

Remembering the Lake Air Mall

1960-2002

In 1959, it was announced that a shopping mall would be built on Bosque Boulevard. The Lake Air Mall was developed by Arthur Temple, Charles Sligh, and George Nokes. Goldstein-Migel, was the first store to open in the new mall on Monday, October 31, 1960. **The Grand Opening of the Lake Air Mall was Thursday, March 16, 1961.** The Lake Air Mall was an innovative and amazing place, and will always hold a special place in the hearts of those who knew it. It closed in January, 2002.



Although some stores opened in late 1960, the Grand Opening of the Lake Air Mall was on Thursday, March 16, 1961. It was a well-loved Waco landmark for many years, and closed in January, 2002.

IN THIS ISSUE:

The Lake Air Mall.....	Page 1
The Lake Air Cinema.....	Page 4
The New Lake Waco and Dam.....	Page 9
The New Lake Shore Drive.....	Page 11
The Twin Bridges.....	Page 16

THE STORES OF LAKE AIR MALL

The First Phase of the Opening of The Lake Air Mall was the opening of Goldstein-Migel's on October 31, 1960.

According to the 1961 Waco City Directory, all spaces except for Goldstein-Migel were vacant. This reflects January-February, 1961. By March 1961, much of the spaces at the mall were filled.

The Grand Opening of the Second Phase was March 16, 1961. The stores that were on the mall by then were:

5201 Pioneer Savings Association

5201 Lake Air Mall

-232 Lake Air Barber Shop

-234 Sherwin-Williams Paint Co.

-236 Bettis Art Center

-237 Holt's Sporting Goods

-240 Walgreen's Grill & Restaurant

-241 Walgreen's Drug Store

-247 Butler's Shoe Store

-249 Cardinal Co. Apartment Managers

Lake Air Inc.

Lake Air Development Co.

Lake Air Merchants Assn.

George Nokes, Lawyer

Town Hall Meeting Place

Waco Property

-250 Texas State Optical

-251 Lewis Shoe Store

-252 South's Gift Shop

-253 TG&Y Variety Store

-254 Book Nook

-258 Morris Jewelers

-259 National Shirt Shops

-261 Grayson's RTW Women's Clothes

-264 Andes Candies

-275 Goldstein-Migel



Postcards from our personal collection.



By the end of 1961, The Third Phase had occurred, and included the addition of Safeway, Montgomery Ward, Piccadilly Cafeteria, Casual Corner, and Bauer McCann.

By the time the 1963 Waco City Directory was published, Lake Air Records, Farmers Insurance Group, Junior House Children's Clothes, and Singer Sewing Machine Co. had been added. At some point, the office area of the Lake Air Mall was added, but we are not sure of when that happened.

The layout of the stores in the 1963 Waco City Directory is:

- 5201 Pioneer Savings Association
- 5201 Lake Air Mall
- 211 Safeway Store No. 259
- 215 Montgomery Ward
- 230 Lake Air Records
- 231 Piccadilly Cafeteria
- 232 Lake Air Barber Shop
- 234 Sherwin-Williams Paint Co.
- 236 Bettis Art Center
- 237 Holt's Sporting Goods
- 238 Farmers Insurance Group
- 240 Walgreen's Grill & Restaurant
- 241 Walgreen's Drug Store
- 247 Butler's Shoe Store
- 249 Cardinal Co. Apartment Managers Lake Air Inc.
- Lake Air Development Co.
- Lake Air Merchants Assn.
- George Nokes, Lawyer
- Town Hall Meeting Place
- Waco Property
- 249A WACO Radio Station
- 250 Texas State Optical
- 251 Lewis Shoe Store
- 252 South's Gift Shop
- 253 TG&Y Variety Store
- 254 Book Nook
- 258 Morris Jewelers
- 259 National Shirt Shops
- 260 Junior House Children's Clothes
- 261 Grayson's RTW Women's Clothes
- 263 Singer Sewing Machine Co.
- 264 Andes Candies
- 267 Casual Corner
- 271 Bauer McCann Co.
- 275 Goldstein-Migel



Postcards are from our personal collection.

