

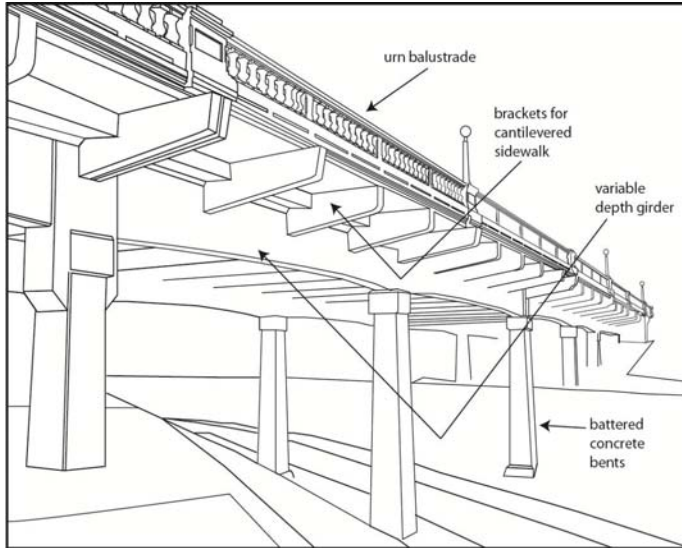
FROST TOWN URBAN GARDEN NEWS

JAMES BUTE PARK / FROST TOWN HISTORIC SITE

Art & Environmental Architecture, Inc.

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Brendan Gill, a devoted supporter of architectural preservation and staff of The New Yorker, said, "If the unexamined life is not worth living, the unexamined past is not worth possessing: it bears fruit only by being held continuously up to the light, and is as changeable and as full of surprises, pleasant and unpleasant, as the future."



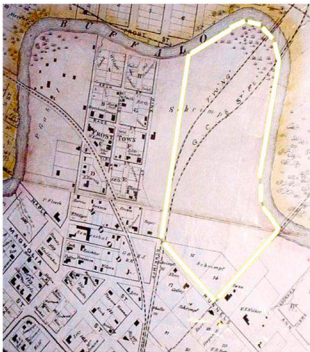
Yale Street Drawing by Texas Historical Commission, photo by Patrick Feller, Yale built in 1931, approved for listing on the National Register by Art & Environmental Architecture, Inc. J. G. McKenzie Engineer



Photo: Story Sloane's Gallery, San Jacinto Street Bridge, snowy day 1929: Schumacher Central Grocery flanked by Tex Pac Building by (Joseph Finger). All three of these historic structures are at risk for demolition. These important buildings are our last link to the Historic commercial uses of Buffalo Bayou as the shallow draft channel. This downtown area was once the hub of all commerce. Captain Griffin, first woman pilot in Texas operated from the Tex Pac buildings second floor. With her own doorway and ladder she reached the Tug New Brunswick and barges loaded with shell, flax, cotton, bulk foods and products all for Houston's Markets.



The Barrio El Alacran, Schrimpf's Alley circa 1940's.



Schrimpf's Field circa 1869.



Birdsall House Update

Research continues into the accurate modeling and re-construction of the Birdsall House to the scale and style of early Frost Town structures. Elements of the rescued remains of the house are believed to be of the same era as the original wood kit home of John Birdsall the Republic of Texas' first attorney general and partner to Sam Houston.

Also in progress is planning for the building of a Heritage Garden with authentic early tree and garden choices to accompany the Birdsall House in James Bute Park. J.K. Wagner and Company will be providing the Landscape Plan and coordinating the proceedings.



Focus on the Barrio El Alacran

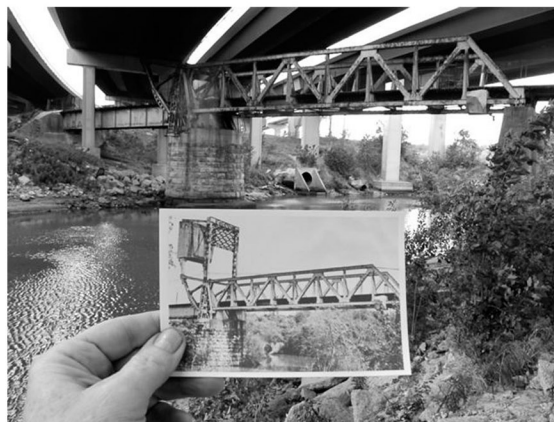
The Mexican American contribution to Second Ward History has lacked proper public attention. The heterogeneous ideologies represented in Houston's post-Depression Mexicano community in particular made it a Petri dish of emerging hybrid identities as immigrant Mexicanos worked to adapt in the face of segregation and their American-born descendants came of age under the influence of jazz and swing.

One site of note, the Barrio El Alacran, located adjacent to historical Frost Town and named for the dead end curve of Schrimpf's Alley which, flanked with shotgun houses, resembled a scorpion tail (alacran), was home to the aggressive, non-conformist, and highly stylized pachucos and pachucas from the 1930's until its demolition in 1955. Long vilified in the public imagination as a slum of violence and crime and often derided by other Mexicanos with assimilatory aims, the cultural wealth of the Barrio El Alacran has yet to be properly understood and few scholarly works have demonstrated the complexities of this aberrant neighborhood and its significance in the overall makeup of Houston's Mexicano community.

To aid in remedying this situation AEA has formed a committee and are directing historian Louis Aulbach and film maker Carlos Callibillo toward doing a series of personal contact interviews with the surviving inhabitants of the Barrio El Alacran. AEA has also initiated the placement of a Harris County Historical Marker for this important Second Ward community site. The Marker is planned for the TxDot freeway property in the approximate center of the Barrio El Alacran and near to Runnels Street for easy public viewing.



Alacran Pachucos. Courtesy of Willie Rodriguez



Strauss Trunnion Bascule Bridge over Buffalo Bayou (left; photograph by John Runnels). The San Jacinto St. Bridge adjacent to the Tex Pac Building and the Central Grocery Warehouse facing Buffalo Bayou (above).

Preserving Historic Bridges and Buildings

Having successfully listed the Yale Street Bridge over White Oak Bayou to the National Register of Historic Places, AEA is continuing in its programming to preserve other historic structures. We are exploring potential nominations to include the Tex Pac Building and Central Grocery Warehouse, Strauss Bascule Bridge, designed by the Golden Gate Bridge's engineer Joseph Strauss, and seeking a missing file on the Galveston, Houston and Henderson 1927 Steel Truss Bridge rejuvenated as bikeway.