

Texas Historical Commission staff (SLH), 11/19/2012, ed. 12/7/12, 1/8/13, 1/15/13 SEM
18" x 28" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Hidalgo County (Job #12HG07) Subject BF (Atlas) UTM;
Location: 609 US Business Hwy. 83, McAllen

PARIS GUM FACTORY

DURING WW II, BECAUSE OF RATIONING, ANDREW J. PARIS (1919-1997) AND HIS FAMILY HAD NO SWEETS TO SELL IN THEIR DETROIT, MI. TOBACCONIST SHOP. IN 1942, IN MEXICO CITY, PARIS FOUND AN AMPLE SUPPLY OF CANDIES AND CHEWING GUM TO SAVE HIS FAMILY'S STORE. IN 1945, HE ESTABLISHED AN IMPORT BUSINESS IN MCALLEN BRINGING IN GUM FROM MEXICO. IN 1946, HE CONVERTED MEXICAN CHEWING GUM FACTORIES TO BUBBLE GUM PRODUCTION AND CORNERED THE LATEX MARKET. IN FEB. 1947, LIFE MAGAZINE DUBBED HIM THE "BUBBLE GUM KING." ON OCT. 1, 1947, THE PARIS GUM FACTORY OPENED IN MCALLEN, EMPLOYING FIFTY HISPANIC WOMEN IN THE AIR-CONDITIONED BUILDING, WITH SALES WORLDWIDE. THE ART-DECO FACTORY DESIGNED BY LUCILE HENDRICKS OF MCALLEN CLOSED IN 1955.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2012
MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS: 2012 Official Texas Historical Marker Sponsorship Application Form

Valid September 1, 2011 to November 15, 2011 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 Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) requests only for buildings or structures. Please see separate forms for either Historic Texas Cemeteries or subject markers.

Proposed marker topic (THC will determine official title): Paris Gum Building

County: Hidalgo

Town (nearest county town on current state highway map): McAllen

Street address of marker site or directions from town noted above: 609 West US Business Highway 83

Marker Coordinates:

If you know the location coordinates of the proposed marker site, enter them in one of the formats below:

UTM Zone Easting Northing
Lat: Long: (deg, min, sec or decimal degrees)

Otherwise, give a precise verbal description here (e.g. northwest corner of 3rd and Elm, or FM 1411, 2.6 miles east of McWhorter Creek): Southeast corner Business Highway 83 and West Sixth Street

NOTE: RTHL markers must be placed at the structure being marked.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS

Definition: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) markers are awarded to buildings and 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 building or 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, which 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 properties must give the THC 60 days written notice before any alterations are made to the

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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:** Properties 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 property for RTHL designation. It must have a significant historical association, which 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:** Properties deemed architecturally significant are outstanding examples of architectural history through design, materials, structural type or construction methods. In 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 are ineligible for RTHL designation. The THC reserves the sole right to make that determination relative to eligibility for RTHL markers.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR RTHL DOCUMENTATION:

National Register properties

Properties individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR) under either Criterion A or B **and** Criterion C (Architecture) may not require additional documentation of the building's history or architecture. In such cases, only an RTHL application needs to be submitted. The THC has sole discretion to determine whether such documentation is satisfactory and correct or if documentation needs to be updated.

Check this box if the property is individually listed in the NR. Year listed:

Courthouses

Historic county courthouses with documented master plans accepted through the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) may not require additional documentation of the building's history or architecture. In such cases, only an RTHL application needs to be submitted. The THC has sole discretion to determine whether such documentation is satisfactory and correct or if documentation needs to be updated.

Check this box if the property is a courthouse with a master plan accepted through the THC's THCPP.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Any individual, group or county historical commission (CHC) may apply to the THC to request an Official Texas Historical Marker for what it deems a worthy topic. Only complete marker applications 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; legal description; site plan; floor plan; historic photograph; and current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure—please resize digital photographs to 1-2 MB, or approximately 1024 x 768 pixels).

- Completed applications must be duly reviewed, verified and approved by the county historical commission (CHC) in the county in which the marker will be placed. Paper copies of applications, whether mailed or delivered, cannot be accepted in lieu of the electronic version.
- The sponsorship application form, narrative history and documentation must be submitted as Microsoft Word or Word-compatible documents and sent via email attachments to the THC by no later than November 15, 2011. THC email accepts mail no larger than 10 MB.
- Required font style and type size are a Times variant and 12-point.
- Narrative histories must be typed in a double-spaced (or 1.5-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.
- Upon notification of the successful preliminary review of required elements by the THC, a non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required. Please send payment with the invoice which THC provides.

