

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1414

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Bankhead Highway Historic District

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Texarkana-Dallas-El Paso; Broadway of America; State Highway No. 1; US 80

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: approx. 4 mi. sections of US 80 contained w/in Taylor Co. NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

CITY OR TOWN: Abilene, Merkel

VICINITY: X

STATE: Texas

CODE: TX

COUNTY: Taylor

CODE: 441

ZIP CODE: N/A

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lawler Russell
Signature of certifying official

10-13-98
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

X entered in the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

Linda McClelland

12/03/98

 determined eligible for the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public-local

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: District

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	0	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	8	0 STRUCTURES
	5	0 OBJECTS
	13	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: TRANSPORTATION: Road-related

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: TRANSPORTATION: Road-related

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: No Style

MATERIALS:

FOUNDATION	N/A
WALLS	N/A
ROOF	N/A
OTHER	Concrete; Asphalt; Granite

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-17).

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Bankhead Highway Historic District
vic. Abilene/Merkel, Taylor County, Texas

DESCRIPTION

The Bankhead Highway Historic District is a linear district consisting of four discontinuous sections of the c.1917 route in Taylor County, Texas. Each section includes slightly less than one mile of 18-foot wide concrete pavement laid in linear segments 12 feet in length connected by expansion joints that date from c.1927-1929. All four sections also include related structures and objects that support a typical highway system. The district is identified as Sections A, B, C, beginning at the western boundary of Taylor County and ending at the city limits of Abilene, and Section D, on the eastern edge of Abilene along the northern end of the Abilene airport. Sections A and C are large "S" curves that slope slightly under 20-foot wide concrete railroad underpasses with concrete girder spans and drainage culverts dated "1928" in large block numbers. Sections B and D are straight thoroughfares following the flat topography of the region. Section B is parallel to the Texas and Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific Railroad) tracks. Several small concrete box culverts allow for dry creek drainage along Sections A, B, and C. The sections received periodic improvements roughly every ten years until abandoned as a primary roadway in the late 1950s, but now vary in condition from excellent to poor. Section C is also noted for a 1936 Texas Centennial marker on granite base that sits on a landscaped roadside turnout approximately 500 feet south of the Texas and Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific Railroad).

Taylor County lies in the plains of West Texas. Although largely flat dry land, a range of moderate sized hills known as the Callahan Divide runs from the southeast to northwest providing a geographic break between the Brazos and Colorado rivers. A number of small creeks feed into the rivers, but they are dry creeks most of the year. The landscape is noted by the scarcity and groupings of vegetation which mostly consists of mesquite trees and occasionally pecan, elm, and hackberry trees. Some groupings of trees contain dense underbrush of cacti and scrub grasses sometimes impenetrable by cattle and humans.

The Bankhead Highway, also called the Texarkana-Dallas-El Paso Highway, Broadway of America, State Highway No. 1, and US 80, runs east to west near the northern boundary of Taylor County, except for a small segment of the northern route that enters the county at its northeast corner from Albany. The Bankhead divides west of Fort Worth near Palo Pinto, Texas, with the northern route going through Breckenridge and Albany, and southern route going through Cisco and Strawn. The Taylor County route consists of a total of approximately 75 miles of roadway today largely parallel Interstate 20 and the Texas and Pacific Railroad (now the Union Pacific Railroad). Most of the route runs through rural areas and the small towns of Tye, Merkel, and Trent, west of Abilene. The exception is the roadway that winds through the city itself and the short segment going through Elmdale on the eastern boundary of Taylor County and on to Baird in Callahan County. These four sections are the only pieces dating from the first paving of the route in 1927-1929 that have not been replaced or suffered a significant loss of integrity.

The Bankhead Highway Historic District is a linear district consisting of four discontinuous sections in Taylor County, Texas. Each section includes slightly less than one mile that date from c. 1927-1929, as well as related

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structures and objects. The district is identified as Sections A, B, C, beginning at the western boundary of Taylor County and ending at the city limits of Abilene, and Section D, on the eastern edge of Abilene along the northern end of the Abilene airport (see maps).

Section A

Section A is .6 miles of highway west of Trent approximately 28 miles west of Abilene in Taylor County, Texas. The section begins at the county line of Nolan and Taylor and follows a well-defined right-of-way in a large "S" curve until it intersects with the access road to Interstate 20. The right-of-way is devoid of major vegetation and marked by barbed wire fences, telephone poles and lines, and large vegetation on both sides of the 18-foot road. A slight rise in the center of the roadway denotes an unmarked center stripe that then slopes down to unimproved shoulders. Toward the eastern end of Section A, a 20-foot wide underpass with 23-foot concrete girder spans claims the only significant change in topography or road variation. The south side of the concrete span is stepped down in large concrete blocks of increasing size from the railroad track to the roadway; the north side is sloped downward in what appears as large concrete triangles from the road. Both sides are slightly angled outward toward concrete drainage culverts. The north side is inscribed with the date of "1928" in large block numbers in the upper west portion of the angle. The south side of the girder is now heavily draped with cacti and scrub grass that ties the highway feature to the surrounding landscape. A three-foot concrete obelisk is located southeast of the girder on a small rise within the right-of-way. The obelisk carries the federal highway shield and the reference numbers to the Federal Aid Project (FAP-444) responsible for the construction of the concrete highway and underpass in 1928. This sections ends after completing the curve and intersecting with a new roadway that provide access to Interstate 20 to the immediate north. Section A is maintained in good condition by Taylor County and is used only by nearby farmers and ranchers. Photographs #3-6 illustrate Section A.

Section B

Section B consists of .5 miles of the Bankhead Highway from the eastern city limits of Tye to approximately seven miles west of Abilene city limits. This section is approximately 200 feet north of the Texas and Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific Railroad) which it follows exactly parallel. The 18-foot roadway is level with a slight rise in the middle that is highlighted with a center stripe. Roughly 3-foot asphalt shoulders flank the roadway. The full right-of-way is visible from the road and defined by the railroad tracks on the south and a fence line and vegetation on the north. A small concrete culvert allows drainage under the section. Section B begins at the city limits of Tye and continues to the intersection of the Interstate 20 access road. This is the only section of the highway that visibly retains the straight linear relationship with the railroad common to most of the early highway in Taylor County and West Texas and emphasizes the historical associations between the rail and highway routes. Section B is in good condition and is the most used portion as it provides direct entry into Tye. Photograph #1 and Photograph #2 are historical views of Section B.

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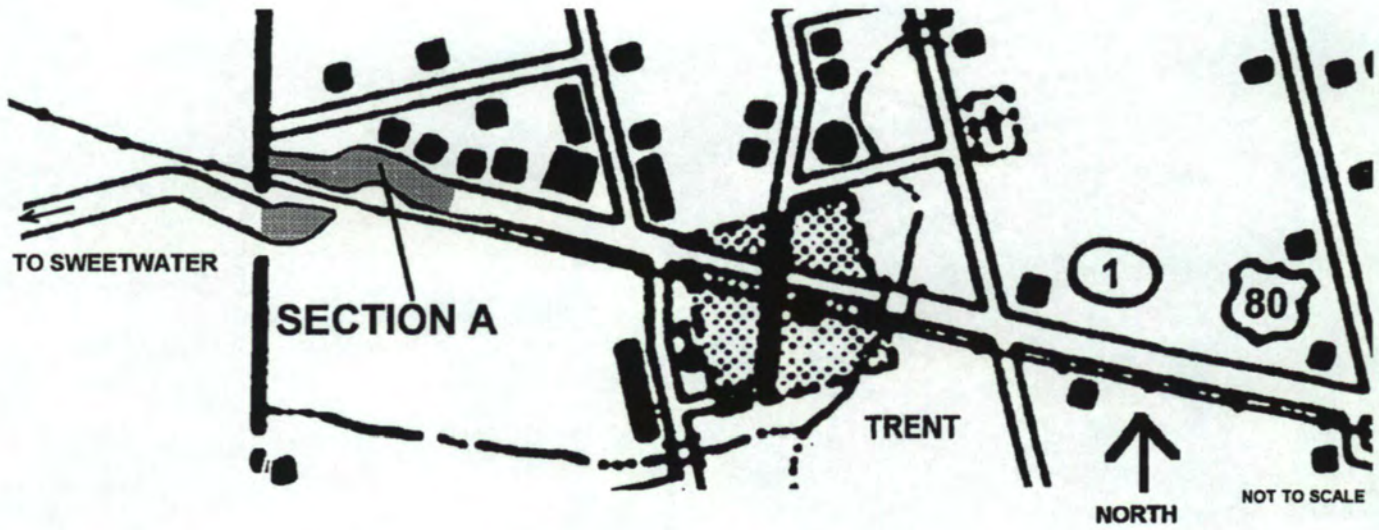


