



Austin Creeks

Many people have contributed their time and talents to the Bicentennial creeks project, and their efforts, for the most part, have gone unnoticed. Their common denominator, however, was not a desire for public recognition. They simply care about Austin and want to make it an even better place to live.

It is impossible to recall all who have helped, but we feel special thanks should go to these members of the Horizons '76 Committee: Mary Arnold, Lawrence Buford, the late Harris Brush, Janet Christie, Margie Cowden, Maydelle Fason, Carol Ikard, Larry Janousek, Jack Keever, David Lake, Bill and Mary Ley, David Minter, Shirley Bird Perry, Ruth Ann Rushing, Larry Sandel, Pam Smith and Mary Lib Thornhill.

Collectively, they developed the creeks project and took it to the community for ideas and reactions through slide shows, posters, a seminar at the University of Texas, the curriculum of the Austin Independent School District, and discussions with neighborhood groups, bicycle enthusiasts, civic groups and the Austin Tomorrow program, to name a few.

We gratefully acknowledge the help without which there would have been no creeks project—Maline McCalla, co-chairperson of the Bicentennial Commission, whose enthusiasm, presence and practicality were unfailing; and Sinclair Black, unpaid professional consultant and member of the Commission, whose technical information, creative planning and advocacy were invaluable.

For their approval and support, we thank both city councils who worked with the Bicentennial; the Planning Commission members who approved the initial funds; Jack Robinson and the Parks Department who worked tirelessly to help develop the ideas and translate them to reality; and the other department heads who also gave generously of their time and expertise.

We especially appreciate the support of Councilman Lowell Lebermann, who so aptly arranged at the Council's request for the Bicentennial to be celebrated in Austin.

For this publication, we are indebted to Jack Keever, who researched and wrote the historical text as well as major portions of the remaining text, and to Andy Vernooy, Arte Chan and Mike McGlone, students in the UT School of Architecture, who designed the publication and did the artwork, the layout

and some of the photography, virtually donating their time.

Our thanks go to Larry Sandel for sharing his technical expertise in publishing; and we are grateful to Tom McCrummen, who undertook the task of fundraising for the Bicentennial's programs, and whose efforts underwrote this publication.

The principal source of information for the history was the Travis County Collection of the Austin Public Library, which also provided a number of photographs. We thank the staff, especially Director Audray Bate-man and Karen Warren, for their guidance.

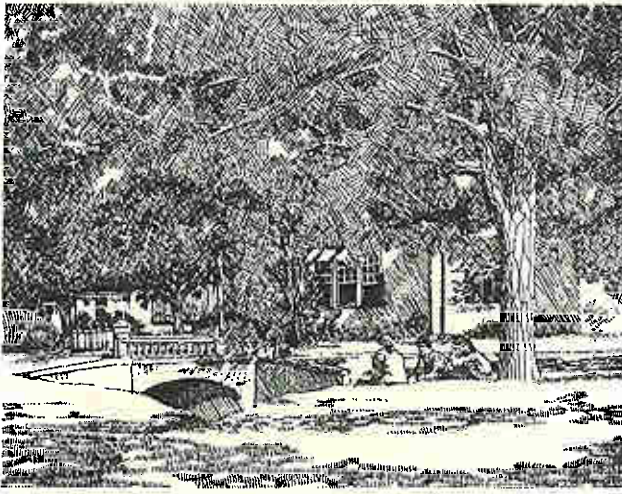
Finally, we thank Beverly Sheffield, Director of the Office of Bicentennial Affairs and one of Austin's creeks staunchest supporters, and Elaine Douglas, who typed countless drafts of speeches, letters and project explanations on little or no notice.

The Bicentennial has served as a catalyst to coordinate and further the attention Austin's creeks have always commanded. The citizens of Austin can be proud to have celebrated the nation's birthday so well.

—Co-chairpersons Susan Morehead and
Howell Ridout, Horizons '76

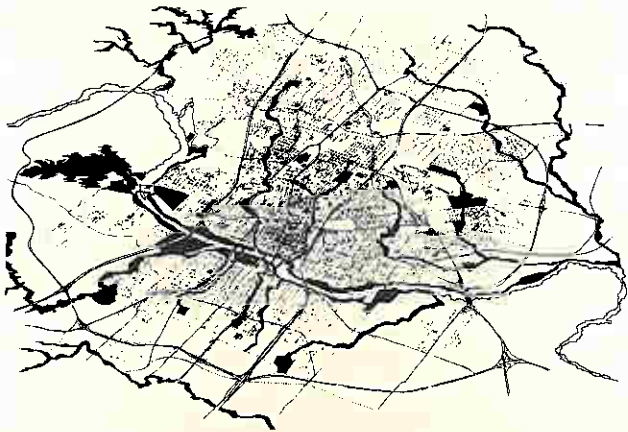
Austin, Texas





INTRODUCTION TO AUSTIN'S BICENTENNIAL PROJECT

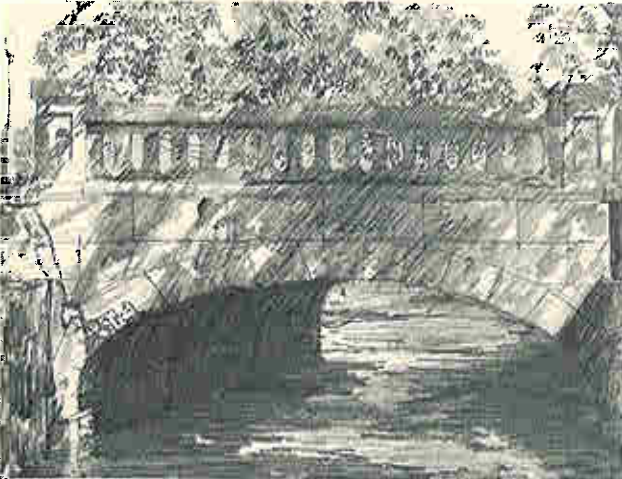
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TO BETTER FAMILIARIZE
YOURSELF WITH AUSTIN,
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INTRODUCTION TO AUSTIN'S BICENTENNIAL PROJECT

A BOLD PLAN TO PRESERVE, RESTORE AND ENHANCE THE CREEKS AND WATERWAYS OF AUSTIN

In September 1973 a varied group of Austinites appointed by the City Council began meeting to plan a large project for the city's Bicentennial "gift to the nation." The Horizons '76 Committee was provided with guidelines from the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission: that the Horizons project provide for the future, be permanent in nature, and benefit the entire community, thus enriching the state and nation. In addition, the Austin City Council suggested that the project relate in some way to the greenbelt development of Town Lake.

Horizons '76 was one of the three working committees appointed to plan for Austin's celebration of the Bicentennial. Another, Heritage '76, encouraged citizens to undertake projects that would create an awareness and an appreciation of their community, including the development of a number of historic publications. Through the Heritage Committee's coordination, the Austin Ethnic History Association was established, and its work is ongoing. In addition, the Committee encouraged the establishment of a revolving fund for restoration of historic buildings in Austin and initiated work on the Caswell House.

The third, Festival USA, planned and coordinated the celebration itself, through the publishing of a Bicentennial Year Calendar, which began with the kick-off on July 4, 1975, and ended with the 1976 July 4th festivities. The celebrations included city-wide events such as two Folk-life festivals, Aqua Festival events, a stop in Austin by the American Freedom Train, Emancipation Proclamation and Dies y Seis ceremonies, and small neighborhood parades and picnics.

In its early months, the Horizons '76 committee reviewed several presentations relating to Town Lake, creeks and parks. Among these were the Parks and Recreation De-

partment's greenbelt projects, the Town Lake Committee's plans and the Waller Creek Plan initiated by five University of Texas Architecture School students, the Waller Creek Action Team. Combined and elaborated, these ideas formed the basis of a long-term and complex proposal for a "bold plan to protect, preserve and enhance our creeks and waterways."

Austinites have long held the dream of protecting and preserving numerous creeks. In 1839 the beauty of this site on the Colorado River was recognized as suitable for the Texas Capitol, and the original mile square city was laid out between Shoal and Waller Creeks, with a broad avenue sweeping north from the river to the Capitol. Later planners recognized the valuable legacy left to Austin by its founding fathers, and in 1928, the city's master plan showed all the creeks as a greenbelt system. An early encyclopedia described Austin as a "greenbelt city."

Private citizens often have been the champions of creative creek development. Russell and Janet Fish made Austin a pioneer in the development of the Shoal Creek Hike and Bike Trail, providing the model and inspiration to project the greenbelt trail idea to other creeks. William Henry Stacy set aside the Blunn Creek area, now known as Stacy Park, in his subdivision plan for Travis Heights, and later, the South Austin Lions added a trail. Along Boggy Creek numerous unknown Austinites charted the trail by wearing a footpath along the creek.

The Parks and Recreation Department has continued to advocate larger budgets for creeks and open space, and citizen interest has reinforced its efforts. The most visible accomplishment of the cooperative effort of city and citizens is the development of Town Lake, begun by the Austin Environmental Council's request for a study, planned and

achieved by the Town Lake Committee and PARD.

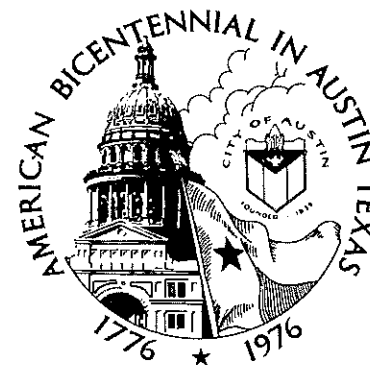
The "bold plan" in concept is not new for Austinites. The Sierra Club recommended the preservation of all creeks in a presentation to the city council several years before the Bicentennial planning began. The nation's birthday celebration proved to be a catalyst. The Bicentennial provided a vehicle for the integration and implementation of creek plans and ideas from all over the city, incorporating these into a single, multi-faceted plan.

The plan, as proposed, includes pedestrian and bicycle trails along creek greenbelts, linking all areas of the city; and promotes cultural, recreational and commercial development while restoring or preserving natural areas and buildings that are historically or aesthetically valuable.

The proposal was approved by the Austin Bicentennial Commission in January, 1974, and later that spring it was approved by the state and national commissions, making Austin an official Bicentennial City.

Meanwhile, the committee was researching pertinent information about the recreational habits of Austinites, especially as related to waterways; the ideas, dreams and plans of other groups concerned with Austin's waterways; the Town Lake plan; the special problems of creeks, including erosion, runoff, flooding, pollution, threatened plant and animal life in creek areas, and problems of zoning, ownership and land dedication along and near creeks.

City Edges, National Endowment for the Arts grant to the University of Texas School of Architecture, was funding a study of creek oriented open space in Austin under the direction of Sinclair Black. At the request of the committee, Black and his students



were designated by the City Council as project consultants. In addition, a number of city department heads were directly involved in the planning, especially Jack Robinson of Parks and Recreation, Dick Lillie of Planning, Joe Liro of Budget, Charles Graves of Engineering and Stuart Henry of Environmental Resources. Each provided the committee with information and support.

In the spring of 1974, the committee began wrestling with the problems of establishing a time frame and a price tag for the project. With the help of the consultants and the city, an initial step in implementing the plan was designed, in hopes of having something ready for the July 4, 1976, deadline. A million dollar project on four central city creeks, linking Town Lake with existing park areas and improving an Urban Renewal area were the heart of this step. The criteria for selecting these four projects included their linkage potential from Town Lake into the city, their visibility to all citizens of Austin, and their diversity as examples of the plan's potential.

In addition, all projected greenbelt and parkland acquisition for three years, a \$1.2 million purchase, was to begin immediately. The money already proposed in the city budget for Town Lake was endorsed as an imperative priority, making the Bicentennial's first step one that would expand the central park, Town Lake, into every quadrant of the city.

Funding, a potential stumbling block for Austin's Bicentennial project because none was designated at state, national or local levels, was provided by the city through its Capital Improvement Projects bonds and through Revenue Sharing funds, administered by the Parks Department.

Council approval in May, 1974 of the initial million dollar step meant the completion of the Shoal Creek Hike and Bike Trail from

Ninth Street to Town Lake, development of the Glenn Oakes Greenbelt on Boggy Creek with trails and picnic tables, extension of Stacy Park's trail to Town Lake on Blunn Creek, and beginning the redevelopment of Waller Creek from Tenth Street to Town Lake.

WALLER CREEK

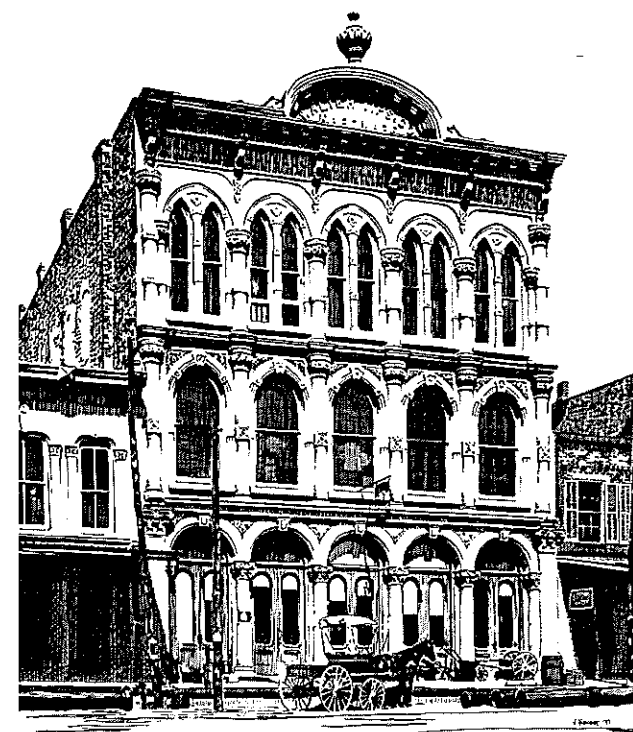
The Waller Creek project required the hiring of consultants to prepare a plan, and in the summer of 1975 several architectural firms were selected. The resulting plan involved considerations of traffic flow, economic stimulations, zoning patterns, flooding problems, biking trails and fair weather hiking trails, existing trees and green areas, residential possibilities and historic considerations, among other concerns. A citizens' committee, proposed by the Bicentennial interests and selected by PARD, worked with the consultants in the early stages of the plan. More money was requested in the December 1975 bond election, not only adding \$1.5 million to Waller Creek's development over the next several years, but including nearly \$8 million for creek related parkland acquisition and development.

Concurrent with the planning of the lower ten blocks of Waller was the development of Symphony Square and Waterloo Park on the adjacent five blocks, an area which had been in the planning stages for several years. Symphony Square embodies all three project areas of the Bicentennial in its restoration of four historic buildings on the creek, accessible by trail north toward the University and south toward downtown, and providing the central city with cultural opportunities previously unavailable in that area.

The University of Texas, encouraged by the student body as well as the city's Bicentennial plans on Waller, began planning for its portion of the creek. The Student Union, the

Ex-Student's Association and the Horizons '76 Committee cosponsored a three day creek seminar in the fall of 1975. Following the seminar, Regent Lady Bird Johnson and President Lorene Rogers walked the entire UT portion of Waller to explore its potential. A student committee originated from the seminar and polled the student body for ideas and interest in the project. Separate walking and biking trails are already partially built, and replanting of cypress trees along the creek is planned, with the natural character of the creek emphasized. The plans extend to East Woods Park near Thirtieth Street.

Waller serves as an example of the cooperative spirit of the Bicentennial, linking UT, the Capitol complex and the city in a joint project whose benefits far exceed those of any collection of single undertakings.



OVERALL CREEK SYSTEM

TOWN LAKE

Town Lake is the heart and soul of the open space concept for Austin. It has become the most important public space in Austin and with the completion of work on the landscape development, it should become the center of outdoor activity, sporting events, cultural events, festivals, boat races, art shows, trade shows, etc. The major events celebrating the American Bicentennial in Austin will take place on Town Lake, a fitting tribute to the completion of one of the most unique and beautiful linear parks anywhere. As each creek greenbelt is completed to Town Lake, more and more people will have easier access to Town Lake by walking or by bicycling.

BULL CREEK

The 17,000 acre watershed of Bull Creek contains the most beautiful of all the landscapes around Austin. With the completion of the crosstown sewer and Loop 360 the area will be subject to very rapid development. 25% of the entire area is made up of slopes of 15% or greater, many of which are considered to be unstable. Problems with natural factors are compounded by the prospects of increased erosion, and flooding that will inevitably follow development. Acquisition of a greenbelt along Bull Creek has begun with the creation of Bull Creek Park, just off Spicewood Springs Road. Hopefully the Greenbelt will be extended to include the most beautiful portions of the creek.

TAYLOR'S SLOUGH

West Austin neighborhood groups are anxious to link Taylor's Slough, an old lime quarry just off Lake Austin, to Reed Park and to Casis School to the East. Presently the creek that follows this path is undeveloped but in private ownership. Hopefully a way will be found to create the greenbelt even though some form of development of the land seems inevitable. A mutually satisfactory solution that would benefit the development as well as the entire neighborhood could serve as a positive example for future growth along creeks.

BEE CREEK & LITTLE BEE CREEK

These relatively wild creeks run through undeveloped areas of Southwest Austin, primarily through West Lake Hills. People in these areas have proposed a major wilderness preserve of about 400 acres to be known as "Wild Basin Park." The proposed park would include the very beautiful areas of Bee Creek as well as most of the land on both sides that is too steep for building. A great deal of care must be exercised by the Highway Department where Loop 360 is scheduled to cross Bee Creek. A less than sensitive bridge could destroy one of the most unique natural areas in Travis County.

JOHNSON CREEK

A small, completely developed watershed in residential West Austin, Johnson Creek roughly parallels the right-of-way of MoPac Expressway. Even though the road construction has obliterated the creek in several areas, a greenbelt is planned from Town Lake north to Westerfield Park. The proposed trail will emerge from under MoPac at the new Austin High School on Town Lake, giving the West Austin neighborhoods access to the school and the lake.