APPROVAL BY COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The duly appointed marker representative (chair or marker chair) noted below for the county historical commission will be the sole contact with the THC for this marker application. To ensure accuracy, consistency and efficiency, all information from and to the THC relative to the application, throughout the review and production processes, will be by 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 contact is notifying the THC 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 or talked with the potential marker sponsor and discussed the marker program policies as outlined on the THC web site. CHC members have reviewed the history and documentation for accuracy and made corrections or notes as necessary. It is the determination of the CHC that the topic, history and documentation meet criteria for eligibility.

CHC comments or concerns about this application, if any:

Name of CHC contact (chair or marker chair): Glenn C.Housley

Mailing address:1015 valley View Drive **City, Zip:** Weslaco 78596

Daytime phone:956 968 7468 **Email address:** gchousley@yahoo.com

PERMISSION OF PROPERTY OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT

Property owner: Said Shuaib c/o Leonel Garza & Associates LLC

Address:1419 Dove Ave, Suite #1 **City, state, zip:**McAllen TX 78504

Phone:956-687-7295 **Email address:** Leonel3@aol.com

Legal Description of the property (metes and bounds, lot and block, etc.): Lots 3 and 4, Block 7 and 0.33 acres out of Block 2, KEMH Subdivision, City of McAllen

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 any additional copies of correspondence from the THC. All procedural correspondence (notice of receipt, request for additional information, inscription, shipping notice, etc.) will be sent by email to the CHC representative, who is encouraged to share the information with all interested parties as necessary.

SPONSORSHIP 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 markers 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 or property owners through marker text, incising or supplemental plaques.

Marker sponsor (may be individual or organization): Hidalgo County Historical Commission

Contact person (if applicable): GlennC. Housley

Mailing address:1015 Valley View Drive **City, zip:** Weslaco 78596

Phone: 956-968-7468

Email address (required):gchousley@yahoo.com

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

In order to facilitate marker delivery, residence addresses, post office box numbers and rural route numbers are not permitted. To avoid additional shipping charges or delays, use a business street address (open 8 a.m.—5 p.m., Monday through Friday).

Name: Leonel Garza III

Street address:1419 Dove Ave., Suite 1 **City, zip:** McAllen 78504

Daytime phone (required): 956-687-7295 **Email** (required): Leonel3@aol.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 prefers 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 the application is complete, the history has been verified and the topic meets the requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the materials should be forwarded to the THC by email at the following address:

markerapplication@thc.state.tx.us.

- The CHC or marker chair should send an email containing the following attachments (see attachment function under file menu or toolbox on your computer):
 - This application form
 - The narrative history (including documentation)
 - Legal description of the property
 - Detailed floor plan for each floor of the structure
 - Detailed site plan of the property
 - At least one historic photograph
 - Current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure

RECORDS RETENTION BY CHC: The CHC must retain 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, see the Markers page on the THC web site (<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madmark.html>)

Texas Historical Commission
History Programs Division
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276
Phone 512/463-5853
history@thc.state.tx.us



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

PARIS GUM FACTORY

I CONTEXT.

With the onset of World War II, the American government found it necessary to ration food, gas, and clothing, and asked Americans to conserve on everything in order to maintain supply levels for the troops abroad.

Rationing regulated the amount of commodities that consumers could obtain. Sugar rationing took effect in May 1943. After registration, coupons were distributed based on family size. The ration book guaranteed each family its fair share of scarce goods. Possession of a coupon book, however, did not guarantee that sugar was available. (1)

World War II was over in August 1945, and rationing ended in 1946, but many commodities remained scarce or hard to find. Among them was candy, since sugar remained in short supply, and during the Cold War era there were few resources and no real infrastructure to manufacture the confections that used to satisfy America's "sweet tooth," including chewing gum and bubble gum. (2)

Bubble gum was invented in 1928 by Walter Diemer, an accountant for the Fleer Chewing Gum Company, who played around with new gum recipes in his spare time. One batch was less sticky and more stretchable than regular chewing gum. This bubblegum was so successful that it sold over \$1,500,000 worth in its first year. Chewing gum was credited with over \$2 billion in sales in the year 2000. (3)

II OVERVIEW

The national economy boomed after WW2 ended. Entrepreneur Andrew J. (Andy) Paris was in the right place at the right time when he found a way to solve the chewing gum shortage in the United States by importing the raw materials—sugar and latex--from Mexico. In 1947, Paris launched the Paris Gum Corporation in McAllen and shipped a million pieces a day. Fame and fortune followed. (4)

The Building. In 1946, Hendricks Construction Company of McAllen was hired to build a new bakery factory slated to open in 1947 at what is now 609 W. Business 83 in McAllen. When Paris saw the slab poured at the location right across from the railroad

tracks, he knew it was the perfect site for his bubblegum factory and bought the land on the spot. (5)

The \$500,000 factory, on a main east-west business artery, is constructed of yellow brick and concrete blocks on a concrete foundation. It occupies 7,000 square feet of floor space, 70x100,' of which 1400 is office space.

Warehouses, which were new construction after Paris acquired the property, occupy 2,876 square feet. The work was done by S&T Construction Company of McAllen, under direction of Paris and Willard K. Braeme, plant superintendant and production engineer. Braeme joined the company in July, after leaving the American Chicle Company in New York, where he was a development engineer and supervisor of a refining department. A graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Braeme was a chemical engineer. After spending five and a half years in the Army, he was a colonel in the reserves. (6)

Following in the Art Deco style of the era, the one-story building had four corner-curved windows constructed of glass bricks with a moving neon sign on either side sporting a boy and girl blowing a bubble. Cars lined up for miles, so their occupants could watch the growing bubble. (7)

There were large glass panels on each side of the front door, giving a very open appearance. Inside the main entrance on the left was Andy's office, lined in dark wood paneling, with a massive matching desk. Past the Art Deco styled reception area, the factory covered two huge rooms housing conveyer belts lined with workers following the bubble gum mixture of sugar and latex, the basic liquid that makes bubble gum bubble, as it traveled to the boxes which carried the finished gum pieces around the United States and the globe. (8)

Opening October 1, 1947, with 50 employees, the factory operated 24 hours a day. It ran for nine years and closed in 1955. Latina women employees worked in the air-conditioned building in a very clean environment, a job highly regarded back then. The factory was sanitary and shiny, with a mechanized assembly line. Eventually, 150 employees were needed for full operation. (9)

Except for removal of the signs and a non-bearing interior wall, there have been no major alterations since the building was constructed in 1947. (10)

Architect. The architect has been identified as Lucile Hendricks of Hendricks Construction Company of McAllen (10) Per documentary. . Lucile McKee Hendricks married Harold Hendricks in 1927. After his death, she managed construction projects including Pharr's first high school and the McAllen bus station. Hendricks was elected to the school board, the first female elected public official in Hidalgo County, and became president of the school board. (11)

Hendricks was the first woman member of the Associated General Contractors of Texas and the McAllen Housing Authority, serving for 18 years. She advocated a McAllen Civic Center and served on the committee that laid groundwork for its construction in 1960. She co-founded the RGV International Music Festival and championed cultural and historical appreciation. (12)

Andy Paris. Andrew J. (Andy) Paris (1919-1997), the son of a successful Greek immigrant family, was born in Stockton, California. He had two brothers, George and Jim, and sisters Athena and Bella. The family moved to Detroit, Michigan, where they operated a tobacconist shop, selling sundries such as tobacco, mints, chewing gum, and fruit. In 1936, the Paris family organized a wholesale candy business, J.Paris & Sons. (13)

Andy's primary language was Greek, but he had studied several languages. As a child, he got sales experience on the streets of Detroit. Andy had a scholarship to Wayne State University, but attended only a short time, since his family needed him in the business. During WWII, he sold about \$2.5 million worth of Series E War Bonds. (14)

When war shortages left his family with little to sell, in 1942 he trekked from Detroit, Michigan to Mexico City, where he found an ample supply of sweets. "Because of the war, there was very little chewing gum in the United States at the time, so I bought gum and Lifesavers, tons of it," Paris said, "and soon I was the biggest importer of confections in the country." (15)

He settled in McAllen, Texas, in the early 1940s to set up his confection import business. Both sugar and latex, the prime ingredient that puts the bubble in bubblegum, were scarce in the US after World War II, but Paris had connections in Mexico where they were more plentiful Paris investigated the possibility of making bubblegum in

Mexico and within a month had four Mexican chewing gum factories turning out orders. (16)

The difference between chewing gum and bubblegum is that the base in bubblegum is latex (rubber) rather than chicle. In late January, with practically no bubblegum coming from the four or five companies which made the novelty in the US, Paris suddenly leaped into prominence in nationwide stories as the man who had cornered the market. (17)

Paris obtained latex in Chiapas and Oaxaca, where the sapodilla trees grew. Indians tapped the trees to collect the latex, and dried it in molds. (18)

Already importing confections from Mexico, Paris contacted factories in Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Mexico City that produced his regular gum and mints. “We converted those factories almost overnight [to produce bubblegum, which was in great demand by American children]. We forgot about the other gum and the candy and took care of the kids.” The factory made 75 million pieces of bubblegum each month. The recipe was simple: latex and other resins, sugar glucose, flavoring and pink food coloring. (19)

By summer 1947, Paris was taking the output of 14 bubblegum factories in Mexico which he had helped to organize and then placed under contract. (20)

He was inspired to establish his own bubble gum factory on U.S. soil when he saw some McAllen kids haggling over a few pieces of bubble gum one day back in 1946. “They had a little black market going on,” Paris reported. “Those kids were fighting to pay 25 to 35 cents for a little penny piece of bubble gum.” (21)

Behind in orders and with former US manufacturers getting into the act, Paris decided to organize a manufacturing company in the US in 1946. By 1947, he had his own factory in McAllen, which shipped to 13 warehouses around the country for distribution throughout the US and Canada, and as far off as South Africa. (22)

Andy Paris was president of the McAllen plant. His two brothers and a brother-in-law were also associated with the company. (23)

The McAllen operation was completely mechanized from the mixing machines which blended the basic ingredients on through the various stages of shaping and cutting to the final process of wrapping. Paris operated a thoroughly sanitary plant in which the product was untouched by human hands. The plant was open to the public constantly for

visitors to observe the entire operation. Personnel in the mixing and packing rooms were dressed in white uniforms. The plant was air conditioned with temperatures at different levels to meet the needs of the various mixing and packing operations. (24)

Opening Party. Paris planned a gala sendoff for the opening, September 28, 1947. The factory was open all day with free bubblegum samples, radio broadcasts, conducted tours, and a special guest of honor. In the evening, over 1000 of Andy's brokers and customers from all over the US crossed the border to Reynosa for dinner and dancing, with a floor show, a radio broadcast, and introduction of celebrities including politicians, and customs and immigration officials. Paris took over the Monte Carlo Gardens, Reynosa's biggest and newest night club. (25)

Paris's spotlight fell on a 10-year-old girl from Kansas City, Missouri, Ann Louise Ansett, who owed her power to speak, and maybe life, to bubblegum. She had just recovered from polio at St Luke's hospital in Kansas City, Missouri. While she was desperately ill, her throat muscles stiffened with paralysis and doctors ordered her to chew bubblegum to loosen the muscles. It worked. Gradually her voice came back and she planned to return to school after her McAllen visit, which included a motor trip and an aerial tour of the Valley with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hector Ansett. (26)

Andy controlled the Mexican import business and the bobbysoxers at the same time. Six to sixteen-year-old kids were buying more than a million pieces a day of his sweet-tasting pink bubblegum to blow in transparent bubbles of air and latex. (27)

Publicity. A consummate salesman, Andy practiced blowing bubbles himself. An early claim to fame was his blowing an unheard of triple bubble—a second bubble inside the first, and inside it a third bubble. He accomplished this feat at a news conference at the Mark Hopkins Hotel in San Francisco, and by the next day most daily newspapers had Andy Paris's picture on the front page. (28)

Life magazine descended on his McAllen office, ran a full-page picture of him blowing a bubble at his office desk, and crowned him the "Bubble Gum King" in their Feb 3, 1947 issue. He was featured in numerous national magazines in the late 1940s and appeared on national radio shows with such celebrities as Art Linkletter and crooner Perry Como. Paris dated Marilyn Monroe and taught a young Natalie Wood how to blow bubbles for her role in the movie "A Miracle on 34th Street." Making various

appearances in 1948, he traveled worldwide more than a million miles by air as a guest artist blowing his bubbles. (29)

