

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Third Street Railroad Trestle
Other name/site number: Third Street Trestle at Shoal Creek
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: Western end of Third 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Not for publication: [ ] Vicinity: [ ]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 [ ] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [ ] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D

Signature of certifying official / Title: Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 10/21/21
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

Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

**Category of Property**

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	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: NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** TRANSPORTATION: Rail-related

**Current Functions:** NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** OTHER: Wooden Railroad Trestle

**Principal Exterior Materials:** WOOD

**Narrative Description** (see continuation pages 6-7)

Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Transportation (*local*)

**Period of Significance:** c. 1922-1964

**Significant Dates:** c. 1922

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

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

**Architect/Builder:** International-Great Northern Railroad Company

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation pages 8-17)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation pages 18-19)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on (date)
- 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, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Shoal Creek Conservancy

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

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## 10. Geographical Data

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

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

Latitude: 30.267110°N Longitude: -97.750403°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The nominated parcel includes the entire trestle structure at West Third Street and Shoal Creek in Austin, Texas. The trestle is approximately 150 feet long and 30 feet wide.

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Ivey Kaiser, executive director, and Larry McGinnis, volunteer, with Alyssa Gerszewski, THC  
National Register Historian  
Organization: Shoal Creek Conservancy  
Street & number: 707 Rio Grande Street, Suite A  
City or Town: Austin State: Texas Zip Code: 78701  
Email: ivey@shoalcreekconservancy.org  
Telephone: (512) 474-2412  
Date: November 2020

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see map continuation pages 20-30)  
**Additional items** (see figure continuation pages 31-40)  
**Photographs** (see photo continuation pages 5, 41-52)



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**Photograph Log**

Name of Property: Third Street Railroad Trestle

City or Vicinity: Austin

County: Travis

State: Texas

Photographer: Joemy Buschur (February 2020) and Andre Boudreaux (April 2020) as noted.

Photo 1: View of north side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing east. Photo by Joemy Buschur.

Photo 2: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing northeast. Photo by Joemy Buschur.

Photo 3: Third Street Railroad Trestle surface detail, camera facing east. Photo by Joemy Buschur.

Photo 4: Third Street Railroad Trestle railing detail, camera facing south. Photo by Joemy Buschur.

Photo 5: Third Street Railroad Trestle surface detail, camera facing east. Photo by Joemy Buschur.

Photo 6: View of north side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing southeast. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.

Photo 7: View of Shoal Creek Trail Bridge and Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing east. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.

Photo 8: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing northeast. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.

Photo 9: View of Third Street Trestle from Shoal Creek, camera facing southeast. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.

Photo 10: View from beneath Third Street Railroad Trestle. Photo by Andrew Boudreaux.

Photo 11: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing northwest. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.

Photo 12: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing north. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC

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## Narrative Description

The c. 1922 Third Street Railroad Trestle was built by the International-Great Northern Railroad Company (I-GN) as a 12-bent wooden open-deck railroad trestle across Shoal Creek at West Third Street in downtown Austin, Texas. Standing 35 feet above the creek, the trestle is 150 feet long and 30 feet wide and constructed of Creosote treated Southern Pine. Designed for heavy rail, the superstructure consists of an open deck of stringers, guardrails, ties, and railroad tracks supported by a substructure of 12 bents with 6 to 8 piles each positioned roughly 14 feet apart. The timbers in the bents are held in place with sway braces and sashes. Some of the bents are supported by concrete footings over the bedrock of Shoal Creek. The trestle is characteristic of railroad infrastructure typically utilized by American railroad companies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The rail lines which once crossed through downtown at West Third Street have been covered up or removed and no railroad tracks connect to the trestle from the east or west bank of Shoal Creek. The structure is currently owned by Union Pacific Railroad Company but the railroad right-of-way to and from the trestle was abandoned. In the 1990s or early 2000s, roughly 30 percent of the structure, likely the guardrails and some of the decking, was replaced with in-kind materials, and while some of the wood is deteriorated and in poor condition, the trestle retains historic integrity.

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## Location & Setting

The Third Street Railroad Trestle spans Shoal Creek approximately one-half mile west of the intersection of Third Street and Congress Avenue in downtown Austin where the historic passenger depot was located. Shoal Creek is an 11-mile creek that winds through central Austin into downtown before emptying into the Colorado River two blocks to the south of the trestle. The I-GN originally built a single spur off the main line in 1876 that crossed Shoal Creek at Third Street providing access into Austin from the west.<sup>2</sup> As more companies provided service to Austin, the network of rail lines sprawled across much of the bottom half of downtown.<sup>3</sup> The west bank of Shoal Creek was known locally as the “Upper Yards.” These tracks served a compact light industrial area that included the City of Austin Power and Light Plant. On the east bank of the creek was a network of tracks known locally as the “Lower Yards.” These tracks served a warehouse district roughly situated between West Avenue and Congress Avenue and Second Street and Fourth Street.

The setting has been compromised since the construction of the c. 1922 trestle due to the encroachment of commercial and residential development in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The high-rise development within a three-block radius of the trestle springs from recent expansion of a burgeoning urban landscape that has modernized the image of a thriving downtown Austin. Directly to the northwest of the trestle is the Independent, a tall residential tower. Southwest of the trestle is the Seaholm Power Plant (NRHP 2013) and the new central branch of the Austin Public Library. Two blocks away are the high-rise buildings of such major high-tech employers as Facebook, Google, and Firmspace. Several other bridges exist in the vicinity including the pedestrian/utility truss bridge located directly to the north, the Butterfly Bridge over Shoal Creek at West Second Street, the Cesar Chavez Bridge over Shoal Creek, and the 1942 Lamar Boulevard Bridge, the 1936 Union Pacific Bridge, Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge—all over the Colorado River, and the 1936 International-Great Northern Railroad underpass at West Third Street and Lamar Boulevard.<sup>4</sup> A masonry pedestrian staircase is also located on the west bank of Shoal Creek.<sup>5</sup> A little further to the northwest is the 1931 West Fifth Street Bridge at Shoal Creek (NRHP 2019) and the 1887 West Sixth Street Bridge cross Shoal Creek (NRHP 2014) (Maps 1-12).

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<sup>1</sup> Wooden Trestle Construction on the Rio Grande Southern Railroad. Trestle components. <http://www.rhyman.org/articles/trestles-rgs-style> (accessed November 19, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Revised Map of Austin, Texas. Drawn by Reuben Ford. 1885-86. Austin History Center, L-0016.

<sup>3</sup> Station map, lands, tracks, and structures of the International-Great Northern Railway. Drawn 30 June 1917. Revised 15 October 1926. Austin History Center.

<sup>4</sup> “International-Great Northern Railroad Underpass, Austin, Texas,” *The Living New Deal*, accessed October 13, 2021, <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/international-great-northern-railroad-underpass-austin-tx/>.

<sup>5</sup> According to sheet 11 of the 1935 Austin Sanborn Map, there was another railroad trestle across Shoal Creek at West Second Street likely

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## Trestle Structure

The c. 1922 Third Street Railroad Trestle was built by the International-Great Northern (I-GN) as a 12-bent wooden open-deck railroad trestle across Shoal Creek.<sup>6</sup> The trestle is 150 feet long and 30 feet wide and constructed of Creosote treated Southern Pine. Most of the year abundant vegetation obscures both the east and west side near the creek bank. The superstructure, which stands roughly 35 feet above the creek, has an open deck of stringers, guardrails, ties, and railroad tracks supported by a substructure of 12 bents with 6 to 8 piles each situated roughly 14 feet apart. The timbers in the bents are held in place with sway braces and sashes. Some of the bents are supported by concrete footings over the bedrock of Shoal Creek. The creek is partially lined with masonry walls not connected to the bridge.<sup>7</sup> (Photos 1-12)

## Integrity

The trestle retains sufficient historic integrity. The structure retains integrity of location at West Third Street over Shoal Creek in downtown Austin. Integrity of setting has been compromised by the intrusion of modern high-rise commercial and residential development, but Shoal Creek itself remains fully intact as a waterway and green space meandering through the city. The I-GN rail lines which once crossed through downtown at Third Street are no longer extant and no railroad tracks connect to the trestle from the east or west bank of Shoal Creek. In the 1990s or early 2000s, roughly 30 percent of the structure, likely the guardrails and some of the decking, was replaced with in-kind materials.<sup>8</sup> While some of the wood is deteriorated and in poor condition, it retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship reflected in the intact 12-bent wooden open-deck railroad structure constructed of Creosote treated Southern Pine. Combined, these aspects of integrity convey the feeling of a 1920s wooden railroad trestle positioned over a key crossing that provided access to the commercial core of the city. The trestle is no longer associated with heavy-weight rail activity.

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originally associated with the Austin Dam and Suburban Railway Company also owned by the I-GN, which provided access to the Austin power and light plant. It was removed at an unknown date after 1961. See Maps 11-12 and Figure 3.

<sup>6</sup> The exact construction date of the current Third Street Railroad Trestle is unknown since few records specifically reference the structure. According to an Austin Historic Landmark Commission resolution, the trestle dates to 1925. Additional newspaper research yielded information on the I-GN work announced and implemented in the area between early to mid-1920s, and it seems likely that the trestle was constructed sometime between 1922 and 1926 when other I-GN work was completed along West Second, Third, and Sixth streets in downtown. A historic photograph documenting the Austin Light and Water Plant shows the Third Street trestle in 1922 with only one guard rail. The trestle appears to be in good condition indicating it was likely new construction at the time. For these reasons, it seems probable the construction date of the trestle is c. 1922. Later historic photographs from the 1950s show the trestle with two guardrails, suggesting the decking was expanded or replaced at some point during the period of significance.

<sup>7</sup> Lila Knight, Knight and Associates, Texas Department of Transportation, Environmental Affairs Division, Historical Studies Branch, *Historical Studies Report No. 2004-01: A Guide to the Research and Documentation of Local Texas Bridges*, January 2004 Revised 2013, 17, 50-60, <https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/env/toolkit/420-08-gui.pdf>; Sparks Engineering Inc, and Limbacher & Godfrey Architects, *3<sup>rd</sup> Street Trestle Conceptual Master Plan*, November 2017, 5-8, 10, Appendix 1.

<sup>8</sup> City of Austin, Historic Landmark Commission Resolution on Shoal Creek Trestle (May 2001) suggests that the 30 percent replacement of materials occurred in the 1990s. Due incomplete records, it's unclear exactly which materials were replaced and when, but a 2001 structural assessment completed by Jaster-Quintanilla & Associates recommended replacement of the guardrails and decking. Based on current photos, it seems plausible those changes were carried out around 2002, constituting the 30 percent replacement. Figure 3 suggests the trestle historically had guardrails on one side, and not both. No other information regarding material replacement is available.