DRY CREEK

Many people are familiar with Dry Creek already because it is the location of a nature trail and the site for "Safari" each spring. Properly developed as a greenbelt, Dry Creek could provide access to Zilker Park and Town Lake for the rapidly developing southwest areas as well as become a scenic easement along portions of Bee Caves Road, similar to the area along Lamar Blvd. at Pease Park.

BARTON CREEK

Barton Creek is not only the largest of all the creeks that flow into Town Lake but it is the creek with the greatest potential to provide access to the open countryside. A greenbelt has been acquired as far south as Loop 360. The construction of both Loop 360 and MoPac will precipitate considerable new development in the southwest quadrant of the city. The runoff, erosion and pollution that result from poorly planned development could destroy Barton Creek and with it Barton Springs Pool. Hopefully new and higher standards of planning and design will be expected from anyone building in the watershed, and hopefully that will insure that there will always be a Barton Springs.

EAST & WEST BOULDIN CREEKS

These two very small watersheds in South Austin have similar problems, i.e., they are both completely developed and there has never been any concerted effort to care for them, nor do they flow through any significant amount of open public land. As Town Lake is finished and becomes more and more a major focus of activity, the older neighborhoods to the South will want to develop greenbelts to link them to the lake.

WILLIAMSON, SLAUGHTER, & ONION CREEKS

These three major creeks run east-west, roughly paralleling Town Lake, through a relatively undeveloped portion of South Austin. Some of the newer subdivisions in sharp contrast to most of the older ones, have respected the creeks. Several have even created hike and bike trails. All three creeks lead to McKinney Falls State Park several miles east of IH 35. If trails can be developed along these three creeks, tremendous numbers of people would have access to the park.

Onion Creek with a 60 mile long watershed is easily the largest creek in Travis County. Fortunately for Austin the huge floods that can come down Onion Creek reach the Colorado River downstream from Austin.



SHOAL CREEK

Shoal Creek, the largest of the creeks within the city limits, has a watershed that is almost completely developed. As the northern end of the watershed has experienced rapid development in recent years Shoal Creek has become a significant flood problem. If the increased runoff from development is not retained at the northern end by holding ponds, the problem will continue to increase until complete channelization of the creek will become inevitable. The lessons of not planning for the ultimate development of Shoal Creek will hopefully teach us how to avoid similar problems on other creeks in the future.

WALLER CREEK

More than any other creek in Austin, Waller Creek offers tremendous economic potential. Public investment in solving the flooding problems and building a pedestrian environment similar to the San Antonio River Walk will be the catalyst for a great deal of private investment. Preservation of the fine old stone bridges, the huge oak trees, and the historic buildings along the creek, combined with sensitive design of new buildings, will create a new center for commercial and residential development. The renaissance of East 6th Street as an historic area will contribute significantly to the redevelopment of Waller Creek.

WALNUT CREEK

Walnut Creek has a very large and very dangerous flood plain in addition to erosion prone soils and unstable slopes. A map of the flood plain and the slopes would indicate that very little land adjacent to the creek is really suitable for development. A greenbelt along Walnut Creek would link a golf course and at least two major parks all the way from Northeast neighborhoods to the Colorado River.

LITTLE WALNUT CREEK

Development of subdivisions along Little Walnut Creek during the 1960's has virtually destroyed the natural creek leaving very little opportunity to create a greenbelt. There are, however, several good possibilities to link schools, parks, etc. along portions of the creek.

FORT & TANNEHILL BRANCHES

The two large branches of Boggy Creek both run through areas that are almost completely developed. Although chances of a continuous greenbelt seem slim, there are a number of small creative development possibilities that could enhance the creeks and the neighborhood through which they flow.

BOGGY CREEK

In addition to the fifty-five acre linear park being developed along Boggy Creek, a major extension of that greenbelt is proposed toward the east, ultimately to link with the Colorado River east of Austin. Historically a large portion of the Boggy Creek watershed is regularly flooded. New flood plain insurance regulations and new funding for innovative solutions to flooding problems may someday help solve these age old problems.

COLORADO RIVER

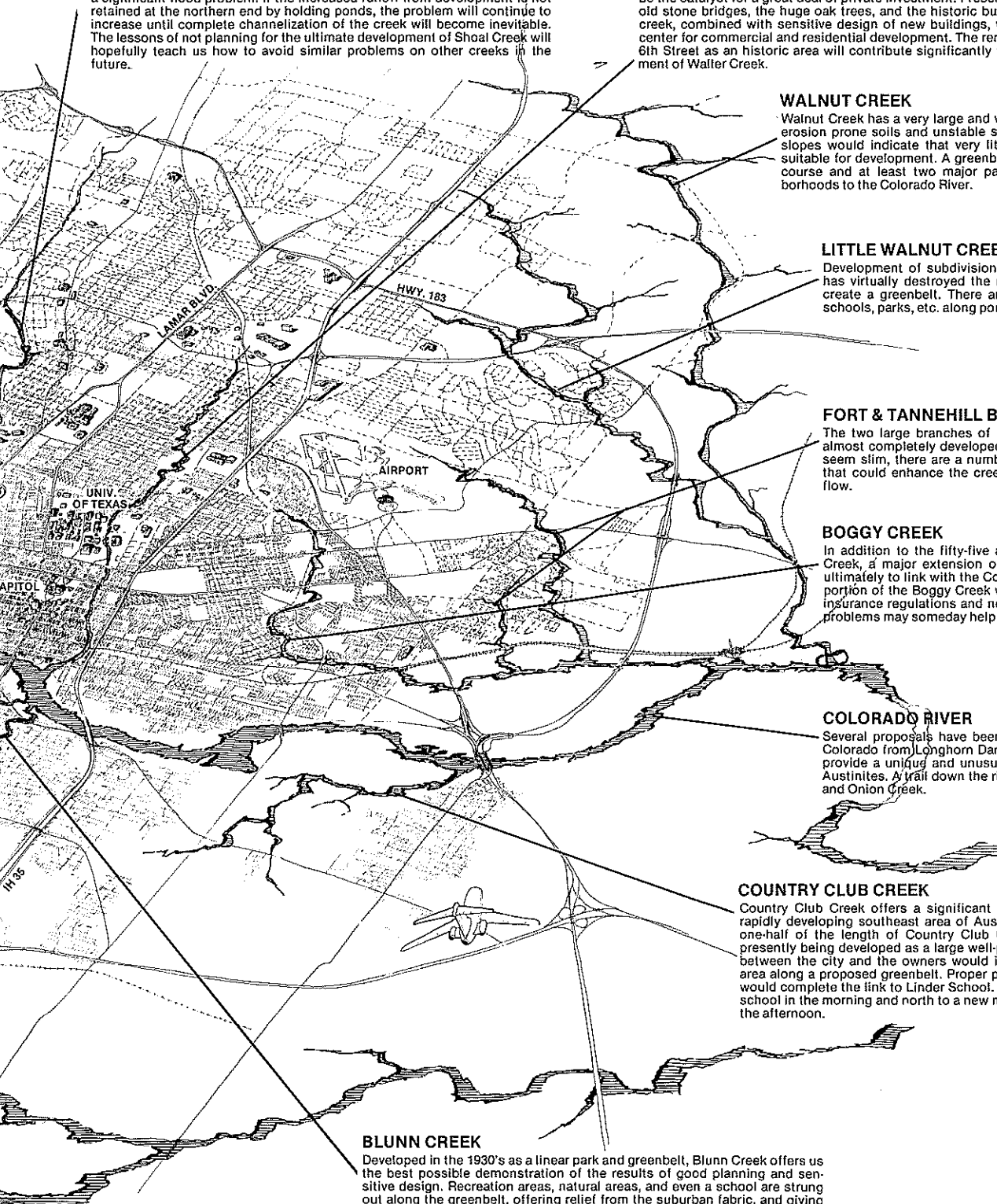
Several proposals have been put forward to create canoe trails along the Colorado from Longhorn Dam eastward, at least to Webberville. This would provide a unique and unusual recreational opportunity for adventuresome Austinites. A trail down the river would eventually link up with Walnut Creek and Onion Creek.

COUNTRY CLUB CREEK

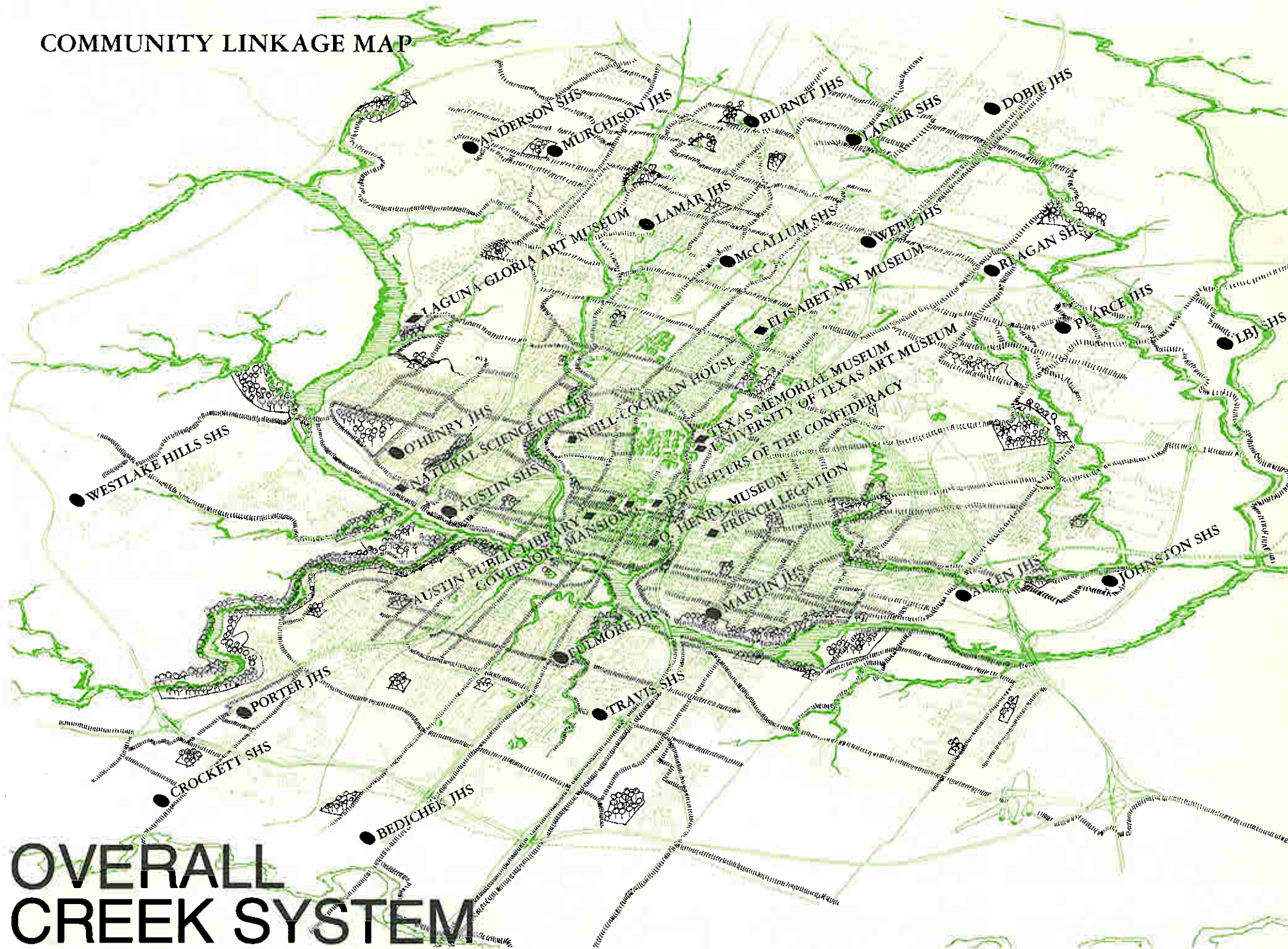
Country Club Creek offers a significant opportunity to link the new and rapidly developing southeast area of Austin to Town Lake. Approximately one-half of the length of Country Club Creek runs through land that is presently being developed as a large well-planned subdivision. Cooperation between the city and the owners would insure public access through the area along a proposed greenbelt. Proper planning south of this subdivision would complete the link to Linder School. Children could move south to the school in the morning and north to a new metropolitan park on Town Lake in the afternoon.

BLUNN CREEK

Developed in the 1930's as a linear park and greenbelt, Blunn Creek offers us the best possible demonstration of the results of good planning and sensitive design. Recreation areas, natural areas, and even a school are strung out along the greenbelt, offering relief from the suburban fabric, and giving structure and identity to a whole district of South Austin. Residents of the neighborhoods around the creek are very interested in extending the trail south to link up with Travis High School and St. Edwards University; and providing access to Town Lake on the north by extending the trail a mere six blocks.



COMMUNITY LINKAGE MAP



OVERALL CREEK SYSTEM

Imagine being able to move freely throughout a city within a network of scenic natural corridors, removed from the congestion, pollution and danger of city streets. Children go to school without being threatened by traffic. Adults walk or bike to work on tree-lined paths beside flowing streams. Families reach mid-city cultural events, libraries, shopping centers, adjoining neighborhoods and even the open countryside—all via beautiful nature trails.

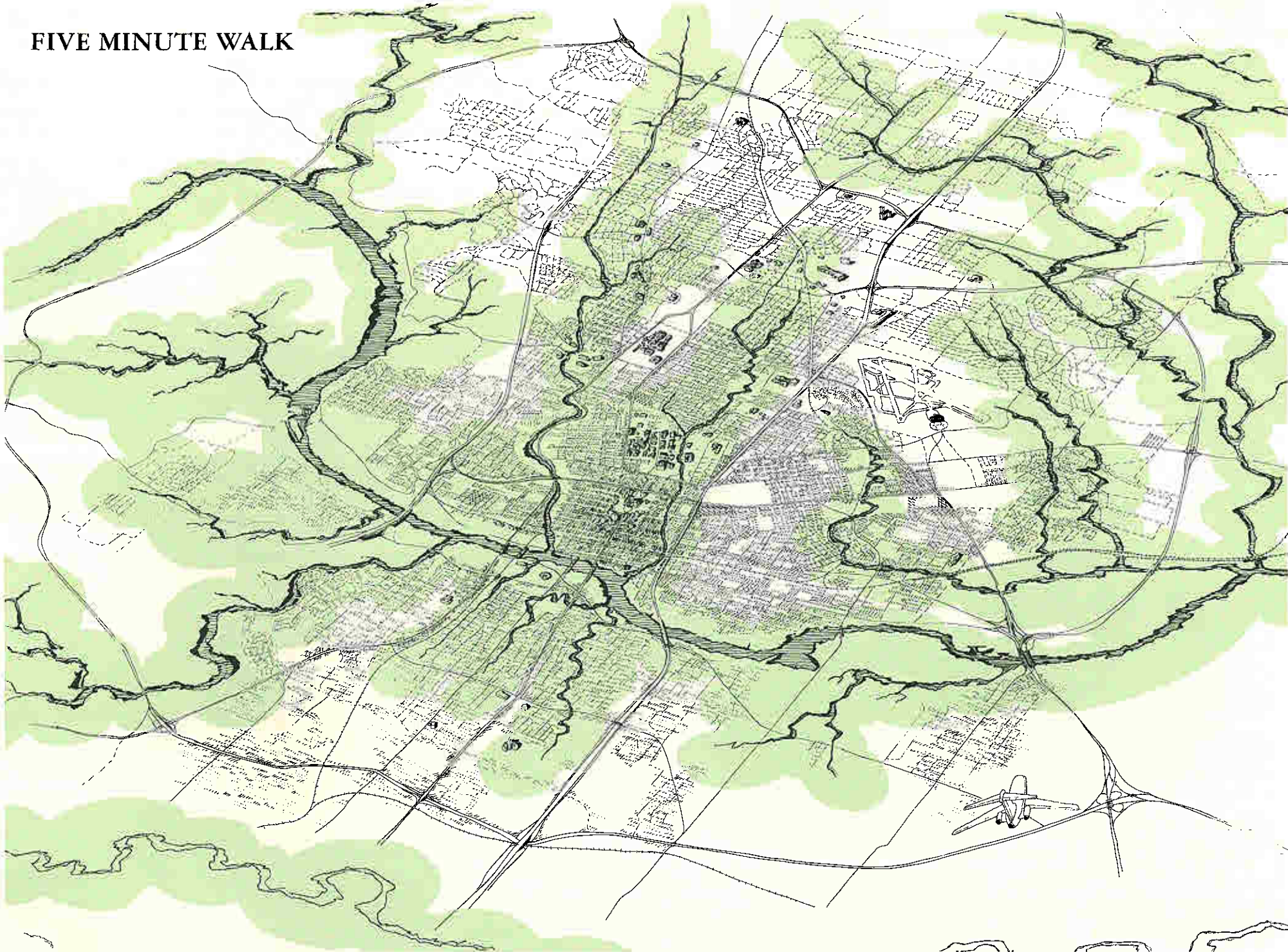
Austin has the potential of becoming this imaginary city. The beginnings of such a network already exist along Town Lake, Shoal Creek, and Blunn Creek. The idea of a green

belt city has captured the imagination of Austinites from the city's founding. The celebration of the Bicentennial in Austin gave it form, with the Horizon's Committee's plan to preserve, restore and enhance the city's creeks and waterways.

The plan envisions a city of greenbelts marked by continuous open space along the 18 creeks of Austin, extending out from Town Lake at the center of the city, through the suburbs, into the developing fringe and out to the countryside. The concept is based on four different categories of potential for the rivers, creeks, and tributaries involved: (1) *the urban center*, where the presence of

water and its potential as an amenity will encourage revitalization of the core areas near the creeks; (2) *suburban areas*, where the creeks not only give structure and identity to the otherwise homogeneous neighborhoods but may well be the only way to increase people's access to open space in the future; (3) *areas of future growth*, wherein the creek corridors constitute a powerful planning tool enabling the city to shape municipal development in a positive, deliberate manner as it occurs; (4) *beyond the city*, where the creek corridors can ensure a natural highroad to the open countryside.