Saturday Evening Post, Coronet magazine and other national publications wrote him up. He was a guest of the French, Belgian and Hawaiian governments. Three weeks after the Life news story, Universal News followed up with a newsreel about the “Bubble Gum King. (30)

For a while, Paris received up to 8,000 letters a day from kids, inclosing nickels and dimes for gum. He hired eight girls to answer the letters, return the coins and inclose free samples. Soon Andy Paris was making \$30,000,000 a year in the bubblegum business. He lived flamboyantly. He had a new tailor-made suit imported every week from Monterrey. A bachelor, he lived in one of the cabanas at the posh Casa de Palmas Hotel in McAllen. (31)

He was generous with his good fortune. He set up the Andrew J. Paris Scholarship Fund, and offered 20 scholarships a year for students. A 14- year old schoolgirl named Adele Haver of Libertyville, Illinois, was babysitting seven children when fire broke out. She rescued them all. Paris awarded her a \$1000 scholarship, which paid for a year at the University of Illinois. Paris sponsored bubble gum blowing contests for children, with a gold watch as the prize for the biggest bubble. And of course, free samples for everyone at his school appearances. (32)

With his McAllen plant in operation, Paris planned to supply the US and Hawaiian demand and expand the contracted production of 13 Mexican factories to Europe. On Nov 13, 1947, he left for France and Belgium to negotiate the 1948 and 1949 sale contracts for the Mexican product. (33)

Sales and executive offices of the Paris Gum Corporation occupied the third floor of the Dime National Bank in Detroit, where 32 employees handled distribution, book-keeping and billing. The company had ten warehouses in Portland (Oregon), Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago, New York, Boston, and Atlanta. (34)

By this time, there were other bubblegum manufacturers, but Paris was confident his king-size, untouched-by-hands product would hold its own. “I turned down a \$2.5 million offer from a nationwide chain for 1948 delivery,” he said. “I’ll stand by my jobbers and they’ll stand by me.” (35)

Civic Activities. In 1962, he formed the Caravan of Friendship, a reciprocal visiting relationship with Mexico, which was credited with great success in enticing Mexican nationals to shop in McAllen. U. S. Congressman Kika de la Garza of Mission, Texas, said he was an inspiration and source of pride for this area. (36)

On Jan 4, 1966, the McAllen Chamber of Commerce presented Andy Paris with a plaque in appreciation for outstanding work in inter-American relations. The next year, 1967, Paris was recognized with a McAllen City of Palms award as outstanding man of the year. A news story reported that he gained his title as Bubble Gum King because his firm was the only major one in the nation to produce the popular chewing gum. In later years however, Paris became known locally more for his work in the field of inter-American relations. He played an active part in making McAllen's annual Friendship Caravan one of the most successful programs of its type along the border. (37)

"You never hear of an international crisis in McAllen on which he isn't called for action," Benny Jackson, outgoing president and a 1968 director of the Chamber, said of Paris. "He knows his way around Mexico and has contacts not only in Reynosa but throughout Mexico. He believes in the strength of an international good neighbor policy and is president of the McAllen chapter of the Good Neighbor Commission." (38)

Paris had been an active member of the McAllen Chamber of Commerce since 1942 and in 1966 served as a Director. He was also on the Boys Club board of directors and a member of the Rotary Club. (39)

International relations. Five thousand tons of the bubble gum produced in McAllen hit the market in 1947. Key to the maneuver was Paris' friendship and trust with the Mexican people. Through his relationships, he obtained large quantities of latex from Mexico—something none of the major U S manufacturers could do back then. The Mexicans found him the perfect U S ambassador because he spoke fluent Spanish, wore loud neckties, danced the samba and drove a long, low red Chrysler convertible. An overnight success, Andy's movie-star good looks and charismatic personality helped him become one of the most interviewed and photographed men of the late 1940s and a hero to children around the world. (40)

Berlin Airlift. When the Russians blockaded Berlin after WW2, cutting off shipments of supplies, the Western Allies launched Operation Vittles (Victuals), an airlift

starting June 26, 1948. Cargo planes landed every few minutes, 24 hours a day, bringing food and fuel to the beleaguered Berliners. One of the American pilots, Lt. Gail Halvorsen, noting how appreciative sweets-starved German children were for a few sticks of gum, started dropping his own rations of candy and gum in small handkerchief parachutes over Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. The children called him the “Chocolate Pilot.” Other pilots joined in the project. After favorable publicity, the Army Air Force approved Operation Little Vittles. American individuals and companies began to send donations of candy and gum. When Halvorsen received a whole case of Paris Bubblegum, he took it to the children in West Berlin’s polio hospital. Most had never seen bubblegum, and Halvorsen taught them to blow bubbles. (41)

The Soviets found that the Airlift was unstoppable, and lifted the blockade in May 1949, but not before European children had developed a taste for American bubblegum. (42)

IRS Audit and Plant Closure. Mexican factory personnel wouldn’t take checks. Paris delivered the cash payroll in a suitcase, driving from McAllen to Monterrey with a pistolero (armed guard) in the back seat. This may have been his undoing.