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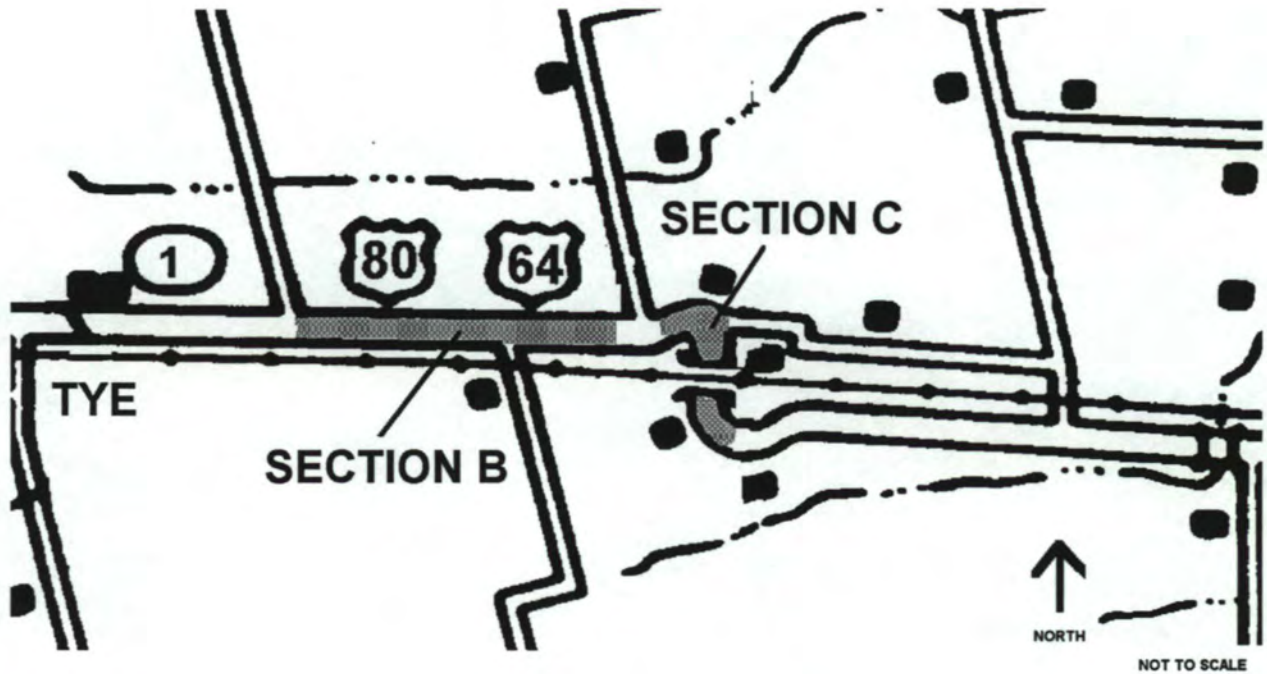


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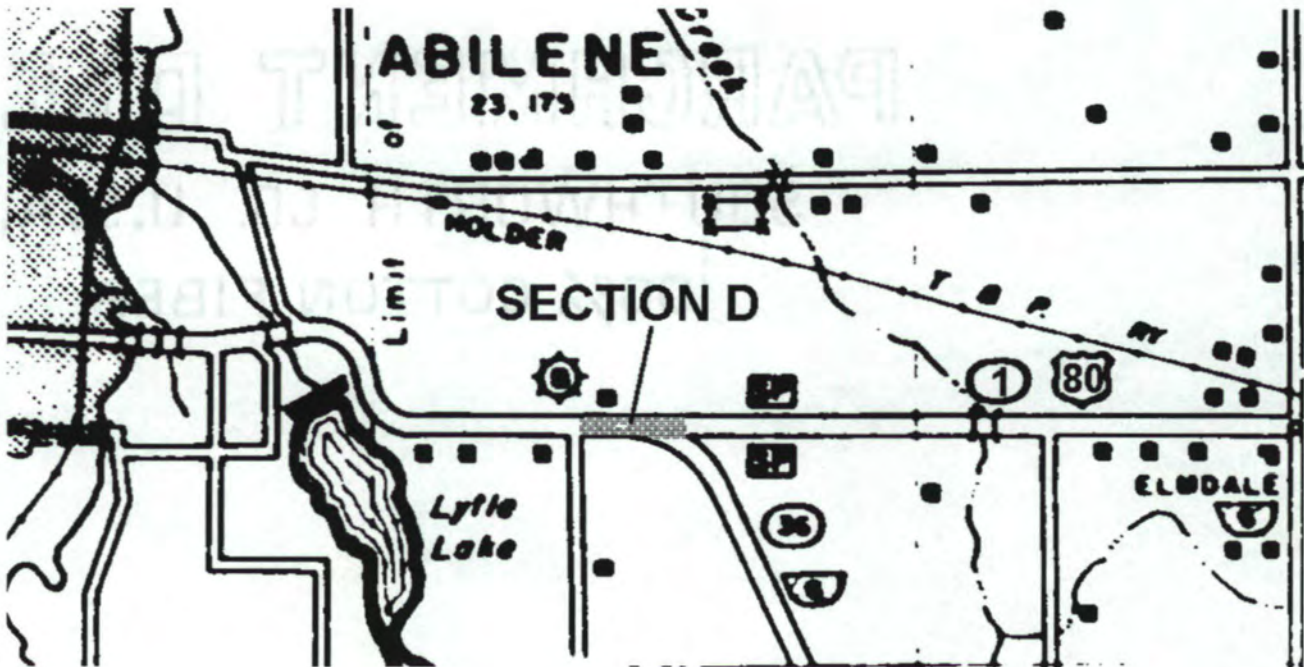


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Section C

Section C is .8 miles of the Bankhead Highway beginning at the intersection of Interstate 20 and continuing to the Abilene city limits. This section is detached from Section B by .2 miles of interstate highway and access road. Like Section A, the section is an extended "S" curve that follows the railroad and then descends through an underpass and continues its curve to the intersection of new highway accessing Interstate 20 and known as Business I-20 (see illustration of curve). The right-of-way is largely clear and devoid of excessive vegetation, thus mesquite trees and fence lines denote the boundaries on the north as the rail tracks do on the south. Through this section, four small concrete obelisks are visible along the north side and historically marked the right-of-way. The 18-foot road rises in the center though no center stripe is evident. Small cracks in the pavement indicate expansion joints and reflect years of wear. Near the middle of this section, a small concrete culvert allows drainage under the roadway. A second 3-foot obelisk is imbedded in a small rise to the northwest of the underpass. Vandals, however, recently removed the federal highway shield and tilted the marker. The underpass consists of a 37-foot concrete girder that slopes down to the roadway and is marked by large angular concrete piers (see illustration of elevations and plan). Large block numbers stating 1928 are in the upper half of the northwest pier. Double drainage culverts are on the north side of the underpass where the block numbers "1928" again mark the date of completion. The underpass is painted in sections with alternating yellow and black angled bands and small reflecting lights are found on each corner. These are historic highway signals to attract the attention of motorists. Southeast of the underpass, approximately 500 feet, is a narrow graveled automobile pull-out for a 1936 Texas Centennial marker. The marker rests on a concrete and granite base with a slanted top. Vandals also recently removed the inscription plate, but the round medallion with encircled star are intact. The marker may have been relocated from an area to the south when Interstate 20 was constructed, but this is not yet verified. Section C is in fair condition and used primarily by nearby ranchers or motorists commuting to Abilene. Photographs #7-14 illustrate Section C.

Section D

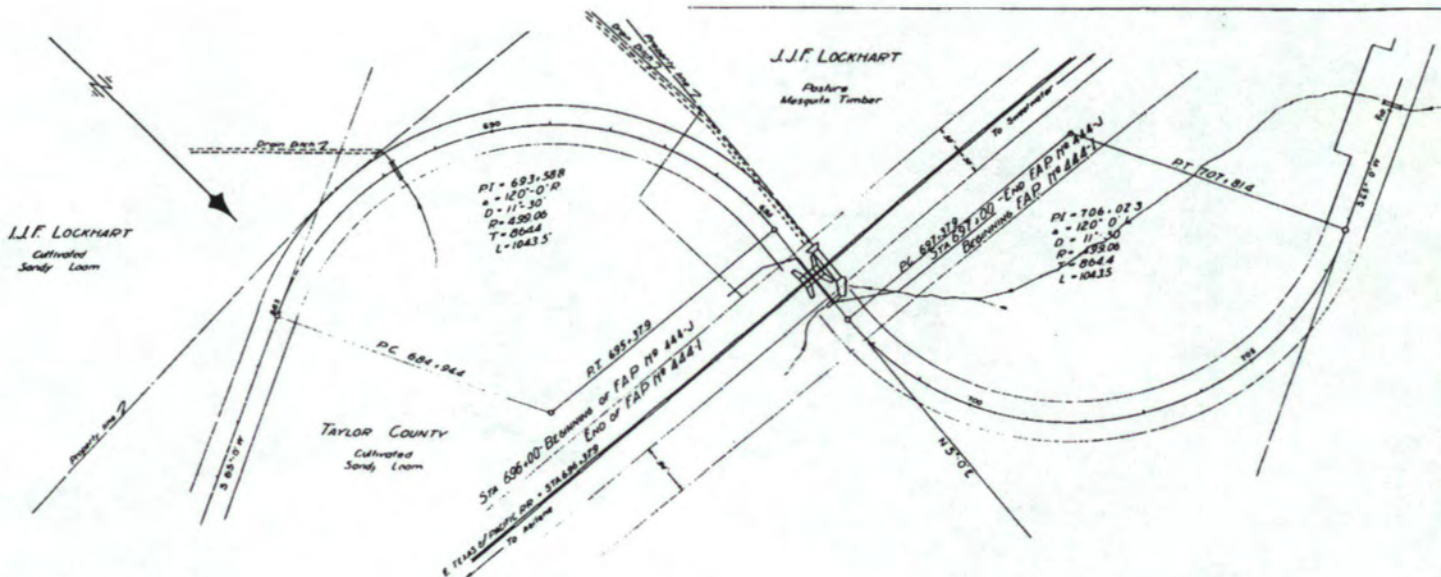
Section D consists of .4 miles of the Bankhead Highway east of the city along the northern end of the City of Abilene airport and immediately south of the old Abilene airport (now county fair grounds). This section is a flat straight road that was abandoned when the city acquired the airport land after the construction of Interstate 20. New city streets cut off the section on the west and east allowing no public access. Despite the lack of access, the 18-foot wide road is a strong visual presence and the link to the disconnected route is clearly discernible when standing on the section. The center of the roadway is still slightly elevated, and like the expansion joints, visible to the motorist. This section is owned by the City of Abilene and in poor condition. Section D is the only section of the Bankhead remaining east of Abilene. It is an important element to the district because it underscores the full extent of the original route across the county and through the city, it retains the historical connection between highways and early aviation centers during the 1930s, and it represents the highway and its construction on the flat plains typical of eastern Taylor County. Photograph #15 illustrates Section D.

