

**ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET****CASE NUMBER:** C14H-2018-0014**HLC DATE:**

December 18, 2017

February 26, 2018

**PC DATE:****March 27, 2018****APPLICANT:** Historic Landmark Commission**HISTORIC NAME:** West Sixth Street Bridge over Shoal Creek**WATERSHED:** Shoal Creek**ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE:** Bridge over Shoal Creek in the 800 block of West Sixth Street.**ZONING FROM:** P to P-H**SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from public (P) district to public – Historic Landmark (P-H) combining district zoning.**QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:**

Architecture, historical associations, community value.

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:** **December 18, 2017:** Initiated historic zoning. Vote: 7-0 (Papavasiliou, Brown, and Hibbs absent). **February 26, 2018:** Recommended historic zoning for the bridge under the criteria for architecture, historical associations, and community value. Vote: 8-0 (Reed, Brown, and Hudson absent).**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:****DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The bridge is listed as a Priority 1 for research in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984).**CITY COUNCIL DATE:****ACTION:****ORDINANCE READINGS:** 1<sup>ST</sup> 2<sup>ND</sup> 3<sup>RD</sup>**ORDINANCE NUMBER:****CASE MANAGER:** Steve Sadowsky**PHONE:** 974-6454**NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION:** Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association**BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:****Architecture:**

The bridge over Shoal Creek on West Sixth Street is a three-span masonry arch structure constructed of rusticated limestone blocks on stone footings. It has a low stone parapet on the south side and a concrete curb and steel guardrail on the north side. The bridge is approximately 80 feet wide and approximately 90 feet long. The bridge deck has an asphalt surface. There are concrete sidewalks on both sides of the bridge.

**Historical Associations:**

The bridge was constructed in 1887 to replace the first bridge in Austin, a ca. 1872 iron bowstring truss bridge built by prominent landowner James H. Raymond to connect his property west of Shoal Creek to the center of town. The iron bridge apparently became obsolete, and the city contracted to replace it with the current masonry arch bridge in 1887.

The width of the bridge matched the width of the street as laid out in Edwin Waller's 1839 plan of Austin, and was spacious enough to accommodate wagons traveling in both directions as well as providing tracks for mule-drawn street cars. The bridge was crucial to the development of the areas to the west as residential districts, and its width allowed for the necessary vehicular traffic.

**Community Value:**

The Shoal Creek bridge occupies a prominent and unique location in the city; the Shoal Creek Trail passes under the bridge, providing a very high degree of exposure to the historic character of the structure.

**PARCEL NO.:** N/A

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** N/A

**ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT:** N/A

**APPRAISED VALUE:** N/A

**PRESENT USE:** Bridge

**CONDITION:** Excellent

**PRESENT OWNER:** City of Austin

**DATE BUILT:** ca. 1887

**ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS:** The north parapet has been replaced with a concrete curb; numerous repairs to the bridge over the years, but none have compromised its integrity of design, materials, or feeling.

**ORIGINAL OWNER(S):** City of Austin (1887)

**OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS:** Individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (2014).

NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

**United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form****1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

**2. Location**

Street &amp; number: West Sixth Street at Shoal Creek

City or town: Austin

State: Texas

County: Travis

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this

☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official / Title State Historic Preservation Officer\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register☐ determined eligible for the National Register☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.☐ removed from the National Register☐ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
|   | Private          |
| X | Public - Local   |
|   | Public - State   |
|   | Public - Federal |

### Category of Property

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
|   | building(s) |
|   | district    |
|   | site        |
| X | structure   |
|   | object      |

### Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 0            | 0               | buildings  |
| 0            | 0               | sites      |
| 1            | 0               | structures |
| 0            | 0               | objects    |
| 1            | 0               | total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** Transportation: Road-related = bridge

**Current Functions:** Transportation: Road-related = bridge

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** Other: masonry arch bridge

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Stone/limestone

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheet 6)



West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

|   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| X | <b>A</b> | Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.   |
|   | <b>B</b> | Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.  |
| X | <b>C</b> | Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction. |
|   | <b>D</b> | Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.  |

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Engineering , Community Planning and Development

**Period of Significance:** 1887

**Significant Dates:** 1887

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 7 through 10)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet 11)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☒ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # TX-51

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property:** less than one acre

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 30.270524° Longitude: -97.751323°

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The nominated parcel includes the entire bridge structure at West Sixth Street and Shoal Creek in Austin, Texas. The bridge is approximately 80 feet wide and 90 feet long.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary includes all components historically associated with the structure.

## 11. Form Prepared By

**Name/title:** Jimena Cruz Pifano and National Register Coordinator Gregory Smith, based on the 1996 HAER report by Robert W. Jackson.

**Organization:** Shoal Creek Conservancy

**Street & number:** 707 West Avenue, Suite 101

**City or Town:** Austin

**State:** Texas

**Zip Code:** 78701

**Email:** jimecruz@gmail.com

**Telephone:** 512-565-0812

**Date:** February 2014

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets 12-13)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets 14-25)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets 5; 26-29)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places REGISTRATION FORM  
NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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### Photographs

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek  
Austin, Travis County, Texas  
Photographed by Gregory Smith, February 2014

#### Photo 1

North side, camera facing southeast

#### Photo 2

South side, camera facing northeast

#### Photo 3

South side, camera facing north

#### Photo 4

South side, camera facing northwest

#### Photo 5

Eastern arch, south side, camera facing north

#### Photo 6

Western arch, camera facing south

#### Photo 7

Street level, camera facing west

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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### Description

The 1887 West Sixth Street Bridge (historically known as Pecan Street Bridge) in Austin, Texas, is a three-arch masonry bridge spanning Shoal Creek. The bridge is 80 feet wide and 90 feet long, with three arches that each span 24 feet at the base. The bridge was constructed with rusticated limestone blocks, presumably quarried in the local area. No original plans have been located, but according to the Historic American Engineering Record documentation (HAER TX-51), the piers are probably founded on bedrock, just a few inches below the ground surface. While the street surface has been modified over the decades, and the north parapet has been replaced by a low concrete curb and steel guardrail, the bridge retains a high degree of integrity.

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The West Sixth Street Bridge spans Shoal Creek approximately one-half mile west of the intersection of Sixth Street and Congress Avenue in central Austin. Nearby development ranges from single-story mid-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings, to more recent multi-story buildings with a variety of retail, office, and residential spaces. The bridge is wide enough to accommodate four lanes of traffic, with additional space on each side of the street for parallel parking. The bridge is undistinguished at the street level, with a low rough-cut regular-coursed stone parapet on the south, and a concrete curb and steel guardrail on the north. The concrete pavement is surfaced with asphalt.