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## Statement of Significance

The c. 1922 Third Street Railroad Trestle was built by the International-Great Northern Railroad Company (I-GN) as a 12-bent wooden open-deck railroad trestle across Shoal Creek at West Third Street in downtown Austin, Texas. The I-GN, which arrived in Austin in 1876, came down the western side of the city along the center of what is now MoPac Expressway. Shoal Creek presented a natural barrier, and the I-GN built an 1876 wooden trestle across the waterway to gain access to downtown and continue its spur from the main line along West Third Street. When that trestle was deemed unsafe it was replaced by a beam bridge in 1908. The 1908 trestle was only in use for about fourteen years before being replaced to accommodate advancements in locomotive technology introduced in the 1920s largely resulting in heavier engines. Stronger than its predecessors and able to withstand the Mikado freight engines and Pacific passenger engines, the c. 1922 trestle stood 35 feet above Shoal Creek spanning 150 feet long and 30 feet wide. Constructed from Creosote treated Southern Pine, the design of the superstructure consisted of an open deck of stringers, guardrails, ties, and railroad tracks supported by a substructure of 12 bents with 6 to 8 piles each positioned roughly 14 feet apart.

The structure is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Transportation at the local level of significance because served as vital crossing providing transportation connectivity and supported the efficient movement of both passenger and freight trains thereby transferring people, materials, and products in and out of downtown Austin. For these reasons, this important piece of railroad infrastructure inevitably contributed to the growth of the central business district. Over the years the trestle was used by the International-Great Northern Railroad, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (M-K-T or Katy) Railroad, and the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The trestle is also significant because it serves as one of the last remaining vestiges of Austin's historic railroad infrastructure. It is the last example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century wooden railroad trestle in downtown Austin. The period of significance begins with construction c. 1922 and ends in 1964 when the last scheduled passenger train of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad crossed the trestle signaling the decline of railway traffic in downtown Austin.

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## Historical Background

Austin, Texas was established on an undeveloped site on the Colorado River near the settlement known was Waterloo. The site was chosen for its views, natural resources, and named for Stephen F. Austin. Republic of Texas President Mirabeau Lamar appointed his friend Edwin Waller as agent to layout the basic townsite for the new capitol city in April 1839. Austin was legally incorporated as a municipality on December 27, 1839. The capitol was relocated a few times before leaders settled back on Austin in 1846 shortly after Texas gained statehood in 1845.<sup>9</sup>

Surveyors L. J. Pilie and Charles Schoolfield were instructed by Waller to produce the grid pattern for Austin. Positioned on the north bank of the Colorado River, the 640 acre townsite was divided into fourteen blocks bounded on the east by Waller Creek and on the west by Shoal Creek. Congress Avenue was platted down the middle of the townsite and lead from the river to the "Capitol Square" on the north.<sup>10</sup> "This plan centered around the capitol, placing narrow lots for commercial development along Congress Avenue, with larger lots for residential development just to the east and west. The plan also set aside open public squares in all quadrants of the new city, as well as land for churches, a market, a county courthouse and jail, and schools."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "When Was Austin Founded?" Austin Public Library, accessed October 24, 2018, <http://www.austinlibrary.com/ahc/faq1.htm>; HHM & Associates, Inc., *Historic Resources Survey for Old Austin Neighborhood Association*, June 2020, 7; "Austin, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/austin-tx-travis-county>, accessed March 5, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> "Austin, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/austin-tx-travis-county>, accessed March 5, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> HHM & Associates, Inc., *Historic Resources Survey for Old Austin*, 7.

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Transportation routes to and from Austin remained limited and as a result the city grew slowly in the first few decades after its founding. The use of the Colorado River as a navigable waterway was not reliable, and roads were poor and hardly passable when rain turned them into mud making travel by stagecoach both lengthy and arduous.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the city's population stayed below 5,000 inhabitants until the arrival of the railroad in the 1870s.<sup>13</sup>

### The Railroad Arrives in Austin

The Houston & Texas Central (H&TC) Railway was first the railroad to arrive in Austin on December 25, 1871.<sup>14</sup> Its route followed a course from Houston to Hempstead, Brenham, Burton, Giddings, Elgin, Manor, and across Waller Creek into downtown Austin on East Pine Street (now East 5<sup>th</sup> Street) to a market square near the city's main street of Congress Avenue.<sup>15</sup>

The International-Great Northern (I-GN) Railroad was the second railroad to arrive in Austin on December 28, 1876.<sup>16</sup> Its route followed a course through Rockdale, Thorndale, Taylor, Hutto, Round Rock, over the top of Austin and down the western side of the city along a sloping grade in what is now the center of MoPac Expressway. It then crossed the original railroad trestle constructed by the I-GN over Shoal Creek and entered downtown via a spur from the main line along West Cypress Street (now West Third Street—Maps 8-9).<sup>17</sup>

The I-GN presence was strong in the Austin area. It owned the Austin Dam and Suburban Railway Company that ran trains from downtown Austin along what is now Lake Austin Boulevard out to a park near a dam on the Colorado River that formed Lake McDonald, a body of water later replaced by Lake Austin.<sup>18</sup> That railway crossed Shoal Creek at a point a block or two downstream of the Third Street Trestle, likely at what is now West Second Street but the exact location is unknown (Maps 11-12).<sup>19</sup> The I-GN also owned the Georgetown Railroad Company, having bought it at foreclosure in 1882, a common practice back then to grow through mergers and acquisitions.<sup>20</sup> Over the years, the I-GN developed into the city's major rail line for many years.<sup>21</sup>

The arrival of the railroad generated economic development in Texas and Austin facilitating a transition from a rural agrarian to an urban industrial economy. This new technology served as a powerful force for centralizing the economy and supported urbanization. Austin became the westernmost railroad terminus in Texas, and the southernmost terminus for the I-GN until 1881 when the line crossed the Colorado River and reached San Antonio. As a result, the city

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<sup>12</sup> Griffin, Roger. Austin Community College history professor emeritus. E-mail to Larry McGinnis. 4 August 2009. Private collection of Larry McGinnis.

<sup>13</sup> "Austin, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/austin-tx-travis-county>, accessed March 5, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> *Austin Tri-Weekly Statesman*. "Arrival of the Cars." 28 December 1871.

<sup>15</sup> Schedule of the Houston & Texas Central Railway, 1879, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/suffrage/battle/railroad-schedule-map.html> (accessed December 6, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, George C. Werner, "INTERNATIONAL-GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD," accessed October 24, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/eqj04>; "Romantic Story of Texas Revealed in Austin's History," *The Austin American* (1914-1973), March 26, 1939, 2C.

<sup>17</sup> Woodward, Tiernan, and Hale. Map of the International and Great Northern Railroad: (Lone [Star] Route) and connections., map, 1877; Chicago, Illinois. ([texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph231275/](http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph231275/); accessed December 6, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, [texashistory.unt.edu](http://texashistory.unt.edu); crediting University of Texas at Arlington Library.

<sup>18</sup> Willoughby, Larry. *Austin – A Historical Portrait*. Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company. 1981. p.67.

<sup>19</sup> See 1935 Austin Sanborn Map, sheet 11.

<sup>20</sup> "History of the International-Great Northern," *Missouri Pacific Historical Society*, accessed December 7, 2018, <http://www.mopac.org/corporate-history/72-international-great-northern>.

<sup>21</sup> Like nearly all other railroads of the time, the I-GN was reorganized, moved in and out of receivership, bought and sold several times. In 1924, the I-GN was sold to the New Orleans, Texas & Mexico (NOT&M) Railway Company, a line that controlled a group of railroads known collectively as the Gulf Coast Lines. A year later, the Missouri Pacific (MP) Railroad bought the NOT&M to shore up its Texas connections. The I-GN operated as a subsidiary of the MP until its flag was lowered as an independent road when it was folded into the MP lines on March 1, 1956. The Missouri Pacific was later acquired by the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad on December 22, 1982.

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experienced economic development, population increases, infrastructure improvements, new systems of communication, and thus became more fully integrated into the regional and national economy.<sup>22</sup>

“By the 1880s, railroads cut through East Austin along 6th Street and through downtown along 3rd Street. Warehouses and related industries rapidly sprung up along the rail lines.”<sup>23</sup> Beginning in the 1850s, brick and limestone one- and two-part commercial buildings were constructed along Congress Avenue, a trend that continued into the 1880s. The railroad afforded access to new building materials and helped disseminate information about architectural styles. This was readily seen not only in some of the commercial and institutional architecture downtown, but in that of the residences located in neighborhoods adjacent to the commercial center.<sup>24</sup>

Another railroad, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (M-K-T) Railroad (the “Katy”) entered Texas with regular train service in 1872 and began pushing deeper into the state, arriving in Austin later around 1904.<sup>25</sup> The Katy had been working its way south from Dallas when a group of Austin’s leading citizens joined together to create a financial incentive sufficient enough to attract the M-K-T to Austin. The M-K-T would provide service over the Third Street trestle until 1964 (Figure 5).<sup>26</sup>

#### Early Railroad Trestles Across Shoal Creek at Third Street, 1876 – c. 1922

The I-GN was eager to expand into the Austin market and area residents hoped the new transportation connectivity would diversify and boost the local economy. I-GN contractors worked on the roadbed with great haste. To get into downtown Austin from the west along the spur, a railroad trestle was needed across Shoal Creek. The *Daily Democratic Statesman* on July 21, 1876, reported the foreman in charge stated he was confident the trestle “will be in readiness for the cars by the first of August.”<sup>27</sup>

The foreman missed his deadline by five months. The *Daily Democratic Statesman* on December 20, 1876, printed a follow-up article which announced “the Shoal creek bridge will be finished to-day and the International track laid to the depot before to-morrow night” where its rails would terminate at the southwest corner of Congress Avenue and Third Street.<sup>28</sup> After the I-GN completed its trackwork, it ran a work train over the trestle for the first time on December 28th.<sup>29</sup> The original 1876 wooden trestle carried I-GN trains in and out of Austin (Maps 9).

Flooding was an ongoing challenge in Austin, especially with proximity to both Waller and Shoal Creeks. Reports of bridges and trestles being washed away or damaged were common throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. When these structures needed to be replaced or partially rebuilt, it caused delays in both passenger and freight service. The I-GN trestle had to be repaired after a bad flood in April of 1885, but it’s unclear if it was entirely replaced at that time.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1977), 6, “Austin, Texas,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/austin-tx-travis-county>, accessed March 5, 2021; Reed, St. Clair Griffin. *A History of Texas Railroads*. Houston: The St. Clair Publishing Company. (New York: Arno Press. 1981) 320.

<sup>23</sup>HHM & Associates, Inc., *Historic Resources Survey for Old Austin*, 17.

<sup>24</sup>HHM & Associates, Inc., *Historic Resources Survey for Old Austin*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Donovan L. Hofsommer, “MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS RAILROAD,” accessed October 23, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/eqm08>; “1904 M. K. & T. Service Map,” *Katy Railroad Historical Society*, accessed October 15, 2021, [https://katyrailroad.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/map\\_2.pdf](https://katyrailroad.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/map_2.pdf).

