

II.4. SAN ANTONIO

Seeing Scintillating San Antonio

“From [New Braunfels] to San Antonio many interesting villages and hamlets are seen, all typical of this intensely interesting portion of Texas—the mesquites, looking like immense fruit trees; with here and there a mass of the ever-increasing cactus, with stickers and spikes (also ever-increasing)—it’s all worth while [sic]. Several creeks are crossed—the Alamo eventually looms up in the distance. We pass the Country Club; right on down River Avenue, to the very heart of San Antonio, the cosmopolitan and metropolitan center of the South. The Alamo, that had us in a warm embrace of entrancing welcome the minute we entered its environs—no wonder tourists all head towards San Antonio and are so loath to leave—no wonder Texans point with patriotic pride to the Alamo with all its hallowed traditions, and are always, as in the past, prone to see its possibilities and always quick to grasp the same—the simile being in the Bi-Centennial Exposition of 1918 that marks the birth of the City of the Alamo. The growth of this city is the marvel of the age; and it is a growth that is grasped as we say, more readily by the San Antonian than any other; and that with a community spirit that has evolved a vast city where there was once only “a wide place in the road.” Its [sic] the Tourists’ Paradise, for nowhere have the tourists’ tastes been so sediously [sic] studied as right in San Antonio—the parks, the hotels, etc. The pikes are all tarviated, and, miracle of miracles, the serpentine San Antonio River, everywhere, is festooned with vari-colored electric lights, causing at night a grand and glorious vision, that you will have to visit San Antonio to rightly realize. Result is that never a train or bunch of autos come to the city, but what you may mark tourists; and each and everyone is welcome. Not like the new preacher: ‘The congregation was so glad to receive him they felt like eating him up, and afterwards they were sorry they didn’t.’ No, not that way; but the visitor in San Antonio is made to feel like he is ‘home folks,’ and treated—absolutely treated that way.”

G. A. MacNaughton, *The Meridian Road in Texas*, 1916

San Antonio is one of the most important cities along the entire Meridian Highway route, and it was prominently featured in numerous publications promoting the road since the idea of the highway originated in 1911. Indeed, San Antonio has been a transportation hub since its founding, and many of the state’s oldest and most historic trails and roads—some of which date to the eighteenth century—either passed through or originated in the city. This aspect of local history underscores the significance of San Antonio to the development of Texas and of the Meridian Highway.

Founded in 1718 with the establishment of missions along the San Antonio River, the city played a key role in the Texas’ fight for independence when several battles, including the siege of Bexar and the battle of the Alamo, were fought in the area. The city grew rapidly after Texas entered the Union and continued to develop as an important hub

of commerce and trade. The U.S. Army first established a military post in San Antonio in 1845, and the city subsequently became a key center of military fortifications within the entire Southwest region of the country. The development of Fort Sam Houston was particularly significant. The first railroad to provide service to San Antonio was the I&GN Railroad, which arrived in 1881. By 1900, three additional railroads provided service to the city.

San Antonio's response to the arrival of the automobile mirrored that of other large cities of the time; growth became horizontal in the form of expansive neighborhoods, which, along with the establishment of Fort Sam Houston, helped the city steadily grow to the north. The city also expanded in other directions. Many of the city's wealthiest and most affluent residents embraced the automobile and became very active in the early automobile movement efforts in Texas. They created their own automobile club and even published a series of travel guides that provided detailed driving instructions and trips for enthusiastic motorists (see *Figures 120 and 121, to follow*). As the Good Roads movement gained popularity, San Antonio became a major hub of activity, and residents such as David Colp readily embraced the effort and helped to form and support multiple highway associations that promoted highways that passed through the city. The auto trails that extended into San Antonio included the Meridian Highway, Old Spanish Trail, King of Trails Highway, Colorado-to-Gulf Highway, and the Puget-Sound-to-Gulf Highway (see *Figure 122, to follow*).

As originally conceived and promoted, the Meridian Highway was among the earliest, if not the very first, interstate auto trail to pass through San Antonio. It entered the city from the north via the communities of Solms, Comal, Selma, and Fratt, and continued south towards Laredo via Natalia, Devine, and Moore, more or less following the I&GN Railroad. The route extended through Fort Sam Houston and passed near the famous quadrangle and parade grounds. The highway continued onto Broadway and into downtown via Houston Street (see *Figure 123, to follow*). This route largely followed the old Post Road, which was established in 1915 to facilitate the U.S. Post Office and its service between San Antonio and Austin.²⁶⁹ The Meridian Highway extended past the federal post office as well as other local landmarks including City Hall and the Bexar County Courthouse. The road continued south along S. Flores Street toward Nogalitos Street and on to Frio County and the Winter Garden District region.

Among all of the major cities in Texas, San Antonio has the most distinctive and unique layout, which reflects its Spanish Colonial heritage. Many of the major streets extend along former *acequias* that were part of irrigation systems that supported the missions along the San Antonio River; other streets were part of a colonial-era road system that linked San Antonio with other early towns, such as Nacogdoches. These main arterials within the system greatly influenced the overall

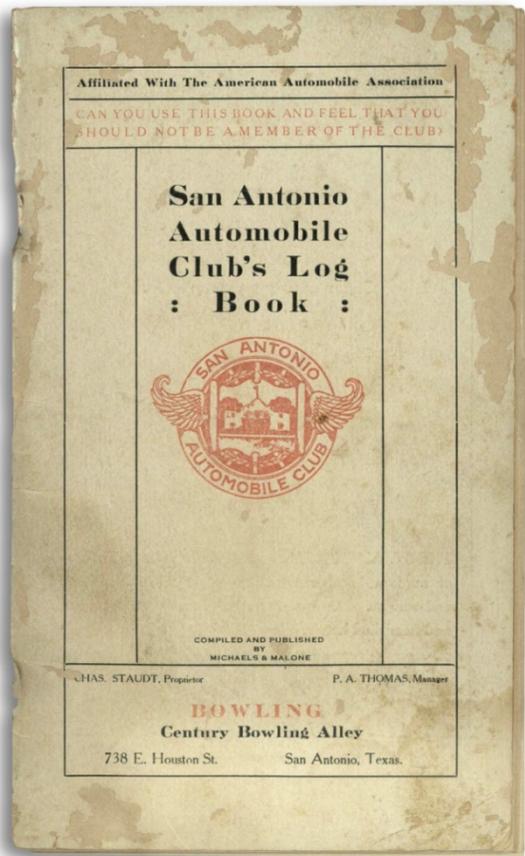
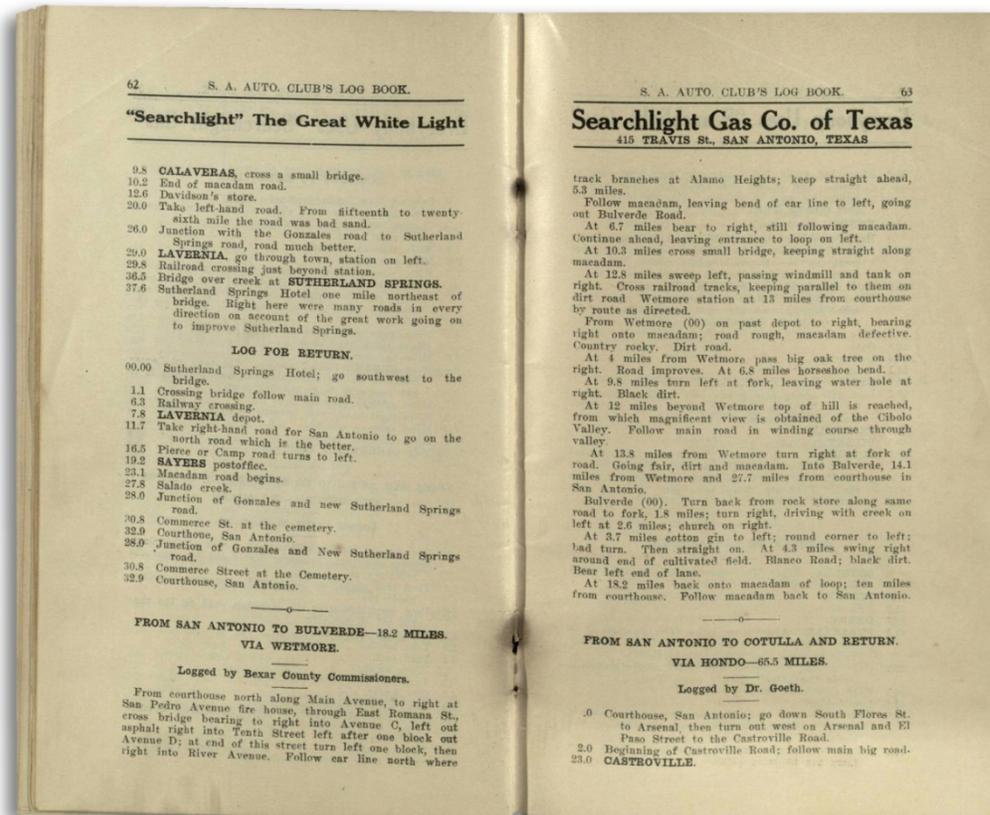


Figure 120. Excerpts from the San Antonio Automobile Club's Log Book, 1911. In the early years of automobile travel, groups such as the San Antonio Automobile Club published guides that recommended trips and drivable roads for auto enthusiasts. This guide also suggested multiple trips emanating from San Antonio, including those associated with the Meridian Highway. Source: Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas (available online at <http://brushauto.net>).