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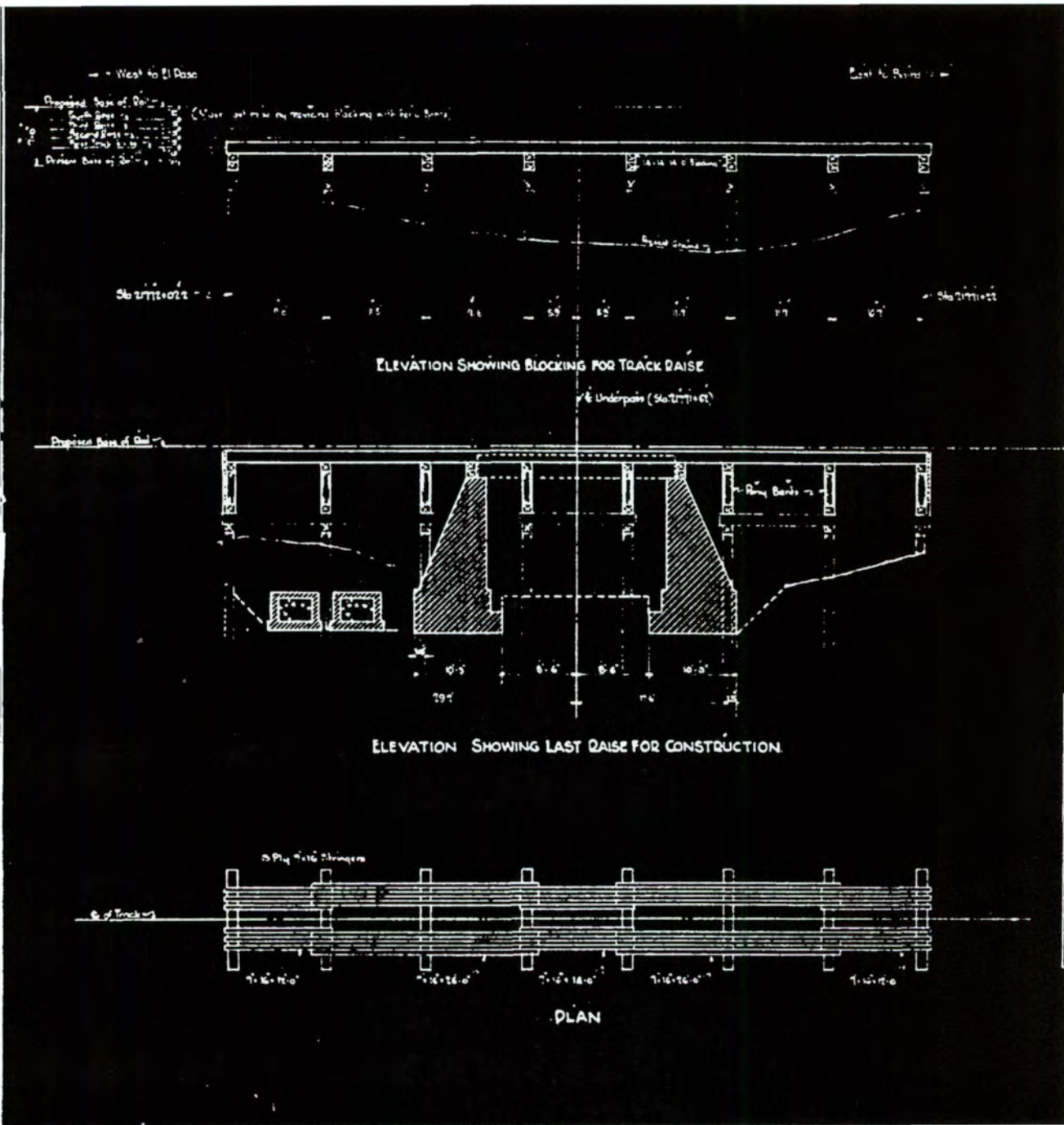


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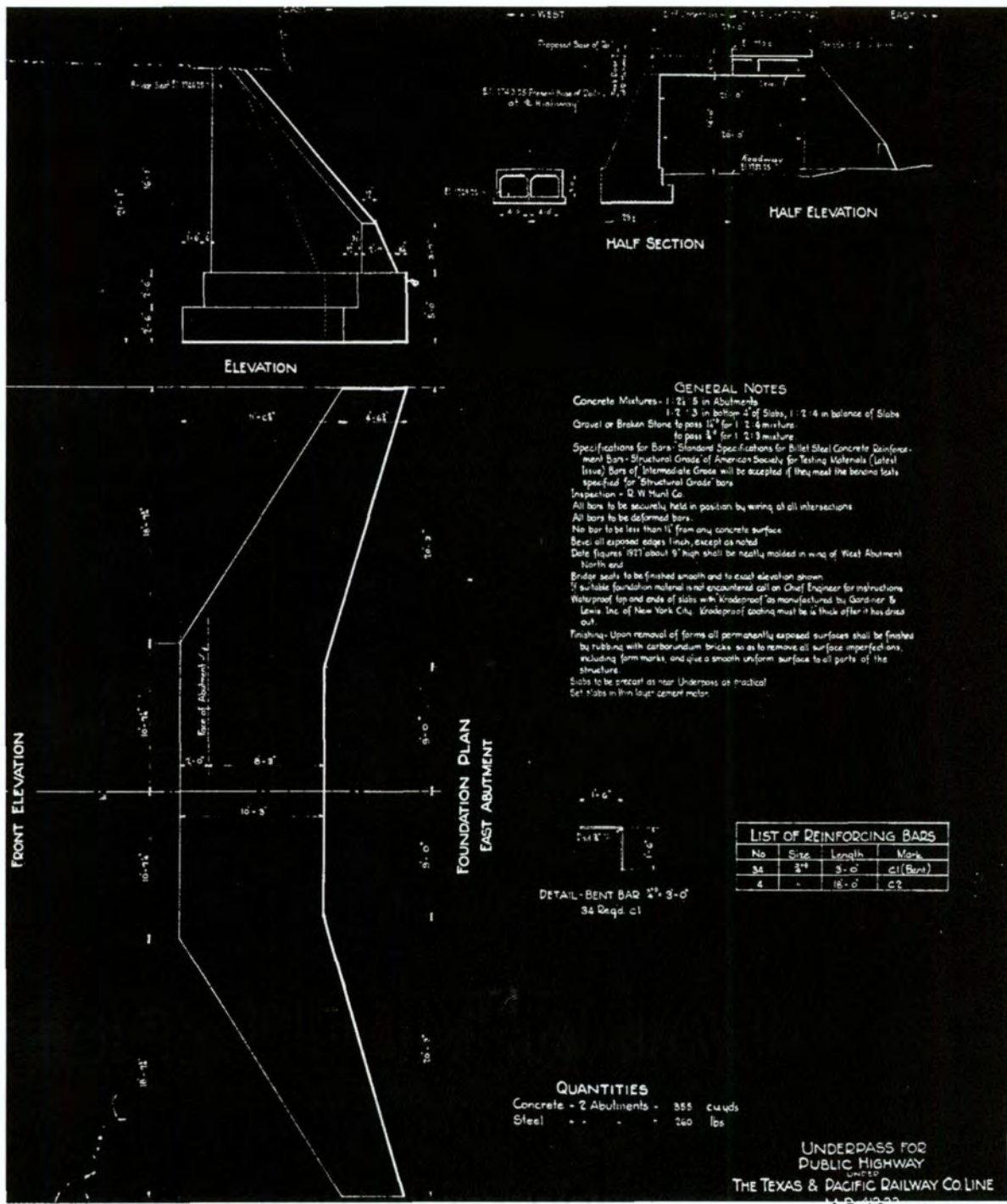


