missions: Nomination for Inscription on the World Heritage List”

A more recent seminal event in the management of water in Texas was the creation of the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA), established by the Texas legislature in 1993. A series of lawsuits questioning the legitimacy of the EAA, however, delayed its operational onset until 1996. In concert with groundwater conservation districts (GCDs), the EAA has the “power of eminent domain, the power to issue permits for drilling of water wells anywhere in the Edwards Aquifer jurisdiction, and the power to regulate the amount of water pumped.”³³

Within San Antonio, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) responded to the continued dangers associated with flooding along the San Antonio River by initiating, in partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers, the first of two tunnels. The first, the San Pedro Creek Tunnel, was completed in 1991. It carries “floodwaters 150 feet beneath downtown San Antonio and releases it downstream.”³⁴

33 Charles R. Porter Jr., *Spanish Water, Anglo Water: Early Development in San Antonio* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 131-32.

34 “The People’s Waterway,” San Antonio River Improvements Project, San Antonio River Authority, accessed June 8, 2019, sanantonioriver.org/river_history/history.php.



FIGURE 12–8. A panoramic view of Tunnel Inlet Park, showing the open character of the southern-most point of Brackenridge Park. This portion of the park does not currently feel integrated with the rest of the park, but it demonstrates the varied character of the riparian corridor. Source: Suzanne Turner Associates

In 1993, construction began on the second tunnel. The effort was intended to

bifurcate the river in the name of flood prevention. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in a collaboration with the San Antonio River Authority, built a tunnel (twenty-four feet in diameter) one hundred feet below the heart of the city center. The tunnel, like the Great Bend cutoff channel from decades earlier, allows water to be diverted from the most critical investments at times of risk without affecting the appearance of the river the rest of the time. In 2002, the tunnel was put to the test and proved successful in diverting water from a massive storm that would have otherwise inundated downtown.³⁵

In 1997, the San Antonio River Tunnel Inlet was completed. The entrance to the tunnel begins in Brackenridge Park at its lower boundary near Josephine Street and carries water underneath the city to an outlet downstream (**figure 12-8**). The infrastructure serves a dual purpose, relieving the effects of both flooding and periods of drought.

When not actively being used as a flood bypass, the tunnel becomes an aquifer. Water is drawn in at the southern outflow and, with minimal pumping, it is pumped up into the river at the north end of the city where the tunnel begins. The flood tunnel allows the three-mile stretch of the river in the city center to function as a hydraulic loop, ensuring that there will be water in the river year-round regardless of rainfall or the condition of the aquifer. Once again, the linear flow of water was looped back on itself to support San Antonio's daily life.... The tunnel ensures that the river will reliably and perennially flow.³⁶

It is widely recognized and accepted that the completion of this second tunnel prevented what would have been widespread flooding during a flood event in 1998, the year after its completion.

35 David Malda, "Landscape Narratives and the San Antonio River" in *River Cities: City Rivers*, ed. Thaisa Way (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018), 255.

36 Malda, "Landscape Narratives and the San Antonio River," 255.

Growing public understanding that the river and its systems are a regional resource and the desire to undo some of the environmental damage of the last part of the twentieth century have resulted in a range of projects. These projects aim to address flooding and drainage and to address aesthetic and ecological opportunities that the river provides.

All recent river work has not come in the form of large-scale infrastructural projects. Over the past decade, through a close collaboration among the Army Corps of Engineers, the San Antonio River Authority, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, and numerous dedicated groups of residents, the character of the San Antonio River to the north and south of downtown has seen dramatic transformation as well. Once fortified and channelized in the name of flood prevention, the stewards of the river now consider ecological health and community access important. Native plants and trees grow along more gradual and varied slopes with a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths running above. Residents are returning to the river through this linear park.³⁷

As a result of this change in focus, amenities such as the Mission Reach and the Museum Reach provide connections to the river, with recreational opportunities for visitors and citizens.

Another serious flood event occurred in 2002. It has become increasingly obvious that in order to address the repeated flooding that has continued to impact the city, it will be necessary to embrace a holistic regional approach to water management.