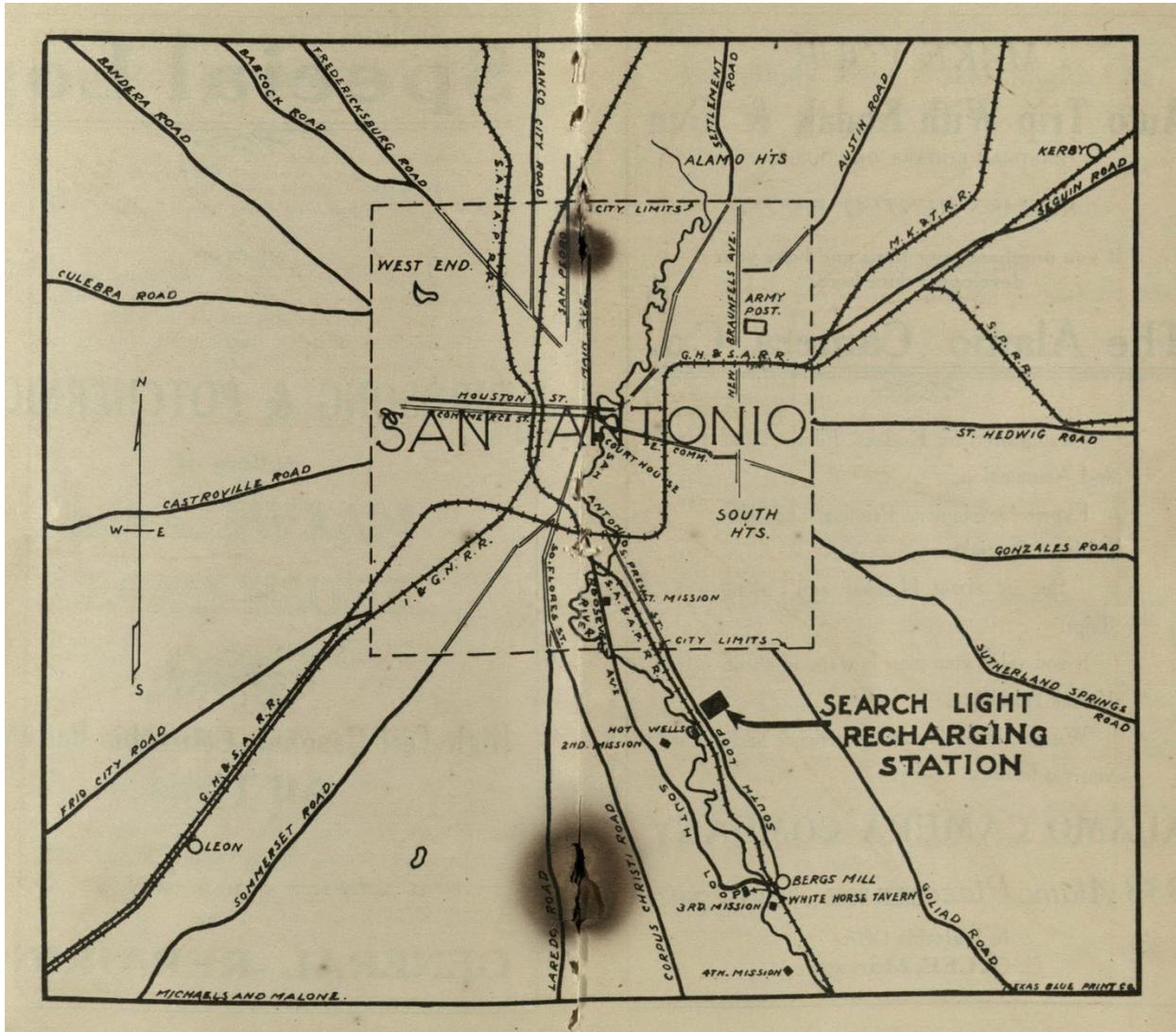


Figure 121. San Antonio map in the San Antonio Automobile Club's Log Book, 1911. This map was included as the center page of the travel guide. The routes outlined in heavy line weight show the recommended roads through the city. Although the Meridian Highway is not identified, segments of the route are depicted, notably the Austin Road at the top-right corner. Source: Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas (available online at <http://brushauto.net>).

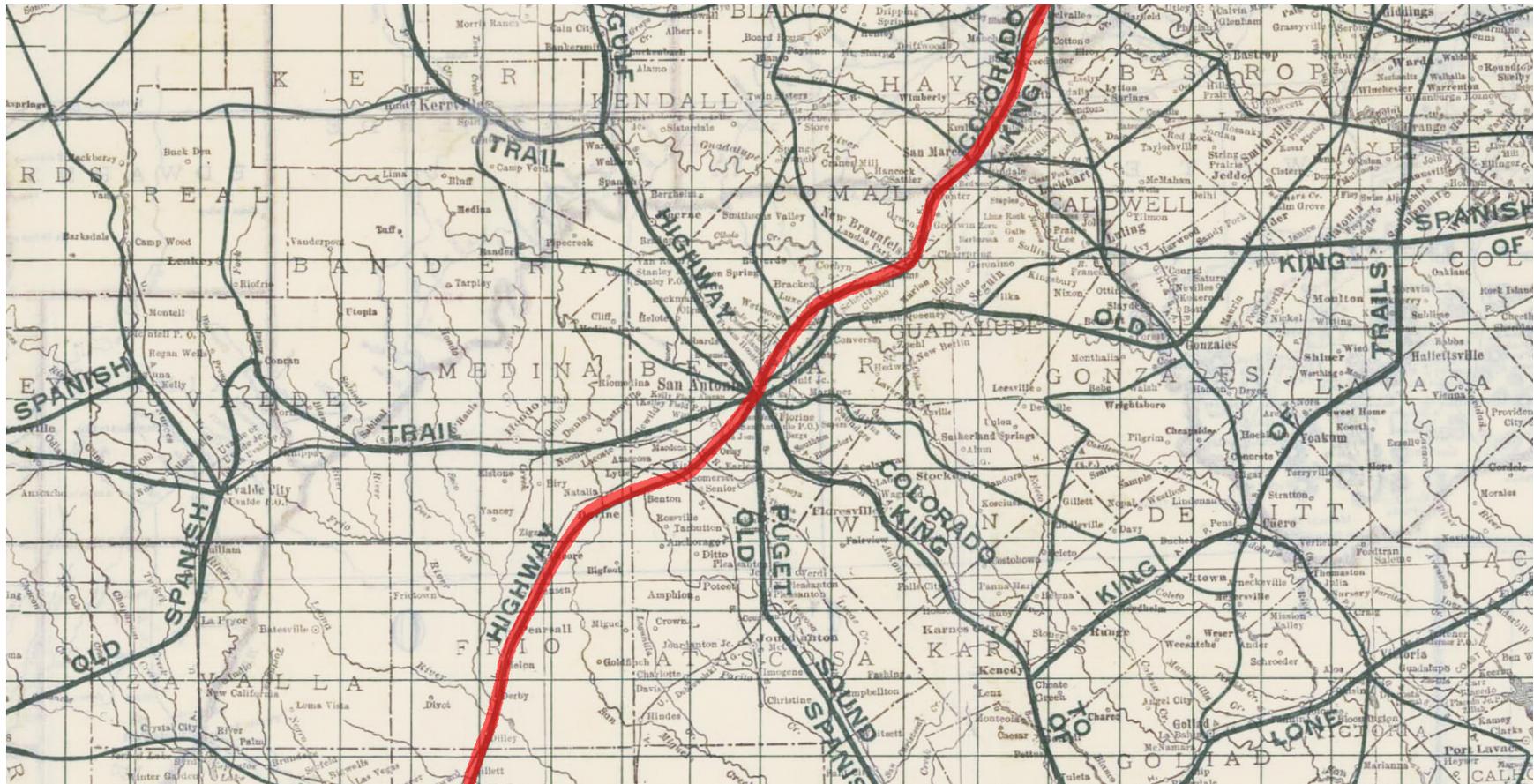


Figure 122. Detail of Texas Highway Map. This map shows the many historic named highways/auto trails that passed through San Antonio, with the Meridian Highway in red. With its many parks, rich history and architecture, temperate climate, and abundant supply of lodging, the city attracted many visitors from Texas and other parts of the country. Source: Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas.

