

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Galvan Ballroom
Other name/site number: R. Galvan Building, Galvan Building
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 1632 Agnes
City or town: Corpus Christi State: Texas County: Nueces
Not for publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
 national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer 4/20/15
Signature of certifying official / Title Date
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register
 other, explain: _____

[Signature] 6/3/2015
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Recreation and Culture: music facility; Commerce/Trade: specialty store

Current Functions: Recreation and Culture: music facility; Commerce/Trade: specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Modern Movement: Moderne

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, concrete

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6 through 8)

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Commerce; Ethnic Heritage/Hispanic; Entertainment; Architecture

Period of Significance: 1950-1965

Significant Dates: 1950

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): Galvan, Rafael

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Hamon, Everett Elijah

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 9 through 14)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 15 and 16)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, Bell Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre (0.2583 acres)

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 27.787273° Longitude: -97.409101°

Verbal Boundary Description: CHAMBERLIN'S LTS 1 THROUGH 4 LESS POR TO ROW BLK 2

Boundary Justification: The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building, less a small portion of the lot that on the northwest that was taken widening of Fourteenth Street.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator
Organization: Texas Historical Commission
Street & number: PO Box 12276
City or Town: Austin State: TX Zip Code: 78711
Email: gregs@thc.state.tx.us
Telephone: 512-463-6013
Date: October 28, 2014

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 17 through 19)
Additional items (see continuation sheets 20 through 35)
Photographs (see continuation sheets 5 and 36 through 49)

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photographs

Galvan Ballroom
1632 Agnes Street
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas
All photos by Gregory Smith, 2014

Photo 1
Southwest Oblique
Camera facing northeast

Photo 2
Northwest Oblique
Camera facing southeast

Photo 3
West elevation
Camera facing east

Photo 4
West side storefront windows
Camera facing north

Photo 5
South elevation
Camera facing north

Photo 6
Stairs leading to ballroom from sidewalk
entrance
Camera facing north

Photo 7
Music store interior from main entrance
Camera facing north

Photo 8
Music store interior from central counter
Camera facing northwest

Photo 9
Music store interior, west side
Camera facing south

Photo 10
Entrance to ballroom from stairs
Camera facing east

Photo 11
Ballroom dance floor and stage
Camera facing east

Photo 12
Ballroom entrance and audio booth, from the
dance floor
Camera facing southwest

Photo 13
Ballroom entrance and audio booth detail.
Camera facing southwest

Photo 14
Bar
Camera facing north

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Description

The Galvan Ballroom at 1632 Agnes in Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas, is a two-story postwar Moderne commercial building, approximately 1.5 miles southwest of downtown. The building sits northeast of the intersection of Agnes Street and the north frontage road of the Crosstown Expressway, with irregular storefronts along the west and south sides. The concrete framed building is characterized by its curved southwest corner, but is otherwise rectangular in plan, and is faced with painted brick. The building's horizontality is enhanced by a flat awning with an underside cove transition over the storefronts, and a continuous concrete sill and lintel defining the string of irregularly-spaced windows on the second floor. Originally host to several businesses, the ground floor commercial spaces have been combined to house the Galvan Music Company retail store, while the upstairs has been occupied by the large wood-floor ballroom and associated smaller rooms since the building's completion in 1950. The building retains a very good degree of integrity.

The Galvan Ballroom occupies the majority of a quarter-acre parcel at the northeast corner of the Agnes Street-Crosstown Expressway intersection in west-central Corpus Christi, a Gulf Coast city in southeast Texas. A small triangular section of the lot was clipped from the northwest corner of the formerly-rectangular lot by the access road to Crosstown Expressway, an elevated highway which looms over the west side of the building. The two-story building features storefronts that face Agnes Street to the south and the Crosstown Expressway to the west. To the north is an alley and a single-story garage for an auto service company, and to the east is an empty lot where a movie theater once stood. The immediate neighborhood along Agnes Street features a mix of historic-age and more recent commercial buildings, with a significant number of parking lots and empty lots where buildings once stood.

The concrete-framed building is characterized by its curved southwest corner, but is otherwise rectangular in plan, and is faced with painted brick. The primary south elevation is angled back (approximately seven degrees) from the street towards the southwest corner, leaving the sidewalk much wider at the west side entrance to the upstairs ballroom. This setback was most likely designed to allow customers to gather at the ballroom's entrance while leaving room on the sidewalk for other pedestrians. The building contains approximately 19,000 square feet of floor space divided among the two floors. The wrapped awning covers an additional 1,949 square feet.¹

Originally host to several businesses, the ground floor commercial spaces have been combined to house the Galvan Music Company retail store, while the upstairs has been occupied by the large wood-floor ballroom and associated smaller rooms since the building's completion in 1950. The south and west brick-faced elevations front city streets and feature a 2-part commercial block façade composition, wherein the ground floor features combinations of doors and storefront windows opening to various commercial spaces, while the second floor features an irregular band of windows that provide light and ventilation to the upstairs ballroom. The building's horizontality is expressed by a flat awning with an underside cove transition over the storefronts, and continuous the concrete sill, lintel and parapet coping that define the second-floor window band and the similarly-sized plain brick parapet.

The original irregularly-distributed storefronts have been altered, with the originally-inset doorways, wood-framed windows and tile base panels replaced with steel-framed flush display windows and doors. Despite replacement of materials, the storefront bay dimensions are original, and are set between tiled columns (brown 4-inch squares on the bottom; white and brown 1-inch tile on top). Beginning at the east corner: Bays 1 and 2 are filled with full-height plate glass windows; Bay 3 features a double-door entrance to the music store flanked by plate glass

¹ Nueces Central Appraisal District, http://propaccess.ncadistrict.com/clientdb/Property.aspx?prop_id=212246 (accessed October 31, 2014).

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

windows; Bay 4 features a pair of single-light wooden doors that lead into the music store; Bay 5 features the recessed entrance to the ballrooms stairs set between curved tile and glass block walls, centered on wooden doors, each with a 4x14 set of decorative square panels and wrought iron handles; Bay 6 is occupied by the corner building entrance with a single door, sidelight and fixed transom, set between a pair of sidelights. On the west side: Bay 7 is infilled with a 4-part plate glass window over a tile base panel; the high horizontal windows in Bays 8 and 9 have been covered; Bay 10 features a single louvered door; Bay 11 features a single louvered door and an infilled window opening with four small fixed vertical lights; Bay 12 holds a single paneled door. The fenestration pattern on the second floor does not correspond to that of storefront bays. Set within a horizontal band defined by a continuous sill and lintel, the second-floor openings are filled with single, paired, and tripartite five-light metal awning windows, some of which have been covered by wood panels or partially infilled with air conditioner units.