<sup>26</sup>“Contract with Katy to Use the Bridge: International Tracks to be Used by Katy From San Marcos to Austin. Structural Work Progressing,” *The Austin Statesman*, August 3, 1905; “Katy Railroad is Not in on the Deal: Col. A.L. Bowers of the International That the Y Is for Use of the I.&G.N. Railroad Only,” *The Austin Statesman*, August 10, 1905.

<sup>27</sup>“Round.The Sale of Lots Etc.,” *Daily Democratic Statesman*, July 21, 1876. p.3.

<sup>28</sup> “Personal and Local Dots,” *Daily Democratic Statesman*, December 20, 1876.

<sup>29</sup> Bartholomew, Eugene Carlos. Diaries (No. 17). November 25, 1873 to April 21, 1879. Austin History Center.

<sup>30</sup> “A World of Water: Works Wreck and Ruin in and About the Capital City,” *The Austin Weekly Statesman*, April 30, 1885. Another article references work on the damaged International and Great Northern tracks and the railroad bridge over the Colorado River. See “Few Passenger Trains

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In September 1908, the Austin City Council concluded that three decades of heavy railroad traffic had taken a toll on the trestle. *The Austin Statesman* reported “ten passenger trains pass over this bridge every day, as well as numerous freight trains.” After years of continual use, the trestle was deemed dangerous. The city council urged the railroad company to take steps to replace the trestle with a stronger structure.<sup>31</sup>

The I-GN took action to replace the trestle in 1908. *The American Statesman* reported in October that “work is actively underway on the now International and Great Northern bridge over Shoal Creek in this city and within a few weeks an entirely new structure would have been completed.”<sup>32</sup> The I-GN built a beam bridge over the creek.<sup>33</sup> The new span crossed over on horizontal beams that connected to wooden structural piers which transferred vertical force to concrete footings anchored in the creek bed.

### Construction of the Third Street Railroad Trestle

In the early 1920s, the I-GN began implementing an improvement program on the line through Austin. Part of this plan included alterations to the exterior and interior of the 1888 passenger depot at West Third Street and Congress Avenue to give it a “mission style of architecture appearance.”<sup>34</sup> It’s unclear whether the changes to the depot were carried out but the railroad company did add improvements to their Austin line over the next few years, including a new railroad trestle across Shoal Creek what is now West Second Street to provide more efficient access to the Austin Water and Light Plant, and new track on West Third Street around 1923 (Maps 10-11, Figures 1-3).<sup>35</sup> In 1926, the I-GN also replaced the railroad bridge over West Sixth Street.<sup>36</sup>

The exact construction date of the current Third Street Railroad Trestle is unknown since few records specifically reference the structure. According to an Austin Historic Landmark Commission resolution, the trestle dates to 1925. Additional newspaper research yielded information on the I-GN work announced and implemented in the area between early to mid-1920s. It seems likely that the trestle was constructed sometime between 1922 and 1926 when other I-GN work was completed along West Second, Third, and Sixth streets in downtown.<sup>37</sup> A historic photograph documenting the Austin Light and Water Plant shows the Third Street trestle in 1922 with only one guard rail. The trestle appears to be in good condition indicating it was likely new construction at the time. For these reasons, it seems probable the construction date of the trestle is c. 1922. Later historic photographs from the 1950s show the trestle with two guardrails, suggesting the decking was expanded or replaced at some point during the period of significance (Maps 3-7, 10-12, Figures 3-8, Photos 6, 12).

The 1908 trestle was only in use for about fourteen years before it needed to be replaced to accommodate advancements in locomotive technology largely resulting in heavier engines used by the 1920s. In 1925, *The Austin Statesman* reported the I-GN took delivery of new “Mikado” steam locomotives for freight service and new “Pacific” steam locomotives for

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Moving: Temporary Bridges are Built Across the Creeks,” *The Austin Statesman*, April 26, 1915 and “Flood Sweeps Down Waller and Shoal Creeks with Heavy Loss of Life and a Big Property Damage,” *The Austin Statesman*, April 23, 1915.

<sup>31</sup> “May Force Replacing of I.&G.N. Bridge: Members of City Council of Opinion That it is Unsafe and Will Have it Examined by City Engineer Iredell,” *The American Statesman*, September 3, 1908.

<sup>32</sup> “New I.&G.N. Bridge is Being Erected Here: New Wooden Structure Over Shoal Creek Replaces Old and Alleged Dangerous Bridge at That Point,” *The Austin Statesman*, October 29, 1908.

<sup>33</sup> History of Bridges. <http://www.historyofbridges.com/facts-about-bridges/types-of-bridges/> (accessed November 19, 2018). p.2/11.

<sup>34</sup> “Work of Improving I.-G.N. Passenger Depot,” *The Austin Statesman*, April 10, 1923.

<sup>35</sup> “I.G.-N to Explain for Placing Track on Third Street,” *The Austin Statesman*, January 11, 1923; “I.G.-N. to Bridge Shoal Creek and Lay New Track,” *The Austin Statesman*, July 18, 1923; “Engineer Believes Railroad Will Build Spur Track for City,” *The Austin Statesman*, December 20, 1923; “Construction of Water Plant to be Speeded Up,” *The Austin Statesman*, January 6, 1924; I.-G.N. Bridge Plans to be Discusses Next Week in Conference,” *The Austin Statesman*, March 7, 1924.

<sup>36</sup> “Death Bridge of West Sixth Will be Replaced Soon,” *The Austin Statesman*, August 11, 1927.

<sup>37</sup> City of Austin, Historic Landmark Commission Resolution on Shoal Creek Trestle (May 22, 2001).

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passenger service on the railroad's system in Austin. The newspaper reported "the 'Mikado' freight engine is the most powerful engine yet to be developed" and "the 'Pacific' type passenger engines are long and have drive wheels tremendous in size in order that almost any speed desired can be obtained from them."<sup>38</sup> Regarded as "second-generation" locomotives because of their technological leap over earlier versions, these locomotives tipped the scales upward to 265 tons, much heavier than predecessor locomotives that weighed at around 12 tons.

Railroads were attracted to Mikados for their tractive effort to start heavy trains and to Pacifics for their steaming capacity to crest mainline grades at speed.<sup>39</sup> The I-GN also acquired what the paper reported were "twenty-two all-steel passenger coaches" with "the Austin I-GN branch receiving part of this equipment."<sup>40</sup> I-GN trains would be longer, faster, more powerful, and more luxurious (Figure 4).

Much stronger than the previous trestles and able to withstand the Mikado freight engines and Pacific passenger engines, the c. 1922 trestle stood 35 feet above Shoal Creek spanning 150 feet long and 30 feet wide. Constructed from Creosote treated Southern Pine, the design of the superstructure consisted of an open deck of stringers, guardrails, ties, and railroad tracks supported by a substructure of 12 bents with 6 to 8 piles each positioned roughly 14 feet apart. The timbers in the bents were held in place with sway braces and sashes. Concrete footings anchored the bents (Maps 4-7, Figures 3, 5-8, Photos 1-12).

All freight trains headed for the warehouse district or passenger trains coming into the depot at West Third Street and Congress Avenue had to cross the Third Street Railroad Trestle over Shoal Creek. The structure was a critical piece of railroad infrastructure that helped transport goods and people into downtown Austin between the 1920s and 1960s. Since there is not a formal historic resources survey of railroad infrastructure in Austin available, a Google reconnaissance survey was completed to evaluate any extant historic railroad infrastructure in downtown Austin and beyond along the rail lines. Texas Historical Commission experts of historic rail infrastructure were consulted, as were local Austin historians. The investigation concluded that the trestle serves as one of the last remaining pieces of Austin's historic railroad infrastructure. It is the last example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century wooden railroad trestle in downtown Austin (Maps 3-12).

### **The Impact of Passenger Service**

As I-GN trains steamed across the trestle in downtown, Austin's leaders wanted visitors to step off at a first-class depot as the gateway to a sophisticated city. At one point, railroad tycoon Jay Gould either owned or maintained control of the line.<sup>41</sup> Early in 1888, his son Edwin Gould and other officials of the Gould system of railroads stopped in Austin. The city rolled out the red carpet for these special guests, and before leaving, Mr. Gould announced a plan would be submitted to the executive committee of the railroad company and to city officials for a new depot.<sup>42</sup> Gould understood the importance of the depot as the "front door" to the city, where people came to greet incoming trains.<sup>43</sup> He felt that Austin should "have a depot commensurate with her importance as the capital of the state and one of its most important cities."<sup>44</sup> Gould kept his word. The I-GN hired Gustav Wilke, a builder who did much of the work on the State Capitol, to build the new I-GN passenger depot.<sup>45</sup> The new 1888 Union passenger depot owned by the I-GN was built at the southwest corner of West

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<sup>38</sup> "New Engines - Austin Branch I-GN gets New Stock." *The Austin Statesman*, December 14, 1925. p.8.

<sup>39</sup> *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*. Edited by William Middleton, George Smerk, and Roberta Diehl. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 2007. p.1015.

<sup>40</sup> "New Engines - Austin Branch I-GN gets New Stock." *The Austin Statesman*, December 14, 1925. p.8.

<sup>41</sup> Missouri Pacific Historical Society.

<sup>42</sup> "Mr. Gould and Party: Their Impressions of the Capital City of Texas," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, January 25, 1888.

<sup>43</sup> Keith L. Bryant Jr., "Railway Stations of Texas: A Disappearing Architectural Heritage," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, April 1976, Vol. 79, No. 4 (April 1976) 417.

<sup>44</sup> "A New Depot," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, March 4, 1887.

<sup>45</sup> Wellman, Reynard, "History of the International - Great Northern Railroad Station and the Strong Connections to the Texas State Capitol Building," Revised 9 August 2001, and again on 21 January 2008, accessed October 24, 2018,



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Third Street and Congress Avenue replacing an earlier station in the same location. The depot was in use until at least until the late 1940s, and it's unclear how much longer it remained extant but was likely demolished in the 1960s when the last passenger service into downtown ended (Map 3, Figure 1).<sup>46</sup>

When I-GN approached Austin on its main line west of town, its train used the track configuration known as a “wye” with a railway switch that allowed trains to move from one track to another. Trains either pulled in engine first or backed in depending on direction of travel. Passenger trains entering Austin from the south, for example, proceeded over the west leg of the wye to a point on the main line and then backed through the north leg to the depot.

The Third Street Railroad Trestle was the landmark that alerted arriving passengers the train would soon slow down for its final push into the depot. As trains eased over the trestle, passengers gathered up their belongings. They then made their way to the vestibule of their coach to deboard the train.