The bridge is a three-span closed spandrel masonry Roman-arch bridge on stone footings, and is constructed of irregularly sized rough-cut blocks arranged in a coursed pattern with concave mortar joints. Each voussoir arch rests on 4-foot-wide stone piers on bedrock foundations, and measures 24 feet wide at the creek level. The keystones are not distinguished by size, shape, nor decoration from the other voissiors. The creekbed is partially lined with a variety of masonry walls (concrete, coursed masonry, and rubble in wire mesh), which are not attached to the bridge. Shoal Creek has an intermittent flow, but is prone to flooding after heavy rain. Otherwise, standing water is generally limited to the area under the central arch. The creek bed under the outer arches has been partially filled with gravel, and a concrete walking path runs through the west half of the western arch.

The bridge is in good condition, and carries a great deal of daily traffic as part of a major east-west arterial feeding traffic into and out of the central business district. Flood control measures instituted by the City of Austin following the disastrous Memorial Day flood of 1981 should provide a measure of security in terms of the structural integrity of the bridge, thus allowing this unusually well preserved example of late nineteenth-century stone construction to survive into the twenty-first century with only periodic maintenance.

The bridge retains a high degree of integrity, but due to incomplete records, it is difficult to determine when, or how often, repairs or modifications to the bridge have been made. Given the frequency and severity of flooding by Shoal Creek it is probable that the bridge has been damaged on numerous occasions. There have been extensive repairs, but it is believed that there have not been any significant alterations since initial construction, except for the loss of the north parapet. Some of the stonework has been painted, and the mortar is lost in several areas. Some stones are missing and there have been repairs in all three spans, but none of this cumulative change has altered the overall design and feeling of the structure, which retains the appearance of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century masonry bridge.

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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**Statement of Significance<sup>1</sup>**

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-19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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In 1839, Texas President Mirabeau Lamar appointed his friend Edwin Waller as agent to plan the basic layout of the capitol city of Austin weeks before the site selection was announced in April 1839. Waller laid out the one-mile-square plan between "two beautiful streams of clear water" (Shoal Creek to the west and Waller Creek to the east) on the north banks of the Colorado, with a broad central avenue (Congress Avenue) extending northward from the river to "Capitol Square," which commanded good views of the town from the north. The streets were 80 feet wide, except for Congress Avenue and College Avenue (120 feet each), North Avenue (100 feet), and West Avenue and East Avenue (200 feet each). The unusual width of the West Sixth Street Bridge (80'-0") is attributable to the generous dimensions of the streets as laid out by Waller.<sup>2</sup>

The early bridges inside the city limits traversed Shoal and Waller creeks, as well as Little Shoal Creek located just east of Shoal Creek (now completely covered over). The Colorado River, first crossed at Austin by a short-lived pontoon bridge from 1869 to 1870, was still outside the city limits when the first iron wagon bridge to span the river was completed at the foot of Congress Avenue in 1884. There were no bridges of any description inside the city limits until 1865, the year a foot bridge was erected by the U.S. military authorities over Shoal Creek at West Pecan (Sixth) Street. The next bridge (circa 1866) was built of stone over Waller Creek, leading to the old arsenal grounds.<sup>3</sup> In the years since, numerous stone, iron or concrete bridges have been built over these three creeks, but none have met the needs of the community as long or as well as the West Sixth Street Bridge.

James Raymond, who served as State Treasurer from 1846-1856 and later became an influential banker, owned a considerable amount of land along West Pecan Street west of Shoal Creek. In 1855, he built a rather substantial house just west of the creek, approximately where West Sixth Street now crosses Lamar Boulevard. He later developed plans for an exclusive residential subdivision to be located near his home between West Pecan Street and

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<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from Historic American Engineering Record report HAER TX-51, prepared in 1996 by Robert W. Jackson. *West Sixth Street Bridge, Spanning Shoal Creek at West Sixth Street, Austin, Travis County, TX* Available from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/item/tx0778/> accessed March 6, 2014 .

<sup>2</sup> David C. Humphrey, *Austin: An Illustrated History* (Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, 1985), pp. 24-25. Two other valuable histories utilized for this report are Mary Starr Barkley, *History of Travis County & Austin, 1839-1899* (Waco, Texas: Liberty Binding, 1963); and Katherine Hart, *Austin & Travis County: A Pictorial History, 1839-1939* (Austin, Texas: Encino Press, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> Frank Brown, "Annals of Travis County and of the City of Austin: From the Earliest Times to the Close of 1875" (typescript, Austin History Center, n.d.), p. 22.

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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the sandy northern banks of the Colorado River, leading him to champion the construction of an improved footbridge across the creek in 1869. The *TriWeekly State Gazette* reported on August 27 of that year:

There is once more an excellent foot bridge over Shoal Creek, the military, together with Mr. Raymond and Judge Duval, having rebuilt the old one, which gave way, owing to bad construction and the injury done it by bad boys, white and black. We hope if any are caught swinging on the iron supports or maliciously or thoughtlessly doing anything to injure the new bridge, that prompt punishment may follow.<sup>4</sup>

As excellent as this footbridge may have been, however, a wagon bridge across Shoal Creek was necessary in order for the area west of the city limits to be profitably developed. In 1871, Raymond began advertising his Raymond Plateau subdivision, and the promotional plat for that subdivision shows an iron bridge spanning Shoal Creek at West Pecan Street, although it appears that the plat was anticipating what would be, rather than what was.<sup>5</sup> The *Daily State Journal* reported on March 4, 1872:

The city government has completed the eastern or corporate approach to the new iron bridge over Shoal Creek, and it now remains for the county to complete the western approach, which, we believe, is just outside the corporate city limits. The use of this bridge is very much needed, as several vehicles have broken down recently while going up and down the steep hill on either side and through the creek bottom.<sup>6</sup>

Birdseye views of Austin drawn by Augustus Koch 1873 and 1887 show a bowstring arch at this location.<sup>7</sup> In addition to his role in reconstructing the first bridge in Austin, Raymond was also involved in a grander bridge enterprise. In 1880, the Travis County Road and Bridge Company was organized, with Raymond as president.<sup>8</sup> Although it is unclear what was accomplished by this organization prior to June 1886, in that month the multiple-span iron toll bridge completed at the foot of Congress Avenue in 1884 was bought by the company and made a free bridge.<sup>9</sup>

For reasons which are unclear, the small bowstring arch that provided access to Raymond Plateau was in need of replacement by 1887. At the city council meeting of January 3, the city engineer was instructed to estimate "the cost of moving the iron bridge at present located on West Pecan Street over Shoal Creek to Cedar Street ... and replacing same with a substantial stone or iron bridge, the full width of the street."<sup>10</sup> At the next meeting of the council on January 17, the city engineer estimated:

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<sup>4</sup> *Tri-Weekly State Gazette* (Austin, Texas), 20 August 1891.