Original signage includes the words "R. GALVAN BLDG." on the southwest corner of the curved parapet and a projecting sign box on the south elevation (overpainted; neon tubing removed). Additional signage consists of: a box sign reading "GALVAN BALLROOM" on the west side parapet; the words "Galvan Music Co." painted over glass blocks on the second floor of the corner bay; the name "Galvan" painted in script on the underside of the awning in the corner bay; and two identical cartoon illustrations of a smiling king (the logo of former tenant King Furniture) on the underside of the south awning.

The secondary elevations on the north and east sides are relatively unadorned. The north side, secured behind a chain-link fence, features irregularly-placed window and door openings (many of which have been covered by painted wood panels), metal electrical conduit and circuit boxes, and a metal fire escape with ladder access to the roof. The eastern elevation lacks fenestration, and is characterized only by a continuation of the lintel from the south side.

The ground floor originally housed four narrow retail units that were accessed from Agnes Street to the south and a fifth retail space at the northwest corner accessed from 14th Street. The retail space was later reconfigured with an open plan to serve as a music store, with small offices and storage rooms along the west and north walls. The main entrance is in the central bay, which opens directly into the store. The only evidence of the former multi-unit configuration is the structural concrete posts and beams. The merchandise, consisting of a wide variety of musical instruments and sheet music, is displayed throughout the store on freestanding and fixed counters, islands, and shelves, and cabinets, and the walls are adorned with photographs and framed posters that depict the history of the Galvan family, the store, and the ballroom.

Primary access to the second-floor ballroom is from a sidewalk entrance, leading to a wide interior staircase set inside a curved and festively-tiled stairwell. At the top of the stairs is a landing and doorway leading past a pair of concrete breezeblock walls into the west side of the ballroom, facing the stage on the east wall. The ballroom occupies most of the second floor, with the exception of a curved mechanical room and audio booth on the southwest corner, and the stage, flanked by restrooms and the bar, along the east wall. The truss roof allows for a vast open space, supported only by the exterior walls and four metal columns near the center of the room. The wooden dance floor and combined seating areas are approximately 8,000 square feet in area. The west wall is largely covered with mirrors, the south wall features a mix of mirrors and windows (which provide the majority of natural light into the ballroom), and the north wall features a mix of mirrors and a single window with a large ventilation fan. All walls with the exception of stage wall have wood wainscoting. Decoration is limited to saxophone reliefs and musical notes (to the song "More" – the wedding song of Bobby and Alicia Galvan) on the upper portion of the sound room, lines of multicolored incandescent lights, and a rotating mirrored pendant hanging over the dance floor. The central portion of the dance floor is raised slightly, evidence of repairs made following water damage during Hurricane Celia in 1970, which caused widespread destruction across the city.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

The focus of the ballroom is the original stage, approximately 30 feet wide, set within a bright pink arched proscenium, with a gold silhouette depicting a seven-piece jazz band affixed to the back wall (a design based on the original artwork). The curved stage extends a few feet into the room and is elevated on a low base, which is covered with the same 1-inch tile found on the adjacent walls, the entry stairwell, and portions of the exterior. Doors on each side of the performance area allow the performers to have discreet and direct access to the restrooms on either side of the stage (women's on the north; men's to the south) without stepping onto the dance floor. The bar, located in the southeast corner of the building, can be accessed through a door from the dance floor, or another door from the men's restroom. The barroom is finished with dark wood paneling and features a long plastic-laminate-topped wooden bar, framed historic photographs on the walls, and a string of multicolored incandescent lights.

Overall, the Galvan Ballroom retains a high degree of integrity, which is especially noteworthy given the loss of numerous buildings in the immediate vicinity. Although the storefronts have been replaced, the current doors and windows are set within the original openings, and the building still retains a façade composition that emphasizes its horizontality. The most significant interior space is the ballroom, which is largely unchanged from the way it appeared on opening day in 1950.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The Galvan Ballroom, in the Central City neighborhood of Corpus Christi, Texas, is a live music and event facility that has been continuously owned and operated by the Galvan Family since its opening in 1950. Businessman Rafael Galvan hired architect Everett E. Hamon to design the modernistic building with retail space on the ground floor and a 9,000 square-foot ballroom on the second floor to serve as a home venue for his children's popular music band, the "Galvan Orchestra." The ballroom served as one of the city's premier privately-owned live music venue in the mid-twentieth century, hosting local and internationally-acclaimed jazz and swing bands, as well as wedding receptions, *quinceañeras*, school dances, and other events for local clubs. The ground floor commercial spaces have been combined to house the Galvan Music Company retail store. Significant as a business venture and cultural center established by a Mexican-American family, and as a musical venue that featured local and nationally-acclaimed performers playing to mixed Anglo and Hispanic audiences, the building is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment and Commerce at the state level of significance, and Criterion B at the local level in the area of Ethnic Heritage/Hispanic as the property that best reflects the achievement of Corpus Christi businessman and community leader Rafael Galvan. No other mid-20th century urban ballroom in Texas better exemplifies the nexus of Mexican-American achievement in business, community service, and the melding of Anglo, African-American and Mexican musical traditions. The building is also nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level as an excellent example of postwar modernistic commercial design in Corpus Christi. The period of significance is 1950 through 1965.

The Mexican-American Jazz and Swing Music Scene in Corpus Christi

The Corpus Christi jazz scene of the mid-twentieth century is noteworthy for the prominence of its Mexican-American musicians and bandleaders. The diversity and the vitality of the scene has been attributed in part to the city's geographic location on the Gulf Coast within a short distance to the major cities of Houston and San Antonio, both of which had thriving jazz scenes that were influenced by both the Kansas City and New Orleans styles, as well as its proximity to the cultural capital of Monterrey, Mexico.² Access to new music through records and the radio also supported the popularity of jazz in its various forms in the region. Although segregation limited (if not prevented) significant cross-racial artistic interaction between African Americans and Anglos in Texas, Hispanic-Anglo relations in urban areas were tied to social class as well as ethnicity, allowing members of well-established Hispanic families to possess "a degree of status and freedom of mobility that few African Americans did."³ This mobility was part of the social foundation that allowed a great number of Mexican American musicians to become prominent members of the Corpus Christi jazz scene in the 1940s.⁴

Corpus Christi's jazz scene of the 1920s is not well documented, but members of a New Orleans-style group called the Real Jazz Orchestra (RJO), originally based in Laredo (about 140 west, on the US-Mexico border), relocated to Corpus Christi about 1930.⁵ The band travelled throughout south Texas, and into Mexico as well, sometimes setting up residence for a week or more at a hotel in Monterrey. The RJO band members who came to Corpus Christi are credited with establishing some of the city's long-standing "musical families," whose children, including Beto Garcia, Joe Gallardo, and Eddie Olivares, populated the city's jazz scene of the 1940s and 1950s. The Caceres brothers (Emilio, Ernie, and Pine), were Corpus Christi natives who found some success as touring jazz musicians,

² Glen Nicolas M. Evans, *Swingin' and Boppin' South Texas-Style: Toward an Understanding of the Corpus Christi Jazz Scene*, (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1992), 41. Evans' thesis stands as the most comprehensive study of the Corpus Christi jazz scene of the mid-twentieth century.

