

Texas Historical Commission staff (BB), 9/7/2007, rev 9/12/07
18" x 28" Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Marker with post
Cameron County (Job #07CF02) Subject BG, FS (Atlas 14016) UTM: 14 648704E 2867295N
Location: Brownsville, 1249 W. Washington

HICKS-GREGG HOUSE

MERCHANT AND BROWNSVILLE NATIVE
FREDERICK HICKS AND HIS SECOND WIFE,
SOCIAL WORKER ZULEIKA BANTON
BLACKSHEAR OF DUBLIN, TEXAS, BUILT
THIS HOUSE CIRCA 1909. THREE YEARS
LATER THEY SOLD THE HOUSE TO HARRY
AND NELLIE MOLER, WHO LIVED HERE
EIGHT YEARS. IN 1920, BANKER AND CIVIC
LEADER JOHN GREGG AND HIS WIFE LILY
BOUGHT THE PROPERTY. THE HICKS-
GREGG HOUSE IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE
AMERICAN FOURSQUARE DESIGN, A
SYMMETRICAL TYPE OF THE PRAIRIE STYLE.
PROMINENT FEATURES OF THE FRAME
RESIDENCE INCLUDE ITS HIPPED ROOF,
DORMER WINDOW, EXPOSED RAFTER
ENDS, FULL-LENGTH THREE-BAY PORCH,
TUSCAN COLUMNS AND BAY WINDOW. THE
GREGGS ADDED A COMPLEMENTARY
SUNROOM ADDITION DURING THEIR
OWNERSHIP.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2007
MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

**RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS:
2007 Official Texas Historical Marker
Sponsorship Application Form**

Valid November 15, 2006 to January 2, 2007 only

This form constitutes a public request for the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to consider approval of an Official Texas Historical Marker for the topic noted in this application. The THC will review the request and make its determination based on rules and procedures of the program. Filing of the application for sponsorship is for the purpose of providing basic information to be used in the evaluation process. The final determination of eligibility and therefore approval for a state marker will be made by the THC. This form is to be used for subject marker requests only. Please see separate forms for either Historic Texas Cemeteries or Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks.

Proposed marker topic (Official title will be determined by the THC): House on West Washington

County: **Cameron**

Town (nearest county town on state highway map): **Brownsville**

Street address of marker site or directions from town noted above: **1249 West Washington**

NOTE: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers must be placed at the structure being marked.

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers definition: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) markers are awarded to structures deemed worthy of preservation for their historical associations and architectural significance. RTHL is a legal designation and comes with a measure of protection; it is the highest honor the state can bestow on a historic structure, and the designation is required for this type of marker. The RTHL designation becomes effective upon approval by the THC. Official Texas Historical Markers signify the RTHL designation; designation comes only through application to and approval by the THC and must include public display of an Official Texas Historical Marker. Owners of RTHL-designated structures must give the THC 60 days written notice before any alterations are made to the exterior of the structure. RTHL status is a permanent designation and is not to be removed from the property in the event of a transfer of ownership. Only the THC can remove the designation or recall the marker. The marker must remain with the structure and may not be removed or displayed elsewhere until or unless the THC gives express approval in writing for such action. Once designated as RTHL, properties are subject to provisions of Texas Government Code, Section 442.006(f).

Criteria:

1. **Age:** Structures eligible for the RTHL designation and marker must be at least 50 years old.
2. **Historical significance:** Architectural significance alone is not enough to qualify a structure for the RTHL designation. It must have an equally significant historical association, and that association can come from an event that occurred at the site; through individuals who owned or lived on the property; or, in the case of bridges, industrial plants, schoolhouses and other non-residential properties, through documented significance to the larger community.
3. **Architectural significance:** Structures deemed architecturally significant are outstanding examples of architectural history, either through design, materials, structural type or construction methods. In

THC use only

Job _____; NR/C+ _____; IR _____; Prev _____

all cases, eligible architectural properties must display integrity, that is, the structure should be in a good state of repair, maintain its appearance from its period of significance and be considered an exemplary model of preservation. Architectural significance is often best determined by the relevance of the property to broader contexts, including geography. Any changes over the years should be compatible with original design and reflect compliance with accepted preservation practices, e.g., the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

4. **Good state of repair:** Structures not considered by the THC to be in a good state of repair—i.e., restored—are ineligible for RTHL designation. The THC reserves the sole right to make that determination relative to eligibility for RTHL markers.

Special considerations for RTHL marker applications: If a structure has been individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under either Criterion A or B and Criterion C (Architecture), the historical text compiled as part of the National Register nomination process may be submitted as part of the marker process, provided it includes the required reference notes and other documentation. Acceptance of the National Register information for the purposes of the marker process will be up to the sole determination of the THC. Listing in the NRHP does not guarantee approval for an RTHL marker. See the THC web site at <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madnrcrit.html> for National Register criteria.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Any individual, group or CHC may apply to the THC to request an Official Texas Historical Marker for what it deems a worthy topic. Only complete marker application packets that contain all the required elements can be accepted or processed by the THC. For RTHL markers, the required elements are: sponsorship application form; narrative history; documentation; online map (see details below); site plan; floorplan; historic photograph and current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure.

- Completed application packets must be duly reviewed, verified and approved by the county historical commission in the county in which the marker will be placed.
- The sponsorship application form, narrative history and documentation must be in the form of Microsoft Word or Word-compatible documents and submitted via email attachments to the THC by no later than January 2, 2007.
- Required font style and type size are a Times variant and 12-point.
- Narrative histories must be typed in a double-spaced format and include separate sections on context, overview and significance.
- The narrative history must include documentation in the form of reference notes, which can be either footnotes or endnotes. Documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary.
- Applications for RTHL markers must include a current city or county map through TopoZone.com that clearly denotes the proposed marker location. Instructions for using TopoZone.com are available on the THC web site.
- Immediately upon notification of the successful preliminary review of required elements by the THC, a non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required. The fee shall be submitted to the THC within ten working days of application receipt notification.

APPROVAL BY COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The duly appointed marker representative (chair or marker chair) noted below for the CHC will be the sole contact to the THC for this marker application. To ensure accuracy, consistency and efficiency, all information to and from the THC relative to the application will be via direct communication with the CHC representative. All other inquiries (calls, emails, letters) to the THC will be referred to the CHC representative for response. By filling out the information below and filing the application with the THC, the CHC representative is providing the THC with notice that the application and documentation have

been reviewed and verified by the CHC and that the material meets all current requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program.

As chair or duly appointed marker chair, I certify the following:

- Representatives of the CHC have met with the potential marker sponsor and discussed the program policies as outlined on the THC web site.
- Representatives have conveyed information on the RTHL designation, including legal restrictions, to the property owner.
- Representatives of the CHC have reviewed the history and documentation for accuracy and made additional notes as necessary.
- It is the determination of the CHC that the structure, history and documentation meet the THC criteria for eligibility.

CHC comments or concerns about this application, if any:

Name of CHC contact (chair or marker chair): **Mary Lou Rumbo**

Mailing address: **2318 E. Van Buren Street** City, zip: **Harlingen, 78550**

Email address (required): **rumbomary@aol.com**

Daytime phone (with area code): **956-423-5727**

PERMISSION OF PROPERTY OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT

Property owner: **Javier and Cristina Salinas**

Address: **7125 Bending Oak Road** City, state, zip: **Austin, TX 78749** Phone: **512-699-5933**

Legal Description of the property (metes and bounds, lot and block, etc.): **Lots 4, 5, 6, Block 30, West Brownsville Subdivision**

Upon receipt of the application, the THC will provide the owner with a letter that outlines the legal responsibility of ownership under the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark statute. The letter must be signed by the owner and returned to the THC before the evaluation can be completed.

NOTE: The property owner will not receive other copies of general correspondence from the THC. All procedural correspondence (notice of receipt, requests for additional information, inscriptions, shipping notices, etc.)—with the exception of payment notices—will be sent via email to the CHC representative, who is encouraged to share the information with all interested parties as necessary. Given the large volume of applications processed annually and the need for centralized communication, all inquiries about applications in process will be referred to the CHC for response. The CHC is the sole liaison to the THC on all marker application matters. The THC will, however, provide regular updates to the CHC via the Internet, email or listserv on the progress of all applications.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Prospective sponsors please note the following:

- Payment must be received in full within 45 days of the official approval notice and must be accompanied by the THC payment form. The THC is unable to process partial payments or to delay payment due to processing procedures of the sponsor. Applications not paid in the time frame required may, at the sole discretion of the THC, be cancelled or postponed.

- Payment relates to sponsorship of the marker in partnership with the THC, which provides the match for program costs.
- Payment does not constitute ownership of a marker; Recorded Texas Historic Landmark and other Official Texas Historical Markers are the property of the State of Texas.
- If, at any time during the marker process, sponsorship is withdrawn, a refund can be processed, but the THC will retain the application fee of \$100.
- The Official Texas Historical Marker Program provides no means of recognizing sponsors through marker text, incising or supplemental plaques.

Marker sponsor (may be individual or organization):

Contact person (if applicable):

Mailing address: City, zip:

Email address (required): Phone:

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

In order to facilitate delivery of the marker, neither post office box numbers nor rural route numbers can be accepted. To avoid additional shipping charges or time delays, use a business street address (open 8 a.m.—5 p.m., Monday—Friday).

Name: **Javier Salinas**

Street address: **7125 Bending Oak Road** City, zip: **Austin, 78749**

Daytime phone (required): **512-699-5933** Email (required): **csalinas93@austin.rr.com**

TYPE AND SIZE OF RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS

As part of its review process, the THC will determine the appropriate size marker and provide options, if any, for the approved topic based on its own review criteria, including, but not exclusive of, historical significance, replication of information in other THC markers, relevance to the statewide preservation plan and the amount of available documented information provided in the application narrative. In making its determination, however, the THC will also take into account the preference of the CHC, as noted below.

The sponsor/CHC prefer the following size marker:

- 27" x 42" RTHL marker with post (\$1500)
- 27" X 42" RTHL marker without post* (\$1500)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker with post (\$1000)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker without post* (\$1000)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque with post (\$750)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque without post* (\$750)

*For an RTHL marker without post, indicate to what surface material it will be mounted:

- wood
- masonry
- metal
- other (specify)

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION (via email required)

When the CHC has determined that the application packet is complete, that the history has been verified and that the application meets the requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the required elements only should be forwarded to the THC via email at the following address: markerapplication@thc.state.tx.us.

- The CHC or marker chair should send an e-mail containing the following attachments:
 - This application form
 - The subject history (narrative and footnotes)
 - A TopoZone.com map of the proposed marker location
 - Photographs (may be sent as attachments or by separate mail; digital photos are acceptable)
 - Site plan (may be sent as attachment or by separate mail; if sent separately, it must be on letter size paper)
 - Floor plans (may be sent as attachment or by separate mail; if sent separately, plans must be on letter size paper)
- Follow these steps to attach the files:
 - Most email services have the “Attach” or “Attachment” command under the “File” menu or in an email toolbar.
 - Select the file for attachment
- Send the email including the attachments, with all requirements met.

RECORDS RETENTION BY CHC: The CHC must retain both the hard copies of the application as well as an online version, at least for the duration of the marker process. The THC is not responsible for lost applications, for incomplete applications or for applications not properly filed according to the program requirements. For additional information about any aspect of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, visit the Markers page on the THC web site (<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madmark.html>).

THE GREGG HOUSE OF WEST WASHINGTON STREET, BROWNSVILLE

I. CONTEXT

As the city of Brownsville began to expand in the early 1900s, many of its streets began flourishing to include the construction of the city hall, Cameron County Courthouse, a motion picture theater and a high school.¹ In 1904 significant developments began to occur, such as the coming of the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway as well as the Brownsville owned electric-lighting system, waterworks, and sewerage system in 1908.^{2,3} Although the city endured much border unrest resulting in the revival of Fort Brown in 1913, many families began populating the city's first suburb. Soon the city's growth brought paved roads and the completion of the international bridge in 1910 that connected Brownsville to its sister city, Matamoros. It was in this decade that famed photographer and botanist, Robert Runyon, began to document much military activity as well as civic developments.⁴

II. OVERVIEW

In 1909, Frederick Hicks purchased Lots 4, 5 and 6, block number 30, from the Brownsville Land and Improvement Company for \$550.00. By 1912, county records reveal Frederick and Zuleika Hicks sold the property to Harry B. and Nellie Moler for \$6,000.00. The Molers resided in the home until 1920 and then sold the home to John and Lily Gregg for the sum of \$9,000.00. Mr. Gregg, one of the leading bankers of the valley, was president of the Merchants National Bank of Brownsville.⁵ Helen Bacon, a noted interior designer for the most prominent residents of Brownsville, purchased the home and sold it in 1964 to Hector and Mary Rose Gonzalez. Currently the home is owned by Javier and Cristina Salinas.

Originally the house was built by Frederick Hicks, a hardware merchant and landowner, for his second wife Zuleika Baniton Hicks. Frederick Impey Hicks was born in Brownsville, Texas, on Oct. 10, 1878. He was the son of Annette Pauline Impey of New Orleans and Benjamin Frederick Hicks of Tiverton, Rhode Island.⁵ Zuleika Baniton Hicks was born in Dublin, Texas in 1886, and was the daughter of Imogene Baniton and William St. J. Blackshear, a pharmacist and successful salesman.⁶ Zuleika, who was to advance to a long career of public service, began her social work calling in 1927 with United Charities in Dallas, Texas. In 1929, she became executive secretary of United Charities in Texarkana, Ark-Tex. Her duties encompassed

reorganizing the Pulaski Company of Little Rock, Arkansas, a relief agency under Federal Emergency Relief Administration. She then moved to Florida to work in the Federal Transient Bureau, heading up the Miami Bureau until 1934 when she returned to Austin, Texas. Her role in Austin was assistant Social Service Director for the State Relief Agency of the Texas Relief Commission and later director of the agency at the time the agency merged with Old Age Assistance to form the present State Department of Welfare.

Mrs. Hicks served as the head of Social Service for two years and in 1941 became Welfare Consultant for the Food Stamp Plan of the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture. In that role she traveled throughout the southern states. She then took the position of director of Home Service of Dallas Co. with the American Red Cross. Mrs. Hicks retired on September 15, 1952, in order to enjoy home life with her son and grandchildren.

In 1920, the home came into the hands of its third and most prominent owners, John and Lily Gregg, who created a considerable impact on the community during the time they owned the home. Their role in the community is why the home is referred to as the Gregg House. Mr. Gregg began his career with the First Merchants National Bank as a cashier and notary in 1913 and was also president of the Brownsville Country Club at that time.⁷

A document drafted in 1914, details Gregg's role in assisting C.W. Batsell, a family friend who was attempting to secure a Confederate pension, having served in the Civil War with Gregg's father. As the son of Lieutenant-Colonel E. P. Gregg, who had commanded the 16th Texas Cavalry of the Confederate Army during the Civil War, Gregg share's his insight regarding Mr. Batsell's character. In the letter Mr. Gregg commends C. W. Batsell, a member of his father's brigade, as being "a man of exemplary habits and the soul of honor."⁶ He goes on to add, "We desire to commend Mr. Batsell in the highest terms and recommend that he be given the Confederate pension."

By 1926, Mr. Gregg had earned the title of bank president and retained it until 1931. The Greggs were active socially and listed in *The Standard Blue Book-Texas* in the Who's Who Section as well as in the Social Register of the same year.⁸ However, events were to drastically alter the picture. In 1932, the *Galveston Daily News* reported that Mr. Gregg was on trial in federal court for misapplication of more than \$200,000 of funds from the Merchants National Bank of Brownsville.⁹ After his conviction, Mr. and Mrs. Gregg lived in Brownville until his death at which time Mrs. Gregg moved to Los Angeles. As stated in her 1964 obituary, word of Mrs.

Gregg's death was sent to friends in Brownsville and the Greggs' local, civic, and social prominence was noted.¹⁰

III. The Structure

The home is two and a half stories and features a four room plan reflecting the American Foursquare, or the *Prairie Box* design which is a post-Victorian style and a product of the Arts & Crafts era. The design incorporates a hipped roof with a full-width porch with wide stairs, wood siding and a large central dormer appearing atop the second story. Unlike most Arts & Crafts styles which include decorative (false) beams or braces commonly added under gables, each level of the home, including the dormer, displays a decorative brace under the gable on the exposed roof rafters that are also full-length and provide true support to the roof.

Adopting an elegant feature from the Queen Anne style, the home has a front facade bay window and shows classical symmetry with paired windows flanking a center front door. The house has a total of 31 windows on the first floor and 23 windows on the second floor. Another characteristic feature is three of the windows located in the center of the second story are smaller in size and are flanked with two larger windows that maintain the symmetry of the home.

Accentuating the first floor are four Tuscan columns supporting the wide porch. Borrowing a feature from Greek Revival style, the house's entryway is adorned with an elegant frieze and a simple cornice. The back of the home faces west and has a secondary staircase that provides access from the kitchen directly to the bedrooms.

The property also includes a detached two-story, one bedroom residence believed to have been used as servants' quarters. Records, including information from the 1910 and 1930 Federal Census, reveal two servants were living in the household.^{11, 12}

The interior of the home features a butler's pantry and formerly had a ringer wired to the kitchen installed in the master bedroom. Other interior features include built-in cabinetry that define the rooms and maintains a boxlike appearance. Simple trim and baseboards complement the five panel doors throughout the home. The home's design incorporates two fireplaces, one located to the right of the entryway in the living room and the other in the dining room.

The Runyon Collection lists the home as the Gregg House in August 1920, at which time the window-ensconced sunroom, which is attributed to the Greggs, had not yet been added.¹³ Neighbors, whose parents attended gatherings hosted by the Greggs, remember a specific area of

the home known as the sunroom which was complete with a terrazzo floor complemented by brass inlay.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

The neighborhood still retains several early and significant houses. The home across the street is known as the Dr. Merrill Residence. Photographs of this home are also included the Runyon Collection. Behind this structure is a home built by Frederick Hicks' brother, Edgar Lawrence Hicks and is currently owned by the Lof family.

The Gregg House is one of the last remaining of West Brownsville's intact two-story structures of the early 20th century. In late 2005, the house underwent renovation to restore the home's original features. These features are representative of houses in West Brownsville's first subdivisions and are distinct in one of its largest and earliest existing homes. In December 2006, the home earned recognition by the Brownsville Heritage Council as a local historical site.

Photographs of the house discovered in the Robert Runyon Collection, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, were integral in providing details on many of the original structural features. The current owners are working to restore the long-hidden character of the home so that it can live up to its reputation of being "the anchor of the neighborhood", a title given by it by long-standing neighbors. In returning the structure true to its original design, it has become a snapshot of early Brownsville. The home is now a symbol of Brownsville's finest and proud community leaders of the past, as well as representing the rich heritage of the city.

V. REFERENCES

¹ *A Pictorial History of Brownsville, Texas-- Past, Present, & Future: Growth & Development*
By: Tony Lehmann Jr., s.v. ", "

<http://www.brownsvilletexasonline.com/14-Contacts/index.htm>.

(NOTE: "s.v." stands for sub verbo, "under the word.")

² Alicia A. Garza and Christopher Long. "Brownsville, Texas." *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. ", "<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/hdb4.html>

³ *Brownsville and Matamoros History Online*, s.v. " , "

http://blue.utb.edu/localhistory/brief_history2.htm

⁴ Joe Ideker and Kendall Curlee. "Runyon, Robert." *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. ", "
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/RR/fru37.html>

⁵ Hicks Newsletter II, Vol 4, Feb 96.

⁶ *Grayson County TXGenWeb Batsell Family Research by Theresa Hodge Online*, s.v. ","
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~txgrayso/batsellhist.html>

⁷ Brownsville City Directory, (1913-1914), pg 152.

⁸ The Standard Blue Book-Texas, Vol. XIV (1926), pg 106 and 118.

⁹ *Galveston Daily News*, December 2, 1932

¹⁰ Obituaries, *Brownsville Herald*, Feb. 10, 1964.

¹¹ Year: 1910; Census Place: Brownsville Ward 1, Cameron, Texas; Roll: T624_1536; Enumeration District: 25; Image 793.

