Houston Home & Garden

JANUARY 1978 $1.50

Texas contemporary
A house that's still a winner

China town
Table top trends & news
China pattern knock-offs
Table settings that dish up style

How to make POTPOURRI

At-home whirlpools spas & hot tubs

Home front
A new look for an old favorite

Houston Home & Garden

JANUARY CONTENTS

DEPARTMENTS

4 Home Front
8 Letters
12 Comment
14 Thyme Being: Madalene Hill
19 Travel Intelligence: Mary Woodson Dennis
27 Books: Rita Cobler
30 Compleat Collector: Nick Quintrelle
36 Imminent Domain: Karen Graul
42 House Call: Wendy Haskell Meyer
45 On Stage: Kit van Cleave
48 Postings
124 New Leaf: John Kriegel
126 Garden Calendar: Odessa Rentz
139 Gardener's Glossary: Outenreath & Kriegel
140 Ortho Corner
154 Fare Enough: Marty Ross
170 Fixit: Jim Brown
182 The Back Page

INFORMATION

56 Buying trends in china, crystal and silver
96 How to care for your silver

FOOD

158 A visit with a local cooking club
162 Feedback: How Houston Cooks, conclusion

DECORATING/DESIGN

66 Table settings with designer flair
69 Houstonians add the personal touch to tabletops
78 New dinnerware designs
80 Feature home: Jodie Bell's home, designed with contemporary style
110 Suspended information on Houston bridges

GARDENING

115 The fragrant art of potpourris
122 Post-Christmas care for poinsettias
144 January greenhouse guide
148 Compost tips for Houston gardeners

HOME MAINTENANCE

88 Home spas are news
99 Custom dining tables available in Houston

THE COVER

Cover photograph by Rob Muir. Color, texture and a mix of old and new provide a contemporary, comfortable setting in the Bells' home. Plants, baskets and an Oriental screen and area rug provide warmth — they mix well with contemporary paintings, antique and modern furniture, and with their lifestyle. For more on Texas contemporary living, see story, page 80.

p. 56

p. 80

p. 115

p. 99

p. 110

Vol. 4 No. 4 HOUSTON HOME & GARDEN is published monthly by Bayland Publishing, Inc., 2472 Bolsover, P.O. Box 66469, Houston, Texas 77006. Telephone (713) 524-3000. Subscriptions are available at the following rates: U.S. — One year $12.00, Two years $21.00, Three years $30.00; Canada — One year $16.00, Foreign $22.00 per year surface, air mail foreign rates on request. Single copy price $1.50 (special issues $1.95). Back issues $1.75. Payment must accompany all single copy orders. For change of address, include old address as well as new address with both old and new zip codes. Allow one month for address change to become effective. Please include current address label when writing about your subscription. *Second-class postage paid in Houston, Texas, publication No. 068290.*

Contents copyright © 1978 by Bayland Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Unsolicited material will be handled with care, but the magazine assumes no responsibility for it.

Bayou city bridges

SUSPENDED INFORMATION ABOUT HOUSTON'S BRIDGES

by Peter Papademetriou

Contemporary technology may well be one of the great homogenizers which could make a place — a town or city — unique. Freeways, for example, are the same in Ohio as they are in Texas, and shopping centers are beginning to all have the same ingredients. Yet, if you can see the city beneath the skin, you find aspects which are still special. You'll discover buildings, places, spaces and urban events which are truly that town or city and nowhere else.

Houston has one basic reason for being where it is: Buffalo Bayou. It was the existence of the east-west stream that provided the excuse taken by the Allen brothers to promote their spot as a gateway to the settlement of the Anglo colony nearly 150 years ago. Crossing the Bayou, therefore, has been a continuing project for civil engineers.

And as we go the length of the Bayou we discover that the solutions to this problem have resulted in a unique catalogue of bridges in a variety of forms — appropriate both to what the bridges facilitate crossing and the point along the width of the Bayou where they facilitate it.

On the eastern end, Buffalo Bayou becomes the Ship Channel, then Trinity Bay and eventually Galveston Bay. The wider the separation between land becomes, the larger the problem of spanning that gap. Compounding the difficulty is the necessity of permitting easy ship traffic in the channel. Eventually the bridge ceases to exist altogether and becomes a mobile bridge: a ferry link. On the western end, the bayou narrows to a small stream and a delicate, light suspension bridge is adequate to cross it. A variety of forms exist to suit geographical circumstances.

