



Blog

News The 6th Street Bridge at Shoal Creek: A Historic Treasure



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West 6th Street Bridge, Shoal Creek, Austin, Texas by Ted Lee Eubanks

Did you know that the [West 6th Street Bridge over Shoal Creek](#) is older than the Texas State Capitol Building?

Built in 1887, this historic bridge is one of the state's oldest masonry arches and located at the site of the first bridge in Austin, which opened up the area west of the city to development. It continues to serve as a major east-west transportation artery for motorists, walkers and cyclists.

The Shoal Creek Conservancy is committed to restoring this significant landmark by registering it with the [National Register of Historic Places](#) and the City of Austin, restoring the stonework, installing lighting, enhancing the immediate area with landscaping, and addressing ongoing graffiti and other maintenance needs.

An Important First Step

On Saturday, May 17, the Texas Historical Commission [State Board of Review](#) will consider an [application for the nomination](#) of the Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek for the [National Register of Historic Places](#). This nomination is a critical component of the Conservancy's project to protect and restore the bridge. If recommended, the nomination will be considered by the [National Park Service](#) for listing in the coming months.

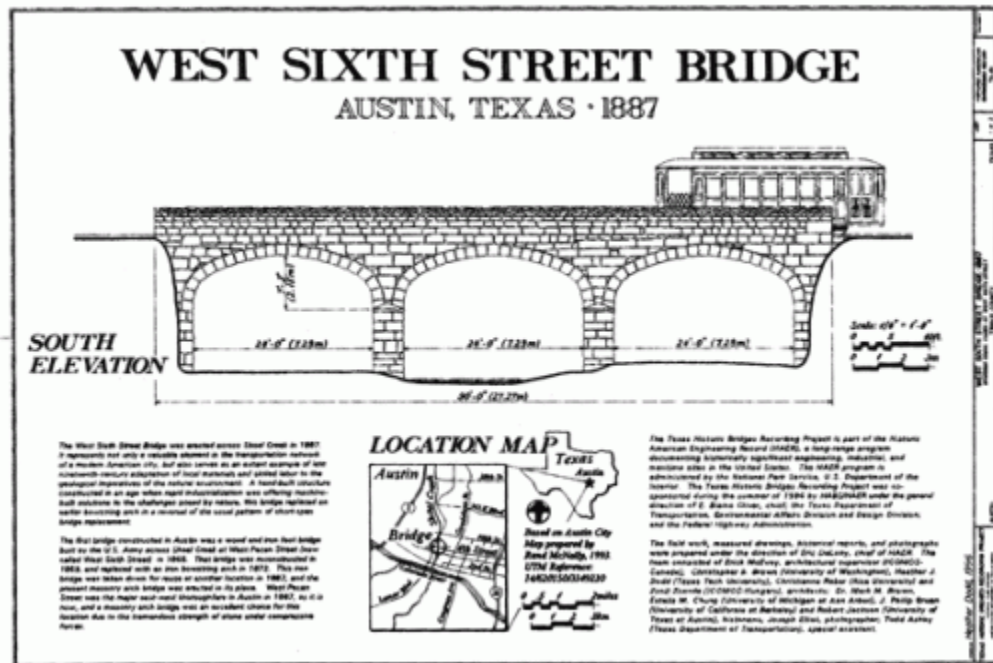
Listing in the National Register provides national recognition of a property's historical or architectural significance and denotes that it is worthy of preservation. Along with the City's historic designation, this designation will assist with the Conservancy's efforts to raise funds for its restoration.

More About the Bridge – Expert from the Nomination Application

The 1887 West Sixth Street Bridge (historically known as Pecan Street Bridge) is a three-arch masonry bridge spanning Shoal Creek approximately one-half mile west of the intersection of Sixth Street and Congress Avenue. In reversal of the usual pattern of short-span bridge

replacement with factory-made truss bridges, this hand-built structure replaced an earlier iron bowstring arch.

Its wide street dimension conforms to the width of the streets originally determined by Edwin Waller's 1839 city plan, which allowed for the passage of wagons going in either direction, and also facilitated the installation of tracks for mule-drawn streetcars, which were first used in Austin in 1875.



The bridge retains a high degree of integrity and is an excellent example of a multiple-arch masonry bridge built with local materials to carry vehicular traffic. The bridge also reflects the establishment of ambitiously wide arterial streets in the City of Austin in the mid-19th century, as well as the city's substantial investment in road infrastructure to encourage expansion beyond the original city plat.

This bridge is one of the state's oldest masonry arches, is located at the site of the first bridge in Austin, and continues to serve as one of the city's principal east-west arteries. Numerous stone, iron or concrete bridges have been built over downtown creeks, but none have met the needs of the community as long or as well as the West Sixth Street Bridge.

An Invitation to Take a Closer Look

Next time you walk or bike along the Shoal Creek trail or drive across the 6th Street Bridge take a moment to look at this amazing hand-crafted historic structure. To learn more about this project and Shoal Creek's historic bridges, please [contact us](#) or visit Conservancy Board Member Ted Eubanks' [online gallery](#).