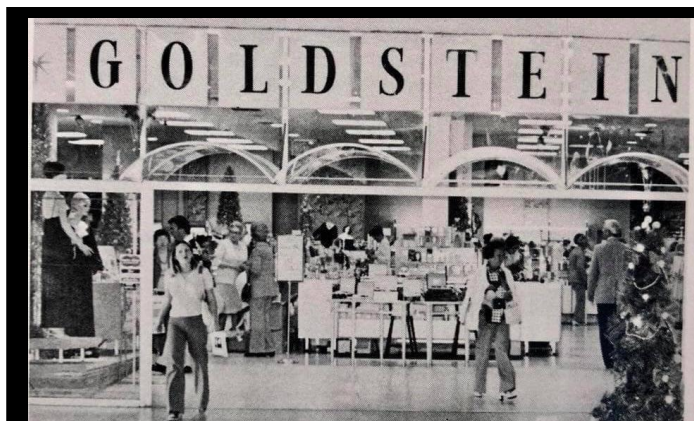


Photo from the 1978 Jefferson Moore High School Yearbook.

THE LAKE AIR CINEMA

On December 28, 1964, it was announced that the almost four year old Lake Air Mall would have a new theater. Richard Smith, President of the General Cinema Corporation, and George Nokes, General Manager of Lake Air Center, announced that the new venue would be a luxurious, 1000-seat theater built on the northwest corner of the shopping center, with a projected completion date of May, 1965. It



*Artist's Conception of the Lake Air Cinema
Photo contributed by Paul Concilio III.*

would feature push-back seats, the best in projection equipment, and would feature a 50' x 22' screen--the largest screen ever installed in a theater its size. It would be known as "The Cinema". The design was conceived by Maurice Sornik of Massapequa, New York and Irving J. Klein of Houston. The floor of the theater was to be built on an incline, with enough space between rows so that one could pass between the rows without having seated guests stand up. The theater would have a large lobby, and feature an art gallery

where local artist's work could be displayed. (1)

While this theater was being built, the new dam had been just been completed and the Lake Waco was filling up. Not too far away, a new drive-in movie theater called "Lake Air Drive-In Theater" was also being built on the corner of Highway 6 and Waco Drive, site of the present-day Richland Mall. The new drive-in had space for 785 cars, a playground at the front between the cars and the screen, and a large concession stand.(2) It's final day of operation was December 8, 1974, when it and the downtown Waco Theater, now the Hippodrome, were closed. Both were owned by ABC Interstate Theaters. They were being closed as the new ABC Interstate Theater was opening its new 800 seat "ABC Cinema 1 and 2" at 330 Bowden Drive, close to Highway 6. ABC Interstate also owned the 25th Street Theater. (3) Later, when the mall was built, the twin movies inside the mall would be "ABC Cinema 3 and 4.



ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF NEW INDOOR THEATER AT LAKE AIR CENTER

The Waco News Tribune, December 28, 1964.

GENERAL CINEMA


Cinema

LAKE AIR SHOPPING CENTER • VALLEY MILLS & BOSQUE

PHONE PL6-7258

BOX OFFICE OPEN AT 7:30 P.M. WEDNESDAY

- ★ CONVENIENT LOCATION
- ★ LOBBY ART GALLERY
- ★ MODERN DECOR
- ★ PUSH-BACK, WIDE SPACE SEATS



A NEW AND EXCITING CONCEPT IN SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT COMES TO WACO

Located at LAKE AIR SHOPPING CENTER
Valley Mills Drivemnd Bosque

- ★ COMFORT
- ★ CONVENIENCE
- ★ ELEGANCE
- ★ SERVICE

EASY TO GET HERE FROM ANYWHERE



BOX OFFICE OPEN AT 1:30 P.M. DAILY BEGINNING THURSDAY

THE CININNATI KID

He'll take on anyone, of anything, anytime.

A new story of mystery and romance!

★ GIANT PICTURE-WINDOW SCREEN

★ MODERN PROJECTION

★ ACRES OF FREE PARKING!

★ MODERN HI-FI SOUND

BOX OFFICE OPEN 7:30 P. M. WEDNESDAY "CININNATI KID" BEGINS AT 8 P. M. OPENING CEREMONIES—8 P. M.