³ Evans, 46.

⁴ Evans, 44-46.

⁵ Dave Oliphant, *Texan Jazz*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 412.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

and served as an influence to members of the local scene, including the Galvan Brothers (Ralph, Eddie, Sammy, and Bobby).⁶

The Corpus Christi music scene of the early 1940s reflected the national interest in big band swing, with several bands that played the popular American dance music in hotel ballrooms, dinner clubs, country clubs, and at the Corpus Christi and Kingsville Naval Air Stations.⁷ On the eve of World War II, Hispanic musicians such as the Galvan brothers regularly performed with Anglo musicians in popular bands. It was widely acknowledged that Mexican-American instrumentalists had the talent to break across cultural barriers and appeal to white audiences, as long as they played familiar popular (i.e. not Mexican or Spanish-language) hits. Meanwhile, local and regional bands, headed by notable bandleaders such as Beto Villa, Isidro Lopez, and Oscar Martinez, played a Mexican-derived style of music called *orquesta tejana*, and little – if any – “American” music.⁸ The versatile Ralph Galvan Orchestra, however, bridged this cultural gap between contemporary big band swing and *orquesta tejana*, playing music in the Tommy Dorsey and Duke Ellington vein, as well as traditional Mexican-influenced dance music, with interpretations of Mexican and regional Spanish-language hits.⁹ In addition to their ability to cross ethnic lines through proficiency in Tejano and mainstream American popular music, the Galvan brothers, along with other prominent Corpus Christi musicians such as Beto Garcia, Nash Hernandez, and Eddie Olivares, sought out – and learned to play -- new and innovative forms of jazz performed by African American musicians in the segregated nightclubs of a mid-city neighborhood known as “The Cut.”

Big band swing music, characterized by its control, precision, danceable rhythms, and attention to melody, appealed to a cross-section of Americans and grew in popularity through World War II to become a dominant style. After the war, however, the popularity of dance-oriented big band swing music began to decline, as more Americans concentrated on domestic issues such as raising families, and enjoying home entertainment through the medium of television. Some prominent big bands disbanded, and many jazz musicians turned to more progressive forms which were not suitable for dancing. The postwar period also saw the rise in prominence of solo singers such as Frank Sinatra and Patti Page, singing popular tunes backed by small bands.¹⁰ More experimental modes of jazz, such as bebop – rooted in melodic improvisation, changing tempos, and free-form structure – also developed through the 1940s, but were generally heard in Corpus Christi only in small racially-segregated nightclubs, or on the influential disk jockey Jake Trussell’s radio program, broadcast from the Kingsville A&I College station.¹¹ A few swing musicians incorporated elements of this underground sound into their music, but for the most part the two musical modes ran parallel without significant crossover. Some Anglo and Hispanic members of the Corpus Christi swing scene, however, would often visit the “The Cut,” just northwest of downtown, and participate in jam sessions in nightclubs such as the Down Beat, In & Out, Hoot Club, Skylark Terrace, Club Alabam, and the Cotton Club, playing live music for predominantly – but not exclusively – Black audiences.¹² Bobby and Eddie Galvan both reported that in the late 1940s, the Galvan brothers would regularly drive over to the Cut to listen to cutting-edge bebop jazz, and participate in late night and early morning jam sessions, where local performers would play with touring jazz musicians.¹³ A similar melding of musical cultures was also occurring in the “Blacktown” section of Kingsville, Texas, about a 45-minute drive southwest of Corpus.

⁶ Evans, 11.

⁷ Evans, 13.

⁸ Evans, 50.

⁹ Evans, 13.

¹⁰ Lawrence McClellan, *The Later Swing Era, 1942-1955* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 12-13.

¹¹ Evans, 15.

¹² Davis Louzon, “Corpus Christi’s Galván Ballroom: Music and Multiculturalism in the 1950s.” *Journal of South Texas* 20 (Fall 2007): 184–207, 191.

¹³ Louzon, 192.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

The Rafael and Virginia Galvan Family

Rafael Galvan and his second wife Virginia (whom he married 1918 after the death of his first wife) headed one of the most prominent and influential Hispanic families in Corpus Christi. Rafael worked as a fisherman, became the city's first Hispanic police officer, and rose to prominence as a businessman and real estate investor. A well-respected community leader, Rafael was a founding member of LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), which was organized in Corpus Christi in 1929.

The Galvans had nine children (five girls and four boys): Beatrice, Rosa, Patty, Mamie, Ralph, Sammy, Virginia, Eddie, and Robert (Bobby). Beginning in 1942, the family lived in the Former French House at Waco and Comanche streets, approximately one mile northeast of the Galvan Ballroom. Rafael was not a musician, but Virginia played piano, and seeking to provide well-rounded education for their children, the Galvans hired Bernabe Alvarado, a local music instructor from Mexico, to pick up the children after school and tutor them for three hours in singing and playing various instruments. "There were so many of us little ones that my father worried we kids would get into trouble and that music would keep us at bay and safe at home," Ralph Galvan recalled.¹⁴ Ralph, Jr., played violin, and the other children played violin, viola, cello, banjo, piano or guitar. They became quite proficient, and regularly played together as a family at "home, in school, at social gatherings, and at local clubs" as "Los Hermanos Galvan."¹⁵ The brothers played instruments while sisters Beatrice and Rosa provided lead vocals.¹⁶

While in high school, about the year 1940, Ralph began to play trumpet, and his brothers Eddie and Bobby followed by taking up saxophone. Moving beyond their classical training, the boys soon started playing popular jazz and big band swing tunes they heard on the radio, and while they were teenagers, Ralph and Eddie began to play in local bands. Between 1941 and 1945, Eddie played in the Jake Stephens Band, and after the war he performed in a small jazz combo called the "Latineers."¹⁷

Brothers Sammy and Ralph joined the army during World War II, where they both had opportunities to play in military bands.¹⁸ When Ralph returned to civilian life, he and his brother Eddie played as sidemen with Hank Henry, Óscar Ramos and Jake Stephens in Corpus Christi.¹⁹ After Stephens told his band members that they would have to work more hours for less pay, the four Galvan brothers assembled their own big band, with support from their father who purchased all the necessary equipment and supplies.²⁰ Christened the "Ralph Galvan y Su Orquesta," the fifteen-piece band was the largest in the area, and debuted at Munds Hall, at the Church of the Good Shepard on Water Street, on January 27, 1947.²¹ The band played Latin American and contemporary American popular music in venues all over South Texas, including "high school dances, proms, private clubs, and public dances."²² About 1948, the band recorded their first record, "Los Tres Pelonas" backed with "Amor Y Mysterio." Under the name Americanized their name "Ralph Galvan Orchestra," they released "With a Song in My Heart" backed with "Avalon" on the Melhart label.²³ The Galvan Orchestra played regular performances through the 1950s. The band featured two vocalists, Buddy Blair and Wanda Gregory, and played contemporary dance music,

¹⁴ Hernández, Ramón. "Whatever Happened to Ralph Galván?" January 3, 2012. <http://www.rivercityattractions.com/whatever-happened-to-ralph-galván/>.

