SG-2266

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

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

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Natl. Reg. of Historic Places
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District
Other name/site number: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company Freight Depot
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by E. Fronton St., Former Railroad Alignment, E. 4th St., and E. 9th St.
City or town: Brownsville State: Texas County: Cameron
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐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 2/12/18
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:

X 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 of the Keeper 3-26-18 **Date of Action**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property

	building(s)
x	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
11	5	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
11	5	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE / warehouse;
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION / manufacturing facility

Current Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE / warehouse;
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION / manufacturing facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification: OTHER: Industrial; LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY PERIOD REVIVALS: Mission Revival

Principal Exterior Materials: BRICK, WOOD, CONCRETE, METAL

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7 through 28)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Transportation

Period of Significance: 1909-1959

Significant Dates: 1904

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

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

Architect/Builder: William Doty Van Siclen, Architect; Guadalupe Saenz, E. D. Porter, Builders

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 29 through 53)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 54-57)

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:
X State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*, Austin)
_ Other state agency
_ Federal agency
_ Local government
_ University
_ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 8.65 acres

Coordinates Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (see continuation sheet 58)

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

Verbal Boundary Description: (see continuation sheet 58)

Boundary Justification: (see continuation sheet 58)

11. Form Prepared By

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Date: September 6, 2017

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 59-68)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 69-85)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 5-6, 86-105)

Photograph Log

Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District
Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas
Photographed by Terri Myers
Date photographed: March 2017

Photo 1: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot (left) and Depot Office (right), (Resources 1 and 2), front/south elevations, facing north/northeast.

Photo 2: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Depot Office (left) and Freight Depot (right), (Resources 2 and 1), side/east and rear/north elevations, facing northwest.

Photo 3: Nabisco Warehouse (right) and Ullmann Stern & Krausse Warehouse (left), 720-730 E. Fronton Street (Resources 10 and 12), front/north elevations, facing south.

Photo 4: 600-700 blocks of E. Fronton Street, (Resources 9, 10 and 12 showing right to left), front/north elevations, facing south/southeast.

Photo 5: 400-500 blocks E. Fronton Street (Resources 4 and 5 showing right to left), front/north elevations, facing south.

Photo 6: 700 block E. Fronton Street (Resources 16, 15, & 14 on left; Resource 12 on right), facing southeast.

Photo 7: Rear (freight line) view along rear, 400-700 blocks E. Fronton, facing north/northwest.

Photo 8: Rear (freight line) view along rear, 600 block E. Fronton (Resources 8 and 9 showing left to right), facing north.

Photo 9: Resource 6 side/west elevation (left) and Resource 1 (freight depot; behind right), front/north elevation, facing southwest.

Photo 10: McNair factories, Resources 14, 15 & 16 (right to left), 700 block E. Fronton, front/south elevations, facing north.

Photo 11: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot, west and south elevations, facing east/southeast.

Photo 12: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Depot Office, front/south and side/east elevations, facing north.

Photo 13: 430B E. Fronton Street (Resource 3), side and front/north elevations, facing south.

Photo 14: 430A E. Fronton Street (Resource 4), side and front/north elevations, facing west.

Photo 15: 454 E. Fronton Street (Resource 5), front/north and west elevations, facing south.

Photo 16: 504 E. Fronton Street (Resource 6), east and front/north elevations, facing west.

Photo 17: 534 E. Fronton Street (Resource 7), side/east and front/north facing west.

Photo 18: 600 block E. Fronton Street (Resource 8), front/north elevation, facing west.

Photo 19: 634 E. Fronton Street (Resource 9), original c. 1924 building volume, front/north elevation, facing southwest.

Photo 20: 720 E. Fronton Street (Resource 10), front/north elevations, facing south.

Photo 21: 720 E. Fronton Street (Resources 11 and 10 left to right), front/north elevations, facing west.

Photo 22: 730 E. Fronton Street (Resource 12), rear/south and east elevations, facing north.

Photo 23: 800 E. Fronton Street (Resource 13), front/north elevation, facing south.

Photo 24: 759 E. Fronton Street (Resource 14), front/south and east elevations, facing north.

Photo 25: 749 E. Fronton Street (Resource 15), front/south elevation, facing northeast.

Photo 26: 739 E. Fronton Street (Resource 16), front/south elevation, facing northeast.

Photo 27: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot, facing south (Depot Office visible at far left).

Photo 28: Bracket and brickwork detail, St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Depot, south elevation, facing northwest.

Photo 29: 430A E. Fronton Street (Resource 4), rear (freight line) elevation, facing northeast.

Photo 30: 454 E. Fronton Street (Resource 5), rear (freight line) south elevation, facing north/northwest.

Photo 31: 504 E. Fronton Street (Resource 6), rear (freight line) elevations, facing north.

Photo 32: 600 block E. Fronton Street (Resource 8), north and west elevations with c. 1906 original building volume visible on the right, facing south.

Photo 33: 634 E. Fronton Street (Resource 9), facing west/southwest.

Photo 34: 634 E. Fronton Street (Resource 9), c. 1956 building volume front/north elevation, facing southwest.

Photo 35: 730 E. Fronton Street (Resource 12), east side elevation with c. 1925 office volume on right, facing north.

Photo 36: 730 E. Fronton Street (Resource 12), brickwork detail at southeast corner, facing north.

Photo 37: 749 E. Fronton Street (Resource 15), brickwork detail, front/south elevation.

Photo 38: 749 E. Fronton Street (Resource 15), brick detail, rear/north elevation.

Photo 39: 739 E. Fronton Street (Resource 16), rear/north elevation, facing west/southwest.

Narrative Description

The Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District contains sixteen one and two-story utilitarian industrial buildings constructed of brick, metal, and concrete block. The eleven (69%) contributing buildings were constructed between 1909 and 1959. Five (31%) of the buildings in the district are noncontributing. Of those, one was constructed after the period of significance and four were severely altered after the period of significance (ending 1959), resulting in a lack of integrity. Composed of a freight depot, depot office, warehouses, and factories, the district reflects transportation and freight activities associated with the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company that historically utilized the railroad for shipping and receiving. Many of the district's warehouses are located on the south side of E. Fronton Street, along the railroad's freight spurs. The district boundaries encompass the south side of E. Fronton between E. 4th and E. 9th Streets, a portion of the 700 block on the north side of E. Fronton, and the freight depot and freight depot office in the 500 block along the freight line that runs parallel to E. Fronton Street, between E. 5th and E. 6th Streets. Despite alterations over time, the district as a whole retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic character and significance.

The Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District is associated with the development of the freight yard as a transportation and commercial warehouse and manufacturing hub from the arrival of the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad in 1904, to the present time. Resources in the district reflect these factors. The freight yards developed with the arrival of the first railroad to reach Brownsville in 1904, an event that launched a tremendous period of agricultural development throughout the entire lower Rio Grande region. The low-lying, flood-prone location was determined to be undesirable for substantial residential or retail development but appropriate for commercial warehouse and light industrial uses. The first resource in the district was a brick freight depot built in 1904 with the arrival of the railroad. The depot burned in 1911. A new freight office (Resource 2) was erected in 1911 and a new freight depot (Resource 1) was completed by January 1912.

Lumber yards and ice factories were among the first businesses to locate along the freight lines in the district. The former Consumer's Ice and Cold Storage plant built survives in part at the corner of E. Fronton and 6th Street (Resource 8). Built in 1909, it is the oldest extant building in the district. As agriculture began to explode in the region in the 1910s, the district attracted commercial grocers who needed storage facilities and rail transportation to ship carloads of produce to outside markets. In 1909, the first wholesale grocery warehouse was built in the district in the 400 block of E. Fronton Street (razed c. 1945). Other wholesale grocery and dry goods warehouses followed in the 400-700 blocks during the 1910s and 1920s (Resources 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 14).

After World War I, Brownsville attracted light industrial business and small factories opened on E. Fronton Street where they, too, had close access to the railroad. The first factories converted a former lumber yard at 800 E. Fronton and a warehouse at 759 E. Fronton for use (Resource 14). By the mid-1920s, the district was defined by its brick grocery warehouses and small-scale factories and the trend continued through the 1950s.[1] The last warehouse in the district was started in 1953 and completed in 1959, at 454 E. Fronton (Resource 5). These businesses contributed significantly to Brownsville's rise as the dominant commercial and transportation hub in the region in the early twentieth century. Resources

[1] Resource 14 was built as a grocery warehouse but was later converted to a shirt factory. Resource 12 was also built as a grocery warehouse and, though acquired by Alamo Iron Works in 1926, continued to serve the new business as a warehouse.

in the district, including the freight depot and depot office, brick grocery warehouses, and small factories, clearly depict these aspects of the city's history.

Location and Setting

The district boundaries encompass the south side of E. Fronton between E. 4th and E. 9th Streets, a portion of the 700 block on the north side of E. Fronton, and the freight depot and freight depot office in the 500 block of the former railroad tracks between E. 5th and E. 6th Streets (Maps 1, 2 and 3).[2] The buildings are utilitarian in nature and have been altered over time in response to changing uses and technology. Most of the alterations happened within the period of significance and only slightly undermine the district's overall integrity. Except for the freight buildings which are vacant, most of the resources remain in use as warehouses and/or factories. The contributing resources are largely intact to the historic period and retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance. Noncontributing buildings are largely compatible with the district, maintaining the size, scale, setback and function established in the historic period. Overall, the district conveys a strong sense of Brownsville's historic development as a regional shipping and manufacturing center in the early twentieth century.

The district is located in west-central Brownsville, approximately five blocks west-northwest of the downtown core and five blocks northwest of the Rio Grande which delineates the international boundary between the United States and Mexico (Maps 1 and 4). The Brownsville street grid is skewed, with named streets running northwest/southeast and numbered streets running southwest/northeast. The St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. tracks entered the city from the north, turned southeast following the street grid, and passed along the southwestern edge of town before continuing south across the river and into Mexico. Since the tracks passed through central Brownsville one block south of E. Fronton Street, Fronton Street was a natural location for a freight district to develop. The freight depot was constructed along the northeast edge of the main rail yard, and freight spurs were added parallel to the north side of the depot. The spurs allowed the warehouses on the south side of Fronton to have loading bay doors that opened directly onto waiting train cars. The railroad tracks were removed in 2004 and the former freight yard is now a grassy expanse. A dirt road that once provided access to the shops and offices along the rail yard was historically identified in city directories as "Railroad" as if it was a street. It is roughly parallel to E. Fronton and forks to run along both sides of the freight depot, behind many of the district's warehouses. Though the rails have been removed, their paths are clearly defined by the straight alignment of the buildings that once fronted onto them and by the still-visible hard-packed dirt and gravel road beds.

Overview

The district has a largely cohesive appearance; its resources are largely one- or two-story masonry buildings with relatively flat roofs and low parapet walls. Of the sixteen buildings in the district, twelve are one story in height. Two are fully two-stories, the freight depot office and the factory/warehouse building at 739 E. Fronton Street (Resources 2 and 16). A historic metal warehouse at 800 E. Fronton Street has a two-story central section flanked by two one-story wings (Resource 13). The warehouse at 730 E. Fronton is essentially a one-story building with a smaller two-story volume at its east corner (Resource 12). All but three of the buildings are masonry, with brick, CMU or structural clay tile walls. The others are metal buildings. Only three, or 18% of the buildings in the district, were constructed after

[2] On early Sanborn maps the railroad line is labeled "St. L B & M RR (Frisco Lines)" (St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railroad).

1945. Of those, two are mid-century resources with materials, massing, and roof forms that are compatible with the district (Resources 5 and 16). The remaining resource is a nonhistoric pre-manufactured metal storage building (Resource 7). Most of the buildings have little or no setback from E. Fronton Street—their front elevations directly abut the sidewalks. Other buildings have a slight setback that allows trucks to load into open loading doors or loading docks on the front elevations. Only two of the buildings along Fronton Street have significant setbacks and front parking lots. The most consistent view of the district is formed by the rear elevations of buildings on the south side of E. Fronton. Built to align exactly with the former railroad tracks, the flat rear facades present a broad, regimented appearance that stretches the length of the district.

The district is densely built. Buildings cover most of their lots with occasional narrow storage or loading areas between them but few vacant lots. Sidewalks are narrow and are punctuated by concrete curb cuts and parking aprons. Most of E. Fronton Street lacks curbs and instead has a concave strip of concrete at the edge of the sidewalk to encourage drainage. Several of the numbered side streets, however, have traditional concrete curbs. A narrow strip of grass runs between the curb and the sidewalk on the north side of E. Fronton Street. A row of small trees is planted at regular intervals within the strip. A few other trees, including palms, are scattered between buildings on the south side of the street. The north side of Fronton Street from E. 4th Street to the mid-point of the 700 block is primarily residential in nature and does not have the same industrial character as the district buildings on the south side of the street.

Since most of the district's resources are utilitarian in nature, they are simple, largely unadorned buildings in which form closely follows function. In general, they are expansive masonry warehouses or factories with 7,000-20,000 square feet of space. They are set on raised concrete foundations to facilitate loading and unloading trucks and railroad cars. All but two of the depot buildings and warehouses built from the 1910s through the 1930s are load-bearing brick buildings (Resources 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 15).[3] A metal warehouse was built in the 1940s (Resource 13). In the 1950s, concrete block became more common (Resources 5 and 16). The building erected after the historic period (ending 1959) is a pre-manufactured warehouse made of standing seam metal (Resource 7). Several historic buildings have nonhistoric metal sheathing or additions (Resources 8, 9, and 11).

Though many of the roofs appear to be flat, most slope slightly to drain water. These typically have low brick parapets. Several of the warehouses and factories have concrete loading docks, and all have loading bay doors of various sizes, often on both the front and rear elevations and occasionally on side elevations, as well. Windows that provide light and ventilation to office and warehouse spaces are simple rectangular or regimental-arch openings with brick sills, or small clerestory windows set high on the wall. Door openings intended for pedestrians are simple, without unnecessary decorative elements. Earlier buildings typically had full-façade porches while later ones had concrete stoops sheltered by small canopies. The district is vacated at night, which invites graffiti and break-ins. Most property owners in the district have covered their windows with plywood or infilled them with brick or glass block rather than continue to replace broken panes.

Interiors are cavernous work or storage spaces, depending on their function. Typically, warehouses might have been filled with boxes of fruits and vegetables or shelves full of manufactured items to be shipped by rail or truck to outside markets, while factories were vast open-plan rooms with long rows of sewing machine stations and cloth-cutting tables. Both warehouses and factories have small offices spaces with

[3] Resource 11 was originally built as a frame warehouse with metal cladding c. 1912. Resource 14 was built as a frame warehouse in 1910 and was later sheathed in brick.

wood or metal partition walls set out of the way along an outer wall. Warehouses typically have segmental-arch half-windows or small rectangular windows on their exterior walls, some set high on the wall like clerestories. Virtually all the flat-roofed warehouses and factories have glass and wire skylights to bring illuminate the otherwise dark interiors. The oldest factory (Resource 14) still has double-hung wood sash windows behind the front wall that likely date to the building's original construction in 1910. The c. 1933 McNair building (Resource 15) has two original sets of glass block windows flanking the central entrance and the c.1954 McNair factory (Resource 16) has rows of original awning windows on both upper and lower floors that provide more light and ventilation than the earlier window types.

Architectural Types and Styles in the District

Few of the utilitarian buildings in the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District exhibit any nationally recognized style but they do share some construction and design elements that identify them as a distinctive type common to the lower Rio Grande region in the early twentieth century. Brick use has a long history on both sides of the border where clay was plentiful and timber was scarce before railroads arrived with inexpensive milled lumber for construction. Local brickmakers often set up *ladrillas* on the river banks where they dug clay, molded it into wooden forms, and dried the brick in the sun or in beehive-shaped kilns. Matamoros had a long history of brick-making but four brick plants were operating in Brownsville by 1870 and brick was the dominant material for substantial buildings throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century (Cook 1998: 31). After the international bridge was completed into Matamoros in 1910, much of the local brickmaking shifted to the Mexican side of the border. Long lines of mule-driven wagons stacked high with finished brick could be seen crossing the river every day into Brownsville. Hundreds of nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings in Matamoros and Brownsville attest to the prevalence of brick for all construction types, regardless of use.

Brownsville's location on the Mexican border, its proximity to Mexican cities and its isolation from American towns, as well as the availability of brick, contributed to an architectural style that is unique to the lower Rio Grande. Architectural Historian and Rice University professor, Stephen Fox has written extensively about the architecture of Brownsville and the lower Rio Grande borderlands. Fox uses the term "Border Brick Style" to define a unique type of brick architecture that emerged and flourished in Brownsville in the nineteenth century (Figure 1). The style is a blend of Spanish-Mexican Creole and American-Anglo building traditions. They are generally one- or two-story brick buildings set close to the street with little or no setback (Fox 1995: 199-219). They typically have pronounced cornices and stepped entablatures featuring bands of corbelled brick and wall surfaces may be articulated with vertical piers (engaged columns or pilasters) (Fox email correspondence September 11, 2017).

Only one building in the district closely follows the Border Brick model, and that is a late example, the c. 1933 McNair factory at 749 E. Fronton Street (Resource 15). However, other brick warehouses and factories in the district share some attributes of the type. They combine elements of both American and Mexican building traditions that are particular to a place – the lower Rio Grande border region – and a time – from about 1904 to about 1945. For this nomination, they are defined as *Early 20th Century Border Vernacular*. They are differentiated from Fox's "Border Brick Style" by their more recent construction, utilitarian function, and lack of formal arrangement or stylistic embellishment (Resources 4, 6, and 12).