FIVE MINUTE WALK



LINKAGE SYSTEM

The plan creates a system of continuous linear parks linked at the center by Town Lake. In the center of the system, Town Lake will be easily accessible from all areas of Austin for civic and cultural events. The system makes it possible to travel on a hike and bike trail from one neighborhood to another, or to schools, libraries, parks, shopping areas, or downtown. Moving out from Town Lake, the trail system will provide access to the country side, to large metropolitan or state parks, or even to campsites. The city's Bicycle Plan, developed by the Urban Transportation Study Office, notes the advantages

of linking the north-south greenbelt trails into the citywide bicycle system. From the viewpoint of the individual, a linkage system of trails provides escape from the hard-edge man-made environment into a natural setting, with its different challenges and rewards. The linear park system maximizes freedom of choice—walk, bike, wade in the creek, meander along the trail or reach a destination. One creek corridor in essence provides several parks, with easy access between them. The system creates a new setting for social contact, allowing access to new areas of town and to new people you might not otherwise see or meet.

RECREATION

Linear parks are accessible to more people than traditional parks because the edge of contact between the park and the neighborhood is greater. If all Austin's creeks were part of a linear park system, the number of people within five minutes' walking distance of a park would double. The recreational potential of the creek corridors themselves, not just as access to other parks, is growing dramatically. According to the Capital Area Planning Council's ten county open space study, lifestyle changes are reflected in recreational pattern changes. The study indicates dramatic increases in passive recreation and

a decrease in organized sports. Walking and biking are replacing car-riding as the biggest recreational pastime. Trails along creek corridors are perfect for jogging, which has become popular for health reasons as well as recreation. The study also indicates that in 1970 Austin had 3.8 miles of hike and bike trail, but that in the year 2000 Austin will need over 110 miles of bike trails to meet recreational demands. Because Austin is a relatively small city with a very large university, the age of the residents will naturally be lower than other cities of comparable size. This fact added to the near ideal climate, tends to amplify the need for open space.

FLOOD PROTECTION

Flood damage to life and property continues to be a serious problem in many areas of the city. The problems are caused directly by development within the path of a potential flood, and indirectly by run off water from other areas of a watershed. Flood plain legislation, recently adopted locally, will drastically limit development in the flood plain and will eliminate building altogether in the most critical portion of the flood plain area. The result will be an undeveloped corridor of land along each creek. What better use for it than as a linear park?

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL NATURAL AREAS

Creek areas contain a concentration of animal habitats and plant life, some of which are becoming rare as natural areas are transformed into suburbs. Austin's Audubon Society has identified fifty-three unique areas of critically sensitive ecological balance, most of which contain creeks. A familiar example is the Wild Basin area of Bee Creek, one of the few remaining habitats for the rare golden-cheeked warbler. Preservation of this and other critical natural areas would create outdoor laboratories, accessible to every interested citizen.

Cities whose development eliminated natural areas, channelling or piping creeks to increase building density, give Austinites a glimpse of their own potential future, if natural areas are not saved. The current trend toward re-creating park areas within these large cities, at great expense, demonstrates that the larger a city becomes, the more important it is to have protected natural areas within easy access.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Greenbelting the creeks serves to stabilize property values in suburban areas, as property near parks and open space is historically more stable in value than land in other areas. Property values will increase in new and developing areas where creek corridors are integrated into planning. A quick check with local developers indicates that residential lots adjacent to protected open space could bring up to a 25% premium on the price. Redevelopment of urban creek corridors such as Waller will be the catalyst for private investment, and can promote development throughout an area, much like the effect of the San Antonio River Walk in downtown San Antonio.

Tourism has become an economic factor in the growth of Austin's business community now that Texas has emerged as the second ranked state for tourist income. In addition to general tourism, Austin hosted over 800 conventions in 1976 with the prospect for more in 77-9. Austin, with the creeks' potential exploited, could generate even more convention business just as San Antonio has with the beauty and life along the River.

SHAPE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Open space corridors can positively shape the urban environment by serving as buffers between incompatible land uses, as barriers for noise and pollution, and as screens or filters for unwanted views. They can also

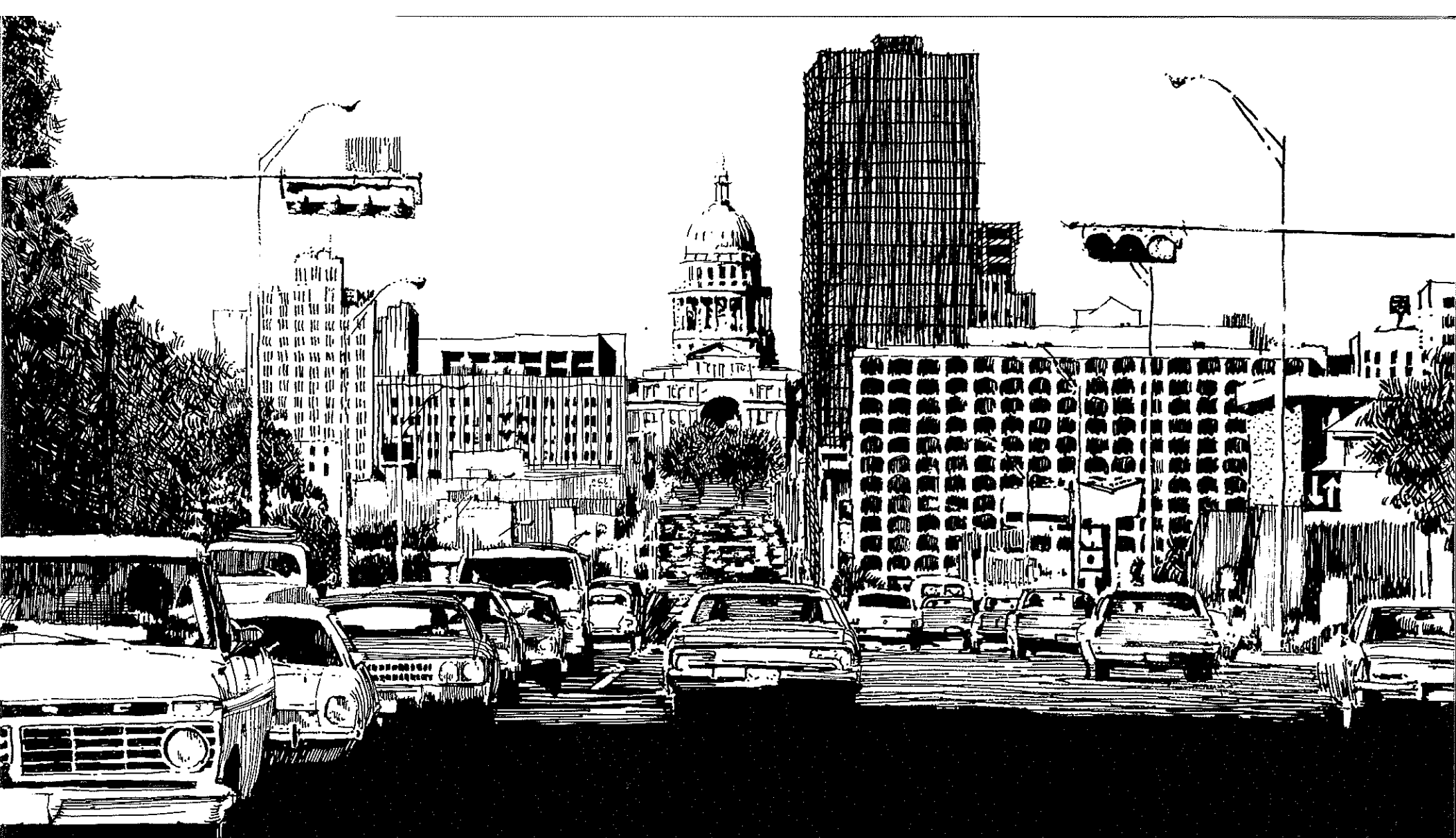
serve as a connection between compatible uses, such as being the place where neighborhood children from both sides of a creek play together. Shoal Creek is an inspiring example of open space use and should serve as a model for greenbelt development. The neighborhood, the park users, and the traffic on Lamar Boulevard all relate directly to the park, which creates a scenic drive as it protects the neighborhood from the street. Stacy Park in South Austin, planned and dedicated by the original developer and enhanced years later by the Downtown Lions Club, serves as a perfect example of sensitive planning. One has only to compare this beautiful linear park with any of dozens of characterless suburban neighborhoods to realize the wonderful potential of planned open space.

ENERGY

The availability of open space within the city will be directly affected by the energy crisis in a number of ways. As the cost of energy escalates, people will tend to move back toward the center of the city and will be less able to leave the city for recreation. With more and more people living closer to each other and fewer of them able to travel to distant parks, the intensity of use of the open spaces near people's residences will increase drastically. As this process develops, the cost of creating new open space will become higher, just as the demand for more of it becomes greater. Reduced energy budgets for each person, more people and the probability that more time will be spent outside during good weather, are all factors that will increase the demand for outdoor green spaces in the future.

FUTURE GROWTH

The creek plan can help to creatively shape future growth in the city by developing the open space system in advance of development along creeks. By planning new subdivisions with respect to creek corridors, the linear



THE NEED FOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

system will grow as the city grows, providing continuity from Town Lake out into the countryside, and insuring adequate open space for all new residents of Austin.

In planning the growth and extension of the city, open space along creeks must be considered an integral component of the whole urban structure, with status equal to that of streets and utility systems.

Planning and acquiring open space along creeks in advance of new development would assure adequate public parkland in the future and at a small fraction of what it costs to provide parks after development is complete. There is probably no single act that could have more overall positive impact on the future suburban environment than implementing a bold plan to acquire and develop the creek corridors in advance of residential development.

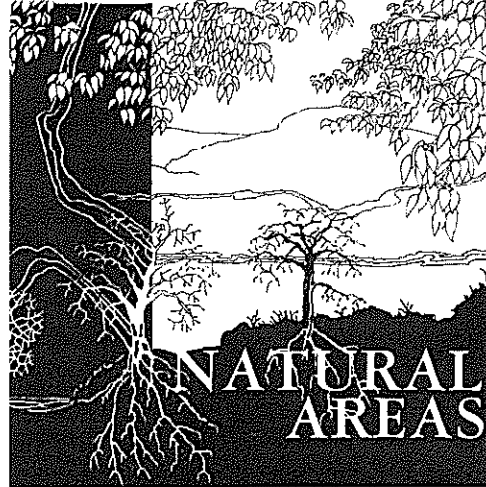
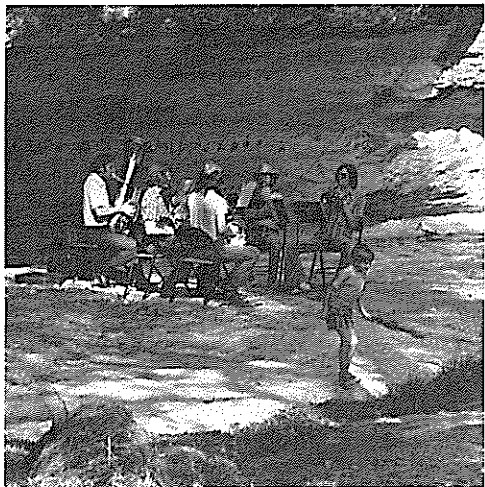
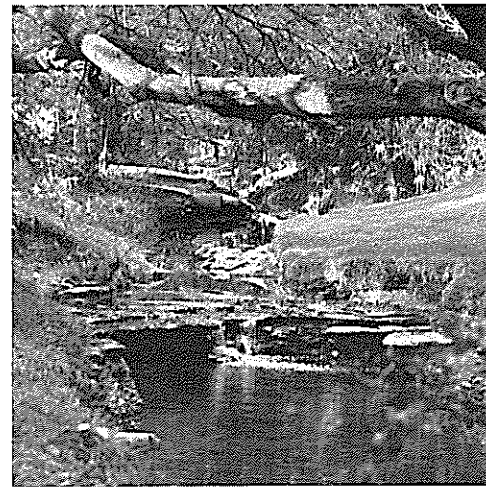
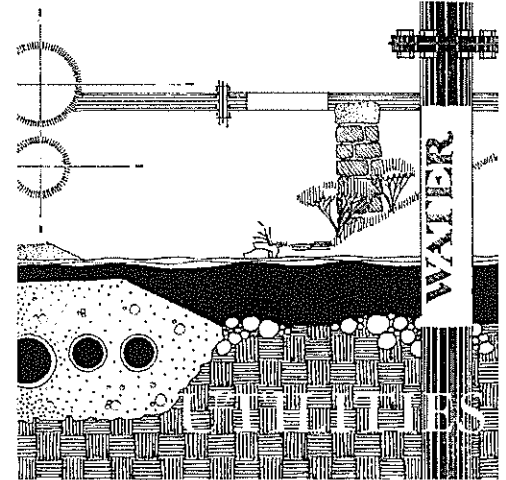
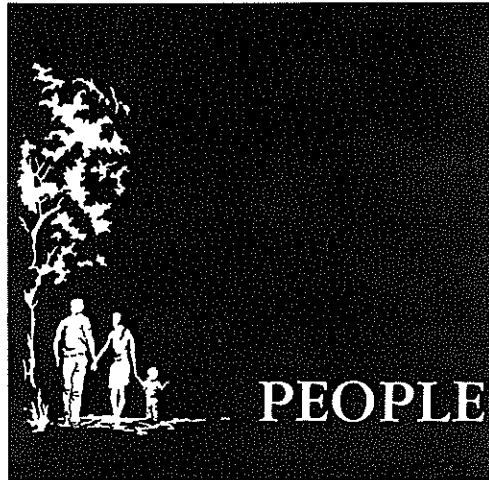
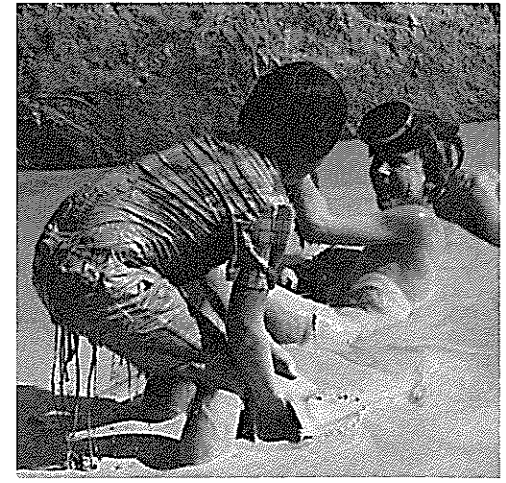
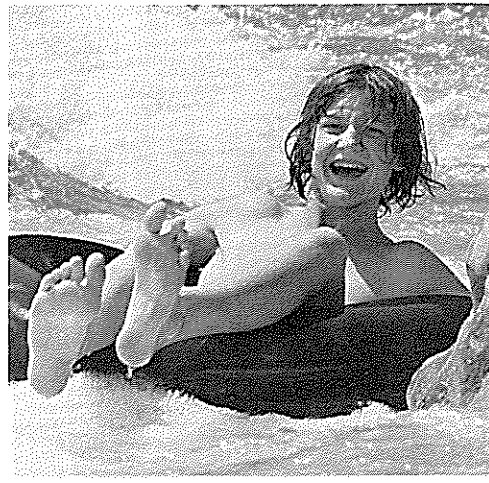
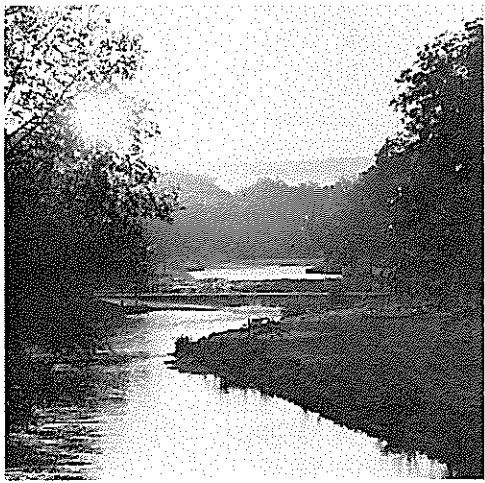
Austin can and should be proud of the legacy of public open space available in the older parts of the city. Many of these older parks were acquired by donations of land in the 1920's and 1930's. Unfortunately, the tradition of giving land for public use has not continued, and the government processes to acquire public lands have been slow in developing. As a result, the years of Austin's most rapid growth were also the years of slowest parkland acquisitions. As a result, large areas of suburban Austin developed during the 1950's and 1960's are virtually without public parkland, leaving Austin not only an overall deficit in parkland acreage, but more seriously, a very clear imbalance in the allocation of public open space throughout the neighborhoods.

