

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 16 1988
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Medio Creek Bridge

and or common Normanna Bridge

2. Location

street & number County Road 241 N/A not for publication

city, town Normanna X vicinity of

state Texas code 048 county Bee code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Bee County

street & number Bee County Courthouse

city, town Beeville N/A vicinity of state Texas

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bee County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Beeville state Texas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Recorded Texas Historic Landmark has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1987 federal state county local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin state Texas

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Spanning Medio Creek in a wooded area of rural Bee County, Texas, the Medio Creek Bridge is an early and intact Pratt through-truss bridge. It is part of ten-mile long County Road 241, which connects the villages of Mineral, Normanna and Colony Settlement. The pin-connected structure was constructed in 1897 from a bridge kit manufactured by the New Jersey Steel and Iron Company. The superstructure was rebuilt by the Austin Brothers Bridge Company in 1923, and it retains its integrity as a hybrid 1897/1923 structure.

The Medio Creek bridge is approximately 258 feet in length and consists of a main span, running east-west with approach spans at each end. The main span, an iron, six-panel Pratt through-truss, is 118 feet long. Verticals and struts have lattice bracing. The main span is supported by concrete-filled Lally-type columns. Approach spans consist of seven 20-foot sections, two at the west and five at the east ends. These are supported by steel I-sections on steel bents. Abutments are of concrete. The wood deck runs the length of the one-lane bridge, and guard rails running the length of the structure are made of small channel beams. The roadway is 11 feet wide. There is no evidence of a builder plate or decorative elements.

The superstructure of the bridge was rebuilt in 1923 by the Austin Brothers Bridge Company of Dallas. The contract at that time called for

... removing and replacing the following members: End posts, top chords, vertical posts, counters, portals, top laterals, top struts, diagonals, joists, flooring, felloe guards and handrails. [Austin Brothers Bridge Company to Felix J. Hart, Contract # 479]

The Austin Bridge Company also replaced the deck and three broken diagonal tension members, and cleaned and painted the structure in 1947. The bridge has apparently not had any significant work since that time, although the southwest main frame diagonal has been reinforced with small steel splices in recent years. At an unknown date, the approaches were rebuilt in steel and the abutments in concrete; likely this was done over fifty years ago.

The bridge is closed at present, and a temporary low water crossing has been created to the south of the bridge.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1897 /1923

Builder/Architect New Jersey Steel & Iron Company
Austin Brothers Bridge Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Pratt through-truss bridge over Medio Creek in rural Bee County in the Texas Coastal Plains has been a source of pride locally since its construction in 1897. Rebuilt in 1923, it is an excellent example of its type, one rapidly disappearing from rural Texas. The Medio Creek Bridge appears to meet National Register Criterion C for its significance in engineering and associations with notable New Jersey and Texas bridge-building companies.

The late 19th century was a prosperous period for Bee County, in South Texas. The county population more than doubled from 3,720 in the 1890 census to 7,720 in 1900, and agriculture and ranching were very important to the county's economy. The town of Walton in the northern portion of the county was renamed Normanna (meaning 'Home of the Norsemen' and sometimes referred to as Normanna Station) that decade by a newly arrived group of Norwegian settlers, and a depot and stockyard had been erected by 1894 to accommodate the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway, which went through the settlement in 1886. To the west of Normanna was the town of Mineral, which had flourished briefly as a health spa in the 1880s. According to the Handbook of Texas, the spa failed when its well was deepened and the medicinal power of its waters greatly diminished (Webb, II, p. 204, 284).

In the mid-1890s, the road which linked Mineral and Normanna had no bridge over Medio Creek in the 1890s. The creek rises in adjacent Karnes County and flows southeast 45 miles, joining Blanco Creek in Refugio County to form the short Mission River. Some believe the Mineral-Normanna Road to have been a link on the main road between the county seat, Beeville, and San Antonio, although certainly for most of the 20th century the road, now called County Road 241, has catered to local traffic. Nonetheless, there was likely optimism that a bridge would benefit Bee County by providing access for the transportation of agricultural products from the western part of the county to the railhead at Normanna and restoring Mineral's prosperity; the latter ambition was not to be realized.