NOW Going to the Movies IS FUN AGAIN!


ADMISSION	Adults	1.00
	Children	.50
	Students	.25
	Seniors	.25

An Exciting New Concept in Motion Picture Entertainment

GRAND OPENING TONIGHT 8 P. M.

This ad appeared as a two-page spread in the Waco News Tribune, November 10, 1965.
Photo contributed by Paul Concilio III.

Completion of the Cinema took longer than expected, partially due to a strike of construction workers that was called by Common Laborers Union 859. The ten-day strike was in October of 1965. An agreement was reached, and they returned to work on the construction of the theater and several other Waco projects—including the new VA complex on Valley Mills Drive—on October 28, 1965. (4)



General Cinema Corporation of Boston supported its confidence in Waco's future with the first new "hard top" theater to be built in Waco in a decade. The Cinema opened in Lake Air Center in November. Another new theater is Lake Air Drive-In.

The Waco News Tribune, January 25, 1966.

The beautiful, new Cinema had its Grand Opening on November 10, 1965, and the premier showing was "The Cinnati Kid", starring Steve McQueen, Edward G. Robinson, and Ann-Margret.(5) The lobby was beautiful and large, unlike anything Waco had ever seen. It had art on the walls and long rows of cushioned benches, like an art gallery. The ticket booth was outside, on the front right left side of the building. There was a concession stand, but customers bought drinks out of automated vending machines. After the selection was made, a cup would drop out of the machine onto the platform, and the selected soft drink would fill the cup.

The Lake Air Cinema was the newest and best, and very popular for many years.



The Waco News Tribune, November 10, 1965.



"The Cincinnati Kid" was the first movie shown at Lake Air Cinema. The Waco News Tribune, November 10, 1965.



The lobby of Lake Air Theater was an art gallery. This photograph was contributed by Paul Concilio III.



In the early 1970s, Lake Air Cinema ran Franco Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliet" and many junior high and high school English Literature classes traveled by school bus—on a school day—to see the classic film.

On Saturday evening, March 9 1974, there was much excitement as a fire began in an upstairs popcorn machine, and 400-500 people had to evacuate the building very quickly. The machine was destroyed, but the theater reopened the following day. (6)

On September 27, 1974, a new "Twin Cinema" was opened at Diamond Point Shopping Center on the corner of Valley Mills Drive and Cobbs Drive, and it was the first ever twin cinema in Waco. It was soon followed by Ivy Twin Theater on University Parks Drive at Baylor on October 16, 1974,(7) and ABC Interstate Theater's new 800 seat "ABC Cinema 1 and 2" at 330 Bowden Drive, close to Highway 6 on December 20, 1974. (3)

In 1980, Lake Air Cinema was converted into a "twin cinema" and continued to be run by General Cinema until



Distinctive trim in the lobby. This photo was contributed by Paul Concilio III.

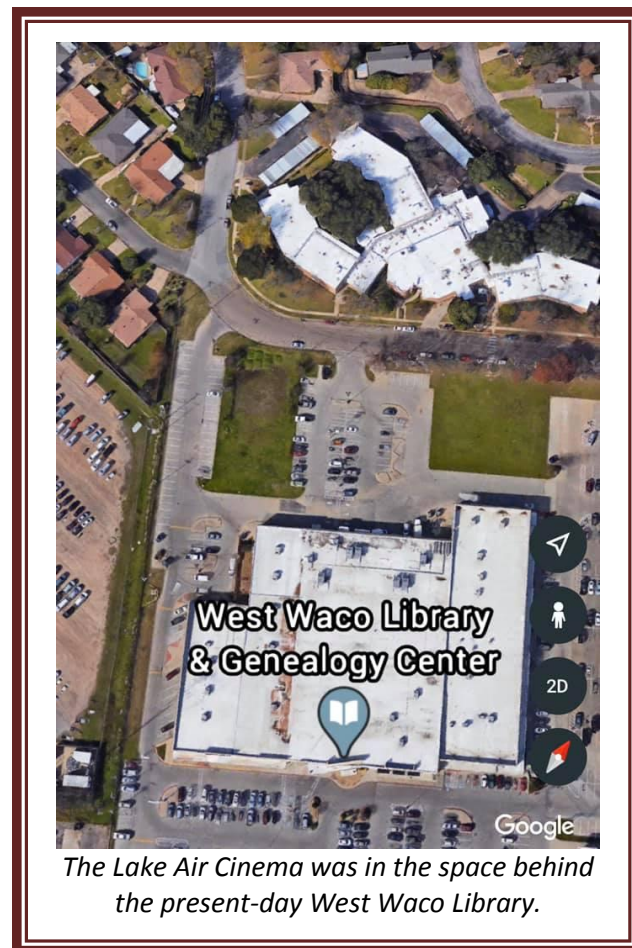
April 12, 1984. Cinematic Odeon ran it in the early 1990s, and Cinemagic Theaters reopened it and ran it from 1997 until 1999. **It closed forever in 1999.** (8)

