

## Description of East Bexar County OST

Driving east bound on Houston St. from N. Flores. The **Houston St. Bridge** over the San Antonio River is one of Texas' earliest surviving concrete bridges of continuous girder design. The facade of the **Texas Theater** was saved during modernization of #175 E. Houston. Most building facades on this corridor of the Houston St. OST have not changed from the 1920s. Street furniture and landscaping have been added over the years. #205, **Gunter Hotel** was the headquarters for the OST from 1919 to 1930.

The entire OST corridor from Fredericksburg at Culebra, across Houston and New Braunfels and out Seguin St. is in the City of San Antonio's Downtown Empowerment Zone which has brought outside investment to restore these beautiful old buildings. In keeping with city plans, many have been converted to residential.

It may be advisable to walk these few blocks of downtown Houston St. or ride the yellow route trolley to look at the addresses that are listed here as businesses on the 1920s OST Founders List. #109 Silk House, #122 Savoy Hotel, #221 Frost Brothers, #223 P. J. McNeel Jewelry, #231 Riegler Confection Co, #308 Martin Wright Electric, #313 Central Trust Co., #315 S. H. Kress & Co., #318 Beyer Phonograph, #401 Washer Bros., #501 Commonwealth Bank, #509 Fomby's Clothes, #518 Woolworth Co., #728 Clifton George Bldg.

That 16-story ornate building centered in the street view was the Medical Arts Building, converted in 1984 to the **Emily Morgan Hotel**. Many officeholders there were Founders of the Old Spanish Trail auto highway. The roadway takes a slight jog to the right, then left behind the **Alamo** at the **Central Fire Station**, another jog to the right a block later at Bowie and #901, the **Cottonwood Trading Co.**

Under IH-35.

The area around the Southern Pacific RR tracks is beginning to see some revitalization, more is needed.

At the present time we need to take a 5 block detour as TxDOT and San Antonio Public Works reconstruct Houston St. for better access to the new SBC Center. Note at #1631 an old **Texaco Station** on the NW corner of Olive across from the **Carver School** building for Performing Arts. From Cherry to Palmetto, #s 1400 to 2000 Houston, the OST corridor passes through the Dignowity Hill Historic District. The homes near Pine St. originally had their yards terraced in stone. Concrete faces have replaced the sidewalk retaining walls, but **stone** alley, driveway and entrances remain. #1824 with its pair of magnolia trees is named TRAILS END. Across the street at #1833 a fountain is always running. #1914 is a registered **National Wildlife Federation Habitat** at Florence Alley. This portion of the OST has been designated Rosa Parks Way.

Past the **Dorothy C. Pickett Academy** (old Fannin Elementary), medical facilities indicate moving into the commercial corner at New Braunfels Ave. During January, the nation's largest MLK march begins from here. To the south is the Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" statue; to the north a monument "IN THE MEMORY OF THE WHITES OF GOODWILL WHO LOST THEIR LIVES FOR THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM FOR ALL PEOPLE PARA LOS HOMBRES DE BUENA VOLUNTAD QUE MURIERON POR LA LIBERTAD DE TODO EL MUNDO." Smaller ground plaques commemorate the first Hispanic SAISD Superintendent and first Hispanic San

Antonio Mayor (Dr. Victor Rodriguez and Henry G. Cisneros), and those who donated to the Martin Luther King statue with the Youth Leadership Conference.

New technology in this area will redirect traffic to or from the SBC Center rodeo, sport and civic events. Turn north, left onto New Braunfels. The **Cobb** family has been selling building supplies from #520 since Malcolm Cobb returned from WWII in 1946. Old, new, active and empty buildings and lots are found along New Braunfels. It is always a busy section of the San Antonio OST. In the 1920s #908 was the **White Front Lunch Room** and #1003 the **Tourist Cafe**. While crossing the new RR bridge, look down to the right to view the old **motor courts** that served the OST and the railroad. After the RR bridge, immediately turn right on Osborn, right on Benton and right on Seguin for a closer look at the **old motor courts** and the **stone arch** enhancements from the courts to what during the 1940s was known as Paul's Beer Garden. Turn around and proceed east on Seguin noting the large old **cactus and yucca** of the yard at #200 on the corner of Benton. Small houses and light industry are along this section of Seguin. OST drivers could get auto repairs next to the Nave home at #319. The old OST road bed is covered by IH-35 from Walters to Salado Creek.

As you approach the end of Seguin St. at the top of the hill, bear right to enter the IH-35,

Pan Am access road. From the Walters St. traffic light, follow the north bound IH-35 access road 1.8 miles to Salado Creek. Avoid the SBC Center traffic by staying in the left lane. Proceed through one more traffic light, again moving left. Just past Splashtown, watch for the first turn to the left labeled with a 19 ft. 8 in. height marker and a CROSSOVER sign. Pass under IH-35, cross over the south-bound IH-35 access road and turn right onto Seguin Rd. and the Salado Creek low-water crossing.

Old **stone walls** lead into San Antonio Parks & Recreation and Public Works Departments' restoration of the home of 1950s San Antonio Mayor Jack White, as the beginning of the Salado Creek linear park. There is another half-mile of more new light industry and hotels before Seguin ends at Binz-Engleman and the new Brook Army Medical Center of Ft. Sam Houston. Turn right on Binz-Engleman, pass under IH-35. Follow Kirby, IH-10 and 410 signs to the right under the Southern Pacific RR. Immediately turn left onto eastbound Farm to Market Route 78. Just one mile from the RR underpass, after Buzz Aldrin Dr., Old Seguin Rd. leaves 78 at the traffic light to bear right into Kirby. This summer, Kirby is also paving the Old Seguin Rd. OST.

Take the time to see Kirby's old and new homes and businesses leading to Hugo F. Lentz City **Park** and a bit of countryside before reentering FM 78. This next four mile section follows 78 past new subdivisions, new retail services, the very large **blue roofed** Woodlake Hills Middle School, Woodlake Golf Club and tree-lined creeks.

A sign indicates ENTERING CONVERSE. Just after Coers Blvd, Upper Seguin Rd. bears to the right, crosses Saltillo Creek and ends on FM 1516 at the **Panteon de Guadalupe and Herman Sons Cemeteries**. Turn left on 1516, S. Seguin St. of Converse. Stay on S. Seguin by crossing 78 through the light to drive through Converse past Judson High School. Again notice new buildings among the older homes. Just to the north of #305, Converse modern **City Hall**, is the **General Store** and Quilt Studio, from OST times.

More study needs to be done about the actual roadbed of the original OST from Converse to Schertz before Randolph Air Force Base was built in 1930. For the purpose of this 2004 motorcade we are passing another old gas station and bearing right on N. Seguin St., FM

3502. There is a RR underpass on Cimieron Trail leading to Aviation Blvd of Universal City. We will not take the north route but will continue on to turn left at the light back onto 78. Aviation Blvd does follow the RR to a low-water crossing of the Cibolo Creek into Schertz and Guadalupe Co. Old maps show the paved highway south of the RR track. Oldest residents remember the highway to Seguin between RAFB and the RR with stations at the Randolph gate and in Converse for commuters from Seguin or San Antonio. We will pass under loop 1604 and along **Randolph Air Force Base**. The same San Antonio Chamber of Commerce members and legislators who brought the OST to San Antonio in 1919 were also successful in gathering the funding and convincing the US government to place the premier Army Air Corps flying school on the OST in 1927.

FM78 passes RAFB and crosses a new modern bridge over the Cibolo Creek out of Bexar County.

*Charlotte Kahl*