¹⁵ Louzon, p. 185.

¹⁶ Hernandez.

¹⁷ Evans, 12.

¹⁸ Louzon, p. 185.

¹⁹ Hernandez.

²⁰ Louzon, 185. The brothers each had been earning \$65 per week.

²¹ Hernandez.

²² Louzon, 186.

²³ Hernández.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

including hits such as “Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White” (made popular as an instrumental by Perez Prado in 1955. Ralph himself would occasionally sing novelty songs such as “Charlie Brown” (a 1959 hit by the Coasters).²⁴

The 1950 Galvan Building²⁵

By 1949, Rafael Galvan owned numerous rental properties, and operated a grocery store, a restaurant, a drug store and a movie theater. By this time, the Galvan Orchestra was touring statewide, playing shows in South Texas and large cities such as Dallas and Houston, and Rafael wanted to provide his children with their own hometown venue.²⁶ He decided to build a large commercial building at the northeast corner of Agnes and Fourteenth Street, with retail space on the ground floor and a large ballroom filling the second floor. By building this venue, the elder Galvan sought to keep his family in Corpus Christi. “Mr. Galvan wanted his sons to be good musicians, but not necessarily leave with a traveling orchestra,” recalled local musician Eddie Olivares.²⁷ Galvan financed the building with a \$150,000 loan.

The Galvan Building was designed by Corpus Christi architect Everett Elijah Hamon (1885-1956), and is the most prominent commercial building designed by him. Hamon was born in Kearney, Missouri, graduated from high school in Frederick, Oklahoma, and moved to Corpus Christi in 1906 to become an apprentice carpenter. About 1910, he began to study architecture through the American Correspondence School and received training through a local architect’s office. He worked as a contractor-architect for five years before devoting himself fully to architecture about 1917. He designed the five-story 1920 Riggan Hotel (500 block of Peoples Street, demolished) and in 1922 designed the Corpus Christi Country Club (destroyed by fire, 1968). Hamon is best known as the architect of approximately fifty schools in the south Texas region, the most prominent of which is the Spanish Colonial Revival-styled Wynn Seale Junior High School in Corpus Christi (1934, Griffith, Hamon & Levy, with Harry D. Payne; NRHP 1996). Hamon also designed numerous residences and several Baptist churches. The Galvan Ballroom is the only known extant commercial project by Hamon, and its design features modernistic characteristics that were popular in commercial design prior and immediately after World War II, specifically its prominent rounded corner, curved ballroom doorway, the use of glass block, and a second-floor band of windows that reinforced the facade’s horizontality. The building shares many characteristics with the 1941 Lichtenstein Department Store in downtown Corpus Christi (demolished 2013), most notably the rounded corner and ribbon window bands. The building’s two-part design and curved corner is also reminiscent of Houston’s Eldorado Ballroom, a significant African-American venue built in 1939.

The Galvan Orchestra opened the ballroom on March 2, 1950, followed by a grand opening on March 30 headlined by the nationally-acclaimed Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. Ralph Galvan later estimated that the capacity crowd was composed of an equal number of Anglo and Hispanic attendees.²⁸ Drummer and bandleader Gene Krupa also

²⁴ Hernandez.

²⁵ Documentation of the Galván Ballroom’s history is incomplete. As noted in David Louzon’s article “Corpus Christi’s Galván Ballroom: Music and Multiculturalism in the 1950s,” (*Journal of South Texas* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 184–207), local newspapers rarely covered events at the venue. Both Louzon and Glen Evans, author of the thesis *Swingin’ and Boppin’ South Texas-Style: Toward an Understanding of the Corpus Christi Jazz Scene* (M.A. Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1992) relied on oral interviews with members of the Galván family, and others associated with the postwar music scene in Corpus Christi. Bobby Galván, the only surviving member of the Galván Orchestra, still operates the Galván Music Store, and has retained a number of original posters and other ephemera from the heyday of the ballroom, but there is no complete record of the various performances and events held at the ballroom.

²⁶ Hernandez.

²⁷ Louzon, 186.

²⁸ Louzon, 187. Louzon interviewed Ralph Galvan in 2006. In 1950, Corpus Christi had a population of 108,000, of which more than half (54%) had Spanish surnames. The African American population was 7,101 (about 6.5%).

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

headlined a show the ballroom later in the spring, and Jimmy Dorsey made an appearance at the ballroom in the early 1950s.²⁹ Other noteworthy performers who played the Galvan Ballroom include Freddy Martinez, Perez Prado, Luis Alcaraz, and Ted Weems. Despite its status as a major musical venue, however, even performances by high-profile recording artists such as Duke Ellington and Count Basie at the Galvan Ballroom drew little to no coverage in city's major daily newspaper. Rafael Galvan also intended his ballroom to serve a multipurpose community events center, to accommodate wedding receptions, *quinceañeras*, school dances, and other events for local clubs. On most Saturday nights, the ballroom was rented by various social clubs for private functions, including the "Lords and Ladies, Privateers Dance Club...as well as Mexican American clubs such as the United Married Couples Club, the Mr. and Mrs. Social Club, and Hi-Fairness Girls Club."³⁰ Rafael Galvan, himself a police veteran, hosted the annual Policeman's Ball, and offered the space at no charge to civic, veterans, church, and school groups as a place to hold fundraising events.

Sunday night was reserved for public dancing, with the Galvan Orchestra playing mostly popular American dance music of the Late Swing Era; popular Mexican and Tejano bands also regularly performed. The ballroom's open layout provided for a large central dance floor with room for seating and tables on either side. These open dance nights were proved popular with local singles (with young ladies often chaperoned by older family members), as well as married couples. Women attended free of charge, while couples and men paid admission.³¹ Most – but not all – of the attendees to these events were Mexican-Americans, and in this respect, the ballroom retained the atmosphere of a neighborhood meeting place for the regulars. While other night clubs, dinner clubs, and venues such as the Memorial Coliseum, American Legion Hall, and Plaza Hotel accommodated a variety of live acts, the Galvan Ballroom was the largest private commercial ballroom.

