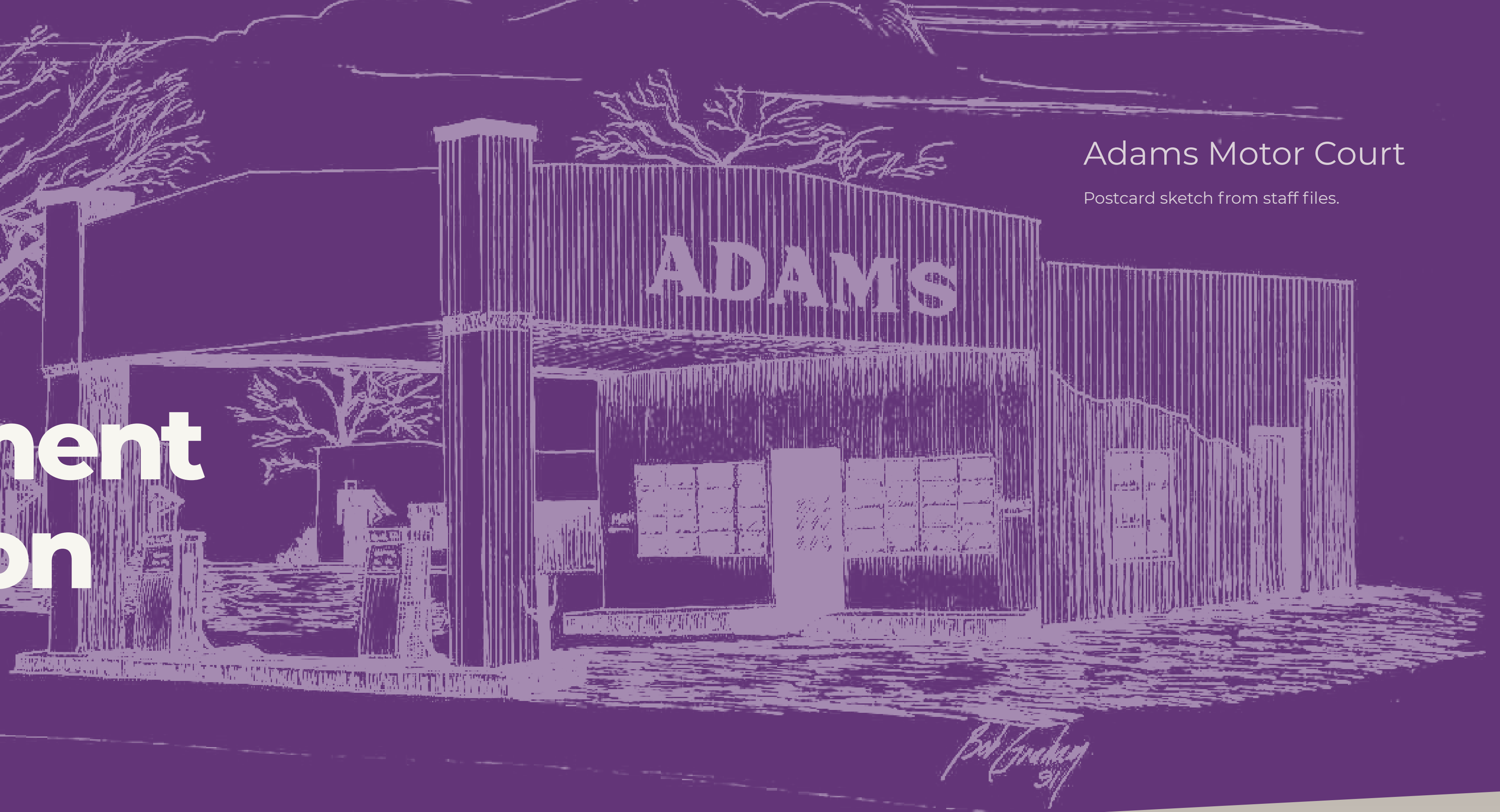


Highway Development and Suburbanization



Adams Motor Court
Postcard sketch from staff files.