The Bayou City bridges are only a modest example of how we can look at events in our city and understand a bit of its underlying form. A city's form tells us a lot about our cultural priorities. These priorities create forces which shape our visual environment, and we can only effectively change the physical settings of urban life by altering the priorities themselves. By keeping our eyes open — to discover the real variety which is there or lament it when it is not — we can begin to see not just fragments, but part of a whole picture of Houston.

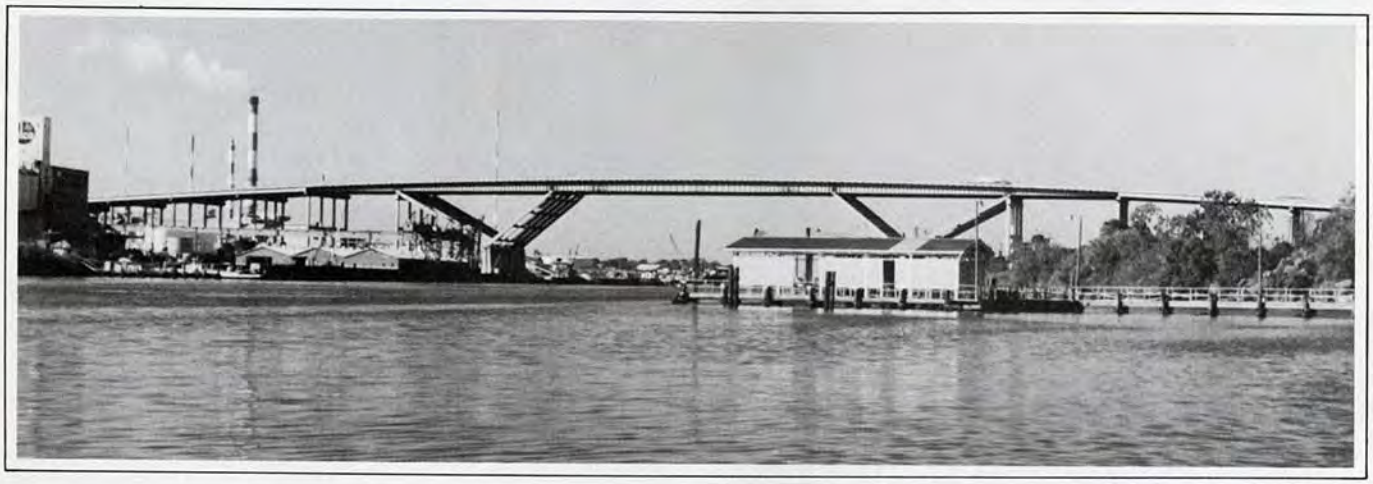
The Sabine bridge, between Allen Parkway and Memorial Dr.