About 1953, IRS launched a two-year audit of the Paris Gum Corporation, alleging insufficient records. They disallowed the cash payments, and claimed Paris owed \$250,000 in taxes. Paris settled for \$12,000. But he had to dispose of his holdings. (43)

Paris rode his “bubble” for eight years. Then the cost of shipping became prohibitive (\$25,000 a month) and a big part of his bubble business burst in July, 1955. Paris liquidated the plant and sent a lot of the equipment to the Wrigley Gum empire. (44)

In 1956 he married Pat, his longtime secretary. They have one son, John Paris. (45)

After closing his bubblegum factory, Andy Paris established Modern Automatic Merchandising Corp, a vending machine business. He sold it in 1984 and went into semi retirement.(46)

Paris died of a heart attack in December 1997. Former McAllen mayor Othal Brand, a longtime friend, said he had an unforgettable personality and “he was always a pleasant person, who was a major contributor to the development of McAllen.” (47)

From 1955 to 1959, the building at 609 W. Business 83 had several owners after Andrew Paris: Eddie Robinson, Roberto Garcia, Sir Sam's Properties, and E. Rodriguez. First it was a seed factory for Lehman Reeds Seed Co. and Eastern Seed Company. Briefly, it served as an auto shade store. But mostly it was home to furniture companies with names like Bonanza Furniture, 4 less Furniture and Mattress Center, the last being Trevino's Furniture Company from 2000 to 2010. The building currently belongs to Mr. Said Shuaib and is now vacant. (48)

A documentary partly sponsored by John Paris, Andy Paris' son, was produced in 2009. Cinesol Film Festival and the McAllen Chamber of Commerce screened the documentary at McAllen's Cine el Rey in September, 2010. Reviewer Jim McKone reported that the film stunned everyone with its strange story, good yet partly tragic, about Andy Paris, who made and lost a fortune in McAllen during the Cold War era. (49)

III SIGNIFICANCE

The Paris Gum Building is one of the few remaining examples of Art Deco style in the Rio Grande Valley. In 2011 the building is 66 years old.

Paris Bubblegum, which sold for only one penny per piece, made Andy Paris a household name. Not only did Paris make bubblegum available to kids everywhere, he also launched one of the biggest trends ever—the art of blowing bubblegum bubbles.

Andy Paris, postwar manufacturer of bubblegum, became an international pop icon. His civic activities strengthened McAllen's relationship with her Mexican neighbors.

The Paris Gum Factory provided jobs for Latina workers in an industrial setting, at a time when few jobs were available for them outside of domestic service. It offered them modern, sanitary, comfortable (air-conditioned) working conditions.

Andy Paris is a strong example of American ingenuity, achievement, and upward career mobility. He “seized the moment,” created opportunity, promoted his product with dash and verve, and made a lasting impression on American childhood.