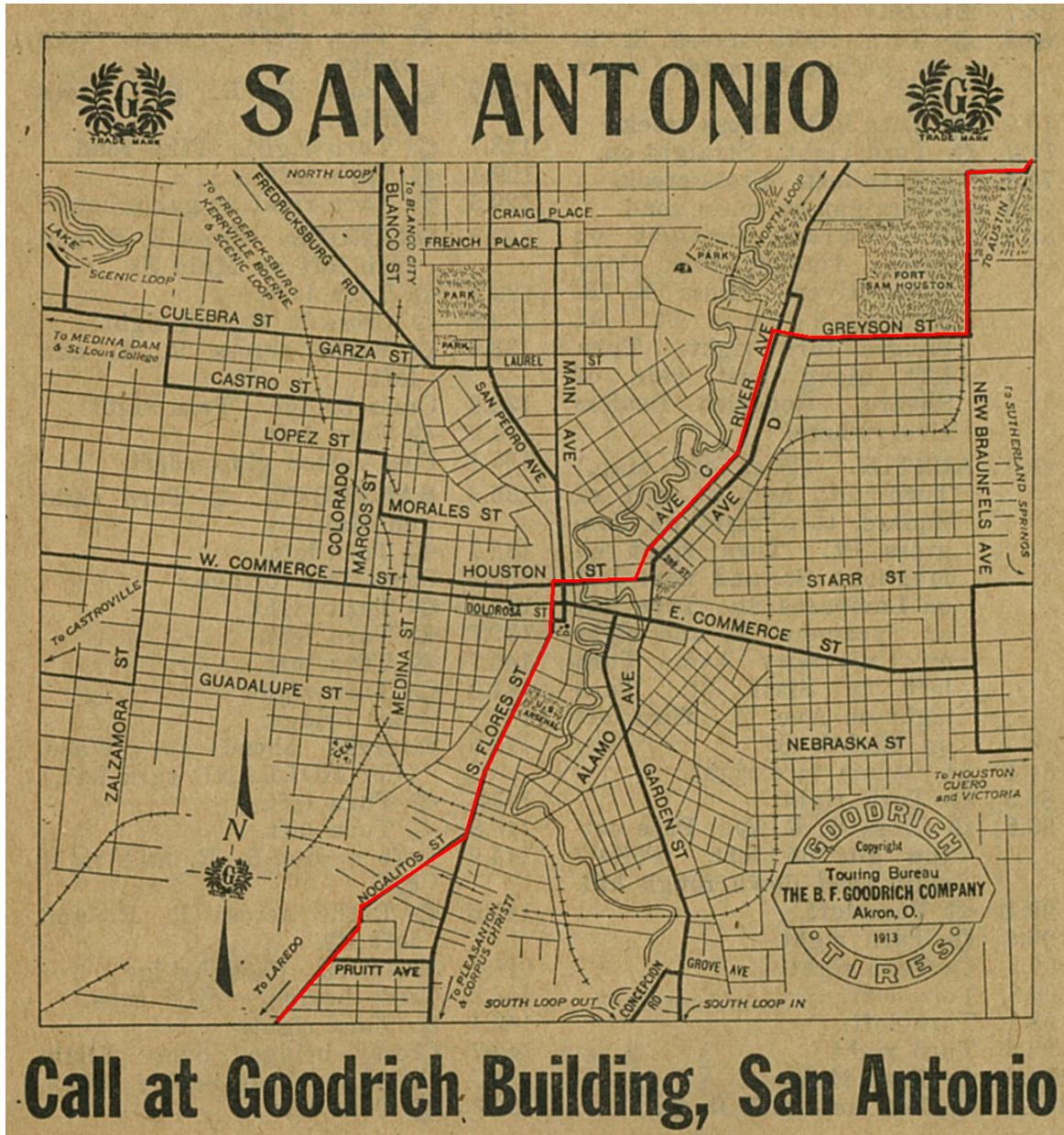


Figure 123. San Antonio City Map, B. F. Goodrich Tire Company, 1915. This map shows major roads servicing San Antonio in 1915. Neither the Meridian Highway nor any other historic auto trails are identified by name, but the route (noted in red) generally conformed to later travel guides promoting the Meridian Highway. Source: Martha Doty Freeman personal collection.

street network/layout in the city, and many of the oldest roads followed the *acequias*. Later infill, especially outside the city’s historic core, adopted the standard grid that typified most late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century urban development in Texas. The resulting melding of two very different street patterns created a unique urban setting, especially within Texas. Thus, it is not surprising that the Meridian Highway route through San Antonio followed an irregular path with multiple turns, especially in the downtown and city center.

The establishment of the Meridian Highway through San Antonio, combined with the presence of other historic highways, such as the Old Spanish Trail, made San Antonio a key destination for travelers. The city

offered numerous tourist attractions, such as the Alamo and the various missions (see *Figure 124* below), and the Meridian Highway route passed by or near several large and prominent San Antonio hotels, such as the Gunter Hotel and the Menger Hotel.



Figure 124. This photograph shows members of a caravan associated with the Sociability Tour of the Colorado-to-Gulf Highway Association in front of the Alamo on its tour through Texas. The group posed for photographs at other landmarks, such as the San José Mission, also in San Antonio, and the ALICO Building in Waco. This tour was one of many that other highway associations undertook during the mid- to late 1910s to promote the highway and generate support for the route and its improvement. Source: Virginia J. Church 1914 Sociability Tour Photograph collection, Pikes Peak Library District, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The Meridian Highway's route from Austin to San Antonio extended along the existing route of the Post Road. Its primary function fulfilled a very practical role that facilitated the postal service and the delivery of mail. However, the aesthetic quality of the route and its effect on the driving experience became a matter of growing concern. Local residents hoped to improve landscaping along the route, and such a trend occurred elsewhere on this and other early automobile trails. According to an article in the *San Antonio Light*, "The San Antonio–Austin Post Road, which is a section of the Meridian road, will be distinctive for the rows of trees on either side of it for the entire distance."²⁷⁰ The article continued, saying that in addition to clearing grass, weeds, and trash from the road, posts were being cut to a uniform height, and the land surrounding the road was in the process of being made more attractive by "removal of unsightly shacks and all but the pleasing landmarks."²⁷¹

In 1916, David Colp, who served as president of the San Antonio–Laredo Division of the Meridian Highway Association, oversaw the production of a travel guide entitled *The Meridian Road in Texas*. It was prepared in cooperation with G. A. MacNaughton of San Marcos (also secretary of

the Meridian Road Association) and Lake Robertson, a San Antonio-based engineer. The guide included a map and description of the cities along the route; it also provides the earliest known detailed illustration of the route specifically identified as the Meridian Road through San Antonio (see *Figure 125, to follow*). The guide shows a meandering path north of San Antonio and a complicated route once the city limits were reached, as directions listed on the map tell the traveler to go “west on Houston” then “south on Flores Street.” Noteworthy features depicted on the map include Alamo Plaza, City Hall, and the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad Depot. South of San Antonio, the route straightened and generally ran adjacent to the I&GN Railroad.

A year after the first official route was published, Kelly Field (later Kelly Air Force Base and now Joint Base San Antonio) was established in what was then an area considered to be on the outskirts of San Antonio, close to the Meridian Highway and approximately five miles southwest of the city. The Army deliberately selected this relatively remote (at the time) location far from downtown, “so as to minimize the chances of aircraft accidents.”²⁷² Prior to the establishment of Kelly Field, the Army conducted flight training at Fort Sam Houston, but Army leaders soon realized that the post had insufficient space for additional flying operations, and decided to build new facilities at another location. The establishment of the new air field further solidified San Antonio’s position as a military center, and that status only grew over time as other posts and reservations were established in and near San Antonio during subsequent years. Examples include Brooks Field, Randolph Field, Camp Travis, and Camp Bullis. In addition, the army continued to expand Fort Sam Houston.

Another important aspect of the Meridian Highway around the San Antonio area was that it serviced the Winter Garden Region, which extended to Dimmit, Zavala, Frio, and LaSalle counties, south and southwest of San Antonio. In the 1890s, the Winter Garden Region rose in importance as irrigation was brought to the area, allowing for year-round production of vegetables. The name of the area, no doubt would have appealed to mid-westerners who would prefer to relocate to a more temperate climate and engage in year-round farming. The arrival of the railroad in the early 1900s, followed by the establishment of the Meridian Highway, helped support a major real estate and land development boom, and by 1920, the number of farms in the region had tripled. Due to its strategic route on the highway, travelers to and from this area utilized the Meridian Highway (see *Figure 126, to follow*).

Another early tourist guide that publicized amenities for motorists traveling along the Meridian Highway in San Antonio was the 1924 *Automobile Red Book*. This guide had pictures and listings of many amenities in San Antonio, including the Prudential Hotel, the Jefferson Hotel, the Alamo, Mission San Juan, and Mission Concepción. In

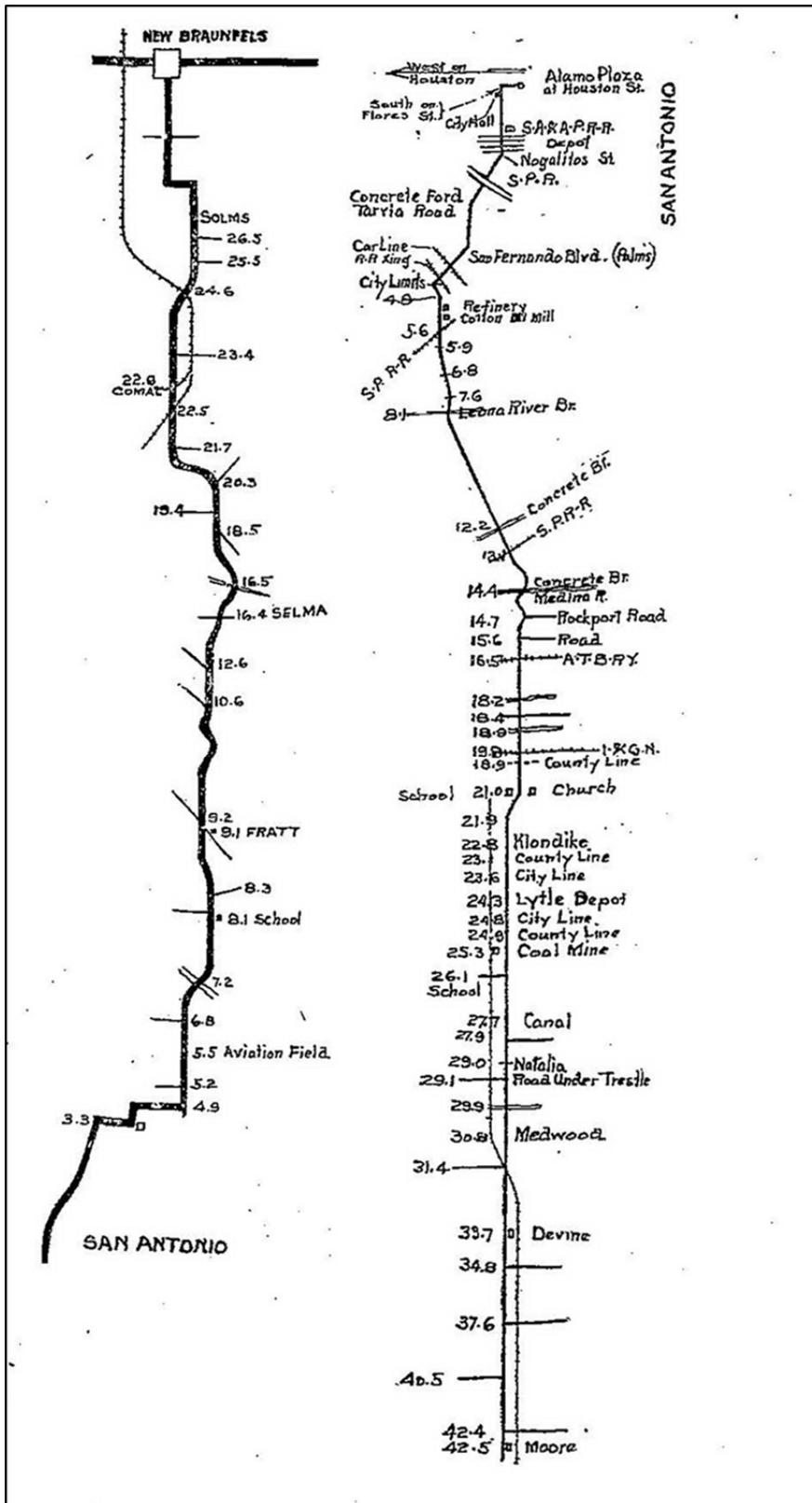
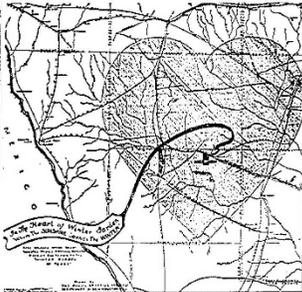


Figure 125. Detail of a map from the 1916 guidebook, *The Meridian Road in Texas*. This illustration shows the road as it extended through San Antonio. Source: Colp Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS - SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1927.

Announcing the Introductory Sale of the New City of **WINTER GARDEN** In the Famous Winter Gardens District of Southwest Texas

The Most **STARTLING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY** You've Ever Had - Positively Guaranteed **100%** But You Must **ACT NOW!**



A LOT IN THIS
NEW TOWNSITE
WORTH \$100.00 AND
Your Investment

THIS GILT EDGED
CERTIFICATE
FOR \$100.00
Your Guarantee

Both for
\$100.00

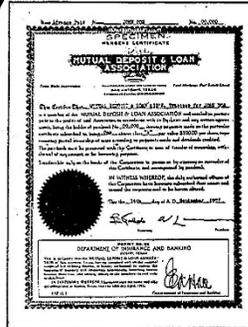
TERMS:

\$100 CASH or Easy
Monthly Payments

No Interest, No Taxes Until Deed is Issued

Officers of
**WINTER GARDEN
SECURITIES CO., INC.**
W. B. Bass, Pres.
M. C. Abraham, Vice-Pres.-Secy.
W. W. Johnson, Vice-Pres.

REFERENCES
Guaranty State Bank
Bradstreet Mercantile Agency
Mutual Deposit and Loan Assn.
All of San Antonio, Texas.



The new city of Winter Garden, located as shown above, is 102 miles southwest of San Antonio on the S. A. U. & G. branch of the M. P. System, between Dilley and Carrizo Springs. It is reached via the Meridian Highway and is almost in the geographical center of Dimmit County, the real heart of the famous Winter Gardens District of Texas.

Winter Garden is the logical trading and shipping point for five major land developments in the Artesian belt, is near good gas and churches, and is served by excellent transportation facilities that carry vegetable and citrus products to a waiting world market every month of the year—"Green Gold" that returns a handsome profit to the grower.

The plot of the new townsite includes approximately 400 acres of land, surrounded by several thousand acres of fine agricultural development tracts. Business lots are 25'x110' with 15' alleys. Boulevards in the business district are 80 feet wide and are supplemented by 50-foot streets.

MUTUAL DEPOSIT & LOAN ASSOCIATION

September 15, 1927.

Winter Garden Securities Co., Inc.,
San Antonio, Texas.

Gentlemen:
The Building & Loan Certificates (shown above) which you are purchasing in trust for investors in the new city of Winter Garden are our regular Prepaid Investment Certificates secured by improved Real Estate, principally homes, in San Antonio and vicinity. This company is operated under the Supervision of the State of Texas, whose statutes require that real estate loaned upon must be of an appraised value of at least 50 per cent in excess of the amount loaned. Our loans average somewhat less than 50 per cent of the real estate value.

This certificate will be redeemed by the Mutual Deposit and Loan Association at maturity at its face value in cash.

Yours very truly,
(Signed) A. L. MOON, President.

MUTUAL DEPOSIT AND LOAN ASSN.
The Oldest Building and Loan Association in Southwest Texas.

ONLY 1000 LOTS ARE INCLUDED IN
THIS OFFER

When they are sold the Winter Garden Securities Company will begin other development of its large acreage holdings in the vicinity of the new city. **THIS GUARANTEED INVESTMENT WILL NOT LAST LONG BECAUSE THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THE WINTER GARDENS.**

You Must Clip and Mail This Coupon Today If You Want Complete Information About the New City of Winter Garden.

COUPON

WINTER GARDEN SECURITIES CO., Inc.,
215 Aztec Building, San Antonio, Texas.

Gentlemen: Please mail me, without obligation to myself, complete information concerning the new City of Winter Garden and your 100% Investment Guarantee.

Name

Street

City

Phone

Every section of the United States is interested in the famous Winter Gardens Section. The stories of its "green gold" developments are drawing thousands to this newest and most important agricultural area. The developers of the new city of Winter Garden are only a step ahead of the general development that is coming and you will be a step ahead if you join them in this project which is destined to become the Queen City of the Winter Gardens District of Southwest Texas.

Men and money are concentrating their energies in the Winter Gardens as never before. Power line extensions; railroad service; paved highways; diversified agriculture; climate; new shipping routes; publicity—all are combining to develop this great district with astonishing rapidity.

Mail Coupon TODAY for
More Information
About—

1. Development Plans.
2. Permanent Membership in Lake Encina Country Club.
3. Profit Guarantee to Every Purchaser.
4. No Taxes Until Property is Conveyed.
5. No Interest on Deferred Payments.
6. Special Death and Permanent Disability Clause.
7. Moratorium in Case of Partial Disability or Sickness.
8. Our Re-Sale Guarantee.

Winter Garden Securities Co., Inc.

326-327 Aztec Building—Crockett 1136

CHARTERED UNDER LAWS OF TEXAS

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Figure 126. Advertisement for the Winter Garden District in the San Antonio Express, 1927. This full-page ad specifically references the Meridian Highway as a way to reach a new development within the Winter Garden District, south of San Antonio. Source: San Antonio Express, September 18, 1927.

addition, the publication devoted an entire page to “San Antonio’s Leading Hotels,” which listed Travelers Hotel, Crockett Hotel, Menger Hotel, Robert E. Lee Hotel, Gunter Hotel, and St. Anthony Hotel (see *Figure 127* below and *Figure 128*, to follow). The travel guide also highlighted other auto-related businesses such as local service stations, auto-repair shops, and even a restaurant.

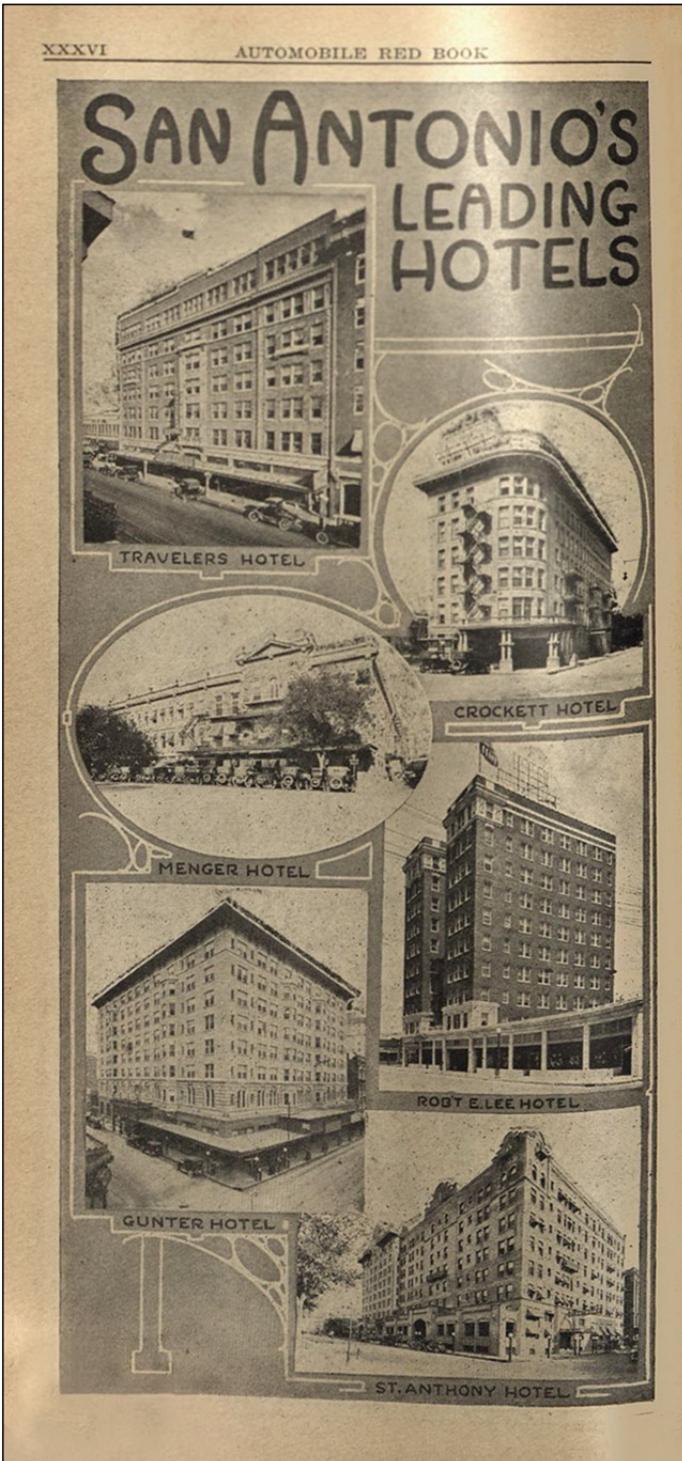


Figure 127. San Antonio’s leading hotels, as noted in the Automobile Red Book of 1924. This page assured motorists that San Antonio offered outstanding hotel accommodations for travelers visiting the city. These hotels provided the most modern and up-to-date amenities. Source: Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas.

Figure 128. Photograph of Gunter Hotel, no date. Designed by architect Ernest J. Russell of the St. Louis firm, Mauran, Russell and Garden, and built by Garden/Westlake Construction Company, the hotel opened in 1909. Named for Jot Gunter, a rancher and real estate investor who helped finance the hotel, it was one of many multi-story hotels constructed in the early twentieth century that helped reshape downtown San Antonio into a major tourist destination. Situated at the prominent location of Houston Street and St. Mary Street, the Gunter was one of the first high-rise hotels in San Antonio constructed of steel and reinforced concrete, allowing for its numerous stories. The Gunter became a popular destination and meeting place for cattlemen, military officers, and even celebrities. Source: Texas Transportation Museum, <http://www.txtransportationmuseum.org/ost.php>.



By the early 1930s, growing congestion in downtown and the city's continued importance as an important military, commercial, and trade hub led the Texas Highway Department to make changes to the highway system in San Antonio. By that time, the Meridian Highway was known both as SH 2 (designed in 1917 with the creation of the Texas Highway Department) and as US 81 for the adoption of the federal highway numbering system. The Meridian Highway's alignment was shifted and upgraded; instead of passing directly through Fort Sam Houston, the highway moved to the Austin Highway and intersected with Broadway in the suburban community of Alamo Heights.²⁷³ Previously, the route had followed what is now known as Harry Wurzbach Road. Rather than turn west onto Houston or Commerce streets, the highway continued south and passed in front of the Alamo Plaza. It followed S. Alamo Street through the King William neighborhood until it intersected with S. Flores Street, south of downtown. Still, the amount of traffic remained high, and intersections within the local road network became increasingly congested (see *Figures 129–131*, to follow).

By the late 1930s, leaders within San Antonio began to advocate for improvements to the entire local highway network, a trend that occurred concurrently in other major Texas cities, such as Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth. In 1939, the interregional committee of the San

THE MERIDIAN HIGHWAY

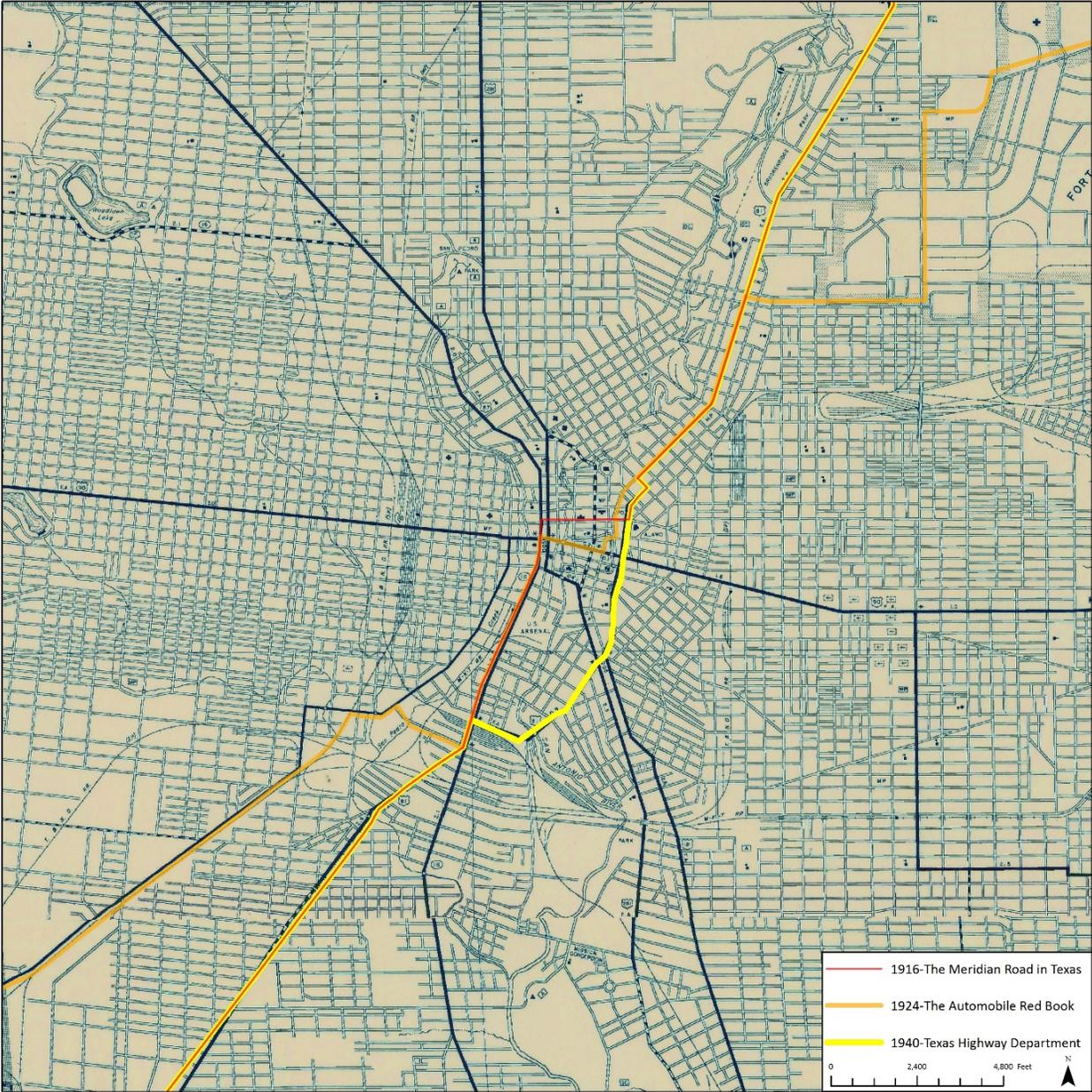


Figure 129. Detail of General Highway Map of Bexar County, 1936 (updated 1940). This map depicts the alignment shifts of the Meridian Highway through San Antonio. Source: Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas.



Figure 130. Intersection of S. Alamo and S. St. Mary streets in San Antonio, ca. 1940. The re-routing of a segment of US 81 onto S. Alamo Street was intended to relieve congestion in the downtown, but the decision also introduced a new set of problems in other parts of the city. This intersection, near the well-known King William neighborhood, became more difficult for local and out-of-town motorists. This trend spurred the development of a new highway system in San Antonio that was built in the postwar era. Source: Texas Department of Transportation, Photo Library.



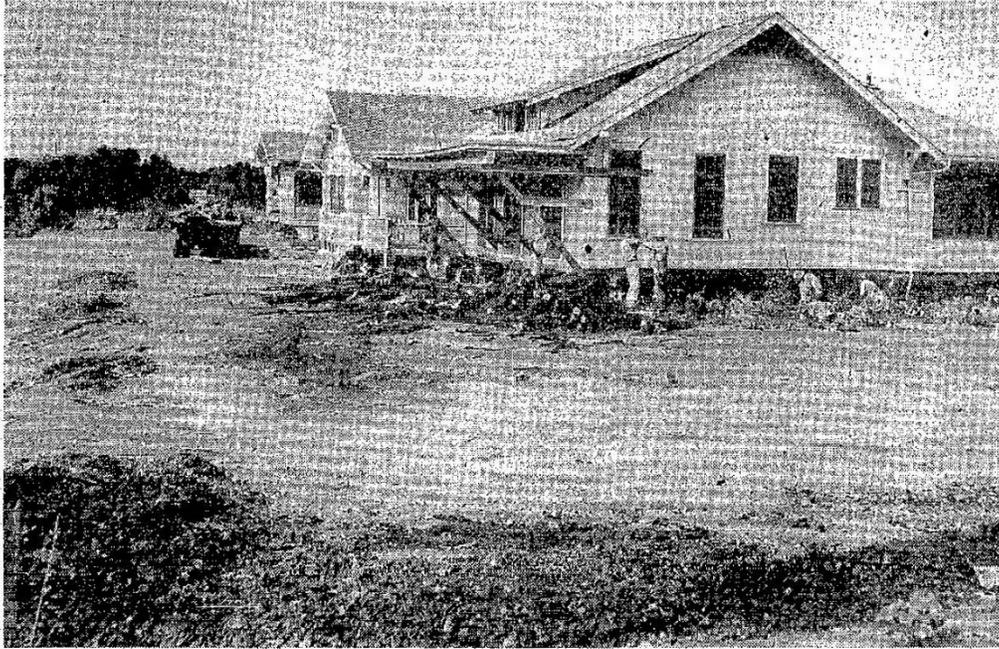
Figure 131. Current view of an abandoned Humble gas station, located on South Laredo Street, just a few blocks west of the King William neighborhood, south of downtown San Antonio. The ca. 1935 Art Deco building remains one of the few surviving examples of a Humble Oil and Refinery Company gas station in San Antonio. The contrasting bright orange and blue tiles and distinct mosaic sign were clearly recognizable and attention-grabbing features to the many motorists traveling along the Meridian Highway. The Humble gas station is one of many auto-related businesses that lined the local roads surrounding the Meridian thoroughfare. Photo by HHM.

Antonio Chamber of Commerce met to discuss the possibility of turning the Meridian into an interregional highway; however, the start of World War II delayed this initiative, and the idea remained largely dormant until 1944 when Allied forces anticipated victory and an end to the war. Despite the delayed start, the importance of the proposed highway enjoyed continued support among civic leaders, and local newspapers promoted the idea to a war-weary and self-sacrificing public. An article published in the *San Antonio Light* on January 28, 1945, stated that “[t]he Interregional highway system, if properly located and built in San Antonio, will form the backbone of our entire thoroughfare structure.”²⁷⁴ An unmentioned requirement was the need for the city to purchase the necessary right-of-way for such a system, which would call for the issuance of bonds and a resulting tax increase. In September 1945, voters narrowly approved a bond issue that would enable the city to spend \$1.75 million for the purchase of right-of-way for a new expressway that would include sections of the Meridian Highway.²⁷⁵ Although city taxes would be raised, local media touted that construction of the highway would increase the value of land in the city, thus covering the difference in the tax rate.²⁷⁶ A small group of local taxpayers contested the election results and filed a lawsuit challenging the outcome arguing that “the law governing such requires a two-third favorable vote instead of a majority.”²⁷⁷ As the case made its way through the courts, local newspapers warned that the city could possibly lose the \$6.5 million of federal funds, as other cities (most notably Dallas) attempted to secure the monies.²⁷⁸ The lawsuit was finally settled in 1947 when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case, which allowed the city to move forward with the project. With the ability to issue bonds for new right-of-way acquisition, the city cleared the way for highway construction, sometimes moving the displaced houses to other locations. One such instance where houses were relocated occurred on land adjacent to Martinez Creek where dirt fill from highway excavation work was used to straighten a bend in the creek.²⁷⁹ These houses were then sold to the public for approximately \$5,000 each and sales were used to purchase other land for the new expressway (see *Figure 132*, to follow).

In July 1949, the first segment of the interregional highway opened in San Antonio along a portion of US 90/Old Spanish Trail. Subsequent construction extended south to include a shared segment with US 81/Meridian Highway. Bypassing the established route of both the Meridian Highway and Old Spanish Trail, the interregional highway system in San Antonio was built on new alignments. This shift of the main highway forced the Texas Highway Department to develop new interchanges at locations where the new highway intersected with key thoroughfares within the local street network, as noted in *Figure 133* (to follow).

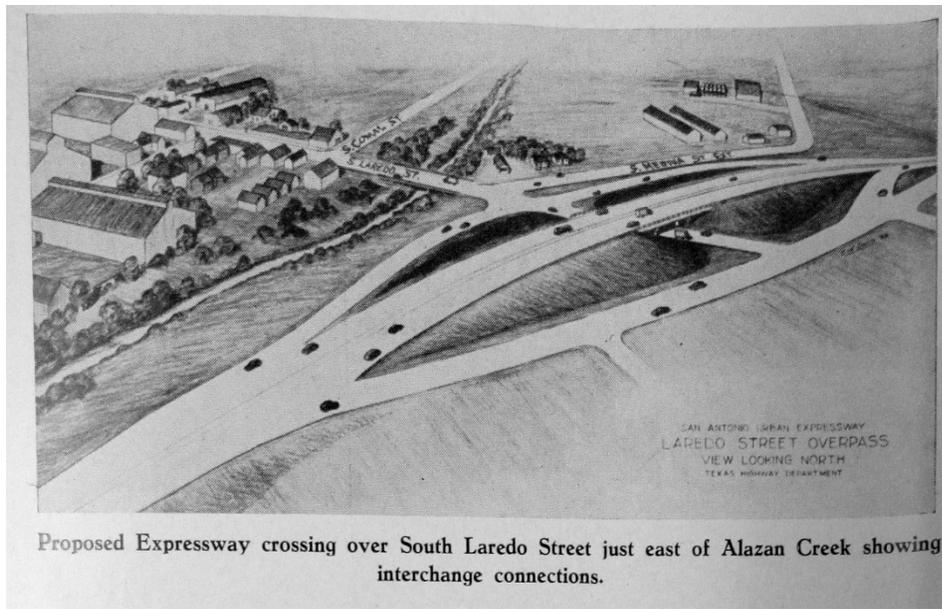
The passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 marked a turning point in the history and development of the highway system, and its

HOME SITE FOR RIGHT-O-WAY HOUSES



HOUSES REMOVED TO MAKE WAY FOR THE INTERREGIONAL HIGHWAY REST AT THEIR NEW SITE
Location is a dirt fill at a point where a bend in the Martinez creek has been straightened, below Cincinnati avenue.

Figure 132. (Above) Houses being moved for the new expressway, 1947. This photo captures a trend that characterized the construction of a new generation of highways in urban areas. The Texas Highway Department typically selected a new alignment for the expressways and often chose paths that extended through residential neighborhoods where land was less expensive than in densely developed commercial or industrial areas. This segment, which was part of the first expressway built in San Antonio during the late 1940s, was not actually on US 81/Meridian Highway (it was part of US 90/Old Spanish Trail route), but it illustrates an issue that the highway department faced for such highway construction efforts. Source: *The San Antonio Light*, June 12, 1947.



Proposed Expressway crossing over South Laredo Street just east of Alazan Creek showing interchange connections.

Figure 133. (Left) This rendering shows the proposed expressway or interregional highway at S. Laredo Street. The design embodies many of the new ideas about highway design that were intended to improve safety and facilitate traffic flow. The kinds of innovations introduced by this and other highway interchanges of the interregional highway era were refined and developed further when the Interstate Highway System was built in the late 1950s and 1960s. Source: *Texas State Library and Archives Commission*, Austin, Texas.

effects extended to San Antonio. The existing sections of the local interregional highway system were upgraded, and the Texas Highway Department embarked on an aggressive building campaign to construct freeways on new alignments for the newly designated IH 35 (US 81/Meridian Highway) and IH 10 (US 90/Old Spanish Trail). By 1960, the highway network in San Antonio was one of the most developed among major urban centers in the state, as noted in *Figure 134* (to follow).

The new expressways changed the role of older segments of the highway within the local transportation network, and historic highway routes increasingly catered to local traffic. This change also affected many of the travel-related businesses along the route. Some proprietors relocated their businesses to the new interstate highway, while others sold the property or repurposed their buildings. Such trends were particularly common on Austin Highway and Broadway Street on the city's north side. The Pig Stand (*Figure 135*, to follow) on Broadway is an example of one of the many establishments that endured having to move due to the construction of IH 35. Fortunately, in this case, it only had to relocate several feet north. Another drive-in restaurant, Bun 'N' Barrel (*Figure 136*, to follow) on Austin Highway, stands out as a relic of the 1950s era, in which it was constructed, amid the otherwise modern surroundings. The car stalls and car hop service distinguish the restaurant and remind passers-by of the period when numerous automobile-related businesses lined the street, catering to Meridian Highway travelers.

The first officially designated international exposition in the southwestern United States was held in San Antonio in 1968, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the city's founding. Known as HemisFair '68, the location chosen for the event encompassed 92.6 acres on the southeastern edge of the city's central business district, on the post-1934 path of the Meridian Highway. Of the 120 historic buildings located on the site, only 22 were saved and utilized for the event. Ultimately, the fair reinforced early marketing efforts of the Meridian Highway as part of the Pan-American Highway and led to improvements of the highway system linking the United States with Mexico.

Perhaps more than other major urban centers in Texas, San Antonio retains a high percentage of its historic built environment, which gives local residents and tourists alike a unique opportunity to obtain a strong sense of the past. Providing access to such landmarks as the Alamo and the other missions from the Spanish Colonial era was a primary reason that the Meridian Highway extended through the city. By the time automobiles began to traverse the local streets in the early twentieth century, the tourism industry was already well established and the number of opulent hotels in the downtown catered to the growing number of "automobilists" who visited San Antonio. The establishment of the Meridian Highway and other highways from the Auto Trails era

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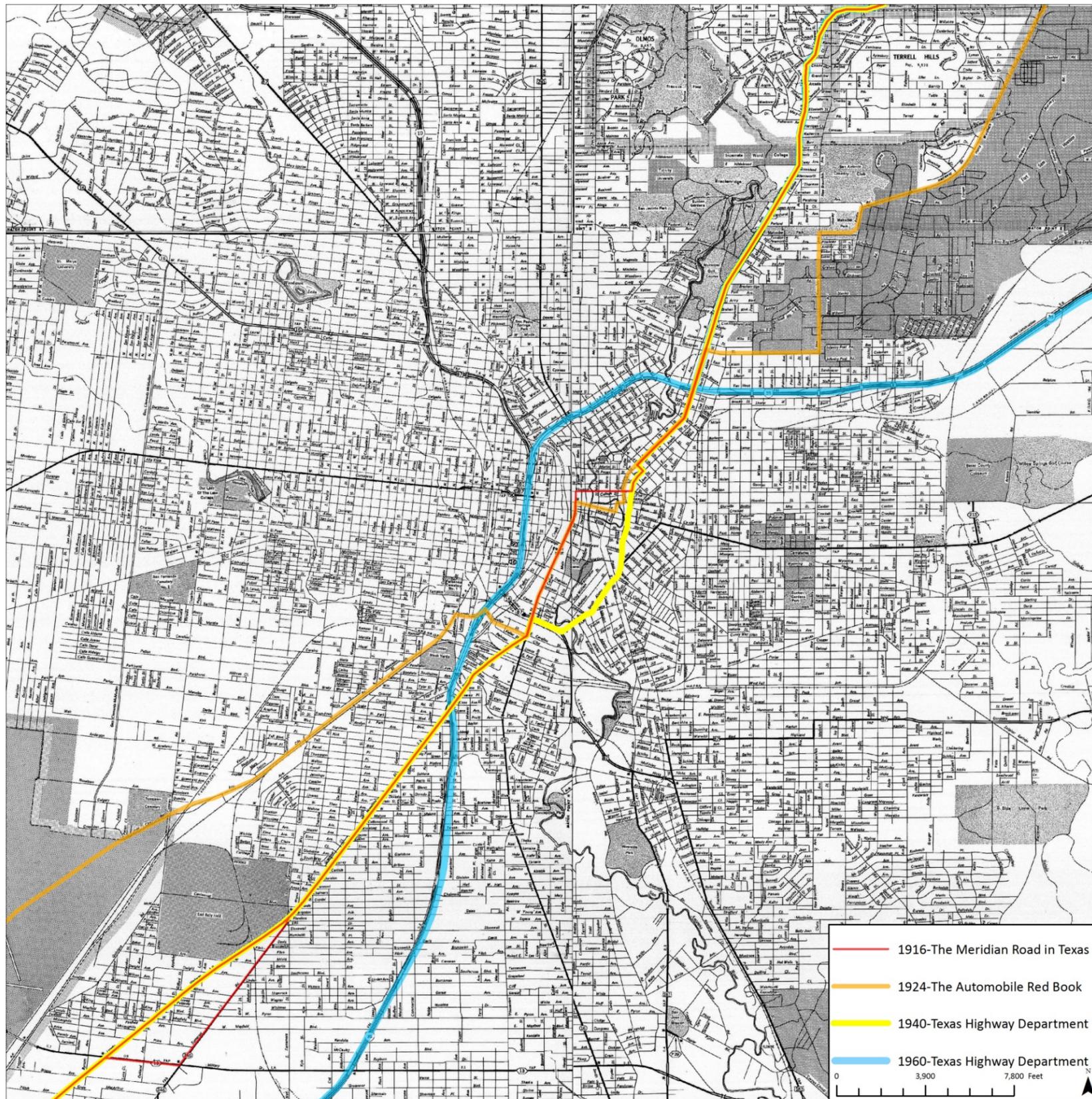


Figure 134. Detail of General Highway Map of Bexar County, 1960. Throughout most of its history, San Antonio has been an important hub within the state's transportation network. The city's age, size and population, along with multiple military bases, made it a logical focus of early highway-building improvement efforts. As this figure shows, the highway system in San Antonio embraced the Interstate Highway System and included several improved expressways that bypassed the historic city center. The shift in alignment enabled the downtown area to retain a high degree of historic character and integrity, fueled in part by the many tourist attractions in the downtown, most notably the Alamo. Source: Texas State Archives and Library Commission, Austin, Texas

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Figure 135. Current view of the Pig Stand #29, located at 1508 Broadway Avenue. San Antonio's original Pig Stand restaurant opened during the 1920s at the well-traversed location of Broadway Avenue near downtown San Antonio, surely attracting the throngs of motorists traveling along the Meridian Highway, looking for a bite to eat. The Pig Stand #29 represents the many automobile-related businesses that thrived along the Meridian Highway, in this case, for many decades. Part of a Dallas-based chain, the drive-in restaurant was forced to move and rebuild just north of its original location in the 1960s, when IH 35 was constructed. It stands today relatively unchanged from its 1960s era iteration. Photo by HHM.



Figure 136. Bun 'N' Barrel, a drive-in restaurant along Austin Highway in San Antonio. This is one of the few intact automobile-related businesses that remains along the thoroughfare since the period before IH 35 was constructed, causing many owners of travel-related businesses along the older segments of the Meridian to close or relocate their establishments. Bun 'N' Barrel opened in the 1950s and still has the mid-century Modern style features such as contrasting colors, a low-pitch angled roof and sharp-angled metal supports.

spawned a new generation of businesses (see *Figure 137*, to follow), especially along Broadway Street. A significant concentration of buildings that housed these businesses still survive and provide a tangible link to the past. The city also boasts many historic motels, gas stations, and restaurants, many of which were adapted to new uses as the tourist traffic shifted to the new freeways. The changing land-use patterns are particularly visible along Austin Highway, which was once lined with a variety of auto-related businesses. However, as the city has continued to grow in recent years, new strip shopping centers and large franchise retailing operations have led to the demolition of many of the historic auto-related businesses on this segment of the highway. A few notable survivors, such as Bun 'N' Barrel and the Phillips 66 service station have nonetheless survived.

See *Figure 137* for a map showing the Meridian Highway and its successors through San Antonio over time.

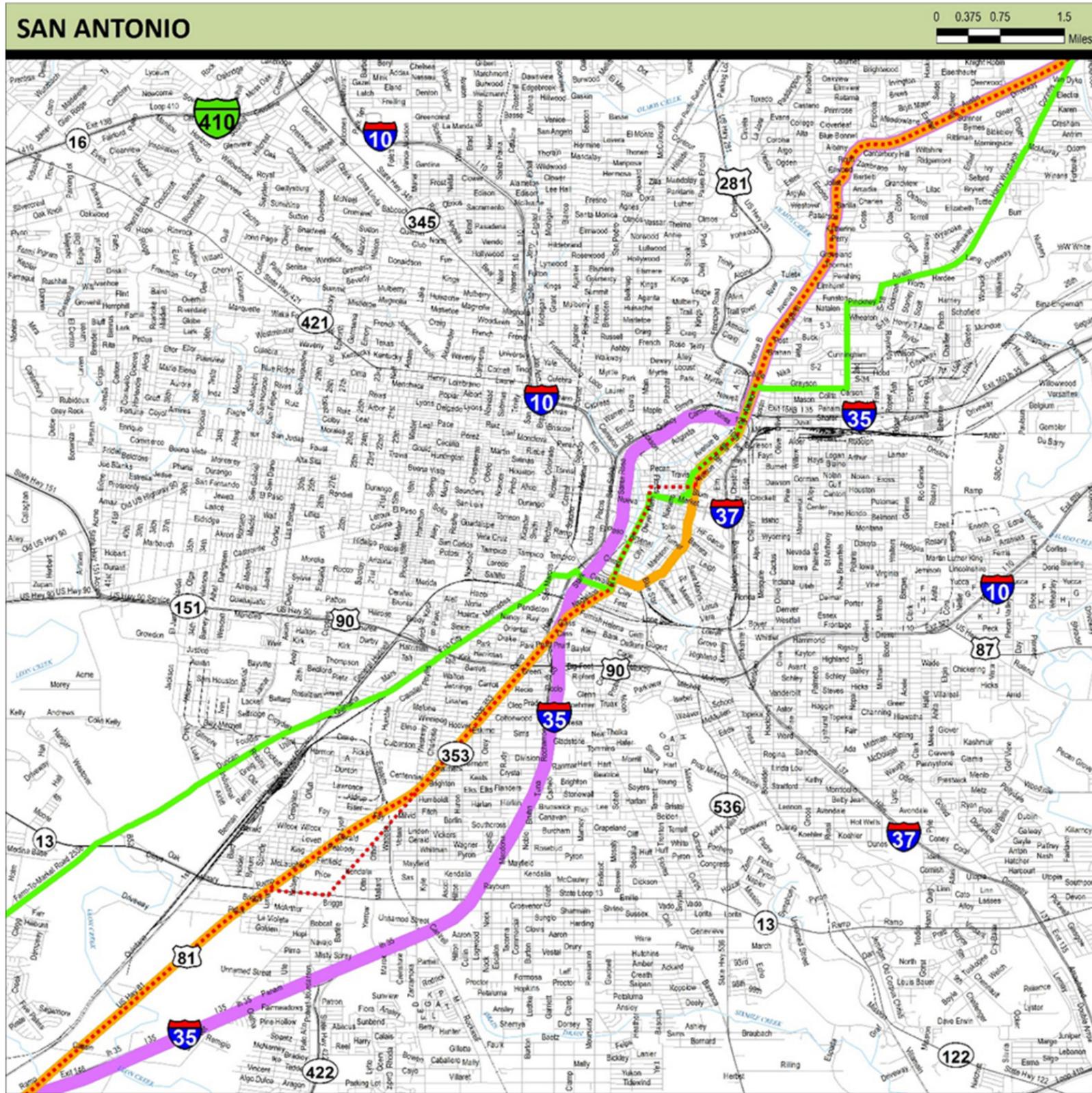


Figure 137. Map showing the Meridian Highway and its successors through San Antonio over time.

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²⁶⁹ Renee Benn, *Report for Historical Studies: Austin to San Antonio Post Road, 1915*, Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, Texas, 2015, pp. 3-4.

²⁷⁰ "May Light Portion of Meridian Road," *San Antonio Light* [San Antonio], 23 February 1916: 6.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² "1916-1941 Era," Kelly Heritage, <http://www.kellyheritage.org/1916-1941era.asp> (accessed May 22, 2015).

²⁷³ TxDOT control section job (CSJ) logs show the construction of the Meridian Highway through Alamo Heights in 1934.

²⁷⁴ "Rail Men to Hear S.A. Traffic Plans," *San Antonio Light* [San Antonio], 28 January 1945: 13.

²⁷⁵ "Returned Service Men Can Vote on Bond Issues Without Poll Tax Receipt," *San Antonio Express* [San Antonio], 13 September 1945: 9.

²⁷⁶ "Low Cost to Individual Owner Emphasized in Tax Analysis," *San Antonio Express* [San Antonio], 19 September 1945: 11.

²⁷⁷ "City Bond Election Contest Notice is Served on Mayor Mauermann," *San Antonio Express* [San Antonio], November 2, 1945: 17.

²⁷⁸ "Bond Compromise Offered to Mayor," *San Antonio Express* [San Antonio], 29 November 1945: 13; "Tiner Becomes President of Planning Board," *San Antonio Express* [San Antonio], 4 December 1945: 19.

²⁷⁹ "'Displaced' Set Up New Colony," *San Antonio Light*, 12 June 1947: 21.

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