The Lake Air Cinema stood for thirty-nine years before it was demolished in 2004. During that time, it was a great source of pride and entertainment for Wacoans, and enhanced the love we had for the Lake Air Mall.
-Randall Scott



SOURCES:

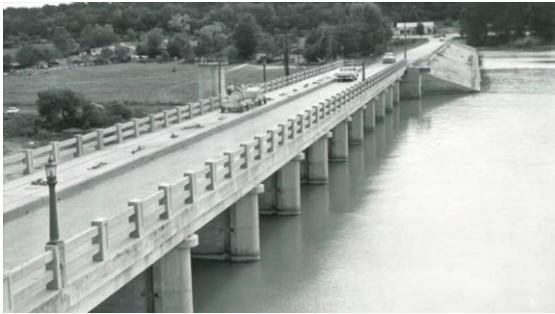
- (1) "Unique in Design: The Lake Air Center to Have Theater". The Waco News Tribune, December 28, 1964.
- (2) "New Drive-In Opens Soon for 785 Cars". The Waco Tribune Herald, May 16, 1965.
- (3) "ABC Interstate Twin Opens Christmas". The Waco Citizen, December 5, 1974.
- (4) "Building Crews Due Back on Job". The Waco News Tribune, October 28, 1965.
- (5) A two-page ad in the Waco News Tribune, November 10, 1965.
- (6) "Popcorn Fire Empties Lake Air Cinema". The Waco Tribune Herald, March 10, 1974.
- (7) "New Theater to Open Friday". The Waco Tribune Herald, September 26, 1974.
- (8) From the website: www.cinematreasures.org



For more information and many more photos, visit our Facebook Group "Waco, Texas History in Pictures".

THE NEW LAKE WACO AND DAM

The original Lake Waco Dam (construction beginning January 1929 and completed April 1930), created a beautiful recreational lake for the City of Waco, and provided a much-needed water supply of 39,000 acre feet of water (1 acre foot= 325,851 gallons). But within just a few years it began to be

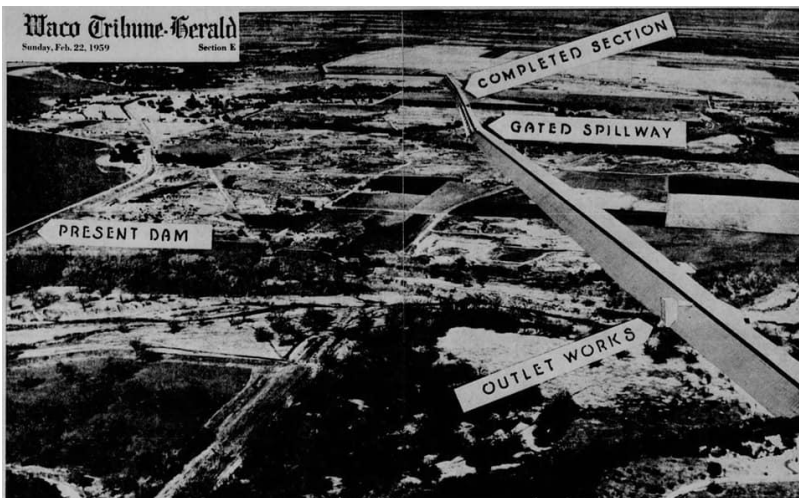


The old dam was completed in 1930. It was both a dam and a bridge! The airport is behind the photographer, and the City of Waco is at the end of the dam. This photo is from The Texas Collection.