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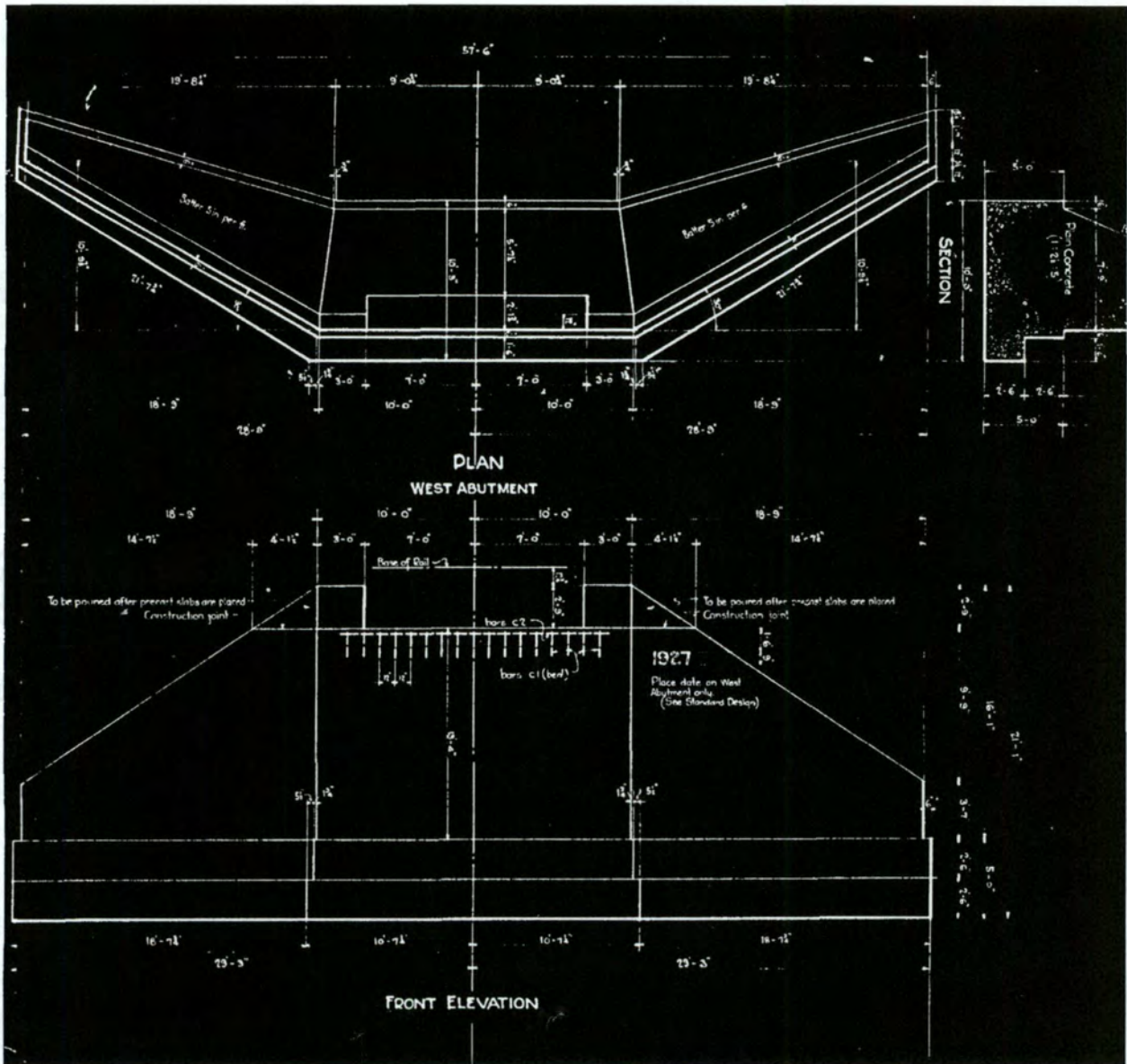
Sections A, B, C, and D of the Bankhead Highway in Taylor County are strong visual and tangible elements in the area landscape. Motorists experience a distinct change from modern (post 1956) transportation rights-of-way. Each of these sections provides a scale and feeling quite unlike the Interstate highway and roadways that supplanted and separate them. These sections, while discontinuous, combine to link a number of structures and objects united historically by plan and physical development.

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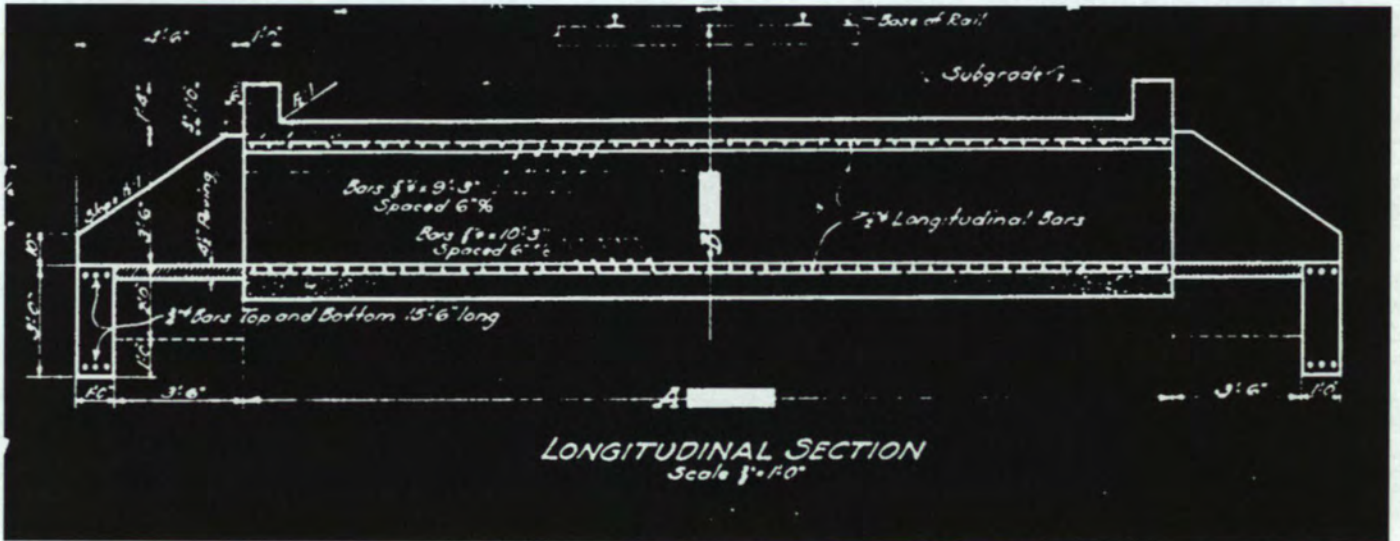


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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Transportation

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1927-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1927, 1936, 1956

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Texas Highway Department (engineer and builder)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-18 through 8-33).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-34).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bankhead Highway Historic District encompasses a number of resources dating from 1927 to 1956. Four discontinuous sections of the early highway form a district of four segments of 18-foot concrete road structures, two concrete underpasses (structures), and seven roadside objects. The Bankhead Highway was one of two east-west transcontinental highways to cross Texas and the only one in Taylor County. This highway, like the railroads of the late 19th century, made Abilene and the county accessible to other parts of the country and contributed to their economic livelihood. The highway is nationally associated with John Hollis Bankhead, Sr., who was responsible for the first federal act to support road development in 1917. It is being nominated at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Transportation. The thirteen Contributing elements in the district are the last surviving features of the historic highway in Taylor County.

Development of Transportation Infrastructure

During the final decades of the 19th century, the US Congress began to address transportation needs for an increasingly more industrialized economy and mobile population. The Civil War and extended period of legislated Reconstruction destroyed some and produced little public infrastructure to facilitate agricultural and economic development across the country. The infrastructure that was developed largely focused on public interests in the navigation of rivers and construction of adequate harbors and ports, and private interests in railroads. Congressmen from states with waterway and water access eagerly supported legislation to bolster facilities and expand capacity. From c. 1880 to 1920, large appropriations were allocated to states for intercoastal waterways, locks and dams, and other shipping facilities. Virtually no federal funds were appropriated for the development of roads, and few turn-of-the-century politicians mentioned the issue of good roads.

Parallel to the development of water facilities, public efforts focused on encouraging and supporting private railroad construction. Broad public support and largesse facilitated the construction of railroads across the country connecting many small towns and cities. The railroads significantly changed American lives. Rural residents, particularly farmers, greatly advanced in the ability to build agricultural markets and improve production with new technology delivered via the local railroad. One important link remained between the farmer and the railroad: good roads.

Roads at the turn of the century offered little to the traveler. They were narrow dirt pathways often poorly constructed by a team of mules and frequently not maintained. For farmers across the country, these roads created obstacles to efficient movement of goods to the rail lines. Poor roads hindered their economic advancement. Texas was no exception to these problems where only occasional efforts to improve roads

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appeared. Early travelers reported foot high stumps in the middle of roads and virtually impassable mud holes, creeks, and rivers.(1)

Good Roads Movement

The organized movement for good roads began with the promotions of the League of American Wheelman in the northeastern states. These early cyclists possessed political and monetary clout and initiated the need for good roads out of the need for improved bike paths. In spite of somewhat selfish motives, the cyclists identified farmers (especially in the South) as good allies and generated enough support to have Congress establish the Office of Roads Inquiry (ORI) in the Department of Agriculture in 1893.(2)

The good roads effort fit well into the political progressivism and populism of the late 19th century dependent on establishing a grass roots movement. Railroad companies recognized the problem of poor roads at the turn of the century and were among the first national supporters of good roads. In 1901-1902 the ORI and railroad companies sponsored Good Roads Train excursions to expose political leaders to the need for road improvements. B.F. Yoakum of the Frisco rail lines was one of the early boosters and organized several trips for Texas farmers and good roads enthusiasts to visit eastern states with good roads. He also helped to establish one of the early regional road organizations, the Southwestern Good Roads Association.(3) This became one of a number of organizations from the local to the national levels that focused on developing good roads. At the national level, the National Good Roads Association (NGRA) and United States Good Roads Association (USGRA) led the effort, though sometimes in opposing directions.