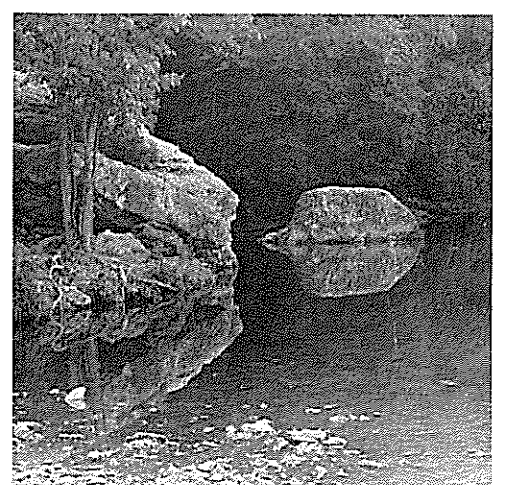
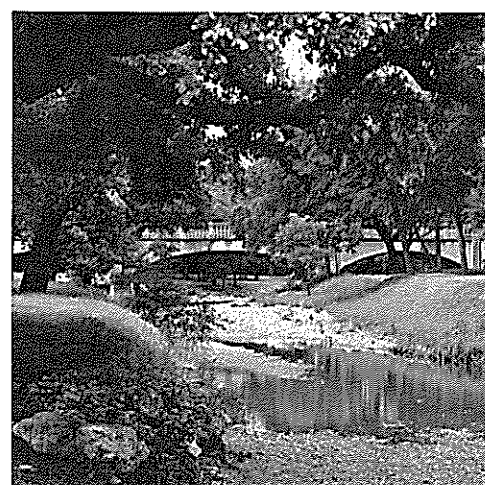
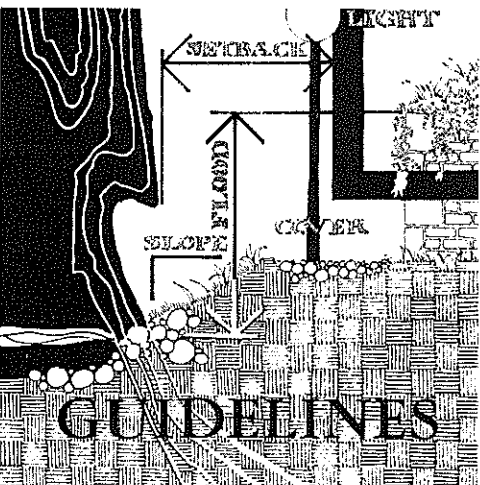
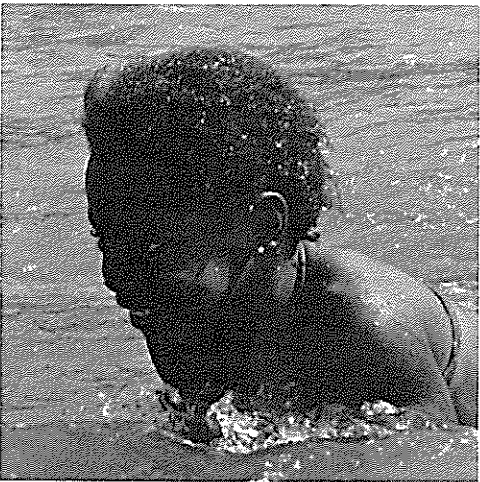
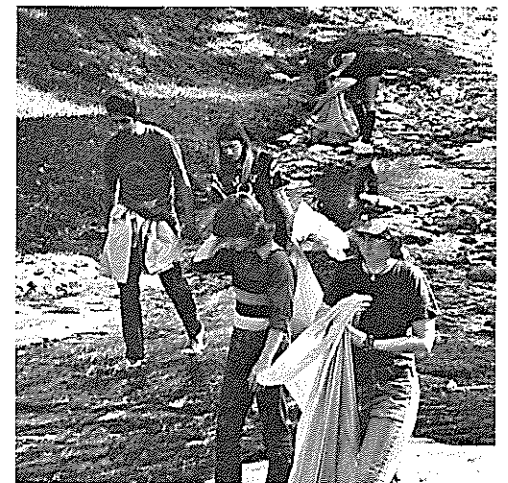
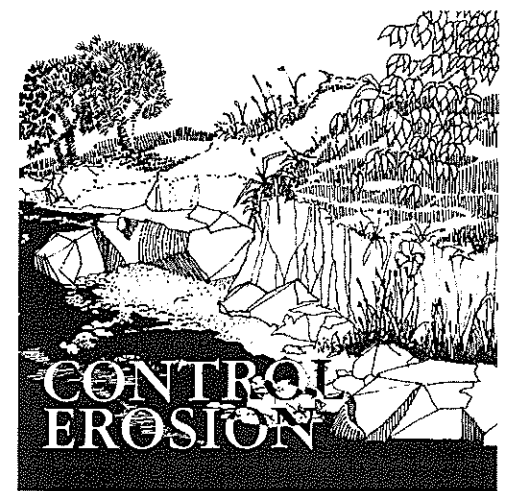
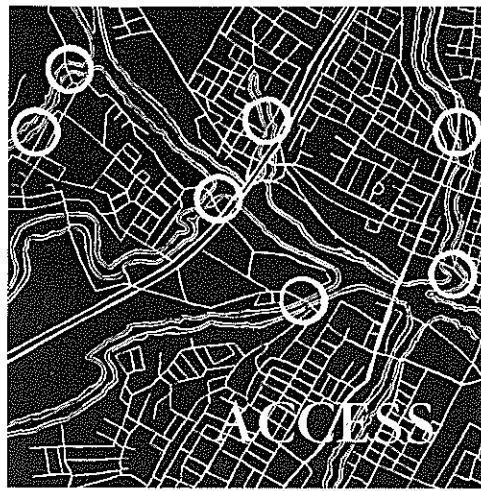
This historical fact raises two issues: first, what can be done to correct or compensate

for the imbalances, that is, provide public open space in areas that have been developed without it; and second, what must be done to insure that these kinds of imbalances do not become compounded in the future as Austin continues to grow?

In older neighborhoods, the creek corridors, generally the flood plain areas, are usually the only land available for any kind of public use and are, therefore, more than likely the only way that new parkland can be created at a relatively low cost to the public.

The problem of providing public open space in future suburban areas is different in that open space can be created anywhere. The creek corridors are, nevertheless, still the logical answer for several reasons: the cost of land is lower and without competing uses; the linear park, by virtue of its shape, is highly accessible; and the potential to link public buildings, neighborhoods and other parks extends and amplifies the role of open space in our daily lives.





HISTORY OF AUSTIN'S CREEKS



PARTIAL VIEW OF
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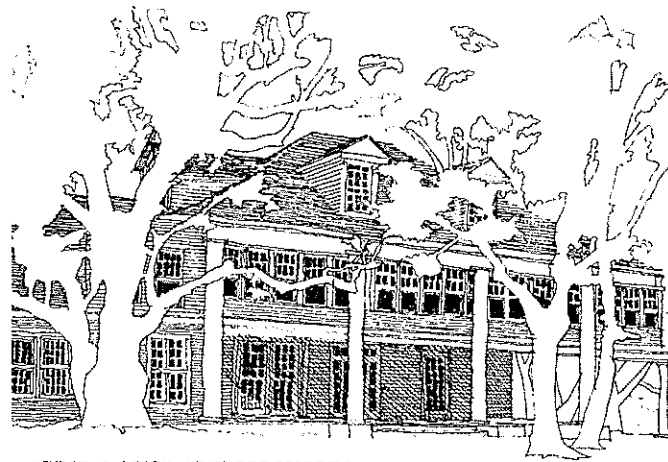
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"THE OAKS" (DEMOLISHED)



DRISKILL RESIDENCE (DEMOLISHED)

Historical accounts tell us that the third president of the Republic of Texas, Mirabeau B. Lamar, was hunting bison in 1838 and stopped at Jacob Harrell's cabin at the mouth of Shoal Creek. Lamar was so impressed with the vista of that clear, deep creek cutting through thick stands of trees into the Colorado River that he suggested a commission searching for a site for the new state capital should "look carefully" at the area near Harrell's cabin.

In 1839 the commission agreed on the picturesque settlement known as Waterloo for the capital and Edwin Waller was sent by Lamar to survey and lay out the city. It was christened Austin. Waller was elected Austin's first mayor in 1840.

This beginning was satirized by William Porter—O. Henry—who wrote that the city had been founded by such men as Stephen F. Austin, Daniel Boone, Ponce de Leon and Davy Crockett, who "got a gun and killed off the Indians between the lunatic asylum and the river and laid out Austin. It has been laid out ever since."

In October 1839 Lamar and his cabinet came to town, and four months later the city was said to have a population of 856.

Historian Rupert Richardson noted that an examination of central Texas land maps "will reveal that the choicest land, that along the streams, passed into private ownership from ten to 20 years before the country was actually settled."

The history of Austin's creeks, of course, began long before Waller designated the creek that was named for him as the city's eastern boundary.

A Lanier High School student, Francis Ann Reed, wrote a prize-winning essay in 1970 that recalled how University of Texas geology students had found the bones of a Mosasaur in the bed of Onion Creek. This marine lizard lived 70 million years ago in the sea that covered Travis County. Several low hills at Pilot Knob along Onion Creek

still remain from an undersea volcano that last erupted about 50 million years ago.

In modern history, wandering Indian tribes, such as the Tonkawas, Lipan Apaches and Comanches, found Barton Creek and springs ideal for camping, because of the fresh water, flint for starting fires and limestone to heat for baking. Legend has it that Spanish explorers Cabeza de Vaca and Coronado were 16th Century visitors, and some have placed the French explorer La Salle at a camp on Onion Creek in the 17th Century. They say he called the creek Robec, possibly because it reminded him of the Robec River in France or because he spotted buffaloes (robec) near the creek. Early in the 18th Century, Spaniards renamed the creek Garrapatas because of the bothersome ticks (garrapatas) there. In 1730 Franciscan Fathers temporarily located missions at Barton Springs, and these are considered the first church structures in Travis County.

It was the Spanish, too, who named the Colorado River, which means "red." Most historians agree that the name was intended for the Brazos River, but the name was inadvertently interchanged.

Early Mexican land grants include one on Onion Creek in 1832 to Jose Antonio Navarro, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Another Onion Creek grant went to Stephen F. Slaughter, for whom Slaughter Creek was named. Early field notes referred to Onion as Union Creek.

Onion, Slaughter and Williamson creeks lead to McKinney Falls, which has become a state park, seven miles southeast of Austin. The falls were named for Thomas McKinney, one of Stephen F. Austin's original colonists. McKinney had a ranch and operated a slave trade in the late 1830s.

This was about the same time that William "Uncle Billy" Barton—called by some the Daniel Boone of Texas—decided he needed more elbow room and moved to a 177-acre tract that included what became known as

Barton Springs. Barton Creek was then known as Spring Creek. Barton's nearest neighbor, Reuben Hornsby, was 11 miles away.

"When you're traveling," Mayor Roy Butler remarked 135 years later, "people say, 'Oh, you're from Austin. That's where the beautiful Barton Springs swimming pool is located.'"

The springs inspired a 19th Century poet to write "The Indians had a tradition that a rainbow was driven with so much force to shiver it asunder; whereupon Barton's celebrated spring near Austin gushed forth from the mountainside, and a portion of the brilliant bow having mingled with the waters of fountain, caused the beautiful prismatic colors reflected from the depth of its waters."

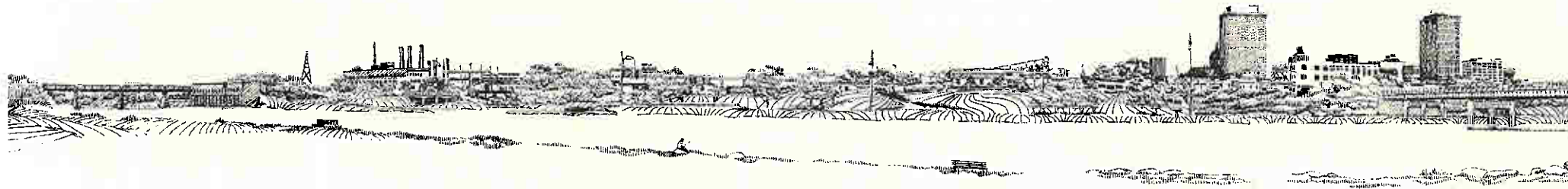
Barton first called the springs Parthenia and Eliza in honor of his daughters, and he once wrote Sam Houston to recall soldiers Houston had sent to guard the Bartons from the Indians. Barton said it was more trouble to keep the soldiers away from his daughters than to fight the Indians.

Barton died in 1840 and was buried 150 yards from the main spring. He was reinterred at Round Rock in 1862.

"We recognize this place," the Rev. Dr. Edmund Heinsohn said in prayer a few years ago, "not as the result of man's handiwork, but as a gift from thee—a place so beautiful that people from all of the earth have been drawn here to come and to see."

One who came, a story goes, was Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee, and a road named for him, skirting the springs, was a common path for soldiers on their way to the western forts, after Texas was annexed. Thousands of soldiers bathed in the springs during World War I, after Austin had obtained military installations by promising that the city had plenty of water.

Land at the springs that had sold for \$28.50 an acre in 1855 rose so rapidly that 20 years later an offer of \$350 an acre was



refused.

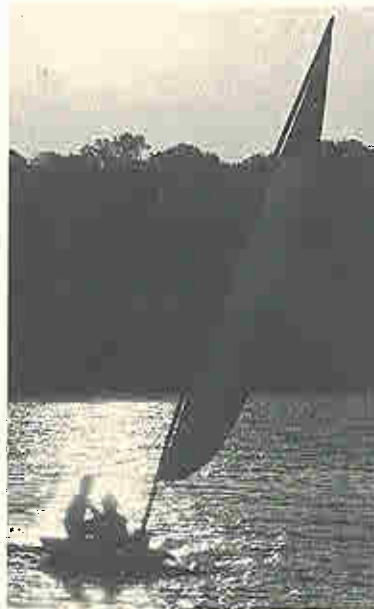
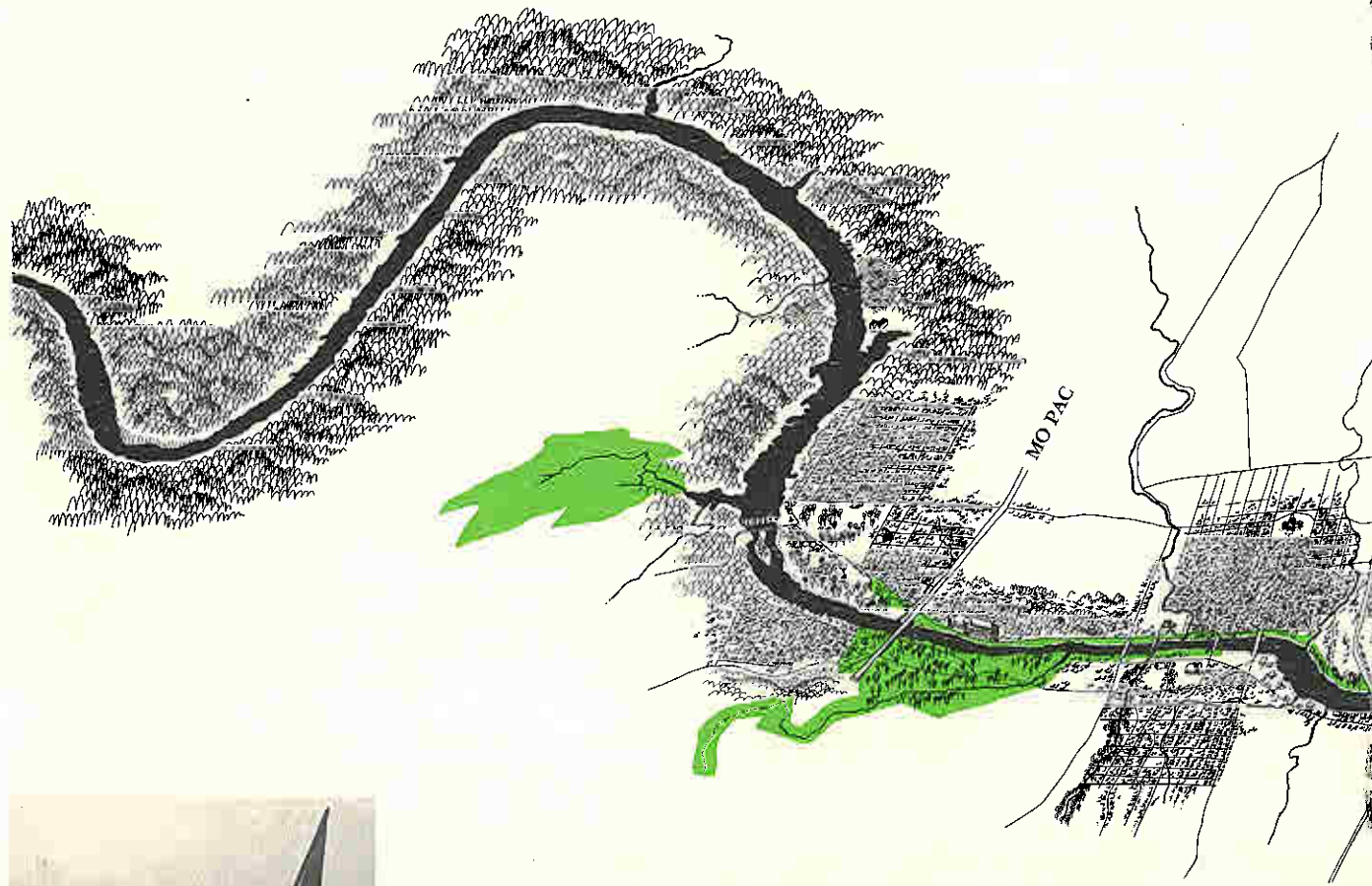
In 1874 the local newspaper advised that "no stranger should visit Austin without going to Barton Springs." Ten years later, the paper described Barton's as "Austin's Eden" and said it had been "praised so long and in so many ways that it would seem useless to speak of its manifold beauties or attempt to describe the sensation when the first plunge is made into its pellucid depths." The average temperature of the water is 68 degrees, and its flow is of such interest that it has been measured periodically by the U. S. Geological Survey since 1894.