These vernacular utilitarian buildings are generally one-story in height, except for the depot office which has two stories. They are load-bearing masonry buildings built of locally made brick.[4] The type

[4] Following World War II, large brick manufacturers in the U.S. like Acme Brick began a negative advertising campaign against

commonly has little or no setback from the street, with front entrances flush with the façade and opening directly onto the sidewalk or street. All of the buildings have large double loading bay doors that originally opened onto wooden platforms, later concrete docks. Those on the south side of E. Fronton are aligned precisely along the former railroad tracks to load goods directly into the freight cars. They have flat or very low-sloping roofs. Most have low parapet walls around the perimeter of the roof with the higher or stepped sides typically facing onto the main street, E. Fronton, though one, the Walker-Craig warehouse (Resource 6), has stepped parapets on the side elevations. Brick or tile coping defines the roofline and parapet walls. Several feature rows of segmental-arch half- or full windows with brick sills set high on the wall. Ghost lines show single or double segmental-arch doorways on the primary façade (E. Fronton Street). Decorative elements are limited to the arched openings and a few rows of decorative brickwork at the cornice level.

Examples of the *Early 20th Century Border Vernacular* type in the district include major warehouses such as the Ullmann, Stern & Krausse's grocery warehouse/Alamo Iron Works warehouse (Resource 12; Figure 3), the Walker-Bennett Dry Goods warehouse (Resource 4), the Walker-Craig Wholesale Grocery Warehouse (Resource 6), and the earliest resource, the Consumer's Ice & Cold Storage building (Resource 8). The original appearance of the E. de la Garza Wholesale Grocery warehouse (Resource 9) is unknown. The Freight Depot itself (Resource 1) displays Craftsman stylistic influences but is also constructed of locally made brick (Figure 2). The Depot Office (Resource 2) is essentially a 2-part commercial building but it is also constructed of load-bearing brick with segmental arched windows and a low brick parapet wall.

Later resources in the district diverge from the borderlands model and instead follow national building trends of their era. For example, the one- to two-story Alamo Iron Works warehouse at 800 E. Fronton (Resource 13) is a barn-like utilitarian building with no regional architectural references; the metal building would not have been out of place anywhere in the country when it was erected c. 1940. Likewise, district resources built in the 1950s follow modern, national trends in utilitarian construction. They lack the regional distinctions found in the earlier warehouses and factories such as handmade brick, segmental-arch windows and brick cornice detail. Instead, they have sleeker lines, are built of concrete block and either have no windows (Resource 5) or standard metal awning windows (Resource 16) common elsewhere in the country after World War II. The only nonhistoric resource in the district is a pre-fabricated metal storage building (Resource 7) which also follows modern national trends for utilitarian uses.

Alterations have been made to the buildings over time, generally in response to changing technologies or expansion programs. Most changes to contributing resources occurred during the period of significance (1909-1959) and reflect the historic evolution of the buildings. Nonhistoric and/or large, incongruous additions and alterations that detract significantly from the historic appearance of a resource resulted in its assessment as a noncontributing resource. Common alterations include infilling windows and doors with plywood, brick, or glass block in response to vandalism. In most of those cases, ghost lines still clearly show the window and door openings and do not detract significantly from their historic appearance. In a few instances, original windows may lie behind the boards. Some original windows on the freight depot and depot office appear to be intact behind their plywood coverings. Some windows in the district appear to have been replaced but the change occurred during the historic period. Most of the brick has been painted but the buildings may have been painted from the outset to protect the buildings from moisture

what they deemed termed "Mexican" brick, including locally made artisanal brick. The campaign largely succeeded and a stigma attached to the local brick. Buildings constructed in the district in the 1950s used concrete block or hollow clay tile.

penetration. Some have been stuccoed; the extent to which the stucco has obscured or obliterated character-defining features factored into a building's assessment as a contributing resource.

1. St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot
500 block E. Fronton (Railroad) Street
1912
Contributing building, (Photos 1-2, 7-8, 11, 27-28; Figures 2, 10, 13-14)

The freight depot is located along the freight line between E. 5th and E. 6th Streets. It is identified in early city directories as "E. Railroad" and on Sanborn maps as "St. L B & M RR (Frisco Lines)." Historically, tracks associated with the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway ran along both sides of the freight depot—the main rail yard to its south had spur lines accessing various warehouses to its north. The current depot was completed in February 1912, to replace the original 1904 freight depot which burned to the ground on this site in 1911. According to the *Brownsville Daily Herald*, the city's main newspaper, the new depot followed the original plan, design, and materials. It is a long, narrow building with a footprint measuring approximately 240 feet long and 35 feet wide. Its short east elevation is connected to the two-story freight depot office, which was built in early 1911. The freight depot is a load-bearing brick building with a raised foundation. It has a gable roof with deep, overhanging, open eaves and regularly-spaced, stick-framed brackets. Each bracket rests on a small corbel consisting of two projecting header bricks. The roof pitch, overhanging eaves, and exposed wood brackets are hallmarks of the Craftsman style, which was a popular style for railroad depots in the early 20th century.

The depot's fenestration pattern has been somewhat altered since its construction, with some door openings relocated slightly and some window and door openings infilled with brick. The overall appearance, however, still reflects the original design, with wide loading bay doors that occupy most of the space between roof brackets, and small rectangular windows located high on the walls between other brackets. The pedestrian door, loading bay, and window openings are square, and windows have sills made of one row of rowlock bricks. Most of the windows and door openings are infilled with plywood, although at least one historic divided-light window and several wood doors remain. Originally, wooden platforms ran along both sides of the building and loading bay doors opened directly onto the platforms. When the platforms were removed, concrete stairs were installed at each pedestrian entry.

The north elevation faces the former location of the rail spurs and the rear of the warehouses along E. Fronton Street. This elevation has an irregular fenestration pattern. Four loading bay doors are spaced along the west and center portions of its façade. Three of the openings have historic sliding doors made from cross-braced wood framing and narrow vertical wood strips, and one of the openings is infilled with plywood. Near the eastern end of the elevation are three smaller pedestrian entries, and spaced along the entire façade are several small rectangular windows. All the pedestrian doors and all but one of the windows are infilled with plywood. The one visible window is a historic wood, six-light pivot window. It is not known if additional historic window fabric is present behind the plywood of the other window openings on this elevation.

The south elevation faces the former location of the rail yard. This elevation has a more regular fenestration pattern, with six loading bay doors interspersed with six rectangular windows along the length of the façade. Several of the bay door openings have historic wood doors, and some of the window openings appear to have historic sash, but the view is obscured by security screens and debris. The short west elevation has a single loading bay door opening centered under the gable end. The opening is infilled with plywood. The east elevation is connected to the freight depot office via a party wall.

The 1912 St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. freight depot is largely intact. The Craftsman-influenced building follows the early twentieth century penchant for designing railroad buildings, particularly depots and waiting rooms, in popular architectural styles. Its low-pitched gabled roof, wide, overhanging eaves and oversized wooden knee braces reflect the emerging Craftsman movement in America. At the same time, the building reflects regional building traditions in its use of locally-made molded brick. Despite plywood enclosures, the windows, doors and fenestration pattern are clearly visible and convey their original design and function. The plywood can be easily removed and the windows replaced. Overall, the building retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity and contributes to the district.

2. St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot Office
500 block E. Fronton (Railroad) Street
1911
Contributing building, (Photos 1-2, 7, 12, 27)

The freight depot office is connected to the east end of the freight depot, but has a different height, massing, and style and reads as a separate building. The depot office was constructed in early 1911 to support the business of the original St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico freight depot built in 1904. That depot burned in 1911 and was replaced by the existing depot completed in February 1912. The depot office is a two-story building with brick walls and a low-pitched shed roof that appears flat. Its primary elevation faces south toward the former location of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. train tracks. The building's low parapet is more pronounced on the south (front) elevation. It steps down in height along the side elevations until it disappears along the rear (north) elevation where water drains from the slightly-sloping roof. Brickwork provides subtle decorative detail—the bond pattern on the walls consists of a row of header bricks in between every five rows of stretcher bricks, and the window and door openings have brick segmental-arch headers and brick sills. All door and window openings are currently boarded with plywood but the fenestration pattern and arched headers are still evident. The building has minor brick damage at the front parapet and rear roofline. Despite minor alterations and deterioration caused by neglect, the depot office possesses good integrity and is able to convey its historic significance.

The front (south) façade has an irregular fenestration pattern that historic photographs indicate is original. The first floor had two entry doors, one at the end of the elevation nearest the depot that was later truncated and converted into a window, and another extant entry near the center of the façade. The entrance is currently accessed by a short flight of concrete stairs but would have originally been entered directly from the railroad platform. Unevenly-spaced single window openings are located to either side of the central entry. On the second floor, five window openings are located in the eastern two-thirds of the façade. The east side elevation originally faced a freight house across a short breezeway on the railroad platform. It has two regularly-spaced window openings on each floor. The rear (north) elevation has a single entry door and three windows on the first floor. The door is the only opening on the building without a segmental-arch opening and it is not known if it is original. On the second floor of the rear elevation are four windows in the western two-thirds of the façade. The west side elevation is connected to the depot. A short, windowless section of upper wall is visible above the depot roof.

The depot office is a good, relatively intact example of a two-part commercial building designed and built in the regional vernacular of the period. It is a handmade brick building with a flat roof, low parapet, and bands of segmental-arch windows and doors typical of early twentieth century commercial buildings in

towns along the lower Rio Grande. Though its historic windows and doors have been infilled with plywood, they are clearly visible and convey their form and design well. The infill can be easily removed and the windows replaced. The building retains a good degree of historic and architectural integrity and is a contributing resource in the district.

3. Auto Garage
430B E. Fronton Street
c. 1924
Non-contributing building, (Photo 13)

This small building at the corner of Fronton and E. 4th Street was constructed about 1924 and functioned as a six-car auto garage for the adjacent wholesale grocery warehouse (430A E. Fronton). It was built independent of the adjacent building at 430A E. Fronton but it is connected to it via a party wall on its east side. Its footprint measures approximately 47 feet across and 28 feet deep. The building is one story in height and has brick load-bearing walls. The front (Fronton St.) elevation has a simple stepped parapet with a brick coping. The building lacks integrity of design, workmanship, materials, association, and feeling due to several non-historic alterations that detract significantly from the original building. The brick walls, parapet, and coping on the front elevation have a thick application of stucco.

Two concrete driveways at the front of the building indicate the former location of garage bay doors which were a character-defining feature of the building; these were infilled in the 1960s or 1970s and aluminum, horizontal sliding windows with security bars were installed. At the eastern end of the front elevation is a single entry with a replacement door. The windowless 4th Street (west) elevation has three rectangular scuppers and several non-historic pipe penetrations. The side elevation is also coated in stucco, which is spalling in several places. The rear (south) elevation has better integrity—the brick is painted but not stuccoed, and the two window openings retain their historic 1/1 double-hung sash. The single entry on the rear elevation has a replacement door, and both windows have security bars installed.

The c. 1924 auto garage has been significantly altered such that it does not convey a good sense of its own history. In particular, it has completely lost its garage bays which were its principal character-defining feature. They were enclosed and show no evidence of their form, design, or original function. The building is covered in a thick coat of cement stucco and has nonhistoric aluminum replacement windows. The form is compatible with other buildings on the street in form, massing, setback and materials, but it lacks considerable historic and architectural integrity and is a noncontributing resource in the district.

4. Walker Bennett Dry Goods/Desel Boettcher Wholesale Grocery Warehouse
430A E. Fronton Street
1919
Contributing building, (5, 14, 29)

The warehouse building at 430A E. Fronton was built in 1919 by local contractor, Guadalupe Saenz for the Walker-Bennett Dry Goods Company. The building measures approximately 88 feet along its front (Fronton St.) elevation and about 120 feet deep on the lot. It is connected to 430B E. Fronton via a party wall on its west side. The building has load-bearing brick walls with a thin application of stucco, a raised concrete foundation, and a flat roof. Both the front (Fronton St.) and rear elevations have symmetrical stepped parapet walls.

The front elevation has a raised loading dock and porch that spans about two-thirds of the façade. The dock has a thick concrete deck supported by concrete piers, and a short flight of concrete steps at either end. A flat canopy supported by tension rods shelters the dock. Several lally poles were added to the porch for additional canopy support. In the center of the front elevation is a corrugated metal overhead bay door. The opening may have contained an original pedestrian entrance to the building but it has been replaced by this nonhistoric door. At the eastern end of the front elevation is another double pedestrian entry with two non-historic, but compatible doors and exterior metal security doors. An original transom has been infilled with painted plywood but it is clearly identifiable from its size, shape, and position above the doors. The front elevation also has five small segmental-arch clerestory windows. Two are positioned over the loading dock canopy and three are grouped at the western end of the elevation. All of the windows have been infilled, but their original segmental-arch headers and forms are clearly evident.

The east side elevation originally had nine rectangular segmental-arch windows spaced at regular intervals and set about mid-point of the wall. Four are infilled but visible, and five retain their original shape but contain replacement sash. A nonhistoric corrugated metal overhead bay door is located at the south end of the elevation; the wood-framed opening may date to the historic period when trucking became more common. An original brick chimney is visible above the roof line. The west side elevation extends beyond the end of the small building at 430B E. Fronton. This side also had several windows but all have been infilled. The rear elevation contains an overhead bay door in the center of the façade and five segmental-arch clerestory windows, only one of which has been infilled with brick.

The original building was likely painted or stuccoed upon construction to protect the low-fire brick from moisture. All segmental-arch and rectangular windows in the building date to the original construction in 1919. The building is a good example of a common, early twentieth century vernacular building type in the lower Rio Grande region. It is made of handmade brick, has a flat roof with low brick parapet walls and features segmental-arch windows, all of which are character-defining features of commercial and utilitarian buildings of this type. Despite the infilling of a number of windows, the building's original form, massing, design, and most of its materials, are evident and it retains sufficient integrity to contribute to the district.

5. Brownsville Fruit & Vegetable Company Warehouse
454 E. Fronton Street
c. 1953-1959
Contributing building, (Photos 5, 15, 30)

The Brownsville Fruit & Vegetable Company Warehouse is located on the west corner of Fronton and E. 5th Streets. The building has CMU walls, a tall, raised concrete foundation and a "flat" (very low-pitched) roof with low, unadorned parapets on the front and rear elevations. It was built in two stages, beginning in about 1953 and completed in 1959. The 1953 volume was a rectangular warehouse that spanned the rear of the two lots and faced south toward the railroad. It has a frame core, CMU walls, and a rear loading dock on its south elevation that provided access to the rail spurs. In 1959, the warehouse was extended to Fronton Street via an addition on its north elevation. Today the building measures approximately 100 feet along its front (Fronton St.) elevation, and approximately 106 feet deep on the lot. It was the last historic grocery warehouse in the district and its completion marks the end of the period of significance.

The front (north) elevation faces Fronton Street. It has four bays that are separated by narrow exposed concrete columns. The three bays at the west end of the building are of equal size and the easternmost bay along E. 5th Street is slightly wider. The two center bays both contain loading bay doors with concrete

headers and sliding corrugated metal doors. The doors once had canopies above them but only the hardware remains. Although the front of the building does not have a projecting loading dock, the raised foundation puts the bottom of the bay door openings at truck level. The western bay does not contain door or window openings. The slightly wider easternmost bay contains a pedestrian entrance at the corner. It has a small entry porch with concrete steps, a raised concrete landing, metal pipe railings, and a flat roof. The single entrance at the porch has a non-historic door and outer security door. The section of wall next to the entrance appears to have originally had a loading bay door or larger window opening that was later infilled and replaced with two small horizontal window openings with aluminum windows. The entire bay has a non-historic application of stucco over its CMU walls.

The building's long west and east side elevations are windowless. The rear (south) elevation has exposed CMU walls divided by exposed concrete columns like those found on the front elevation. The columns create four bays of roughly equal width and a narrow fifth bay at the eastern end. Spanning the rear elevation is a projecting concrete loading dock with a wide concrete ramp. On the loading dock are two bay doors, a small one that may have originally been a pedestrian entry, and a large one with a tall corrugated metal bay door that slides on an exterior-mounted track. The rear elevation contains no windows.

Although the building was constructed in two phases and part of the front (Fronton Street) elevation has been altered by a thick coat of stucco and the enclosure of a loading bay, the building retains its historic massing, roof form, materials, and fenestration to a sufficient degree that it contributes to the district. From the rear, its intact CMU construction, parapet wall, loading bays and alignment with the freight line convey a good sense of Brownsville's continued role in packing and shipping local agricultural products into the mid-twentieth century.

6. Walker-Craig Wholesale Grocery Warehouse
504 E. Fronton Street
c. 1917
Contributing building, (Photos 9, 16, 31)

The Walker-Craig Wholesale Grocery Warehouse is a large warehouse at the corner of E. Fronton and E. 5th Streets. It has a footprint measuring approximately 150 feet wide and 120 feet deep on the lot. When constructed in about 1917, it was the largest building on this stretch of Fronton Street. The building has load-bearing brick walls, a raised concrete foundation, and a flat roof. Unlike most other buildings on the street, the decorative parapet here is found on the side elevations rather than the front or rear elevations, which is more typical. Windows and doors are a mix of segmented-arch and rectangular openings.

The Fronton Street (north) elevation has a partial-width loading dock and porch that spans the eastern portion of the façade. The east end of the porch extends several feet out from the raised foundation to provide access to a pedestrian entry, then widens to become a deeper loading dock across the rest of its span. Concrete stairs are located at either end, and the porch and dock are enclosed with metal pipe railings that were added later. A flat wood canopy covers the porch and dock. The single entry near the east end of the façade has a segmental-arch door opening, a historic wood paneled door with a single light, and a historic outer wood security door. A single loading bay door opens off the loading dock. The western portion of the Fronton Street elevation has one loading bay door and four small, segmental-arch clerestory windows. The parapet along this elevation is low and unadorned. The west side elevation faces 5th Street.

At the northern end of the 5th Street elevation is a glass-block infilled, segmental-arch window and evidence of an infilled entry. The rest of the elevation contains one loading bay door and five small, segmental-arch clerestory windows. The east side elevation has several irregularly-spaced segmental-arch and rectangular windows that have been infilled with plywood and four small arched clerestory windows. At the southern end of this elevation is a concrete loading dock and large loading bay door. Both side elevations have stepped parapets. The rear, railroad-facing elevation has one large loading bay door, two small loading doors, four arched clerestory windows, and a low unadorned parapet.