The first statewide meetings for good roads in Texas occurred in Houston in 1895. The initial organization declined over the next decade and in 1910 a new organization formed, the Texas Good Roads Association (TGRA). David E. Colp of San Antonio became an early leader as did William Bradburn an engineer from Houston. In addition to the state organization, Texas supported some thirty local organizations in 1912, and by 1914, over 126 local good roads clubs. Some of the primary supporters, and benefactors, of the good roads efforts were Texas' farmers. In 1912, Colonel Frank P. Holland, owner and publisher of the Dallas based *Farm and Ranch* and *Holland's Magazine* sponsored a "Farmers' Automobile Tour" making a triangle from Dallas, to San Antonio, Galveston, and back to Dallas. He offered \$1,000 as the first prize for drivers daring the unpaved

1. Various travel reports and Thomas Stutzenburg, "The History of Highway 75 in Texas," master of arts thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1954, pp. 1-3.

2. Howard Preston, "Good Roads Movement," *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, editors, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1989, pp. 22-23.

3. Erle, "Need for Good Roads," *The Texas Magazine*, January 1910, pp. 68-71; Roy Scott, "Land Use and American Railroads in the Twentieth Century," *Agricultural History*, Volume 53, No. 4, October 1979, pp. 683-685.

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roads on the route. Preceding and following the "tour", Holland frequently published articles emphasizing the "modern farmer" and his automobile.(4)

The good roads clubs joined another growing set of organizations focused on the automobile and its primarily recreational uses. Automobiles began appearing at the turn of the century in small numbers and unpredictable locations. While largely an urban and upper income membership, auto clubs made great contributions to the development of roads and especially marking routes from 1900 to 1920. Dallas, Houston, San Antonio (Bexar County), and Waco, all major cities at the turn of the century, supported clubs. The Dallas Automobile Club had its own headquarters and information center for auto tourists. Club membership sometimes overlapped with the good roads organizations, but both agitated for better roads. For all groups, however, the concept of what constituted a "good" road was little more than a well-drained, solid roadway with few obstacles. Their definition, however, was soon to change.

Highway Engineering

At the time of the good roads efforts, highway engineering and public highway administration were developing at a slow pace. Road surveyors and travelers thus classified roads in two categories, unimproved and improved, for the purposes of communicating to other travelers or public officials. Unimproved roads were simply discernible routes of varying widths, subject to little periodic road work, concern for topography, and articulated vehicular lanes. Improved roads varied significantly and were the focus of numerous debates of quality, durability, and costs. By the 1920s, highway engineering included standard construction principles and an understanding of highway materials.

Improved highways varied considerably, but it typically meant a good surfaced roadway with a solid underlying base and good drainage. The most basic improved road was dirt or clay leveled and tamped down with adequate drainage ditches on either side. These were the most common across Texas and the country. Graveled roads were a step up and included a uniform depth of gravel on a well prepared base. This road technique was sometimes referred to as "macadam" or "macadamized" after John Macadam, a 19th century English road builder of note. Other road techniques included oiled (generally a graveled road surface that has oil applied) and Tarviated (a trademark for a substance used in road building that binds paving material). In many parts of Texas, the only affordable road surface was dirt, sand, or clay. This was especially true in parts of West Texas where only improved sandy roads existed as late as 1920 and in the Gulf Coast region where broken shell surfaces were popular.

Concrete eventually became the most preferred road pavement. In spite of much larger costs, slower building, and the need for sophisticated engineering techniques, concrete roads were popular and durable driving surfaces.

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Oscar Dancy, long-time county judge of Cameron County, led Texas counties in the construction of concrete roads by the 1920s. He was one example of local political leadership thoroughly devoted to road construction and savvy enough to convince his electorate that concrete roads were a better investment than mere dirt ones. Dancy, however, sometimes compromised and built only one-lane concrete roads leading to the nickname of "Dancy sidewalks."

Road and Highway Financing

The extent of improved highways depended heavily on the amount of money spent and jurisdictional responsibility. State legislators formed many of the early state highway departments for the express purpose of implementing road construction using state revenues. New Jersey formed in 1891, followed by Massachusetts in 1892, California and Connecticut in 1895, and Maryland, New York, and Vermont in 1898. The Midwestern states formed after 1900 with most of the southern states organizing after 1910. The Texas Highway Department, now Texas Department of Transportation, formed in 1917 as one of the last states to recognize this need. Other states continued to pass the authority for highway construction to local jurisdictions, generally county governments, making it difficult to raise money and creating a "leap frogged" effect, i.e., one county improved roads and the next might not.

State and local governments also struggled over financing, adequate construction, and proper and adequate use of labor, in particular convict labor. By 1900, many Texas counties operated extensive road convict gangs or leased convicts to large employers. Road construction, such as breaking rocks for gravel, was hard and time consuming. Convicts seemed to many elected officials as a cheap form of labor for a widely popular idea. Convict road construction, however, became less popular as improper deals were made and the level of skill needed for road construction increased.

In response, local and later state governments turned to professional road building companies with whom they executed contracts. The higher costs of private contracting created new financing programs such as bonds and special dedicated road taxes. In some locations, an older form of road financing, toll roads, again became popular. All financing programs continued to make road construction a local issue through the mid 1920s. In Texas, county governments continued to be responsible for road building which left some less affluent areas of the state with many miles of unimproved roads.

The Rise of Highway Associations

The absence of state and national leadership for road development at the turn of the century led to the development of private highway associations. These groups borrowed heavily from the good roads organizers and automobile clubs for their memberships. They also aggressively sought local government and commercial club support. Highway associations made the critical and necessary leap to link local and state road

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development at a large scale, often national or multi-state. These groups acted like chambers of commerce but with the intention of raising membership dues for publishing long segments of road routes and promoting better roads. The earliest associations appeared in the East coast states before 1910. After the first decade, associations formed all over the country with some of the earliest being the Lincoln Highway (1913), National Old Trails Road (1912), and the Quebec-Miami International Highway (1911). By the mid 1920s, over 250 highway associations existed, some with overlapping routes.

The associations served two important functions. First, they increased public awareness of the need for good roads and the value of travel on interstate highways. Second, they enhanced local economies. The highways created regional economies with greater vertical integration. Thus, the farmer's products reached a larger market and found access to commodities trading centers miles away. New industries also emerged through local highway entrepreneurship. Lodging facilities, camps (public and private), eating establishments, and recreational businesses developed along these routes. The highway associations may be credited with the development of tourism across a large part of the country.

Over 40 named highways crossed Texas, several were national roads headquartered in Texas cities. The Meridian Highway, Old Spanish Trail, Puget Sound to Gulf Highway, King of Trails, Dallas-Canadian-Denver Highway, Colorado to Gulf Highway, Dixie Overland Trail, and Bankhead Highway were the major highways during the 1920s in Texas (see Trail and Highway Markings).

Federal and State Highway Development

The popularity of automobiles and auto travel generated more public demand for the federal government to support highway construction. The public effort eventually led to the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921. This legislation called for a system of interstate and intercounty roads to be designated as the Federal Aid Highway Road System. Most of the major named highways became part of this trunk-line system. In addition, state legislatures were required to match on a 50-50 basis the federal appropriations. While the federal government continued to support a federal road system, some state legislatures appropriated too little and thus the money available within the state failed to make a significant difference for road construction. The southern states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana offered especially poor roads well into the 1960s.(5)

Texas struggled with the highway financing problem. In 1927, the demand for good highways reached statewide proportion and the Legislature authorized a bond election for raising money to match the federal aid. Governor Dan Moody aggressively spoke for the bond issue citing that only 17,960 miles were designated as part of the state highway system (11,692 federal). His facts on road surfaces seemed embarrassing. Texas had

5. Preston, *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, p. 23.













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Bankhead Highway Historic District
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TRAIL & HIGHWAY MARKINGS

- 1 MISSISSIPPI RIVER SCENIC HIGHWAY BLACK ON WHITE 
- 2 JEFFERSON HIGHWAY BLUE BANDS, BLACK H 
- 3 POSTAL HIGHWAY BLACK AND WHITE 
- 4 STAR HIGHWAY RED, WHITE, BLUE 
- 5 ALBERT PIKE HIGHWAY RED, WHITE, BLUE, BLACK LETTERS 
- 6 DENISON-WHITESBORO-FORT WORTH-GULF WHITE, RED, WHITE, RED 
- 7 CENTRAL TEXAS HIGHWAY 
- 8 MERIDIAN HIGHWAY RED IN H ON WHITE 
- 9 ABO PASS HIGHWAY WHITE, RED, WHITE, RED 
- 10 SOUTHERN NATIONAL HIGHWAY BLACK ON WHITE 
- 11 F. F. F. HIGHWAY BLACK AND WHITE 
- 12 OLD SPANISH TRAIL RED, WHITE, YELLOW, BLACK LETTERS 
- 14 DEL RIO CANADIAN HIGHWAY