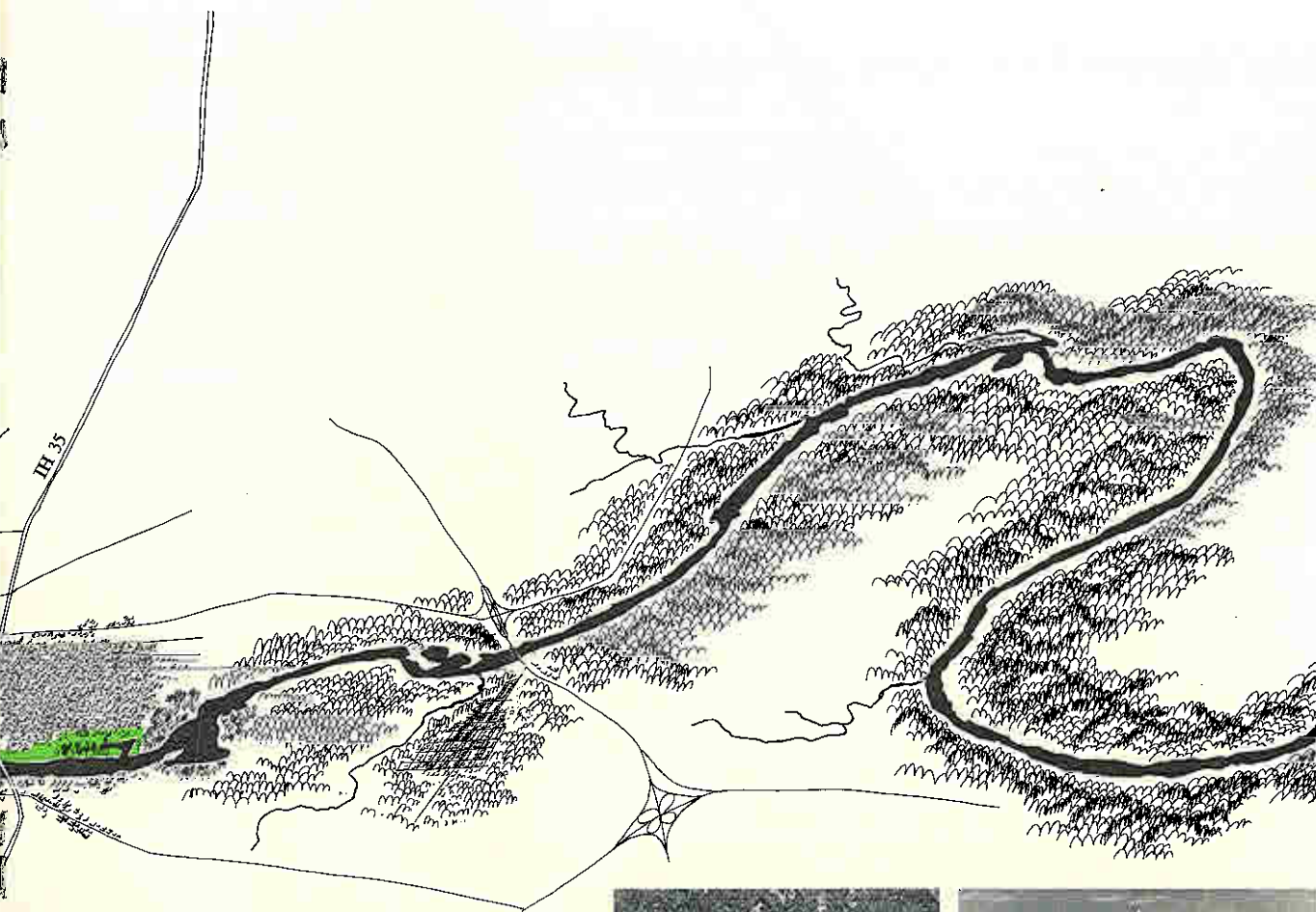
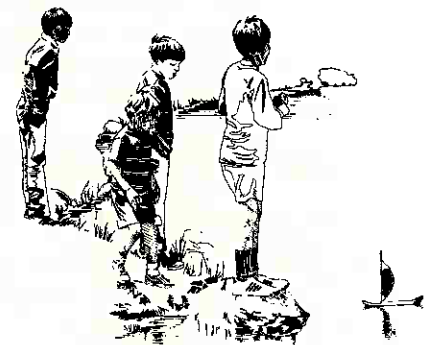
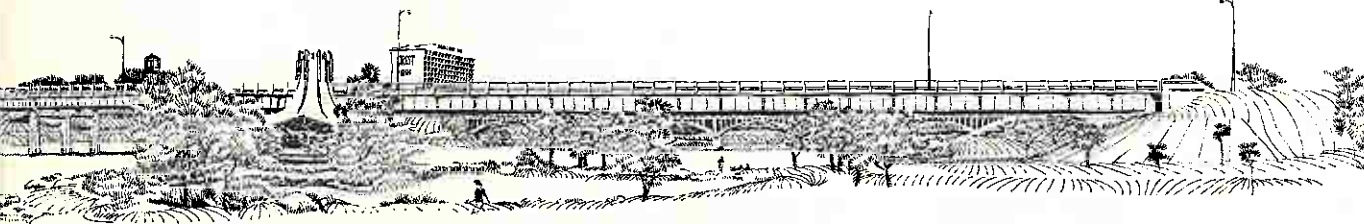
Years ago, it was written that the spring's waters were uncontaminated by silt and did not contain minerals, except lime in solution, and even a recent study by the Texas Water Quality Board showed that some samples had no bacteria.

The land that includes Barton's and what is now Zilker Park was acquired in 1901 by Andrew Jackson Zilker, who came to Austin from Indiana at the age of 18 after reading a favorable account of the city in a book. Zilker was an early Coca-Cola bottler in Austin, but his main business was making ice. He had planned to build a home at the springs, but he abandoned the idea after his wife, Ida, died in 1916. In January 1918 Zilker gave the springs and 50 acres of land to the city in exchange for which the city agreed to spend \$10,000 a year for ten years on manual training and home economics in the public schools. In late 1931 Zilker conveyed nearly 300 acres near the springs to the city, with the city guaranteeing it would endow manual training in the schools with \$200,000 over 20 years. It was, the seven school trustees said in seeking voter approval for the proposal, the "most generous and beneficial" gift ever offered the city "by any man."

Zilker said he felt it was a "wrongful thing for this beauty spot to be owned by any individual . . . it ought to belong to all of the people of Austin."

COLORADO RIVER AND TOWN LAKE





A few years later, while Zilker was in La Jolla, Calif., seeking to regain his health, the city council unanimously voted to name the 330-acre tract known as Zilker Tract and Barton Springs as Zilker Park. The mayor was Tom Miller, who had grown up next door to Zilker.

So many, of course, have shared a fondness for the springs.

Before World War II, the Texas Longhorn swimming team swam a meet there, and freestyler Eddie Gilbert, a UT All-American and Olympic swimmer in 1948, developed his skills in the chilly water. It has been a common sight to see former Longhorn baseball coach Bibb Falk exercise by swimming 600 yards a day. For years, on July 4 and Labor Day, entertainer Skinny Pryor would float the length of the pool reading a newspaper. Pryor's son, Cactus, not too long ago, took his two young sons to Campbell's Hole, a mile above the springs, and recalled that when he was young it "used to represent the Atlantic, Pacific, the Great Lakes, and the Nile River, all in one."

Those who remember writer Roy Bedichek, who sunned on a big rock near where a willow grew by the springs, probably remember, too, that shortly after he died in 1959, the willow died.

In 1970, citizens urging the council to preserve Barton Creek canyon from Zilker Park to state highway 71 described the canyon as a "refuge of tranquility and relaxation for the public . . . an extraordinary enclave of wilderness so close to the heart of downtown; a free-flowing stream with rapids, with pools that reflect precipitous bluffs, a marvel of variety in colors, textures, and shapes, a place to see flowers rarely seen in a city, to hear bird songs rarely heard by city dwellers."

The area first marked off for Austin's city dwellers was bounded by Waller and Shoal creeks and the Colorado River.

As surveying teams were laying out the



WALLER CREEK

city, two men were scalped in an Indian raid, and they were buried on the east side of Waller Creek between 9th and 10th streets. This became Austin's first cemetery. Although President Lamar bought 68 acres along Waller and built a cottage, the threat of Indians made it too dangerous to live there, and he sold the land for \$1,200 to General William Harney, a cavalry officer. Harney sold the land to two bankers, and one, Charles Whitis, subdivided it into lots. One of the early homeowners in the neighborhood was Jesse Driskill, who built the Driskill Hotel.

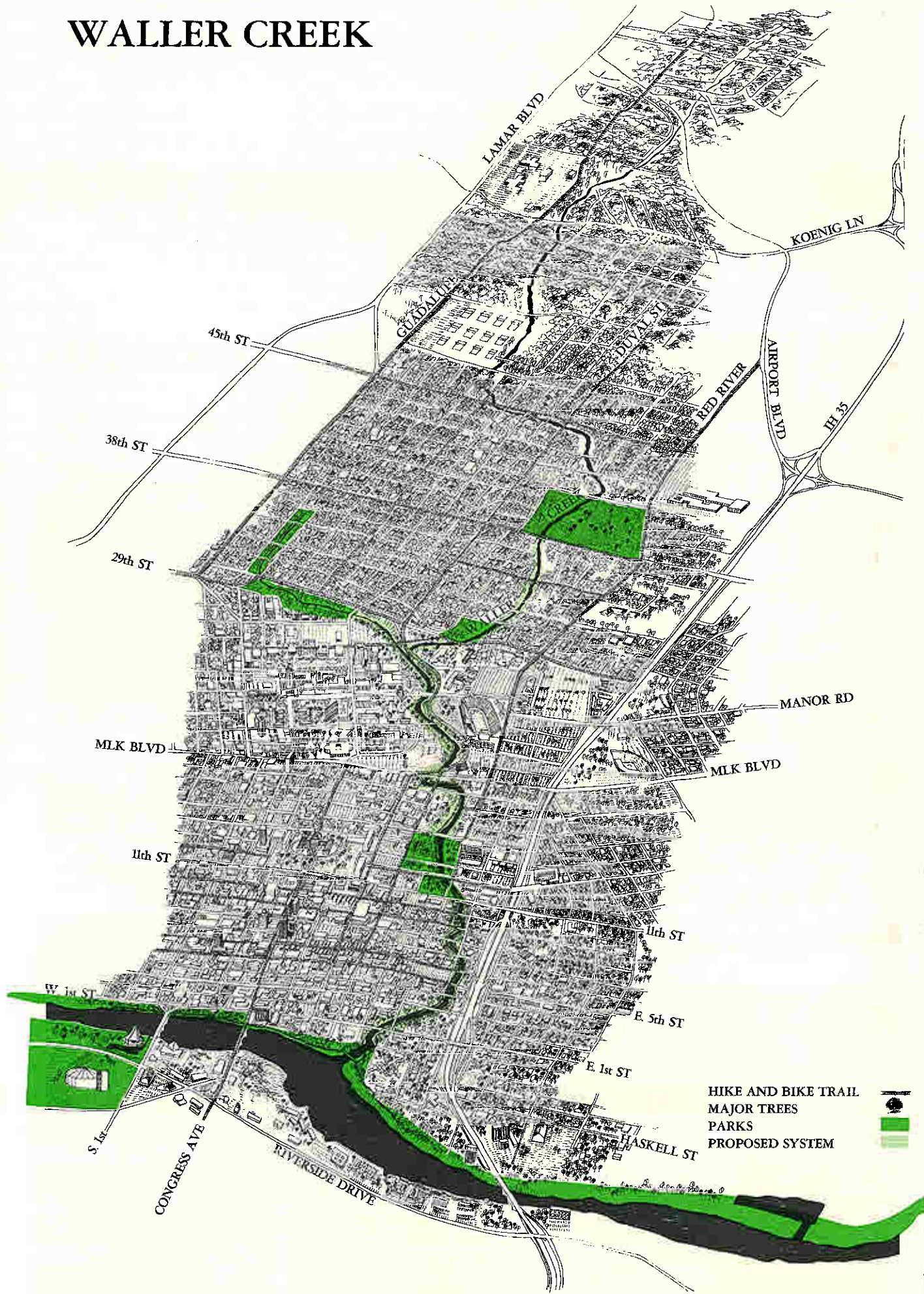
Other famous homes closer to the six-mile creek have included those of Reconstruction Governor E. J. Davis, sculptress Elizabeth Ney and writer J. Frank Dobie.

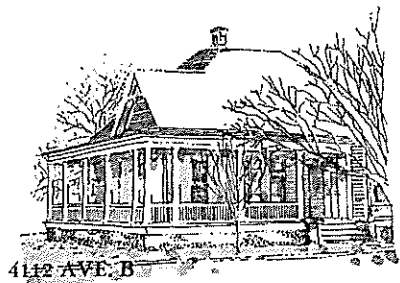
Early residents described Waller and Shoal as running year-round, abounding in perch and trout, with deer, turkey and other game using the creeks as watering holes. In the 1860s, water flowing in Waller was used to power machinery to manufacture Confederate cannon from Mexican brass, and barbed wire supposedly was first made along the creek. General George Custer, his family and staff used the Blind Asylum near the creek for a temporary residence. The city's first arched stone bridge crossed Waller in 1866 at Pecan Street (East 6th Street); some reports say the railroad entered Austin in 1871 over a new iron bridge at Pine (East 5th Street); and a bridge was built over Waller at East 12th in 1882 and used to haul pink granite to construct the new Capitol.

News accounts through the years have recorded how suddenly Waller, as well as the other creeks, could turn ferocious. In 1873 a youngster described only as an "Irish lad" made a quick stop at a privy on the bank of Waller, but while he was inside, the paper said, the creek rose so suddenly that he drowned. In 1915, in the second largest flood in nearly a century on the Colorado, 32 drowned in Waller and Shoal creeks, with spectators watching "corpses swirling" down those rampaging tributaries.

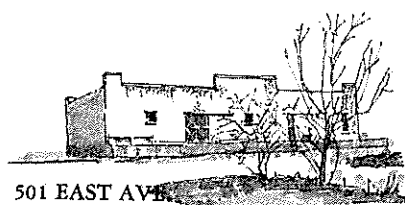
In 1938 young Lyndon Baines Johnson walked Waller and decried the numerous "shanties" as "hot beds of crime . . . profits of the moment but community losses in the end." Thirty-one years later, 27 persons were arrested in a futile effort to save immense live oak and cypress that were felled along Waller's banks so Memorial Stadium could be enlarged. One of those arrested referred to it as the "People's Crick."

In the Bicentennial year, 1976, Johnson's widow, Lady Bird, led a tour of Waller to dramatize the decision to spend millions of dollars to restore the creek, possibly to how

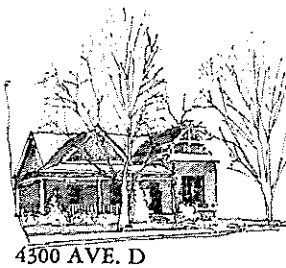




4112 AVE. B



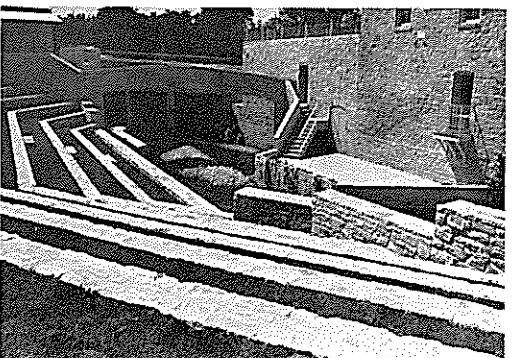
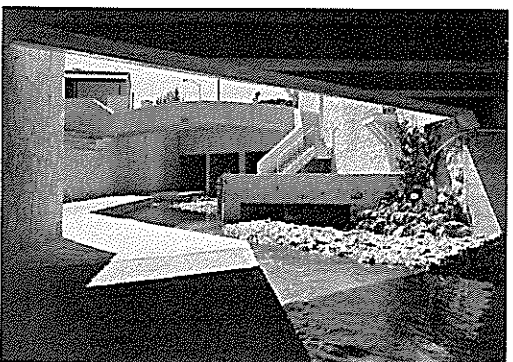
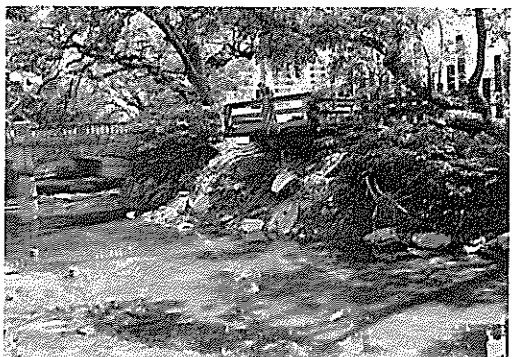
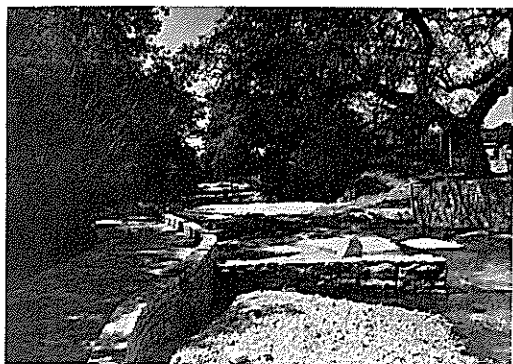
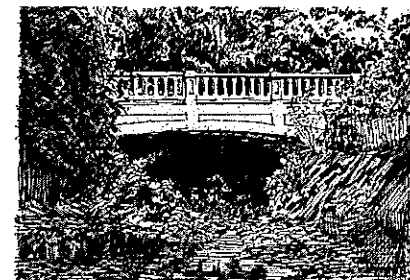
501 EAST AVE.



4500 AVE. D



ELISABET NEY RESIDENCE



it looked when President Lamar saw it—a “beautiful” stream of “permanent and pure water.”

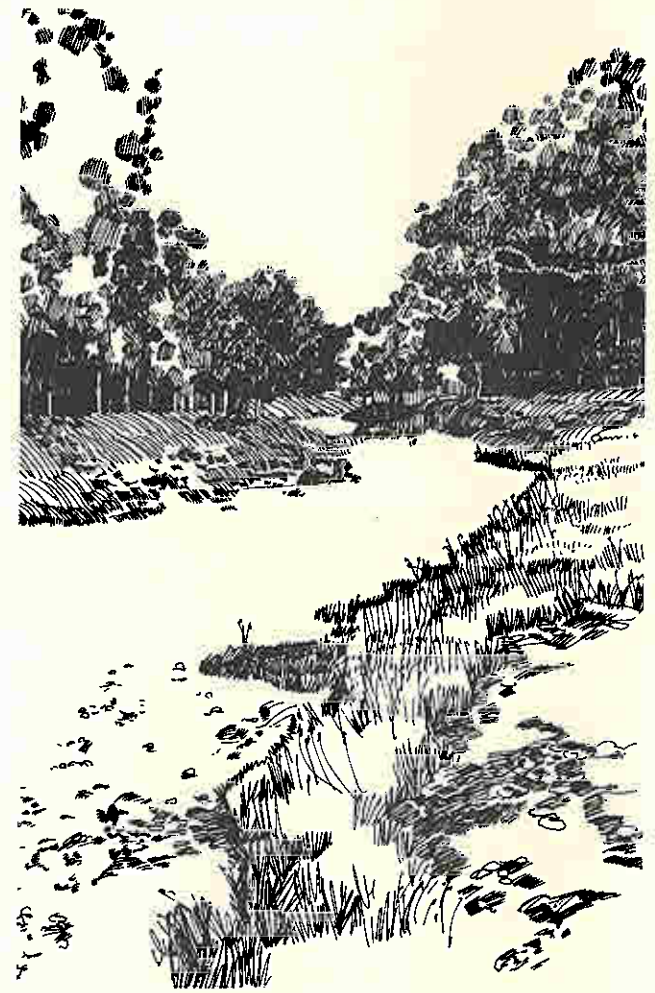
Waller’s “sister” creek is Shoal which, for many years, was the western boundary of the city. Shoal is the largest creek within the city limits, and the idea that Waller and Shoal would be the central threads of linear parks originated long ago. It may have been Edwin Waller who gave Shoal its name as it was recorded on older maps as Cascade Creek.