apparent that a new and bigger dam needed to be built that would help with flood control and supply the water needs for the growing City of Waco. In 1939, U.S. Engineers conceived the idea of the larger “Bosque Dam” as one of a number of new dams in Texas to help with flood control. In 1950, city leaders began planning for the construction of a new dam. On May 13, 1954, Waco city leaders testified before Congress in Washington, DC about the need for the new dam. On May 29th of the same year, Texas State Senator Lyndon B. Johnson formally proposed the Waco Dam in a speech at the dedication of the Lake Belton Dam in Belton, Texas. In June of that year, he and State

Representative W.R. “Bob” Poage presented the idea in Washington, DC. In 1955, a delegation of city leaders from Waco went to Washington to once again present the need for a new dam. The delegation was headed by Harlon Fentress, publisher, and Bassett Watson, President of Waco Chamber of Commerce. Waco businessmen and civic leaders Jack Kultgen and Sidney Dobbins were also a part of this delegation. Congress authorized the construction of the new Lake Waco Dam by the Corps of Engineers.

On Saturday, July 5, 1958, Federal, State and Local officials... including Senator Lyndon B. Johnson and Congressman W.R. “Bob” Poage...gathered for the formal ground breaking ceremony out at the north end of the proposed new dam. Just before the ceremony was to begin, a cool front brought in rains that created an unexpected flood. The ceremonies were moved into the terminal of the Waco Municipal Airport, and the rain-drenched dignitaries continued the groundbreaking ceremony. Construction of the new dam



This photo shows the old dam at the right, with the proposed new dam at the right.

The Waco Tribune Herald, February 22, 1959.

began in July, 1958. The new dam was constructed one-half mile downstream from the 1930 Waco Dam.

In late October of 1961, work stopped when a portion of the earthen embankment between the Spillway and the Outlet Works shifted 22 feet vertically and 21 feet horizontally. Col. R. Paul West of the Corps of Engineers determined that this was caused by a shale "soft spot" beneath the subsurface that was giving way because of the weight of the new dam. After additional studies, the damaged portion of the dam was repaired and construction of the dam resumed in early 1962.



This photo shows a young boy standing on the outside of the new Dam. This is from our group archives, but we do not know the original contributor.

In September of 1964, heavy rains and waters released from the old lake began to fill the area between the old and new lake. A temporary dike had to be built to hold the water back so that the rest of the embankment between the Outlet Works and the cliff of the Waco side of the lake could be completed. According to the Corps of Engineers website, the Waco Dam was completed in 1964.

In February of 1965, it was announced in newspaper articles that the new dam was "practically complete" and on February 26, 1965, the gates of the new Waco Dam were closed and deliberate impounding began. In March of 1965, the gates and spillway of the old dam, as well as the old Highway 6 Bridge, were demolished by Downing Brothers Construction of Waco. Also in March of 1965, the bridge over Reynold's Creek was removed, even though the lower half of the bridge was underwater due to heavy rains. Those heavy rains continued into April and May, and the new lake, which

was expected to take longer to fill, was pronounced "completely full" (conservation pool level) at 6:08pm on Friday, May 14, 1965. The new dam secured 59,000 acre feet of water for the City of Waco.

In a May 16, 1965 article in the Waco Tribune Herald entitled "The New Dam Facts and Figures", it is stated that "THE DAM is built of rolled earth fill and is 24,618 feet long. It rises 140 feet above the old Bosque River stream bed. It is 20 feet wide at the top and 990 feet wide at the base. THE SPILLWAY is 560 feet long and contains 14 tainter gates, each of which is 40 feet wide and 35 feet high. Top of the gates is 500



The old dam, with the bridge top removed, and the new dam in the distance. This photo would have been around March of 1965. Photographer not known. Photo contributed by Mark Randolph/City of Waco.

feet above sea level. Flood waters are released through the spillway. THE OUTLET WORKS controls normal level of the lake. It contains three control gates in the 20-foot conduit through the base.”