- 15 KANSAS-OKLAHOMA-TEXAS HIGHWAY BLACK, WHITE, BLACK 
- 16 NORTH TEXAS HIGHWAY 
- 17 EAST TEXAS HIGHWAY 
- 18 "X" ALL HIGHWAY BLACK ON WHITE 
- 19 CHOCTAW TRAIL 
- 20 SAN ANTONIO DEL RIO 
- 21 LONE STAR TRAIL WHITE, RED, WHITE, WHITE STAR 
- 24 KAN.-OKLA. TEXAS AND GULF HIGHWAY BLACK, YELLOW, BLACK 
- 25 PUGET SOUND TO GULF HIGHWAY BLACK, RED BAND 
- 26 MIDDLEBUSTER HIGHWAY RED, WHITE, RED 
- 27 KING OF TRAILS BLACK, YELLOW, ON WHITE 
- 37 DALLAS-CANADIAN-DENVER HIGHWAY WHITE AND BLACK 
- 44 BANKHEAD HIGHWAY YELLOW, WHITE, YELLOW, RED, BLACK LETTERS 
- 48 PERSHING WAY RED, WHITE, BLUE, BLACK P 
- 50 OZARK TRAIL WHITE, RED, BLUE, BLACK LETTERS 
- 51 LEE HIGHWAY RED, WHITE, BLUE 
- 56 ATLANTIC-PACIFIC HIGHWAY YELLOW, BLUE, YELLOW, YELLOW LETTERS 
- 57 STAPLETON ROADS WHITE BANDS, BLACK S FOR YELLOW 
- 60 OKLAHOMA-KANSAS-COLORADO HIGHWAY 11" W BANDS 
- 65 COLORADO TO GULF HY. BLACK AND WHITE BANDS
- 66 DIXIE OVERLAND TRAIL RED, WHITE, BLUE STAR
- 78 SOUTHWEST TRAILS BLACK ON WHITE
- 79 OKLAHOMA CITY - FT. SMITH AIR LINE BLACK, BLUE, WHITE
- 80 MINERAL WELLS TRAIL BLACK ON WHITE

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1,396 miles of concrete pavement and 8,214 miles of earth and clay roads. The bond issue passed, launching the state's most progressive and sophisticated highway building program.

John Hollis Bankhead (1842-1920)

At the turn of the century, the Good Roads Movement seemed well established in many communities and most states. Politicians, especially populists, frequently endorsed good roads and its accompanying organizations because of the broad public appeal and almost unarguable economic benefits. Two national politicians became the leading spokespersons for the movement: Senator Asbury C. Latimer (South Carolina) and Senator John H. Bankhead (Alabama). Senator Latimer served in the US Senate from 1903 until his death in 1908. Although a longtime devoted Democrat and populist, Latimer only fully endorsed the good roads movement after entering the Senate in 1904. His early legislation and speeches focused on shifting the debt of road construction from the farmer to the federal government for the national development of good roads. Despite Latimer's strong support of federal public road legislation, he died before any legislation passed Congress.(6)

Shortly after Latimer's death, Senator John Hollis Bankhead, Sr., assumed the role as chief spokesman for good roads. Bankhead, born into a farming family in Lamar County, Alabama, shared Latimer's rural background and devotion to the concerns of farmers. After serving briefly in the state legislature, he entered the Confederate Army later to be the last Confederate veteran to serve in the US Congress. In 1886, he ran successfully to represent the Sixth Congressional district in Alabama, a position he held until losing an election in 1906. While serving as a Representative, Bankhead introduced legislation for the federal government to fund road construction but nothing passed. He again championed the development of good roads after being appointed to the Senate in 1908. Bankhead eloquently and often spoke on behalf of the farmer and the need to develop a national road system funded by the federal government. His countless speeches and the numerous publications that covered the issue began to attract more attention from politicians. In 1910 Bankhead introduced several good road bills. One funding bill passed but it required local and state governments to match federal funding for roads at a two to one ratio. In spite of the failure of this legislation, sixty additional pieces of legislation were introduced in Congress between December 1911 and July 1912. None of these passed.(7)

Despite his failure to pass legislation, John Hollis Bankhead continued to press for federal aid and support of a national highway system. In 1916 he succeeded with the enactment of the Federal Aid Road Act and an appropriation of \$5 million for the construction of high quality roads in all states during 1917. The Act required states to establish a state highway department in order to be eligible for allocations from the federal government. By 1917 most of the state legislatures, including all the southern states, authorized state highway departments and committed state governments to developing good roads. The 1916 legislation, however, only provided

6. Howard Preston, *Dirt Roads to Dixie*, University of Tennessee Press, 1991, pp. 31-33.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-36.

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money for the construction of post roads and thus had little effect on the large number of unimproved roads outside that designation.(8)

In January 1920, John Hollis Bankhead became ill while hosting a delegation of the United States Good Roads Association in Washington. He died several weeks later at his home in the capital.(9)

John H. Bankhead's contributions to the Good Roads Movement were widely recalled among enthusiasts following his death. His son, Representative William B. Bankhead of Alabama, however, continued his much of his father's political agenda. In spite of the family's activity, Bankhead was largely forgotten within a few years. It is Bankhead's niece, Tallulah Bankhead, one of the popular vaudeville actresses of the 1920s, who many automobile travelers would later associate with the transcontinental highway.

Bankhead Highway Association Forms

In 1916, John Asa Rountree organized the Bankhead Highway Association in support of the 4,000 mile transcontinental John Hollis Bankhead National Highway. Beginning near (the ellipse) the White House in Washington, DC, the highway as originally conceived extended through the Deep South, across Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, and ended in San Diego, California. Rountree served as the General Director of the Bankhead Highway Association from its inception until December 1927.(10)

As General Director, Asa Rountree led the organization in acquiring private and public memberships and developing a national image and presence. During the 1920s, Rountree made three full-length trips on the Bankhead Highway to generate support from local boosters. Each trip included a caravan of automobiles decorated with flags and banners to draw attention to the highway. Local members of the organization met Rountree's delegation on the road and guided them along the route. Public speeches and presentations frequently caught the attention of area newspapers, chambers of commerce, and local elected officials. In more rural locations, the highway was marked on telephone poles and other roadside features with a large black "BH" centered on a yellow, white, and yellow background (see Trail and Highway Markings). While similar to the organizational efforts of other major highway associations, Rountree's leadership stimulated interest in the highway and coalesced support at the national level for funding and recognition.(11)

8. Preston, "Good Roads Movement," *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, pp. 22-23.

9. "John H. Bankhead, The Oldest U.S. Senator, Dies," *The Texas Highways Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 12, March 1920, p. 12.

10. The records of the early Bankhead Association are in John Asa Rountree Papers of the Birmingham Public Library Archives in Birmingham, Alabama. Records indicate Rountree maintained a long affiliation with the highway, though he may not have actually been General Director for the duration. No contemporary papers have been written regarding the Bankhead Highway, so extensive analysis of the organization and its highway development role are not easily available.

11. Preston, *Dirt Roads*, pp. 89-90.

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The Bankhead Highway in Texas

The beginnings of the Bankhead Highway in Texas are still unknown, but road maps and publications of the 1910s virtually never called the route by that name. A 1918 *Locke's Road Guide* published by the Dallas Automobile Club shows the route through Texas as the Texarkana-Dallas-Fort Worth-El Paso Highway (in some cases the Fort Worth section was dropped from the title). When the Texas Highway Department adopted its state highways in 1917, this one became State Highway No. 1. The Texarkana-Dallas-El Paso and State Highway No. 1 continued to be used until c. 1920 when the association with the Bankhead begins to appear on state maps and tourist guides. Perhaps through the efforts of Rountree and his Texas followers in 1920, the Texarkana-Dallas-El Paso Highway became the adopted route and the name was simply substituted to gain the support of the national effort and growing transcontinental travel.

The Bankhead Highway route appears in the early 1920s guides through the following Texas towns and cities: Texarkana, Maud, Douglasville, Cooksville, Mount Pleasant, Mount Vernon, White Oak, Sulphur Springs, Greenville, Royse City, Garland, Dallas, (Oak Cliff and onto the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike), Arlington, Fort Worth, Weatherford, Mineral Wells, and Palo Pinto, [northern route to Breckenridge, Albany], Strawn, Cisco, Baird, Abilene, Tye, Merkel, Trent, Sweetwater, Colorado, Big Spring, Monahans, Pecos, Van Horn, Sierra Blanca, El Paso. At Van Horn, or more likely at Kent, the Bankhead Highway intersected with the transcontinental Old Spanish Trail (US 90) and continued west. The Bankhead generally followed the MK&T Railroad in East Texas and the Texas & Pacific Railroad in West Texas. This association with the railroad was typical of many early automobile routes.

The 1918 Locke's guide described the majority of the road as graded clay, dirt, and sand. Most of the graded road sections were graveled but, around Greenville in North Texas, approximately six miles were concrete. Several miles around Strawn and Stanton in West Texas were described as poor and impassable in bad weather. West of Abilene, the road was graveled to Merkel and the remaining route graded dirt or sand (see maps).(12)

In 1919 the young Texas State Highway Department described the State Highway No. 1 as the longest of 43 state highway designations. Taylor County received approximately \$25,000 of federal highway aid and \$15,000 in state aid. By 1922 the Texas Highway Department reported that roughly 90% of State Highway No. 1 was completed or under construction. Nolan, Callahan, and Hopkins Counties had little or no improved roads while all of Palo Pinto County offered improved graveled roads. The roadways varied from a minimum of 12 feet of gravel to 20 and 21 feet of concrete in Tarrant County.(13)

12. Locke's Good Road Maps, published by Harry Locke, Los Angeles, California, in conjunction with the Dallas Automobile Club.