¹² Year: 1930; Census Place: Brownsville, Cameron, Texas; Roll: 2305; Page 9A; Enumeration District: 4; Image 18.0.

¹³ *The South Texas Border: The Robert Runyon Photograph Collection Online*, s.v. ","
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/txuhtml/runyhome.html>

MODERN HOME No. 102

This house contains ten conveniently and economically arranged rooms as shown on the two floor plans.

The arrangement of this house is as follows:

FIRST FLOOR.

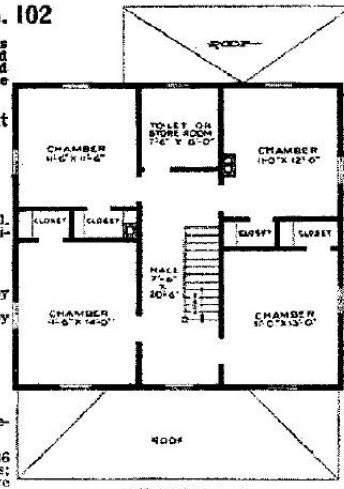
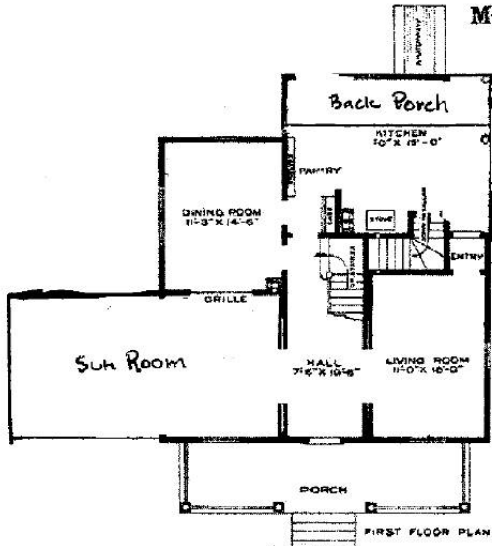
Parlor.
Large Reception Hall.
Living Room or Library.
Dining Room.
Kitchen.
Pantry.
Front Porch, 7 feet by 25 feet.
Rear Porch, 4 feet by 15 feet 6 inches.

SECOND FLOOR.

Bedroom.
Bedroom.
Bedroom.
Bathroom or Storeroom.
LARGE HALL.
Length of building 36 feet, exclusive of porches; width, 32 feet, exclusive of porches.

This house is one of the most economical to build. Being practically square, every inch of space can be utilized to the very best advantage. It has proven to be a favorite in all parts of the country. It is the best house ever built in recent years under \$3,000.00. The material we specify is always the best. Send for the plans (blue prints), specifications and bill of materials which we will send you free on conditions as explained on page 2.

Any of the houses shown in this book can be arranged with bathroom for a small additional charge. Write for particulars.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

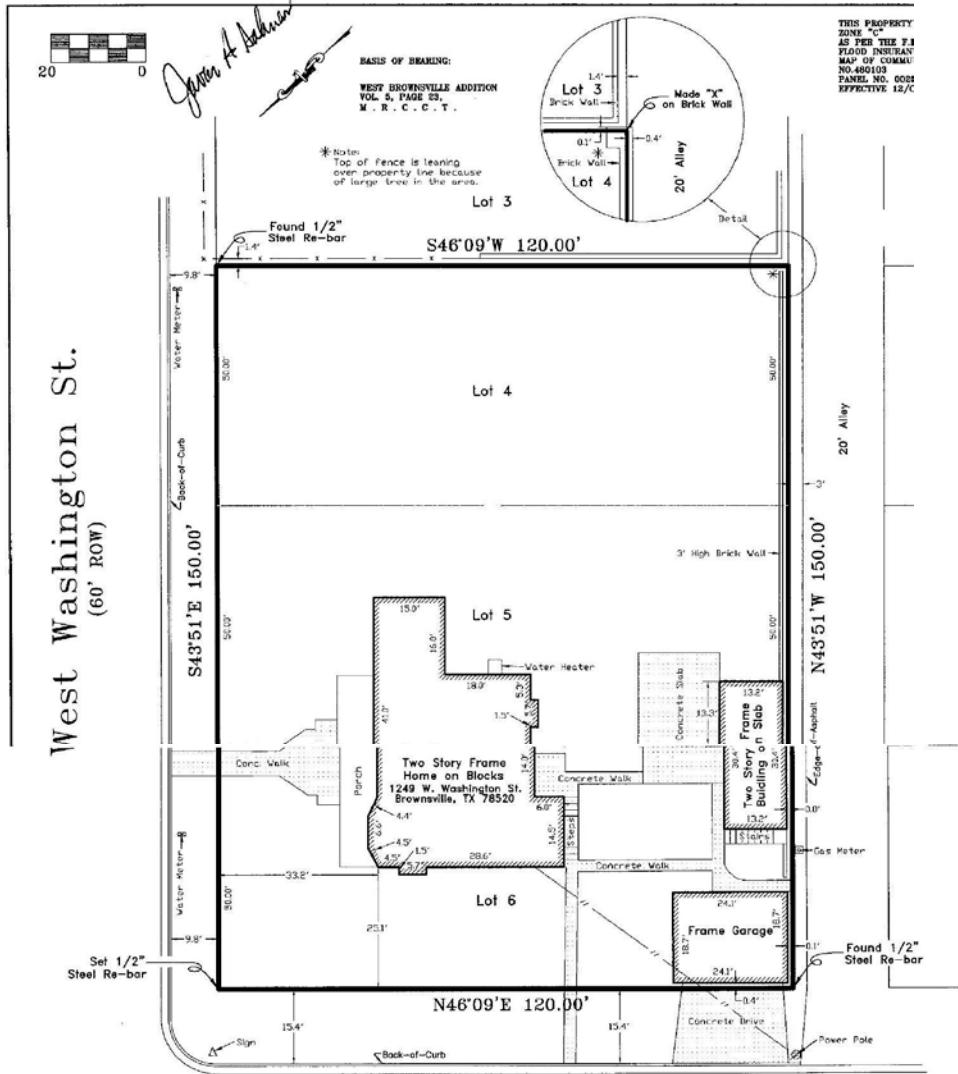
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

P.1

S123015406

Javier Salinas

an 02 07 06:44p



THIS PROPERTY ZONE "C" AS PER THE F.I FLOOD INSURANCE MAP OF COMAU NO.480103 FAMED NO. 6028 EFFECTIVE 12/C

West Washington St.
(60' ROW)

West 13th St.
(60' ROW)

Survey of:

Lots 4, 5 and 6, Block 30, WEST BROWNSVILLE ADDITION TO THE CITY OF BROWNSVILLE, Cameron County, Texas, according to the map of said addition, recorded in Volume 1, Page 18, Map Records, Cameron County, Texas.

Surveyed For:
Javier Salinas

O R I V E
& Associates, Inc.
5580 Paredes Line Rd.
Brownsville, TX 78526

Daniel G. Drive, Registered Professional Land Surveyor No. 4668, do hereby certify that the survey described hereon was made on the ground on the 19th day of October 2005, that the visible improvements on the ground are as shown, that there are no visible encroachments, visible overlapping, apparent conflicts, or visible easements except as shown.

Daniel G. Drive

NEEL G. DRIVE, R.P.L.S. # 4699

Job # 017-603 GP No. 2055057

(956) 541-8808 (956) 541-8404 fax

an 02 07 06:45p

Javier Salinas

S123015406

P.1



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- [ABOUT US](#)
- [HELP!](#)

USGS West Brownsville (TX) Topo Map

View *TopoZone Pro* topographic maps, aerial photos, street maps, coordinate and elevation display
UTM 14 648704E 2867295N (NAD27)

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- 1:24K/25K Topo Maps
- 1:100K Topo Maps
- 1:250K Topo Maps
- Automatic selection

Map Size

- Small
- Medium
- Large

View Scale

1 : 25,000

Coordinate Format

UTM

Map Datum

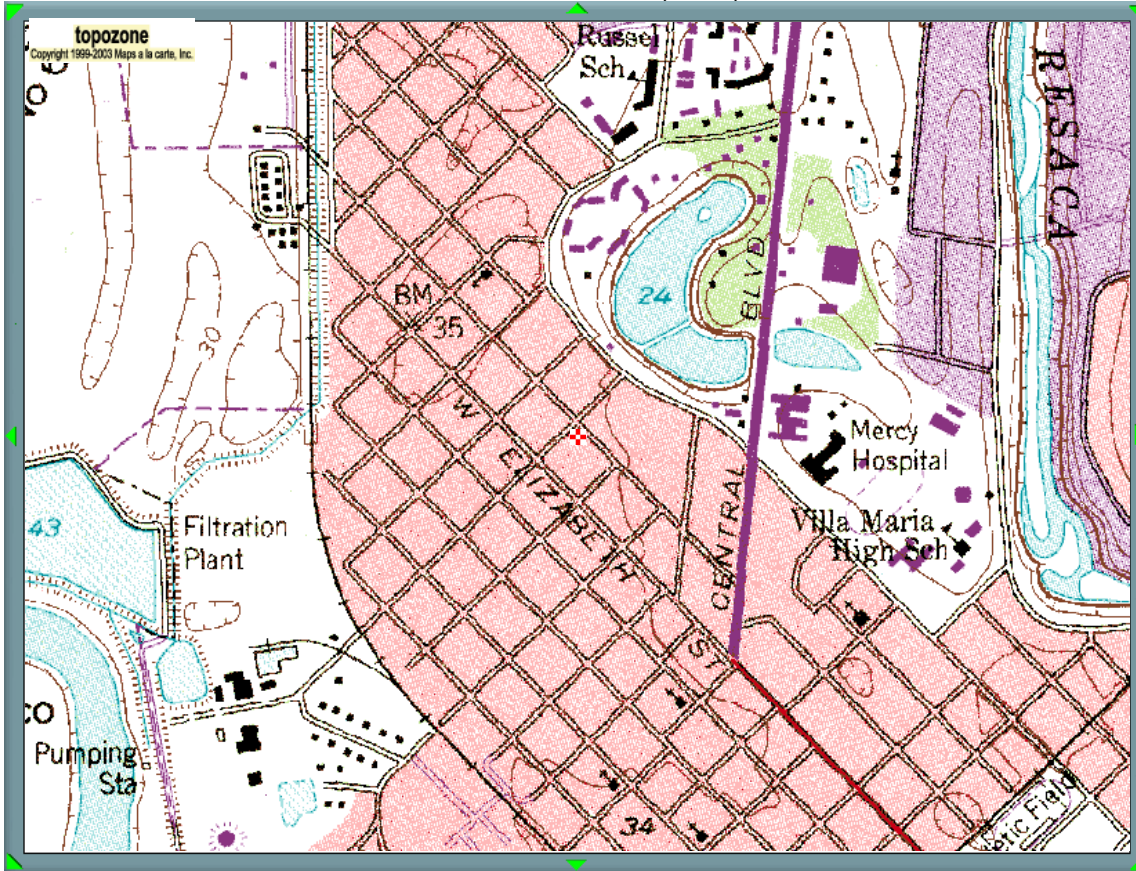
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This was a second narrative that was in this file. I think it's an earlier version.
-Charles

8/30/2007 Xavier Salinas called to make revisions to large size marker, inquired about size.
Sponsor did in fact pay for a small RTHL marker.

WEST WASHINGTON HOUSE

I. CONTEXT

As the city of Brownsville began to expand in the early 1900's with it many of the peripheral streets began flourishing to include the construction of the city hall, Cameron County courthouse, motion picture theater and high school.¹ In 1904 significant establishments began to emerge such as the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway as well as the Brownsville owned electric-lighting system, waterworks, and sewerage system in 1908.^{2,3} Although, the city endured much border unrest and a reviving of Fort Brown in 1913, many families began populating the city's first suburb. Soon the city's growth gave way to paved roads and completion of the international bridge connecting sister city, Matamoros. Robert Runyon, a botanist and photographer, began to document much of this military activity as well as civic development.⁴

II. OVERVIEW

In 1909, Frederick Hicks purchased Lots 4,5,6, block number 30, from the Brownsville Land and Improvement Company for \$550.00. By 1912, county records reveal Frederick and Zuleika Hicks sold the property to Harry B. and Nellie Moler for \$6,000.00. The Moler's resided in the home until 1920, and then sold the home to John and Lily Gregg for the sum of \$9,000.00. Mr. Gregg, one of the leading bankers of the valley, was president of the Merchants' National Bank of Brownsville.⁵ Helen Bacon, a notable interior decorator for the most prominent residents of Brownsville, purchased the home and sold it in 1964 to Mr. Hector and Mary Rose Gonzalez. The home is currently owned by Javier and Cristina Salinas.

The house was built by Frederick Hicks, a hardware merchant and land owner, for his second wife Zuleika Baniton Hicks. Zuleika Baniton Hicks was born in Dublin, Texas, in 1886, and was the daughter of Imogene Baniton and William St. J. Blackshear, a pharmacist and successful salesman.⁵ Frederick Impey Hicks, was born in Brownsville, Texas, on Oct. 10, 1878. He was the son of Annette Pauline Impey of New Orleans and Benjamin Frederick Hicks of Tiverton, Rhode Island.⁶

Zuleika, who was said by her niece, Mary Hicks, to be an engaging speaker, began her social work career in 1927 with United Charities in Dallas, Texas. In 1929, she became

executive secretary of United Charities in Texarkana, Ark-Tex. Her duties encompassed reorganizing the Pulaski Company of Little Rock, Arkansas, relief agency under Federal Emergency Relief Adm. She then moved to Florida to work in the Federal Transient Bureau, heading up the Miami Bureau until 1934 when she returned to Austin, Texas. Her role in Austin was assistant Social Service Director for the State Relief Agency of the Texas Relief Commission and later director of the agency at the time the agency merged with Old Age Assistance to form the present State Dept. of Welfare.

Ms. Hicks served as the head of Social Service for two years and in 1941 became Welfare Consultant for the Ford Stamp Plan of the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture. In that role she traveled throughout the southern states. She then took the position of director of Home Service of Dallas Co. with the American Red Cross. Ms. Hicks retired on Sept. 15, 1952, to enjoy home life with her son and grandchildren.

The second owners of the home were Harry B. and Nellie A. Moler.

In 1920, the home changed hands to its third and most prominent owners, John and Lily Gregg, who created a considerable impact on the community during the time they owned the home. Mr. Gregg began his career with the First Merchant's National Bank as a cashier and notary in 1913. He also held the title of president of the Brownsville country club at that time.⁷

In 1914 Mr. Gregg wrote a letter on behalf of C.W. Batsell, who was attempting to secure a Confederate pension. Mr. Gregg was the son of Lieutenant - Colonel E. P. Gregg, who commanded the 16th Texas Cavalry of the Confederate Army during the Civil War, in which Mr. Batsell served. Mr. Gregg writes, "We desire to commend Mr. Batsell in the highest terms and recommend that he be given the Confederate pension." In the letter Mr. Gregg commends C. W. Batsell, a member of his father's brigade, as being "a man of exemplary habits and the soul of honor."⁵

