

Texas Historical Commission Staff (ECB) 12/20/99; rev 3/1/00

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post  
Comal County (Job #14799)

Location: East end of Faust Street, at Guadalupe River, New Braunfels

### **FAUST STREET BRIDGE**

CARAVANS CARRYING SUPPLIES TO SPANISH MISSIONS IN EAST TEXAS AND OTHER TRAVELERS CROSSED THE GUADALUPE RIVER ON EL CAMINO REAL (THE KING'S HIGHWAY) NEAR THIS SITE IN THE 18TH CENTURY. IT SOMETIMES TOOK WEEKS FOR FLOODWATERS TO SUBSIDE SO TRAVELERS COULD CROSS. IN 1887, THE COMAL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT CONTRACTED WITH THE KING IRON BRIDGE COMPANY OF OHIO TO BUILD A HIGH WATER BRIDGE OVER THE GUADALUPE RIVER.

AMONG THE LAST WROUGHT IRON BRIDGES BUILT IN TEXAS AND ONE OF THE FIRST LONG-TERM TOLL-FREE STRUCTURES COMPLETED OVER A MAJOR WATERWAY IN THE STATE, THIS MONUMENTAL TRUSS STRUCTURE EXTENDS MORE THAN 640 FEET IN LENGTH. IT IS COMPRISED OF TWO MAIN SPANS, KNOWN AS PRATT (WHIPPLE) TRUSS SPANS, FLANKED BY TWO SMALLER SPANS. THE WHIPPLE WAS A VARIATION ON THE MORE TYPICAL PRATT TRUSS STYLE BRIDGE DESIGN WHICH ENJOYED BRIEF BUT EXPLOSIVE POPULARITY IN THE MID- TO LATE-19TH CENTURY. THESE TRUSSES ARE CONNECTED BY A PIN-AND-HANGER SYSTEM, WHICH WAS THE COMMON METHOD OF THE TIME. THE SPANS ARE SUPPORTED BY OVAL-SHAPED MASONRY PIERS WITH RUSTICATED STONEMWORK AND POINTED, OR "CUT-WATER," ENDS.

IN 1917, THE TEXAS HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT DESIGNATED THE FAUST STREET BRIDGE TO SERVE AS A MAJOR CROSSING FOR ALL TRAFFIC BETWEEN AUSTIN AND SAN ANTONIO ON STATE HIGHWAY 2, FORMERLY THE AUSTIN-SAN ANTONIO POST ROAD. IN 1934, A NEW CONCRETE HIGHWAY BRIDGE WAS ERECTED. THE FAUST STREET BRIDGE CONTINUED TO SERVE LOCAL TRAFFIC UNTIL IT WAS DAMAGED BY FIRE IN 1979.

ITS UNIQUE DESIGN, USING A COMBINATION OF PRATT AND WHIPPLE TRUSS TYPES, AND ITS WROUGHT IRON CONSTRUCTION PLACE THE FAUST STREET BRIDGE AMONG THE IMPORTANT HISTORIC BRIDGES IN THE STATE.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK-1999

## Faust Street Bridge

For more than a hundred years before the founding of New Braunfels, caravans from Mexico hauling supplies to the Spanish Missions in East Texas crossed the Guadalupe River at the foot of present Nacogdoches Street. If a caravan arrived while the river was at flood stage, it waited, sometimes weeks, for the waters to subside. This route, named King's Highway or Camino Real, was blazed in 1691 by Domingo Teran de los Rios as a direct route from Monclova to the Spanish missions established among the Indians of East Texas.<sup>1</sup>

In April 1887 the Comal County Commissioner's Court opened sealed bids for the first high-water bridge to be constructed in the county. The location selected by the Commissioners was within feet of the Guadalupe River crossing of the old San Antonio Road (or El Camino Real). The contract for construction of the bridge was awarded to King Iron Bridge Co. of Cleveland, Ohio for the low bid of \$25,600. On December 27th and 28th of the same year the court formally accepted the bridge. The total cost of the bridge, including land for right-of-way, trusses, piers and engineering costs was \$33,269.<sup>2</sup>

The Court also adopted the rules regulating the traffic over the bridge: Driving live-stock over the bridge was prohibited. A sign hung at center overhead read: "WALK YOUR HORSES OR BE FINED \$5". By 1912 another sign was added, which read "AUTOMOBILE SPEED LIMIT OVER GUADALUPE RIVER BRIDGE 5 MILES PER HOUR".<sup>1</sup>

At the time of its opening the bridge was one of the first permanent "toll-free" structures completed over a major waterway in Texas.