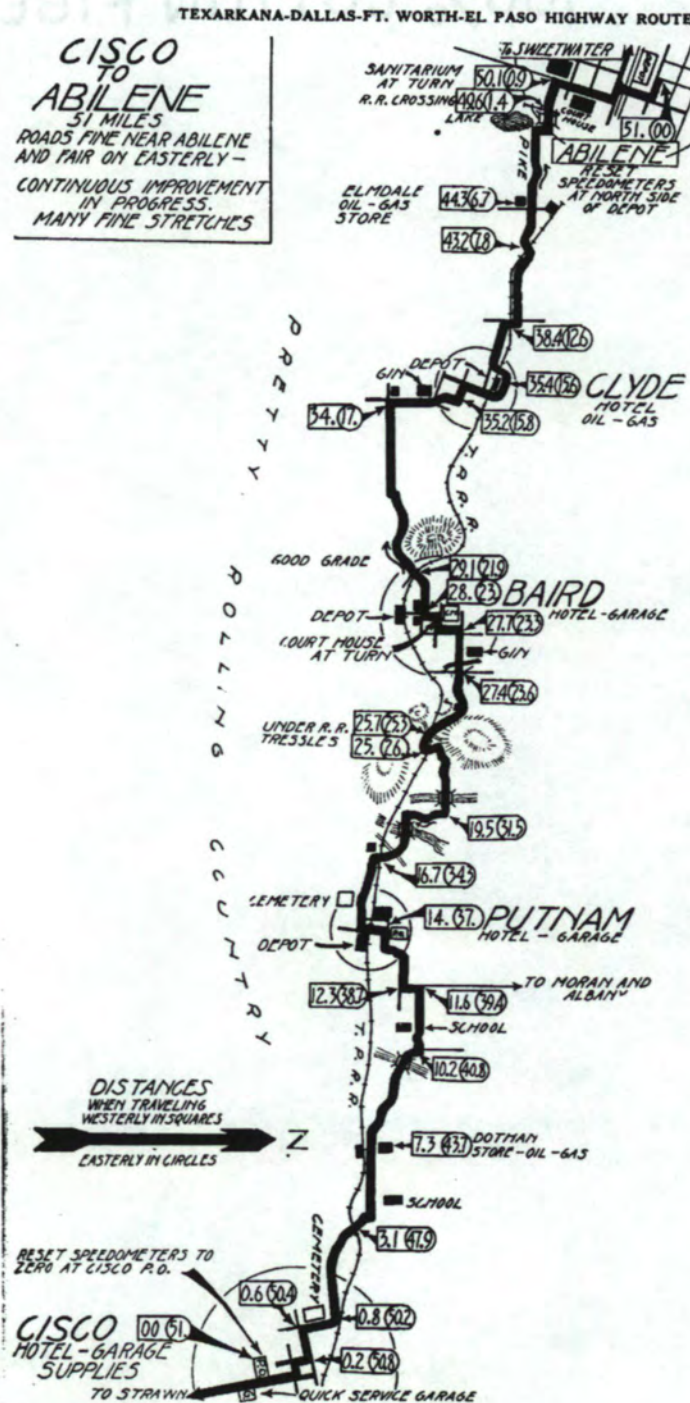
13. "Bankhead Highway," Texas Highway Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 5, May 1922, Austin, Texas, no page number.

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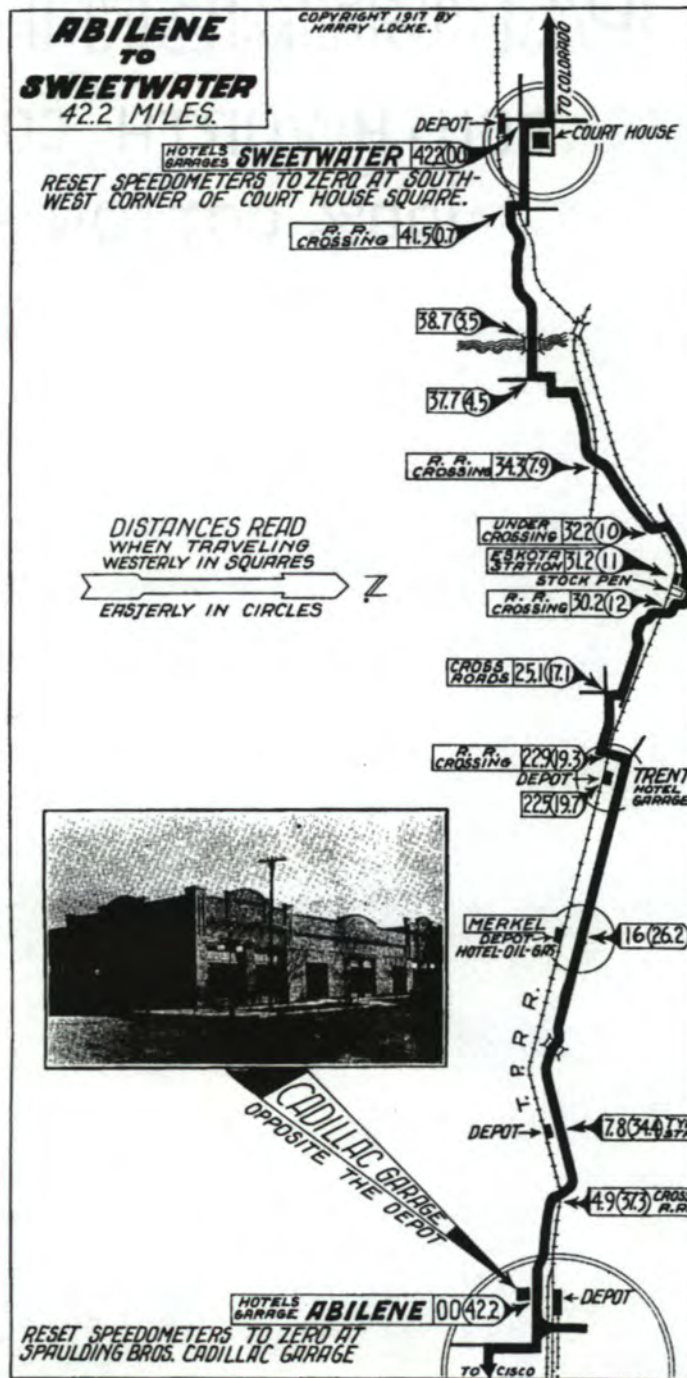
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TEXARKANA-DALLAS-FT. WORTH-EL PASO HIGHWAY ROUTE



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The first road improvements made to the Taylor County stretch of the Bankhead began in November 1919 and were completed in February 1921. This work involved grading, building of structures and two bridges, and developing a gravel base course. The second major work program was accompanied by a report by the Texas State Highway Department on the elimination of railroad grade crossings. In 1927 254 auto-train accidents occurred in Texas with 87 people killed and 348 injured. The number of collisions had increased annually since 1918 making a political and public issue of railroad crossings. Texas launched a special effort in 1927 to eliminate these crossing and funding new paving and road improvements. In Taylor County, the Highway Department organized Federal Aid Project (FAP 444-J) to remove two crossing along the Bankhead Highway west of Abilene. The same funding package added concrete roads of 18-foot width (30-foot crown and 8-foot unimproved shoulders) and small road structures. The contracts were let in July 1927 and completed in March 1929, the majority of the work was completed in 1928-29. Later improvements and some widening on sections occurred in the 1930s through the 1950s.

Establishment of the Broadway of America Association

By the mid 1920s, local and state boosters began to lose confidence in Asa Rountree's leadership of the Bankhead Highway Association. Moreover, as federal and state governments picked up interest in the named highways, the need for the association deminished. In August 1927, members of the fledgling Bankhead Association in Texas were called to Pecos, Texas, to discuss ways of improving publicity and advertising of the Bankhead. The group appointed the Honorable R.N. Thomason of El Paso as chairman of a special committee to investigate future plans. Three months later on November 19, 1927, at El Paso, Texas, the committee reported to over 100 businessmen from Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. The special committee recommended a new highway route beginning at Broadway in New York City, New York, and continuing through to Broadway in San Diego, California. The committee suggested the new name of "The Broadway of America-The All Year National Highway."(14)

The delegates to El Paso formed a temporary organization to select a route, set up an executive office in El Paso, and report to a national convention in 1928. Several Texans were among the first officers including H.L. Birney (El Paso), Clifton M. Caldwell (Abilene), and Robert H. Rinehart (El Paso). Colonel Ed Fletcher of San Diego, a national figure in highway promotion, was elected as well. The officers proposed a new route to cover much of the same trail as the Bankhead Highway with the exception of the route from Washington, DC, to New York, known as Federal Highway No. 1. The route continued from Highway No. 1 to Federal Highway No. 70 and then Highway No. 80. This route eliminated much of the trail through the Deep South along what had become US 29 and, of course, John Hollis Bankhead's home state of Alabama. As the first promotion, the board requested a motorcade to the first annual convention of the Broadway of American Association to be held in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 20 and 21, 1929. Colonel Fletcher led the procession from San Diego picking