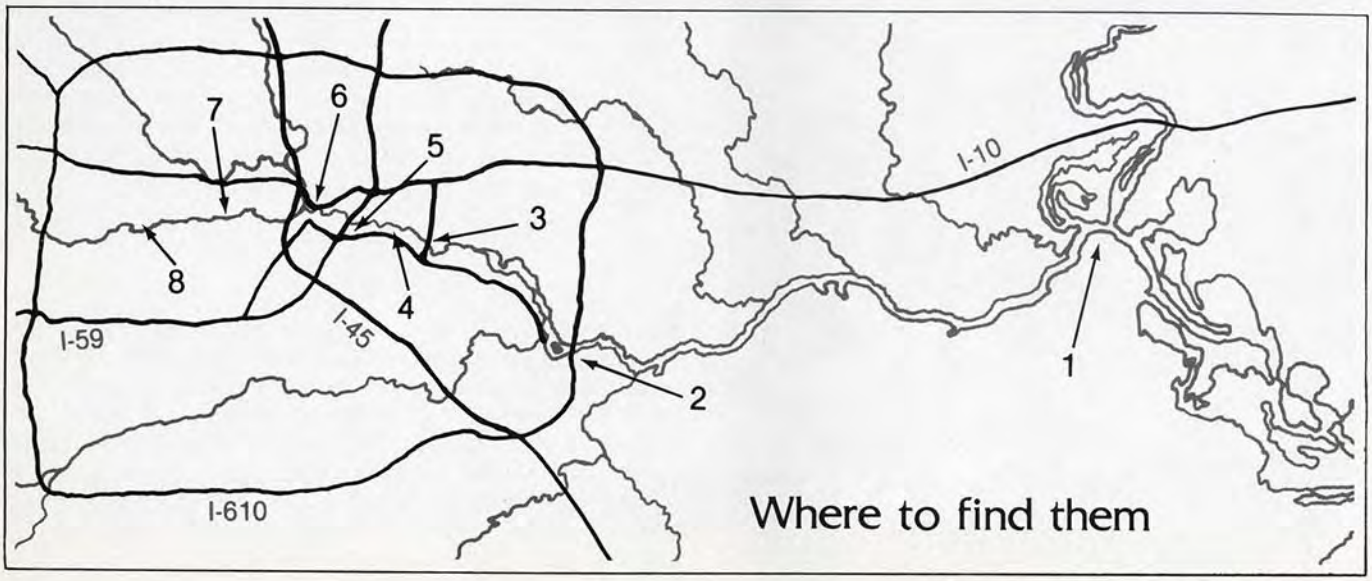
#1

Right: This is one bridge where the traveler stands still: the Lynchburg Ferry. Maintained toll-free by the Texas State Highway Department, the ferry boats are funny little crafts, lumbering across the bay and looking a bit like aircraft carriers that never grew up. Nautical imagery aside, there's no denying that the ferry is not a boat but a mobile bridge between distances too great for a fixed span.

#2

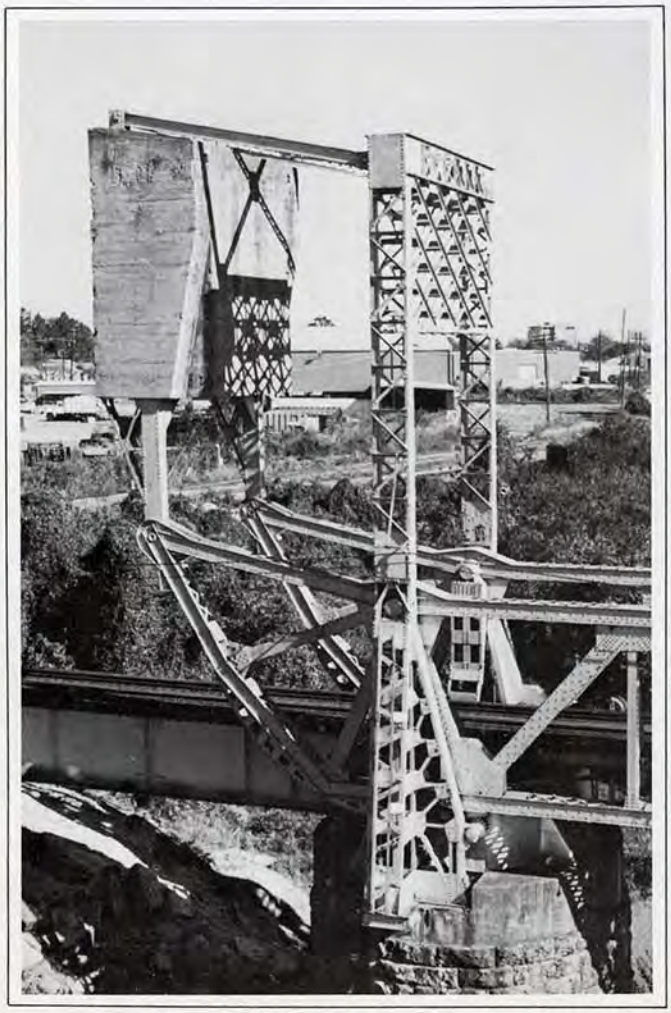
Below: Being in the middle of a 10-lane freeway makes it impossible to know what the East Loop looks like as it crosses over the Ship Channel. Completed in 1972, this is Houston's largest bridge and the largest braced-beam span in the United States. Triangular braces jut up from the piers nearly 100 feet below and 630 feet apart to clear all ships coming into the turning basin. *(continued)*





#3

Left: When it was completed in 1928, the Lockwood Street Bridge seemed to have struck a balance between a decent span across the Ship Channel and clearance for incoming boats. Its center section is a rigid truss platform connected by a pulley system on either end to two gigantic lumps of concrete riding across the face of the end towers. As these concrete weights are released, the center section rises up between the towers to a height clearance of 65 feet.