Most major bridges built during the 1880's were built by privately funded bridge corporations which charged tolls or fees to cover construction and maintenance expenses of the bridge. The county's investment in the opening of a "free bridge" across the Guadalupe was a testament to the county's prosperity and civic-mindedness. The bridge served as a major crossing for all traffic between Austin to San Antonio from 1887 to 1934. In 1917 the newly created Texas Highway Department designated the structure to serve as part of State Highway 2, the predecessor route to US 81 and IH 35. The bridge accommodated highway traffic between Dallas-Austin-San Antonio until 1934 when the highway department completed a "new" concrete arch highway bridge. The bridge, then referred to as the "Faust Street Bridge" served local traffic until 1978 when it was closed due to fire damage. The bridge is important for its long history serving transportation needs in the region and for its role as a state highway bridge from 1917 to 1934. The monumental structure has additional significance as one of few early landmarks surviving along the Old San Antonio Road.<sup>3</sup>

The bridge is also a rare type structure that is an extremely significant engineering accomplishment for its time. It is one of a very small number of large, multiple-span Whipple truss bridges remaining in the country and is the most complex and intact example of a Whipple truss roadway bridge surviving in Texas. While six Whipple roadway trusses remain in the state, the Faust Street Bridge is the only multiple-span example surviving at its original site. In addition, four of the five other Whipple trusses have either been relocated, damaged or severely altered.<sup>3</sup>

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## FAUST STREET BRIDGE, N

By Barbara Stocklin, T.E.

The Faust Street bridge was constructed by King Iron and Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio in 1887. Comal County considered three proposals for the bridge at its April 5, 1887, commissioners court meeting. King Iron and Bridge Company submitted the low bid of \$25,600 and was awarded the contract. According to the Comal County Commissioners Court Minutes, the total cost of the bridge, including land for right-of-way, trusses, piers and engineering costs, came to \$33,269.

This monumental truss structure extends more than 640 feet in length across the Guadalupe River in New Braunfels. The structure is comprised of two, central 220-foot double-intersection Pratt (or Whipple) through truss spans flanked by two smaller 100-foot Pratt through trusses (one on each side). The truss members are connected by a pin-and-hanger system which was the common connection method for trusses in the late-19th century. The spans are supported by massive oval-shaped masonry piers with articulated stone work and pointed or lancet-shaped ends. Pedestrian metal railing, which is cantilevered off of one side of the truss, was added in 1947. In 1978, a fire caused some damage to the structure and it was closed. Overall, however, the bridge survives in relatively good condition with few alterations.

The county opened the bridge as a toll-free structure in late 1887. At the time of its opening, the Faust Street Bridge was one of the first permanent "toll-free" structures completed over a major waterway in Texas. Most major bridges built during the 1880s were built by privately-funded bridge corporations which charged tolls or fees to cover construction and maintenance expenses of the bridge. The county's \$33,269 investment in the opening of a "free bridge" across the Guadalupe was a testament to the county's prosperity and civic-mindedness at the time.

The county built the Faust Street bridge within feet of the Guadalupe River crossing of the Old San Antonio Road (or Camino Real). The county selected the Faust Street site for the bridge because of its strategic location on this important regional route. Prior to the completion of the bridge in 1887, travelers often waited for long periods of time at this crossing until the waters were low enough to ford. According to the *History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas, 1844-1946*, agricultural products were brought to the New Braunfels market over the Faust Street Bridge from as far away as Johnson City. The bridge also served as a major crossing for all traffic between Austin to San Antonio from 1887 to 1934. In 1917, the newly created Texas Highway Department designated the structure to serve as part of State Highway 2, the predecessor route to US 81 and IH 35. The Faust Street Bridge accommodated highway traffic between Dallas-Austin-San Antonio until 1934 when the highway department completed a "new" concrete arch highway bridge at the foot of San Antonio Street. The Faust Street Bridge then served local traffic until 1978 when it was closed due to fire damage. The Faust Street bridge is important for its long history serving transportation needs in the region and for its role as a state highway bridge from 1917 to 1934. The monumental structure has additional

significance as one of few early landmarks surviving along the Old San Antonio Road.

The Faust Street Bridge is also a rare type structure that is an extremely significant engineering accomplishment for its time. The structure is one of a very small number of large, multiple-span Whipple truss bridges remaining in the country and is the most complex and intact example of a Whipple truss roadway bridge surviving in Texas. While six Whipple roadway trusses remain in the state, the Faust Street Bridge is the only multiple-span example surviving at its original site. In addition, four of the five other Whipple trusses have either been relocated, damaged or severely altered. The Faust Street Bridge's two 220-foot Whipple spans are also extremely lengthy and add to the bridge's overall significance.

The Whipple is an unusual truss type that was popular for only a short period of time during the mid- to late-19th century. The Whipple is a variant of the Pratt, a more common 19th century truss type which featured horizontal upper and lower chords joined by a complex system of vertical compression posts and diagonal tension members. The Whipple truss is similar to the Pratt except that each of the diagonals cross two vertical posts instead of one, creating a stronger and more rigid truss framework. The Whipple or Double-intersection Pratt truss was patented by Squire Whipple, an American inventor, in 1847 and almost immediately gained popularity as the preferred truss type for long railroad bridges. The Whipple design was also used, to a much lesser extent, for roadway bridges with spans of 150 to 300 feet. Because the Whipple was more expensive to construct than other types of trusses, it was used only for highway crossings carrying extremely heavy traffic loads. The Whipple truss reached its height of popularity in the 1880s, but by the turn of the century it had been replaced by the Parker, which was the predominant long-span truss type in the United States through the 1940s.

A very similar Whipple truss structure -- also built by King Iron Bridge Company -- survives in Allegan, Michigan. This 1886 single-span Whipple truss bridge is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has been recognized as a National Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers. The Faust Street Bridge is at least as significant as the Allegan, Michigan, structure and would also qualify for these historic designations.

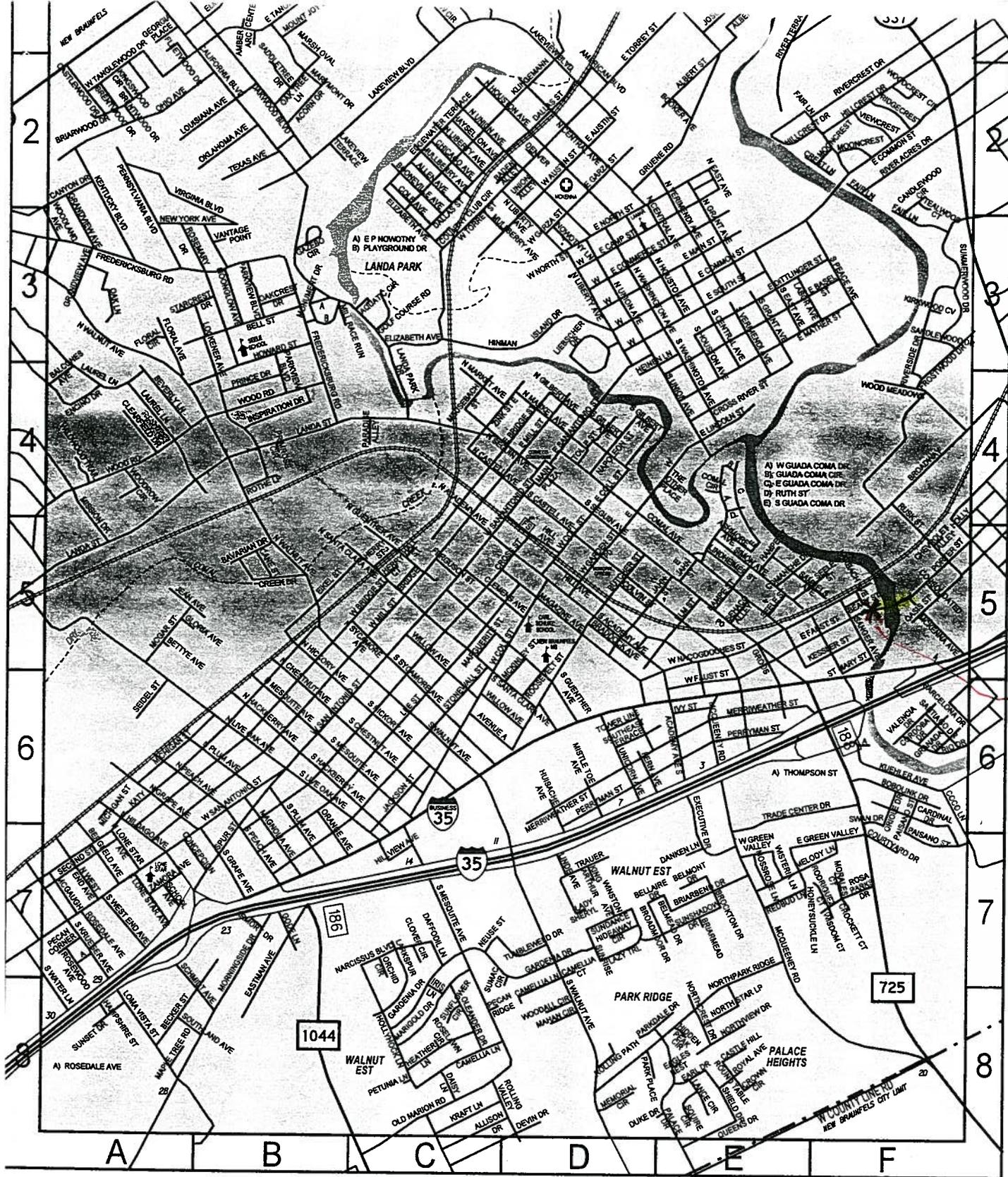
While the bridge's Whipple trusses are important, the structure is also significant as one of the earliest and largest truss bridges surviving in the state. The Faust Street Bridge is one of less than twenty trusses in the state constructed prior to 1890, and is the longest, most complex and important of these examples. It is also the only early truss bridge in the state with multiple spans built as part of the structure's original construction. The bridge's use of Whipple trusses, its combination of truss types (Whipple and Pratt), and its distinctive masonry piers make it one of the most important historic bridges in the state.

The Faust Street Bridge is also significant for employing wrought iron truss members. Wrought iron was first employed in trusses during the 1840s, and by the mid 19th century American rolling mills were using this material to generate a wide variety of structural shapes, such as I-beams, angles, plates and other members. By the 1890s, however, steel had replaced wrought

iron as the universal material for trusses. Because Texas experienced its most rapid expansion in the decades following 1900, it is not surprising that virtually all of the 1,200 truss bridges surviving in the state were constructed from steel -- rather than wrought iron. The Faust Street Bridge is one of a relatively small number of wrought iron bridges ever constructed in the state, and survives as a very rare survivor of this technology for Texas.

Located within the city limits of New Braunfels, the Faust Street Bridge has tremendous potential as a pedestrian structure and tourist destination. A good precedent for the Faust Street Bridge project is the Waco Suspension Bridge which the city of Waco rehabilitated in the mid 1970s. This monumental bridge accommodates pedestrians in a downtown park and serves as a major landmark and tourist draw for the city of Waco.

\*\*Information compiled from local histories and TxDOT's Historic Bridge Inventory files.



SEE MAP # 459  
*Site of map*

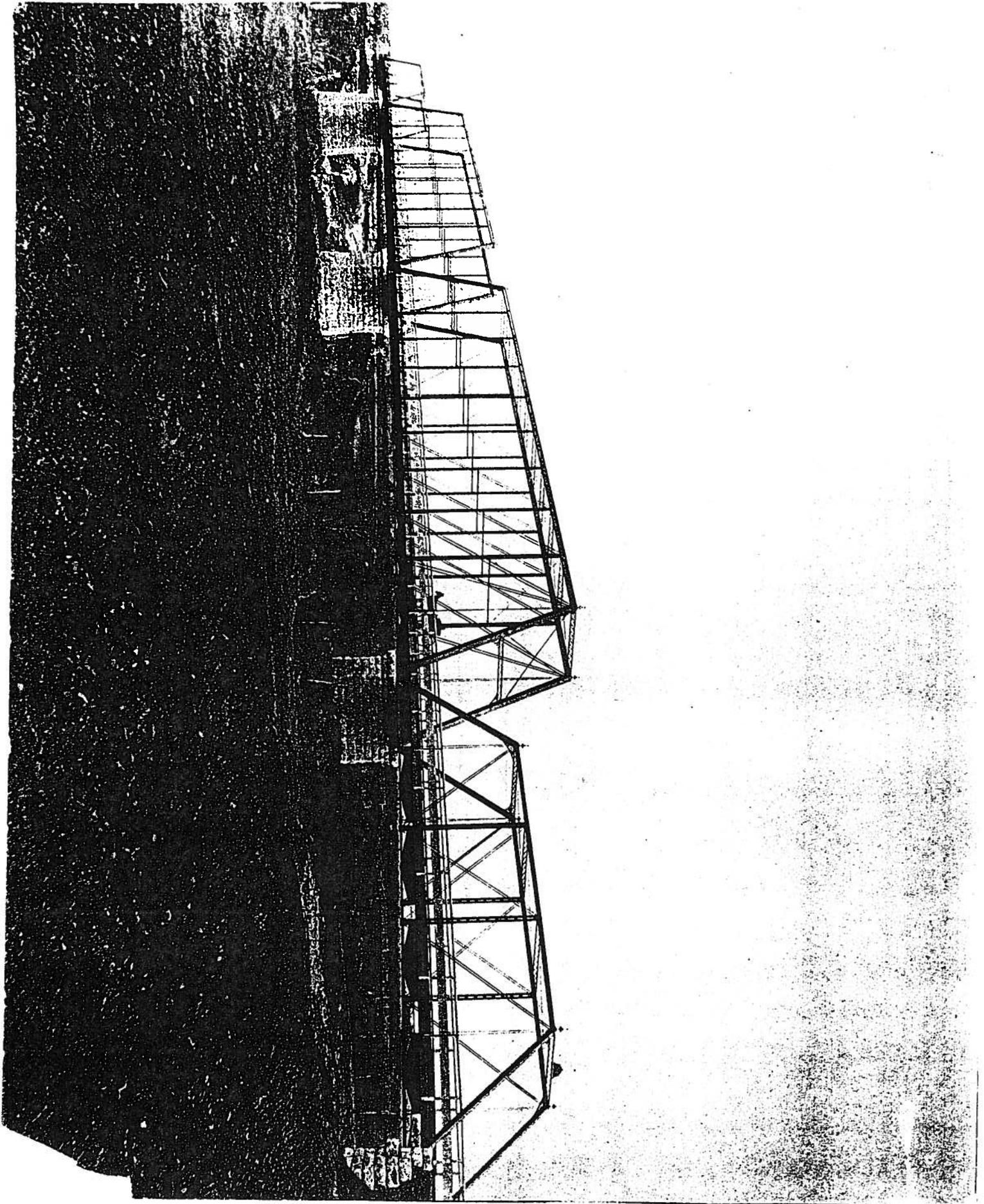
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SEE MAP # 490

Faust Street Bridge is over the Guadalupe River, connecting East end of Faust Street with Porter Street at its corner with McKenna Avenue; as marked above.

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14799





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I approve this text as written.

Please consider the revisions as noted on this copy.

*Michelle Oatman*  
(signature) <sup>cc:tc</sup> Sec

*Michelle Oatman*  
cc:tc  
Chairman

*Danny Scheel*





