



#6: The History of the Bevil Jarrell Bridge

The Bevil Jarrell bridge is that old bridge that crosses the San Jacinto river at U.S. Highway 59/Interstate 69. It was originally part of State Highway 35 that went through Humble and up to into Montgomery County. The bridge was built by the Standard Construction Company, which submitted a low bid of \$200,000. Construction started in October 1930, and the bridge was completed in September 1931. When the highway was completed, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held in Humble with a speech by Governor Ross S. Sterling. By 1942, this original section of State Highway 35 was re-designated as U. S. Highway 59.

The bridge, originally named "The Bridge at the West Fork of the San Jacinto River," consists of two 200-foot Parker through-truss spans and 30 concrete girder approach spans. Its overall length is 1499 feet. This bridge is only one of three examples of the T22-200 standard bridge design surviving in Texas.

The bridge was open to two-way traffic, with a single lane for north-bound traffic, and a single lane for south-bound traffic. Sometime after 1944, the concrete bridge railings on the bridge were shortened. Evidently, the standard railing height of just over 3 feet made bridges appear narrow, causing drivers to veer toward the center of the roadway and sometimes collide. By shortening the railing, the illusion of the narrow bridge was lessened. In addition, the decreased railing height allowed truck overhangs to clear the railings. In 1961, new bridges were opened to serve south-bound traffic, while the old bridge was still used for north-bound traffic. New north-bound bridges were finally opened in 1974, at which time the old San Jacinto Bridge was kept for use as the feeder road bridge.

While creating plans to widen US 59 in 1987, the Texas Historical Commission and the Texas Department of Highways made plans to build a new bridge for the northbound frontage road, removing the San Jacinto River bridge from vehicular traffic and preserving it by converting it to a pedestrian bridge. The new bridges for US 59 were finally opened in 1997. For the old bridge, pedestrian ramps were constructed at each, and lighting was installed along the center of the bridge. Due to a lengthy resolution in securing permits to complete full construction, the bridge was fenced off and not accessible for pedestrian use for quite some time.

In May 2007, pedestrian railing was installed on the bridge and along the ramps at each end. Parking areas were constructed below each end of the bridge, and the bridge was (finally) opened to pedestrian traffic. At an Humble City Council meeting in 2003, citizens suggested naming the bridge after longtime Humble educator and historian, Bevil Jarrell. Harris County Precinct 4 Commissioner Jerry Eversole was instrumental in working with the Texas Department of Transportation, Harris County and the City of Humble in having the bridge renamed. On June 11, 2011, the bridge was officially renamed as the Bevil Jarrell Memorial Bridge.

Now in its 87th year, the old bridge is still a favorite place for residents to visit. On almost any given weekend, you can drive by and see couples using it as a location for taking wedding photos. It recently survived river damage from Hurricane Harvey, and is clearly showing its age (it is in dire need of a new paint job!). But hopefully, with proper care and maintenance, it will be with us for many years to come.