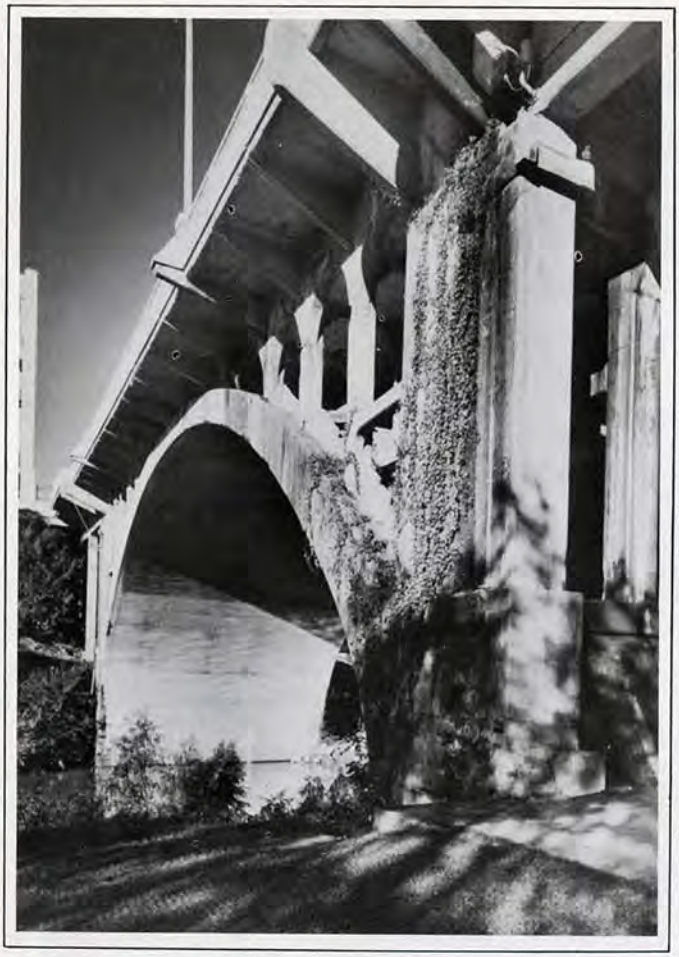


#4

Above: Very hard to find, the McKee Street Bridge crosses from the near northside into downtown in the shadow of the Elysian Street Viaduct, considerably less interesting than this design, which in 1932 was the largest concrete structure in the United States, with a center span of 120 feet. The "roller coaster" effect is actually the principal concrete girder, whose concave-convex shape is the physical embodiment of a phenomenon known as "bending moment," where stresses are least in the middle between supports, and the greatest directly over the supports. Its visual character is nothing more than the actual mathematical description of a law of physics.

#5

Left: Perhaps the most interesting of Houston's mechanical bridges is this railroad bridge which parallels the Eastex Freeway as it crosses over Buffalo Bayou. It is also the most difficult to see since it is well below the freeway overpass, which was elevated to overcome the problem this bridge confronts: clearance for boats. This is a classic drawbridge made out of steel, with a hinged swivel topped off by a huge concrete counterbalance. Tip the center of gravity, and up goes the bridge.



#6

Left: One of the loveliest and most graceful solutions of clearance over Buffalo Bayou was achieved in 1913 by the extension of Main Street. Its form is a delicate parabolic concrete arch vault which supports the street on vertical struts, best viewed from below in a canoe or from Allen's Landing.

#7

Below: An anachronism in Space City is the presence of this lightly ramshackle-looking wooden trestle carrying a railroad spur across Allen Parkway, Memorial and Buffalo Bayou to the rice elevators adjacent to Studemont. This is the most basic of bridges, a framework of heavy timber supports strengthened by X-braces spaced relatively close together. Perhaps this bridge's finest hour came in a chase scene from the movie *Brewster McCloud*.

#8

Left: Another wooden bridge, and the smallest in this series, is the pedestrian footbridge at Bayou Bend, the former Hogg Mansion now a part of the Museum of Fine Arts. Here Buffalo Bayou may be seen in a natural state not unlike that which characterized it as far in as downtown at the turn of the century. Fortunately this section of the bayou hasn't yet been "improved" by the Corps of Engineers. Horizontal frames support the platform and are in turn carried by radiating suspension steel cables. Resistance to cross-sway is achieved by the introduction of side cables along the entire length on each side. The total effect is in scale with pedestrian movement; small-scale, visually lightweight and made of small sticks.