In keeping with de facto segregation practices common through Texas and the south, African Americans attended only segregated private events at the ballroom, sponsored most often by local clubs such as Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, or area schools.³² Even when African American artists such as Duke Ellington and his band performed at the Galvan (February 13, 1952), only Mexicans and Anglos could attend. Despite the presence of mixed-race musical ensembles, the degree of race separation of the Galvan Ballroom audience was likely due to the venue's function as a dance hall. In San Antonio, African American musicians played in segregated clubs to Black audiences in the 1920s and 30s, but in the postwar era some of these same venues became fully integrated.³³ Author Allen Olson attributes this to a combination's of the city's diverse ethnic makeup and progressive attitudes of venue owners, and clubs such as the Keyhole Club, on San Antonio's east side, were fully integrated. Perhaps in Corpus Christi, as in San Antonio, authorities could enforce de facto segregation not by citing specific code against race mixing, but alleged fire and safety violations.³⁴ Mixed audiences may or may not have been considered a problem, but the presence of mixed couples *dancing* could have subjected the Galvan Ballroom to a police raid and the imposition of fines for real or imaginary code violations.

The downstairs space of the Galvan Building has remained occupied by various businesses since it opened in 1950. Through the 1950s, commercial occupants included Galvan Drugs, Broadway Photography Studio, a café, a

²⁹ Laurie E. Jasinski, "Galvan Ballroom," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xdg04>), accessed November 10, 2014. Uploaded on June 30, 2014. Modified on October 3, 2014. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

³⁰ Louzon, 192.

³¹ Louzon, 193.

³² Louzon, 187. The Galvan Ballroom was most likely the only large ballroom in Corpus Christi to host large events sponsored by African American clubs and schools during the Jim Crow Era.

³³ Olsen, Allen O. "The Post-World War II 'Chitlin' Circuit' in San Antonio and the Long-Term Effects of Intercultural Congeniality." *Journal of Texas Music History* 7 (2007), p. 3.

³⁴ Olsen, p.7.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

clothing store (Victor's Men's Shop), and the business offices of the Ralph Galvan Orchestra. About 1960, the family established Galvan Music Store, which eventually expanded (along with King Furniture) to occupy the entire ground floor by about 1980. King Furniture was owned by Bobby's in-laws, Salvador and Angela Varela.

The Corpus Christi jazz scene remained robust through the 1950s, and the Galvan Ballroom remained one of the primary venues for live local and national acts. Jazz musicians also found regular work playing at nightclubs such as the Uptown Club, and at the naval air station. The scene transformed through the 1950s, however, towards what local scene chronicler Nick Evans described as its "domestication," leading to the establishment of a major jazz festival and the gradual disintegration of the jazz underground. During this decade, big bands were replaced by smaller combos, the informal late night jam sessions in the Cut became less frequent, and the scene as a whole became, in Evans' words "organized or even somewhat 'institutionalized,'" culminating in the establishment of the Corpus Christi Jazz Festival (now the Texas Jazz festival) in 1962.³⁵ The Texas Jazz Festival Society, chartered in 1968 as a nonprofit, modeled the Corpus Christi festival after the highly-successful Newport Jazz Festival, and later claimed the status as one of the city's "first major tourist attractions."³⁶

Ralph Galvan headed the family orchestra until his retirement from music in the mid-1960s, after which Eddie Galvan took over, fronting the Eddie Galvan Orchestra for over three decades. Eddie also worked as the longtime leader of the Miller High School band, and along with Bobby, was a founder of the Texas Jazz Festival.³⁷ Bobby Galvan also remained active as a saxophone player, forming his own band in 1954 San Antonio after serving in the U.S. Air Force and graduating from St. Mary's University. He returned to Corpus Christi in 1960 and opened the family music store with Eddie. In 2004, the Galvan Brothers were inducted into South Texas Music Walk of Fame. Bobby continues to manage the family's music store on the ground floor of the Galvan Building.

The Galvan Ballroom has operated continually since its opening in 1950, as a venue for local and national musical acts, and as a multipurpose events center, hosting wedding receptions, *quinceañeras*, school dances, and other events for local clubs. The list of notable performances at the ballroom is far from comprehensive, but they range from big hit-makers Tommy Dorsey and Gene Krupa, to African American jazz legends Duke Ellington and Count Basie, to the first major punk concert in Corpus Christi (by the Milwaukee hardcore band Die Kreutzen) in 1986. The Galvan Ballroom is nominated to the National Register in recognition of its role in the social and cultural development of Corpus Christi. Owned by a prominent Mexican American family, it allowed for the integration of the Hispanic and Anglo-American communities through music, and was a pioneer in the showcasing of ethnically and racially diverse entertainers.

³⁵ Evans, 20, 82.

³⁶ Evans, 85.

³⁷ "Eddie Galvan, Longtime Miller Band Leader and Community Music Man, Dies at 83." *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*. Accessed November 10, 2014. <http://www.caller.com/news/longtime-miller-band-leader-and-community-music>.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

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Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

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<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph435115/m1/3/?q=%22Galvan%20ballroom%22>.

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre (0.2583 acres)

