

(Oct. 1990)  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



1234

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Almeda Road Bridge over Brays Bayou  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: B026-01-001

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Almeda Road @ Brays Bayou  
CITY OR TOWN: Houston  
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Harris CODE: 201  
VICINITY: N/A  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A  
ZIP CODE: 77030

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 (  nationally ) (  statewide ) (  locally ). (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*[Handwritten Signature]*  
Signature of certifying official  
Date: 9/26/07  
State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official  
Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

*[Handwritten Signature: Edson H. Beall]*  
Signature of the Keeper  
Date of Action: 11.29.07

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Public-city

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Structure

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	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:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** *Historic Bridges of Texas, 1866-1945 MPS*

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) = bridge

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular) = bridge

**7. DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** OTHER: continuous span concrete girder bridge

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE (piers)  
WALLS  
ROOF  
OTHER CONCRETE (deck, balustrade railing)

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheet 7-5).



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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 2.7 Page 5

Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
Harris County, Texas

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**SECTION 2: LOCATION**

This bridge is located on Almeda Road at Brays Bayou, 0.2 miles west of State Highway 288 near Hermann Park in Houston, Harris County, Texas.

**SECTION 7: DESCRIPTION**

The 1931 Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou in Houston, Texas is a continuous span concrete girder bridge. Special design elements include a neoclassical urn balustrade railing, girders with a shallow curve and battered concrete bents. Although the urn balustrade has been damaged since its construction and repaired with unsympathetic materials, the bridge still retains a high degree of integrity.

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**General Specifications (bridge)**

- Type: continuous span concrete girder
- No. spans: 3
- Main span length: 60'
- Roadway Width: 40'
- Overall length: 149'
- Deck type: concrete with asphalt overlay
- Piers/Interior bents: concrete bents
- Abutments/End Bents: concrete abutments

The Almeda Road Bridge is 149 feet long and is composed of three reinforced continuous concrete girder and floorbeam spans, supported by two battered concrete bents and a concrete abutment at each end. The girders are of variable depth, with shallow arches between each pier. The forty-foot wide roadway carries four lanes of traffic and is flanked on each side by cantilevered concrete sidewalks with concrete urn balustrade railings. The balustrade railings are supported by concrete newel posts decorated with square panels and capitals. The approach span wingwalls at each end are solid concrete parapet walls. The bridge retains the plaque installed during construction, which lists the engineer, contractor, and city officials responsible for its construction.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- A PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Engineering

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1931

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1931

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Bridge designer: J.G. McKenzie  
Bridge builder: Don Hall

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-6 through 8-8).

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheet 9-9).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- 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 #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency (*Texas Department of Transportation*)
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
Harris County, Texas

## SECTION 8: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This bridge is one of a few remaining examples of bayou crossings constructed during early Houston's street improvement bond program of the 1930s and is a typical example of City Beautiful design in Houston. This bridge is significant as a good example of City Beautiful design on a concrete girder structure and retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, feeling, and association. The Almeda Road Bridge over Brays Bayou is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of engineering at the state level of significance.

### The City-Beautiful Movement and Houston Bayou Bridges<sup>1</sup>

The Beaux-Arts axial landscape of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was a catalyst for the City Beautiful Movement, urban planning that included boulevards, classical-inspired architecture, and public monuments.<sup>2</sup> During the City-Beautiful Movement in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local governments across the United States began conscious efforts to improve the aesthetic features of their cities. This movement coincided with rapid growth in Texas, and several cities in the state began their own beautification programs. In 1912, the City of Houston passed a \$250,000 bond issue to acquire land and improve its park system. The Houston Park Commission then hired landscape architect and city planner Arthur C. Comey to develop a master plan for the city. Comey's plan, like many being produced at the time, featured a system of parkways and boulevards to link the central city with growing suburbs. Parkway were planned along Buffalo and White Oak bayous, and Comey recommended that the necessary bridges be built of concrete, in the simplest form of construction.<sup>3</sup>