Accordingly, in June, 1897, builder Viggo Kohler submitted a petition to the Bee County Commissioners Court to erect a bridge over Medio Creek on the Normanna Station and Mineral Road. A motion was made and passed to build the bridge, and the project put out for bid. Funding was to be in the form of six percent bonds purchased from the permanent school fund of the county. Because of the objections of the Texas Attorney General, who by law had to pass on the issuing of the bonds, the Commissioners Court amended the bridge order by transferring one cent of the general levy to the bridge levy.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Tuleta, Tex.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	4	6	1	8	0	0	0	3	1	5	6	2	8	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

Zone		Easting						Northing						

C

Zone		Easting						Northing						

D

Zone		Easting						Northing						

E

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H

Zone		Easting						Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

An area 268' x 21' centered on the bridge, as outlined in red on the enclosed sheet. It consists of the 258' x 11' bridge and the surrounding five feet on each side.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Winnie Chestnutt, Museum Director (with Peter Flag Maxson, THC)

organization Normanna, Texas Historical Museum and Community Association

date May, 1987/August, 1988

street & number P.O. Box 94

telephone 512/358-2778

city or town Tuleta

state Texas 78162

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Laurie J. Funnell

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12 Sept. 1988

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Melone Byers

Entered in the National Register

date 10/13/88

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Four companies submitted bids, and that of the New Jersey Iron and Steel Company of Trenton was accepted as the lowest and best bid by the Commissioners on 7 July 1897 at a cost of \$3990.00. The Commissioners subsequently met with E. C. Alsbury and Son, company agents on 30 August of that year and signed an agreement which provided for the construction of

... a steel bridge over Medio Creek near Normanna Station in Bee County, Texas. Said Bridge to be one span 120 feet long, extreme length; 140 feet of wood approaches, cylinder piers of steel tubes 35 feet long, and three feet diameters.... Earth abutments to be furnished by the Party of the Second Part. The said First Party hereby agrees to have said structure ready for travel on or before the first day of November, A.D. 1897. [Bee County Commissioners Court Minutes, Book C, pp. 329-30]

The 'steel bridge' main span evidently was a Pratt through-truss, a bridge form patented by Thomas and Caleb Pratt in 1844 and arguably the most efficient and popular truss design in America. The year 1897 would have been in the transitional period when iron was being replaced by steel as the dominant metal used in bridge construction. The bridge would likely have been seen as a symbol of modernity and permanence in the community.

The company which manufactured the bridge kit was New Jersey Steel and Iron Company of Trenton, New Jersey. It was formed in 1866 and was a part of the Cooper, Hewitt and Company operations which also included the Delaware Bridge Company. This company operated the Trenton Iron Works, but from 1886 to 1899 advertised under its own name as a bridge builder, although Trenton was also advertised. It was acquired by the American Bridge Company in 1900, a huge corporation organized that year by investor J. P. Morgan and acquired the following year by U.S. Steel. (Darnell, p.35) New Jersey Iron and Steel Company also built two Pratt through-truss bridges, still extant, in nearby Gonzales County, Texas in 1897 and 1898.

The Medio Creek Bridge has associations with a second major bridge-building company as well. In 1923, County Judge Felix J. Hart, who had also been county judge at the time of the bridge's initial construction in 1897, contracted with the Austin Brothers Bridge Company of Dallas for rebuilding the superstructure of the bridge in its present appearance at a cost of \$2223.00.

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The roots of the Austin Brothers Bridge Company go back to 1894 when George and Frank Austin of Dallas advertised as "George L. Austin and Brother, Agents of George L. King Bridge Company." (Miller, p.1) It is one of only nine Texas companies listed in Victor Darnell's A Directory of American Bridge-Building Companies, 1840-1900, and it is perhaps the largest bridge construction company of the 20th century in Texas. The major rebuilding of the superstructure of the bridge in 1923 was followed by a minor repair performed by the Austin Bridge Company in 1947.