The resource exhibits nearly all of the character-defining features common to early twentieth century vernacular brick commercial buildings and warehouses of the lower Rio Grande border region. It is built of locally made brick, with a flat roof and stepped parapets, segmental-arch windows, and a broad, covered porch on the front, pedestrian side of the building. Though some windows have been infilled with glass block, most are merely covered with security grilles and are easily visible. The building has a thin coat of paint that reveals the original brick and fenestration. It retains several original exterior doors and interior features including glass and wire skylights, structural wood posts and supporting wood braces, and the historic company safe. Its rear elevation is aligned to the former railroad tracks. Furthermore, though some openings have been modified, the nonhistoric additions do not detract from its historic appearance. The building is an excellent example of its type with a high degree of historic and architectural integrity. It conveys a strong sense of its historic ties to early twentieth century commerce and transportation in Brownsville and is a contributing resource in the district.

7. McNair Storage Building
534 E. Fronton Street
c. 1974
Non-contributing building, (Photo 17)

The McNair Storage Building is a modern, pre-manufactured metal warehouse at the corner of Fronton and E. 6th Streets. Its footprint is approximately 100 feet square. The building sits on a concrete slab and has corrugated metal walls and a low-pitched gabled metal roof. In the center of the front (Fronton St.) elevation is a cantilevered metal canopy that shelters two single pedestrian entries with plain wood doors. The front elevation has a small overhead bay door, and a tall, wide bay door that appears large enough for semi trucks. The side and rear elevations are windowless. One additional small overhead bay door is found on the 6th Street (east) side of the building, and two bay doors are in the center of the rear elevation.

The metal storage building is non-historic. It was constructed around 1974, outside the district's period of significance and is, therefore, a noncontributing resource in the district.

8. Consumers Ice & Cold Storage
600 block E. Fronton Street
c. 1909, altered c. 1980
Non-contributing building, (Photos 8, 18, 32)

The Consumers Ice & Cold Storage building (now part of the E. de la Garza, Inc. Wholesale Grocers complex) is located on the corner of Fronton and E. 6th Streets. The building consists of two parts—the original Consumers Ice & Cold Storage ice plant building, which was built about 1909 at the rear of the lot along a railroad spur, and a large c. 1980 metal building that encompassed the earlier building and doubled its size. The original building is visible at the rear (south) elevation and in the rear section of the 6thStreet (west) side elevation. The original refrigerated ice and cold storage building was set far back on

the lot and fronted onto the railroad spur. It was about 140 feet long and about 50 feet deep along 6th Street.

It has load-bearing brick walls with wide brick pilasters and segmental-arch window openings, all of which have been infilled with brick. The brick walls are covered with cement coating in several places. The c. 1980 building volume is essentially a large front addition, but its low-pitched, side-gabled roof extends to cover the roof of the historic building. The non-historic front volume has corrugated metal walls, a raised concrete foundation, and two loading bays near the end of its front (Fronton St.) elevation. A single pedestrian entry at the center of the front elevation is accessed by a set of concrete stairs with metal pipe railings.

Though part of the building dates to the earliest history of the district, its c. 1970 metal addition dominates the site and detracts significantly from the historic building which is only partly exposed on the secondary 6th Street (west) and rear elevations. The building retains integrity of location and association, but lacks integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. It is therefore a noncontributing resource in the district.

9. E. de la Garza Grocery Warehouse
634 E. Fronton Street
c. 1924; additions c. 1940, c. 1951-1956, c. 1980
Non-contributing building, (Photos 4, 8, 19, 33-34; Map 7)

The E. de la Garza Grocery Warehouse is located at the corner of E. Fronton and E. 7th Street and occupies approximately half a city block. It measures approximately 160 feet across and 98 feet deep. The building represents numerous building campaigns that occurred between c. 1924 and c. 1980. Because of the various additions, the one-story warehouse has both flat and very low-pitched roofs and as a mix of exterior building materials. The warehouse sits on a raised concrete foundation that extends to become a shallow loading dock across most of the front (Fronton St.) elevation. A metal canopy supported by lally poles shelters the dock. The original, c. 1924 building volume is about 48 feet wide; it is located near the center of the block. It has an unusual asymmetrical stepped parapet on both its front and rear elevations. The original volume has brick walls, one loading bay door, and an offset single entry flanked by two rectangular windows. One of the original wood 1/1 double-hung sash windows remains. The rear elevation has one small loading bay. The original volume is attached to the Consumer's Ice & Cold Storage warehouse next door via a party wall.

The central section of the warehouse is also about 48 feet wide. It was constructed in two phases—the rear section at the back of the lot was built between 1930 and 1949 as an addition to the 1924 warehouse and the front section along Fronton Street was added in 1956. The rear addition is constructed of CMU sheathed in stucco. When built, this volume was set back about 40 feet from E. Fronton Street and had a full-façade wood porch across its front. Subsequent building campaigns covered both of its sides and primary (front) façade. Today, only the rear wall with its plain parapet and single loading bay is visible. The front section was built in 1956 as a cold storage unit. Built of CMU, it rises several feet higher than both the rear addition and the adjacent c. 1924 volume. When completed, it bridged the gap between the original de la Garza warehouse and a 1951-1953 addition. The front elevation has a single loading bay door that opens onto the building's covered loading dock. It has no other fenestration. A banner sign with the words "E. de la Garza Inc., Wholesale Grocers" is displayed across the top wall above the metal canopy.

Between 1951 and 1953, a second, much larger CMU addition measuring about 58 feet across was built at the east end of the building, along 7th Street. Its CMU walls are clad in stucco and corrugated metal. The side of the earlier (first) addition was opened to provide interior passage into the rear half of the new addition. Because the building occupies a corner lot, this addition is visible on three sides. The front (Fronton St.) portion contains one wide bay door and a single pedestrian entry. The building's loading dock has a set of concrete stairs at this end of the building. The addition's E. 7th Street (east) and rear additions have small, evenly-spaced windows set high on the wall. In about 1980, a new low-pitched, side-gabled metal roof was installed over the entire addition and the CMU walls were partially encased in corrugated metal siding, from about midway on the wall to the top of the new roof.

Due to its numerous additions and nonhistoric materials, the warehouse does not convey significance. In particular, the addition of a modern metal roof and large expanses of corrugated metal siding detract greatly from the historic brick and stucco warehouse. The metal-clad addition overwhelms the earlier building volumes and reduces the warehouse's overall integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling. It is therefore a noncontributing resource in the district.

10. Nabisco Wholesale Grocery Warehouse
720 E. Fronton Street
1926
Contributing building, (Photos 3, 20-21)

The Nabisco Wholesale Grocery Warehouse is a Mission Revival style building with painted brick and stuccoed walls, a shaped parapet, and clay tile ornamental features. It is one of the few architect-designed buildings in the district. In 1926, San Benito businessman Brown White hired architect William Doty Van Siclen to design a grocery warehouse for his lessee, Nabisco (the National Biscuit Company). Van Siclen enjoyed a successful career working largely in San Jose, California, Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, before coming to Brownsville about 1925. He started his career designing Queen Anne style houses in the 1890s, but became an early proponent of Spanish and Italian architectural motifs in the Pacific Northwest. These motifs continued to inform his work in Brownsville and elsewhere in the lower Rio Grande region. Van Siclen designed a number of other small commercial buildings, clubhouses, apartments, and residential properties in the city. Van Siclen continued to work in Brownsville until his death in 1951.[5] The Nabisco warehouse was one of Van Siclen's first Brownsville commissions, described in a contemporary newspaper article as a "Spanish type." S. W. McKenzie was the contractor for the project (*Houston Post-Dispatch*, September 2, 1926).

The Nabisco warehouse is one of the smallest warehouses in the district, measuring approximately 50 feet wide x 120 feet deep. It has a raised concrete foundation that extends from the front of the building to become a full-façade porch. The porch has a flat wood canopy supported by five lally poles; in between the poles is a non-historic metal balustrade. At each corner of the porch is an inset set of concrete steps. The front elevation is symmetrical, with two storefronts and an ABA arrangement. The center bay contains two entrances that are spaced a short distance apart. The door on the east has a historic paneled, single-light door and sidelight. The entrance on the west has an infilled door and sidelight. The outer bays contain the storefront windows, each consisting of two large, rectangular multi-light window openings

[5] "William Doty Van Siclen," *Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation*, accessed November 3, 2017, https://dahp.wa.gov/william-doty-van-siclen; "Eitel Building," Wikipedia.org, accessed November 3, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eitel_Building; "Exploring San Jose Landmarks," Continuity, accessed November 2, 2017, http://preservation.org/newsletters/fall2012.pdf .

with metal casements. Its decorative features include a stuccoed parapet, which has a curved, Mission-style central section with the date "1926" in relief and a decorative coping. Two ornamental urn-like projections extend from each end of the central section. Below them are narrow vertical strips that help frame the section. The flat outer sections of parapet are each trimmed with clay tiles. A stringcourse separates the parapet from the wall below.

On the 7th Street (west) elevation is a wide concrete loading dock that spans the central portion of the wall. It is sheltered by a flat canopy with lally poles. One historic overhead bay door is located on the loading dock, and a small window opening is located north of the dock near the building's corner. At the south end of this elevation is what appears to be an infilled non-historic opening. The building's rear elevation has two loading bay doors and a short section of wooden loading dock. Though constructed and counted separately, the east elevation is internally connected to Resource 11 next door. The adjacent building is set back on its lot and so a portion of this building's windowless southeast elevation is visible.

Despite its minor alterations, the building retains a high level of architectural integrity and conveys a good sense of its historic Mission Revival design. It is a contributing resource in the historic district.

11. Warehouse
700 block E. Fronton Street
c. 1912; altered c. 1990
Non-contributing building, (Photo 21)

The warehouse building in the 700 block of E. Fronton was constructed as a wood frame building with metal walls dating to c.1912. Around 1990, it was re-sheathed on its north and east elevations with new metal siding and a new metal roof. It has a footprint measuring approximately 48 feet across and 80 feet deep. It may have been internally connected to the adjacent warehouse at 720 E. Fronton Street at that time. Its front elevation is set back about 30 feet from the front elevation of that next-door building. The storage building sits on a concrete foundation and has a concrete driveway in front. The front-gabled roof has two roof pitches on its west side where it connects to 720 E. Fronton. In the west corner of the front elevation is a flat-roofed metal canopy that shelters one loading bay door and a single pedestrian entry.

Though the original building dates to the period of significance, no evidence of its early frame construction and original metal cladding is visible. Its original appearance has been entirely obscured by the application of new metal siding, a new metal roof, and stucco on the rear (south) elevation. Its original roof form and pitch and fenestration are unknown. The front porch is a modern addition. Because the building lacks integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling, it is therefore, a noncontributing resource in the district.

12. Ullmann, Stern & Krausse Grocery Warehouse/Alamo Iron Works Factory and Warehouse
730 E. Fronton Street
1912; office c. 1925; enlarged & remodeled c. 1940
Contributing building, (Photos 3, 22, 35-36; Figure 3; Map 8)

The Ullmann, Stern & Krausse/Alamo Iron Works Warehouse is a large building at the corner of E. Fronton and E. 8th Streets. The building has overall dimensions of approximately 100 feet across and 120 feet deep, but is comprised of three distinct sections that represent three major building campaigns. The original building volume was constructed of local handmade brick in 1912. A freestanding two-story

brick building was constructed at the corners of E. Fronton and 8th Streets about 1925; it was later incorporated into the warehouse.

The original building was about 100 feet across and 74 feet deep, and was built at the rear of the lot near the railroad spur. The rear (south), east, and west elevations are still visible and have a high level of integrity. The main building volume is one story in height and has load-bearing brick walls, a flat roof with low parapet, and a raised concrete foundation. The west side elevation was once connected to a demolished neighboring building, so it is windowless and devoid of decorative detail. Both the rear and east side elevations, however, have highly decorative matching brick friezes at parapet level. Each frieze consists of a row of brick dentils above narrow brick stringcourses, and pendant-like, corbelled brick details at each corner. The decorative brickwork and stylistic motif makes this one of the more noteworthy buildings in the district, distinguishable from the more utilitarian warehouses and factories.

The rear of the building originally had a single, full-façade loading dock, but it was replaced by two small docks with concrete ramps at either end of the elevation. The ramps lead to two original loading bays with original wood overhead doors and non-historic metal security screen doors. At the center of this elevation was another loading bay that was infilled. Above the doors are seven evenly-spaced clerestory windows with brick sills, original fenestrations, and replacement windows. Each window has two single-light sash, one of which appears to be fixed and the other operable. On the east side elevation is a single pedestrian entry accessed by a set of metal stairs, and a loading bay door with a flat metal awning. Between the doors is a rectangular window opening that has been infilled with glass block.

Circa 1925, when Alamo Iron Works purchased the site, a two-story, free-standing brick building was built in front of the 1912 warehouse, at the west corner of E. Fronton and E. 8th Streets. Its footprint was small, measuring only approximately 20 feet square. The building was originally constructed as a garage with storage. About 1940, the warehouse was enlarged to occupy the entire lot. During that remodel, two-story section received a rear addition, enlarging its footprint to about 20 feet long and 46 feet deep and connecting it to the 1912 building as an office associated with Alamo Ironworks.

Much of its interior office partitions and finishes from the period are intact. Next to the office, a one-story warehouse addition was constructed along Fronton Street, connecting to the west elevation of the 1912 volume and the west elevation of the two-story volume and enlarging the building to its current dimensions. The new sections were built of brick. The c. 1940 additions and office remodel have a consistent utilitarian appearance, with clean lines and no ornamentation. Their flat roofs have simple low parapets with plain copings, and the several large window openings found on each floor have concrete sills and no trim.

The east elevation (of the two-story office volume) has four windows on the second floor and three windows and a single entry door with sidelight on the first floor. The door is accessed by set of metal stairs and is sheltered by a flat metal canopy. On the Fronton Street (north) elevation, the two-story volume has two windows upstairs and two downstairs, and the one-story warehouse addition has five irregularly-spaced windows. The west side of the addition has two window openings. All windows have been infilled with glass block to deter vandalism but the fenestration pattern is intact and the exterior has been painted. Despite this and other minor alterations, the building, its two-story office section and all additions were built during the period of significance and represent the historic evolution of the building.

The building retains sufficient historic and architectural integrity to contribute to the district. Built in 1912, it was the first of the large load-bearing brick grocery warehouses that came to characterize the

freight yard district in the early twentieth century. It displays aspects of common brick commercial and utilitarian buildings of the border during that time with its handmade brick construction, flat roof, low parapet and decorative brick work. Its warehouse interior is largely intact with a voluminous open space, concrete floors and floor-to-ceiling wood roof supports and wood braces. Though not the first warehouse in the district, it is the oldest extant warehouse that retains its original appearance. It retains its architectural and historic integrity of design, materials, feeling, association, setting, location and workmanship to a good degree and conveys a strong sense of history. It has strong historic associations with the freight lines and the development of the wholesale grocery and manufacturing businesses in Brownsville. Thus, the building is a contributing building in the district.

13. Alamo Iron Works Supply Warehouse
800 block E. Fronton Street
c. 1940
Contributing building, (Photo 23)

The Alamo Iron Works Supply Warehouse is a large steel-framed building with a "barn-like" appearance. It is composed of a tall central section flanked by two one-story shed wings that are flush with the central section's front façade. The building sits on a slightly raised concrete foundation and its walls and roof are clad in its original corrugated metal siding. The central building volume measures approximately 66 feet across and 86 feet deep, and each of the side wings are approximately 46 feet across and 62 feet deep. The central section is two stories in height and has a front-gabled roof and a wide loading bay door on its front elevation. Two concrete ramps lead to the bay door. A non-historic, metal-clad canopy shelters the loading ramps and door.

The rear elevation of the central building volume is aligned close to the freight spur. It projects beyond the plane of the side wings; wide, swinging bay doors are located on each side of the central volume where the wings intersect. The side wings are each one story in height and have steeply-pitched shed roofs. On the front elevation, both wings have two horizontal window openings located high on the walls. The west wing has a loading bay door between the windows. The east wing has a single pedestrian entry at its eastern corner. The west wing has one loading bay door on its rear elevation. The east wing also has a loading door on its rear elevation, and appears to have a non-historic overhead bay door and small shed-roofed addition on its east elevation. The warehouse is set about 70 feet back from Fronton Street and has a parking and loading area in front.

The building is associated with Alamo Iron Works, a major metal machinery and implement business founded in San Antonio with branches opened in South and West Texas during the historic period. The building appears very much as it did when built about 1940, when the company expanded its operations to meet wartime demand. The building's metal construction and lack of embellishment places it in the context of the more utilitarian structures such as cotton gins and grain mills that lined the railroad tracks in the early 20th century. It possesses good overall historic and architectural integrity, retaining its original form, roof pitch and configuration, siding materials and some mechanical equipment such as pullies and hasp-hung bay doors. It is therefore a contributing resource in the district.

14. McNair Shirt Factory
759 E. Fronton Street
1910; enlarged c. 1933; remodeled and enlarged c. 1945
Contributing building, (Photos 6, 10, 24; Figure 23; Map 9)

The McNair Shirt Factory building is a large factory and warehouse located at the north corner of E. Fronton and E. 8th Streets. Portions of this building date to 1910, when a frame grocery warehouse building measuring about 48 feet across and 56 feet deep was constructed at the front (E. Fronton Street) portion of the lot. The shallow front-gabled roof is part of the 1910 building, as are the interior framing members and several wood double-hung windows that are only visible from the interior. About 1933, the original warehouse building was enlarged by the addition of about 20 additional feet on the rear. The building's current appearance, however, dates to c. 1945 when it was enlarged and remodeled by the McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company as the business expanded in the early postwar era.

The brick building contributes to the district based on its c. 1945 appearance which subsumed earlier incarnations of the building. The original volume was clad in brick, covering the original windows. A decorative parapet was added and a rear (north) addition was constructed. The result was a larger building with a cohesive architectural design and no exterior trace of the 1910 building. The building's current overall footprint with the addition is approximately 48 feet across and 120 feet deep on the lot. A raised concrete foundation places the building's floor level about a foot and a half above grade.