Shoal had a small tributary, Little Shoal Creek, where Union soldiers watered their horses after the Civil War, but it was covered by a storm sewer in 1917.

Harrell’s cabin, where Lamar spent the night in 1838, was on the Colorado (near the present site of the Congress Avenue bridge), a few hundred yards from the mouth of Shoal Creek. Cedar for the Capitol of the Republic was floated down Shoal to the Colorado. Upstream, also in the 1830s, Gideon White had built a cabin, and Ed Seiders was a visitor when Comanches scalped White. Seiders married White’s daughter, and a portion of Shoal (from north of 38th Street to 34th Street) became known as Seiders Springs, which is now a park. General Custer camped there in the winter of 1865–66 and had to bury 15–16 of his troopers downstream in the Pease Park area when an epidemic—probably cholera—thinned his ranks. Custer had tried to make his headquarters in the Woodlawn mansion in the absence of Governor E. M. Pease, but the people refused to let him move in. The park was named for Pease, who gave 23 acres along Shoal to the city for what became the first public park donated in Texas. Pease, with others, also pitched in \$400–\$500 to help the city build a bridge across Shoal.

Seiders built a dancing pavilion and bathhouse at his place in the 1870s and served

SHOAL CREEK

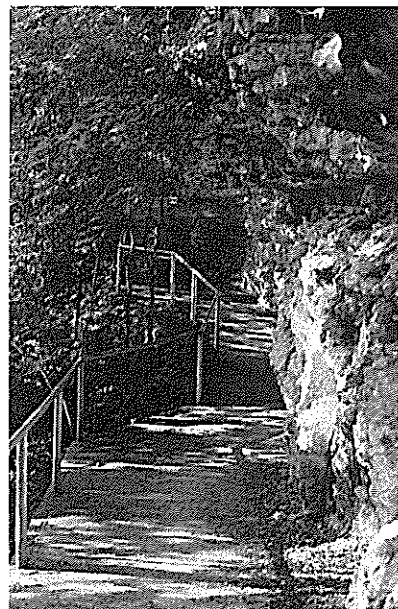
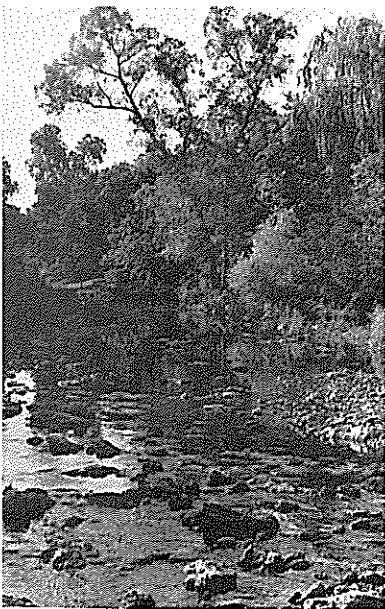
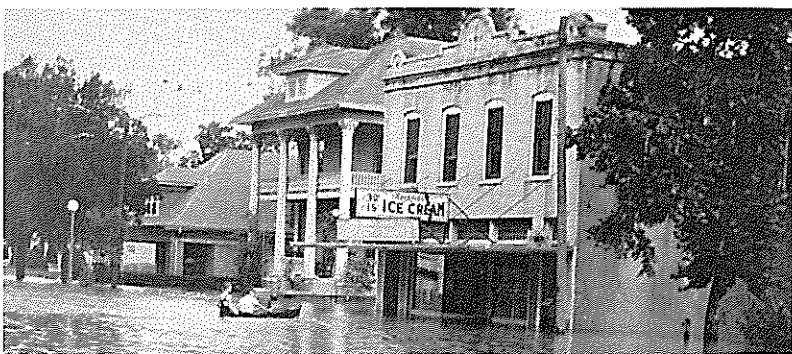
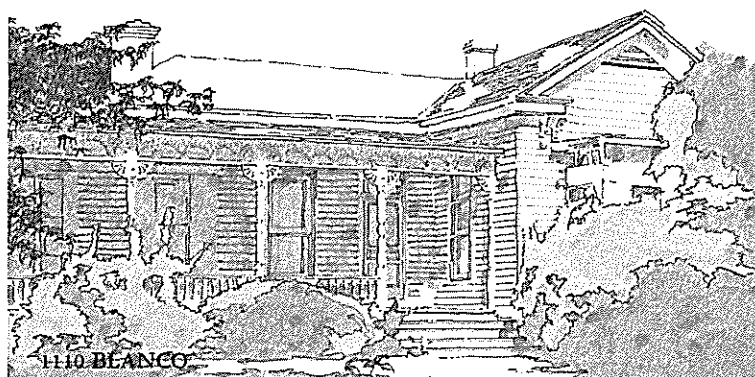


beer and hardboiled eggs to pleasure-seekers, but he sold the property in 1890 to E. J. Heppenheimer of New York. Heppenheimer built a dam, forming Alamo Lake, which was to be the focal point of an elaborate development. White swans were imported for the lake, but a flood in 1900 destroyed the dam, and the addition never succeeded as Heppenheimer had hoped. He returned to New York but kept the land until he died in 1946.

The Hancock brothers, George and John, owned a 10,000-acre estate that included a portion of Shoal. George was a surveyor and Indian fighter and owned a trading post where Scarbrough's department store is now located. John built the house known as "The Oaks" and trained race horses for the English tracks. He was a member of Congress.

Treasure hunters, including O. Henry, searched for buried Spanish gold along Shoal in the 1890s, and O. Henry later wrote a short story that apparently was based on his quest.

Near the current 29th Street was a settlement known as "Dog Town," supposedly because so many dogs roamed the neighborhood. Blue Hole, Cat Hole and Split Rock were popular swimming places in Shoal Creek. In 1933 the Civilian Conservation Corps laid out a walking trail, following the path of the original Indian trail, along the



creek. This was salvaged in 1948 by the city and Mr. and Mrs. Russell Fish and became what was probably the first hike-and-bike trail in the nation. A friend recalled that Mrs. Fish often personally picked up trash on the trail, and it apparently was a longtime dream that the trail would stretch as far as that part of the Colorado known as Town Lake.

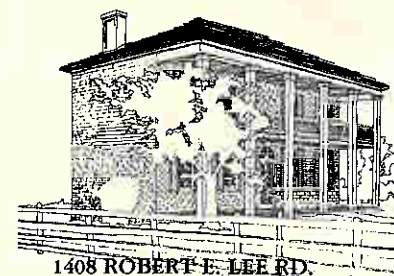
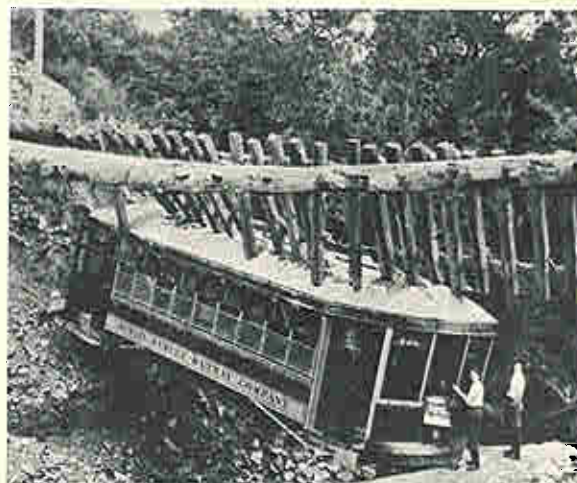
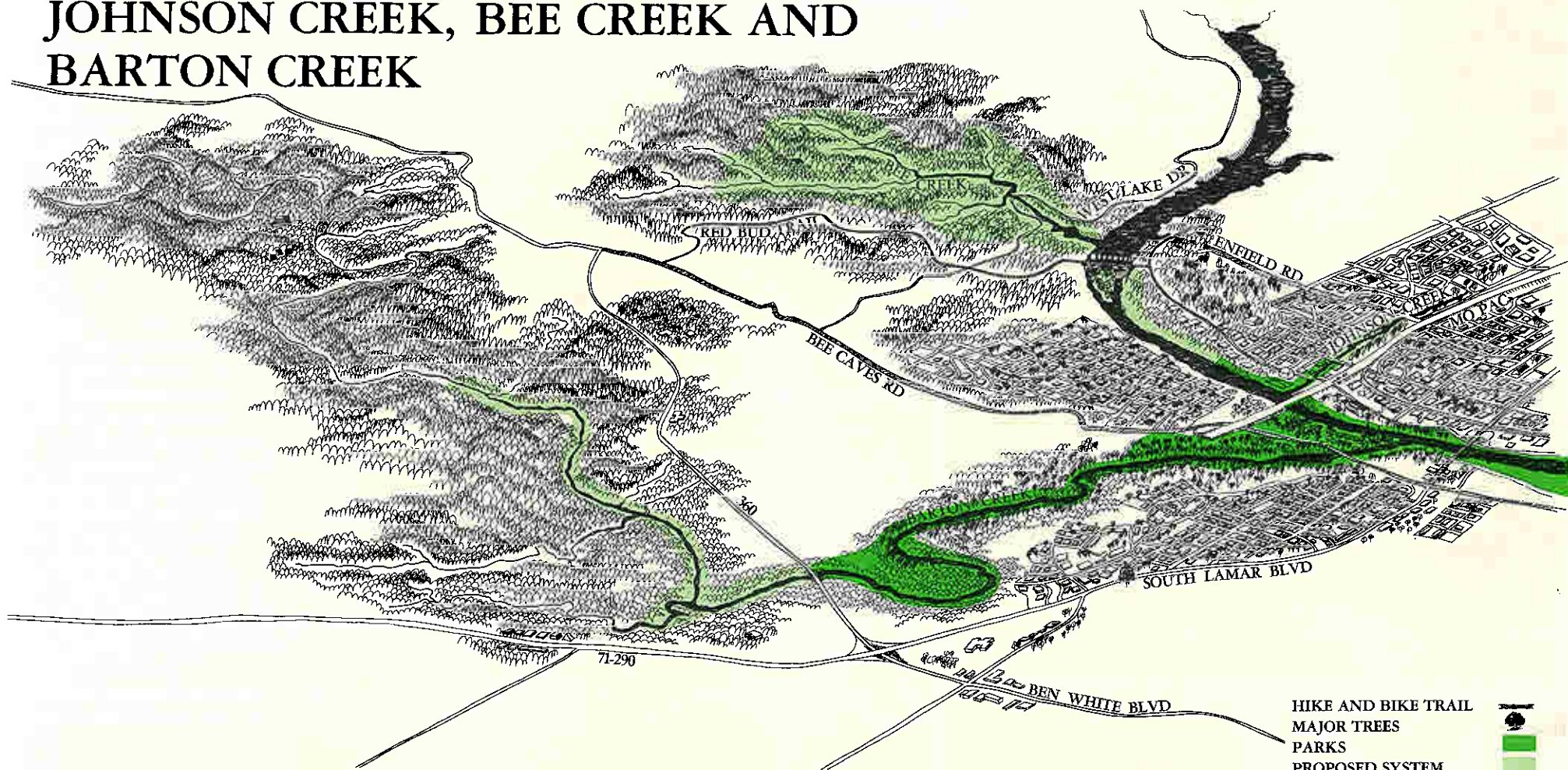
Although still young, Town Lake became the most important public place in Austin, the heart and soul of attempts to create and to maintain more open spaces for recreation and relaxation. The lake was created in 1959 and is the last of a series of Highland Lakes on the Colorado. It is six miles long, extending from Tom Miller Dam in west Austin to the Longhorn Crossing Dam on the east. The Longhorn dam got its name from the account that the first herd of Longhorn cattle heading to Abilene, Kan., stampeded in 1867 at the Colorado, the only cattle crossing in this region. The route became part of the Chisholm Trail, and those cattle were the vanguard of the great herds that helped to pay for rebuilding Texas after the Civil War.

It was with this in mind that the chamber of commerce strongly recommended that the city council name Town Lake as Lake Longhorn. The name, Town Lake, originated in 1958 when reporter Bill Woods, writing about a forthcoming bond issue to build a dam, came up with an abbreviated way to refer to the lake that would be created in the center of the city. Woods decided on "town lake" and it became "Town Lake." His colleagues were not impressed. Reporter Al Williams said such a name was befitting a village but degrading to a city the size of Austin. He recommended Lake Lamar, in honor of Mirabeau B. Lamar. Outdoor columnist Russell Tinsley wrote of Town Lake — "Ugh! What a dreadful name."

After discarding such proposed names as Tejas, Waterloo, Friendship, Freedom, Chisholm, Willow, Blue Water, Sunshine Mirror, Coloriver Haven and Longhorn, a lake development committee suggested the name Lake Tonkawah. "I recognize," said chairman David Barrow, "that the name will be unfamiliar to people, and that it will be good, in a way, since people will ask what it means and that will arouse more interest in its history."

"Lake What?" was the general reaction. "No one can pronounce it—or spell it," commented a secretary. "They must be kidding," remarked an oilman. "No respecting fish would ever swim through a lake with a name like that." Indian expert W. W. Newcomb said, however, he thought it was appropriate, because the Tonkawas "were in this vicinity to start with." His book on Indi-

JOHNSON CREEK, BEE CREEK AND BARTON CREEK



ans said the Tonkawas roamed central Texas at least as early as the 18th Century, hunting buffalo from horseback. The phrase they used in referring to themselves meant something similar to "the most human of people," Newcomb said.

Councilman Hub Bechtol objected that the Tonkawahs were feared because of their predilection for cannibalism, and the remnants of the tribe had fled to Oklahoma.

The council, in May 1962, selected the name Town Lake, a tranquil name.

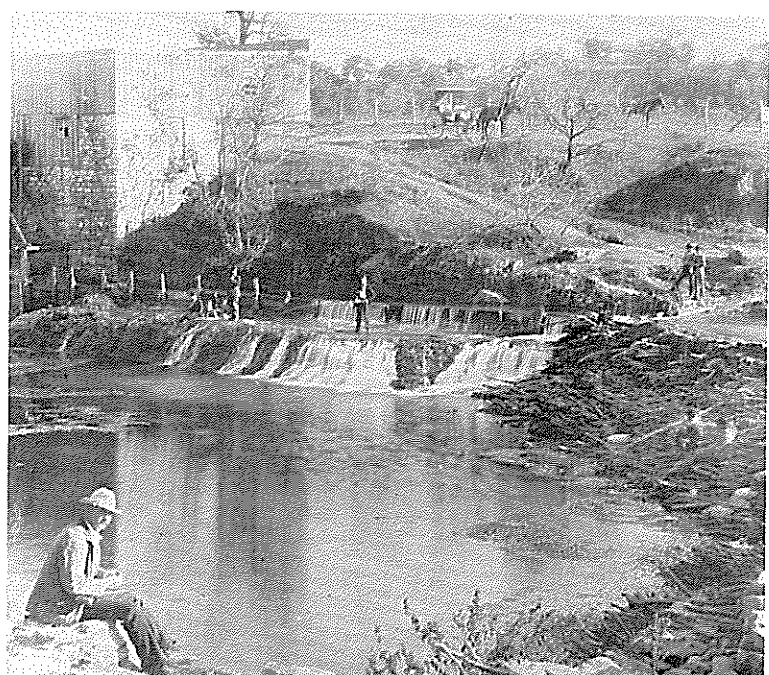
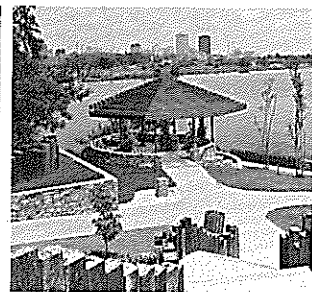
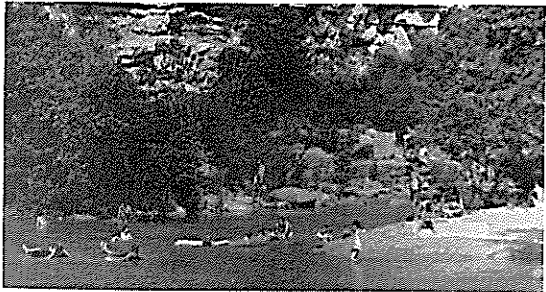
Before the dams were built, however, the Town Lake stretch of the Colorado was not so placid. In July 1869 its rise was estimated at 46 feet, equal to 1843. The rise in 1832, however . . . was said to have been far greater. In 1900 eight men "drowned like rats in a trap" when the power room of a dam was swept away, the Dallas Morning News reported. In June 1932, when 32 drowned on overflowing Waller and Shoal creeks, the Colorado peaked at 45 feet and caused \$15 million in damages. It took ten days for the water to recede south of the Congress Avenue bridge, and to avoid possible contamination, residents lined up for water at wells in the Driskill Hotel, on the Capitol grounds and at Howard's Montopolis Nursery.

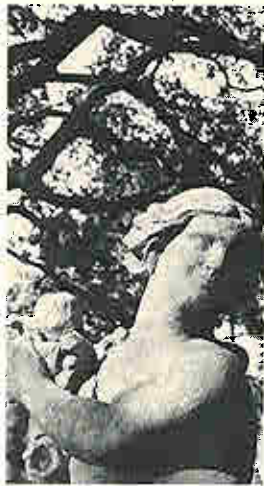
People in Austin were seriously concerned about pollution even in 1880, according to the recent reprint of an article that year from the Dallas Herald. The Herald complained that the "city fathers of that mossback village on the Colorado" had refused to allow the federal government to put down an underground earthen pipe from the post office to the Colorado because they thought it might pollute the river. While the alternative—a cesspool or outhouse—was not a "happy one by today's standards of hygiene," wrote Mrs. Katherine Hart of Austin-Travis County Collection, "still we can thank the city fathers of 1880 for their foresight in being aware of the dangers of pollution and their courage in refusing to allow the contamination of the Colorado."

Some 90 years after the council had displayed its "courage," it appointed a committee to make Town Lake more beautiful, and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson was named honorary chairman. Nearly \$200,000 was contributed over the next few years, and in December 1975, the 11-mile Town Lake hike-and-bike trail was designated as part of the National Trail System. This, said Mrs. Johnson, is a "nice, warm, happy moment."

Just as Waller and Shoal once ran fresh and full, all of Austin's creeks are teeming with historical tales, and a few more will be cited.

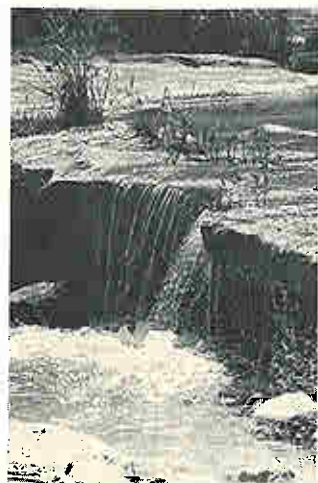
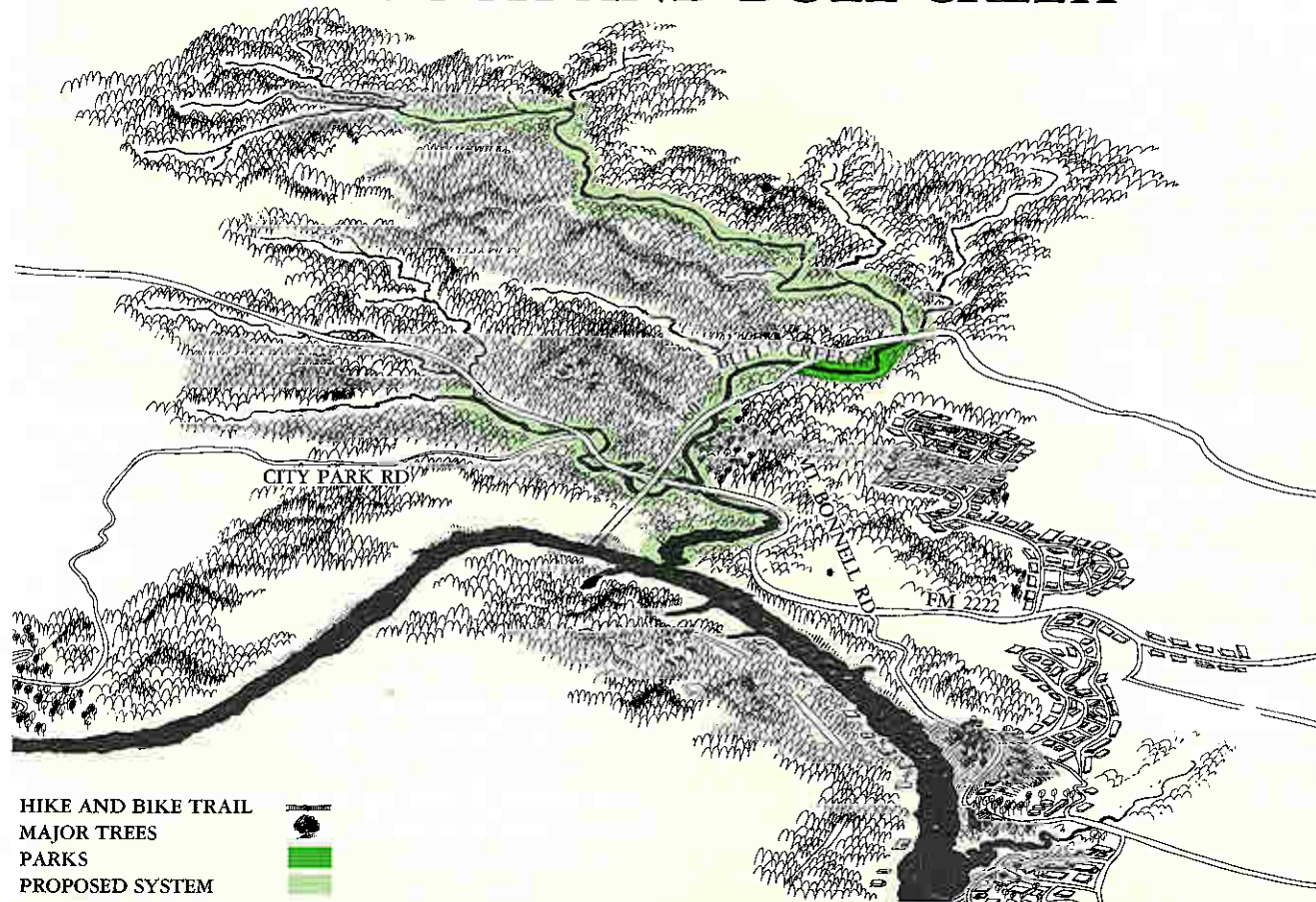
Onion Creek, the largest creek in Travis County with its 60-mile long watershed, was





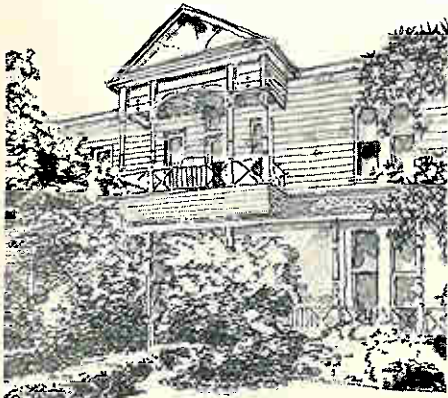
210 ACADEMY DR.

TAYLOR SLOUGH AND BULL CREEK



the site of one of the county's earliest academies—Rowe's Select Academy—which was started in the late 1840s by Joseph Rowe, a North Carolina physician who came to Texas in 1833. The San Antonio road between Onion and Slaughter creeks was the scene of one of central Texas' most gruesome slayings. The slayings occurred in 1860, when three men had their throats cut and their heads smashed. A doctor theorized that the murder weapon was a four-pound Bowie knife. The next year, the "Travis Rifles" of the Confederate Army marched with great fanfare out of the city and camped on Onion Creek on their first night as they went to war. In 1874, without warning, the local newspaper of the day recounts, a spring larger than a man's arm spouted on Onion Creek, and a bathtub was cut in the rock to make use of the spring. Flood records of Onion Creek show that the highest on record were in 1869 and 1921, and a couple became so desperate during the 1921 flood that they cut through their ceiling with a knife to escape the high waters. That first great flood swept away many of the large cypress trees that lined Onion's banks. Cypress was valuable as timber because it is almost impregnable to decay. As an illustration of how Onion, as well as the other creeks, has turned into a trickle, four persons canoed it in 1971 and found the water so low that they had to carry the canoes two of the eight miles. The trip took them five hours.

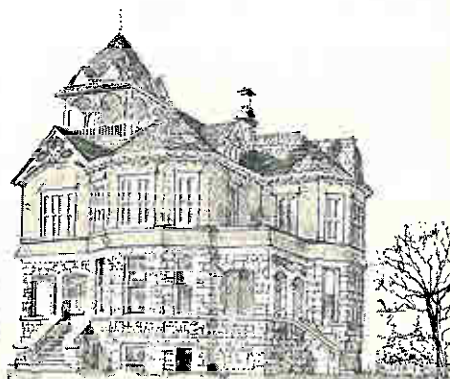
Cascade Creek, which was an old name for Shoal, was also the name early settlers used for a creek that cut through a remote valley in the hills northwest of Austin enroute to the Colorado. What became known as Bull Creek is probably the most beautiful landscape in the city. Because the valley was open range, great numbers of cattle roamed the hills, and Mrs. Hart received a letter at the library ten years ago saying the creek had been named—probably in the late 1860s—for the last old male buffalo slain in Travis County. The letter writer, Harold Preece, said his grandfather,



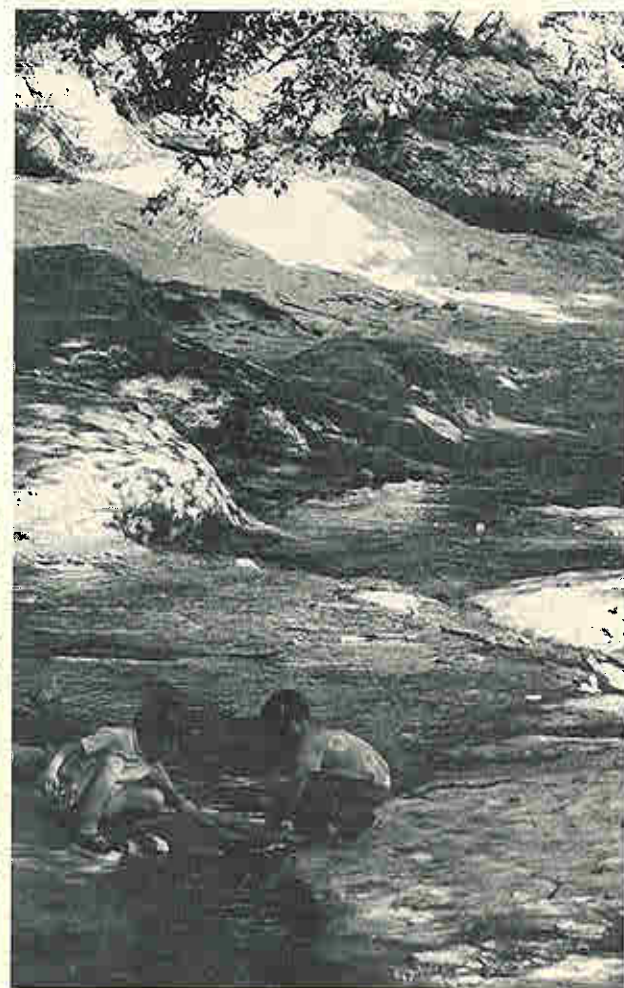
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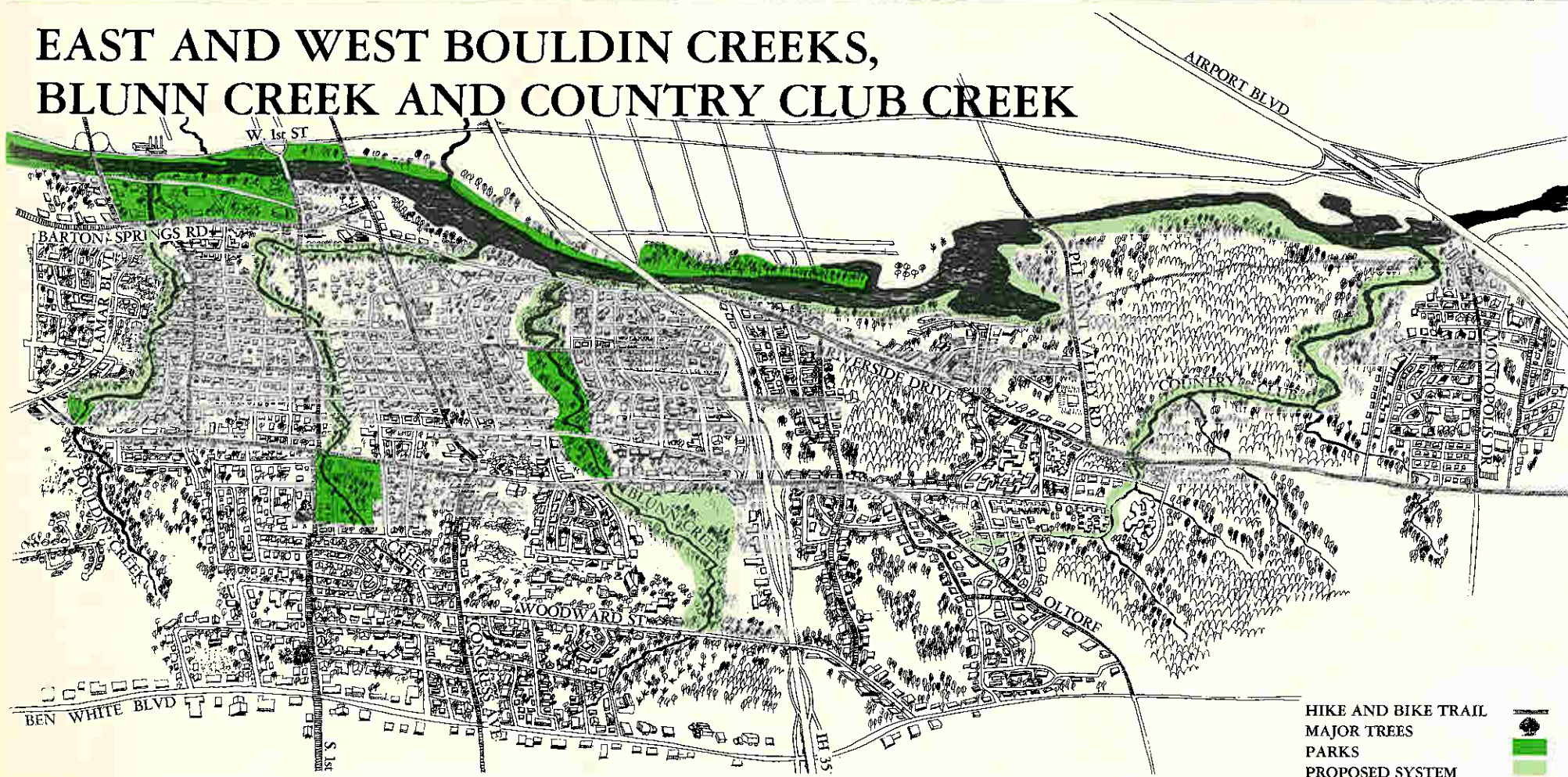
303 ACADEMY DRIVE



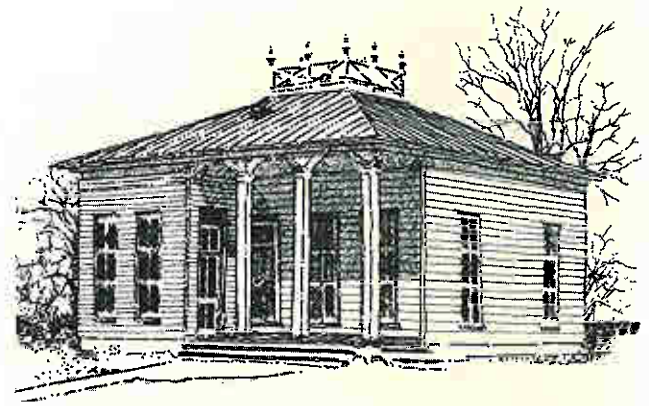
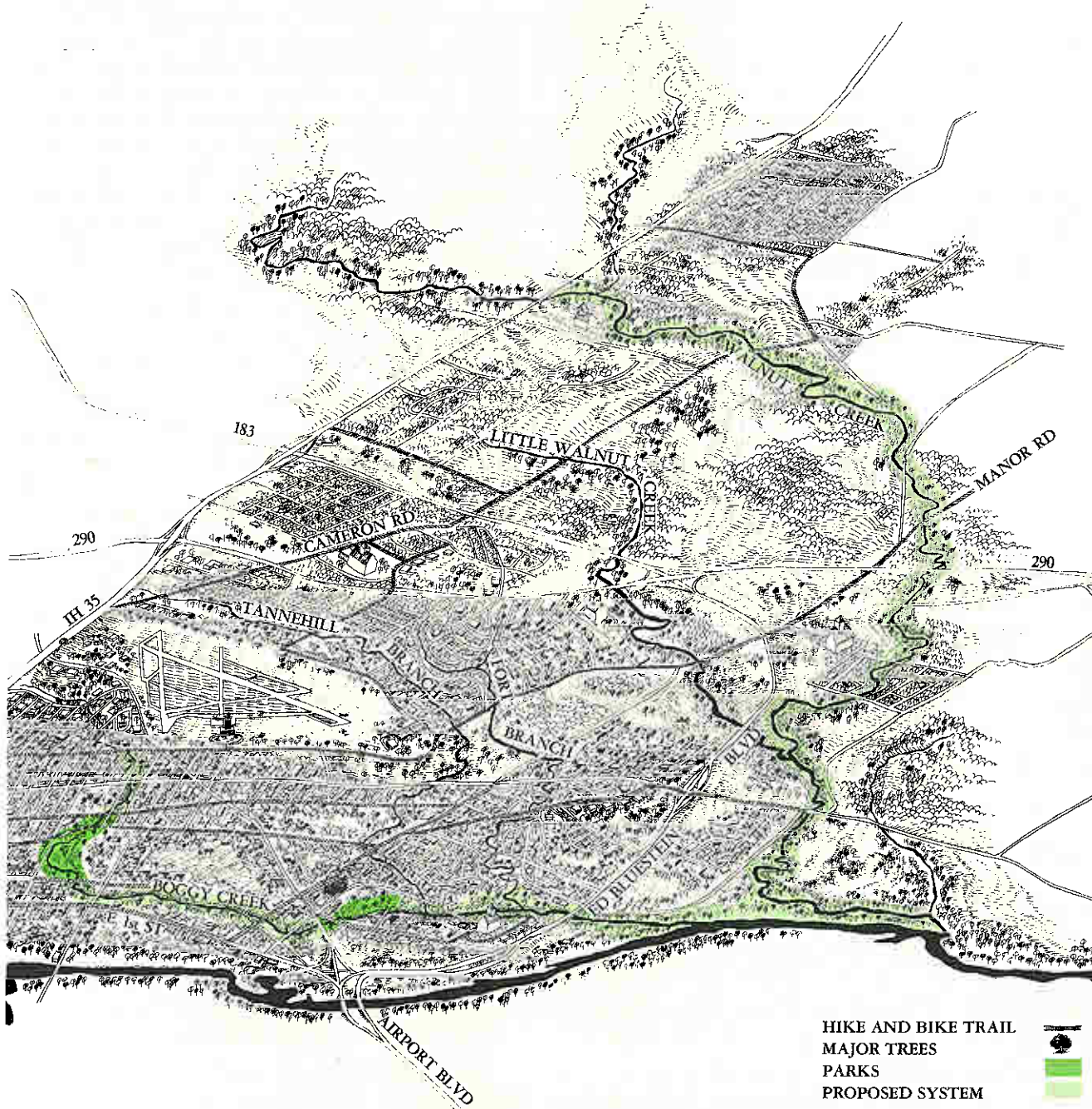
402 ACADEMY DR.