Latitude: 27.787273° Longitude: -97.409101°

Verbal Boundary Description: CHAMBERLIN'S LTS 1 THROUGH 4 LESS POR TO ROW BLK 2

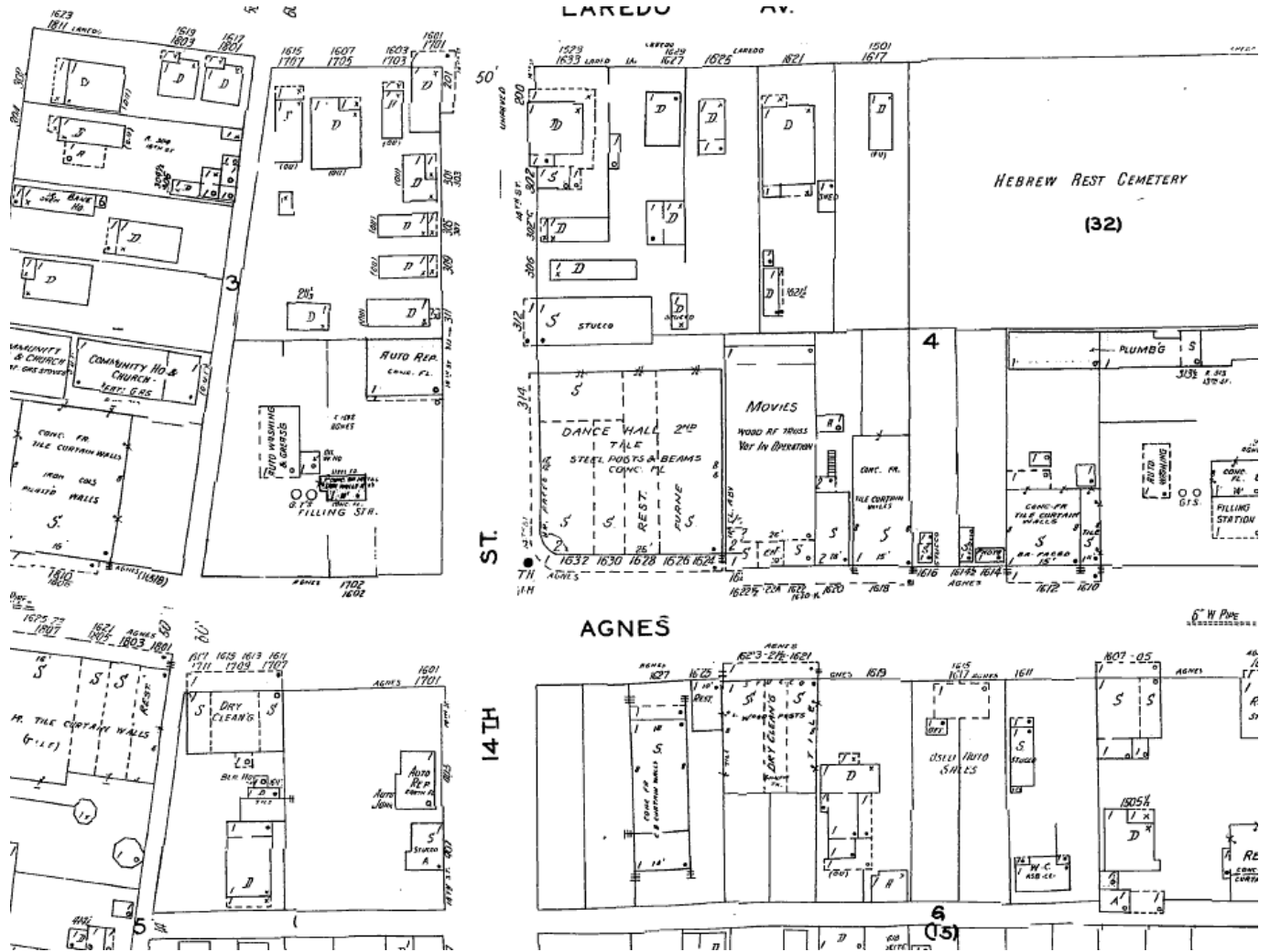
Boundary Justification: The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building, less a small portion of the lot that on the northwest that was taken widening of Fourteenth Street.

Source: Google Earth, accessed November 12, 2014 .



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950, showing the Galvan Building (center) in its neighborhood context.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Rafael Galvan and Family (c.1930)

Source: <http://www.rivercityattractions.com/whatever-happened-to-ralph-galvan/>



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Galvan Orchestra (no date).

Source: <http://www.rivercityattractions.com/whatever-happened-to-ralph-galvan/>



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Galvan Ballroom, drawing by architect Elliott E. Hamon, c.1949.

No other architectural drawings of the building are known to exist.

Source: Galvan Music Co. Store



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Galvan Building under construction, c.1949

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—
Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

1941 Lichtenstein Department Store, downtown Corpus Christi, 2011 (demolished 2013)

Source: <http://www.caller.com/business/local/developer-closes-on-downtown-lichtenstein-plans>



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Opening Day Advertisement, 1950

Source: Photocopy on display at Galvan Music Co.


GRAND OPENING of the GALVAN BALL ROOM

Agnes at Fourteenth St.
Corpus Christi, Texas

Thurs. Mar. 30 8:30 'til 12:00 p m

Music By
The Sentimental Gentleman

TOMMY DORSEY HIS TROMBONE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

<p>THIS BALL ROOM Will Be Available for PRIVATE PARTIES PUBLIC DANCING and CIVIC AFFAIRS Telephone R. GALVAN 7621 For Reservations</p>	<p>COMPLIMENTS OF H A W N SASH & DOOR COMPANY Suppliers of Gate City Awning, Windows and all Special Mill Work 401 North Port</p>	<p>Refreshing  5¢ MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW!!</p>	<p>CONGRATULATIONS from BRINER PAINT MANUFACTURING COMPANY 3713 Agnes St. Phone 2-7477</p>	<p>Featuring BUDDY RICH One of the Nation's OUTSTANDING DRUMMERS Frank Irvin and Johnny Amarosa VOCALISTS</p>
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Tickets on Sale At - Music Center, Radio Center, Horn Shop, Bledsoe Music, Leows Drug No. 1 & 2, and at R. Galvan Ball Room, Dial 7621

Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Galvan Building, c.1955

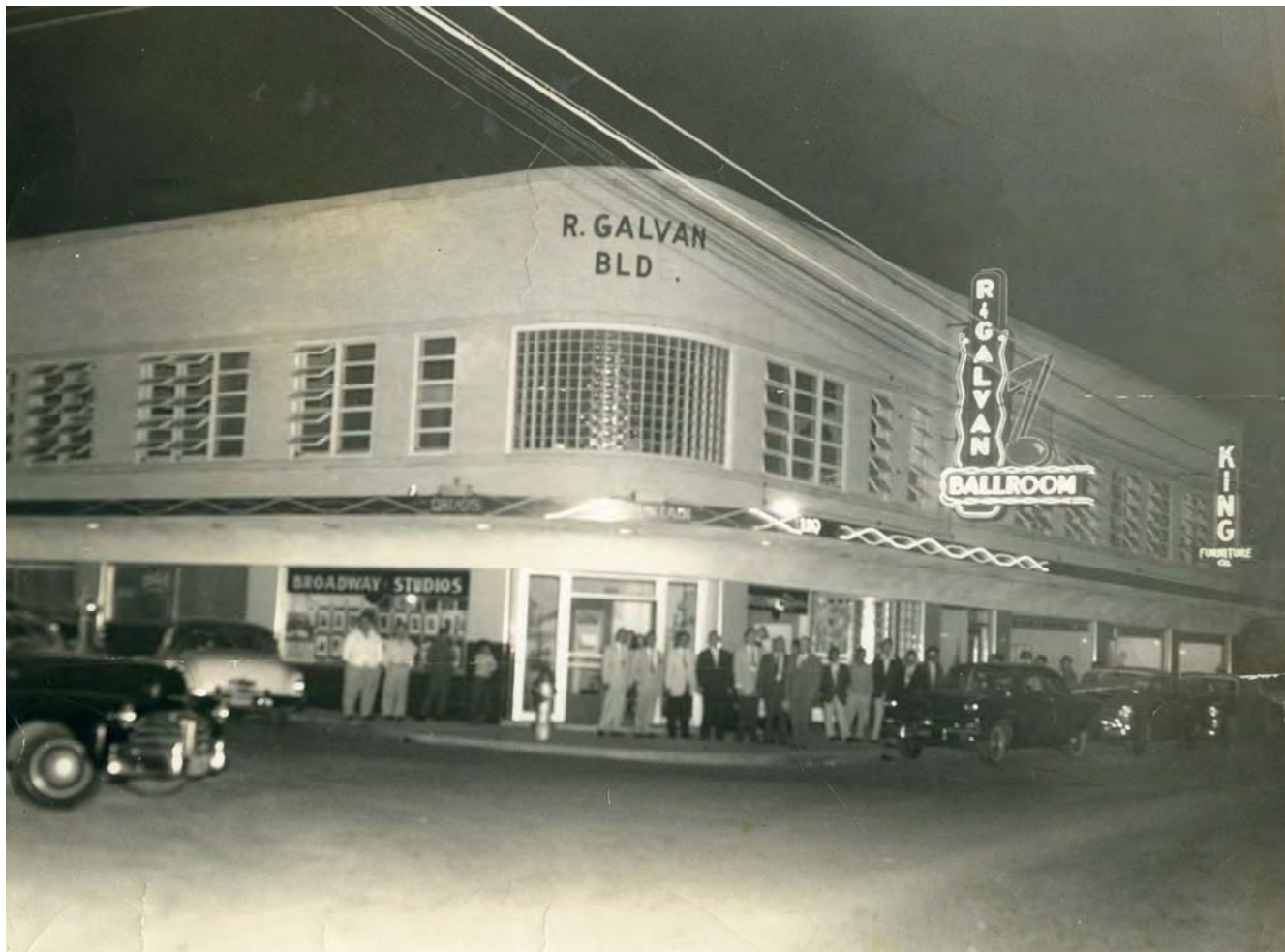
Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—
Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Sunday Night Dance (no date)