Several concrete bridges were constructed in the 1920s under Comey's plan, and many employed a type of construction that was increasing in popularity, the reinforced concrete girder. Early concrete girder bridges were constructed with steel wide-flange beams encased in concrete, but engineers soon learned that only parts of the beam were absorbing stress and that a series of smaller metal rods could achieve the same effect. Concrete girder bridge construction was used increasingly in the expansion of the Texas state highway system after the organization of the State Highway Department in 1917, reaching the height of its popularity in the 1930s. The 1924 Sabine Street Bridge over Buffalo Bayou included six spans of continuous reinforced concrete girders supported on concrete bents. Curved concrete fascia walls were used to give the appearance of an arch.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Entire section excerpted and expanded from Kirk Farris and Peter Ketter, "McKee Street Bridge" National Register Nomination, October, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture*, Vol. 2: 1860-1976. MIT Press: Cambridge, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Texas Department of Transportation, "Survey of Non-Truss Structures:" 34-36.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*:26-30, 35-36.



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Houston's parkway boulevard and street extension plan continued into the early 1930s. City bridge engineer J. G. McKenzie continued to design bridges in a similar aesthetic, using a simple concrete girder structure and an urn style balustrade. McKenzie streamlined the bridges' form and ornamentation, reflecting more general trends in bridge design. The Almeda Road and Telephone Road bridges over Bray's Bayou, and the Yale Street Bridge over White Oak Bayou were all built in 1931, and together they illustrate McKenzie's simplified version of City-Beautiful design.<sup>5</sup>

Based on a search of the Texas Historic Bridge Inventory, maintained by the Texas Department of Transportation, there are eleven extant historic bridges in Texas with a Neoclassical urn balustrade railing. These include three other Houston Bridges: the Telephone Road Bridge over Brays Bayou, the Sabine Street Bridge over Buffalo Bayou, and the Yale Street Bridge over White Oak Bayou. Of the other seven bridges, one is in New Braunfels (Landa Street over Dry Comal Creek), two are in San Antonio, and four are in Dallas. Date of construction for these bridges ranges from 1914 to 1931, placing them all in the City Beautiful movement. As it was designed and built by the State Highway Department (Landa Street is Business 46), the urn balustrade on the Landa Street Bridge in New Braunfels's is actually a standard highway rail design (Type J). Although this may give the impression that urn balustrades are not uncommon, Landa Street Bridge has the only documented Type J railing in the State of Texas. Out of these eleven bridges only the four bridges in Houston are of concrete girder construction, Landa Street Bridge is constructed of steel I-beams encased in concrete, and the rest are closed spandrel arch bridges.

## Almeda Road Bridge over Brays Bayou

The Almeda Road Bridge was constructed in 1931 to improve and complete the Shreveport-to-Freeport highway through Houston. Replacing an earlier timber structure over Brays Bayou, its construction coincided with the widening of Almeda Road.<sup>6</sup> The road and crossing was a major entrance from the south to the City of Houston until approximately 1960, when highway development changed traffic patterns.<sup>7</sup>

The bridge was designed by city bridge engineer J.G. McKenzie and constructed by contractor Don Hall in 1931 for \$33,200, as part of a 1930 City of Houston bond issue.<sup>8</sup> The construction of the Almeda Road Bridge was part of the final phase of Houston's parkway plan and is a typical example of McKenzie's use of City Beautiful aesthetics, streamlined to reflect changes in bridge design.<sup>9</sup> The City Beautiful movement influenced

<sup>5</sup> Texas Department of Transportation: 36.

<sup>6</sup> Texas Historic Bridge Inventory.

<sup>7</sup> Janet K. Wagner, "Historical Bridge Evaluation, Brays Bayou Flood Damage Reduction, HCFCD Project," August 2005. On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

<sup>8</sup> Texas Historic Bridge Inventory

<sup>9</sup> "Texas Department of Transportation: 36.



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the special design of the bridge, consisting of a neoclassical urn balustrade railing, girders with a shallow curve and battered concrete bents.<sup>10</sup>

The Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the state level of significance during a 1999 survey of non-truss historic bridges in Texas conducted by Texas Department of Transportation and Texas Historical Commission. Reinforced concrete girder bridges are considered historically significant if they retain integrity and feature decorative design.<sup>11</sup> This bridge is a typical example of a reinforced concrete girder bridge constructed in the early twentieth century, and as a representative of the City Beautiful movement, features neoclassical elements such as an urn balustrade, square bent capitals, and other decorative features. Although the urn balustrade has been damaged since its construction, and repaired with unsympathetic materials, the bridge still retains a high degree of integrity. It is a significant example of its type in the state, as it is one of only eleven Texas bridges with an urn balustrade railing. In addition, as a concrete girder bridge, it is a representative later example of the type; earlier City Beautiful bridges with urn balustrade railings in Texas were closed spandrel arch bridges.

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<sup>10</sup> Texas Historic Bridge Inventory

<sup>11</sup> Parsons Brinckerhoff and Engineering and Industrial Heritage, "A Context for Common Historic Bridge Types: NCHRP Project 25-25, Task 15." October 2005:3-94.

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## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
Harris County, Texas

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### **Bibliography**

Farris, Kirk and Peter Ketter, "McKee Street Bridge" National Register Nomination. October, 2001.

*Google Earth*. 12 September 2005. Google, Inc. 2 April 2007. <http://earth.google.com>

Koeper, Frederick. *American Architecture, Vol. 2: 1860-1976*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

Parsons Brinckerhoff and Engineering and Industrial Heritage, "A Context for Common Historic Bridge Types: NCHRP Project 25-25, Task 15." October 2005.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). "Texas Historic Bridge Inventory, Survey of Non-Truss Structures."

Texas Historic Bridge Inventory. Inventory maintained by Texas Department of Transportation.

Wagner, Janet K. "Historical Bridge Evaluation, Brays Bayou Flood Damage Reduction, HCFCF Project," August 2005. On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** 0.14 acres

<b>UTM REFERENCES</b>		<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	1.	15	269575E	3289399N
	2.	15	269554E	3289333N

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:** The nomination encompasses the complete structure, including the approach spans, and all of the superstructure and substructure.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** The boundary includes all components of the bridge

**11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Adrienne Campbell, THC Historian)**

**NAME/TITLE:** Kirk Farris

**ORGANIZATION:** Art & Environmental Architecture, Inc.

**DATE:** 9-24-07

**STREET & NUMBER:** 1654 Bonnie Brae

**TELEPHONE:** 713/521-9453

**CITY OR TOWN:** Houston

**STATE:** TX

**ZIP CODE:** 77006-5219

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS**

**PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheets Photo-10 through Photo-13)**

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

**PROPERTY OWNER**

**NAME:** James Leonard, P.E., Engineer, City of Houston Public Works Department

**STREET & NUMBER:** 2701 Dalton St.

**TELEPHONE:** 713.641.7955

**CITY OR TOWN:** Houston

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 77017

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Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
Harris County, Texas

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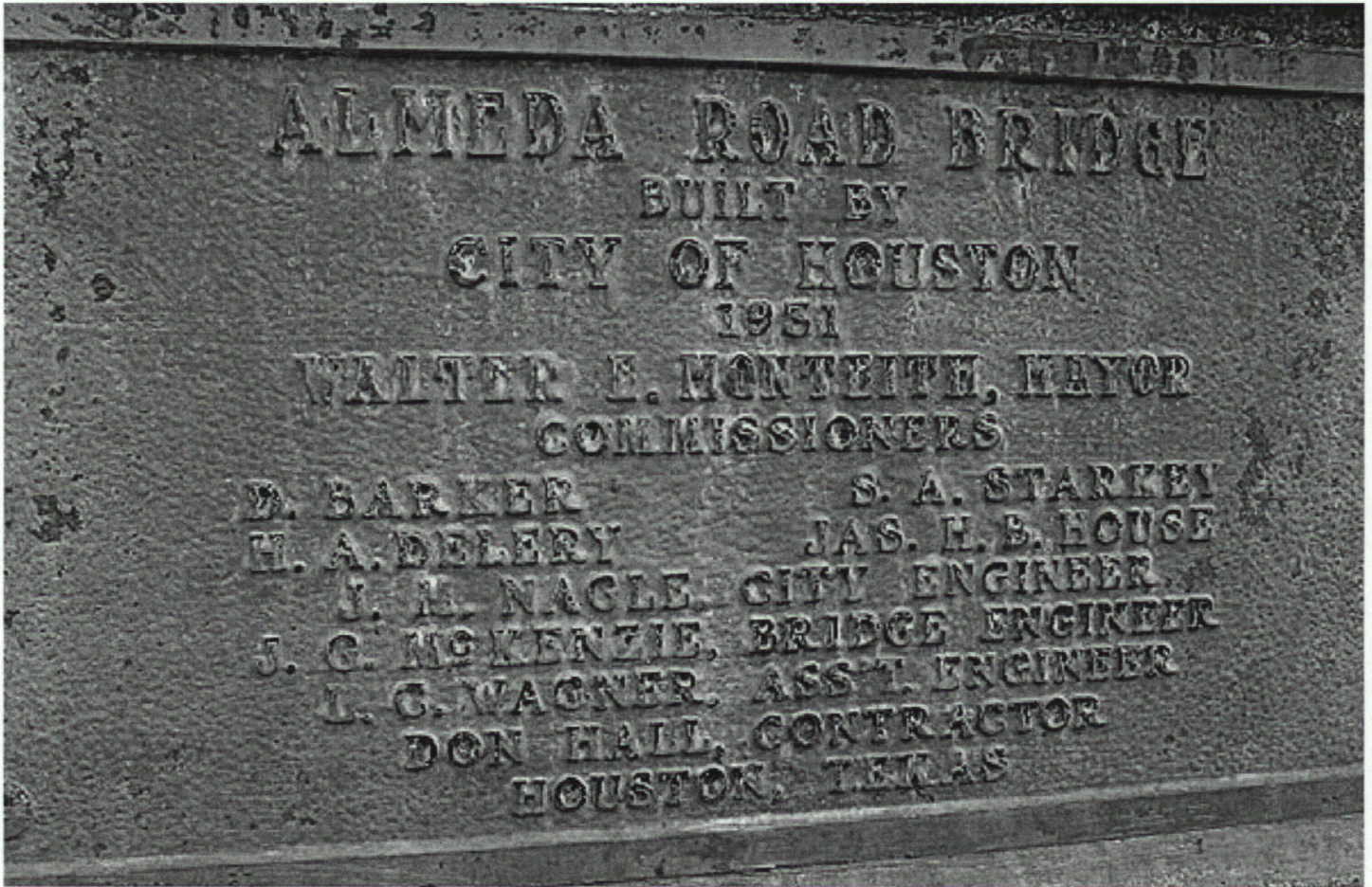


Photo 1: Almeda Road Bridge construction plaque. Photo by Greg Harmon.



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Section Photo Page 11

Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
Harris County, Texas

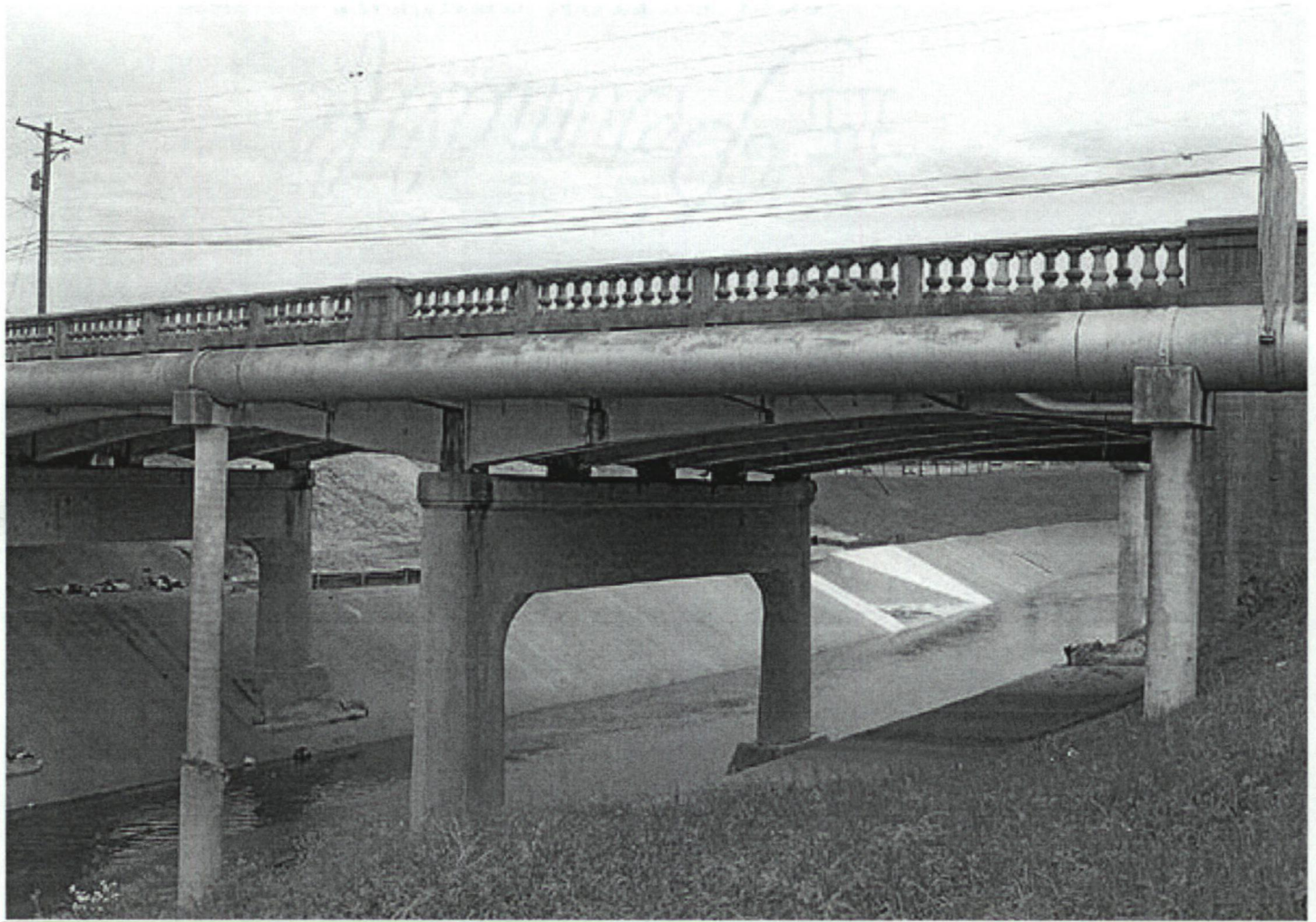


Photo 2: Almedea Road Bridge over Brays Bayou, facing east. Photo by Greg Harmon.



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Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
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Photo 3: Roadway photo of bridge, facing north. Photo by Greg Harmon.



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
Harris County, Texas

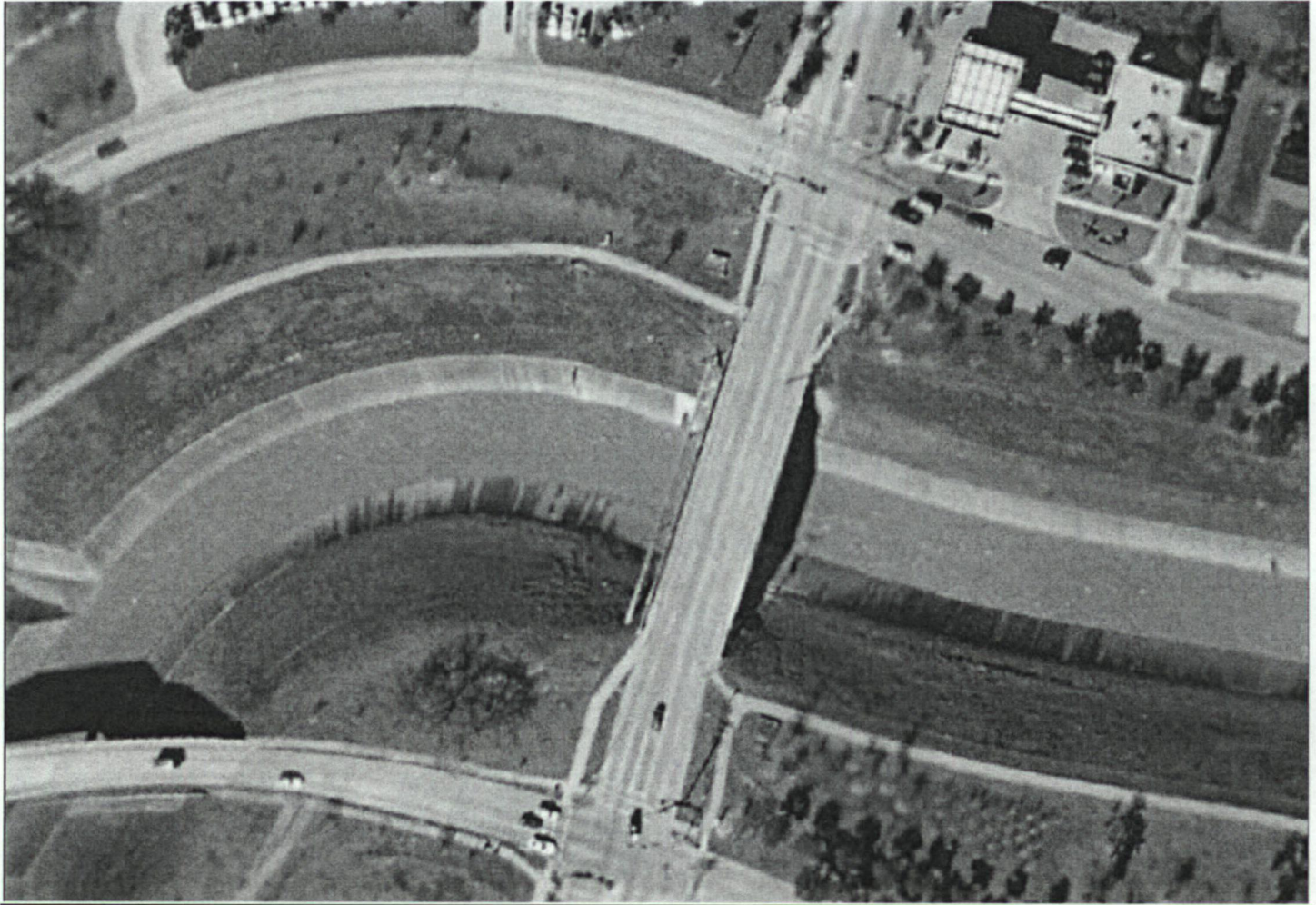


Photo 4: Aerial photo of Almeda Road Bridge (source: Google Earth)



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Almeda Road Bridge at Brays Bayou  
Harris County, Texas

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### Photographs

Almeda Road Bridge over Brays Bayou  
Houston, Harris County, Texas  
Valerie Tamburri  
November 2, 2006

Photo 1 of 3  
Railing, east side of bridge  
Camera facing southeast

Photo 2 of 3  
Elevation  
Camera facing east

Photo 3 of 3  
Substructure of bridge  
Camera facing southeast

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Almeda Road Bridge over Brays Bayou

MULTIPLE NAME: Historic Bridges of Texas MPS

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Harris

DATE RECEIVED: 10/17/07      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/02/07  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/17/07      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/30/07  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07001234

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    12.29.07 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





Almeda Road over Brays Bayou, Houston,  
Harris County, Texas

Photo 1 of 3





Alameda Road over Brays Bayou, Houston,  
Harris County, Texas  
Photo 2 of 3





Alameda Road over Brays Bayou, Houston,  
Harris County, Texas

Photo 3 of 3





**TEXAS  
HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION**

Rick Perry • *Governor*  
John L. Nau, III • *Chairman*  
F. Lawrence Oaks • *Executive Director*

*The State Agency for Historic Preservation*



TO: Linda McClelland  
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Adrienne Campbell, National Register staff  
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Almeda Road Bridge over Brays Bayou, Houston, Harris County, Texas

DATE: October 15, 2007

- The following materials are submitted regarding the Sabine Street Bridge:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resubmitted nomination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Property nomination form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS map
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

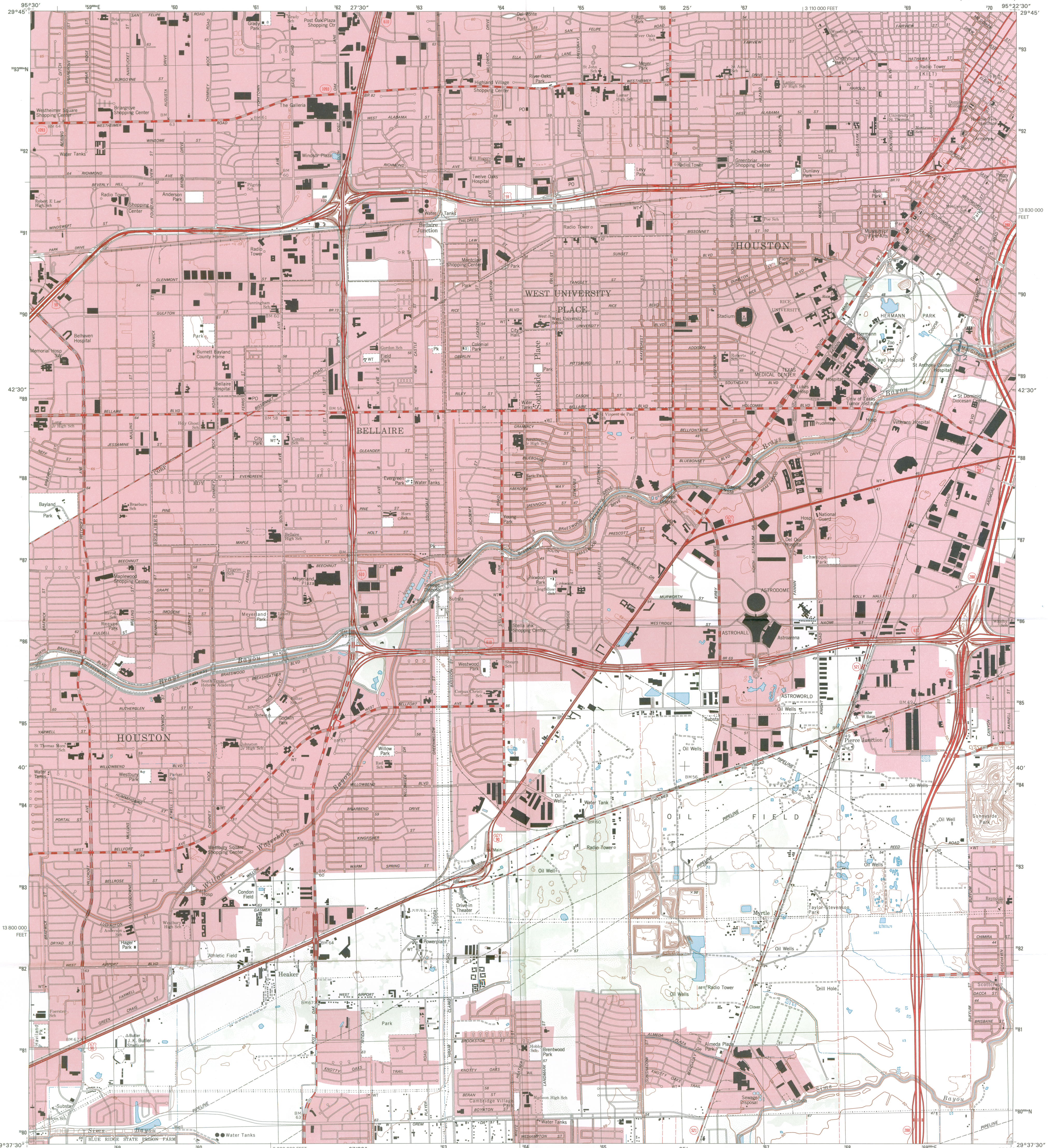
COMMENTS:

SHPO requests substantive review

The enclosed owner objections (do ) (do not ) constitute a majority of property owners

Other:





Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
 Topography compiled 1976. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1995. Survey control current as of 1976  
 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 15  
 10 000-foot ticks: Texas Coordinate System of 1983 (south central zone)  
 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software  
 Landmark buildings verified 1976  
 This quadrangle covers a subsidence area

UTM GRID AND 1999 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:2 000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
 TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

GAYLORD STICKLE MAPS  
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 800-781-5563  
 www.stickle.com

QUADRANGLE LOCATION 2995-423

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

1 Hedwig Village  
 2 Houston Heights  
 3 Settegast  
 4 Alief  
 5 Park Place  
 6 Missouri City  
 7 Alameda  
 8 Pearland

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface .....  
 Secondary highway hard surface .....  
 Light-duty road, hard or improved surface .....  
 Unimproved road .....

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

BELLAIRE, TX 1995

NIMA 6943 III NW-SERIES V882

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

ALMEDA ROAD BRIDGE OVER BRAYS BAYOU  
 HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS  
 1.15 269575E 3289399N  
 2.15 269554E 3289333N



STATE OF TEXAS  
COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL PRESERVATION  
1000 RICE STREET  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701  
512-475-1234

RECEIVED  
AUG 21 2006  
Texas Historical Commission