The front (south) elevation is composed of a modified A-B-B-A pattern with a single window on one side, a single door on the other side, and two paired windows between them. Each window consists of wood 2/2 double-hung sash, a brick sill, and non-historic metal security screening. The two sets of paired windows in the center of the elevation have narrow wood mullions between them. The entry door is trimmed with simple molding and accessed by a short set of historic concrete stairs. A non-historic, flat metal canopy held by metal tension rods covers the entry. Above the windows and doors are concrete headers. The front elevation has a decorative stepped parapet at the roof that is tallest in its center and steps down to the outside edges. The parapet is trimmed with a metal coping.

The long east side elevation faces E. 8th Street. It is organized into two sections: the south two-thirds of the building has five evenly-spaced, paired 2/2 windows, while the rear (north) third has four single, 2/2 windows and one small bay door in an ABAAA arrangement. All windows have brick sills, and the windows and door have concrete headers. A painted concrete band runs along the upper part of the wall above the windows. The length of the band corresponds to the length of the building after its first addition about 1933. The rear (north) elevation faces an alley and has two small windows and a bay door. Their sills and headers do not match those found on the front and side elevations and it appears that they were added later. There is evidence that the rear elevation once had taller or higher windows that were infilled.

The building retains strong historic associations with the McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company which grew to become the largest private employer south of San Antonio by the 1950s and remains in the family today. It reflects the continuing importance of the district to Brownsville's economy in the early postwar era. The building also retains substantial architectural integrity to its c. 1945 construction campaign which is within the period of significance. Because it retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, association and feeling to that date, it is a contributing resource in the district.

15. McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company
749 E. Fronton Street
c. 1933, enlarged 1945
Contributing building, (Photos 6, 10, 25, 37-38; Figure 23; Map 9)

The McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company building is a one-story factory and warehouse on the north side of E. Fronton Street. The building measures about 44 feet long along Fronton Street and about 120 feet deep. It has brick walls, a flat roof with low parapet, and a concrete foundation that raises its floor only a few inches above grade. The building replaced a c. 1910 dwelling associated with the Sugarman warehouse (Resource 14) on the site in 1933. It shares party walls with the earlier 1910 McNair Shirt Factory building to the east and with the later McNair Clothing Co. factory built c. 1954 to the west. Only the front and rear elevations of the building are visible. Though the three buildings are now internally connected, they were built in separate construction campaigns independent from one another as evidenced by the different designs of their principal facades (E. Fronton Street).

The building's front (south) façade is a good example of an early- to mid-20th century interpretation of the "Border Brick Style" as recognized and defined by architectural historian Stephen Fox, with a symmetrical composition, flush entrance, and decorative cornice and frieze. The façade has three bays in an ABA arrangement, with a central entry flanked by windows. Between each bay is a brick pilaster consisting of quoin-like rectangular shapes in relief—these are set at the same plane as the upper section of wall at parapet level, while the entry and windows are slightly recessed. The entrance has a single door accessed by three low concrete steps, two sidelights, and a flat metal awning supported by tension rods. The door has been replaced and the sidelights are infilled with glass block.

The upper section of wall transitions to the slightly recessed entrance via brick corbelling between the pilasters, sidelights, and door opening. This decorative detail creates the illusion that there are narrow pilasters with capitals between each building feature. To either side of the central entry is a set of three rectangular windows with a shared brick sill and 2/2 wood double-hung sash. The window type and arrangement is similar to those in bungalows of the period. Brick corbeling is found between each window near the top of the window openings. The upper sash of each window has been painted and the windows are protected by non-historic metal security screens. In the upper section of wall, a brick cornice with brick soldiers and headers runs along the edge of the parapet. Below this are several rows of corbeled bricks with dentils, and still lower is a recessed brick stringcourse.

An addition was added to the rear of the building about 1945, when the adjacent factory was enlarged. Both buildings extended to the alley at the rear of their lots. The rear elevation faces north into an alley. Its wall is constructed from large bricks or hollow clay tiles with the word MEXICO stamped in their recessed centers. The rear elevation has four infilled clerestory windows and one horizontal window opening with a brick sill and two wide, 2/2 sash. The building is connected to the McNair Shirt Factory (Resource 14) via interior passages that were likely opened in 1945 when rear additions were added to both buildings.

The building has strong historic associations with the growth of the McNair family clothing manufacturing business in the early postwar period. It is an interesting example of the "Border Brick Style" as applied to a rather domestic form and industrial use. The building retains a high level of architectural integrity to its original c.1933 construction and its historic period rear addition. Because of its strong historic associations with commerce and its good integrity, the building is a contributing resource in the historic district.

16. McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company Factory
739 E. Fronton Street
c. 1954
Contributing building, (Photos 6, 10, 26, 39; Figure 23; Map 9)

The McNair Clothing Co. Factory building is a two-story building located on the north side of Fronton Street in the center of the block between E. 7th and E. 8th Streets. Its footprint measures approximately 76 feet across and 120 feet deep on the lot. The building has a stripped-down Modern design with minimal stylistic detail. The walls are painted concrete block with a decorative course pattern: the majority of the walls have a simple running bond with thick blocks, but bands of narrow blocks are placed between the bonds in certain locations to create horizontal lines similar to stringcourses. The building has a flat roof, a low parapet with a plain coping, and a concrete foundation that extends only a few inches above grade. The building's rectangular window openings have sloped concrete sills and no trim. All windows are original and have four stacked lights: the top and bottom lights are fixed while the center lights comprise an operable awning-style sash. The modern design of the building is evident in the clean lines and lack of superfluous embellishment associated with postwar architecture.

The symmetrical front (south) elevation has three bays in an ABA arrangement. The central bay has two single entrance doors on the first floor, located side by side about two feet apart. The doors are accessed by a single wide concrete step. Above the doors is a flat metal awning supported by tension rods. Above the doors on the second floor are two windows. The outer bays on the front elevation each have three window openings on each floor. Several "stringcourses" of narrow blocks alternate with the thicker running bonds on this elevation. These decorative bonds are located at the level of the first-floor window openings. The west side of the building has a single loading bay door and no windows.

A concrete loading dock extends from the west side of the building, and a concrete ramp leads downhill from Fronton Street to the loading dock to facilitate the loading of trucks at the correct level. The dock is sheltered by a non-historic metal canopy. Approximately halfway up the west elevation wall is two additional decorative rows of narrow blocks. The building's rear elevation faces the alley. It has an irregular fenestration pattern, with several single entrance doors on the first floor, several irregularly-spaced windows, and a second-floor door that accesses a fire escape ladder. The rear doors have small sheet metal awnings. The east elevation is connected to 749 E. Fronton next door via a party wall.
This building is associated with the clothing manufacturing business established and developed by the McNair family. It represents the company's growth in the early postwar era when it became the largest private employer south of San Antonio. The building is a good example of a modern mid-century warehouse in the district. It retains its historic architectural features to a high degree and contributes to the district.

Integrity

Overall, the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District retains a high level of historic and architectural integrity. The freight yard was established on a flat, flood-prone landscape at the edge of a marginal neighborhood of small frame houses and thatch-roofed *jacales* in 1904 upon the arrival of the first railroad to Brownsville. Among the first resources were the freight depot and depot office. In the 1910s and 1920s the adjacent blocks of E. Fronton Street developed with one-story masonry warehouses and factories. Others followed in the 1930s through the 1950s until the district (400-800 blocks of E. Fronton) was built out with warehouses and factories. The district today appears very much as it did in the period of significance, 1909-1959. It is composed of sixteen resources, eleven, or 69%, of which are

contributing properties in the district. Of the five noncontributing resources, one was built after the period of significance and the remaining three are historic buildings that have been substantially altered.

Most of the historic warehouses and factories retain their character-defining features, form, design, materials and fenestration patterns. In particular, the buildings generally have long masonry walls, flat roofs with low parapets, rows of regularly spaced segmental-arch or rectangular windows, double loading bay doors, broad covered front porches and lack of ornamentation with the exception of minor brick detailing at the cornice or the corners. Though not all elements are present in every resource, they are sufficient to convey the common building traditions, purpose and aesthetics that define the historic district. In addition, noncontributing resources in the district maintain the historic patterns established in the first half of the twentieth century.

Alignment to the railroad tracks is a significant factor in defining the district. Warehouses and factories on the south side of E. Fronton Street maintain strict alignment to the railroad tracks, even though the rails have been removed. In fact, it is from the vantage point of the freight line looking back at the properties that the district is most evident. Original design features and materials that may have been removed or covered on the front facades can be seen from the rear. More significantly, the district's overall cohesion and integrity is clearly conveyed in the row of closely-spaced flat walls and double loading bay doors that attest to its historic relationship with the railroad and its importance to the growth and development of Brownsville in the early twentieth century.

The district retains a high level of integrity of association; all of its resources – regardless of contributing status – convey its history as a freight shipping, warehouse, and factory zone through their physical appearance and continuing function. All are in their original locations and the setting has not changed significantly since the end of the historic period; it remains a warehouse and factory zone set between the undeveloped floodplain and a scattering of small frame dwellings.

District boundaries were established to include the largest concentration of contributing properties associated with the freight yard and commercial warehouse and factory development from 1909 to 1959. These resources are concentrated in the 400-800 blocks of the south side of E. Fronton Street, and include 739-759 E. Fronton, on the north side of the street. To the north are small frame dwellings with no clear association with the commercial freight or factory development. To the east, the building at 801 E. Fronton has been excluded from the district. It is a historic factory building that has been severely altered. The district includes the metal warehouse at 800 E. Fronton associated with Alamo Iron Works but excludes the adjacent vacant lot and vacant areas beyond that. To the south is a large vacant lot that was once occupied by an oil tank farm. Other wholesale grocery warehouses and resources associated with the freight line once occupied the 100-300 blocks of E. Fronton but they have either been removed or are altered to such an extent that they no longer convey significance.

Inventory of Properties
The following table is an inventory of properties within the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District. Resources are identified by site numbers which are keyed to the district map.

Resource #	Name	Address	Date of Construction/ Additions	Style / Type	Primary Materials	Contributing
1	St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Freight Depot	500 block E. Fronton	1912	Craftsman/Early 20th century Border Vernacular	Brick & Wood	Yes
2	St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Freight Depot Office	500 block E. Fronton	1911	Early 20th century Border Vernacular (2-part commercial)	Brick	Yes
3	Auto Garage	430B E. Fronton	c. 1924	No style	Brick	No – Altered Bays Infilled
4	Walker-Bennett Dry Goods Warehouse	430A E. Fronton	1919	Early 20th century Border Vernacular	Brick	Yes
5	Brownsville Fruit & Vegetable Co. Grocery Warehouse	454 E. Fronton	c. 1953/1959	No style	CMU & Stucco	Yes
6	Walker-Craig Wholesale Grocery Warehouse	504 E. Fronton	c. 1917	Early 20th century Border Vernacular	Brick	Yes
7	McNair Storage Bldg.	534 E. Fronton	c. 1974	No style	Metal	No – Age, Type
8	Consumers Ice/Cold Storage	600 block E. Fronton	c. 1909 /1980	Early 20th century Border Vernacular	Brick & Metal	No – Altered Metal Front Addition
9	E. de la Garza Grocery Warehouse	634 E. Fronton	1924 / 1951-1956/c. 1980	No Style	Brick & Metal	No – Altered Metal Additions
10	Nabisco Grocery Warehouse	720 E. Fronton	1926	Mission Revival	Brick & Stucco	Yes
11	Warehouse	700 block E. Fronton	c. 1912/1990	No style	Metal	No – Altered Metal Siding, and Roof

Resource #	Name	Address	Date of Construction	Style/Type	Primary Materials	Contributing
12	Ullmann/ Alamo Iron Works Warehouse	730 E. Fronton	1912/c. 1925/ c. 1940	Early 20th century Border Vernacular	Brick	Yes
13	Alamo Iron Works Warehouse	800 E. Fronton	c. 1940	No Style	Metal	Yes
14	McNair Shirt Factory	759 E. Fronton	1910 / c. 1933/ c. 1945	No Style	Brick	Yes
15	McNair Clothing Manufacturing Co.	749 E. Fronton	c. 1933 / 1945	Early 20th century Border Vernacular Style	Brick	Yes
16	McNair Clothing Manufacturing Co. Factory	739 E. Fronton	c. 1954	Modern Movement	Concrete block/ clay tile	Yes

Statement of Significance

The Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A, in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. The district is in a low-lying section of the original Brownsville townsite, within a few blocks of the Rio Grande which defines the international boundary with Mexico. The district consists of historic freight depot resources and a dozen historic grocery warehouses and factories built to access the freight lines in the 400-800 blocks of E. Fronton Street. The district derives its significance from its association with the railroad which connected Brownsville to outside markets for the first time in 1904, an occasion that launched a period of phenomenal agricultural development throughout the entire lower Rio Grande region in the early twentieth century. The district is also significant for its contributions to Brownsville's commercial development as a major shipping hub for locally-grown produce and as a center for manufacturing and distributing clothing and metal products. Fifteen of the districts' sixteen resources date to the period of significance which begins with the construction of the first resource in 1909 and continues through the completion of the last major grocery warehouse in 1959. Eleven resources retain their historic and architectural integrity and contribute to the district while five resources are considered noncontributing. One of those is a modern pre-manufactured metal building and four are historic resources that have been significantly altered since the period of significance. Though the contributing resources generally lack architectural style or distinction, they retain sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to express their historic construction and utilitarian function. Together they convey a strong sense of Brownsville's rise and development as a major transportation, shipping, and manufacturing center in the lower Rio Grande region of South Texas in the early twentieth century.

District Overview

The district consists primarily of early 20th century brick depot, warehouse and manufacturing buildings in the 400-800 blocks of E. Fronton Street and adjoining rail yards. The freight line extended to the lower Rio Grande in 1904 when the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company (St. L B & M) laid track to Brownsville, giving the city access to fast, reliable and inexpensive rail transportation to the rest of Texas and the outside world for the first time. Until then, agricultural and commercial development in the region had been severely limited by the time and expense of transporting local products across 160 miles of bad wagon road and chaparral to outside markets. The significant growth of agriculture that followed the railroad formed the basis of Brownsville's economy in the early twentieth century. The city became a major hub for shipping locally grown fruit and produce to outside markets and the 400-800 blocks of E. Fronton Street played a principal role in its success.

The first resource associated with the railroad was the original freight depot which was built in 1904 just after the railroad reached the city. Though the depot burned in 1911, it was replaced with a building with the same dimensions and materials by the following year (Resource 1). A freight depot office was also built along the track and was open by 1911 (Resource 2). Lumber yards and ice plants (Resource 8) were among the earliest commercial buildings erected on the freight line but as agriculture continued to grow in the region, large brick wholesale grocery warehouses and associated resources appeared along the tracks, fronting onto both the spur line and E. Fronton Street (Resources 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 12). In the 1920s, small factories sprang up in former warehouses where manufactured products could be shipped from the same freight lines (Resource 14). Though business slowed somewhat in the 1930s, at least one new factory was built in the district (Resource 15) and several businesses expanded their operations by

building new resources in the 1940s and 1950s (Resources 13 and 16). In 1959, the last of the large grocery warehouses was completed and the district was essentially built out at that time (Resource 5). The only nonhistoric resource is a pre-manufactured metal storage building associated with an existing business in the district (Resources 7). Today, the district is densely developed with the freight depot, depot office, and large brick warehouses and factories dating to the first half of the twentieth century when agriculture and manufacturing played a major role in Brownsville's economic development.

Historic Context

When the first passenger train steamed into Brownsville on the Fourth of July, 1904, it was met by a throng of cheering residents. Nearly the entire population of the city came out to greet it accompanied by a brass band, congratulatory speeches, and a fireworks display that lasted far into the night (Figures 4 and 5). The *Brownsville Daily Herald* reported that "When the train stopped, the fireworks began and the procession of vehicles headed by the band and the floats shooting off fireworks, wound its way to the center of the city. It was a combination celebration – the advent of the railroad and the 4th of July" (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, July 5, 1904: 1). The city had good reason to rejoice. Its leaders had long promised that rail transportation would transform the sleepy frontier outpost at the southernmost tip of the country into a modern, 20th century commercial hub with reliable and inexpensive access to outside markets and consumer goods (Figures 4-5).

Even its promoters could hardly have foreseen the enormity of the railroad's influence on Brownsville and the entire region of the lower Rio Grande on that day. That it would inspire agricultural development and stimulate commerce was expected. That it would help overturn the established land use patterns, business practices, and social and political institutions in place in the region since the Mexican War, however, was unforeseen.

In short, the railroad attracted outside investors who raised the capital to build modern irrigation systems on the Rio Grande transforming semi-arid ranchland into a vast network of irrigated truck farms and citrus groves. The tremendous influx of Midwestern farmers and businessmen overturned the existing social structure which was a blend of Anglo and Hispanic cultural traditions and class distinctions, to a more hierarchical system dominated by newcomers who considered themselves somehow superior to the local Hispanic population. They eschewed the almost feudal system that had prevailed in the region in which a small group of landowning *patrones* held sway over their *peones* and where "boss rule" dictated local politics. These newcomers established a new order that resulted in the break-up of the old haciendas for commercial farming, the replacement of boss rule for "good government" and the institution of ethnic segregation in the new towns.

But on the evening of July 4, 1904, those changes lay in the future. And for the time being, the future was new and bright. The headline on the front page of the newspaper that day read "Brownsville Born Again July 4" (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, July 7, 2004: 1).

The Lower Rio Grande Region of South Texas

The lower Rio Grande region of South Texas has a unique history stemming from the blending of Hispanic and Anglo cultures and traditions that took place within a 200-mile corridor that stretches along the river from Laredo to Brownsville, on the American side of the border, and from Nuevo Laredo to Matamoros, on the Mexican side of the border. Evidence of both cultures can be seen in the region's built environment, particularly in the brick domestic and commercial buildings constructed in border cities like

Brownsville and Laredo after the international boundary between the United States and Mexico was fixed along the Rio Grande at the conclusion of the Mexican War in 1848. Until that time, the architecture of the region was primarily a product of Spanish and Mexican building traditions as adapted to the climate and natural resources of the Rio Grande delta.

