

ALAMO AREA NATURE CHALLENGE 2012: HISTORY TOUR

Address: 950 East Hildebrand Avenue, San Antonio, Texas 78212

Entering the park from Hildebrand you will see a parking area surrounding a large stone building. Your tour will start and finish here. At an easy walking pace, your visit should last 60-90 minutes. The terrain is flat and the paths are generally suitable for strollers and wheelchairs.

Brackenridge Park, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is home to some of the most important historic sites in San Antonio. Some of them, like the gardens of Miraflores, are visible today but have gone through many changes over the years. Others, like the Paleo-Indian campgrounds or the 1776 Upper Labor dam, are buried in the earth and have left few traces on the surface. During today's visit you will learn about a wide range of sites, spanning thousands of years, with many different types of uses. The stories you will learn are really the history of San Antonio, the unique and fascinating place we call home.

The San Antonio River rises from springs just a few hundred yards to the north and has attracted and sustained human beings for thousands of years. The river is formed by clean water that flows from the Edwards Aquifer to the surface through artesian springs. Without its water, our city wouldn't exist. The park itself was established in 1899 with a gift of land along the river from George W. Brackenridge. Most of the sites you will learn about today are related to the San Antonio River. In addition, many are built from stone quarried within the park, which was also used for other important buildings such as the Spanish Colonial Missions.

Today you will take a self-guided tour of thirteen of the historic sites within Brackenridge Park:

- Site #1. The Donkey Barn
- Site #2. Electric Pump Station #3
- Site #3. Lambert Beach Bath House
- Site #4. Pump House #1
- Site #5. Lenticular Bridge
- Site #6. Joske Memorial Pavilion
- Site #7. Picnic Tables and Benches
- Site #8. Bathrooms
- Site #9. Archaeological Sites
- Site #10. Dionicio Rodriguez Bridge
- Site #11. Miraflores

Site #12. Reconstructed Acequia
Site #13. Upper Labor Dam

Site #1: Donkey Barn

In 1916, the San Antonio Rotary Club made a gift of twelve burros, or donkeys, to the children of San Antonio. The donkeys gave rides to children along a trail in the park and were kept in a corral near the river until a barn was built in 1920. The stone structure located close to the Hildebrand entrance to the park has traditionally been called "the Donkey Barn" and it is likely that part of this building was originally used as a barn for the burros. Later, it was also used to store hay for the San Antonio Zoo. In 1956 the barn was renovated, or prepared for a new use, as offices. The City of San Antonio Department of Parks and Recreation had offices here for more than 40 years. Today the building is empty and there are plans to renovate it again to be an education and visitors center for the San Antonio Zoo and Brackenridge Park. Look at the front of the building, which is called the front façade: does it remind you of another famous San Antonio building? The decorative design around the lower windows is also borrowed, but from Mission San Jose. Finally, notice the buttresses at the base of the corner towers and around the door. A buttress is a supporting structure built on one side of a wall to make it stronger.

DEFINITIONS--Masonry: Stone or brick construction. Most of the historic buildings in Brackenridge Park are masonry and many are built from limestone that was cut, or quarried, in the park. These old quarries are now home to the Sunken Garden Theater, Japanese Tea Gardens and San Antonio Zoo.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--How are barns different from office buildings? What changes would be needed to renovate a barn into offices?

Site #2. Pump Station #3

Facing the front façade of the Donkey Barn, turn left (south). You will walk along a paved road and parking area; the chain link fence on your right is the edge of the San Antonio Zoo. Ahead of you there is a live oak tree in the middle of the road and a small building to the left. This is our second stop, Electric Pump Station #3. This square building, also made of limestone and with a tile roof, was built to house an electric pump that took water out of the river and pumped it into a water tank for storage. The pump has been removed and this building is no longer used. There is a metal plaque over the door of the building that tells us who built it and when. Note the date on the

plaque--you'll need it to get your sticker at the end of the mission! Public buildings often have plaques or inscriptions that provide information about the building's history and the people who were involved in its construction. Sometimes the architect (designer), contractor (builder), and funder or donor (the person or people who gave the money) are also named.

DEFINITIONS--Barrel Tile: A rounded, thin piece of clay used for roofing. Barrel tile roofs are common on stone structures in Brackenridge Park.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Look around the Pump Station #3. Do you see a lot of water? Today, less water flows in the San Antonio River and from springs in this area than in the past. Why do you think this might be? Consider the underground Edwards Aquifer and how many people now use its water.