The Medio Creek Bridge today retains its 1920s form and appearance. It is an excellent example of a Pratt through-truss bridge. Construction of these bridges seems to have been a status symbol in rural Texas in the late 19th century, and examples from various parts of the state have been listed in the National Register. Unfortunately, many have been demolished in recent decades and few early Pratt through-truss bridges are likely to remain into the 21st century. No other examples survive in Bee or adjacent counties. The pre-1925 appearance of the Medio Creek Bridge superstructure has not been documented, and thus it is nominated as a hybrid 1897/1925 structure.

The Medio Creek Bridge has been considered a landmark since its construction. It is located in a particularly picturesque site in rural Bee County, and the location has been popular for 90 years for fishing, swimming, painting, photography and even baptisms. It also survived major floods in 1903 and 1967.

The future of the one-lane bridge is uncertain. The bridge is closed to traffic, and Bee County citizens have mounted a vigorous campaign to preserve the structure and encourage its continued enjoyment. The Medio Creek Bridge was determined eligible for listing on the National Register in 1985 and designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1987.

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National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet

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Bibliography continued -

- Austin Brothers Bridge Company, Contract 479, May 1925, on file Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation, Austin.
- Beeville Bee, June 4, 1897 and October 15, 1897.
- Bee County Court Records, Vol. C, pp 308, 310, 329-330, 359; Vol. H, pp 178, 217; Vol. L, pp 79.
- Darnell, Victor C. A Directory of American Bridge-Building Companies, 1840-1900 (Washington, D.C.: Society for Industrial Archaeology, 1984)
- Eisenhour, Thomas to Peter Flagg Maxson, interview, Austin, September 8, 1988.
- Miller, Shannon Austin Bridge Company and Associated Companies: The First 50 Years, 1918-1968 (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1974).
- Webb, Walter Prescott (ed.) Handbook of Texas, II (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952).

STRATHMORE PARCHMENT

100% COTTON FIBER USA

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

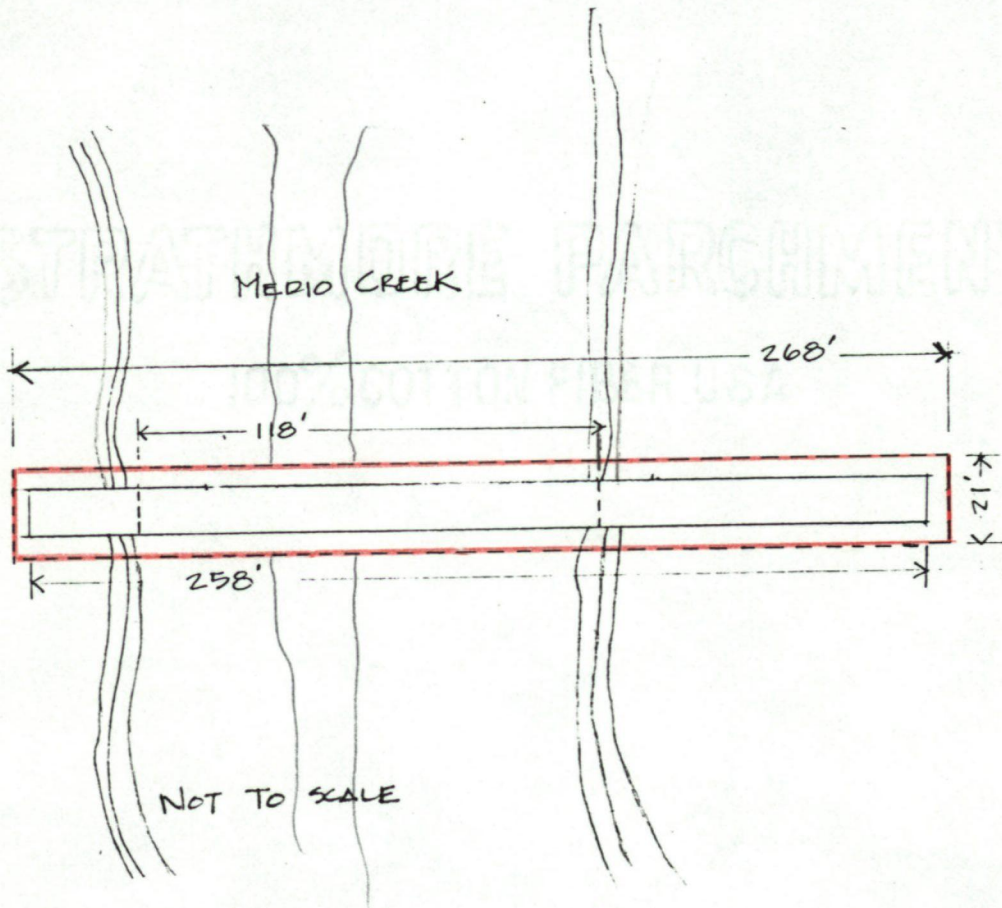
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Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Medio Creek Bridge