<sup>5</sup> Travis County, *Plat Records of Travis County*, vol. 5 (Travis County Courthouse, Austin, Texas), p. 401.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily State Journal* (Austin, Texas), 4 March 1872.

<sup>7</sup> Augustus Koch, "Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin; Travis County, Texas" (Madison, Wisconsin: J. J. Stoner, 1873; lithograph, Barker Center For American History, Austin, Texas); and Koch, "Austin, State Capital of Texas," 1887 (lithograph, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas). In *Views and Viewmakers of Urban America: Lithographs of Towns and Cities in the United States and Canada, Notes On the Artists and Publishers, and A Union Catalog of Their Work, 1825-1925* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984), p. 185, John W. Reps states that "Koch revisited and redrew several cities. These sets of views are particularly useful for determining the urban development taking place between the dates of the two views." He also finds that Koch "seems to have drawn with substantial accuracy."

<sup>8</sup> Barkley, p. 268.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>10</sup> City of Austin, *City Council Minutes*, vol. F, p. 260.

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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The cost of constructing an iron bridge on West Sixth Street over Shoal Creek, sixty feet wide with two ten feet sidewalks and abutments and wing walls complete, which fixes the cost at \$5,204; and an estimate of the cost of removing the iron bridge, now on West Sixth Street, over Shoal Creek, to West Cedar Street, over Shoal Creek with abutments, wing walls, new woodwork and fresh painting and putting bridge up \$1,543.<sup>11</sup>

No mention was made by the city engineer at this time concerning the erection of a stone bridge, and on March 7, 1887, a proposal was presented to the council for the appropriation of \$6,750 for building "an iron bridge over Shoal Creek on West Pecan Street, and removing an iron bridge on said street and replacing the same over Shoal Creek on West Cedar [Fourth] Street."<sup>12</sup> This was referred to a special committee, composed of four representatives from the west side of town (west of Congress Avenue) and four from the east side of town. This committee apparently reconsidered the type of bridge to be erected, because on March 21, 1887, the council passed an ordinance providing that "the following sums of money, or so much thereof as may be necessary," be appropriated "for the erection of a double-arched stone bridge over Shoal Creek on West Pecan Street" - \$6,126.20; and "for removing the iron bridge now over Shoal Creek on West Pecan Street and placing same over Waller Creek on East Water [First] Street" - \$1,593.<sup>13</sup> As built, however, the new stone bridge was a triple arch instead of a double arch. It would seem, therefore, that the construction plans were changed sometime between when the specifications were drawn up and when the bridge was completed. There is no record of work done on this bridge other than two observations in *The Austin Daily Statesman*, which noted in May 1887, that "work has commenced on the West Pecan Street Bridge," and further noted in July 1887, that "the bridge over Shoal Creek, on West Pecan Street, will be completed in a few days and will be a credit to the city. A transfer of passengers on the street car is now necessary, and will soon be dispensed with."<sup>14</sup>

The only other mention of work related to this project may be found in *The Austin Record*, which noted in July 1887, that "the city has contracted with Mr. Hoffard ... to take down and remove the iron bridge now spanning Shoal Creek. It is to be removed to East Third [Cypress] Street and placed over Waller Creek."<sup>15</sup> Apparently, the city had problems in deciding where on Waller Creek to relocate this old bridge. It had previously been suggested in March 1887 that this bridge be moved to East Fourth Street, and the council had voted on March 21 to move it to East First Street before signing the contract with Mr. Hoffard for removal to East Third Street. However, on March 4, 1889, a citizens' petition was presented to the council requesting the city to assist in bridging Waller Creek at Magnolia Avenue (Nineteenth Street) by permitting the Travis County Commissioner's Court to use "the iron bridge formerly over Shoal Creek on West Pecan (Sixth) Street...which is not now in use by the city."<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the eventual fate of this structure is unknown.

### Evolution of the Bridge and Site, 1887-Present

On February 6, 1888, city engineer Sam Matthews reported to the council that the new stone bridge over Shoal Creek was in need of repair, and he later estimated that repairs would cost \$2,536.<sup>17</sup> The street committee, however, reported that there was no money to fix bridges.<sup>18</sup> Shortly thereafter, Mayor Joseph Nalle spoke to the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 565.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 595.

<sup>13</sup> City of Austin, *City of Austin Ordinances*, vol. B, p. 282.

<sup>14</sup> *The Austin Daily Statesman*, May 7, 1887; *The Austin Daily Statesman*, July 28, 1887.

<sup>15</sup> *The Austin Record*, July 23, 1887.

<sup>16</sup> *City Council Minutes*, vol. G, p. 458.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 211,183.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 199.



West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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council concerning the debt left by the Robertson administration, and of the necessity of repairing and rebuilding "the stone bridges built, at a heavy cost, by the administration last preceding us. The city engineer's report shows that it will cost \$4,635 to repair the four bridges he has examined (E. 16th, E. 11th, E. 6th, and W. 6th) .... " Nalle was so disturbed by the state of the city finances, he suggested that the State legislature make it a felony, through an amendment to the city charter, for the mayor and board of aldermen (council) to create debts in excess of the amount of revenues:

The charter is plain in its inhibition on this subject, but no penalty attaches, and therefore this provision, unfortunately is more honored in the breach than in the observance, and no protection is afforded the people against a reckless and extravagant council creating any number of debts it may seem fit to make ...<sup>19</sup>

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the Robertson administration was guilty of any corruption in its handling of bridge contracts, it does appear that the expenditure of a great deal of money was recommended by the special committee on streets and bridges and that these determinations were made outside of the public view. The competence of the contractor for the work performed on the West Sixth Street Bridge is also questionable, given that on March 3, 1888, the city engineer again reported that the four stone arched bridges on East Sixteenth, East Eleventh, East Sixth and West Sixth were all in need of repair, and that

the beautiful three-arched bridge on West Sixth, or Pecan, is in decidedly worse condition than it was at the time of my last report upon the same. The protracted spell of wet weather has demonstrated the inferior quality of the mortar used in its construction and I estimate it will require two thousand five hundred and thirty six (\$2,536) dollars to put same in repair.<sup>20</sup>