The new Lake Waco Dam was formally dedicated at 10:00am on Saturday, September 4, 1965 at the Lake Waco Dam, close to the Waco Municipal Airport. The Brazos River Authority and the Waco Chamber of Commerce hosted the event, and Texas Governor John Connally, Congressman W.R. “Bob” Poage, and City Manager Elmer Roberts were honored guests. The Lake Waco Dedication Committee was chaired by Harry Provence. Because of the date of deliberate impounding (February 26, 1965) and the date of dedication (September 4, 1965), this group refers to this as the 1965 Lake Waco Dam.

The new Lake Waco Dam was first discussed by city leaders when Harry S. Truman was President of the United States. City Leaders began lobbying for the new dam and construction began when Dwight D. Eisenhower was President.

When John F. Kennedy was inaugurated President in January of 1961, Wacoans were about to celebrate the dedication of the new Lake Air Mall...named for the new lake and dam that was being built, and everyone knew that their new Vice-President had been instrumental in the construction of their new dam. When President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963, Lyndon B. Johnson became President and he...who was largely responsible for the construction of the dam, was President when it was dedicated on September 4, 1965.



Photo taken from the new dam, with the top of the old dam disappearing in the distance. The old Lake Shore at the left.



The New Lake Waco Dam, completed in 1964, began deliberate impoundment on February 26, 1965. Photo from Google Earth.

The new dam and lake displaced many families, including my great-grandparents. An estimated 1,500 homes and buildings had to be moved or demolished. Long-established roads and recreational areas were submerged beneath the new lake. An entire town...Speegleville...had to be scattered because of the new lake. Several were injured in the construction of the dam, and at least one was killed. All of this sacrifice was for the needs of the growing Waco population.

In 1979, research revealed that the lake could be raised an additional seven feet, and in 1998, the Waco City Council voted to raise Lake Waco to its current level, providing 79,000 acre feet of water for the City of Waco. The Lake Waco Dam continues to benefit Waco in many ways, and will continue to do so.

-Randall Scott, August 31, 2019

For more information and many more photos, visit our Facebook Group "The Old Lake Waco and Dam".

THE NEW LAKE SHORE DRIVE

Construction on Lake Shore Drive began in early 1963. In 1960, the city was considering three possible routes for the new Lake Shore Drive. The Corps of Engineers refused one of those routes, and there was a controversy over which of the other two would be chosen. In question was the section of Lake Shore Drive from Hillcrest to MacArthur Drive. Both plans called for the new Lake Shore Drive to pass through the land belonging to Mrs. Esse Forrester O'Brien. She told them that if they would choose the route that was on the edge of her land, rather than the route that divided her land, she would donate right of way for way for the road as well as easement for the raw water line. Engineers for the city agreed that the route Mrs. O'Brien was wanting would also be the best for construction of the raw water line, so that route was adopted. The raw water line follows the path of Lake Shore Drive. The water line was constructed by Stimson Constructing Company and Cole Williams Construction Company. **The new Lake Shore Drive was built by Downing Brothers Construction Co. and was completed in late 1964.**

-Randall Scott, September 10, 2019



Lake Shore Drive, 1982. Photo by Vicki Scott Miller.

For more information and many more photos, visit our Facebook Group "The Old Lake Waco and Dam".

Construction of the NEW Lake Shore Drive began in 1963, and these photos are from September, 1963. The OLD Lake Shore Drive, which followed the shoreline of the old Lake Waco, is seen to the right of the photo, pointing to “four o’clock”. The old Highway 6, leading over to Speegleville , is pointing at “three o’clock”.