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Bee

DATE RECEIVED: 9/16/88 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/27/88
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/13/88 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/31/88
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 88002000

NOMINATOR: STATE

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 10/13/88 DATE

Entered in the
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

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

CLASSIFICATION

count resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

historic current

DESCRIPTION

architectural classification
 materials
 descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

summary paragraph
 completeness
 clarity
 applicable criteria
 justification of areas checked
 relating significance to the resource
 context
 relationship of integrity to significance
 justification of exception
 other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

acreage verbal boundary description
 UTMS boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

sketch maps USGS maps photographs presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____



Medio Creek Bridge
County Road 241
Normanna, Bee County, Texas

Photo by Rick Lewis, July 1988;
neg. on file at Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

Southwest oblique; camera looking
northeast

Photo 1 of 5



Medio Creek Bridge
County Road 241
Normanna, Bee County, Texas

Photo by Rick Lewis, July 1988;
neg. on file at Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

Southeast oblique; camera looking
northwest

Photo 2 of 5



Medio Creek Bridge
County Road 241
Normanna, Bee County, Texas

Photo by Rick Lewis, July 1988;
neg. on file at Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

Deck detail

Photo 3 of 5

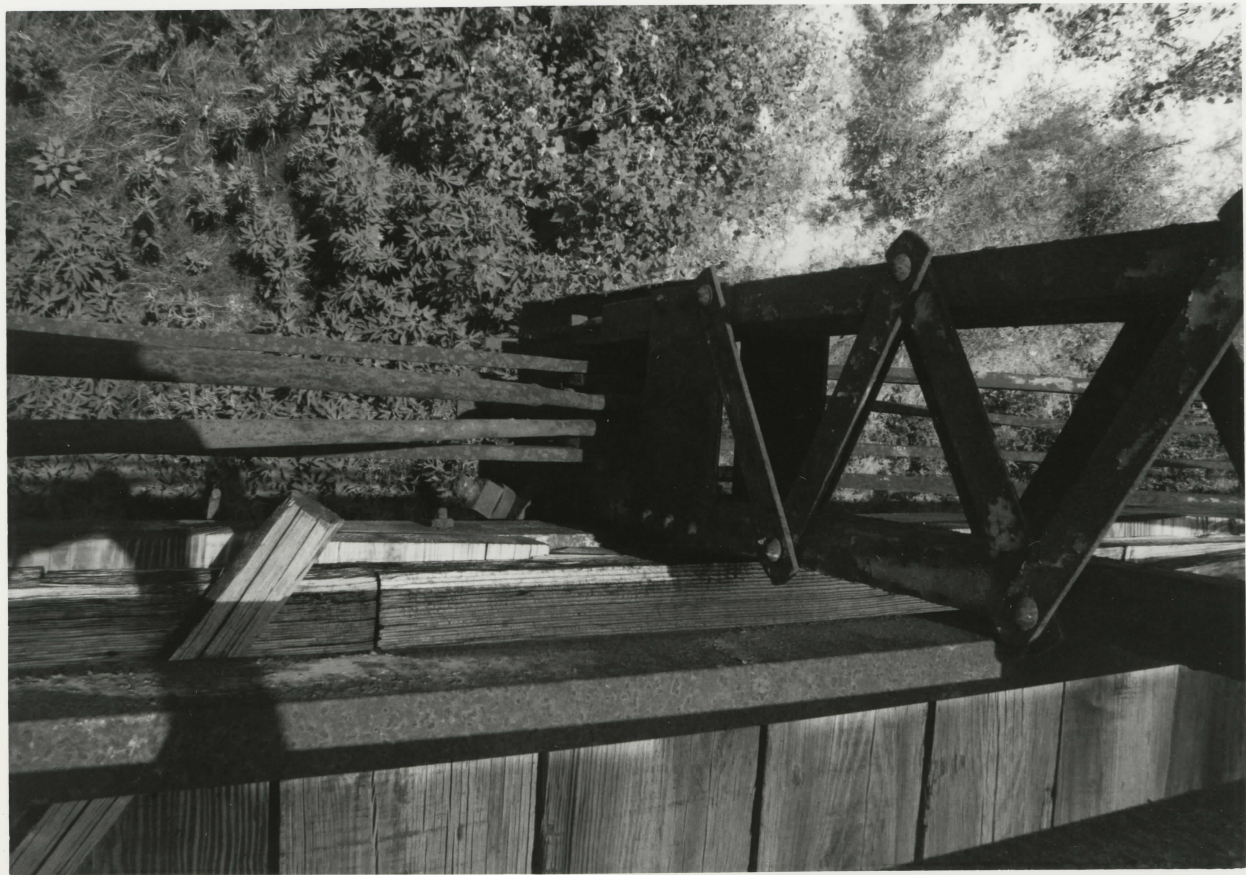


Medio Creek Bridge
County Road 241
Normanna, Bee County, Texas

Photo by Rick Lewis, July 1988;
neg. on file at Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