Due to incomplete records, it is difficult to determine when, or how often, repairs to the bridge have been made, but given the frequency and severity of flooding by Shoal Creek it is probable that the bridge has been damaged on numerous occasions. An examination of the structure indicates that there may have been extensive repairs at some point, but it is believed that there have not been any significant alterations since initial construction, with one possible exception: the south side of the bridge has a parapet with capstones rising 2'-11" above the sidewalk. The north side of the bridge is level with the sidewalk at the top, although there is a steel guardrail on that side which is obviously a later addition. It may be that a flood which washed debris over the top of the bridge, such as the flood of 1915, could have damaged the parapet enough to require removal. Otherwise, the bridge appears to be essentially the same structure that was built in 1887.

The three-arch stone bridge at West Sixth Street over Shoal Creek survives as a good example of roadway infrastructure built by skilled craftspeople with local materials, at a time when metal truss bridges composed of factory-made components were becoming more common. This bridge replaced an earlier iron bowstring arch - a reversal of the usual pattern of short-span bridge replacement, as stone bridges were rapidly being replaced in the late nineteenth century by metal bridges. Austin, however, had a good supply of limestone and a wealth of skilled masons, and there were several instances in the late nineteenth century of iron bridges succeeded by stone arches crossing inner-city creeks.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 241.



West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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**Bibliography**

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*Tri-Weekly State Gazette* (Austin), 20 August 1891.

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West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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## Geographical Data

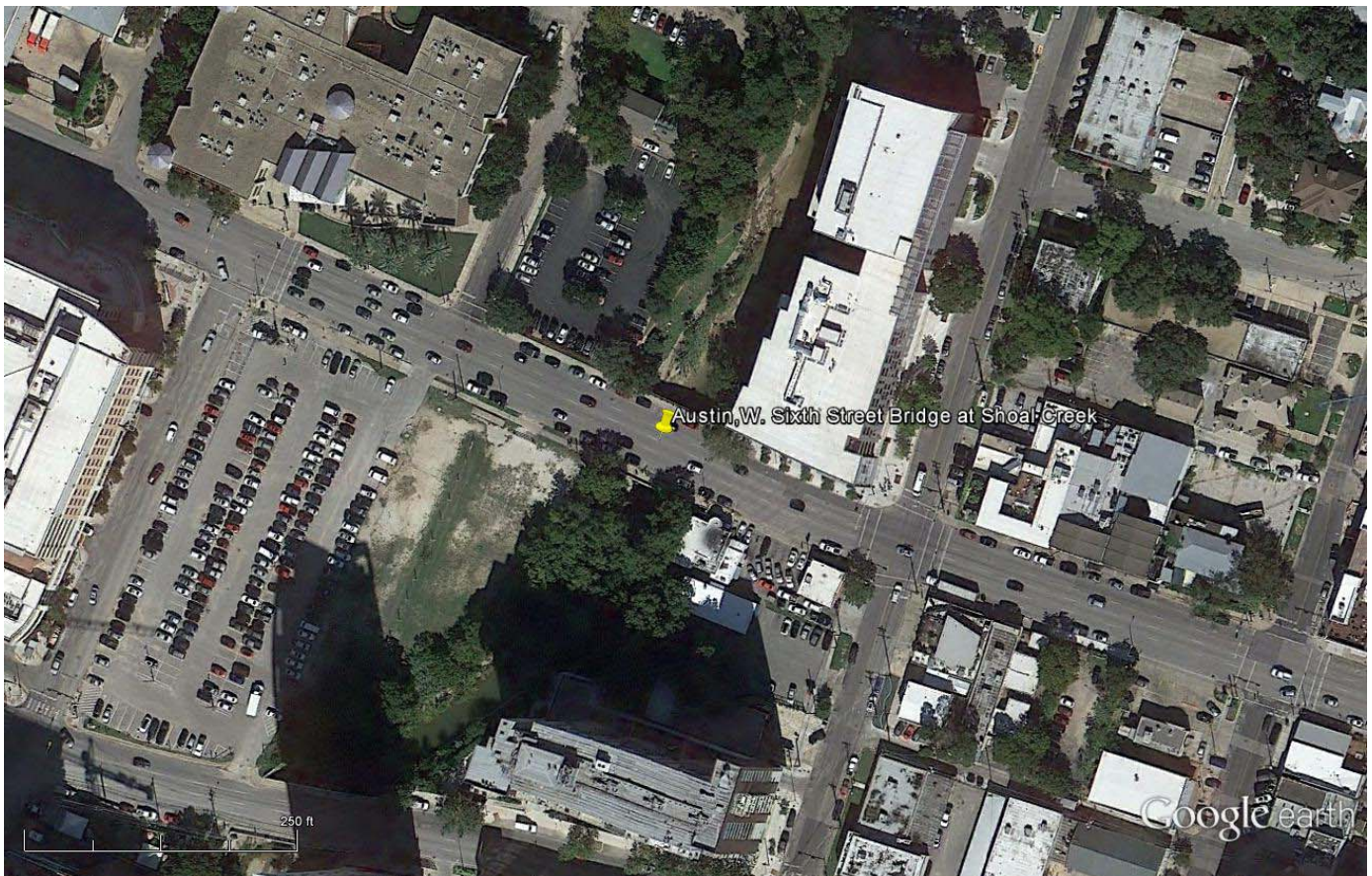
### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 30.270524° Longitude: -97.751323°

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The nominated parcel includes the entire bridge structure at West Sixth Street and Shoal Creek in Austin, Texas. The bridge is approximately 80 feet wide and 90 feet long.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary includes all components historically associated with the structure.

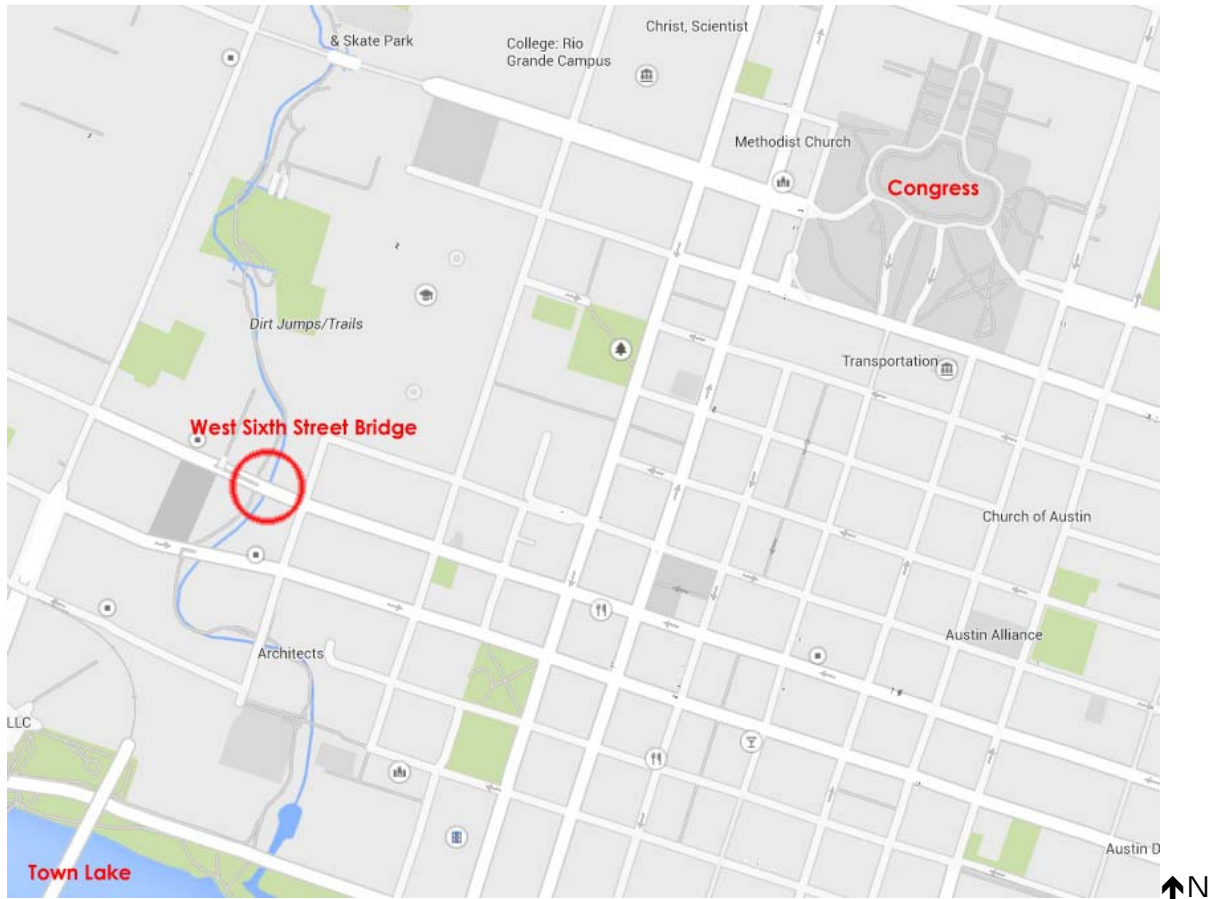


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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 1 West Sixth Street Bridge location

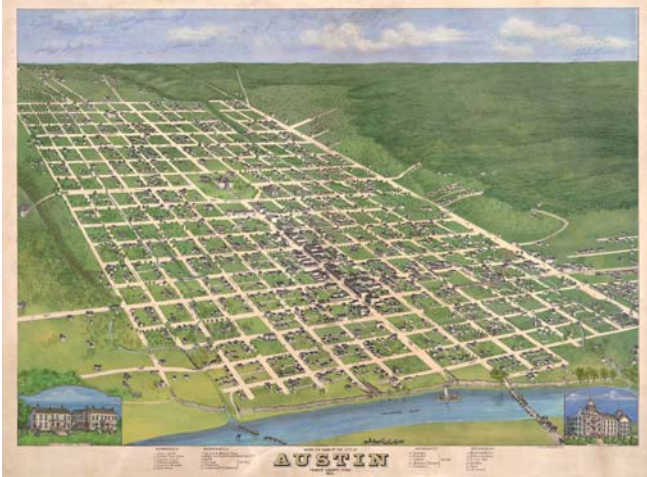




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West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Birdseye view of Austin drawn by Augustus Koch, 1873.  
Detail indicates bowstring truss bridge replaced by nominated bridge.



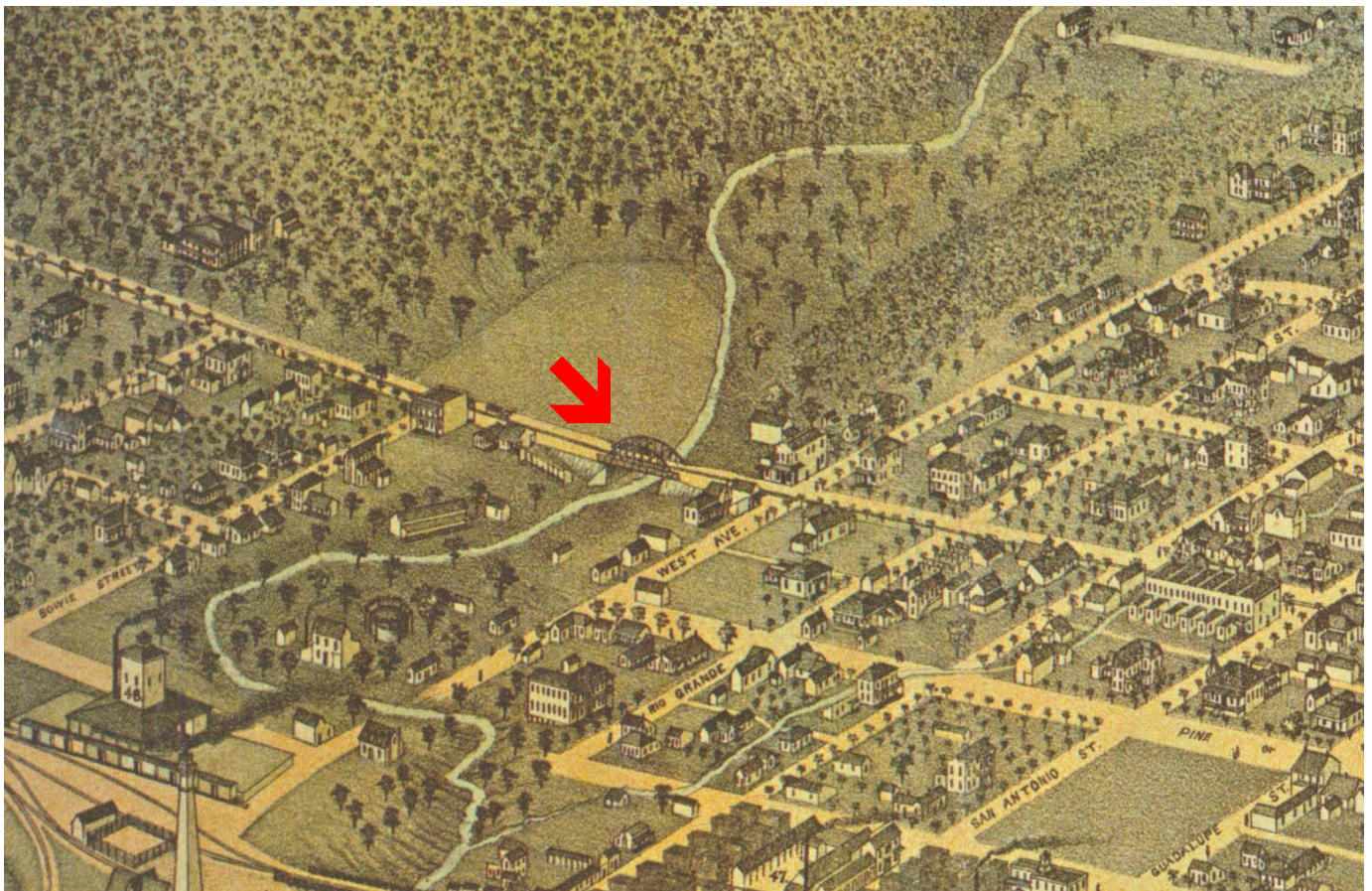
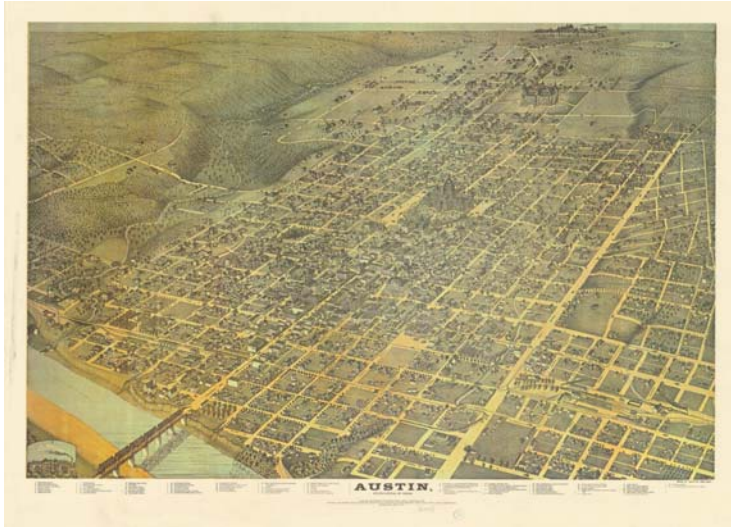


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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Birdseye view of Austin drawn by Augustus Koch, 1887.  
Detail indicates bowstring truss bridge replaced by nominated bridge.

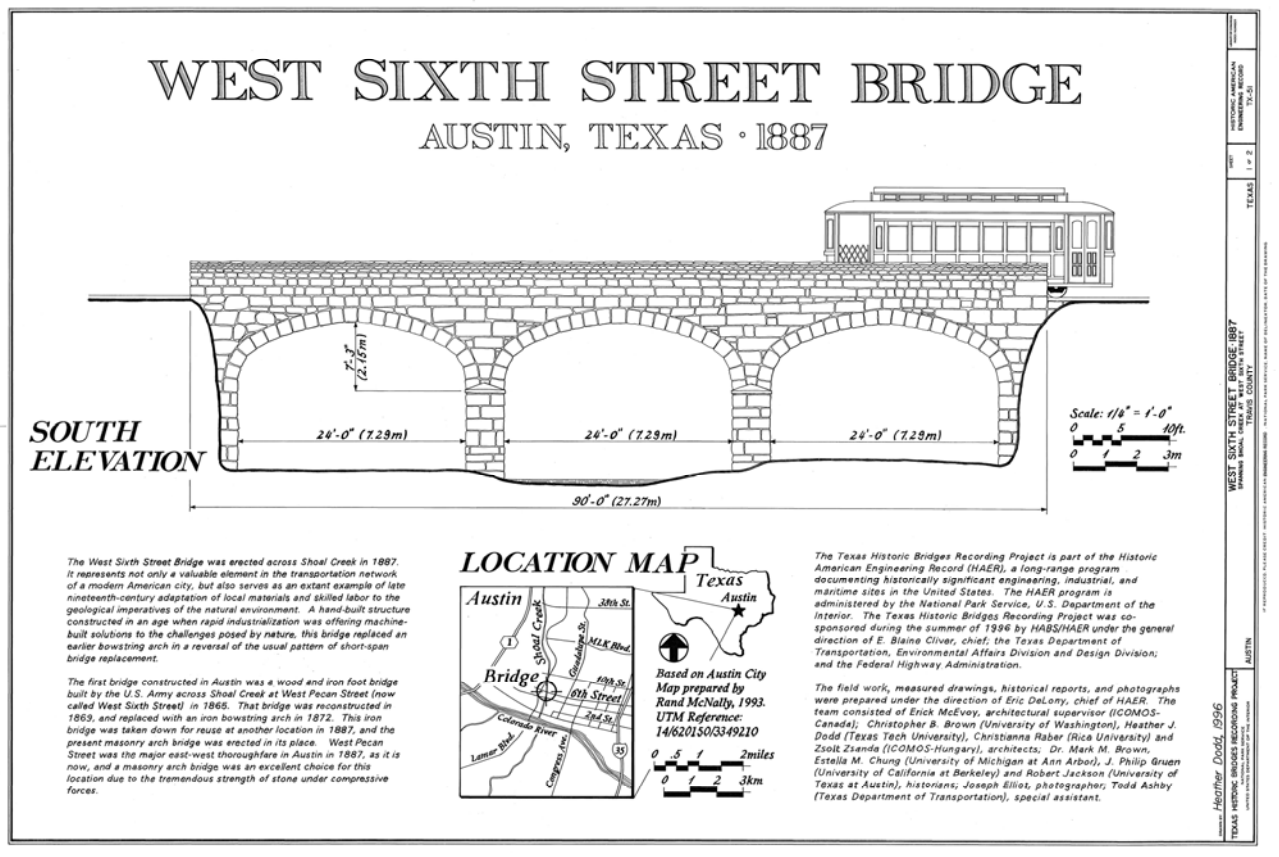


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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

# West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

South Elevation. Drawing by Heather Dodd for the Texas Historic Bridges Recording Project.

West Sixth Street Bridge, Spanning Shoal Creek at West Sixth Street, Austin, Travis County, TX, HAER TX-51.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/item/tx0778/> accessed March 6, 2014.



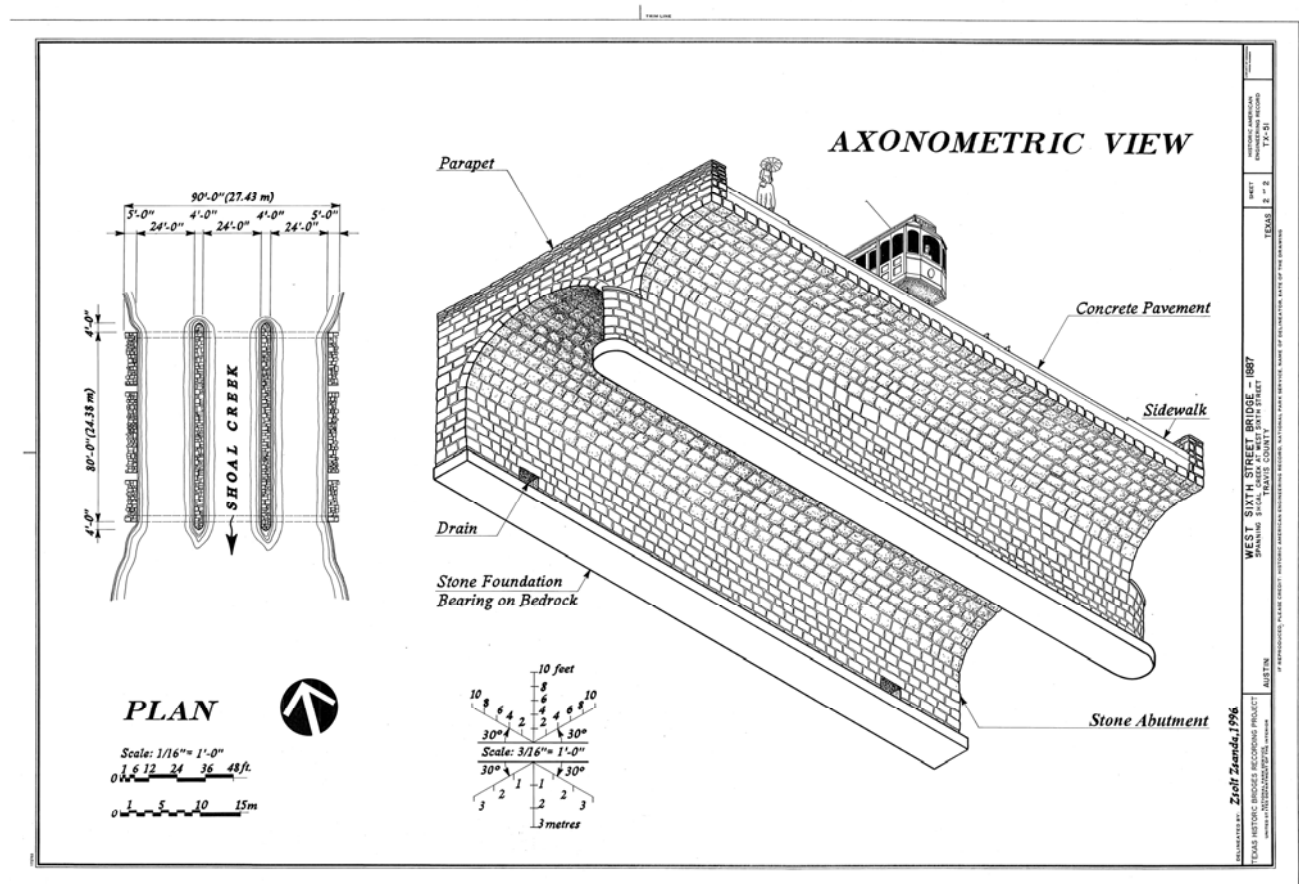


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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Axonometric View. Drawing by Heather Dodd for the Texas Historic Bridges Recording Project.

West Sixth Street Bridge, Spanning Shoal Creek at West Sixth Street, Austin, Travis County, TX, HAER TX-51.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/item/tx0778/> accessed March 6, 2014.



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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 1  
Elevation from south





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National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places REGISTRATION FORM  
NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 2  
Three-quarters view from southwest



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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 3  
Three-quarters view from southwest





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places REGISTRATION FORM  
NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 4  
Elevation of central arch, from south

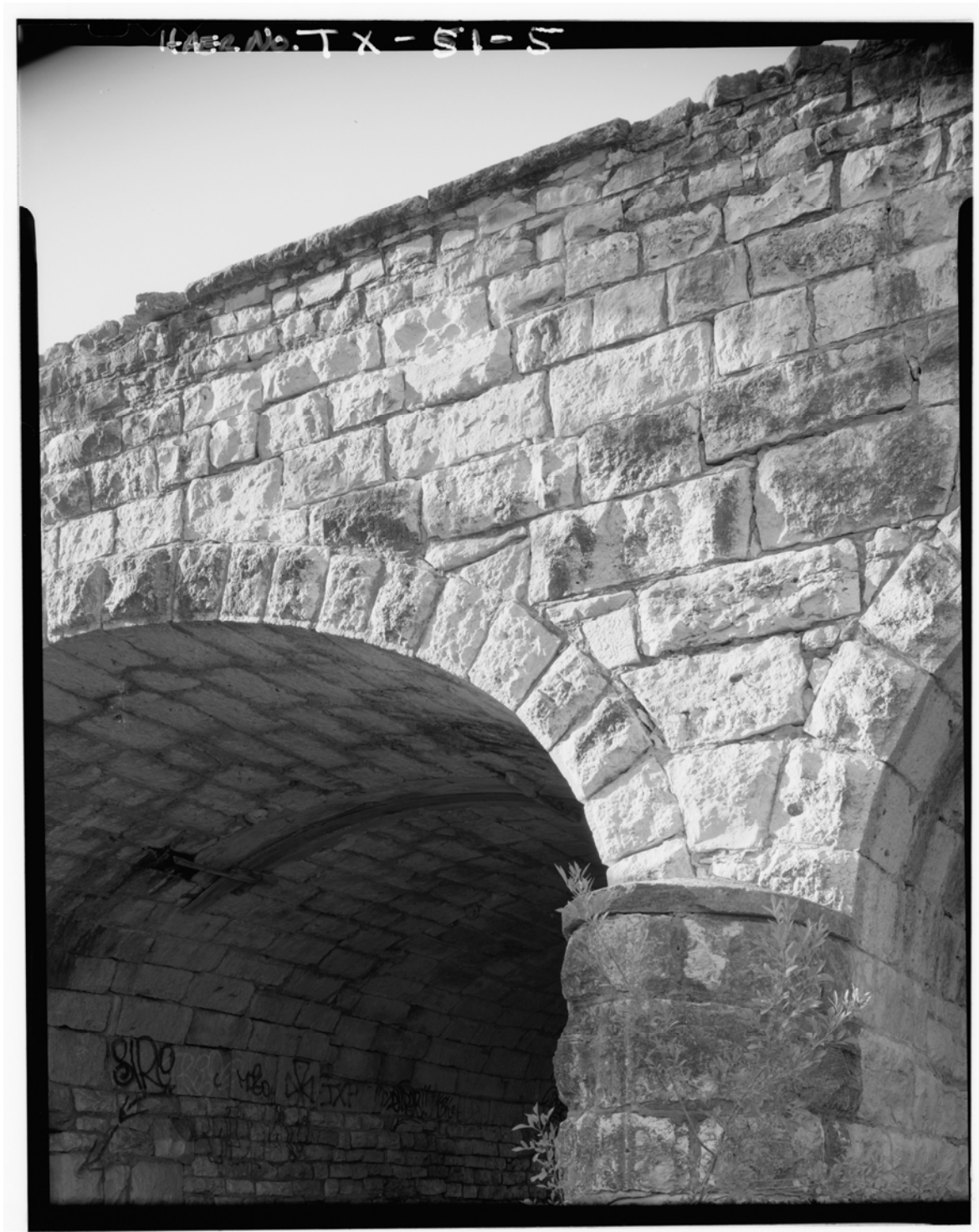


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## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 5  
Detail of stone work, from southeast





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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 6  
Elevation, from north



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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 7  
Interior of central arch, looking south





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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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1996 HAER Photo 8  
Underside of central arch, looking northwest



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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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### Photographs

West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek  
Austin, Travis County, Texas  
Photographed by Gregory Smith, February 2014

#### Photo 1

North side, camera facing southeast



#### Photo 2

South side, camera facing northeast





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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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### Photo 3

South side, camera facing north



### Photo 4

South side, camera facing northwest



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NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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### Photo 5

Eastern arch, south side, camera facing north



### Photo 6

Western arch, camera facing south



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West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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**Photo 7**

Street level, camera facing west



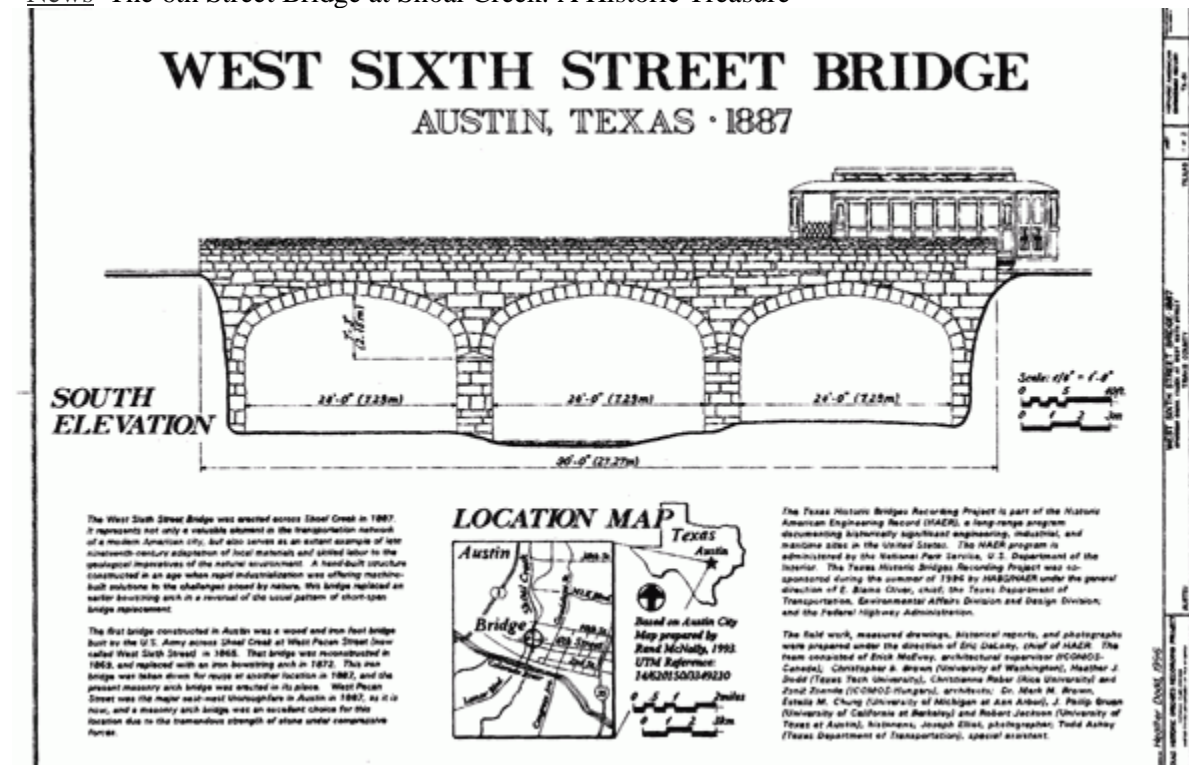
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## Blog

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



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





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

Did you know that the [West 6<sup>th</sup> 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-19<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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](#).



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

*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.*

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Property Name</b>         | <b>West Sixth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek</b>  |
| 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            | <a href="https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000499.pdf">https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000499.pdf</a> |



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

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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

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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.<sup>[2]</sup>

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;<sup>[2]</sup> 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.<sup>[2]</sup>

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.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Design

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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.<sup>[2]</sup>

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.<sup>[2]</sup>

## References

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