Advancements in transportation technology and the economic crisis of the Great Depression were detrimental to railroad companies leading to their slow decline beginning in the 1930s. The stock market crash of 1929 led to economic hardship in the 1930s which impacted American companies, including railroads. Financial strain on railroad companies was exacerbated by the rise in private automobile ownership and the construction of highways across Texas and the United States. Airplane travel and commercial busses also introduced new competition for high-speed service. These new modes of transportation led to a decrease in passenger rail traffic.<sup>47</sup>

To combat the decline and financial losses, railroads fought back with unprecedented levels of investment in upgraded railroad equipment and improved service. What emerged was another “golden age” for railroads, producing faster and more luxurious trains.<sup>48</sup> Railroads adopted such beguiling names for their trains as *zephyr*, *flyer*, and *special* to connote speed and luxury for a new image of coast to coast “streamliner” railroad service.

Railroad activity in Austin between the 1930s and 1940s reflected this resurgence in passenger service. Timetables in this era listed a dozen trains a day crossing the trestle. In 1937, for example, the I-GN ran three round-trip passenger trains a day in each direction over the trestle. The same year, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (M-K-T) also ran three round-trip passenger trains a day in each direction over the trestle.<sup>49</sup> Railroads served Austin through decades of good times celebrated by merriment and prosperity as well as bad times darkened by economic depression and war.

Austin needed two depots to accommodate the resurgence in passenger service. By 1935, a new Southern Pacific Railroad depot (demolished) was located at the northeast corner of Third Street and Congress Avenue to provide access from trains coming in from the east side of the city. In addition to the new passenger depot, the 1888 Union depot owned by the I-GN railroad remained located across street at the southwest corner of Third Street and Congress Avenue (Map 3, Figure 1).<sup>50</sup>

Not only was the Third Street Railroad Trestle a landmark to passengers, it is also significant because served as a key crossing on the way to downtown allowing for continued railroad access which in turn contributed to population growth and commercial development leading to increased urbanization. Shortly after the new trestle was built, Austin's

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[http://www.micronart.com/History\\_IGNRR\\_station.html](http://www.micronart.com/History_IGNRR_station.html).

<sup>46</sup> Austin Sanborn Map, 1889, sheet 4, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*; Austin Sanborn Map, 1885, sheet 5, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*; Austin Sanborn Map, 1935 vol. 1, 1935-Sept. 1961, Sheet 11, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*; “The Union Depot” *The Portal To Texas History*, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph125104/m1/1/>.

<sup>47</sup> A. Ray Stephens, *Texas: A Historical Atlas*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) 241-242.

<sup>48</sup> *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*, 993 – 994.

<sup>49</sup> International-Great Northern Railroad. San Antonio Division, Austin District – San Antonio to Taylor Time Table No. 36. 27 June 1937.

<sup>50</sup> Austin Sanborn Map, 1935, sheet 6, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*. It's possible this depot was modified to Mission style architecture in the 1920s but it's unclear whether the upgrades took place.

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population was 42,174 in 1925. The local economy was growing. In 1927, the Austin City Directory calculated the city's aggregate wealth at \$111,000,000.<sup>51</sup> The railroad allowed for population influxes bringing farmers, merchants, politicians, teachers, and immigrants who hoped to make Austin their home. A decade later in 1935, Austin's population jumped to 60,082. The city's aggregate wealth had increased, too. In 1937, the City Directory set it at \$150,000,000.<sup>52</sup> Another decade later in 1945, Austin's population was 101,289. When the last scheduled passenger train of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad crossed the trestle in July 1964, Austin's population was 208,475.<sup>53</sup>

The Third Street Railroad Trestle is also significant because it allowed transfer of passengers in and out of the city thereby contributing to the political, cultural, and social development of the city allowing it to become both a political and educational center. Since Austin was the state capital and home to the University of Texas, trains brought legislators to the capital city to attend sessions of the Texas Legislature. I-GN, and later Missouri Pacific ran excursions during the Christmas and New Year holidays on its *Sunshine Special (1940s)*, which the road billed as the "aristocrat of the rails." Football fans chartered specials to root for their favorite teams playing the gridiron in other cities. Families traveled to cooler climates to get out of the Texas heat. Trains also carried Austin's young soldiers to serve in the military during World War I and World War II, among many other important functions.

#### *1949 Missouri Pacific Depot*

The Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, successor to the I-GN, ran passenger trains into Austin over the Third Street trestle to the depot at the southwest corner of Congress Avenue and Third Street until the company sought to make a change. Due to increased competition from alternative forms of transportation and the desire to accommodate increased traffic in downtown Austin, the 1944 city plan proposed changes to rail routes.<sup>54</sup> A few years later in 1948, Missouri Pacific decided to relocate to a new depot west of downtown near Lamar Boulevard and Third Street to escape urban congestion and what it claimed were safety hazards of a growing downtown. The Missouri Pacific had to gain permission from the Texas Railroad Commission to move, but the railroad was turned down twice for not following statutory protocols. On May 17, 1948, the Missouri Pacific filed its third request. The railroad won support for the relocation with help from the Austin City Council and the Austin Planning Commission.<sup>55</sup>

In 1949, the Missouri Pacific built a small one-story brick building at the present location west of Shoal Creek at Third and Baylor Streets (250 North Lamar Blvd) now used by Amtrak for a cost of \$250,000 (Map 3). The building is functional, although its location is a bit inconvenient to find.<sup>56</sup> From then on, Missouri Pacific – better known as "MoPac" – operated trains from the new depot on track that bypassed the Third Street trestle, at which point the old I-GN railroad depot became somewhat obsolete. Some twenty-one years later, the Missouri Pacific's last passenger train, Train #2, pulled out of the new depot on September 21, 1970.<sup>57</sup> Missouri Pacific Railroad Company was acquired by Union Pacific in 1982.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Polk's Morrison & Fourmy Austin City Directory*, 1927. Houston: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., Inc. p.4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 1937. p.15.

<sup>53</sup> City of Austin population history, 1840 – 2016. *U.S. Census Bureau and the City of Austin*.

<sup>54</sup> "Changing Routes of All Rails into City is Proposed Under Report by Austin Plan Engineer," *The Austin American*, March 5, 1944; "Place of Transportation in Austin City Plan Visualized Existing Sites of Facilities Here Analyzed," *The Austin American*, March 26, 1944.

<sup>55</sup> "Third Depot Move Made by Railway," *The Austin Statesman*, May 18 1948. p.10; "Austin Shapes Growth Pattern with Caution," *The Austin American*, March 21, 1948; "City Accepts Petition for Rail Station," *The Austin Statesman*, May 20, 1948.

<sup>56</sup> Jim Steely, "Rediscovering Railroad The Station," *Texas Architect*, Vol. 34, No. 3, May-June 1984: (54).

<sup>57</sup> "M-P's New Station to Open Tomorrow," *The Sunday American-Statesman*, August 7, 1949; Kuempel, George. *Austin American-Statesman*. "Eagle Makes Last Run." 22 September 1970.

<sup>58</sup> "Missouri Pacific, *Route of the Eagles*," *American-Rails.com*, accessed October 15, 2021, <https://www.american-rails.com/missouri.html>.

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## The Impact of Freight Service

The Third Street Railroad Trestle at Shoal Creek is significant for serving as the connection between what was known as the “Upper Yards” and “Lower Yards” and thus had a significant impact on local businesses and the growth of light industry in downtown Austin. The I-GN built a single thread of track in 1876 that crossed the original trestle.<sup>59</sup> As the railroad expanded and more companies came to the city in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Austin depicted a network of rail lines that sprawled across the bottom half of the city. On the west bank of Shoal Creek was a cluster of ten spurs and sidings known locally as the “Upper Yards.” By the 1920s this railroad access contributed to the development of and served a compact area characterized by a cotton compress, machine storage, pipe storage, a few houses, and the City of Austin Power and Light Plant (Maps 3, 8-12).<sup>60</sup>

On the east bank of Shoal Creek was a network of tracks known locally as the “Lower Yards.” These tracks served a warehouse district, a rectangular area roughly situated between West Avenue and Congress Avenue and West Second Street and West Fourth Street. By the 1920s, this area was characterized by light manufacturing including ice companies, Calcasieu Lumber Company, mills, storage, a few residences. The I-GN (later the Missouri Pacific) operated out of a freight house at the southwest corner of West Cypress (later West Third Street) and Lavaca. The freight house and platform for general freight car loading and unloading and was extant in 1961, but has since been demolished.<sup>61</sup> The trestle linked these two areas of downtown (Maps 3, 8-12).<sup>62</sup>

Austin never developed as a major manufacturing center and instead the “Lower Yards” was characterized by warehouses and light industry. Cargo had to be shipped from the northern part of the country to the south, making up a large percentage of I-GN tonnage in Texas into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These trains transported essential goods, materials, and products into the warehouse district that both wholesalers needed to ply their business and Austin citizens would purchase. Builders needed lumber, plumbing fixtures, cement, hardware, steel trusses, pipe, and plastics, for a growing city. Homemakers needed grain, flour, ice, and groceries to run their households. Office workers needed supplies and paper, butchers needed poultry and meat, saloons needed cigars and beer, automobiles dealers needed auto parts, and everybody needed janitorial supplies. Anchored in this multiblock area were the Calcasieu Lumber Company, Walter Tips Hardware, Nalle Plastics, and the *Austin American-Statesman*, four important employers in the Austin business community.<sup>63</sup> Railroad connectivity also helped to distribute products made in Austin to other markets as well.

Moving freight in and out of downtown required quite a bit of work. Freight trains moved in and out of railyards, switch locomotives waited their turn at sidings, box cars were dropped and picked up at platforms, materials and supplies were stacked on docks, workers shoved and heaved to keep the ball rolling.<sup>64</sup> In 1925, the I-GN added an additional switch engine and switching crew to “render better service to Austin and Austin merchants.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Revised Map of Austin, Texas. Drawn by Reuben Ford. 1885-86. Austin History Center, L-0016.

<sup>60</sup> Station map, lands, tracks, and structures of the International-Great Northern Railway. Drawn 30 June 1917. Revised 15 October 1926. Austin History Center.

<sup>61</sup> Station map, lands, tracks, and structures of the International - Great Northern Railway.

<sup>62</sup> Austin Sanborn Map, 1885, sheet 5, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*; Austin Sanborn Map, 1889, sheet 15, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*; Austin Sanborn Map, 1900, sheet 42, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*; Austin Sanborn Map, 1935, sheet 13, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*, shown as Missouri Pacific Lines Freight Station by 1935; Austin Sanborn Map, 1935 vol. 1, 1935-Sept. 1961, Sheet 11, *ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*; It’s important to note that the rail lines served as a barrier and everything south of Third Street was considered blighted by 1928. Since this was a concern for the appearance of the capitol city, business along Congress Avenue, and the expansion of the business district, the removal of the tracks and the industry it served was recommended. For more on this see Koch and Fowler, *A City Plan for Austin, Texas*, prepared for the City of Austin 1928, 45.

<sup>63</sup> Insurance Maps of Austin, Texas, Volume One. Sanborn Map Company, New York. 1935. Austin History Center.

<sup>64</sup> Wright, Hamilton. *Austin American-Statesman*. “Railroads Once Big Giant Here.” 29 March 1962. p.B20.