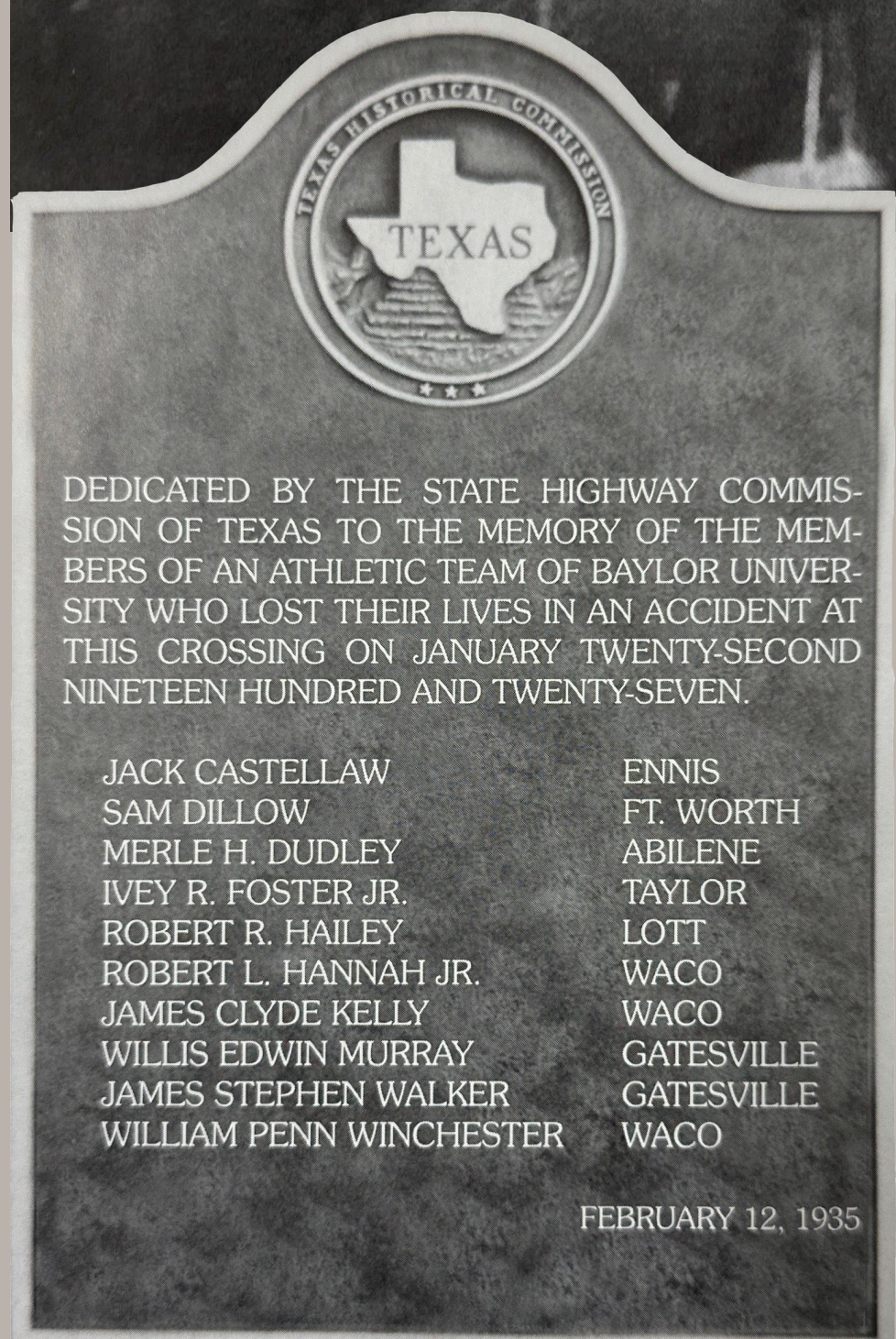


Scan for sources and information about Historic Preservation in Round Rock

Roadways Before Interstate 35

With increased auto use in the 1920s came demand for better roads and federal funding for their construction. In 1923, what is currently known as FM 1460 was built. Before this, the only north-south route went along Chisholm Trail, along Round Rock Avenue, then south on present-day Mays Street.

“The Immortal Ten”



Clockwise from top: The 1927 Baylor Basketball team, photo from the bus crash, Immortal Ten Bridge plaque.

Photos from Thompson, Karen R., 2002, *Round Rock, Texas: From Cowboys to Computers*.

Baylor Bus Crash

On January 22, 1927, a bus carrying the Baylor University basketball team, coaches, and fans was headed to Austin on Highway 2A to play at the University of Texas. The bus was struck by a passenger train as it crossed the railroad tracks in Round Rock because poor weather prevented the student driver from seeing the oncoming train. The ten students killed became known as “The Immortal Ten,” and were mourned across the state and the nation.

The crash was a national tragedy that prompted transportation authorities to adopt safety improvements including requiring school buses to stop at railroad crossings. When Highway 81 was routed through Round Rock, it included a bridge across the railroad tracks where the crash had occurred. In 2017, the bridge was enhanced with Baylor colors, plaques, and pictures of the Immortal Ten. This bridge is now referred to as the Immortal Ten Bridge.

“World’s Largest Road Sign”



The “world’s largest road sign,” built in 1938, advertising Louis Henna’s car dealership on South Mays Street.

Photo from staff files.

Mays Street (US 81)

The route selected for US 81 (later known as Mays Street) focused on straightening curves and removing railroad crossings, partly in response to the Baylor Bus Crash. In 1934, US 81 extended north over Brushy Creek.

The new highway changed Round Rock in many ways. “Old Town” was bypassed, and new auto-oriented businesses clustered along US 81, including gas stations, auto dealerships, restaurants, and motor court hotels. Louis Henna built a Chevrolet dealership and garage next to the railroad bridge and a giant road sign to advertise it. In 1940 a Greyhound bus depot was built across the street from the dealership, indicating Round Rock was becoming increasingly more connected to the Central Texas region.