A new generation of flood management emerged in this community in 2002 with creation of the Bexar Regional Watershed Management (BRWM) partnership. This partnership among Bexar County, the City of San Antonio, SARA and 20 suburban cities takes a holistic, regional approach to managing flood control, storm water and water quality. The program established uniform design, operation and maintenance standards; coordinates local, state and federal funding; and provides an opportunity to measure and evaluate the quality of services delivered to citizens of Bexar County.³⁸

In addition to changes being made in Brackenridge to address water management, portions of the park were constructed, renovated, or repaired between 2003 and 2006 with the use of city bond funds. The affected areas included picnic grounds and associated furniture and structures, the Joske Pavilion and the adjacent playground, some of the river walls, the Dionicio Rodriguez footbridge, and hiking trails. The work also provided for irrigation using recycled water, the conversion of interior roadways to pedestrian trails, the installation of public art, the renovation of the Lions Field playground, and adjustments to the park entrance at Funston Place.³⁹

37 Malda, "Landscape Narratives and the San Antonio River," 255.

38 "People's Waterway."

39 Pfeiffer and Tomka, "Brackenridge Park," 70.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Brackenridge Park Conservancy (BPC), formed in 2008 to preserve and enhance “the park’s natural, historic and recreational resources.”⁴⁰ More recently, Brackenridge Park became the recipient of San Antonio city bond issues that have resulted in resources devoted to maintenance and improvements at the park. These improvements range from cultural components to ecological projects, including one at the Catalpa-Pershing drainage area.

In the early 1980s, sociologist Galen Cranz categorized the different eras of park design according to changes in four broad uses. These included the picturesque-inspired Pleasure Ground park, which Brackenridge Park reflected between 1899 and 1914; the City Beautiful-inspired reform park, reflected in Brackenridge between 1915 and the 1930s; the recreation facility, enacted largely because of the Works Progress Administration and which Brackenridge reflected from the mid-1930s to approximately 1949; and the open-space system, prompted by the preservation movement. In 2004, Cranz updated these categories with a fifth model of park development,⁴¹ the sustainable park, driven by a growing ecological conservation movement.

The partnership between the BPC, SARA, and the San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department in commissioning this cultural landscape report speaks volumes about the city’s growing recognition that cultural and ecological resources in its parklands must be considered together. Put another way, park leadership is keenly aware that cultural preservation and ecological conservation are not two sides of one coin but instead sharing each side of the coin. This partnership resulted in the inclusion of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to assess the site’s ecology and participate in creating recommendations for the park’s preservation Treatment. These decisions, viewed broadly, demonstrate that the city of San Antonio and its large municipal park are steeped in what Cranz called the sustainable park, which realizes more sustainable development and practices in concert with human uses.

40 “Mission & History,” Brackenridge Park Conservancy, accessed September 25, 2019, brackenridgepark.org/about/mission-history.

41 Galen Cranz and Michael Bolan, “Defining the Sustainable Park: A Fifth Model for Urban Parks,” *Landscape Journal* 23, no. 2 (2004): 102–20, doi.org/10.3368/lj.23.2.102.

On August 18, 2019, San Antonio mayor Ron Nirenberg and a citizen’s advisory committee voted to endorse a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. This action was approved by the city council at their meeting on October 17, 2019. “If adopted, Nirenberg floated the creation of a citizen’s advisory commission to help oversee its implementation.”⁴² Overall, the plan takes a comprehensive view of each of the issues that contribute to and that mitigate the negative consequences of global warming. The plan calls for the San Antonio region to achieve carbon neutrality by the year 2050. As the city’s chief sustainability officer, Doug Melnick spearheaded the effort.

Progress is not just measured in days, months, and years. One hundred and twenty years into Brackenridge Park’s history, it is evident that the park has adapted to ever-changing needs in the community, in city administrations, and in the environment. Brackenridge Park, as a municipal park of substantial size and cultural and ecological significance, is uniquely positioned to lead the region in reimagining what an urban cultural park with an overriding ecological foundation can mean to the community. Along with other world-renowned cultural sites in San Antonio, cultural tourism and ecotourism might be developed to new levels for those who appreciate the combination of culture and environment that the park embodies.

42 Brendan Gibbons, “October Vote Set for City’s Climate Plan,” *Rivard Report*, Institute for Nonprofit News, August 19, 2019, accessed November 4, 2019, therivardreport.com/october-vote-set-for-citys-climate-plan/##targetText=The%20plan%20will%20go%20before,Oct.%2017%2C%20Nirenberg%20said.&targetText=The%20document’s%20newest%20draft%20maintains,gases%20driving%20rapid%20global%20warming.



FIGURE 12-9. Period Plan: 1899 – 1914. Source: Reed Hilderbrand

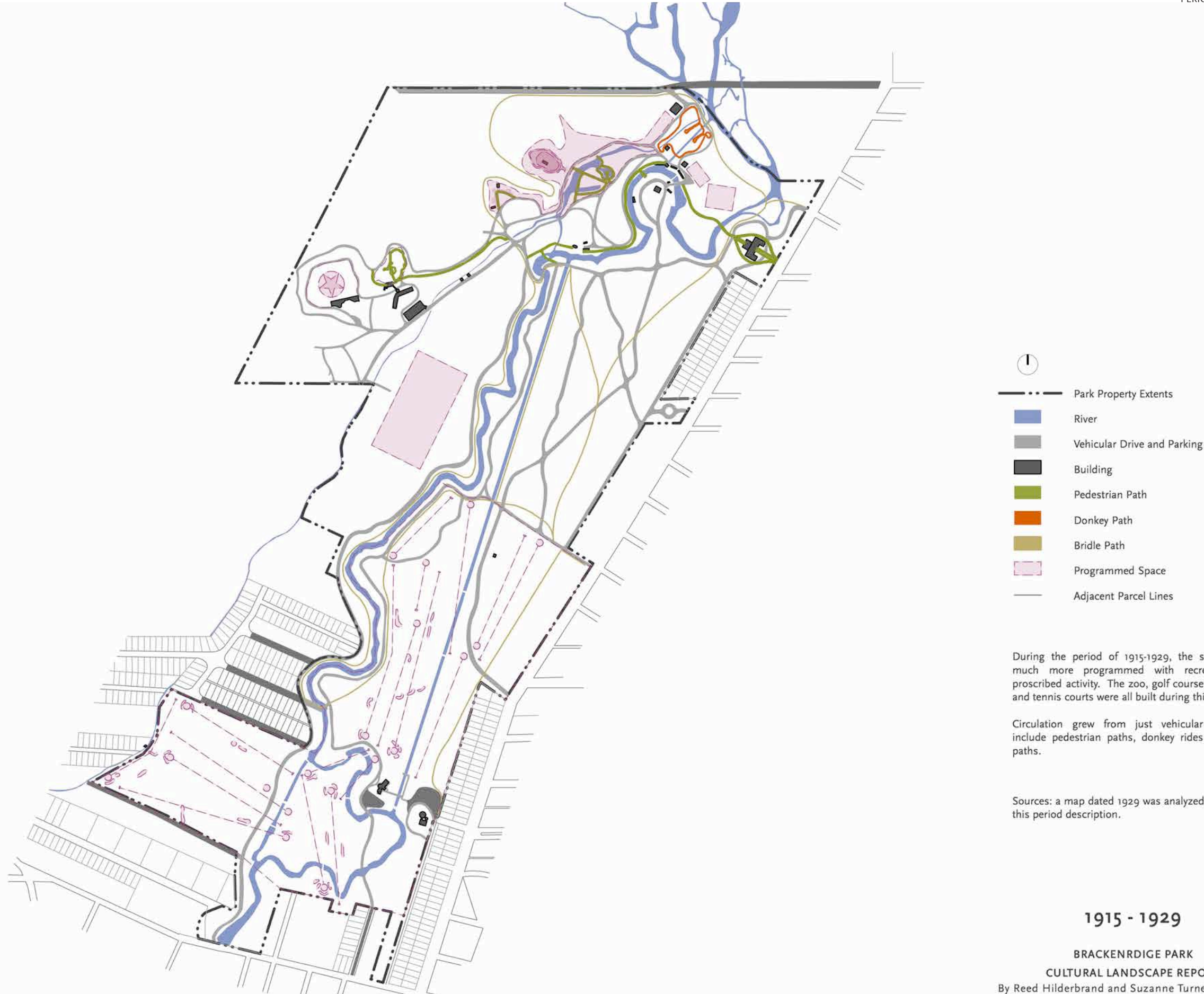
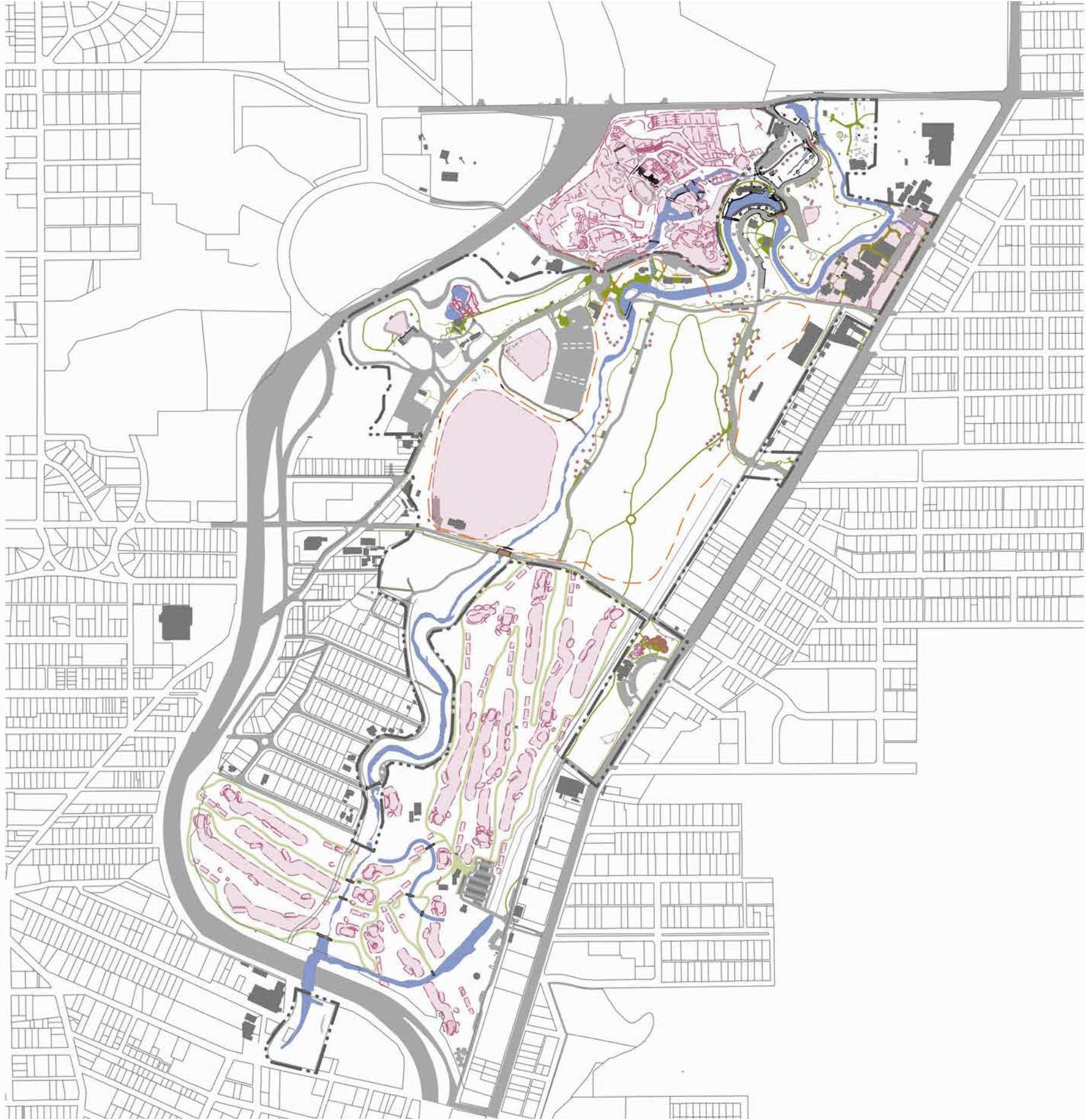


FIGURE 12–10. Period Plan: 1915 – 1929. Source: Reed Hilderbrand



-
- Park Property Extents
 - River
 - Vehicular Drive and Parking
 - Building
 - Pedestrian Path
 - Pedestrian Path within Golf Course
 - Programmed Space
 - Recreational Rail
 - Parcel Lines

In the present period, parking lots have expanded to accomodate more public parking, and the Zoo system and Witte Museum have both grown.

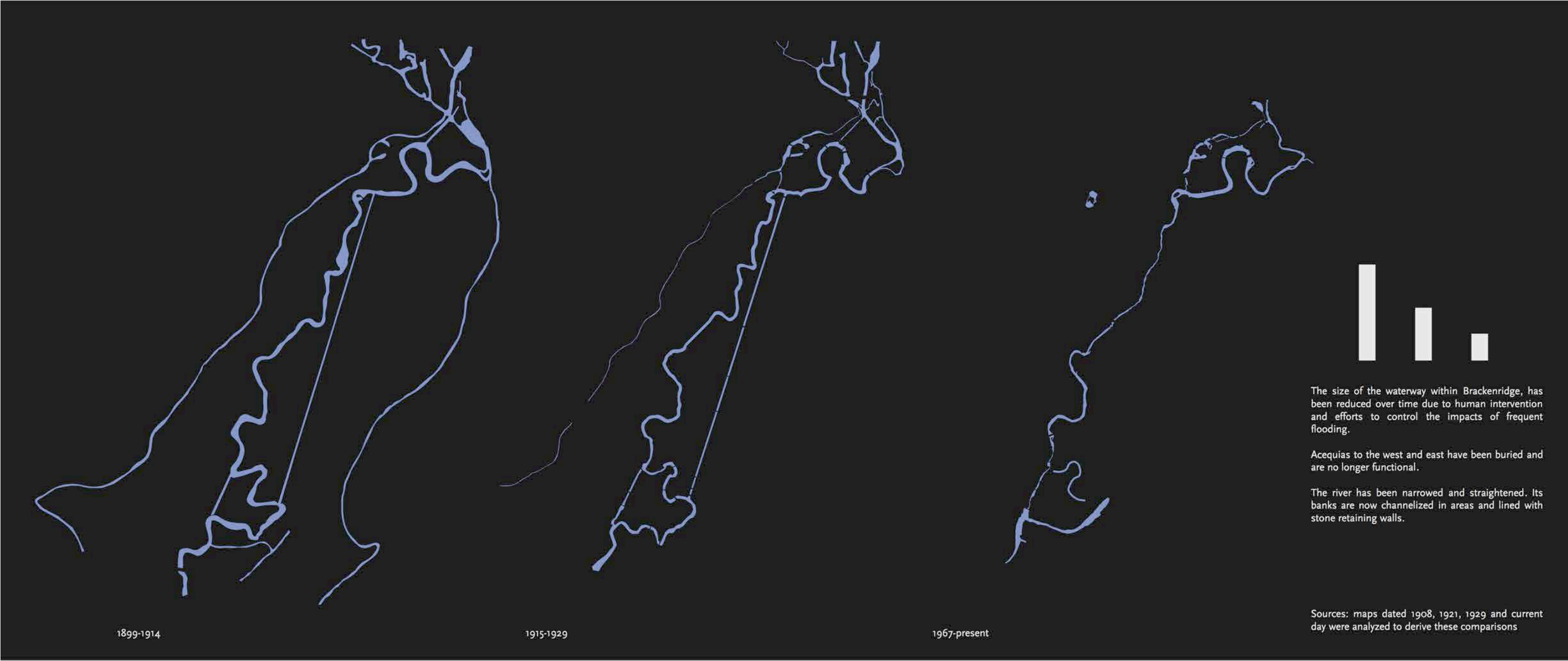
Circulation is comprised of vehicular drives, pedestrian paths and the recreational rail; the donkey and bridle paths are gone.

Sources: current day mapping was analyzed to produce this period description.

1967 - PRESENT

BRACKENRDIGE PARK
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT
By Reed Hilderbrand and Suzanne Turner Associates

FIGURE 12–11. Period Plan: 1967 – present. Source: Reed Hilderbrand



HYDROLOGY - FORM

BRACKENRDIGE PARK
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT
By Reed Hilderbrand and Suzanne Turner Associates

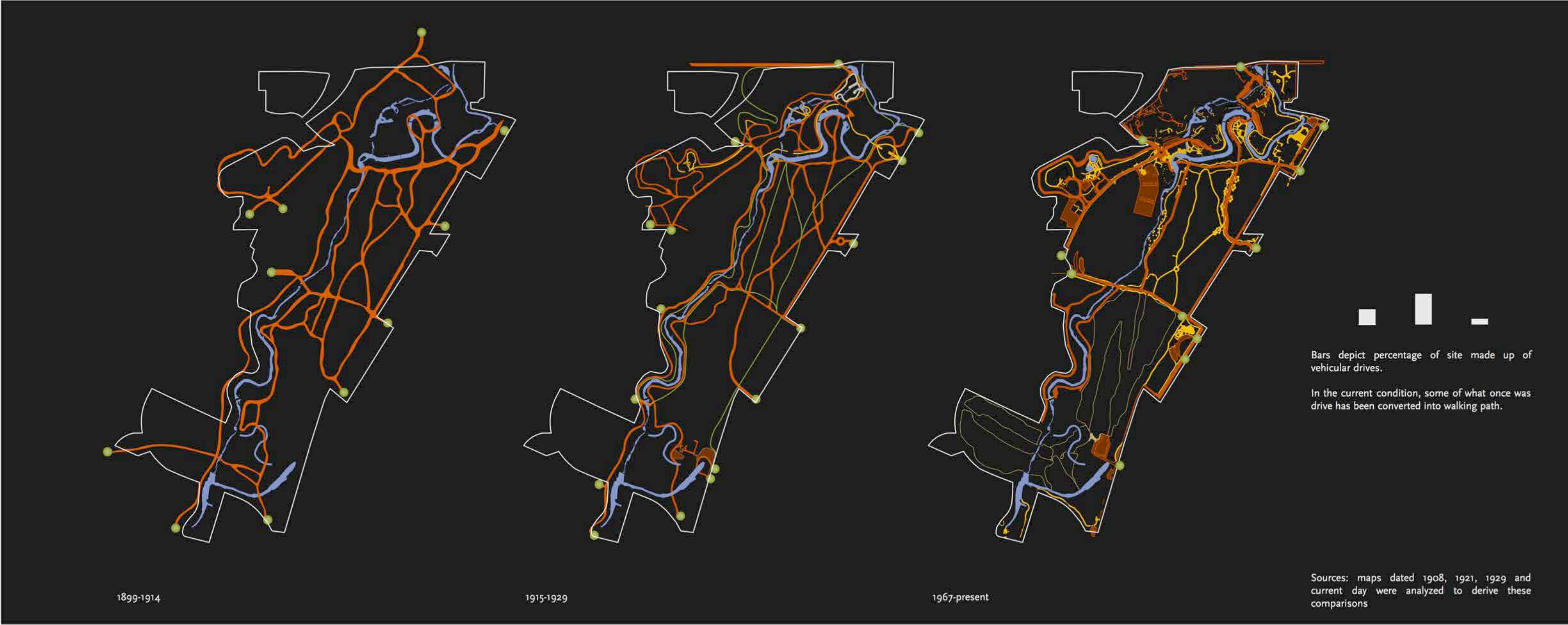
FIGURE 12–12. Period Plan Comparison of Programmed Space. Source: Reed Hilderbrand



PARK BOUNDARY

BRACKENRDIGE PARK
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT
By Reed Hilderbrand and Suzanne Turner Associates

FIGURE 12–13. Period Plan Comparison of Park Boundaries. Source: Reed Hilderbrand



CIRCULATION

BRACKENRDIGE PARK
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT
By Reed Hilderbrand and Suzanne Turner Associates

FIGURE 12–14. Period Plan Comparison of Circulation. Source: Reed Hilderbrand



BUILDINGS

BRACKENRDIGE PARK
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT
By Reed Hilderbrand and Suzanne Turner Associates

FIGURE 12–15. Period Plan Comparison of Buildings. Source: Reed Hilderbrand



PROGRAMMED SPACE

BRACKENRDIGE PARK
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT
By Reed Hilderbrand and Suzanne Turner Associates

FIGURE 12–16. Period Plan Comparison of Programmed Space. Source: Reed Hilderbrand