By 1926, Mr. Gregg earned the title as bank president which he held until 1931. The Gregg's were active socially and listed in *The Standard Blue Book-Texas* in the Who's Who Section as well as in the Social Register of the same year.⁸ In 1932, the *Galveston Daily News* reported Mr. Gregg, was on trial in a federal court for misapplication of more than \$200,000 of funds of the Merchant's National Bank of Brownsville.⁹ After his conviction, Mr. and Mrs. Gregg lived in Brownville until his death at which time Mrs. Gregg moved to Los Angeles. As

stated in her obituary, word of Mrs. Gregg's death was sent to friends in Brownsville in 1964 and the Gregg's local civic and social prominence was noted.¹⁰

The home is two and a half stories high and features a four room plan reflecting the American Foursquare, or the *Prairie Box* design which is a post-Victorian style and a product of the Arts & Crafts era. The design incorporates a hipped roof with a full-width porch with wide stairs, wood siding and a large central dormer appearing atop the second story. Unlike most Arts & Crafts styles which include decorative (false) beams or braces commonly added under gables, each level of the home, including the dormer, displays a decorative brace under the gable on the exposed roof rafters -- which are also full-length and provide true support to the roof. Adopting an elegant feature from the Queen Anne style, the home has a front facade bay window and shows classical symmetry with paired windows flanking a center front door. The house has a total of 31 windows on the first floor and 23 windows on the second floor. Another characteristic feature is three of the windows located in the center of the second story are smaller in size and are flanked with two larger windows which maintains the symmetry of the home.

The first floor is accentuated by four Tuscan columns supporting the wide porch. Borrowing a feature from Greek Revival style, the home's entryway is adorned with an elegant frieze and simple cornice. The back of the home faces west and has a secondary staircase which provides access from the kitchen directly to the bedrooms. The property also includes a detached two-story, one bedroom residence believed to have been used as servant's quarters. Records including information from the 1910 and 1930 Federal Census reveal two servants were living in the household.^{11, 12}

The interior of the home features a butler's pantry and formerly had a ringer installed in the master bedroom which was wired to the kitchen. Other interior features include built in cabinetry which define the rooms and maintains a boxlike appearance. Simple trim and baseboards complement the five panel doors throughout the home. The home's design incorporates two fireplaces located to the right of the entryway in the living room and also in the dining room.

The addition of the window ensconced sunroom is attributed to the Greggs. When Robert Runyon photographed the house in August 1920, the Runyon collection lists the home as the Gregg House.¹³ Neighbors whose parents attended gatherings hosted by the Gregg's

remember a specific area of the home known as the ballroom which complete with terrazzo floor complemented with brass inlay.

The home across the street is known as the Dr. Merrill Residence and behind this structure is a home built by Frederick Hicks brother, Edgar Lawrence Hicks, which is owned by the Lof family.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The house is one of the last remaining of West Brownsville's intact two-story structures of the early 20th century and in December 2006 it earned recognition as a local, historical site by the Brownsville Heritage Council. During late 2005, the house underwent renovation to restore the home's original features which represents West Brownsville's first subdivisions and distinction as one of the largest early homes. Photographs of the home were discovered in the Robert Runyon collection which provided details on many of the original structures. The current owner's are working to restore the long hidden character of the home so that it can live up to its reputation of being "the anchor of the neighborhood" a title given by long-standing neighbors. Staying true to the original design the home is a symbol of Brownsville's finest and proud community leaders, as well as representing the rich heritage of the city proving a snapshot of early Brownsville.

VI. DOCUMENTATION

¹ *A Pictorial History of Brownsville, Tx Past, Present, & Future: Growth & Development By: Tony Lehmann Jr., s.v. ", "*

<http://www.brownsvilletexasonline.com/14-Contacts/index.htm>.

(NOTE: "s.v." stands for sub verbo, "under the word.")

² *Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. ", "*

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/hdb4.html>

³ *Brownsville and Matamoros History Online, s.v. ", "*

http://blue.utb.edu/localhistory/brief_history2.htm

⁴ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. ", "
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/RR/fru37.html>

⁵ *Grayson County TXGenWeb Batsell Family Research by Theresa Hodge Online*, s.v. “,”
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~txgrayso/batsellhist.html>

⁶ Hicks Newsletter II, Vol 4, Feb 96.

⁷ Brownsville City Directory, (1913-1914), pg 152.

⁸ The Standard Blue Book-Texas, Vol. XIV (1926), pg 106 and 118.

⁹ *Galveston Daily News*, December 2, 1932

¹⁰ Obituaries, *Brownsville Herald*, Feb. 10, 1964.

¹¹ Year: 1910; Census Place: Brownsville Ward 1, Cameron, Texas; Roll: T624_1536; Enumeration District: 25; Image 793.

¹² Year: 1930; Census Place: Brownsville, Cameron, Texas; Roll: 2305; Page 9A; Enumeration District: 4; Image 18.0.

¹³ *The South Texas Border: The Robert Runyon Photograph Collection Online*, s.v. ", "
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/txuhtml/runyhome.html>

Two images from the Robert Runyon Collection take in August 1920.



South East view of West Washington home.



North East view of West Washington home.

Two current photos of the home taken by Javier Salinas in December 2006.



South East view of West Washington house displaying sunroom.



North East view of West Washington home.

Additional photos of the home taken by Javier Salinas in December 2006.



Front façade of West Washington home .



Image of the decorative brace and Tuscan style column.