

FIRST AMENDED APPLICATION TO CHANGE THE NAME OF MANCHACA ROAD TO MENCHACA ROAD

This application is filed pursuant to City of Austin Code Chapter 14-5. City Councilmember Sabino Renteria, whose name is affixed below, files this under Section 14-5-2 (A) (2).

There is a road in South Austin starting at South Lamar currently named Manchaca Road that we propose to correct to the man's true surname –Menchaca Road.

In addition to the City Councilmember who makes this application another person who may be contacted is Bob Perkins at 1104 Nueces St., Austin, Tx. 78701 (telephone 512-478-7464). He is president of the Justice for Menchaca 501c3 organization that initiated this correction drive. The address and phone number of the Councilmember-applicant is well known to the Director.

Justice for Menchaca includes descendants of José Antonio Menchaca and other Austin citizens and has its own Facebook page under that name. It is the organization that originally asked the councilmember to request that the name of the road be changed to the correct spelling.

Section 14-5-4 sets out eight possible reasons to change the name of a street. Three of those apply in this case:

“(3) to correct a misspelling”---On the night of April 21, 1836, after the Battle of San Jacinto, José Antonio Menchaca's name was misspelled for the first time in Texas military annals, and from then on many (but not all) Anglo-Texans continued to misspell it throughout Menchaca's life. (Similarly, Juan Seguin, Menchaca's commander, had his first name misspelled in that initial report as Irvin.) Nevertheless, there were those who spelled Menchaca's name correctly, including Sam Houston and Secretary of War Albert Sidney Johnston. For the misspelling of Menchaca's name on Manchaca Springs see “(7) to honor a person” below.

José Antonio Menchaca was born in San Antonio on Jan.9, 1800. He had two brothers who were also named José so our Menchaca always used the name Antonio to differentiate himself from them. Thus, you will see records referring to him by both José and Antonio. He died in 1879 having lived under five of the six

flags of Texas, but he only fought as a soldier under the Texas flag. It's time the capital of Texas honored him by spelling his name correctly.

“(7) to honor a person,”---There are at least four streets in Austin named for men who fought for Texas at the Battle of San Jacinto---the names of the other three are all spelled correctly –Houston, Lamar and Burleson---only Menchaca’s name is misspelled. After the war he stayed in the Texas Army (which during the postwar period performed the functions later performed by the Texas Rangers) and one of his responsibilities was to patrol against the Comanche. By this time, Menchaca, who had joined Seguin’s company in either January or February of 1836 as a second sergeant, had been promoted to captain on April 1, 1837. Sometime after that date Captain Menchaca and his men (all Tejanos from San Antonio) came up an old Indian trail which is now known as Old San Antonio Road running parallel to I 35. This trail had also been used by Tonkawas, Apaches, Comanche and later the Spanish. Captain Menchaca’s company camped at a spring just off the trail in a forest of live oaks. This was an ideal military location because of the abundance of water and the protection afforded by the trees. It was the site of at least two fights between Comanche and whites. The spring is located on the Heep Ranch and is closed to the public. It is 12.8 miles south of 6th and Congress following Congress to Slaughter/I 35 and then Old San Antonio Road. We don’t know if Menchaca and his company camped here once or many times but if only once then he must have made a great impression on the Anglos living along the Colorado because they are the ones who started calling the site Manchaca Springs (they thought his name was spelled that way). In 1837 there were only about four to seven families living along the Colorado (Barton at his springs, Jacob Harrell living in a tent at the mouth of Shoal Creek, Hornsby at Hornsby Bend and Webber at Webberville are the ones we are sure about and there might have been more). They were glad to have the soldiers from San Antonio patrol this area because they lived in Comancheria and the threat of death was constant. Not only did they start calling the spring Manchaca but they were the ones who maintained the name as well. Menchaca’s last visit to the springs as a soldier could not have been after April, 1838. He died in 1879 having lived under five of the six flags of Texas, but he only fought as a soldier under the Texas flag. It’s time the capital of Texas honored him by spelling his name correctly.

It should be noted that although he lived under the Confederacy he never took the oath of allegiance to that government and in fact, had actively campaigned against secession in Bexar County having been appointed to do so by his friend Sam

Houston. He was opposed to slavery and it is ironic that slave owners from Mississippi and Arkansas bought the land which included the springs and the tract immediately north of it and they did change the name of the spring and the entire area to Manchac in 1850 and 1851. It is unlikely that these slave owners wanted their plantations named for a Mexican-American two short years after the end of the Mexican War when prejudice against all Hispanics ran high in the Anglo community. For 30 years the springs bore that new name and is one reason why people still pronounce it that way. In 1880 the International and Great Northern Railroad (now known as MoPac) was extended from Austin to San Antonio and they set up a train station in the community but they insisted on calling it Manchaca to honor the man who had protected settlers from the Comanche. Thus, the old, incorrect spelling was restored but by that time people had been saying Manchac for 30 years so they continued to use a two syllable pronunciation for this three syllable word.

“(8) to enhance a neighborhood through the association of a street with its location, area characteristics, and history.”----In 1973 AISD opened a new school in the village of Manchaca on Manchaca Road and they correctly named it José Antonio Menchaca Elementary School. The village and the road are both misspelled but this name change will at least harmonize the road name with the school. The correction will better bond the area to its history by connecting it with its properly spelled namesake. In addition, some of Antonio Menchaca’s descendants living in the Austin area have always wondered why their forefather’s name is misspelled. The problem has been compounded by the unfortunate and totally incorrect local pronunciation of the name (Manchac) which serves to further disconnect the road’s name from its namesake and totally obliterate the contribution of this Hispanic warrior to the history of this area. As long as the road is misspelled with MAN instead of MEN in the first syllable it enables the mispronunciation.

FINALLY, it should be noted that Justice for Menchaca, a 501-c-3 organization, raised the money to pay for the corrected street signs, if this correction is granted, so it will not cost the taxpayers a thing. On January 8, 2016, Justice for Menchaca deposited a cashier’s check with the city for \$24,291.55, which was the amount the city stated it will cost to change the signs.

Councilmember Sabino “Pio” Renteria
