


## WALLER CREEK (TRAVIS COUNTY)



 Like 2 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

**WALLER CREEK** (Travis County). Waller Creek, in central Travis County, rises at a point (30°20' N, 97°42' W) in Austin. It flows southward through attractively eroded banks of Cretaceous limestone for about six miles to join the Colorado River (at 30°15' N, 97°44' W) in the dammed area known as Town Lake. The creek is in an area characterized by a rolling terrain and expansive clay soils. Although situated in an urban area, the creek is near a variety of vegetation, including oak and juniper trees. In April 1839 President [Mirabeau B. Lamar](#) sent Edwin Waller <sup>qv</sup>, in charge of a company of workmen, to the site chosen for the capital with instructions to lay out the city and construct temporary quarters for government offices. By October the work had been completed. There is general agreement that Waller, who became Austin's first mayor, carried out his assignment with distinction. Waller Creek was so named, it is surmised, by one of his surveyors. Other notable persons who have lived on or near Waller Creek include Elisabet Ney, George Armstrong Custer, Edmund J. Davis, and [J. Frank Dobie](#). Early Austin settlement tended chiefly west, not south, although there was a gristmill on lower Waller Creek in the 1840s. A large tract above Fifteenth Street remained for a long time Horst's Pasture, which was owned by Louis Horst, one of Austin's early arrivals. However, by 1874 Horst's lands were subdivided and sold, initiating a settlement period along Waller Creek that continued when the University of Texas opened nearby in 1883. Meanwhile, the lower creek area had begun to be semi-industrialized after the coming of Austin's first railroad in 1871. A century later the university occupied both banks of the main branch from Twenty-sixth Street to Nineteenth Street and smaller portions on the west branch and to the south of Nineteenth. Rapid and often unplanned development, both institutional and domestic, has taken its toll on Waller Creek. One of the social consequences at the university was the Waller Creek Riot of October 22, 1969, protesting destruction of trees and mutilation of the creekbed along San Jacinto Boulevard south of Twenty-first Street, consequent to plans for the enlargement of Memorial Stadium <sup>qv</sup>. Dense urban development on the watershed of this small but easily flooded stream has necessitated careful monitoring of its flow by two gauging stations and continued study by hydrologists, making it a prototype of the small urban stream in the United States. Waterloo Park, Symphony Square, and Centennial Park have already been completed as scenic-recreational areas along the creek.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Austin *American*, October 23, 24, 26, 1969. Joseph Jones, *Life on Waller Creek: A Palaver about History as Pure and Applied Education* (Austin: AAR/Tantalus, 1982).  
Joseph J. Jones

### IMAGE USE DISCLAIMER

All copyrighted materials included within the *Handbook of Texas Online* are in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107 related to Copyright and "Fair Use" for Non-Profit educational institutions, which permits the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), to utilize copyrighted materials to further scholarship, education, and inform the public. The TSHA makes every effort to conform to the principles of fair use and to comply with copyright law.

For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond fair use, you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

### CITATION

The following, adapted from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, is the preferred citation for this article.

*Handbook of Texas Online*, Joseph J. Jones, "Waller Creek (Travis County)," accessed September 27, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rbw11>.

Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.