<sup>65</sup> *Statesman*. “I-GN adds new service here.” 8 July 1925. p.3.

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While statistics on railroad shipments on a local basis are not readily available, the expansion of tracks in downtown Austin may be documented by tracing a chronological sequence of maps that demonstrate growth from I-GN's original single thread of track to an organized web of railyards on both sides of Shoal Creek. The railroad often sought permission from the Austin City Council to lay a new line or to realign an existing one to make it more efficient. The functioning trestle made it possible for the I-GN and its successor the Missouri Pacific to give Austin merchants a way to meet the needs of the community.

For decades after the c. 1922 Third Street Railroad Trestle was built, the I-GN (and later the Missouri Pacific) provided reliable freight service in the warehouse district. Long-haul trucks did not encroach considerably into Austin's railroad business until the interstate highway system rose in prominence in the 1950s. The first stretch of this new kind of highway in Texas was built between Houston and Galveston in 1951 and the first interregional-type highway in Austin was built in 1960. With regular passenger service largely re-routed to the new 1949 Missouri Pacific depot at Third and Baylor, freight trains continued into downtown over the Third Street Railroad Trestle into the 1960s even with increasing competition from trucking. The use of freight trains eventually faded and warehouses were moved to outlying sections of town where trucks could more easily reach in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Decline of Regular Service in Downtown Austin

The M-K-T (Katy) railroad continued passenger, freight, and mail service into downtown Austin until 1964. The "rail mail" as it was known was discontinued as the use of truck mail service was deemed more efficient and cost effective.<sup>66</sup> By July of 1964 all mail service between Dallas and San Antonio was transferred by trucks "sounding the death toll for both the Katy and the *Texas Special*" leading to the reduction and eventual elimination of passenger and mail service into downtown Austin along West Third Street. This ended the company's sixty year history of providing service to Austin between 1904 and 1964.<sup>67</sup> *The Austin Statesman* reported:

For some 60 years the Katy Railroad had given passenger service to Austin folk. Day after day, in weather cold or hot and in rains and in drought Katy passenger trains served this area and filled a great economic need which continued until the private automobile went into competition with trains and passenger traffic fell off alarmingly.<sup>68</sup>

Already, even though the trains have disappeared for only a few days, Austin feels a pang of nostalgia. For lower Congress Avenue in particular the sound of the air-horns and the clanging bells were familiar sounds that enlivened the setting. Many Austin residents were drawn almost hypnotically to the railway station just to see the passenger trains come in and depart. For many persons it was a daily ritual giving vitality to otherwise dull days. Austin is going to miss the Katy passenger trains in more ways than one. They had become institutionalized for more than half a century, and will be missed more and more as time goes by and they become phantoms of imagination. The day of the steam locomotives long since had come to an end. To railway buffs the most beautiful sight in the world was the speeding engine wheels and flashing drivers and deep-throated roar of the exhaust of the steam locomotives. Now they become history, as the highly efficient but otherwise unimaginative diesels have taken over.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "Truck to Get Rail Mail," *The Austin Statesman*, January 24, 1964; "Mail Loss May Cut Katy Trains," *The Austin Statesman*, May 11, 1964.

<sup>67</sup> "Katy Clips Flyer Run," *The Austin Statesman*, June 30, 1964; "Trucks Take Over: Rail Mail Era Comes to an End," *The Austin Statesman*, July 1, 1964; "Katy Says Passenger Trains Losing Money," *The Austin Statesman*, July 15, 1964; "Katy to Cut Rail Runs," *The Austin Statesman*, July 24, 1964; "Today, Sunday Last Katy Run," *The Austin American*, July 25, 1964.

<sup>68</sup> "End to 60 Years," *The Austin Statesman*, July 28, 1964.

<sup>69</sup> "End to 60 Years," *The Austin Statesman*, July 28, 1964.

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### **Last Train Over the Trestle**

Southern Pacific steam engine #786 was built by the American Locomotive Company in Dunkirk, New York, in 1916. The locomotive was one of a group of twenty Mk-5 class 2-8-2 Mikados (numbers 775 to 794) and was placed into service on the Houston & Texas Central (H&TC) Railway, a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific (SP) Railroad. The SP retired #786 in 1956 and gave it to the City of Austin. The city placed it on display near the firehouse on Trinity Street between East Fourth and East Fifth Streets where it remained for 34 years. In 1989, the Austin Steam Train Association leased #786 and removed it from display the following year. After an intense period of restoration, the Association brought the restored #786 over the Third Street Railroad Trestle in 1991 with an accompanying passenger coach where it was parked on downtown tracks at the center of a three-day celebration.<sup>70</sup> Governor Ann Richards reportedly climbed into the cab of the venerable locomotive. Association historians believe the movement of #786 was one of the last trains, if not the last train, over the trestle. The structure is currently owned by Union Pacific Railroad but the railroad right-of-way to and from the trestle was abandoned.

### **Conclusion**

The c. 1922 Third Street Railroad Trestle was built by the International-Great Northern Railroad Company (I-GN) as a 12-bent wooden open-deck railroad trestle across Shoal Creek at West Third Street in downtown Austin. When the original 1876 wooden trestle built by the I-GN was deemed unsafe it was replaced by a beam bridge in 1908. The 1908 trestle was replaced with the sturdier c. 1922 wood trestle that could accommodate heavier engines. The structure is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Transportation at the local level of significance because the principal piece of railroad infrastructure allowed the crossing of a natural barrier and afforded the efficient movement of both passenger and freight trains thereby transferring people, materials, and products in and out of downtown Austin leading to the growth of the central business district. Over the years the trestle was used by the International-Great Northern Railroad, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (M-K-T or Katy) Railroad, and the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The trestle is also significant because it serves as one of the few remaining vestiges of Austin's railroad infrastructure and is the last example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century wooden railroad trestle in downtown Austin. The period of significance begins c. 1922 and ends in 1964.

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<sup>70</sup> Austin Steam Train Association. Restoration page for Steam Locomotive #786. <https://www.austinsteamtrain.org/historic-restoration/locomotive-786/> (accessed October 28, 2018).

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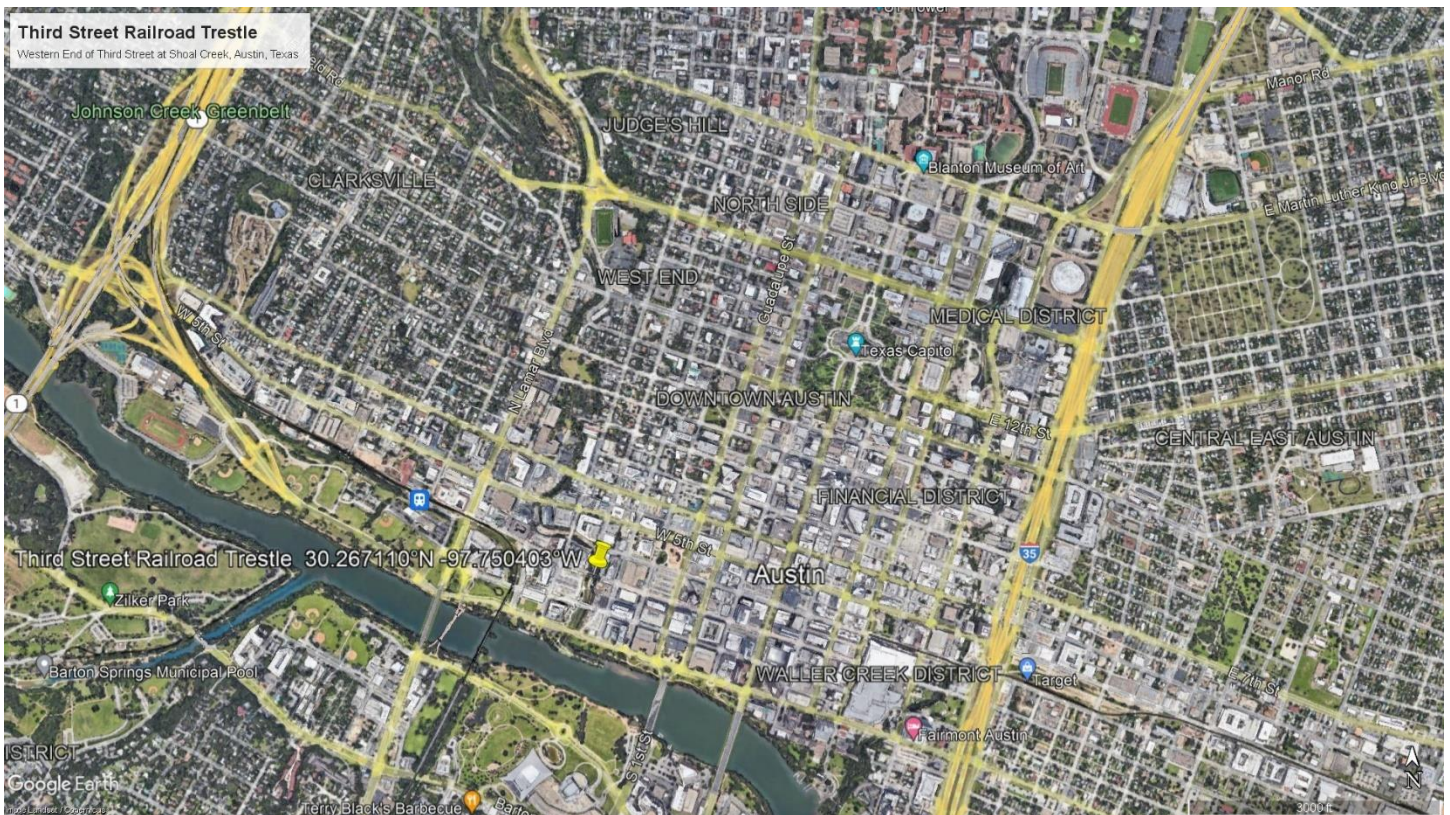


Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 1: Travis County, Texas



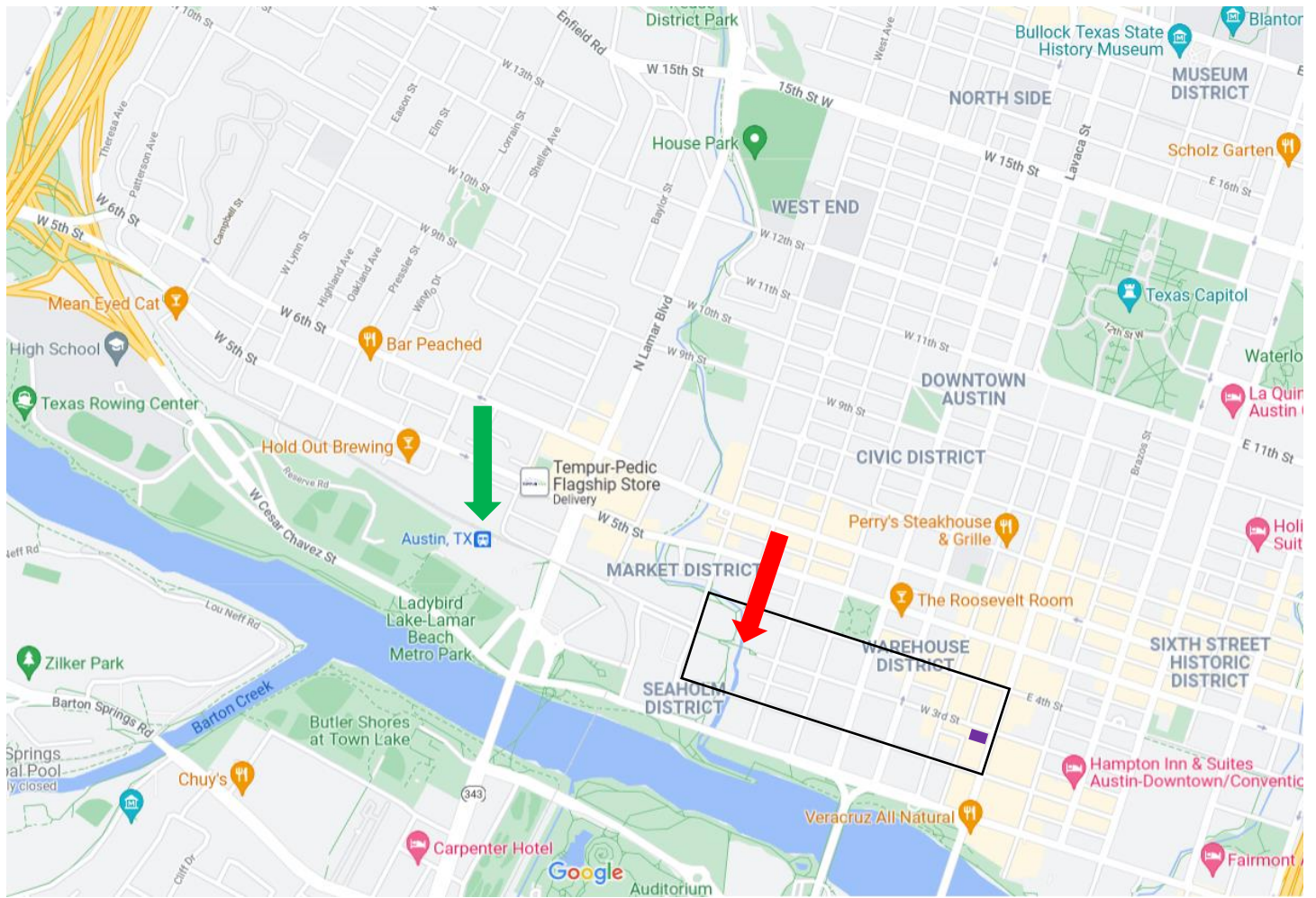
Map 2: Google Earth Map that depicts location of the Third Street Trestle in Austin, Texas, accessed October 15, 2021.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 3: Google Map showing location of Third Street Railroad Trestle in downtown Austin, Texas. Accessed, October 15, 2021. The red arrow shows location of trestle, green arrow shows the 1949 Missouri Pacific depot currently used by Amtrak at West Third and Baylor Streets (250 N. Lamar Boulevard), approximate boundaries of former warehouse district are outlined in black, and the location of the 1888 passenger depot (demolished) is shown in purple. Seaholm Power Plant (NRHP 2013) is located southwest of the trestle.



Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 4: Google Earth Map, accessed March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.





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Map 5: Bing Map showing Third Street Railroad Trestle, looking northeast. Accessed March 4, 2021.



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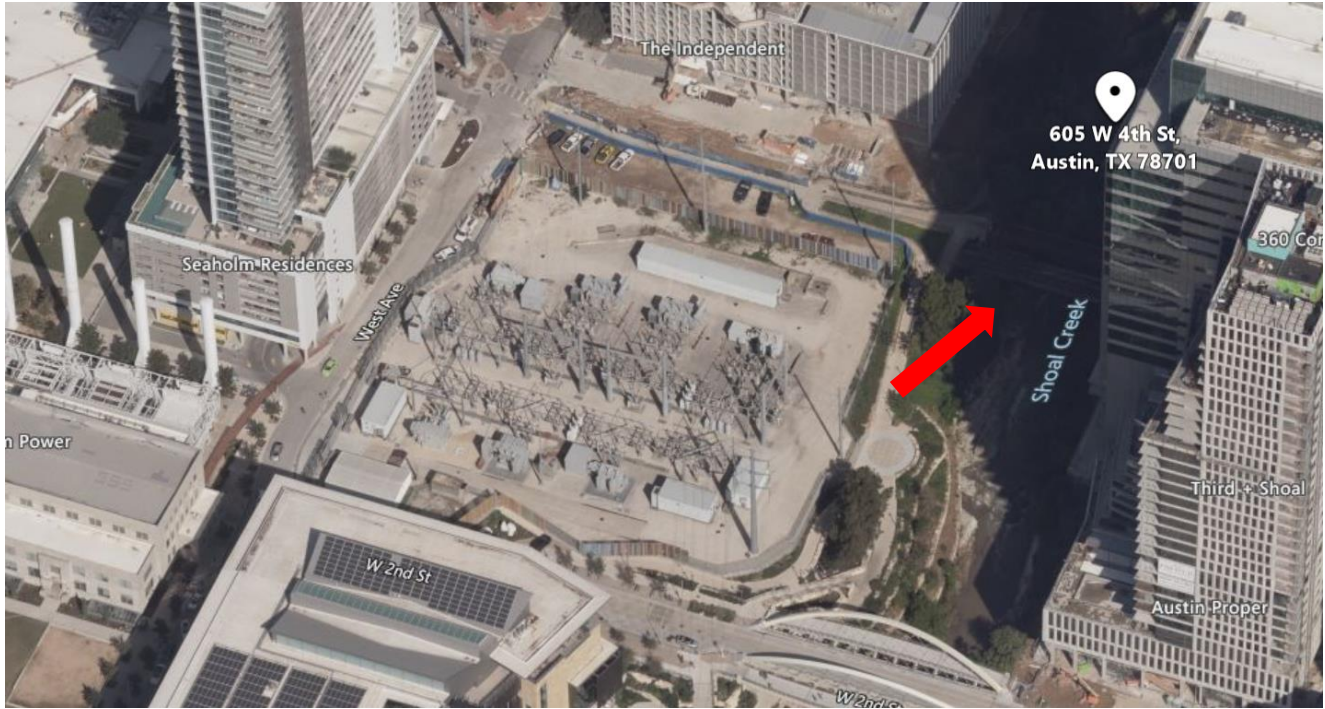
Map 6: Bing Map showing Third Street Railroad Trestle, looking southeast. Accessed March 4, 2021.



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Map 7: Bing Map showing Third Street Railroad Trestle, looking northwest. Accessed March 4, 2021.





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Map 8: 1877 map of International and Great Northern Railroad showing connection to Austin circled in red. Woodward, Tiernan, and Hale. Map of the International and Great Northern Railroad: (Lone [Star] Route) and connections., map, 1877; Chicago, Illinois. (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph231275/m1/1/>: accessed October 14, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/>; crediting University of Texas at Arlington Library.