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—
Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Tommy Dorsey Orchestra on opening night at the Galvan Ballroom, 1950

The typed notation on this photograph is the only reference to the ballroom's opening taking place in 1949. All other sources, including interviews with Bobby Galvan by the author, indicate that the ballroom opened in 1950.

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Tommy Dorsey at the Galvan Ballroom, 1950

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica Online

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/169643/Tommy-Dorsey>



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Duke Ellington's appearance at the Galvan Ballroom, 1951.

Left to right: Willie Smith (saxophonist from Ellington's band), Ralph Galvan, Duke Ellington, Eddie Galvan, Louie Belson (drummer from Ellington's band), Sammy Galvan.

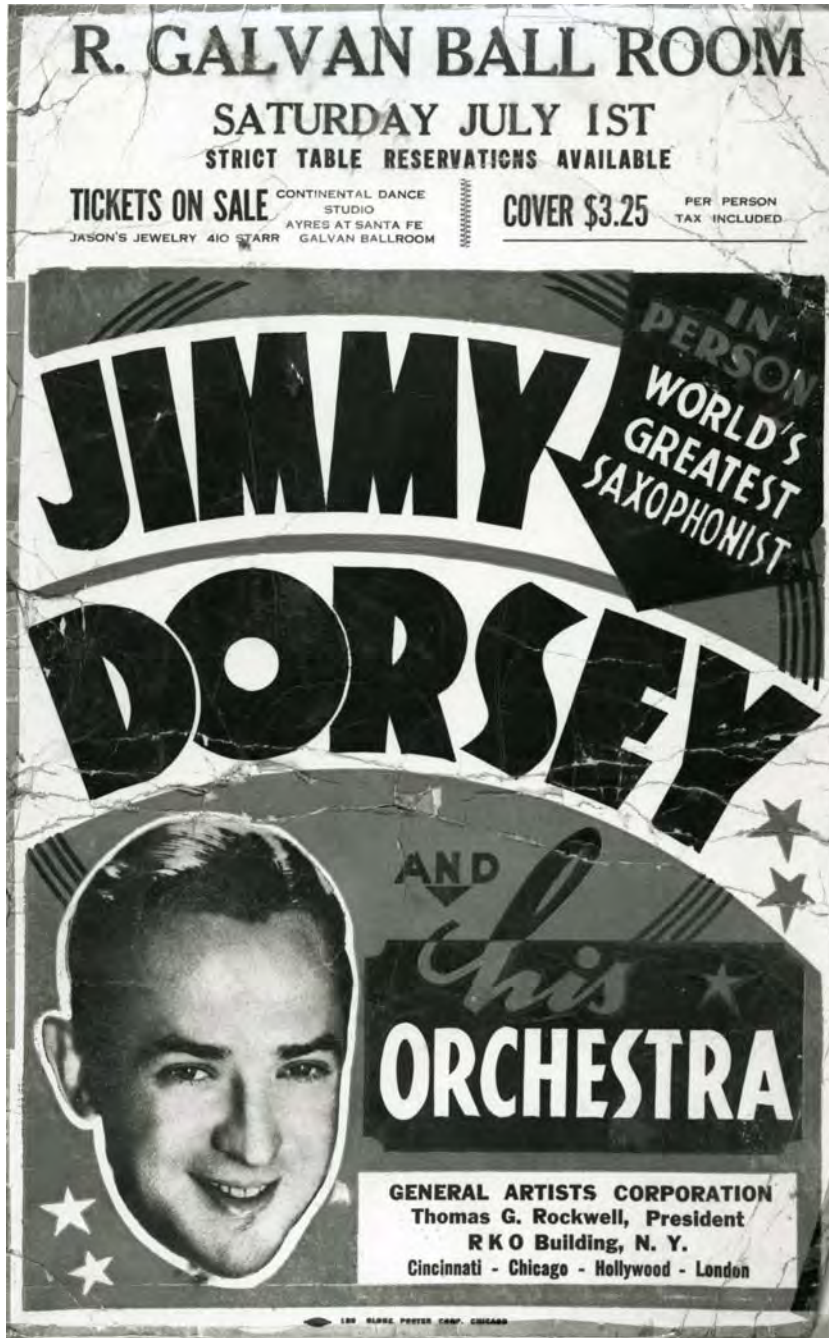
Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Poster advertising a performance by Jimmy Dorsey (no date)

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Jimmy Dorsey and Rafael Galvan (no date)

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—
Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

High School Girls in Dance Troup (no date)

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—
Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Crowded dance floor in the ballroom (no date)

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—
Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Freddy Fender and Bobby Galvan (no date)

Source: Rafael, Sr. & Virginia Galvan Family Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Texas A&M University—
Corpus Christi, Bell Library.