Site #3: Lambert Beach Bath House

Standing in front of the Electric Pump Station, you will see that the road continues on your right. It then curves to the left (east) and crosses two small stone bridges. There are three stone buildings on the other side of the road. We don't know much about the smallest structure, which has no roof and looks like it might have been a place for selling food. The long building with many arched openings and windows is our next stop. This is the Lambert Beach Bath House. It was built in 1925 so that people swimming in the San Antonio River would have a place to change their clothes. This part of the river was a public swimming pool known as Lambert Beach from 1915 to 1950. If you look at the banks of the river here, you can still see the steps leading down to the water. A plaque on the Bath House tells us that it was renovated in 1992 to become a play area for children. The Bath House is also masonry, of a type called rubble, and was designed by architect Emmett Jackson.

DEFINITIONS--Rubble: Construction using stones of various, irregular shapes and sizes. Rubble masonry is typical of buildings in Brackenridge Park.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--How is this building similar to the Donkey Barn? How do they look alike? What do their histories have in common?

Site #4: Pump House #1

Near the Bath House is a dressed limestone building with glazed windows--that is, a building made of stone that has been cut and

smoothed by masons (stoneworkers) and that has glass in its windows. Marks on the stone show that it once was covered with plaster, or was intended to be. This building, which is now used for storage, has a very important story to tell about life in San Antonio. Today, it is easy to take plumbing for granted. You turn on a faucet and clean drinking water comes out; you flush a toilet and waste is whisked away. But San Antonio did not have a system for providing water through pipes to houses, businesses and fire hydrants until the 1870s. Before that time, people relied on the river, acequia system and private wells. Pump House #1 was part of the San Antonio Water Works and was built in 1877-78. A channel called a raceway carried water under the building where turbines used the force of the flowing water to pump it up hill to a storage area or reservoir. The water was then released through pipes and flowed by gravity down hill and into homes and businesses. The reservoir was located on one of the highest points in the area, where the San Antonio Botanical Gardens are today. Pump House #1 was built in 1878 and is the oldest industrial building still standing in San Antonio.

DEFINITION--Quoin: A block that forms the exterior corner of a building, especially one that differs in material or design from the rest of the wall.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Look for quoins on Pump House #1. How is this building different from the other buildings you have seen in Brackenridge Park?

Site #5: Lenticular Bridge

Continue to follow the road along the edge of the river to the left (east) of the Pump House. Spanning the river is a bridge made of cast iron and painted black and gold. Originally located downtown, this bridge was moved to Brackenridge Park in 1925 during a period when automobiles and trucks were becoming more common, downtown's streets were widened, and bridges had to be strengthened or replaced. This bridge has lenticular or lens-shaped trusses. A truss is a framework of beams that supports a bridge or other structure. Look at the bridge from the side--can you see an "eye" shape outlined by the beams? This especially strong lenticular design was patented by the Berlin Iron Bridge Company, which manufactured this bridge in Connecticut. It was shipped to San Antonio via the railroad. Although a plaque on the bridge says "National Youth Administration, 1937-1938" it is not known if it refers to work on the bridge on nearby stone walls along the river.

DEFINITION--National Youth Administration (NYA): NYA was a

national, federal program created to train and employ young people between the ages of 16 and 25 during the Great Depression. The NYA operated from 1935 to 1943. In addition to classwork, many young people worked on public construction and repair projects.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--What other materials are used for building bridges in Brackenridge Park?

Site #6. Joske Memorial Pavilion

As you cross the bridge, look to your left. A two-story multicolored masonry building called the Joske Memorial Pavilion is located just beyond the playground. This building was constructed in 1926 after local department store owner Alexander Joske made a gift of \$10,000 to the City of San Antonio. Find the plaque inside that provides more details! Also look again for the Alamo motif. Joske Pavilion was designed by the same architect, Emmett Jackson, who designed the Lambert Beach Bath house. This pavilion is open to the public and can be rented for special events by contacting the San Antonio Department of Parks and Recreation.

DEFINITION--Motif: In architecture, a recurring design element, such as a shape or decorative detail.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Standing inside the Joske Pavilion, look up. Although they look like wood, the beams in the ceiling are made of concrete. Why might concrete be a better choice than wood?

Site #7. Picnic Tables and Benches

On the other side of Joske Pavilion from the playground you will see a number of stone benches, tables, and barbecue pits. These structures can be found throughout Brackenridge Park. Look for plaques that say "Works Projects Administration, 1938-1940." Made of concrete and stone, each table also has a tile bearing a number. Nineteen picnic units were built by the Works Projects Administration (WPA) over this two-year period, just as the NYA was carrying out other public projects in the park. The WPA was a national, federal program for adults who could not find paid work to support themselves or their families during the Great Depression (1929-1940).

DEFINITION--The word barbecue entered the English language through the Spanish barbacoa, a word borrowed in the 1600s from the Arawakan people living on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola; it referred to the framework of sticks used hold meat above the fire for roasting.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--During the Great Depression many people in San Antonio had very little money. Why would a public park have been especially important during that time?

Site #8. Bathrooms

Visiting our next site requires you to head back the way you came, crossing the lenticular bridge going the other direction. Straight ahead you will see the edge of the softball field. Following the road, turn left away from the softball field. In front of you and to the right is a rubble masonry building with carved limestone details and wooden eaves. Eaves are the part of the roof that extends over the outside wall. Openings above the walls and on the roof provide ventilation. This building and another very similar building just to the west (across the road and the Water Works raceway from where you are standing) were built as bathrooms or changing rooms for people visiting Lambert Beach. Today this building houses men's and women's restrooms and the other structure is used for storage. Walk around the building and notice the architectural details, including stone waterspouts at one end, buttresses, and even the date of construction worked into the masonry. If you can't find the date, look to the left of the entrance to the women's restroom.

DEFINITION--Ventilation: Providing fresh air to a room or building and allowing circulation of air within the building.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--When this building was constructed, there was no air conditioning, so circulating air kept it cooler inside. Can you think of another reason ventilation is important for a bathroom?

Site #9: Archaeological Sites

Our next sites are all around you but can't be seen. As you follow the sidewalk north toward the banks of the river again, think about the fact that people known as Paleo-Indians began living in this area more than 10,000 years ago. Later groups of Native Americans continued living here until the 1700s. For these families, the river was like a grocery store. They hunted animals that came to drink and eat along the river, and also found fish, eels, crayfish, and mollusks in the river itself. The river also supported oaks, pecans, mulberries, grapes and many other edible plants. People who lived here used another park resource, chert (a type of stone often called flint) to make tools such as knives and spear points. Plants and animals provided not only food but also clothing and even jewelry. The land and the river supplied everything these families needed for their daily life. They cooked food and warmed themselves at fires called hearths. The remains of these fires, including ash, charcoal and rocks, can be found through the

practice of archaeology. Tools such as spear points and scrapers up to 8,000 years old have also been found in Brackenridge Park. Today, these sites are buried underneath many feet of soil. The older the site, the more deeply it is buried.

DEFINITION--Archaeology: The science of studying people who lived in the past by examining the remains of things that they used, ate or made, typically through excavation (digging into the ground). An archaeologist is someone who practices archaeology.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Can you think of something that you own or use that would survive being buried in the ground for 8,000 years?

Site #10: Dionicio Rodríguez Bridge

Keep following the sidewalk that runs along the left (west) edge of the picnic area and open field. The road is on your left as you walk back towards the river. Just before you reach the river, the sidewalk material will change from concrete to crushed stone, which looks like coarse, orange-colored dirt. Take a left on this path and head toward the "wooden" bridge that crosses two ditches. The larger ditch is the Water Works raceway, which you learned about at site #4; the smaller ditch is the restored acequia channel, #12 on our tour. Site #10 is the bridge itself, created by artist Dionicio Rodríguez in 1926. Although it seems to be made of wood it is actually constructed from concrete reinforced with steel. Rodríguez, who also created a number of other artworks in the park in the 1920s and 1930s, developed his own secret process to shape and color light fixtures, benches, tables, gates, bridges and other pieces that look like wood or stone but are not; this type of artwork is called *trabajo rustico* or *faux bois*. Four other well-known works of *trabajo rustico* are Rodríguez's entrance gates to the Japanese Tea Garden and the trolley stop on Broadway, and the H-E-B Treehouse at the Witte Museum and the grotto on the Museum Reach of San Antonio River by Rodríguez's grand-nephew Carlos Cortes.

DEFINITION--Rustic: In art and architecture, roughly-finished or unfinished stone or wood, or other materials made to resemble rocks, branches, vines etc. in their natural state.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Which of the buildings you have visited in the park today might be described as rustic?