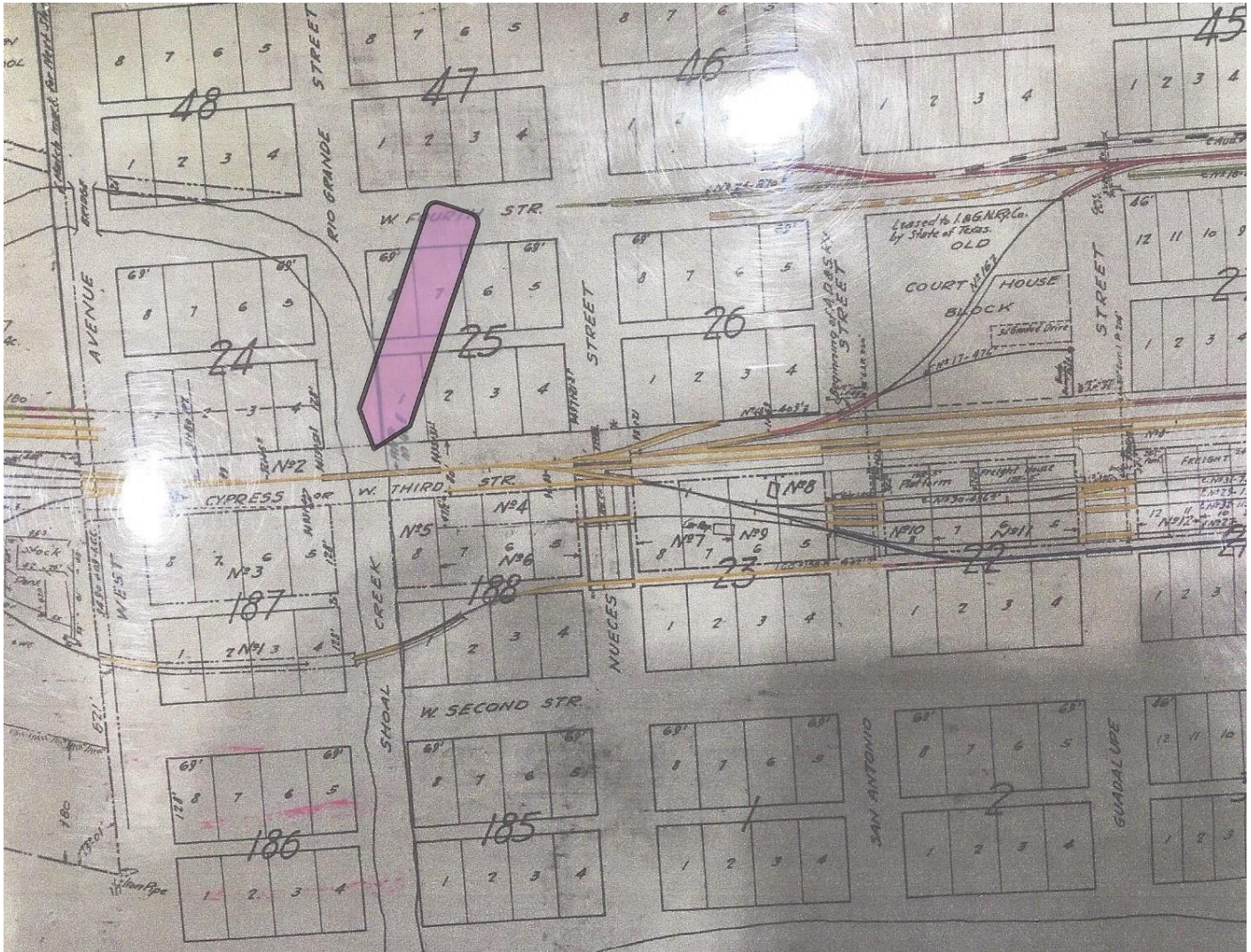






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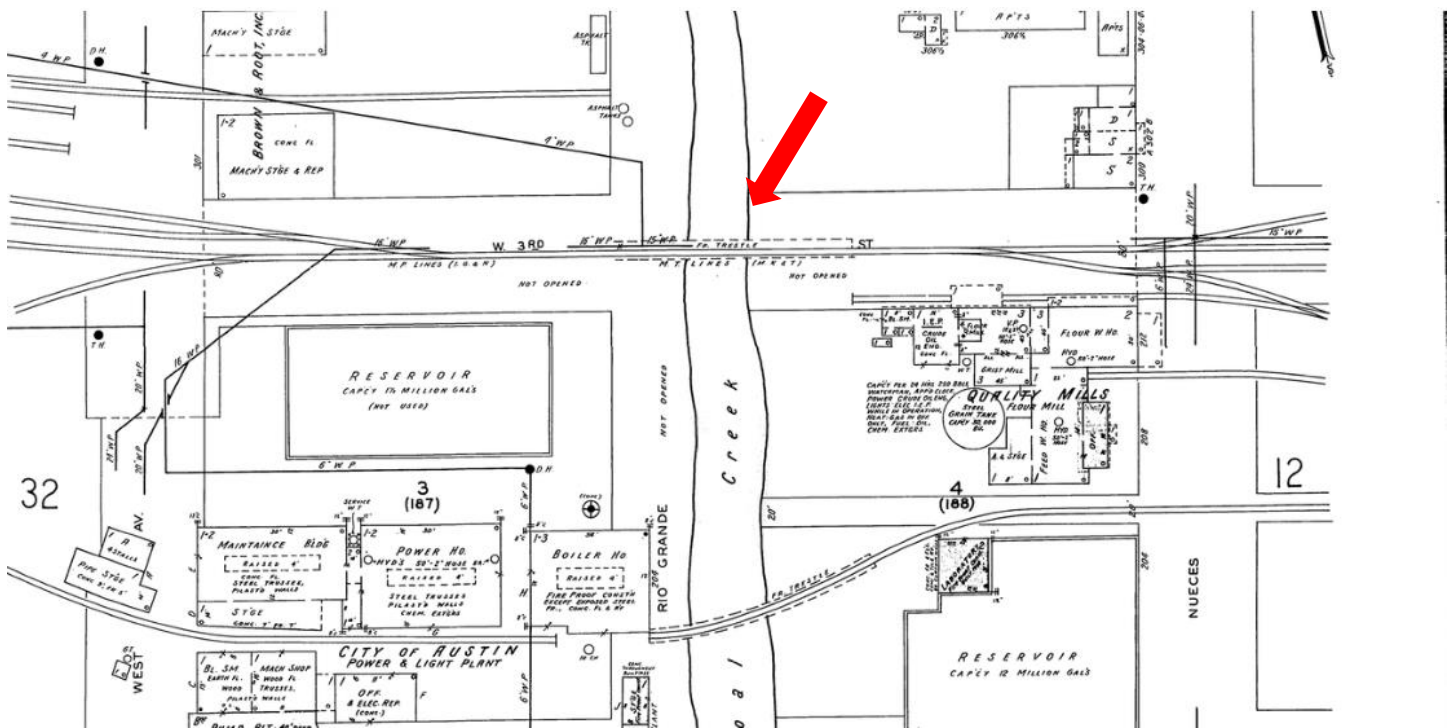
Map 10: Context map that depicts the site in 1926 where the trestle crosses Shoal Creek. The tail track of "Upper Yards" are located at left while much of the "Lower Yards" are located to the right. Station Map – Lands – Tracks & Structures. International & Great Northern Ry. Drawn in 1917 and redrawn in 1926. Austin History Center collection.





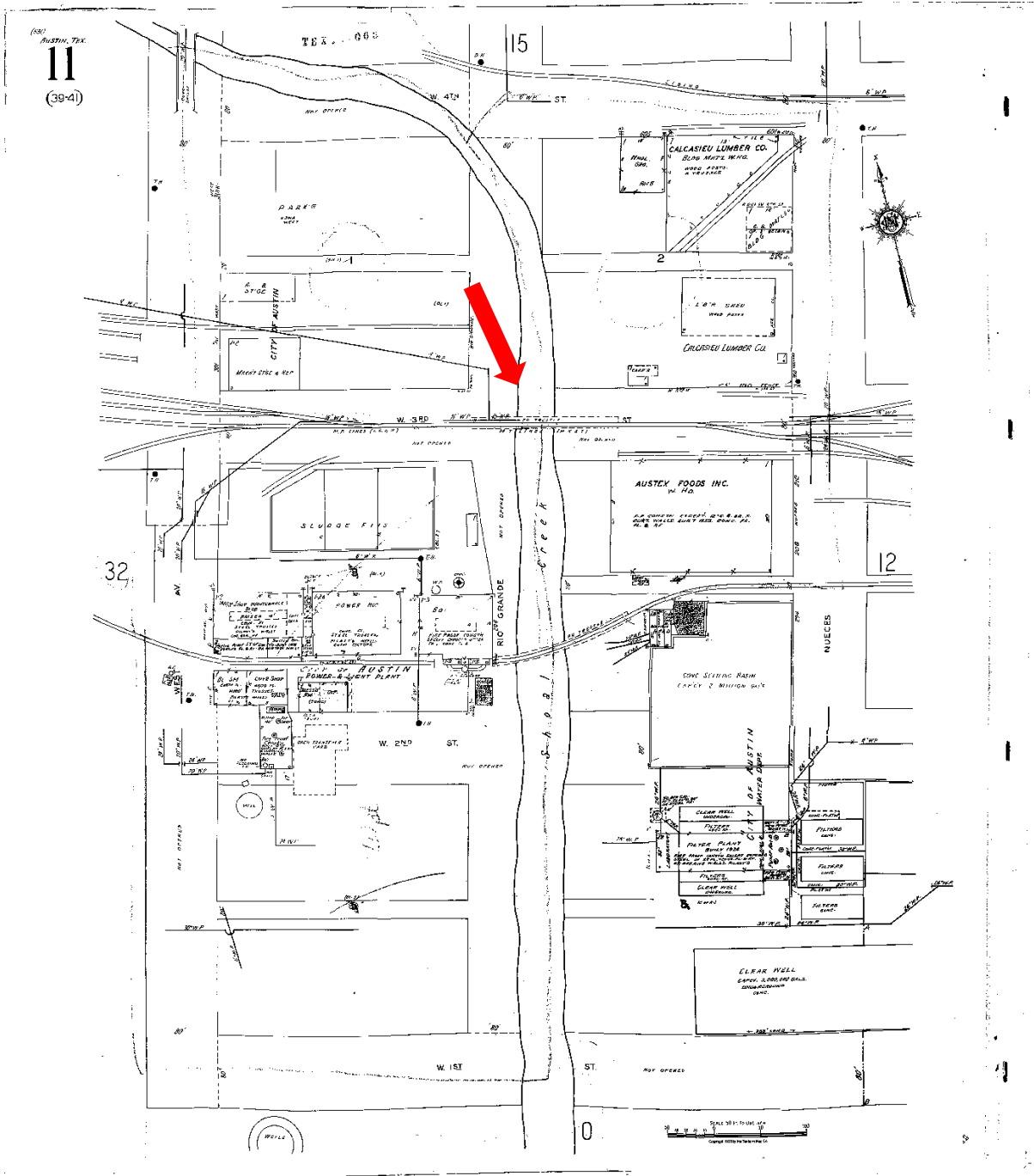
Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 11: 1935 context map that depicts the site where the trestle crossed Shoal Creek. The track of "Upper Yards" are located at left while much of the "Lower Yards" are located to the right. The trestle shown at what is now West Second Street (demolished) was believed to be used by the Austin Dam and Suburban Railway Company, also owned by the I-GN and provided access to the Austin light and power plant. Austin Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1935, Sheet 11. Courtesy ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970.



Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 12: 1961 context map that depicts the site where the trestle crossed Shoal Creek. The trestle shown at what is now West Second Street (demolished) was also owned by the I-GN. It was removed sometime after 1961. Austin Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1935 vol. 1, 1935-Sept. 1961, Sheet 11. Courtesy ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970.



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**Figures**

Figure 1. International & Great Northern Railroad Depot, at 222 Congress Avenue (SW Corner of West Third Street and Congress Avenue), Austin, Texas, circa 1888. [AF-P6150-51-002], Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, accessed, October 13, 2021, [https://ahc.access.preservica.com/index.php/IO\\_cc41944f-0dc4-4d0c-a626-fda6b7b69e1c/](https://ahc.access.preservica.com/index.php/IO_cc41944f-0dc4-4d0c-a626-fda6b7b69e1c/)



Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 2. September 1915 photo looks south from the last bend in Shoal Creek before the creek empties into the Colorado River. The West Second Street railroad trestle (demolished) can be seen at a distance, Third Street trestle not shown, but photo likely taken from it. Photo C08530 from the photographic collection of the Austin History Center. Ellison Photo Co. [Flood waters on Shoal Creek], photograph, September 1915; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph125339/m1/1/?q=austin%20shoal%20creek%20bridge>; accessed October 15, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



C08530, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

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Figure 3. 1922 photograph of Austin Light and Water Plant from the Third Street Trestle over Shoal Creek (right) looking southwest. Third Street trestle shown with one guard rail. Second Street trestle seen at left. Seaholm Power Plant, photograph, 1922; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph125234/>; accessed October 15, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



C02290 Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 4. Railroad Schedules for Austin, *The Austin Statesman*, September 7, 1925, page 9.

**RAILROAD SCHEDULES**

**INTERNATIONAL-GREAT NORTHERN**

**Northbound**

No.	Arrive.	Depart.
2. Sunshine Special.	11:10 a.m.	11:10 a.m.
4. St. Louis	4:35 p.m.	4:40 p.m.
8. St. Louis-Ft. W.	11:20 p.m.	11:20 p.m.
10 From San Antonio	9:50 a.m.	

**Southbound**

3. From St. Louis.	8:48 p.m.	8:48 p.m.
1. Sunshine Special.	7:00 p.m.	7:00 p.m.
5. St. Louis-Ft. W.	6:10 a.m.	6:10 a.m.
9. To San Antonio.		1:00 p.m.

**MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS**

**Northbound**

No.	Arrive.	Depart.
2. Texas Special.	11:25 a.m.	11:30 a.m.
4. Katy Limited.	12:20 p.m.	12:25 p.m.
6. Katy Flyer	11:30 p.m.	11:40 p.m.
8 11 o'Clock Katy.	1:30 a.m.	1:30 a.m.

**Southbound**

3. Katy Flyer	4:05 a.m.	4:05 a.m.
7. 11 o'Clock Katy.	5:10 a.m.	5:10 a.m.
5. Katy Limited.	4:20 p.m.	4:30 p.m.
1. Texas Special.	7:00 p.m.	7:10 p.m.