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Galvan Ballroom
1632 Agnes Street
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas
All photos by Gregory Smith, 2014

Photo 1
Southwest Oblique
Camera facing northeast



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 2
Northwest Oblique
Camera facing southeast



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 3
West elevation
Camera facing east



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 4
West side storefront windows
Camera facing north



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 5
South elevation
Camera facing north



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 6
Stairs leading to ballroom from sidewalk entrance
Camera facing north



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 7
Music store interior from main entrance
Camera facing north



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 8
Music store interior from central counter
Camera facing northwest



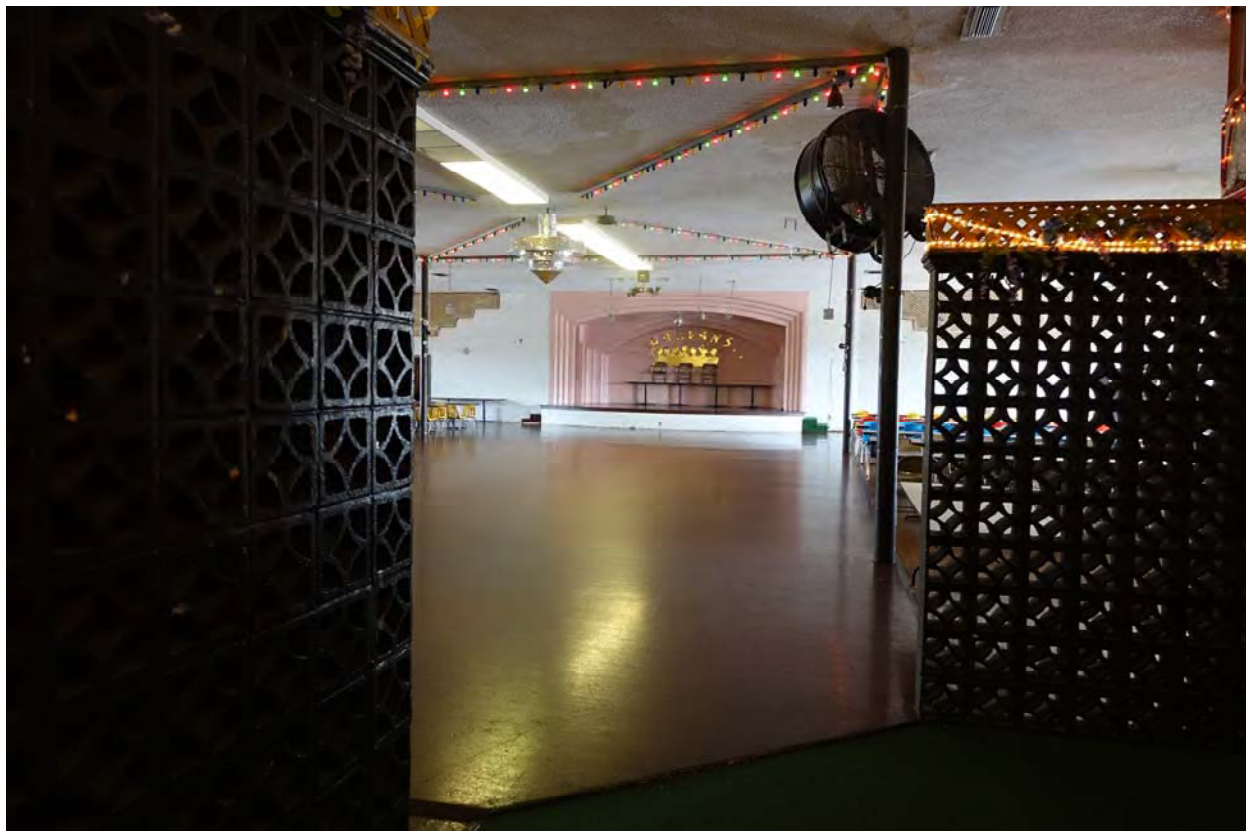
Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 9
Music store interior, west side
Camera facing south



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 10
Entrance to ballroom from stairs
Camera facing east



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 11
Ballroom dance floor and stage
Camera facing east



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 12
Ballroom entrance and audio booth, from the dance floor
Camera facing southwest



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 13

Ballroom entrance and audio booth detail. The musical notation is a line from the song "More."
Camera facing southwest



Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Photo 14
Bar
Camera facing north



- fin -

R. GALVAN
BLDG.

Galvan
MUSIC CO.

R
&
G
A
L
V
A
N

BALLROOM

Galvan

1800

VALERO



**GALVAN
BALLROOM**

SPEED
LIMIT
35



**GALVAN
BALLROOM**

**GALVAN
MUSIC**

R. GALVAN
BLDG.

Galvan
MUSIC

R & GALVAN

BALLROOM

Galvan





SPEED
LIMIT
35



R & GALVAN

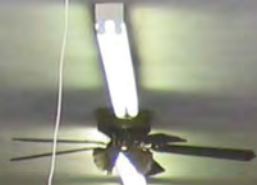
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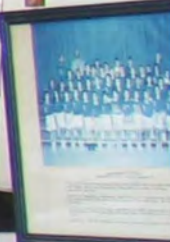






REPAIRS

Fender
PULP
MUSICIANS





8
PUB Fender
MS

REPAIRS
LEFT OVER
90 DAYS
WILL BE
SOLD
FOR CHARGES

SHURE

CASHIER

LIVE



Tambourine

Valve Oil





GALVANS







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Galvan Ballroom
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Nueces

DATE RECEIVED: 4/24/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/19/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/03/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/09/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000336

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Galvan Ballroom is of statewide significance under National Register Criteria A, B & C in the areas of Entertainment, Commerce, Ethnic Heritage-Hispanic, and Architecture. Completed in 1950, the concrete framed building is faced with painted brick. The building's late, post-war Moderne styling is best seen in the curved southwest corner, the horizontal second floor window banding, a broad, projecting storefront awning, and the glass block and tiled entry. The ballroom, which occupies almost the entire second floor space features wood flooring and a small stage. One of the city's premiere live music and entertainment venues (including local and national acts), the Ballroom was designed by architect Everett Hamon for local businessman Rafael Galvan, whose family continues to operate the facility. The property reflects the significant local achievements of Galvan in business and community service. Corpus Christi's jazz and music scene during the mid-twentieth century reflected a diversity and vitality unmatched in the state, successfully melding Anglo, African-American, and Mexican musical traditions. The Galvan Ballroom was at the heart of the city's entertainment scene.

RECOM. / CRITERIA Accept Criteria A, B & C

REVIEWER Paul R. Lusignan DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 6/3/2015

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N Y

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

real places telling real stories



TO: Edson Beall
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20005

FROM: Gregory Smith
National Register Coordinator
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

DATE: April 15, 2015

The following materials are submitted:

Table with 2 columns: checkbox, description. Rows include: Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk; [X] The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Galvan Ballroom, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas; Resubmitted nomination; [X] Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO; Multiple Property Documentation form on disk; Resubmitted form; Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO; [X] CD with TIFF photograph files, PDF, and KMZ file; Correspondence

COMMENTS:

- ___ SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
___ The enclosed owner objections (do___) (do not___) constitute a majority of property owners
___ Other:

