

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. The rural landscape surrounding Brackenridge Park changed dramatically during the early 1900s as developers purchased tracts of land and advertised new and expanding neighborhoods and their association with Brackenridge Park.

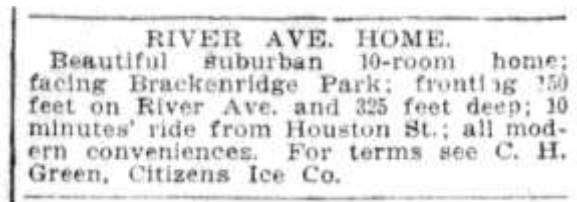


Figure 11-6. "River Ave. Home" facing Brackenridge Park for sale, October 9, 1906. Source: *The Daily Express at The Portal to Texas History*, University of North Texas Libraries

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 "River Ave. Home," *San Antonio Daily Express*, October 9, 1906, accessed July 26, 2014, texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph441064/m1/8/zoom?q=riveravehome&resolution=1.5&lat=4751&lon=1502.75.

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



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

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

Though the Alamo Heights neighborhood was over a mile north of the park, R.H. Russell’s February 1908 advertisement for a house there noted that the property was located adjacent to the Country Club and Brackenridge Park, “making this the choice residence part of the city.”²⁷



Figure 11-8. Belmont Place was advertised as “By the River on the banks of the San Antonio River and adjoining Brackenridge Park.” Newspaperarchive.com.

Advertisements of this nature that specifically mention Brackenridge Park were found in local newspapers throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century. While subdivisions including Montclair, Army Terrace and Brackenridge Place developed east of River Avenue and were touted for their proximity to the park, the neighborhood bounded today by the river, Davis Park, Brackenridge golf course and North St. Mary’s Street (formerly Jones Avenue or Rock Quarry Road) best exemplified the proximate principle. Known generally now as “River Road,” the neighborhood of largely one-story bungalows is the synthesis of several subdivisions whose developers sought to capitalize on the adjacency of their properties to both the park and river.

Like other parts of Brackenridge Park, River Road’s fertile land adjoining the river and Upper Labor Acequia was used for farming and grazing from the 1700s until it was sold for real estate development shortly after 1900. The “founding subdivision” at the south end River Road, Belmont Place, was platted in 1913, as was E.O.Evans’ subdivision at the neighborhood’s north end, later the site of the River Road Country Day School which held outdoor classes in the park. In addition to these, the Brackenridge Parkway Addition (1922), Mistletoe Addition extending west to North St. Mary’s Street (1926), and Magnolia Place and Lindell Place additions (both 1929) formed a tight-knit community. These small, adjoining developments were linked by the winding road known variously as Memorial Way, River Drive, and finally, River Road, that was extended from Josephine Street on the south to Brackenridge Park on the north in 1921-1922.

The neighborhood’s strong affiliation with the river and park was emphasized from its inception. Belmont Place was “By the River,” and described as “a beautiful residence park adjoining our famous Brackenridge Park.” FN (San Antonio Express, June 26, 1921; San Antonio Light, May 29, 1921, newspaperarchive.com). Lindell Place was “in the shadow of Alpine Drive,” and H.J. Shearer advertised Brackenridge Parkway noting “big 300-year old pecan trees on the river high up.” (FN San Antonio Express September 15, 1929; San Antonio Express, February 11, 1923, Newspaperarchive.com.) A reporter writing in the San Antonio Express described “the low water bridge across the river at East Woodlawn Avenue where the crossing is made from the residential section into the park.” Referring to Memorial Drive, they stated, “The space between the winding drive and the river has been secured by the city and here a beautiful parkway will be developed with artistic landscaping affected with flowers and shrubbery.” FN (San Antonio Express, December 24, 1922, newspaperarchives.com)

Today River Road remains the neighborhood most closely affiliated with Brackenridge Park. Though U.S. 281 claimed a portion of the Mistletoe Addition along the neighborhood’s western edge in the 1970s, the area has retained a strong degree of integrity of both design and setting.

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/metaph442357/m1/8/?q=most%20complete%20home.