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Thank you to the Texas Historical Commission as well as the Conservancy's Historic Bridge Committee for your support of this project.

National Register of Historic Places Program

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Property Name	West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek
Reference Number	14000499
State	Texas
County	Travis
Town	Austin
Street Address	West Sixth Street at Shoal Creek
Multiple Property Submission	
Name	N/A
Status	Listed 8/18/2014
Areas of Significance	Engineering , Community Planning and Development
Link to full file	https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000499.pdf



The 1887 West Sixth Street Bridge in Austin, Texas, is a three-arch masonry bridge spanning Shoal Creek. In a reversal of the usual pattern of short-span bridge replacement with factory-made truss bridges, this hand-built structure replaced an earlier iron bowstring arch. Its wide street dimension conforms to the width of the streets originally determined by Edwin Waller's 1839 city plan, which allowed for the passage of wagons going in either direction, and also facilitated the installation of tracks for mule-drawn streetcars, which were first used in Austin in 1875. The bridge retains a high degree of integrity and is nominated to the National Register under Criterion C in the area of Engineering, at the local level of significance, and an excellent example of a multiple-arch masonry bridge built with local materials to carry vehicular traffic. The bridge also meets Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as

a structure that reflects the establishment of ambitiously-wide arterial streets in the City of Austin in the mid-19th century, as well as the city's substantial investment in road infrastructure to encourage expansion beyond the original city plat. This bridge is one of the state's oldest masonry arches, is located at the site of the first bridge in Austin, and continues to serve one of the city's principal east-west arteries.

West Sixth Street Bridge

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **West Sixth Street Bridge** is a historic stone [arch bridge](#) in [downtown Austin, Texas](#). Built in 1887, the bridge is one of the state's oldest [masonry](#) arch bridges. It is located at the site of the first bridge in Austin, carrying [Sixth Street](#) across Shoal Creek to link the western and central parts of the old city. The bridge was added to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 2014.

History

The first bridge within the [Austin](#) city limits was built across [Shoal Creek](#) at West [Sixth Street](#) (then known as "Pecan Street") in 1865. This first bridge, built by the [United States Army](#), was a narrow iron [footbridge](#) and could not carry wagon traffic. As the capital city expanded, development west of Shoal Creek increased, and demand for a reliable vehicular crossing grew. At the Austin City Council meeting of January 3, 1887, council instructed the city engineer to estimate the cost of a new, larger bridge at Pecan Street that would match the full 80-foot (24 m) width of the street and permit wagons to cross.^[2]

On March 21, 1887, city council allocated \$6,126.20 (equivalent to \$163,000 in 2016) for the construction of a permanent double-arch stone bridge to span the creek;^[2] in fact, the bridge was ultimately built with three arches. Construction was completed and the bridge opened to traffic in July 1887. Since its completion, the bridge has required repairs on numerous occasions (usually due to damage from flooding on Shoal Creek), but the overall design is not believed to have been significantly altered.^[2]

Today, the bridge still carries West Sixth Street across Shoal Creek and supports substantial pedestrian and vehicular traffic daily. On August 18, 2014, the structure was added to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in recognition of its significance as a durable work of [civil engineering](#) using local materials and a manifestation of nineteenth-century [urban planning](#) in Texas's growing capital city. The bridge is also notable for having replaced an iron [truss bridge](#) at a time when short-span masonry bridges were commonly being replaced by manufactured trusses.^[3]

Design

The West Sixth Street Bridge is a closed-[spandrel deck arch bridge](#) built of local [limestone](#). It is 90 feet (27 m) long and 80 feet (24 m) wide, its unusual width reflecting that of Pecan Street as established by [Edwin Waller](#)'s original 1839 Austin master plan. Today the structure carries a [concrete](#) roadway surfaced in [asphalt concrete](#), bearing four roadway lanes, along with [parallel parking](#) spaces and [sidewalks](#) on both sides.^[2]

The bridge spans Shoal Creek with a series of three [voussoir](#) arches, each 24 feet (7.3 m) wide at the base. Two central [piers](#), each 4 feet (1.2 m) thick, stand directly in the creek bed on stone footings resting on [bedrock](#). The stonework is of irregularly shaped [rusticated](#) blocks, which rise to form a [parapet](#) along the bridge's south edge; it is speculated that a matching parapet may have originally stood along the north side, but today the north edge is topped by a concrete curb and a

metal [guard rail](#) on wooden posts. A concrete footpath runs parallel to the creek bed beneath the west half of the bridge's west arch.^[2]

References

1. **Jump up**[^] [National Park Service](#) (2010-07-09). *"National Register Information System"*. National Register of Historic Places. National Park Service.
2. **Jump up to:**^{a b c d e} *"National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (14000499)"* (PDF). [National Park Service](#). June 24, 2014. Retrieved October 26, 2017.
3. **Jump up**[^] *"West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek"*. [National Park Service](#). Retrieved October 26, 2017.