Before the arrival of the Spanish in the sixteenth century, South Texas was occupied by loosely-affiliated bands of native peoples collectively identified by scholars as Coahuiltecans. The Carrizo were among the largest subgroups and hey inhabited the lower Rio Grande at the time the Spanish first began exploring the region. They were a nomadic people who roamed the banks of the river in search of food, including rabbits and peccaries, mesquite beans and cactus. They established campsites at springs and other reliable water sources where they lived in huts made of mesquite limbs covered with thatch. Camps were generally only semi-permanent as tribes would move elsewhere when water or food ran out. Contact with the Spanish in the sixteenth century brought disaster to the Coahuiltecans as they succumbed to European diseases for which they had no immunity. Smallpox was especially deadly. Missionaries reported that by 1675, the disease had decimated entire villages in the region. By 1850, only a few small bands Carrizo remained on the banks of the Rio Grande. When they faded from existence they left only the remains of their campsites, along with some pottery shards and stone tools, as evidence of their existence in the region (Thompson in Sanchez, 1994: 19-20).

It was the Spanish who first built permanent buildings in the region of the lower Rio Grande when they established settlements along the south bank of the river in the mid-eighteenth century. Spanish explorers had passed through the territory as early as the sixteenth century. They mapped geographic features including the Rio Bravo (Rio Grande), and described the flora, fauna and native people, but made no attempts to settle the hostile landscape. Prompted by rumors of French incursions into its northern territories, the Spanish government authorized Jose de Escandon to lead an entrada into the region for establishing a permanent presence to deter the enemy. In 1747, Escandon led a party of colonists, soldiers and herds of cattle north to the Rio Grande. Along the way, he surveyed the land and deposited bands of colonists who built a series of *villas* (towns) and ranchos in present northern Mexico and South Texas.

On the lower Rio Grande, Escandon established a line of *villas* on the south bank of the river. These are the present Mexican towns of Reynosa, Mier, Camargo and Guerrero Viejo (formerly Revilla).[6] Land associated with the *villas* extended to the north side of the river where the colonists established *ranchos* where they grazed their cattle and sheep. The ranchos were not permanent settlements but probably had some shelters for the men who tended the herds. A few decades after Escandon left the Rio Grande, a small community emerged near the mouth of the river at present Matamoros. Like the earlier colonists, the settlers used the land across the river to graze stock and eventually established some semi-permanent ranching outposts consisting of a few huts in the vicinity of present Brownsville.

The first buildings were primitive shelters or *jacales* little more than the thatched huts of the Carrizo, but the settlers soon carved stone *sillares* (caliche blocks) from the arroyos and built more substantial fortified dwellings with flat *chipichil* (cement) roofs to retard fire, *canales* to drain water, and *troneras* (gun ports) for defense against the Lipan Apache and Comanche Indians who had moved into the region. Thus, a distinct building type with Spanish architectural roots, and local materials and features necessitated by its dangerous location on the frontier, was created in the villas and ranchos of the lower

[6] Spanish colonists later petitioned the government to established ranching headquarters that grew to become the first permanent settlements on the north side of the river, at present Laredo and Dolores (Viejo) (abandoned).

Rio Grande. This building type persisted throughout the region for more than 100 years, from about 1760 through the nineteenth century, and many examples still survive in the former Mexican *villas* on the south side of the river and at American ranching settlements like Rancho de los Corralitos and Rancho San Ygnacio on the north side.

In 1820, Mexico overthrew the Spanish government but life along the Rio Grande continued much as it had under Spain. They spoke the same language, practiced Catholicism, and maintained Spanish building and land use practices. Just at that time, however, the central government – first Spain, then Mexico – began encouraging Americans and Europeans to colonize Texas. Though many settled in East and Central Texas, few ventured into South Texas where Spanish-Mexican towns and ranches – as well as the culture and traditions – had long been established. When Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, its leaders assumed the southern boundary of the Republic followed the Rio Grande but they did little to enforce the concept and the inhabitants of the region did little to question the notion.

When the United States annexed Texas in February 1846, however, it was a direct challenge to the government of Mexico. President Polk, a strong proponent of Manifest Destiny, hurried to assert Texas' claim to the land between the Nueces and the Rio Grande and ordered General Zachary Taylor to take his army to the river. Taylor marched his army from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande, arriving on March 28, 1846. He quickly had an earthen fortress constructed on the north bank of the river. It faced the Mexican city of Matamoros and the Mexican military on the other side. Hostilities erupted and the war began. Taylor's army fought two battles near the fort before pushing deep into the Mexican interior (Thompson in Sanchez 1994: 40-43).

Ultimately, the Americans prevailed and won the Mexican War (1846-1848), thereby cementing its claim to the north bank of the Rio Grande. The earthworks were ultimately named Fort Brown, for American Major Jacob Brown who lost his life in the war. The outcome of the war ensured that the north bank of the river was under the protection – and control – of the United States. It also meant that its residents had become U.S. citizens while their neighbors across the river remained citizens of Mexico (Thompson in Sanchez, 1994: 42-46).

United States sovereignty over the region attracted hundreds of land developers, visionaries, entrepreneurs and outlaws to this remote outpost to try – or change – their luck on the border. Among the first and most successful were Richard King, Mifflin Kenedy, and Charles Stillman, who formed a steamboat company and contracted with the government to transport American troops and supplies up the Rio Grande during the war. After the war, they remained in South Texas where they established large ranches and continued their steamboat operation on the Rio Grande. Stillman set his sights on town building and quickly acquired large portions of the Jose Salvador de la Garza land grant where he laid out the town of Brownsville next to Fort Brown.[7] By December 1848, Stillman and his partners formed the Brownsville Town Company and commenced selling lots in the newly minted border town for up to $1,500 each. A month later, on January 13, 1849, Brownsville was chosen as the Cameron County seat, a designation that guaranteed its success from lot sales and development projects (*Handbook of Texas Online* "Brownsville").

[7] Other descendants contested the transaction in a long and protracted legal battle over the land's rightful ownership. Similar conflicting claims over land ownership in the former Mexican territory occurred up and down the Rio Grande for years; some have never been resolved.

Kenedy and King's steamboat operation traded with upriver communities that contributed greatly to Brownsville's growth in the 1850s. Within a few years, Brownsville replaced Matamoros as the center of trade – both legal and illegal – for much of northern Mexico. Numerous stores were built along the waterfront and a ferry was established to carry traders across the river for business in Matamoros. The town's initial success attracted more newcomers eager to "get in on the bottom floor" and by 1853, Brownsville had an estimated population of 3,500 residents. The town began to take form with houses, churches and schools built in the 1850s. By the outbreak of the Civil War, Brownsville had emerged as the only real city on the lower Rio Grande (*Handbook of Texas Online* "Brownsville").

According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, Brownsville's early buildings (1848-1865) reflected the "overlap of Spanish-Mexican Creole and Anglo-American building cultures" but were also influenced by the architecture of New Orleans which shared trade and transportation connections to the city. Brownsville buildings of the period commonly applied traditional Mexican brick architecture to Anglo-American building types (Fox 1995: 201-205). The forms were largely determined through the lens of the Americans who commissioned the projects but the Mexican brick masons used traditional materials and construction methods to execute those visions. They sometimes exhibited a vernacular "Mexican Creole" classicism in their block-like forms, flat or slightly sloped roofs, brick planar walls punctuated with regularly spaced windows and doors, full-height pilasters and parapets set with courses of ornamental molded brick detailed or arranged to recall classical architectural decoration (Figure 1). These building traditions continued to inform the city's architecture through the nineteenth century (Fox 1995: 201).

Brownsville continued to dominate trade in the region into the 1860s and especially during the Civil War when its location near the Gulf of Mexico and on the Rio Grande propelled the border city to the highest levels of international commerce after Union blockade efforts closed Confederate ports across the South. Known as the "backdoor" of the Confederacy, Brownsville played a strategic role in keeping lines open for shipping cotton and receiving supplies during the war. Farmers from as far away as Arkansas and Louisiana hauled their cotton overland by wagon to Brownsville where it was transferred onto boats along the riverfront. Flying under the Mexican flag, they carried the cargo down the Rio Grande and out to the Gulf where French and English ships were anchored offshore. Union forces anxious to avoid instigating a war with Mexico, grudgingly allowed them to pass. The cotton trade helped support the Confederate cause and made rich men of Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy, among others, who trafficked in cotton during the war (Wooldridge and Vezzetti 1996: 47; 54).

Cotton also played a role in the last land engagement of the Civil War which was fought at Palmito Hill, near the coast east of Brownsville, several weeks after General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. It has been said that Brownsville was so isolated that word of Lee's surrender had not yet reached the city and that is the reason the battle was fought. In fact, the Confederates were well-aware of the event but entered the fray in an effort to the stall federal forces as they marched toward Brownsville so that a fortune in contraband cotton could be ferried across the Rio Grande before it was confiscated by the Union army. The ruse was effective in delaying the federal takeover of city long enough to get the cotton to safety on the Mexican side of the border (Wooldridge and Vezzetti 1996: 54).

After the war, Brownsville lapsed into period of little growth and limited prospects for development. Brownsville saw virtually no increase in population during the 1870s. In the 1880s, ranching and trade picked up and the population increased by a little more than 1,000 people over the course of the decade. The city languished again in the 1890s (Fox, 1995: 211).

Despite its dismal development prospects, the city saw some slight improvements in communication and transportation in the latter part of the nineteenth century that brought it closer to the rest of the county. In 1871, Western Union ran telegraph line from Corpus Christi to Brownsville. In 1884, a stage line opened with regular passenger service between Brownsville and Alice, to the north, and connection on to Corpus Christi (Wooldridge and Vezzetti, 1996: 52). In 1876, George Brulay built the region's first irrigation system and began experimenting, first with cotton, and then with sugar cane on his plantation south of Brownsville (Wooldridge and Vezzetti, 1996: 50). His initial success inspired others to consider the potential for agricultural development with large-scale irrigation systems on the Rio Grande. The absence of rail transportation to carry crops to outside markets, however, remained an unsolved obstacle to the region's agricultural development.

Brownsville sorely needed a railroad if it was to become anything more than an isolated frontier town. Its business and civic leaders had long recognized that its location at the southernmost tip of the country severely limited its potential for growth, development and prosperity. It was simply too difficult, too expensive, and sometimes, too dangerous, to conduct business with a city so far removed from the modern world. That isolation became even more acute when railroad builder Uriah Lott laid track to the upriver city of Laredo, connecting to San Antonio on the north and the Mexican interior in 1881 (Thompson in Sanchez, 1994: 68). Laredo prospered as a link between the United States and Mexico while Brownsville drifted into the background. Even the river itself abandoned the city. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, increased demands from upriver communities left the river too shallow for safe, reliable passage and steamboat traffic ended on the Rio Grande. As the twentieth century dawned, Brownsville saw few prospects for improvement without rail transportation.

Bringing the Railroad to Brownsville

Two main factors combined to reverse Brownsville's prospects in the first decade of the 20th century: the advent of large-scale irrigation and the arrival of the first railroad. These two developments inspired spectacular town-building and agricultural development that transformed the sparsely settled ranchland of the lower Rio Grande region into a verdant agricultural landscape within a few short years. The effect of the railroad, in particular, was an astonishing impetus to land speculation. Parched range land in neighboring Hidalgo County that had been selling for twenty-five cents an acre in 1903, was selling for fifty dollars an acre in 1906, only two years after the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway arrived in Brownsville, and as much as $300 an acre by 1910 (*Handbook of Texas Online* "Rio Grande Valley"). In Cameron County, where Brownsville was the county seat, the population grew from just over 16,000 in 1900, to 77,540 in 1930 (*Handbook of Texas Online* "Brownsville").

The significance of rail transportation to the lower Rio Grande was tremendous. Gene Balch, president of the Brownsville Historical Association, agreed saying "The railroad is unparalleled as to what it did for this valley. It opened up all the agriculture down here. Nothing has ever come closer to it in my opinion" (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, July 7, 2004: A1). In 1903, Brownsville was a town of fewer than 7,000 inhabitants. There was no running water, no paved roads, and electricity was only sometimes available. Western Union finally put in a telegraph line six months after the railroad came to Brownsville" (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, July 7, 2004: A12).

Historian Tony Knopp observed that the area had stagnated for a good 20 years because railroad connections between Mexico and the United States had been made at Laredo and El Paso, bypassing Brownsville and the lower Rio Grande. As the new century dawned, Brownsville was at a crossroads. If

its leaders did nothing, the city would likely fall into obscurity. Those bleak prospects prompted them to take the risks inherent in financing and building a railroad across the rugged South Texas coastal plain to Brownsville and open the entire region of the lower Rio Grande to development.

St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway Company

As early as 1889, Uriah Lott had set his sights on linking Brownsville to outside markets as he had done in Laredo. He obtained a charter to build the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad but the project stalled for more than a decade. Finally, major landowners and businessmen in the area banded together to bring the road to fruition. They formed the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway Company and made plans to lay track from a point about fifteen miles west of Corpus Christi (in present Robstown), south to the city of Brownsville (Thompson in Sanchez, 1994: 69).

The company first had to gain right-of-way across the vast expanse of coastal plain between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande. Land owners down the line donated a total of 90,000 acres of land and cash bonuses amounting to $190,000 to the syndicate. Large land owners like the Calhoun County Cattle Company and Henrietta King of the famous King Ranch gave the most money and likely had the most to gain. Mrs. King's gift included a provision that 640 acres was to be used to establish the town of Kingsville and she slated another forty acres for commercial uses in the town. From there they would extend the line some 200 miles to the west, across Cameron and Hidalgo counties, and into Starr County (*Handbook of Texas Online* "St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway").

The company founders were among the wealthiest and most influential men in coastal South Texas. The original board of directors for the railroad were Robert J. Kleberg and Arthur E. Spohn, of Corpus Christi; Robert Driscoll, Jr., Uriah Lott, and Richard King, of Nueces County; and John G. Kenedy, James B. Wells, Thomas Carson, and Francisco Yturria, of Cameron County (*Handbook of Texas Online* "St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway"). Uriah Lott was tapped to serve as president of the company and in the early years, the railroad was known as "Lott's Road". These men owned or controlled vast tracts of sparsely settled brush land that was only marginally suitable for grazing cattle. They gambled on the railroad to generate outside interest and investment in the isolated region and envisioned a surge of land and townsite development along the railroad lines, which, not-coincidentally, ran through their own properties.

In fact, building the railroad was just one aspect of their elaborate strategy to promote and develop the lower Rio Grande into a bustling region of prosperous towns, successful farms, and commercial enterprise. Their plans included bringing modern irrigation technology to the area to pump water from the Rio Grande through a network of canals and ditches to farms laid out along the river's course. The plans also involved launching sophisticated advertising campaigns to convince Midwestern farmers, businessmen, and other "home seekers" to leave winter behind and invest in new towns and farms in the sunny Rio Grande "Valley", a word they used to make the region sound more romantic and appealing (Figure 8). All this was contingent on the railroad.

Laying Track to the Rio Grande

The company hired a syndicate headed by Benjamin Yoakum to build the railroad. Gangs of laborers commenced work on the road on July 26, 1903. For close to a year, they hacked their way through the dense chaparral and mesquite of the "Wild Horse Desert." They graded the road bed and laid the track for more than 160 miles, all the way to the border (Thompson in Sanchez, 1994: 69). A cook wagon

accompanied the crews and fed the men. They set up camps along the way and slept in tents throughout the year. They were supplied with brick and built depots and round houses at pre-determined locations destined to become towns, such as Kingsville. In addition, men erected section houses, stock pens, fences and telegraph poles (*Corpus Christi Caller*, May 20, 1904).

Their work did not end in Brownsville but branched out to reach other locales in the region. When the track reached Harlingen, north of Brownsville, a second crew started working on a fifty-five mile line that stretched westward across Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. The work began in May and was completed in December 1904. Soon, new at Mercedes, Weslaco, Donna, Alamo, San Juan, Pharr, McAllen, and Mission were surveyed and platted along its path (*Handbook of Texas Online* "St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway").

The St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway built other branch lines that ultimately connected Brownsville and the lower Rio Grande to Houston, where connections could be made to locations throughout the country. By 1912, the company owned and operated 502 miles of track that extended to the Houston area and stretched across Rio Grande Valley counties (*Handbook of Texas Online* "St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway"). The criss-crossed lines across the region formed a pattern that gave the railroad the nickname "Spiderweb Railroad". In the 1900s and 1910s, the railroad connected old settlements and ranches like those at Hidalgo and San Juan Plantation, to one another and to Brownsville, which remained the only real city in the region at the time. More dramatically, it also generated brand new townsites, including Edinburg, Mission, and McAllen, which were laid about every five miles along its path.

The St. L B & M railroad continued to expand throughout South Texas in the 1920s, connecting existing ranches and creating new towns through the decade. In January 1925, it became part of the Missouri Pacific Lines (Mo-Pac) but was allowed to continue operating on its own. Throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, the line added or acquired track in both South Texas and along the Gulf Coast. In 1955, its last year as a separate entity within Missouri Pacific, the company owned or leased ninety-eight diesel engines and had 4,377 cars and generated $461,554 in passenger revenues and $15,759,273 in freight charges. In March, 1956, the company was absorbed by the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company and lost its separate status (*Handbook of Texas Online* "St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway"). Its role in stimulating growth and development in Brownsville and the entire region of the lower Rio Grande in the early 20th century cannot be overstated. It was the single most important factor in the evolution of the region's economic, social, and political structures, as well as its built environment during that period.

Prospects for Brownsville

The railroad advocates had great hopes for agricultural development in Brownsville and the entire lower Rio Grande region. Rail transportation encouraged cautious investors to buy land and establish irrigation systems. Even as the track approached Brownsville, men were "found rushing the business [of irrigation] from the Rio Grande" by digging canals and laterals to rice fields "which cover acre after acre of rich land in that section of the country . . . on land that a few years ago was mostly covered with brush." (*Corpus Christi Caller*, May 20, 1904). They envisioned "plenty of grass and water, fat stock, flowing wells . . . and now that the country is to be developed by the man with the plow, the lower country will be strictly in it for business and progress" (*Corpus Christi Caller*, May 1904).

Boosterism preceded the arrival of the railroad. In May, 1904, the Lindsey Town & Improvement Company of Brownsville ran an advertisement in the local newspaper that described Olmito, a few miles

north of the city, as "beautifully situated in a high and healthful location on the banks of the Resaca de Rancho Viejo in the very heart of the rice and truck-farming district which makes it as exceedingly desirable location for all kinds of business." The company had already surveyed and platted 440 acres into business and residential lots, with truck gardens of between two-and-a-half and ten acres each. The company further claimed to have plenty of irrigation water from the Resaca and canals that lay on two sides of the town tract (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, May 3, 1904: 1). It was just a sample of the type of boosterism and land speculation to come.

Boosters further believed that the railroad would open up a vast new territory of trade with Brownsville at its center. M. B. Kingsbury, a native of Brownsville and general agent of the Southern Pacific Railroad predicted that "With the coming of the railroad, new life has been injected into that quaint town and for miles around and up and down the Rio Grande there is hustling and bustling in anticipation of the arrival of the great steam horse. For almost half a century, Brownsville and [the] surrounding country has depended upon the stage line of 165 miles over a hot desert to the nearest railroad and it is not surprising that development has been slow, very slow down in this corner of the great and growing state" (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, May 3, 1904).[8]

It was this great sense of hope for a dynamic and prosperous future that greeted the passenger train of the St. L, B & M Railroad when it entered the city on July 4, 1904. For Brownsville's citizens, the railroad meant that their city would soon join the company of other modern, progressive cities and improve its infrastructure, schools, government, and overall economy. Within a few years, the railroad was bringing carloads of "home seekers" to the "Valley" in search of a better climate, productive agricultural land, and new business opportunities in the boom towns that emerged along its tracks. They were taken in car caravans to "model" farms complete with neat cottages, cleared fields and tree-lined lanes. Once the contracts were signed, however, they were often dismayed to find that their 40-acre "garden plots" were nothing more than mesquite- and cactus-covered tracts of arid land with no access to water or roads, or any other infrastructure. Though some returned home, many of the newcomers set to work with the irrigation-land development consortiums to clear endless acres of mesquite and brush for farms and establish irrigation systems to water them. Others flocked to the many new townsites where they established businesses that served the hordes of Northern and Midwestern transplants to the region.

Many newcomers chose to settle in Brownsville. As the only real city in the region, Brownsville offered advantages over the old ranch settlements and nascent townsites along the railroad tracks. It had an established social order that included a mix of early Anglo land owners, ranchers and businessmen, and Hispanic families, some of whom were descendants of Spanish colonists who could trace their lineage in the area to 18th century land grants. Brownsville also had an established commercial district with one- and two-part brick buildings lining Elizabeth and Levee streets, in the heart of downtown. The city possessed existing educational and religious institutions and was the seat of county government. Expectations ran high that the flow of new capital would result in a major building boom for Brownsville.

In fact, though subdivisions were platted and promoted in the city and its environs, the longed-for effect was not immediate as the incoming population spread out across the region where they established 40-acre truck farms or started new businesses in the recently-platted towns along the western branch of the railroad line. Within a few years, however, Brownsville began to feel the effects of the railroad as new houses, businesses, and institutions were built throughout the city. Though not as visible, new industries were attracted to the city where they built facilities along the railroad track and on E. Fronton Street

[8] The area is most often referred to as a "coastal plain."

which fronted onto the line. These commercial and industrial entities contributed to the city's rise as the center of regional trade and transportation in the 1910s and 1920s.

Early Industrial and Commercial Development Associated with the Freight Depot

When the railroad came into Brownsville, a freight line extended to an area south of the downtown core that was deemed unsuitable for residential and commercial development. The St. L B & M Railroad line came into Brownsville from the northeast and ran parallel to and just east of 11th Street. A passenger depot with waiting rooms, express offices, and a small restaurant were built on the southwest side of St. Charles Street where it terminated at the railroad line (Figure 9). Across St. Charles to the northeast lay a half-block designated as a "railroad park." A freight line spur continued from the depot to the southwest, roughly along 11th Street, before turning westward and running parallel to E. Fronton Street en route to the freight depot in the 500-600 blocks (Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., various maps).

The site for the freight yards was chosen partly because it was undesirable for substantial residential and retail commercial uses. The low-lying tract lay just a few blocks from the Rio Grande and was prone to flooding (Figure 10). As a result, it was only sparsely developed with a scattering of frame shacks and thatched-roof *jacales* that housed the city's poorer residents, most of whom were Hispanic or African Americans. Even after the area was developed into commercial warehouses for storing and shipping local agricultural products, the surrounding neighborhood remained poor and gained a reputation as a "red light" district in the early 20th century. A few frame "shotgun houses" from the early twentieth century still survive on the north side of E. Fronton Street (Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps for years 1914 and 1919).

Another reason the site was selected was because it was "donated" to the railroad company by a member of its first board of directors. Francisco Yturria owned a large ranch that extended into what was then West Brownsville and offered land to the New York and Brownsville Improvement Company, which in turn deeded the land back to the railroad company. As an investor in both companies, Yturria stood to benefit, both from the railroad itself and from the development of commercial property abutting the freight depot. The freight yard was already designated by the time the railroad arrived in the city of Brownsville.

Within a few years of the railroad's arrival in Brownsville, a number of light industrial plants emerged along the freight lines. One of the first was an ice factory built by People's Ice Company on E. Fronton Street between 9th and 10th Streets. By 1914, the business was renamed People's Ice and Manufacturing Company and the original complex had grown to cover several blocks between St. Francis and the tracks. Several cotton seed gins, a cotton oil mill, hardware warehouses, and an extensive ice factory occupied the area. The same kind of development occurred further west in the designated "freight yards" adjacent to E. Fronton Street. Like the 9th/10th Street node, the original buildings and structures were associated with light industrial use or building contracting businesses including a large lumber yard, numerous oil tank farms, two ice and cold storage companies, cotton and flour mills and a couple of meat-packing houses. At the far western end of the track, stock yards fronted onto the freight line in the 100 block of E. Fronton Street.

The Historic District

The Freight Depot and Freight Depot Office

The freight depot and depot office were the first resources in the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District. Built by the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway Company in 1904 and 1905, respectively, they formed the nucleus of what became one of the city's major centers for shipping regional products to outside markets and receiving goods for local consumption and resale. As such, they played a significant role in Brownsville's early identity as the principal transportation and commercial hub in the lower Rio Grande.

The buildings were an integral part of the railroad's overall construction program to lay track and build basic resources such as depots, loading platforms, and water towers to facilitate commerce along its way. At each planned stop along the line, the company directed its crews to erect buildings and structures appropriate to the size and importance of the location. In some towns and settlements, they built both passenger and freight depots. At other stops, a single building served both purposes. At some stops through the "Wild Horse Desert" between Corpus Christi and Brownsville, they erected only water towers to supply steam engines passing through. In the city of Brownsville, the principal stop on the Rio Grande, the company built separate passenger and freight depots; the passenger depot was located in the downtown business district but the freight depot was relegated to a less desirable location.

Brownsville's depots reflected the importance of the city as a regional transportation and commercial hub in size (large), design (trendy), and materials (substantial – brick). From the outset, Uriah Lott had assured residents along the lines that the depots would be "handsome" buildings. Though brick-making had a long history in the Brownsville-Matamoros area, the railroad company contracted with a Laredo outfit to supply the brick used in the construction of its depots and stations between Kingsville to Brownsville (*Brownsville Herald,* March 9, 1904: 1). Brick was hauled across the brush land in wagons from Laredo to the various stations along the route, including Brownsville.

The freight depot itself was finished and ready for business by December 7, 1904 (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, December 7, 1904: 2).[9] It was followed by an office building to handle freight business (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, October 10, 1905: 1). In fact, freight trains were already running before the passenger and freight depots were completed. An article in the *Brownsville Daily Herald* in March of 1904, four months before the first passenger train arrived, announced that "The first freight to go to Brownsville over the Lott Road consisted of two pianos. Usually the first freight over railroads to the frontier are [sic] billiard tables and saloon fixtures" (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, March 9, 1904: 1).

First Commercial Businesses in the District

Shortly after the freight yards were established, a consortium of railroad, land, and irrigation tycoons organized to form the New York and Brownsville Improvement Company to develop property along the railroad tracks (Figure 10). Many of its members wore three "hats" as directors of the railroad company, investors in the irrigation systems, and land speculators who stood to profit from the sale of irrigated

[9] Most sources date the arrival of the first train to Brownsville as July 4, 1904, but that was the date the first passenger train. In fact, freight trains had been in operation for several months before that time. There may have been a temporary freight station in the freight yard but the permanent brick building apparently wasn't completed until December 1904, according to the *Brownsville Herald*.

farms in the region. Francisco Yturria was a prime example. He donated the right-of-way for the freight yard out of his extensive ranch to the railroad company that he helped organize. He then transferred his land along E. Fronton Street, which fronted onto the freight lines, to the New York and Brownsville Improvement Company, of which he was a member. The improvement company subsequently platted the land into commercial lots and deeded them back to the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway whose Board of Directors elected him as its first president.

In 1906, the New York and Brownsville Improvement Company recorded numerous deeds granting much of the property on E. Fronton Street, along the tracks, to the railroad company as part of their arrangement to bring the railroad to the city (Brownsville City lot registers, various blocks). The railroad company then reaped the profits from the sale of lots for commercial uses. As soon as the freight depot was in operation, commercial buildings and structures began to appear along E. Fronton Street where they had direct access to the freight cars.

Among the first businesses in the freight yard were a lumber yard, oil tank farms, ice and cold storage houses, and flour and cotton mills.[10] Little substantial construction accompanied these businesses. The sites typically contained only a small frame office building or a cold storage house, with the remainder occupied by rows of stacked lumber, metal mill structures, and oil tanks set on concrete pads. Open-air *ramadas* and wooden platforms were built to store and load materials for shipment. The stockyards in the 100 block of the street had fenced pens, corrals, and a small office building. The stockyards had direct access to the freight line where cattle were loaded onto waiting cars (Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., various maps).

In June of 1905, the Watters Pierce Oil Company commissioned Martin Hanson, a local contractor, to build a 40 x 50' brick building on a brick foundation "near the freight depot" in the 300 block of E. Fronton. It was completed by February, 1906 (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, June 6, 1905; February 16, 1906). In September 1906, three lots in the 300 block of E. Fronton Street were set aside for a new cotton gin (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, September 22: 1906: 1). Other gins, mills, and oil tank sites appeared along E. Fronton in the following few years.

Among the first businesses to locate along E. Fronton Street were the two competing ice companies, both of which established a presence on E. Fronton Street: Consumer's Ice and Cold Storage built a brick plant with refrigerated rooms at E. Fronton and Sixth Street, and People's Ice and Cold Storage built a larger facility on E. Fronton between 9th and 10th streets. In April 1909, the J. F. Grant Lumber Company bought half a block of land from F. Yturria to establish a 250' x 120' lumber yard on E. Fronton Street "between 8th and 11th Street opposite the ice plant" (*Brownsville Daily Herald,* April 28, 1909: 3). This was one of the first businesses to open in the district but the site was later redeveloped as a machinery warehouse for the Alamo Iron Works (Resource 14; Figure 3).

The earliest businesses in the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District (400-800 blocks E. Fronton Street) were the Grant Lumber Company lumber yard (800 E. Fronton), Consumer's Ice and Cold Storage Company (600 E. Fronton), and the Armadillo Flour Mill (east of the lumber company along the freight line, demolished). All lay directly on the freight spur. None of these resources survive. The lumber yard was redeveloped with a metal machinery warehouse for Alamo Iron Works between

[10] Remnants of cold storage rooms for a meat packing business were later incorporated into the E. de la Garza complex in the 600 block of E. Fronton, the Grant Lumber Company yard in the 800 block was redeveloped in the 1930s or 1940s as a machinery warehouse for Alamo Iron Works, and the Armadillo Flour Mill in the 800 block of E. Railyard was demolished.

1930 and 1949 and the flour mill was removed sometime after 1949. Remnants of two small refrigerated rooms were incorporated into the later E. de la Garza wholesale grocery warehouse complex at 634 E. Fronton (Resource 8).

These businesses were built on the south side of E. Fronton Street, most between the street and the railroad tracks where they could load goods directly onto freight cars. They typically consisted only of a few small office buildings with the rest of the site occupied by open *ramadas* filled with stacked lumber, concrete pads holding barrels of oil, underground oil storage tanks, compact brick refrigerated rooms, and metal grain elevators and mill structures and machinery.

The Rise of Agriculture

One of the most compelling arguments for bringing the railroad to the lower Rio Grande was to stimulate agricultural development in the region. The semi-arid region was rich with alluvial soil deposited by the periodic flooding of the Rio Grande but farmers lacked a good water delivery system and fast, reliable transportation to outside markets. Early attempts at irrigation failed because that the region is a delta – not a valley – and nearly impossible to water through traditional gravity feed methods. New pumping technology designed to lift the water out of the river and over its banks to fields had been developed by the early 20th century, but investors were reluctant to fund projects in the lower Rio Grande because of its isolated location and lack of railroad.

The men who brought the railroad to Brownsville counted on its presence to encourage investment in land along the river. The newspaper brimmed with excitement for the development that was anticipated to follow agriculture to the "Valley." Prosperity was within reach! In the spring of 1905, a front page newspaper headline announced that the "First Car of Onions" would be shipped by Brownsville area grocers McDavitt Brothers to Chicago the next day (Figure 11). The article went on to predict that the first carload of Bermuda onions "will mark a new era in the material development [of the city]" and be "a forerunner of the thousands of cars yearly [that will] roll from the Valley" (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, April 17, 1905: 1). On the same page were advertisements for agricultural implements, cultivators and planers, windmills, and well casing and pipe and a sales pitch by the Brownsville Land and Town Company to "Own your own Truck Farm" near the city (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, April 17, 1905: 1).

The irrigation-railroad-land developers were not disappointed. Within a decade after the arrival of the railroad in the lower Rio Grande, commercial agriculture expanded throughout the entire region. Once assured of rail transportation to outside markets combination irrigation-land development companies began to build large-scale irrigation systems with steam-powered pump houses to draw water from the river and propel it through a great network of canals and ditches across the territory. Irrigation was the key to agricultural development and once it proved successful, the entire "valley" was divided into hundreds of 40-acre truck farms and, later, citrus groves (Figure 12). From the 1910s through the 1950s, agriculture fueled the economy of Brownsville and the rest of territory watered by the Rio Grande.

The new agricultural Mecca was variously nicknamed the "Winter Garden", "Magic Valley", and "Land of No Snow" by land promoters hoping to attract even more Midwestern and northern farmers to the region. Within a few short years, land and irrigation companies attracted thousands of "homeseekers" newcomers to the "Valley" (Figure 8). Some came for the weather, having tired of shoveling snow and staying indoors through the frigid winter months. Some merely wanted to start new farms in a territory where land was inexpensive, plentiful, and nutrient-rich and crops could be grown year-round. In a little

more than a decade, newcomers outnumbered natives in the "Valley" and former grazing lands had turned to verdant fields for a 200-mile stretch along the Rio Grande.

The Rise of Wholesale Grocers in the Brownsville Area

According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, the arrival of the railroad in 1904 did not immediately inspire a building boom in the city of Brownsville (Fox 1995: 284). After several years of successful harvests, however, it became clear that the lower Rio Grande was destined to become a major agricultural region with Brownsville as a central transportation hub. A building boom ensued, starting about 1909 and continuing until about 1914, when border tensions during the so-called "Bandit Era" and U.S. entry into World War I stalled progress for a time. Building resumed after the war and continued into the mid-1920s. Among the commercial projects associated with agriculture of this period were large brick warehouses to store and ship produce, grains and cotton. Starting in about 1909, they began to appear all along E. Fronton Street, which fronted onto the freight lines from about 2nd Street to 11th Street.

The McDavitt brothers were among the first farmers in the Brownsville area to ship produce from the freight depot. They first tried growing rice, but were unsuccessful. When irrigation was introduced in the region, they turned to truck farming where they met with good results shipping the first carloads of onions (1905) and cabbages (1908) from the Brownsville freight depot (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, December 29, 1908: 3). By 1909, they were convinced of continued success and built a brick warehouse directly on the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico freight lines near the ice house (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, December 1909).[11] As agriculture grew to surpass trade as Brownsville's economic base, other local grocers followed the McDavitt brothers' example and built their own warehouses along the railroad tracks.

The land Francisco Yturria transferred to the New York and Brownsville Improvement Company was a prime location for large grocery warehouses.[12] The 400-700 blocks of E. Fronton Street had direct access to the freight depot and spur lines and were a perfect location for building large brick grocery warehouses. Until 1909, when it became clear that agriculture would boom in the region, however, the 400-800 blocks E. Fronton had only been sparsely developed with several dozen small frame dwellings and thatched-roof *jacales* scattered in random fashion across the lots. That year, the Hicks Hardware Company commissioned the first grocery warehouse built in the district (demolished c. 1945). The company hired contractor C. Fleming to construct the 1-story a brick warehouse "near the freight station" at present 454 E. Fronton Street (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, December 1909). In fact, its rear loading bay doors were only about 30 feet from the depot itself. Though built by a hardware company, the building was intended as a grocery warehouse and was rented to growers to store and ship their products by railroad. Shortly afterward the company built its own hardware and plumbing supply warehouse on the adjacent lot (razed) (present Resource 5 at 424 E. Fronton).

The following year, the Sugarman Supply Company built a large frame grocery warehouse at present 759 E. Fronton Street (Resource 14). The Sugarman family occupied the frame house next door at present 749 E. Fronton Street (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, June 2, 1910: 5). The grocery supply warehouse did not have direct access to the freight spur but it was less than half a block from the lines. A broad wooden porch spread across the E. Fronton Street façade and wrapped around the 8th Street side. The building

[11] This was likely People's Ice Company at 10th and E. Fronton Streets.
[12] In 1906, the improvement company deeded the land to the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company to develop but few transactions took place until agriculture began to really take off in the area about 1909.

was later used as a furniture warehouse and in 1921, was remodeled and converted for use as a shirt making factory (Resource 14; Map 9).

New Freight Depot and Depot Office: 1911-1912

By 1911, the produce business had increased so much that the St. L. B. & M. Railway Company enlarged the freight depot to double its capacity by building a long frame warehouse (demolished). At the same time, the company began building a two-story, 16 feet x 24 feet brick office building (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, January 12, 1911: 6). The increased volume of work required a larger, more substantial building than the original frame structure that served as an office in the freight yard. Work was begun on the new office in January and was completed by September 4, 1911, when local St. L. B. & M. Railroad officials moved into the building (Resource 2). A spokesman for the company pronounced the new office building "a model of convenience [that] will greatly facilitate the handling of the company's business" (*Brownsville Daily Herald* September 4, 1911: 3).

The new office and frame warehouse buildings were in place only two weeks before a fire destroyed the original depot and brick warehouse. The new office and frame warehouse survived. C. B. Rogers, a spokesman for the railway company, stated that work would start on a new depot and warehouse (Resource 1) to replace the destroyed building within ten days. Rogers noted that the new combination depot and warehouse building would also be built of brick and have "about the same dimension as [its] destroyed predecessor" (*Brownsville Daily Herald* September 16, 1911: 3). In November 1911, Frontier Construction Co. of Brownsville was awarded a $10,000 contract to build the new freight warehouse and work started the following month (*Brownsville Daily Herald* November 18, 1911: 6). In February 1912, the *Brownsville Daily Herald* reported that the 35' x 300' warehouse was close to completion and noted that it had platform facilities capable of loading and unloading ten freight cars at one time (*Brownsville Daily Herald* February 29, 1912: 8).

The design of the original depot and warehouse is unknown but it was likely similar in appearance to its replacement. The completed freight depot was a long, low load-bearing brick building with a side-gabled roof supported by Craftsman-style wooden brackets (Figure 2). Multiple sets of double doors opened onto wooden platforms along each side of the building. Its length and low profile gave the building a horizontal appearance. The depot office was of a completely different design. It was a typical two-story, two-part brick commercial building with an essentially flat roof and stepped parapet wall. Like many border vernacular commercial buildings of the period, it was built of local brick and featured segmental arch window and door openings. Unlike the depot, its small footprint and two-story construction gave the building a vertical rather than horizontal profile. The building likely added a more professional look to the freight yard than its small, temporary predecessor.

More Grocery Warehouses

Despite the temporary loss of the freight depot and warehouses, construction of new wholesale grocery warehouses continued unabated. In March 1912, the Brownsville Herald announced that a "fine brick warehouse" was to be built by Ullmann Stern & Krause on "8th Street opposite Grant lumberyard" (present 730 E. Fronton, Resource 12, Figure 3). It was said to have "ample proportions" and cost between $7,000 and $8,000 (*Brownsville Daily Herald* March 6, 1912: 3). Ullmann Stern & Krausse "purveyors of coffee and fine groceries" was headquartered in San Antonio with seven branch stores elsewhere in South Texas. When the railroad finally came to the Rio Grande, the company opened a new branch in Brownsville, the largest city in the region, and built a warehouse on a large quarter-block site.

The load-bearing brick building was set far back from E. Fronton Street but had direct access to the freight spur. A small frame barn was built at the corner of E. Fronton and 8th Street. A broad wooden platform across the back connected three double-door bays on the rear façade to waiting freight cars for easy loading. The building is noteworthy for its brick cornice as it is one of the few warehouses in the district to feature decorative ornamentation. It was the last warehouse built before the "border troubles" broke out along the Rio Grande, temporarily halting development in the district (Figures 13-14).

The Bandit Era

Even as the region was opening up to large scale town and farm development in the early 20th century, political turmoil broke out in Mexico in 1910 and erupted into a full-blown revolution that spread to Matamoros in the summer of 1913 when rebel leader Lucio Blanco attacked the city with about 1,500 men. Many fled to safety in Brownsville but chaos and uncertainty followed them across the Rio Grande where the city's residents grew increasingly fearful that the violence might spill over onto the U.S. side of the border. Tensions mounted throughout the summer as Brownsville's residents watched battles take place in the streets of Matamoros from atop their houses or on the new international bridge. Calls went out for additional troops to be sent to Fort Brown and they started arriving with carloads of artillery and weapons at the freight depot in 1914.

As violence in Mexico continued, it did finally spread to the U.S. In the spring of 1915, Pancho Villa's forces attacked Matamoros within plain view of Brownsville. At the same time, Mexican and Mexican-American outlaws sometimes posing as revolutionaries raided ranches and isolated outposts on the U.S. side of the border with impunity. On October 18, 1915, about 50 bandits derailed a passenger train bound for Brownsville on the outskirts of the city. They opened fire on passengers, taking particular aim at uniformed soldiers. Troops were sent out from Fort Brown but it was the Texas Rangers who captured seven of the perpetrators the next morning.

The following year, 1916, Villa raided the American town of Columbus, New Mexico, killing both soldiers and civilians before retreating across the border to safety in Mexico. The outrage over Villa's blatant attack on U.S. soil led to an immediate and major buildup of troops on the border. By June of 1916, thousands of troops were sent to Fort Brown where they lived in tents. They saw virtually no action but their very numbers may have been enough to discourage further transgressions in the area. As the war in Europe began, they were gradually withdrawn until all were gone from the area by 1917.

It is no wonder that development during this period stalled in Brownsville. It was a chaotic, fearful episode in what otherwise should have been a tremendous building boom with the railroad finally gained and agriculture promising a great future. Instead, the city "held its breath" until the fighting was over. By 1917, the country was fully engaged in World War I and some feared that the withdrawal of troops for the border would leave the region defenseless. Instead, peace returned to the lower Rio Grande bringing with it an era of progress and prosperity.

Development of Wholesale Grocery Warehouses Resumes

Once the border troubles ceased, commercial and agricultural development resumed throughout the region despite U.S. involvement in the war in Europe.[13] In fact, produce from the lower Rio Grande were

[13] During World War II, however, domestic residential and commercial development was prohibited for the duration of the war unless it could be proved to be essential to the war effort.

shipped overseas to help sustain American and allied troops during the war. Throughout the period, farmers brought wagonloads of produce to the freight yard to be transported to both domestic and international markets (Figure 15).

In the late 1910s, a group of investors including W. C. Craig, George F. Walker, J. C. Bennett, John Gregg, and J. L. Friedman joined forces to build large wholesale grocery warehouses on E. Fronton Street, directly adjacent to the freight depot. The first warehouse was built in 1917 by the Walker-Craig Wholesale Grocery Company in 1917 at 504 E. Fronton Street (Resource 6). The company bought the land directly from the New York and Brownsville Improvement Company and contracted with H.B. Toler to build a one-story load-bearing brick warehouse with a nearly flat roof and stepped parapets on the side elevations (Cameron County Deed Record Vol. 53: 635). The warehouse occupied three standard lots (lots 4, 5, and 6, Block 17) and measured about 150' across and about 120' deep. Walker-Craig was primarily a wholesale grocery business but they apparently sold hardware as noted on the 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map. The Walker-Craig Company occupied the warehouse until they sold it to McNair Inc. in 1965 (Cameron County Warranty Deed, August 17, 1965).

It was followed two years later by the Walker-Bennett Wholesale Dry Goods Company warehouse at present 430A E. Fronton Street (Resource 4). The Walker-Bennett company had obtained the property from John Closner, a long-time advocate of agricultural and townsite development in the lower Rio Grande. He was involved in numerous irrigation and land development schemes in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties and had been an early supporter of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway, from whom he bought the land in 1908. Closner probably held the property as an investment until 1919 when Mrs. Closner sold lots 4 and 5 to E. J. Yates who immediately transferred the lots to George Walker, president of the Walker-Craig and Walker-Bennett companies (Cameron County Deed, June 28, 1919, Vol. 74: 491).

A month later, the Walker-Bennett Company contracted with William S. West to build a warehouse on lots 4 and 5 (August 1919). The warehouse is somewhat smaller but similar in design and materials to the Walker-Craig warehouse built in 1917. The expansive one-story, load-bearing brick warehouse is about 80' wide and about 120' deep with a virtually flat roof and stepped front and back parapets. Like the Walker-Craig warehouse, it features segmental arch full and half windows and a canopy across most of the front façade. It is not known if the Walker-Bennett Company used the building to store dry goods, as their name implied, or wholesale groceries which was fast-becoming the principal business in the 400-700 blocks of E. Fronton Street.

A 1919 article in the *Brownsville Daily Herald* gave some information on the principals behind the two warehouse buildings. It identified W. C. Craig as the president of the Walker-Bennett Dry Goods Company and George Walker as the "capitalist". Bennett was a local grower and Gregg was president of Merchants National Bank. Friedman was from Cuidad Victoria and may have come to Brownsville during the Mexican Revolution (*Brownsville Daily Herald* June 29, 1919: 1). Together, they formed the dry goods company and built the 89 feet x 120 feet brick building as a wholesale grocery and dry goods warehouse. In 1924, they sold the building to the Desel-Boettcher Wholesale Grocery Company of Houston and Corpus Christi and it remained a wholesale grocery warehouse since that time.

A. C. Hipp was the first local branch manager of the company and he eventually bought out Desel-Boettcher and operated his own wholesale grocery business from the site into the 1960s.[14] As soon as Desel-Boettcher purchased the warehouse in 1924, the company immediately set to work installing a ten-car capacity cold storage plant for fruit and vegetable storage. At the same time, they bought the corner lot at present 430B E. Fronton from another ex-patriot grocer from Mexico, Eleuterio de la Garza, to build a 6-car brick garage building (Resource 3) next to their warehouse. The total cost of the improvements was estimated at $40,000 (*Brownsville Daily Herald* April 14, 1924: 1; July 6, 1924: 3).

After selling his lot in the 400 block of E. Fronton in 1924, Eleuterio de la Garza moved his wholesale grocery business to 634 E. Fronton Street, next to the former Consumer's Ice and Cold Storage plant (Figure 16). City lot transfer records show that the company owned lots 3, 4, 5 and 6 in Block 16, in the 600 block, where they operated a large ice plant with refrigerated rooms and a cooling tower on lots 5 and 6. In 1918, the company sold all of the lots to the Houston [meat] Packing Company. The Houston Packing Company occupied one side of the refrigerated plant and rented the other side to the Armour Meat Company. A small two-story building with a brick first floor and frame upper floor stood on the adjacent lot but between 1919 and 1924, that structure was replaced by a one-story brick warehouse (Resource 9). De la Garza bought the lots from the Houston Packing Company in 1924.[15] It was set much closer to the street than the earlier building but abutted the railroad spur at the rear. The load-bearing brick building was about 50' wide and about 120' deep, with a full-façade wood canopy across the front. Little is known about its original design as it has been obscured by multiple additions. The building has historically been associated with Eleuterio de la Garza and his descendents, who still operate a business in the building today.

These warehouses were similar in building type, construction materials, and design. They were all one-story, open plan load-bearing brick warehouses with interior wood posts supporting their roofs. Roofs appeared flat but sloped slightly to shed water. They were punctuated by four to seven regularly spaced wire and glass skylights. They occupied nearly all of their lot space and had either no or shallow setback from E. Fronton Street. Tall, wide double loading bay doors opened from the rear of the buildings onto wooden platforms abutting the railroad spur. In most cases, the wood platforms were later replaced by concrete.

Design features were limited to rows of segmental arch full- and half-sized windows with two courses brick hoods and brick sills, attached wooden canopies that covered all or most of the primary, street-facing facades, and stepped parapet walls. These design features were adapted from the one- and two-part vernacular commercial buildings common to Brownsville and found throughout the lower Rio Grande from the turn of the 20th century into the 1920s. They were almost certainly built of handmade brick with clay dug from pits along the Rio Grande, set and dried in wooden molds and fired in stone-lined kilns on the river banks. The brick was likely made locally, either in Brownsville or across the river in Matamoros. Brownsville residents recall seeing truckload after truckload of brick transported across the international bridge from Matamoros to Brownsville into the early postwar era. Most masonry buildings

[14] A. C. Hipp bought the property by 1946. The A.C. Hipp Produce Company remained in the building through 1960 (Brownsville City Directories, 1946, 1960). Hipp was a well-known figure in Brownsville who served as the city planning director for a time. Still later, the warehouse was converted into a Piggly Wiggly grocery store that served the surrounding community of Hispanic and African American families (Ernesto Hernandez, personal communication, 2017).

[15] The Houston Packing Company sold the land to de la Garza in 1924 but the building could pre-date the filing of the deed. It is not known whether the meat packing company or de la Garza built the building but the visible architectural elements such as segmental arch windows and stepped parapets suggest that it is a contemporary of the Walker-Craig (1917) and Walker-Bennett (1919) warehouses.

in the Brownsville area were built with such brick until the 1960s when American brick manufacturers including Acme Brick, launched a negative advertising campaigns against "inferior Mexican brick" and drove local brickmakers out of business (Cook, 1998).

A much different type of warehouse was built in the district at 720 E. Fronton Street in 1926 (Resource 10). Brown White, a businessman who operated out of Brownsville and nearby San Benito commissioned the building as an investment property and he hired architect William Doty Van Siclen to design it. It is the only known architect-designed warehouse in the district. Van Siclen had enjoyed a successful career in California and the Pacific Northwest before moving to Brownsville about 1925. His early work in San Jose resulted in many elaborate Queen Anne style houses, many of which are now contributing resources in the Hensley National Register District (NR 1982). Van Siclen moved to Seattle, Washington about 1900 and designed the six-story Eital Building which was considered to be one of the city's finest buildings at the time. While in the Pacific Northwest, he became an early proponent of Spanish and Italian architectural motifs which continued to inform his work in Brownsville and the lower Rio Grande from the 1920s until his death in 1951. Van Siclen's Mission Revival style Nabisco building was one of his first commissions in Brownsville, described as a "Spanish style warehouse" in a newspaper article. S. W. McKenzie was awarded the contract to build the 50 feet x 120 feet "tile and concrete" warehouse for $12,884. White had already leased the building to the National Biscuit Company (Nabisco) as a distribution center when the contract was let (*Brownsville Daily Herald* August 31, 1926: 1).

The "Nabisco" building was a departure from the warehouse type. It was much smaller in size and was divided into two halves, each with its own storefront. It was also different from the earlier buildings in that it displayed the distinctive design elements of the Mission Revival style, with a centered, rounded parapet and decorative roof accents including red clay tile and flanking urns. The year of its construction – 1926 – is depicted in raised numbers in the center of the shaped parapet. By the close of 1926, the 400-700 blocks of E. Fronton with frontage on the freight line were built out with large brick wholesale grocery warehouses as agriculture continued to fuel the regional economy.

Factories on E. Fronton Street

Though Brownsville's economy remained tied largely to agriculture in the 1920s, new businesses and industries also came to the city and contributed to its growth and relative prosperity during that decade. Two manufacturing companies settled in the 400-800 blocks of E. Fronton Street for the same reasons that had attracted the large grocery warehouses: location, transportation, and commercial opportunities. Land in the flood-prone freight yards was inexpensive and designated for industrial use. The noise and traffic associated with factory work was tolerated in the district and factories had direct access to the rail lines for receiving materials and shipping manufactured goods. The first industries that located in the district moved into existing warehouses. Only later, after they achieved a degree of success, did they erect buildings and structures to suit the needs of their growing concerns.

McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company, 1921

Phillip Kitchings McNair opened the first factory in the district in 1921. McNair graduated from West Point in 1915 and was deployed to Fort Brown during the border troubles. He was made a 1st Lt. and Commanding Officer of Company "A", Fourth U.S. Infantry, on October 21, 1916. While there, he met and married Ruth Craig, whose father, W. C. Craig, was a partner in the Walker-Craig and Walker-Bennett dry goods and wholesale grocery businesses. In 1916, McNair was sent to Europe where he

served for the duration of World War I. After the war, he returned to Brownsville where he planned to open a small factory manufacturing khaki pants and denim jeans to sell in Mexico during the oil boom of the late 1910s and 1920s (Gene McNair 1997: 2). With financial backing from the Walker-Craig Company, Ben Freudenstein and Zade Rosenthal, McNair bought the former Sugarman Supply Company warehouse at 759 E. Fronton (Resource 14) (Cameron County Deed Record, Vol. 87: 261). He remodeled the frame building and opened a shirt-making factory in 1921 (Map 9).[16]

Phil McNair invited his brother, Malcolm Prothro "Jack" McNair, to join him in the business. Jack accepted and moved to Brownsville in 1921. He was a Clemson University graduate who served as a medical corpsman in the Navy during the war. The brothers expanded their business to include making khaki pants and denim jeans for sale to Mexico for oil workers. They benefitted from a large labor pool comprised mainly of Hispanic women, some of whom may have come to Brownsville during the Mexican Revolution. Two long time company employees were Frank and Carolina Moreyra, a couple who lived in a frame house behind the factory. Frank was a Native American who worked as a cloth cutter and Carolina supervised the sewing room (Gene McNair, 1997).

The McNair brothers worked hard to keep the business afloat in the 1920s. In the early years, they tried opening a small factory across the river in Matamoros but the venture proved unsuccessful and soon closed (Gene McNair, 1997). It became clear that the business wasn't large enough to both support both men and repay their investors. In 1925, Jack bought his brother's interest in the business to become sole owner of the McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company. He ultimately paid off his investors, as well (Cameron County Deed Record, Vol. 141: 335; Gene McNair, 1996).