**SOUTHERN PACIFIC LINES**

Llano train	4:40 p.m.	7:45 a.m.
Houston train	6:40 a.m.	12:20 p.m.
Dallas train	6:40 a.m.	10:45 p.m.
Houston train	3:15 p.m.	10:45 p.m.
Lampasas train	4:40 p.m.	7:45 a.m.



Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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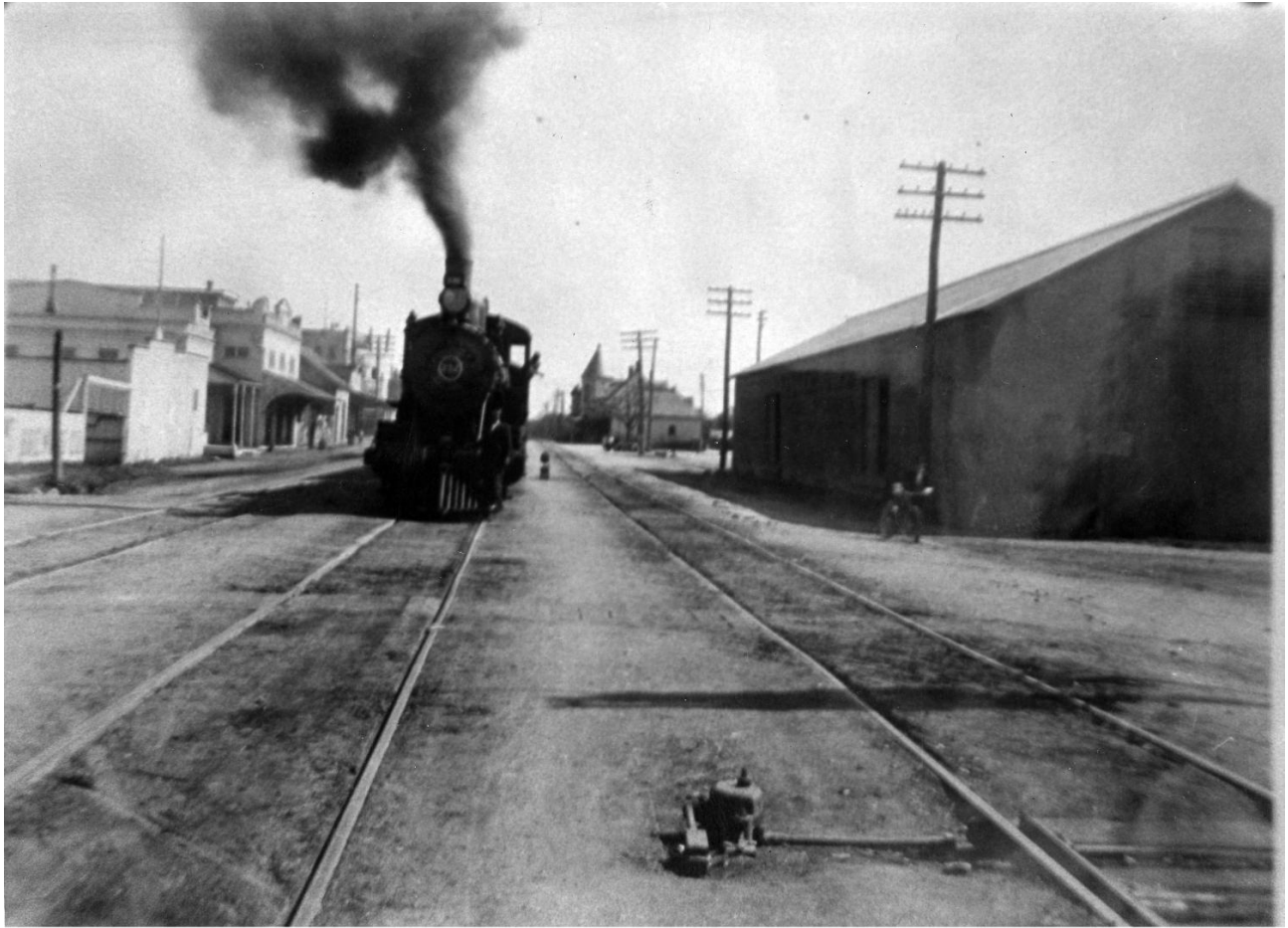
Figure 5. July 1947 photo shows the “Katy” steam locomotive #397 pulling a southbound passenger train across the Third Street Railroad Trestle. The train is the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (M-K-T) luxury train well known as the steam version of the *Texas Special*. Bruce Wilson. RailPictures.net. Accessed November 4, 2020, <https://www.railpictures.net/photo/388474/>.



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Figure 6. This is a photo of a steam locomotive moving through the “Lower Yards” of downtown Austin just east of the trestle. [Locomotive leaving International and Great Northern station], photograph, [..1950]; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124058/>: accessed November 4, 2020), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



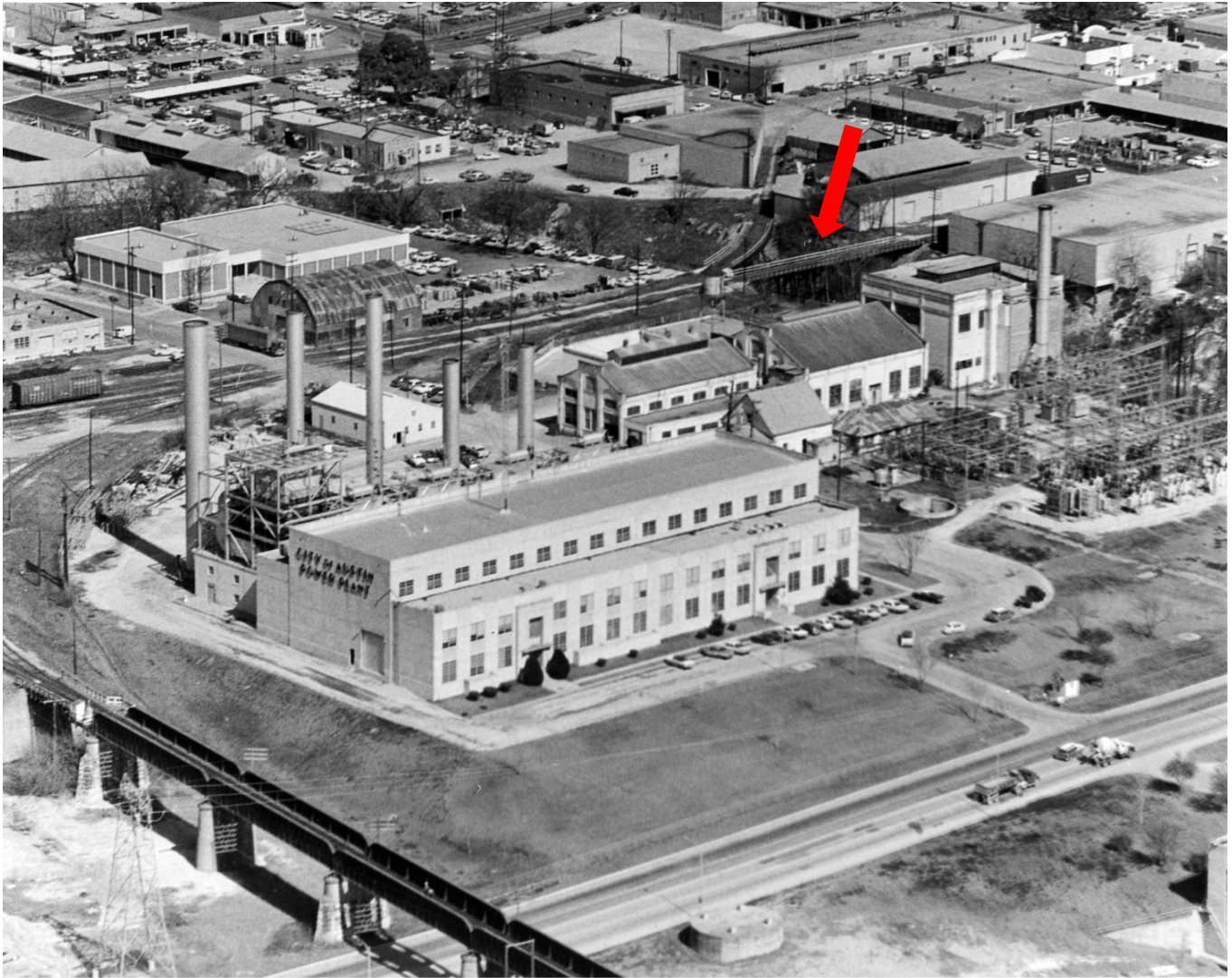
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Figure 7. 1951 aerial photo of new Seaholm Power Plant with Third Street Railroad Trestle over Shoal Creek in background. Note guardrails on both sides. [Aerial View of Seaholm Power Plant], photograph, [1951..]; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124347/m1/1/?q=power%20plant>: accessed October 15, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



PICA 14339 Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

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Figure 8. 1951 aerial photo of new Seaholm Power Plant with Third Street Railroad Trestle over Shoal Creek in background. There was another trestle directly to the north added and removed at an unknown date. [Aerial View of Power Plant from Across the Lake], photograph, [1951..]; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124349/>; accessed October 15, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



PICA 14341 Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

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Figure 9. This is a 1954 photo of the Katy's *Bluebonnet Special* train No. 7 southbound out of Austin. It is shown rounding the east leg of the "wye" as the train departed from downtown over the Shoal Creek trestle before heading out across the Colorado River on the way to San Antonio. Plummer, Roger S. ["The Bluebonnet" departing from Austin], photograph, September 11, 1954; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht28792/>; accessed November 4, 2020), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/>; crediting Museum of the American Railroad.





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Figure 10. 1959 aerial photo of Municipal Auditorium and Seaholm Plant with Third Street Railroad Trestle in background. City of Austin Electric Engineers. [Municipal Auditorium and Seaholm Electric Plant aerial view], photograph, [1959..]; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124346/m1/1/?q=railroad>: accessed October 15, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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**Photos**

Photo 1: View of north side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing east. Photo by Joemy Buschur.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 2: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing northeast. Photo by Joemy Buschur.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 3: Third Street Railroad Trestle surface detail, camera facing east. Photo by Joemy Buschur.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 4: Third Street Railroad Trestle railing detail, camera facing south. Photo by Joemy Buschur.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 5: Third Street Railroad Trestle surface detail, camera facing east. Photo by Joemy Buschur.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 6: View of north side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing southeast. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 7: View of Shoal Creek Trail Bridge and Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing east. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 8: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing northeast. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 9: View of Third Street Trestle from Shoal Creek, camera facing southeast. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 10: View from beneath Third Street Railroad Trestle. Photo by Andrew Boudreaux.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 11: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing northwest. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.





Third Street Railroad Trestle, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 12: View of south side of Third Street Railroad Trestle, camera facing north. Photo by Andre Boudreaux.