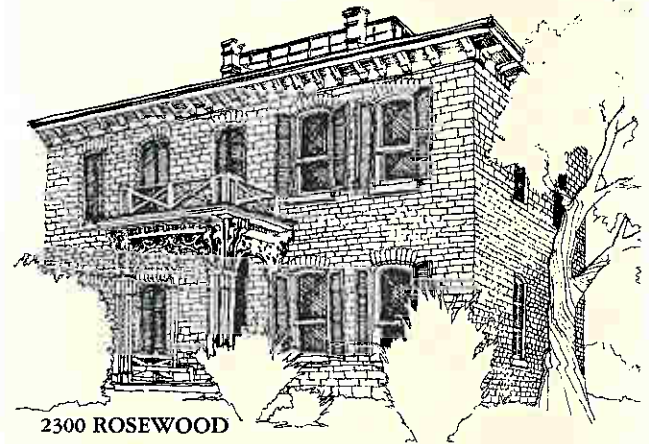
EAST AND WEST BOULDIN CREEKS, BLUNN CREEK AND COUNTRY CLUB CREEK



WALNUT CREEK, LITTLE WALNUT CREEK, FORT AND TANNEHILL BRANCHES AND BOGGY CREEK



1804 EAST 13TH ST.

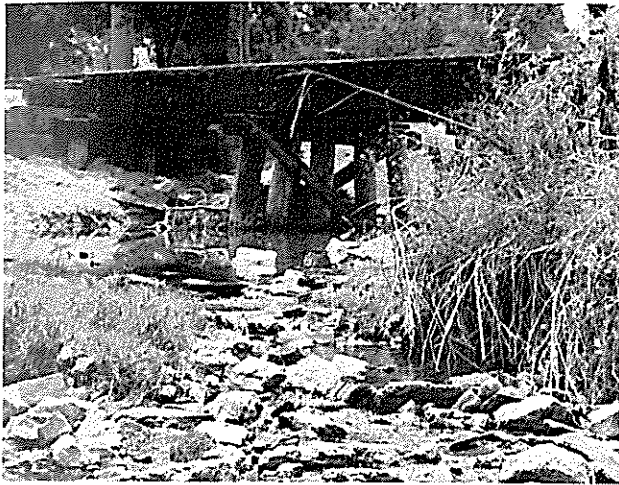


2300 ROSEWOOD



HIKE AND BIKE TRAIL
MAJOR TREES
PARKS
PROPOSED SYSTEM





former Texas Ranger Richard Lincoln Preece, had killed the old bull.

In a short paper about the environs of Cascade, or Bull Creek, Cathryn Richards says many of the oldtime families in that area lived in tents or caves and earned their living by cutting cedar, burning it for charcoal, then selling it in Austin. One family, she said, raised eight children in a cave, but enough suitors came around that all the girls got married. There was a special swimming place on Bull at Walton's old mill pond, and for years panthers stalked the high cliffs.

The end of an era was signaled in 1963 when the last Walden property between Spicewood Springs Road and Mansfield Dam was sold to a stranger. Mrs. Clementine Walden Jackson, then almost 72 and a widow, cried and, moved by her own tears, composed a "Tribute to Bull Creek." The first Walden on Bull Creek was her grandfather, Hugh, who came from Tennessee in an ox wagon and bought several hundred acres in 1850. "Now you are like me," Mrs. Jackson wrote in her tribute. "You have slowed down, as if you were resting from your years of rushing so fast . . . So many things that caused you to run, and laugh, are gone now."

In Texas there are 25 streams with the name Walnut Creek, and two of them—Big and Little Walnut creeks—are in Austin. Walnut rises in northern Travis County and flows south to the Colorado. Its early history, as some of the other creeks in the Austin area, is replete with Indian stories. The first known shedding of blood by Indians in Travis County occurred in 1833, when two men were killed and Josiah Wilbarger, shot through the neck and chin, with both legs pierced by arrows, was scalped and left for dead. His brother, J. V. Wilbarger, told the story in his book on Indian depredations in Texas. He wrote that Mrs. Reuben Hornsby, the wife of one of the early local settlers, had a dream that Wilbarger was alive even though two men returning from the skirmish said they saw Indians



kill him. Mrs. Hornsby urged a search party to get underway by daybreak, and the party found Wilbarger propped against a tree with all the clothing the Indians had left him, a single sock, draped over his naked skull. A small spot in the middle of the wound remained bare, and Wilbarger wore a covering over it for the remaining 11 years of his life.

One of the oldest churches in Travis County is the Walnut Creek Baptist Church, which celebrated its 120th anniversary in the Bicentennial year. The church started in 1856 with a congregation of ten, meeting at the Burdett schoolhouse. There is a legend that Sam Bass often hid out in the heavily wooded church grounds and stashed his loot in the corner of the original sanctuary. Some of Bass' ill-gotten gains also are said to be buried near Barton Springs.

There are so many other creeks in Austin, each with their own history: Johnson, the first stream west of the Missouri-Pacific railroad tracks; Blunn, flowing from near St. Edward's University to Town Lake, an area that was partly developed as early as the 1930s as a park and greenbelt; Boggy, with its two branches, Fort and Tannehill, a creek with persistent flooding problems; Harper's over which a battle was fought that resulted in the dramatic growth of a loud environmental voice, the South River City Citizens Association; Bee and Little Bee Creeks, which flow through a wilderness area in southwest Austin that is said to be a home for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler; East and West Bouldin in south Austin, and others.



MDJORDAN



FUTURE OF AUSTIN'S CREEKS

Most of the people who visit Austin, and everyone who is fortunate enough to live here, agree that it is indeed a beautiful city. The beauty of Austin today can be directly attributed to the foresight of earlier Austinites, those people who cared enough to preserve and protect the natural endowment despite the inevitable pressures to destroy it. The people who planted trees, built fine buildings, dedicated parkland, and insisted on a quality environment had a vision of a better Austin. Without their collective images, the natural qualities of our City that we admire so much would have become quickly and easily lost forever. There is no way and no need for us to repay our predecessors here. Our obligation is to future Austinites. We must create our own images of a more beautiful Austin and dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of that potential. To do less would be to disappoint future generations. As someone once said, "One generation plants the trees, the next enjoys the shade."

When we speak of the natural endowment of Austin, we are inevitably talking about the Colorado River and all the creeks and waterways that flow into it. The natural processes of water are the most critical to the environment that supports us. Creeks are a direct and clear manifestation of those processes. Water flowing through the creeks of Austin create the most delicate, sensitive and ecologically diverse, as well as the most interesting and beautiful, aspects of our physical environment.

GOALS PROGRAM

In the past several years interest in creeks has increased considerably. Citizen concern for creeks, creek protection, and the creation of greenbelts has been vividly demonstrated by the Austin Goals Program. The desire to protect and creatively develop Austin's creeks emerged as virtually the highest priority from among hundreds of issues considered.

CREEK ORDINANCE:

Following the senseless and unnecessary destruction of eleven acres of creek land in south Austin, a city ordinance was created to "protect the natural and traditional character" of Austin's creeks. This ordinance was the culmination of several years of public controversy over the mistreatment of the creeks in Austin and constituted a major step toward insuring creek protection in the future.

TOWN LAKE:

Town Lake has emerged as one of Austin's most important assets in the last few years, thanks to the dedication of the Parks Department and a handful of hard working citizens, members of the "Citizens for a More Beautiful Town Lake" committee.

Several miles of hike and bike trails have been created, pedestrian bridges, view points, etc. have been built, and hundreds of trees have been planted. The striking success of Town Lake must be taken as a signal that the creative development of the creeks that flow to it will soon be realized.

WALLER CREEK:

Waller Creek is rapidly moving toward fulfillment of its potential. The middle portion, 15th Street to 10th Street, has been virtually completed as an urban park with Waterloo Park and Symphony Square. The upper portion of Waller Creek, that flows through the University of Texas, is being planned as a linear park and trail. The lower portion, from 10th Street to the Colorado River, is being planned in great detail as a zone for urban development.

WILD BASIN:

One of the most striking achievements during the past few years has been the efforts of a group of citizens to create a nature preserve on Bee Creek, west of downtown Austin. The idea for a natural park originated with an environmental group, Now or Never, who wanted to preserve the area's

natural beauty and its rare and endangered inhabitants, the Golden Cheeked Warbler.

A community wide organization was formed under the title of The Committee For Wild Basin Park. This group, working with The Environmental Conservancy Of Austin And Central Texas, raised considerable sums of money and purchased the first several tracts of land.

The Travis County Commissioners eventually voted to assume sponsorship of the park and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation agreed to provide Federal funds for further acquisition of land, thereby assuring fulfillment of the idea.

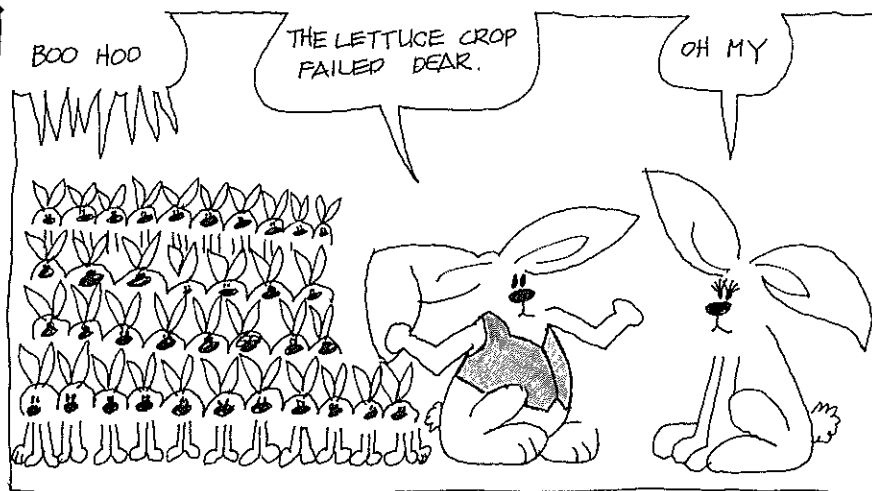
BICENTENNIAL:

Of course the major commitment to the creeks came when the Bicentennial Commission and the City Council of Austin selected as its "gift to the nation" *A Bold Plan to Preserve, Restore, and Enhance the Creeks of Austin*.

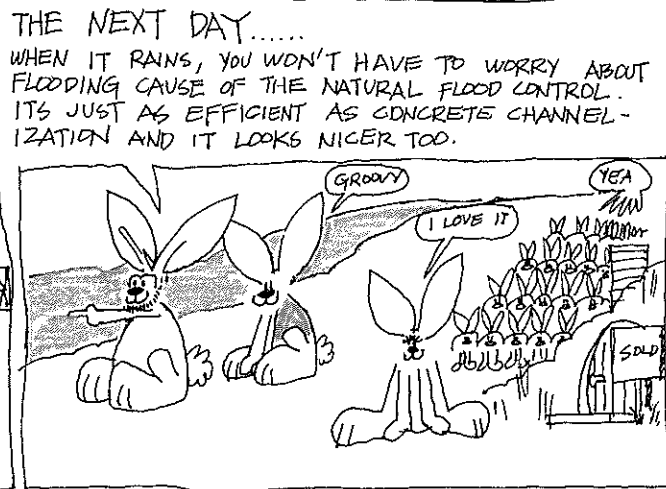
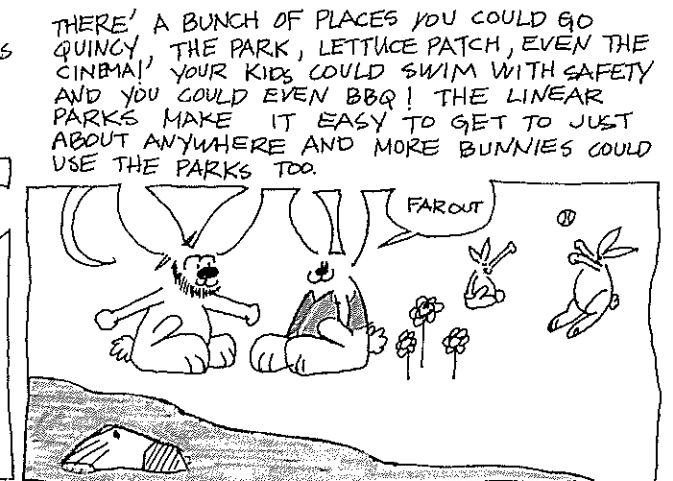
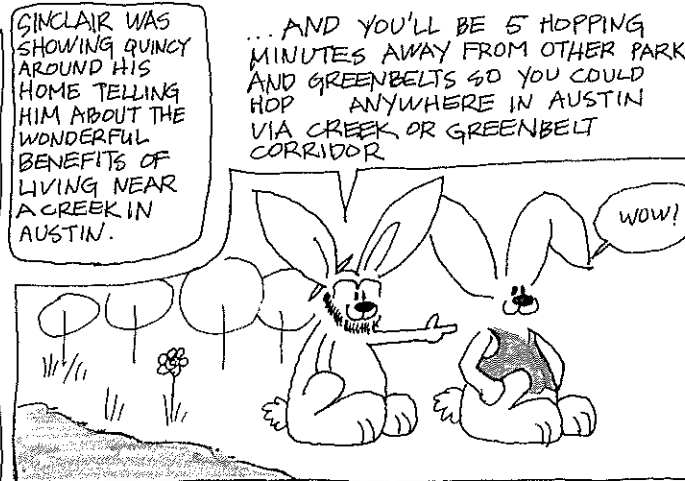
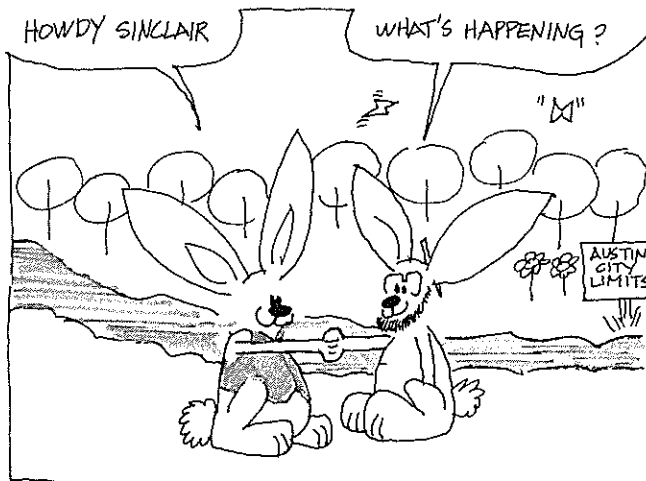
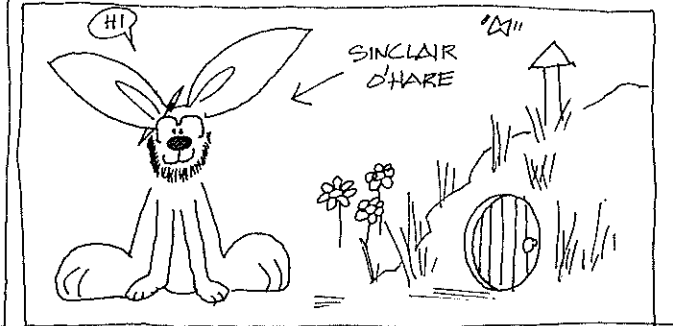
A quick review of the successes would encourage anyone; indeed a great deal has been accomplished in a relatively short time. We need only to look at the tremendous unfulfilled potential of the greenbelt idea to realize how much remains to be done. A project of this scope and importance requires more than dedicated citizens, or a temporal cause, in this case the Bicentennial effort, and whatever funds can be found after the city's other needs are fulfilled. At a time when funds are limited and the competition for dollars is great, it requires continued citizen interest and influence to make it a plan of and by the people it will serve, and to insure that it does not once again become an opportunity missed and a dream of the past.

Quincy O'Hare

ONCE UPON A TIME..... QUINCY O'HARE AND HIS FAMILY WERE LIVING IN THE VALLEY WHEN THE GREAT LETTUCE DISASTER STRUCK. QUINCY HAD TO MOVE HIS WIFE AND 29 LITTLE BUNNIES TO A PLACE OF SUN, FOOD, SHELTER AND WATER. (THE LITTLE BUNNIES LIKED TO SWIM ALOT!)



FORTUNATELY, SINCLAIR O'HARE (QUINCY'S BROTHER) WAS LIVING IN AUSTIN AND INVITED QUINCY AND HIS FAMILY TO LIVE WITH HIM UNTIL THEY FOUND A PLACE TO LIVE. SINCLAIR LIVED NEAR A BEAUTIFUL CREEK WITH LOTS OF TREES AND A LETTUCE PATCH NEAR BY.



THE O'HARE'S HAVE FOUND HAPPINESS AND LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER. (WITH ALL 29 LITTLE BUNNIES)

MORAL:
BE LIKE A BUNNY AND BE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CREEKS.

THE END