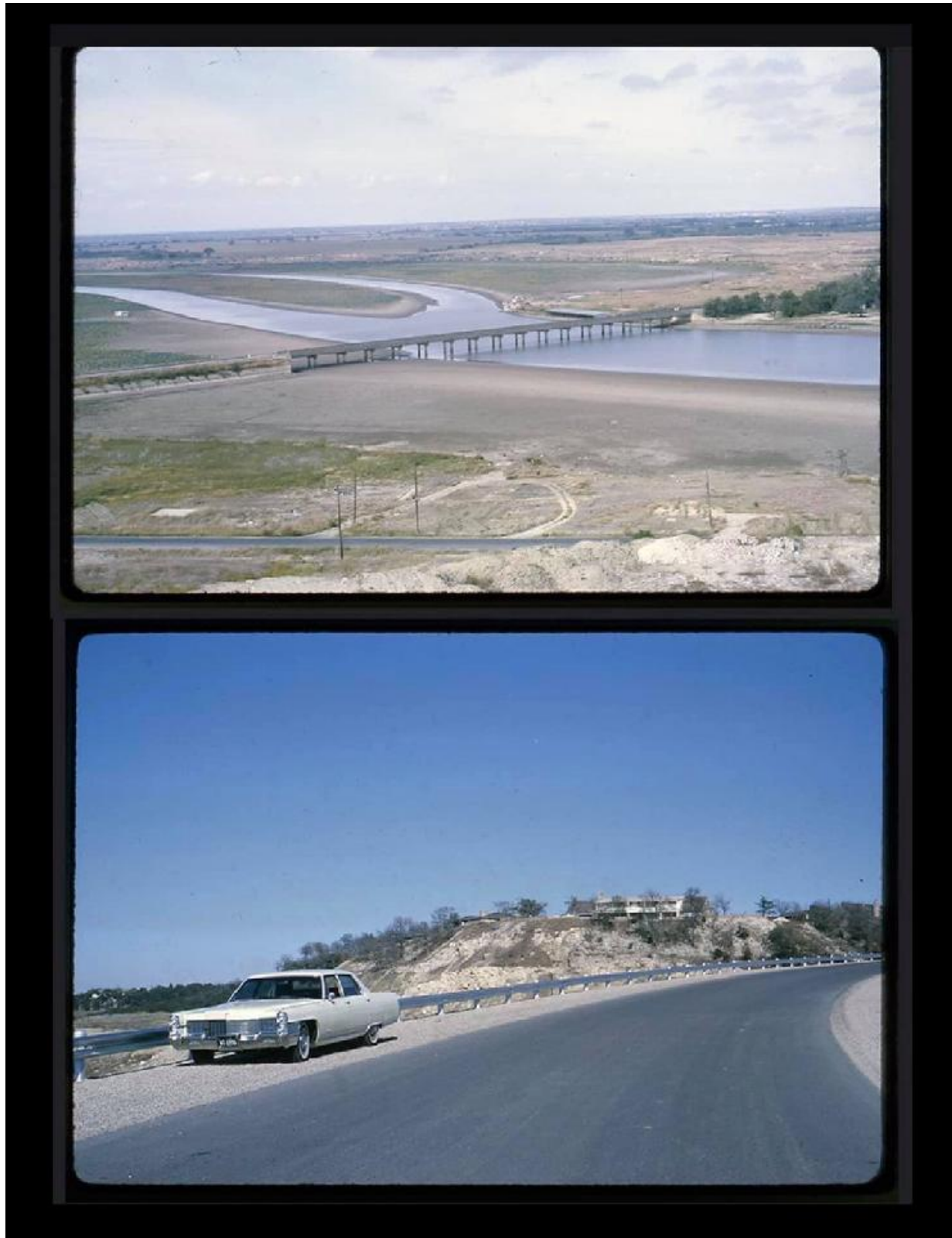
These photos are from The Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Lake Shore Drive construction progress photos from May of 1964. The Twin Bridges, completed in 1962, are shown at the far right of the first photo. The second photo shows the old Highway 6 leading out to the old Highway 6 Bridge.

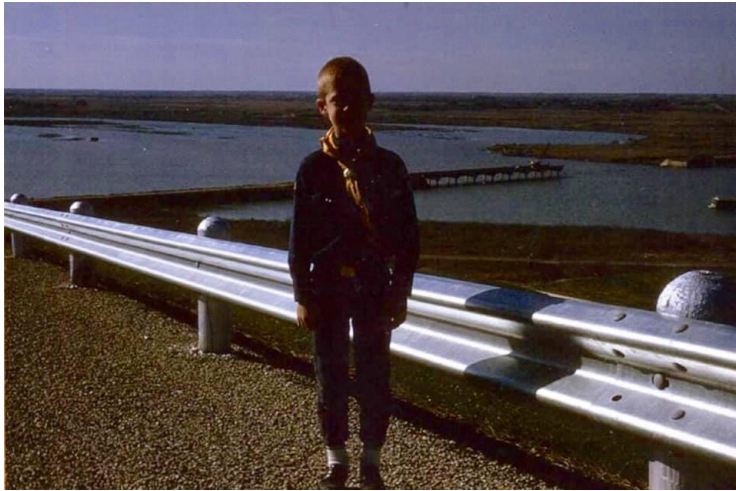


These photos are from The Texas Collection at Baylor University.