Site #11. Miraflores

From the end of the Dionicio Rodriguez bridge, look down at the river to your right. You will see another small bridge crossing the river that

leads to Miraflores. What you see before you is all that remains of the gardens of Qunita Urrutia, an estate built by physician Dr. Aureliano Urrutia and where he lived with his family for forty years. Urrutia had been an important political figure in Mexico and was forced to leave the country after the government collapsed in 1914 during the decade of the Mexican Revolution. Urrutia established a busy and prosperous medical practice in San Antonio and was well-known in the community, hosting many social gatherings at Quinta Urrutia and Miraflores. Urrutia brought Dionicio Rodríguez to San Antonio, and many of the artist's earliest known works adorn Miraflores. These gardens looked very different during their heyday because artesian wells supplied water for a number of fountains, pools and canals, and to keep many trees and plantings lush and green. The Urrutia mansion, which was located on Broadway about a mile closer to downtown, was torn down (demolished) in 1962 and Miraflores was sold and fell into disrepair. Miraflores is now part of Brackenridge Park and although some restoration has taken place, there are plans to restore more of the garden and its works of art.

DEFINITION--Artesian: Well or spring from which water flows to the surface naturally due to pressure underground.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Can you think of a building you know that was demolished? Why do you think it was torn down? Is there another building on that site today?

Site #12: Reconstructed Acequia

To reach the next site, continue to follow the sidewalk toward Hildebrand; when the sidewalk ends you will see a fire hydrant and some low stone walls. Look down toward the river on your right. These walls mark a reconstructed acequia. An acequia, pronounced "eh-say-key-eh", is an irrigation ditch or channel. The word al-saqiya is from the Arabic language and means water conduit. Gravity keeps the water flowing. Dams and gates are built to divert and hold the water, which is sometimes used to power simple machines like the grinding stones in mills. Spanish missionaries and settlers introduced the acequia to this area almost three hundred years ago and used farming techniques based on irrigation. Although the ditches in Brackenridge Park are no longer used to deliver water for human use, part of the acequia system within and close to the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is still in use. In the late 1930s, participants in the Works Projects Administration (WPA) rebuilt the acequia system in the park. It differs from the original because the 1930s version is lined with stone, while the ditches built in the 1700s were unfinished or sometimes lined with boards. Unfortunately, the

WPA left no records of their work, which may have destroyed the remains of the original acequias.

DEFINITION--Water wheel: Wooden or metal wheel with attached buckets or blades that converts the energy of flowing or falling water into power for grinding grain, making wood pulp for paper, or other manufacturing tasks.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Think about your visit to Pump House #1. What are the advantages of a water supply delivered through pipes compared to through an open ditch?

Site #13: Upper Labor Dam

You don't have to walk anywhere else to finish the tour, because site #13 is right in front of you. Although it's a little difficult to tell, the remains of an important Spanish Colonial dam on the San Antonio River are just upstream from where you are standing. Look up river toward Hildebrand. From where you are standing, the left bank of the river is the west bank. On that bank you will see a pile of stones and concrete blocks covering the original Spanish masonry and earthen dam; to the left of the dam is an area where water formed a pond that fed the acequia. The Upper Labor acequia, which flowed through lands to the west of the river in what is now downtown San Antonio, was built here in 1776. Another dam, also located in the park adjacent to the Witte Museum, fed the Alamo acequia madre that supplied water to the Mission San Antonio de Valero (today known as the Alamo) and its fields. In the future, archaeologists hope to excavate this area to learn more about the dam and the acequias.

DEFINITION--Excavate: In archaeology, the exposure and recording of buried material remains.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER--Why is it important for archaeologists to keep detailed records of their excavations?

CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your mission. In order to get your sticker, return to the parking area in front of the Donkey Barn. Find the "One Way" street sign and look for a lockbox attached to the signpost. Do you remember the year in which Pump Station #3 was built? Enter those four numbers plus the numbers 2-3-5 (it takes seven digits to open the box). Press down on the top black button to open and remove the face of the box, then press the button that says "clear." Please remember to re-enter the same digits to close the box

so that the next team will find stickers, too! If you have any problems with the lock box or the stickers please call 210-867-2065.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, these books are available at the San Antonio Public Library--

Cox, I. Wayne. The Spanish Acequias of San Antonio. San Antonio, Tex. : Maverick Pub., 2005.

Fisher, Lewis F. Saving San Antonio: the Precarious Preservation of a Heritage. Lubbock, Tex. : Texas Tech University Press, 1996.

Fisher, Lewis F. River Walk : The Epic Story of San Antonio's River. San Antonio, Tex. : Maverick Pub. Co., 2007.

Light, Patsy Pittman. Capturing Nature: The Cement Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007.

Sibley, Marilyn McAdams. George W. Brackenridge: Maverick Philanthropist. Austin : University of Texas Press, 1973.