The Domino Players



The Domino Players, pictured in 1991. The Mobil gas station formerly at the corner of Mays Street and Main Street closed early each afternoon in response to the gas shortage of 1973-1974. After the station closed each afternoon, L. P. Parker, Garland Walsh, “Doc” Parker, Moody Mayfield, C. J. Miller, Mr. Kelly and Mercer Archer began a tradition of playing dominos under the tree.

Photo from staff files.

Interstate 35

In the 1950s, the planners for the Interstate Highway System proposed that I-35 would run from Dallas to Austin through Taylor. However, the plan faced opposition from Taylor leaders who feared I-35 would negatively impact their town and farmland. In contrast, Round Rock leaders saw I-35 as an economic opportunity and lobbied to route the highway through Round Rock. The highway attracted new businesses and residents to Round Rock. It also required relocation or demolition of buildings in its path.



Northbound I-35 from the 620 overpass. Photo taken soon after completion in 1960.

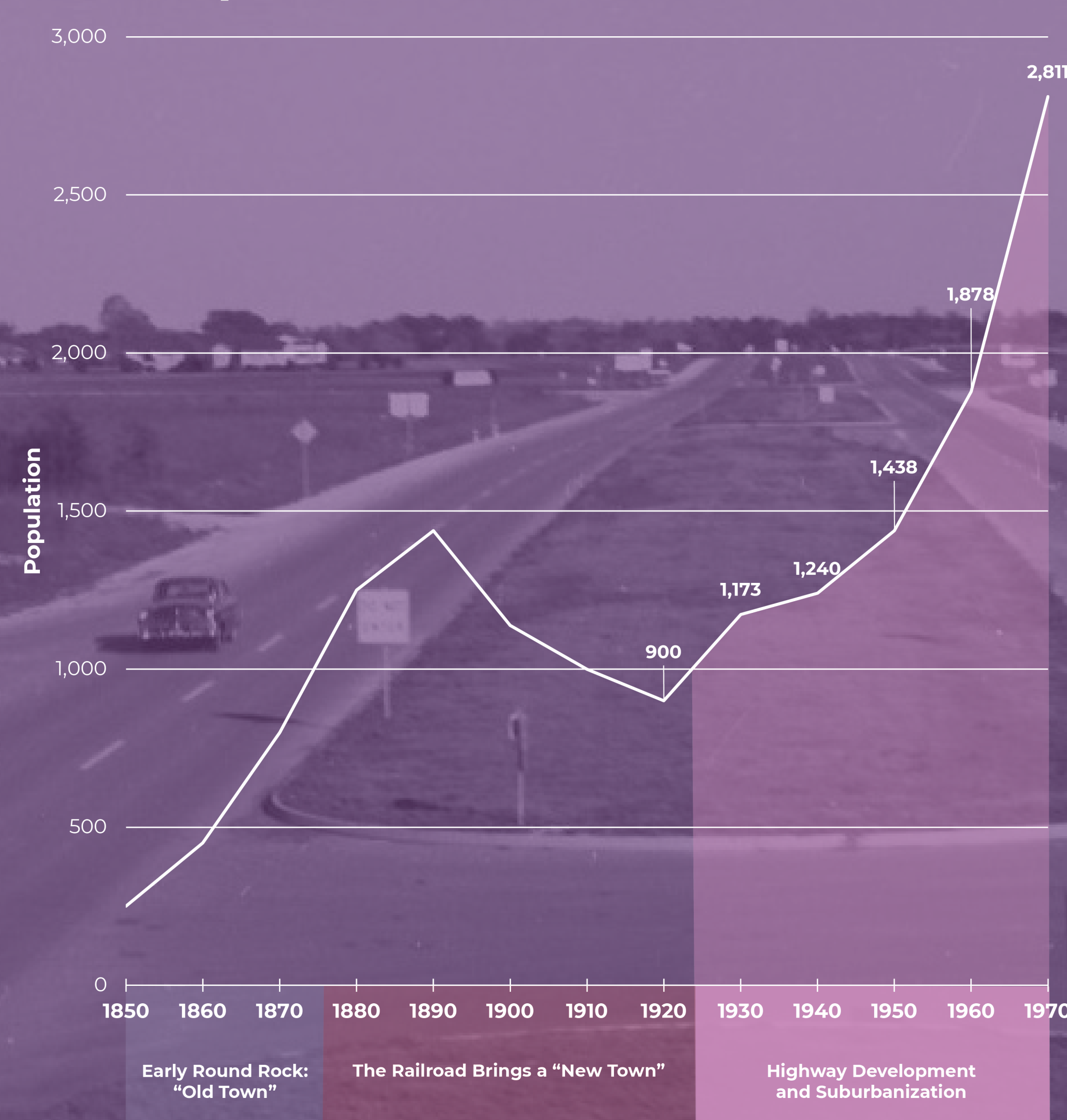
Photo from staff files.

I-35 facilitated a connection to Austin, transitioning Round Rock from a rural community to a bedroom community and a suburb of Austin. The city’s road network continues to drive development through the 21st century.

Photograph looking east along US 79 from I-35, 1961.

Photo from UNT Portal to Texas History.

Population, 1920-1970 Census



This is the fourth in a series of five banners about Round Rock’s history.