In the top photo, taken from the NEW Lake Shore Drive, the Old Highway 6 Bridge, is shown. The OLD Lake Shore Drive can be seen in at the bottom of the photo. The bottom photo shows the completed Lake Shore Drive. Both photos are from May, 1964.



These photos are from The Texas Collection at Baylor University.



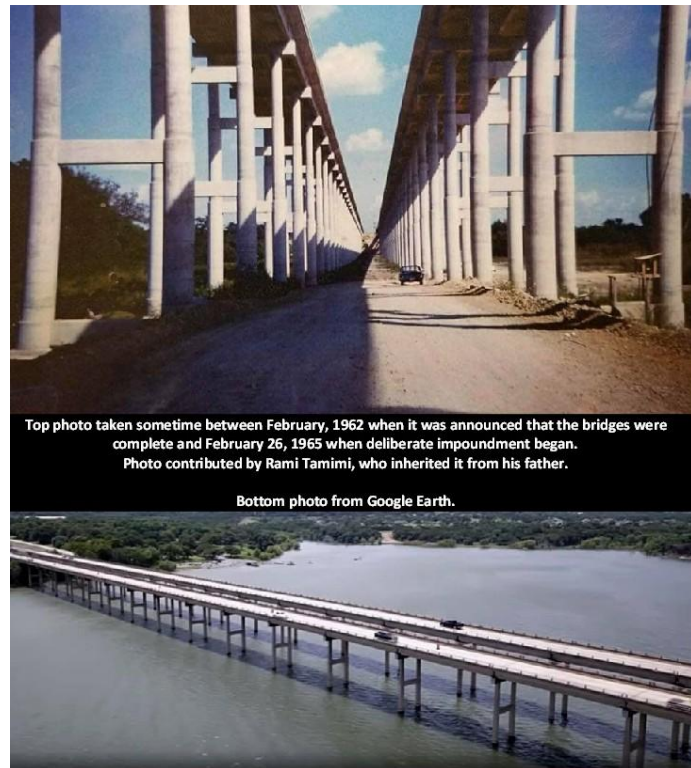
**The NEW Lake Shore Drive,
February, 1965.**

**The old Highway 6 Bridge
is being demolished. The
8-year-old boy in the
photo is Edward Brady
Thompson, who
contributed this photo.**

THE TWIN BRIDGES

The Twin Bridges crossing the South Bosque were built by Moorman and Singleton Construction Company. Construction on the Twin Bridges began in early 1960. The first reference we can find for them is June 10, 1960, and the piers have already been set in place. **A February 20, 1962 photo cutline says that the bridges are now complete, but that it will be about another year before the roads that connect them to other highways will be completed.** When the bridges were first opened, Wacoans accessed them by going out Fishpond Road. The Bosque Boulevard Road did not yet extend into Woodway. When the new Highway 6 was built, it originally ended at Waco Drive, but later was extended to the new I-35. The bridges are three-fourths of a mile long and stand about 78 feet above the original ground level. The cost of the bridges at the time of construction was \$1,575,000. Dean Word Company of New Braunfels constructed the relocated Highway 6...7.1 miles of highway from three miles north of Speegleville to Highway 84 at the end of Waco Drive.

-Randall Scott.



Top photo taken sometime between February, 1962 when it was announced that the bridges were complete and February 26, 1965 when deliberate impoundment began.
Photo contributed by Rami Tamimi, who inherited it from his father.

Bottom photo from Google Earth.

***For more information and many more photos, visit our Facebook Group
"The Old Lake Waco and Dam".***