Caisson detail

Photo 4 of 5

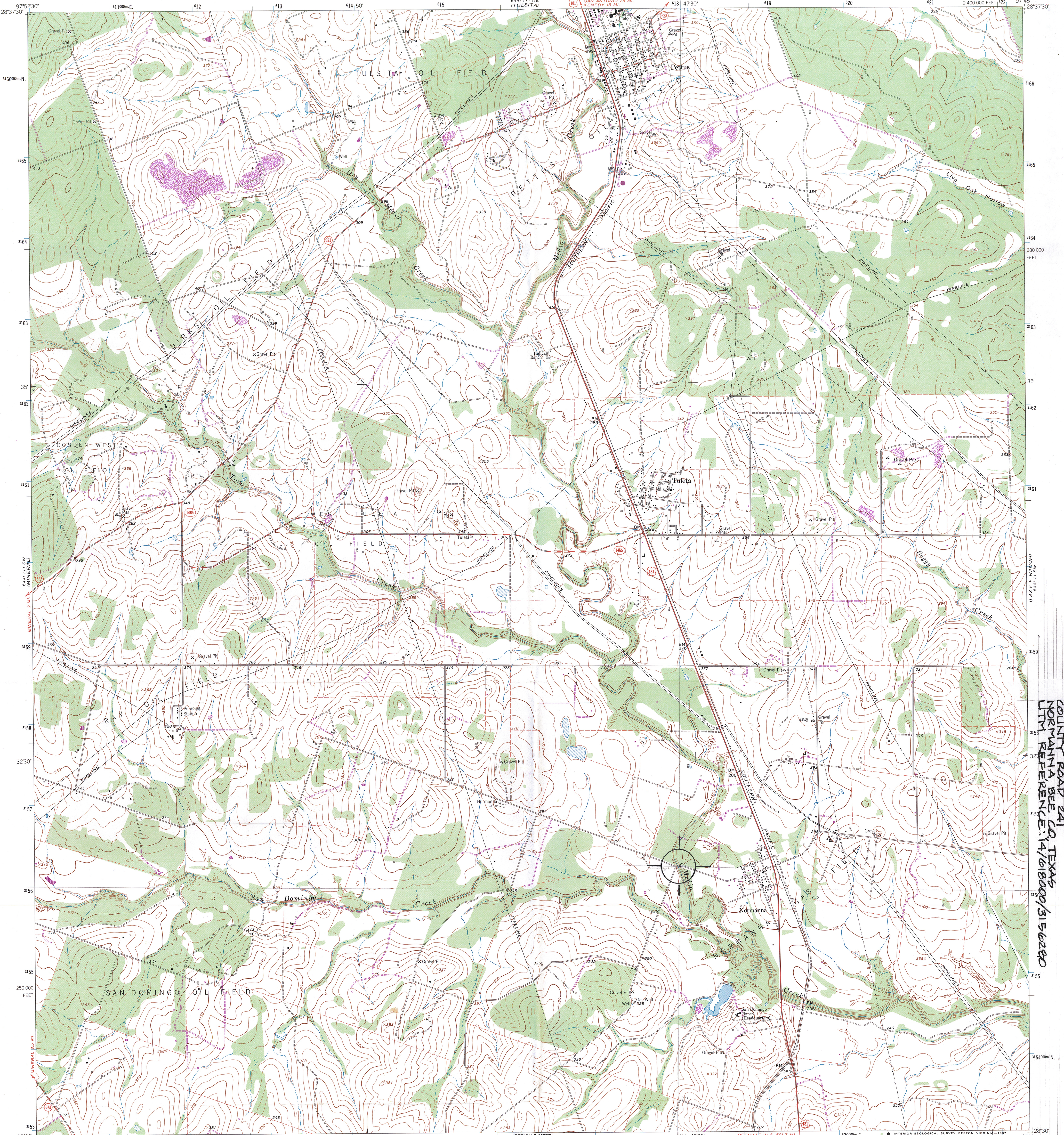


Medio Creek Bridge
County Road 241
Normanna, Bee County, Texas

Photo by Rick Lewis, July 1988;
neg. on file at Texas Historical
Commission, Austin

Lattice detail

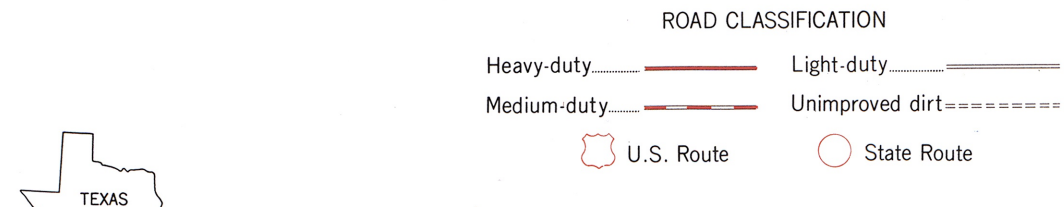
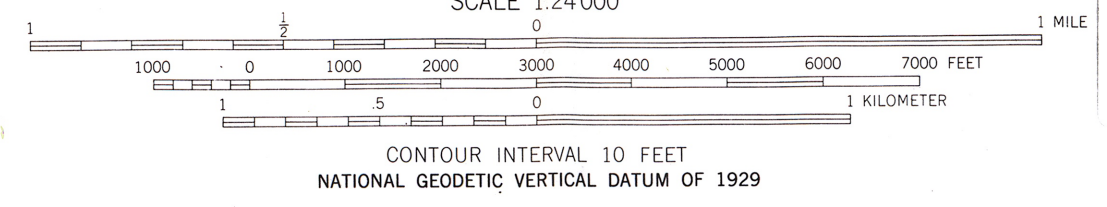
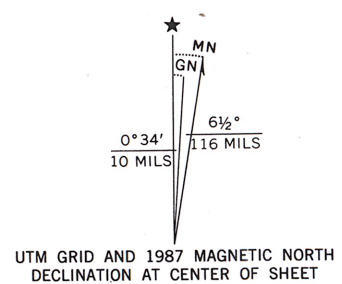
Photo 5 of 5



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1962. Field checked 1963
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American Datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, sixth central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 24 meters south and
27 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial photographs taken 1981 and other source data
This information not field checked. Map edited 1987



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

TULETA, TEX.
28097-E7-TF-024
1963
PHOTOREVISED 1987
DMA 6441 111 SE-SERIES V882

MEDIO CREEK BRIDGE
COUNTY ROAD 241
NORMANNA BEE CO. TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14/618000/3156280