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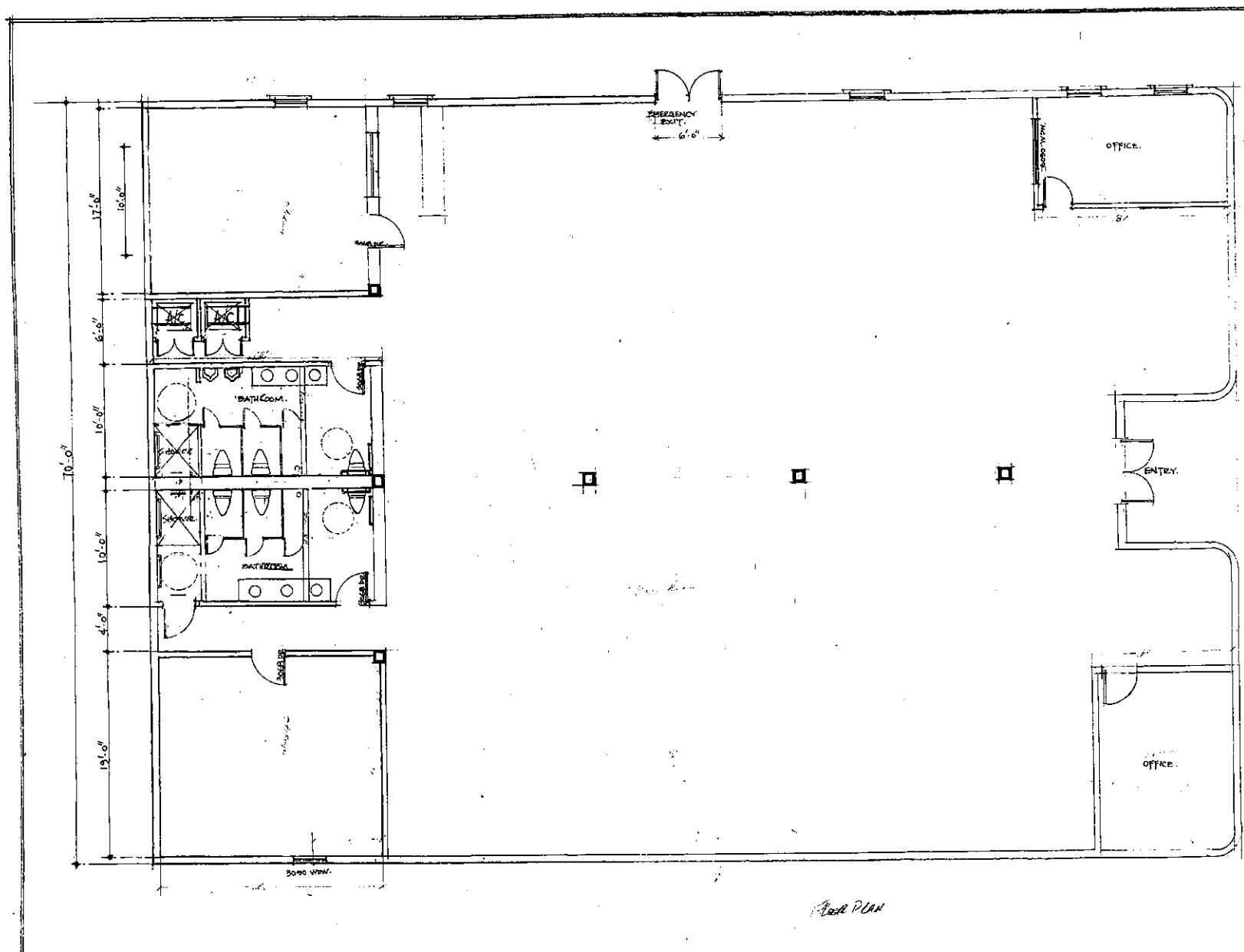
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Handwritten notes:
1st floor



PLAN PLAN

Handwritten: Mr. [unclear] [unclear]

**Garza - Garza
Consulting Engineers**
3011 San Felipe St.
San Juan, Texas 75209
(956) 955-2360
FAX (956) 955-2360
E-MAIL: GGE@GGE.COM



CITY OF McALLEN
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

AREA MAP

LEGEND
SCALE 1" = 100'



SUBJECT PROPERTY

500 FT. NOTIFICATION BOUNDARY

1/4 MILE RADIUS

ZONING LEGEND

R-1 RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY	R-2 RESIDENTIAL	R-3 HOUSEHOLD	C-1 COMMERCIAL GENERAL	RT LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
R-4 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	R-50 CO-OP/CONDO	C-2 OFFICE/RETAIL	C-2A OFFICE/RETAIL	RI INDUSTRIAL
R-6 DUPLEX/DUPLEX	R-65 CONDOMINIUM	C-3 AMUSEMENT/RECREATION	C-4 OCCASIONAL BUSINESS	SI SPECIAL DISTRICT



Paris Gum Building, McAllen, Texas



Mr. Andy Paris, 1947



Paris Gum Factory workers



Night view, 1947

TREVINO'S

FURNITURE

For Lease







TREVINO'S CREDIT
FURNITURE

XTREME
LAZER TAG
FAMILY FUN CENTER



0561 610-5297

XTREME
LAZER TAG