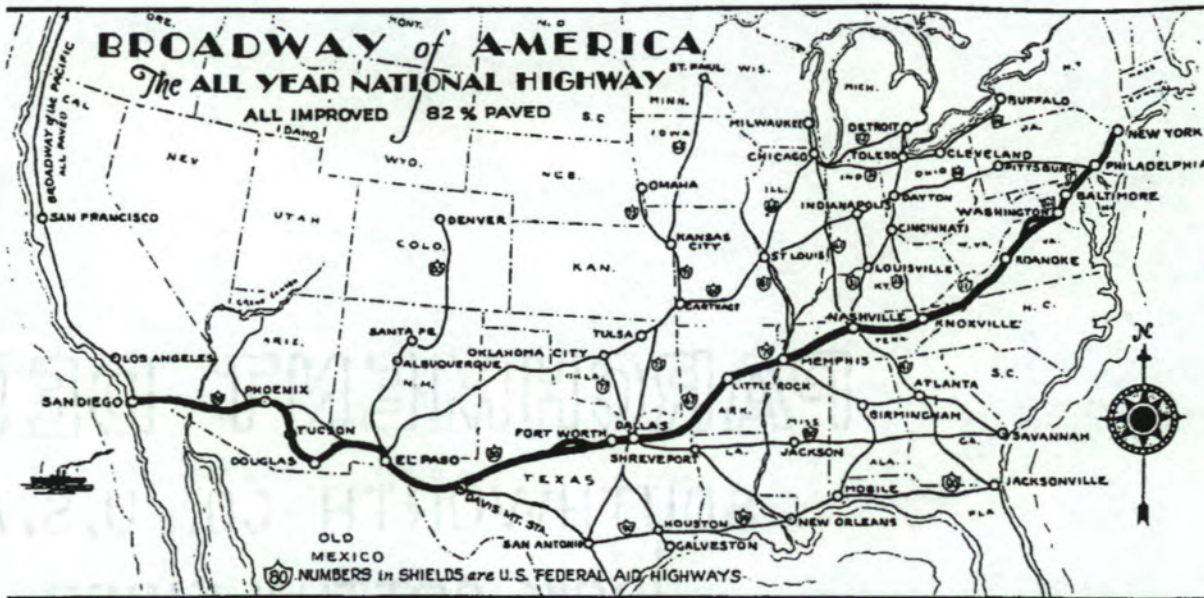
14. H.W. Stanley, "Broadway of America Meeting April 20-21," *Texas Highways*, March 1928, p. 8.

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The map above will show the tourist whose home is off the Broadway of America route how to reach this all-weather, all-improved and 82 percent paved highway. This map shows only the principal points along the route with connecting highways. On the opposite side of this folder is a map showing a complete list of every city and town along the Broadway of America Route.

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up automobiles along the way. Organizers estimated that at least 400 cars would eventually cross the Mississippi River into Memphis.(15)

Although most highway associations had scaled back operations or disbanded, the Broadway of America seemed to prosper. The American Automobile Association (AAA) gave the route high marks: "This is perhaps the best route available for winter travel, a great percentage of the distance being excellent paved road and most of the remainder good gravel." The AAA endorsement gave credence to the highway's label as an "All Year Highway" and the organization's goal of attracting automobile tourists to the South and Southwest.(16) A 1932 publication by the association advertised the route as being 3351 miles of paved roadway (approximately 87%) and another 234 miles hard surfaced. Furthermore, the advertisement stated: "The tourist "crop" is admittedly the largest cash crop of any community on the Broadway today. An increasing number of tourists means an increasing number of new dollars in every community." The association appears to have operated into the mid 1930s as the last identified publication invites members to participate in a motorcade to the annual convention in San Diego, California.(17)

Though no material confirms the continuation of the association, the efforts to attract tourists during the 1930s is verified through the travelogue of Dorothy Childs Hogner in *Westward High, Low, and Dry*. Dorothy and Nils, her artist husband, traveled the majority of the Broadway of America in the 1930s and recounted their first day west of Dallas:

From Dallas we took the transcontinental "Broadway of America" which terminates on the Atlantic coast at Savannah, Georgia, and on the Pacific, at San Diego. From Dallas the road is National Highway 80, leading over the wide, scantily populated plains. But even in this open country we thought that, on the first night out, we might have difficulty in finding a camp ground. Highway 80 was tightly fenced. But oddly enough along about dusk, we came upon a small picnic ground, a space by the highway under a grove of natural shade trees. A sign explained that the spot was being laid out by the National Youth Administration; and although it does seem queer to think of needing specially made picnic space in the immense State of Texas, this need is great in the eastern part...But with the end of the frontier comes the opening up of big National Parks, and places such as this small picnic ground where John Doe, you and I, can stop and tent without being trespassers.(18)

By the 1940s the National U.S. Highway 80 Association, a new organization, took over promotion for the Broadway of America/Bankhead Highway. Little is known of this organization, but the Texas representatives

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Office of the President, Broadway of America Highway Association, brochure, 1932.

18. Dorothy Childs Hogner, *Westward, High, Low, and Dry*, E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., New York, 1938, p. 28.

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"Camping was about to begin in earnest—"

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continued to agitate for improved roadways well into the 1950s. With the passage of the 1956 Interstate Highway Act, even the U.S. Highway 80 Association disbanded as Interstate 20 largely supplanted the previous highways following roughly parallel to US 80.(19)

The Bankhead Highway Historic District is the first identified portion of the historic highway in Texas. Although other segments exist, this district represents much of the history and visual pattern of the larger highway. The four discontinuous sections also represent the staggered development of highways common to the history of roads and highways across the state and country. Since all portions are located in one county, the district further reinforces the role of local decision-making and financing in the history of highways. All four sections retain integrity of location (documented as dating from as early as 1917), setting (in the original rural sections of Taylor County), feeling (as experienced by the motorist of the 1920s and 1930s), materials (first concrete roadway and structures), design and workmanship (reflect highway engineering techniques of the period), and association (still identified and known in the county as the Bankhead Highway). The district remains a cohesive collection of resources separated by recent and incompatible development and date in significance from first construction in 1927 to the last Texas Department of Transportation project completed in 1955. Justification of exceptional significance is not necessary because the majority of the resources are over 50 years of age.

19. Richard M. Morehead, "Bankhead's Broadway Through Texas," *Texas Parade*, October 1953, pp. 19-21; "The Old Bankhead Highway," *Texas Highways*, September 1964, p. 18.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: approximately 6.7 acres in a total of four discontiguous sections

UTM REFERENCES (see continuation sheet 10-35)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheet 10-35)

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION (see continuation sheet 10-36)

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: W. Dwayne Jones with assistance from Larry Abrigg (City of Abilene)

ORGANIZATION: Texas Historical Commission

DATE: May 1996 / November 1998

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 12276

TELEPHONE: (512) 463-5997

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 78711

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-37 through Photo 38)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Taylor County c/o Lee Hamilton, County Judge

STREET & NUMBER: County Courthouse, 300 Oak Street

TELEPHONE: (915) 677-1711

CITY OR TOWN: Abilene

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 79602-1521

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UTM REFERENCES

Section A

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	392280	3595280
2	14	392540	3595300
3	14	392680	3595500
4	14	392900	3595500
5	14	392980	3595380

Section B

	Zone	Easting	Northing
6	14	419920	3591260
7	14	420620	3591220

Section C

	Zone	Easting	Northing
8	14	420880	3591200
9	14	421400	3591200
10	14	421640	3591280
11	14	421780	3591180
12	14	421780	3591020

Section D

	Zone	Easting	Northing
13	14	435220	3588200
14	14	435860	3588200

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Bankhead Highway Historic District is a discontinuous district consisting of four sections roughly 25 feet either side of the center point beginning west to east as Section A (approx. 28 miles west of Abilene being .6 miles of highway from the Nolan County line continuing east), Section B (.5 miles of highway being immediately east of Tye and ending approximately 7 miles west of Abilene), Section C (west of Abilene being .8 miles of highway beginning at IH 20 continuing to city limits of Abilene), and Section D (east of Abilene .4 miles of highway along the northern end of City of Abilene airport grounds).

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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The Bankhead Highway Historic District encompasses the last four sections of the c. 1917 (paved in 1927-29) highway route in the vicinity of Abilene and Merkel, Taylor County, Texas.

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Bankhead Highway Historic District
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PHOTO LOG

The following pertains to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

Property Name	Bankhead Highway Historic District
Address	various sections west and east of Abilene
County/State	Taylor County, Texas
Photographer	Larry Abrigg, Dwayne Jones
Date of Photographs	1994, 1996
Location of Negatives	Texas Historical Commission
Photo Number	1 of 15
Camera Facing	West, showing state highway through village of Tie (sic) being resurfaced by County, Texas Federal Aid Project No. 77
Date of Photograph	May 23, 1921
Photographer	F.P. Sexton
Location of Negatives	Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, Texas
Photo Number	2 of 15
Camera Facing	West, Highway No. 1, West of Abilene, Taylor County
Date of Photograph	c. 1939
Photographer	Unknown
Location of Negatives	Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, Texas
Photo Number	3 of 15
Property	Section A
Camera Facing	East
Photo Number	4 of 15
Property	Section A, FAP 444 Marker
Camera Facing	East
Photo Number	5 of 15
Property	Section A
Camera Facing	North
Photo Number	6 of 15
Property	Section A
Camera Facing	Northeast

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Photo Number 7 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing West

Photo Number 8 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing West

Photo Number 9 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing West

Photo Number 10 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing Northwest

Photo Number 11 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing Southwest

Photo Number 12 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing North

Photo Number 13 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing Northeast

Photo Number 14 of 15
Property Section C
Camera Facing Northwest

Photo Number 15 of 15
Property Section D
Camera Facing East

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Bankhead Highway Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Taylor

DATE RECEIVED: 10/19/98 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/03/98
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/19/98 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/03/98
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 98001414

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: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*1 Discontiguous parcels representing
(1927-1956) intact segments of the (1917 route)
Bankhead Highway in Taylor County,
118 foot wide concrete road and
related road structures,
roadway abandoned in 1950s
Excellent context and statement
of significance for rare surviving
resources.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A

REVIEWER L McClelland

DISCIPLINE History

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 12/3/98

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