Jack McNair managed to keep the factory going through the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, he expanded his business in 1933, one of the worst years of the Great Depression (Figure 17). At that time, he employed 25 seamstresses and operated both day and night shifts. He bought the former Sugarman house next door at 749 E. Fronton and built a new brick factory on the site (Resource 15) (*Brownsville Daily Herald*, April 30, 1933: 14; Cameron County Deed Records, 348: 521). The new building was designed along the lines of the older Border Brick Style with a symmetrical brick façade divided by vertical piers topped with a pronounced, raised brick cornice. Two pair of tripartite double-hung windows similar to those found in bungalows of the period gave it a domestic air. The space would be put to good use as the demand for cotton clothing for military uniforms and war industry workers increased greatly as the country geared up for war in the late 1930s.

In the meantime, Jack rekindled an old friendship with Vivian Faust Schweers of Georgia and in 1935, they married. Jack adopted Vivian's ten-year-old son, Harry Eugene, known by all as "Gene" and the family set up house in Brownsville. Gene attended Brownsville High School and in 1941 started college at Texas A & M at the age of sixteen. World War II intervened and he left school to join the Army Air Corps in 1942. Gene spent the next 3 ½ years serving in the military. In September 1945, he was commissioned a 2nd Lt. and was sent to the South Pacific where he served with the 868th Squadron of the 13th Air Force as a bombardier/navigator on B-24 Liberator bombers. After the war, Gene finished his degree at Texas A & I in Kingsville and graduated in 1948. Later that year, he joined his father in the clothing manufacturing business which had grown considerably during the war to employ about 50 workers and sales amounting to about $485,000 per year (Gene McNair, 1997).

[16] He may have replaced the wood siding with masonry at that time though it was depicted as being a frame building in the 1926 and 1930 Sanborn maps. A photograph of the interior taken in 1926 shows that the building appeared very much then as it does today.

Alamo Iron Works, 1924

The other major manufacturer in the district was Alamo Iron Works of San Antonio. Alamo Iron Works started as a modest blacksmith shop on the banks of the San Antonio River in 1875. In the latter part of the 19th century, the company consisted of an office, a machine shop, pattern shop, and small foundry on a one-acre site southeast of the Alamo. In the early 20th century, the company earned a good reputation for its extensive delivery network and it became a stocking distributor of industrial products and supplies. During World War I, the company contracted with the government to construct and fabricate pipe rail. After the war, the company continued to bid successfully on government contracts. After a major flood in San Antonio, the company played a large part in the construction of Olmos Dam, a huge undertaking that was completed in 1927 (Alamo Iron Works).

As more large projects came their way in the 1920s, the company expanded from its San Antonio base. In 1922, the company opened a subsidiary, Alamo Steel and Supply, in Houston. The location gave them access to port facilities which allowed them to ship their heavier products more efficiently. Two years later they opened a plant in Brownsville, the epicenter of commerce and transportation in the lower Rio Grande "Valley," in 1924 (Figure 18). Company leaders recognized that the entire region was experiencing tremendous growth from agricultural development and wanted to tap into that market. The Brownsville site handled a complete stock of machinery, mill supplies, hardware, and pipe. Demand for their products was so great that the company quickly bought two additional properties, both on E. Fronton Street (Resources 11 and 12).

Alamo Iron Works bought the former Ullmann, Stern & Krausse building (Resource 12) in 1924 to serve as its main warehouse and showroom in the valley. The cavernous expanse of the open warehouse was well-suited for displaying, storing and demonstrating large, heavy pieces of metal machinery and farm implements. Shortly afterward, the company purchased the Grant Lumber Yard across 8th Street where they set up a small foundry to make custom pieces for building and repairing farm equipment, irrigation systems, roads, bridges, and mills in the fast-growing region. Materials and supplies came directly to the plant and showroom on the freight line at the back of the property and finished products were shipped the same way to the many new towns and farming communities that had cropped up along the railroad tracks since the start of the agricultural boom.

In the early years of the Great Depression, production nearly ground to a halt at Alamo Iron Works. By the mid-1930s, however, government relief programs provided funding for various public projects and the company could stay in business by supplying reinforcing steel for road construction in South Texas and a seawall for the city of Corpus Christi. Its most visible project during this period was supplying the structural steel for the San Jacinto Monument, completed by the Public Works Administration in 1936 to commemorate the battle that gave Texas its independence from Mexico. As the nation began to recover from the Depression, Alamo Iron Works established a new branch in San Angelo to serve West Texas as it began to develop its industrial, oil and agricultural potential. Built in 1940, the San Angelo branch was the company's first major expansion effort since 1928, when the Corpus Christi facility opened (Alamo Iron Works).

Like the McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company, Alamo Iron Works increased production for the U.S. Government during the buildup to World War II. The company supplied 28 tons of reinforcing bars to pave roads at Fort Sam Houston and provided materials to build barracks, mess halls, school buildings, a commissary, a chapel and storehouses for a new airfield in Laredo. Over the course of the war, it devoted approximately 90 percent of its production to manufacturing parts for naval ships and the maritime

commission. As part of its wartime preparations, the company replaced its primitive plant in the old lumber yard with the present 1- to 2-story metal factory and warehouse (Resource 13) at 800 E. Fronton Street. The new plant was no doubt outfitted with equipment geared to build materials and products specifically for military use.

Competition for the Railroads

Lower Rio Grande farmers continued to ship their produce and manufactured goods by rail through the 1920s and into the 1930s. By the mid-1930s, however, the railroads faced competition from many sides, by land, sea, and air. Commodore Louis Cobolini, who moved to Brownsville from Italy in 1907, was a local shipper who spent eighteen years pushing for a deep water port for the lower Rio Grande. Though he did not live to see it, his dream was finally realized when the dredge *Orleans* began cutting a channel across the salt flats to connect Brownsville to the Gulf of Mexico in 1934. On May 16, 1936, the Port of Brownsville was dedicated and opened for business. The port quickly rose to become the city's leading "industry" as local growers and manufacturers began to transport their crops and goods by ship. The port reaffirmed Brownsville's position as the shipping center for the lower Rio Grande and northeastern Mexico, a fact that may have saved the city from the worst effects of the Great Depression (*Handbook of Texas Online* "Brownsville"). The port also opened the region to international markets with cargo such as citrus, cattle, vegetables, canned and processed foods and manufactured goods being shipped to Europe and Asia (Wooldridge and Vezzetti, 1996: 161-167).

At the same time, facilities at the Brownsville International Airport improved far beyond the two dirt runways and minimal support resources it opened with in 1928. Between 1933 and 1935, a new terminal, new hangars, maintenance and operational facilities were constructed, paving the way for the era of air freight (Wooldridge and Vezzetti 1996: 128). In addition, some of the transportation shifted to long-haul trucking companies with refrigeration capabilities. Great improvements had been made in roads and in automotive mechanics by the 1930s and some found it cost-effective to ship their products to markets by truck. In 1930, there were no transfer companies in the district but by the middle of the decade the Jones Motor Transfer Company occupied half of the former Nabisco warehouse (Resource 10) and a second motor freight company operated from part of the former Consumer's Ice and Cold Storage building (Resource 8). Motor freight companies maintained a presence in the district through the 1950s. In 1960 the MoPac Freight Transport Company occupied the cold storage building and Red Arrow Freight Lines replaced the Jones Motor Transfer Company in the former Nabisco building (Figure 20). Still, the railroad remained a safe, reliable source of transportation for local crops and manufactured goods throughout the historic period.

Postwar Development in the District

Agriculture remained significant in the Brownsville area through World War II and into the postwar era. The produce, fruit, grains, and cotton produced in the lower Rio Grande had been vital to the war effort as most of the fruits and vegetables produced in the region were shipped overseas to feed the armed forces. In the postwar era, those products were diverted to domestic markets to feed families of the baby boom generation. Wholesale grocers like E. de la Garza, A. C. Hipp and the Walker-Craig Company remained in business shipping local produce and citrus from their warehouses on E. Fronton Street (Figure 21).

In the early postwar era, some new commercial endeavors came to Brownsville. Agriculture and shipping remained major industries for the city but with an expanded scope. Cotton cultivation became widespread in the lower Rio Grande in the late 1940s and by the 1950s, it rivaled citrus and vegetable production in

the region. Agricultural products of all types were increasingly shipped from the Port of Brownsville which also expanded after the war. For a time, the port was the world's leading exporter of cotton in this period. At the same time, Texas and Louisiana shrimpers moved into the lower Gulf and shipped their catch out of Brownsville (*Handbook of Texas Online* "Brownsville"). Tourism rose as an industry in the 1950s with people coming to the area and going across the border to shop and see the sights in "exotic" Mexico. "Snow birds" and "Winter Texans" became a phenomenon during this period, temporarily increased the population and the city coffers during the winter months. Though Union Carbide built a plant near Brownsville in 1959, agriculture and small-scale manufacturing remained essential to the city's economy throughout the era (*Handbook of Texas Online* "Brownsville").

Two of the oldest buildings in the district were demolished by 1949. The original 1909 grocery warehouse and hardware building built by Hicks Hardware at 424 and 454 E. Fronton were razed. They were replaced about 1953 by a rectangular concrete block warehouse set across both lots, far back from E. Fronton Street. Like the earlier warehouses and factories on the southeast side of the street, the rear wall was aligned close to the railroad tracks. Wide wooden loading platforms lined both the front and rear facades. In 1959, the warehouse was enlarged to E. Fronton Street (Resource 5). It was occupied by the Brownsville Fruit and Vegetable Company, a wholesale grocery business (Figure 22). A. C. Hipp and E. de la Garza were still in operation on their sites in 1960. Together, these businesses attest to the continuing viability and importance of the wholesale grocery business into the 1960s.

At the same time, the factories on the street – McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company and Alamo Iron Works – continued to grow in response to the vibrant postwar economy. In 1945, just after the end of the war, Jack McNair hired E. L. Porter to remodel his original factory (Resource 14) by expanding both it and the adjacent c. 1933 factory (Resource 15) all the way to the alley at the rear of their lots, nearly doubling his previous space (Cameron County Mechanic's Lien 47: 243). The additions were built of Mexican brick and featured "flat" roofs that sloped slightly to drain water. The project greatly increased the company's ability to handle clothing orders which remained in high demand during the Korean War and into the period of the Vietnam War.

Looking ahead, McNair anticipated further expansion and in 1946 he bought all of lot 10 and the adjacent half of lot 9, on the other side of the newer factory. Jack's son, Gene McNair, joined the company in 1948 and together they embarked on an ambitious campaign to further expand the family business. In 1953, they obtained a loan from Brownsville Federal Savings and Loan and about a year later, they built a modern 2-story building with sleek lines, masonry walls and bands of metal awning windows on the site (Resource 16). It was adjacent to the 1933 factory but built independently of that building. Together the three masonry factories at 739, 749 and 759 E. Fronton represent the McNair presence in the district from 1921 through the 1950s.

A newspaper photograph printed in 1956 depicts the three adjoining buildings (Figure 23). They look very much as they do today. Though each was designed and built in separate campaigns – and they read as such from the outside – interior openings provide access from one building to the next. The remodeled shirt factory retains interior features from the early 20th century, including structural wood posts with supporting braces, offices with partial wall partitions and pay stations that appear to date to the 1940s, and 2/2 wood frame double hung sash that may date to the original 1910 Sugarman Supply Company warehouse. The remodeled factory and the two postwar buildings retain their historic appearance and architectural integrity to a remarkable degree.

Gene McNair succeeded his father as chief officer in 1956 (City lot registers, 1956). Under his leadership, the business grew to become the largest private employer south of San Antonio with a volume of more than two million dollars in sales by the mid-1950s. To keep up with demand in the 1960s, the company began acquiring other warehouses, including the former Walker-Craig warehouse at 504 E. Fronton Street and another warehouse building on nearby St. Francis Street, outside the district. In 1964, the company opened another factory in the nearby city of San Benito. During that period, Gene McNair expanded the company's reach far beyond the lower Rio Grande with distribution warehouses in Houston, Dallas and Los Angeles, and sales offices and showrooms in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Dallas (Harry E. McNair, Jr., June 12, 2017).

During this period of phenomenal growth, the company continued to manufacture uniforms and casual wear under its private labels but also did contract work for the federal government making uniforms for soldiers in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Its contract division continued to expand during that time with new customers such as Levi Strauss, Sears, Spiegels, Lee Jeans, Wrangler and other well-known national brands (Harry E. McNair, Jr., June 12, 2017). In 1972, Gene sold the business to Levi Strauss but the company retained its property on E. Fronton Street and maintained a strong presence in the district. In the 1980s, the company purchased the metal warehouse built by Alamo Iron Works at 800 E. Fronton Street. In addition to being Brownsville's largest private employer, Gene McNair made considerable social and civic contributions to the city in the 1950s and 1960s. He successfully ran for a seat on the Brownsville City Commission in 1959 and in 1961, he was elected Mayor of Brownsville. In accordance with his campaign promise, he served only one term in that office. Gene's son, Harry E. McNair, Jr., followed his father into business and local politics and was also elected to the Brownsville City Commission. Today, he serves McNair & Company, Inc. as president of the corporation and maintains his office in the former Ullmann, Stern & Krausse warehouse at 730 E. Fronton. The company leases its various buildings in the district to clothing recycling businesses.

Alamo Iron Works also expanded its business in the postwar era. At the end of the war, the company employed more than 500 employees at its various plants and offices. Instead of slowing down, the company redirected its production and distribution from military uses to the postwar building boom. The company supplied materials for brass work, pipe and pattern shops, foundries, welding shops, and steel fabrication and reinforcing steel shops. It expanded to include more steel and concrete used in construction and continued to provide specialized machinery for farms, ranches, and a wide variety of businesses. Unprecedented postwar demand kept all branches and the "home" plant – which had grown to cover six acres of land in downtown San Antonio – fully staffed from the mid-1940s through the 1950s (Alamo Iron Works).

By the early 1960s, Alamo Iron Works began to consolidate its business and closed its San Angelo and Brownsville warehouses, leaving only its sales offices open in those branches. In 1963, the company closed its Houston plant. Alamo Iron Works remained in the former Ullmann, Stern & Krausse building through the 1970s when the company sold the building to McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company, Inc. Harry E. McNair, Jr., president of McNair and Company, Inc., remodeled part of the building as his office. The original 2-story office portion of the buildings retains its historic appearance from the 1930s and 1940s to a remarkable degree. The open warehouse is used for storage. McNair and Company, Inc. ultimately bought the metal warehouse (Resource 13) built by Alamo Iron Works in the block across 8th Street (800 E. Fronton). Like most of their other warehouses on the street, it is leased to a clothing recycling business and remains in use today.

The Present

Today, the freight depot and office buildings lie vacant. The railroad tracks were removed and the freight yards moved outside the city. Though their windows and doors are boarded up, they retain a significant level of architectural integrity, especially in design and materials. Some of the earliest historic warehouses and factories in the district have been altered to a greater extent but still possess sufficient integrity of design, materials, location, setting, feeling, and association to convey a good sense of their history as integral components of a once-bustling commercial district along Brownsville's freight line.

Most of the former wholesale grocery warehouses and factories buildings built between 1909 and 1959 are still in use as work spaces and storage for the clothing recycling industry. The cavernous interiors of the buildings are well-suited to the business of sorting, examining, baling, and shipping used clothing. One former warehouse, the Walker-Bennett Dry Goods Warehouse at 430 E. Fronton (Resource 4), is used as storage for an import business. The warehouse built for the Ullmann Stern & Krausse "fancy foods" company (Resource 12) is used as storage. The two-story office section added by Alamo Iron Works has been remodeled as the owner's office. The original floorplan, glass and metal partitions, window openings and light fixtures of the 1930s and 1940s office section remain intact.

Three historic warehouses have been altered so extensively that they no longer convey their original appearance. They are the Consumer's Ice and Cold Storage building next to the original de la Garza warehouse (Resource 8), the E. de la Garza warehouse at 634 E. Fronton (Resource 9), and a third warehouse in the 700 block of E. Fronton (Resource 11). These resources have lost integrity of design and materials to such an extent that they no longer convey a good sense of history. Large sections of all three resources are obscured by the addition of nonhistoric metal roofs and siding. A third historic resource, the Desel-Boettcher garage at 430B E. Fronton (Resource 3) has been significantly altered by the heavy application of stucco, the introduction of new window openings and aluminum sliding windows and the enclosure of the original garage bays which were a character-defining feature of the building. Only one resource in the district is nonhistoric; it is a pre-fabricated metal building used for storage (Resource 7). The altered historic buildings and nonhistoric metal building are noncontributing resources in the district.

Summary

The district was entirely built out by about 1959 when the last masonry warehouse was completed at 454 E. Fronton (Resource 5). Through the 1960s, most of street from the 100 block to the 1000 block of E. Fronton was lined with masonry warehouses and light industrial plants. By the 1970s, however, several major wholesale grocers, including A. C. Hipp (Resource 4) and Walker-Craig (Resource 6) had closed. Since the 1970s, a number of warehouses and plants in the 100-300 and the 900-1000 blocks of E. Fronton, and elsewhere along the historic freight line, have been demolished resulting in vacant lots. The 400-800 block stretch of E. Fronton Street, however, remains intact with no significant demolition and only one nonhistoric building added in the district since 1959, the end of the period of significance. Most of them remain in use as warehouses and small-scale factories. Today, the historic freight depot buildings, and the warehouses and factories lining the 400-800 blocks of E. Fronton Street, convey a strong sense of Brownsville's significant role in the region's economic development as a center for shipping and transporting local produce and manufactured goods to outside markets, and as a manufacturing district that grew to become one of the largest employers in South Texas by the 1940s. Thus, the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation at the local level of significance. The period of significance is 1909 to 1959.

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Personal communication, various dates.
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Robert Vezzetti, Interview with Terri Myers. Brownsville, Texas. March 7, 2017.
Ambrosio Villarreal. Personal communication. November 10, 2016

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 8.65 acres

Coordinates Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

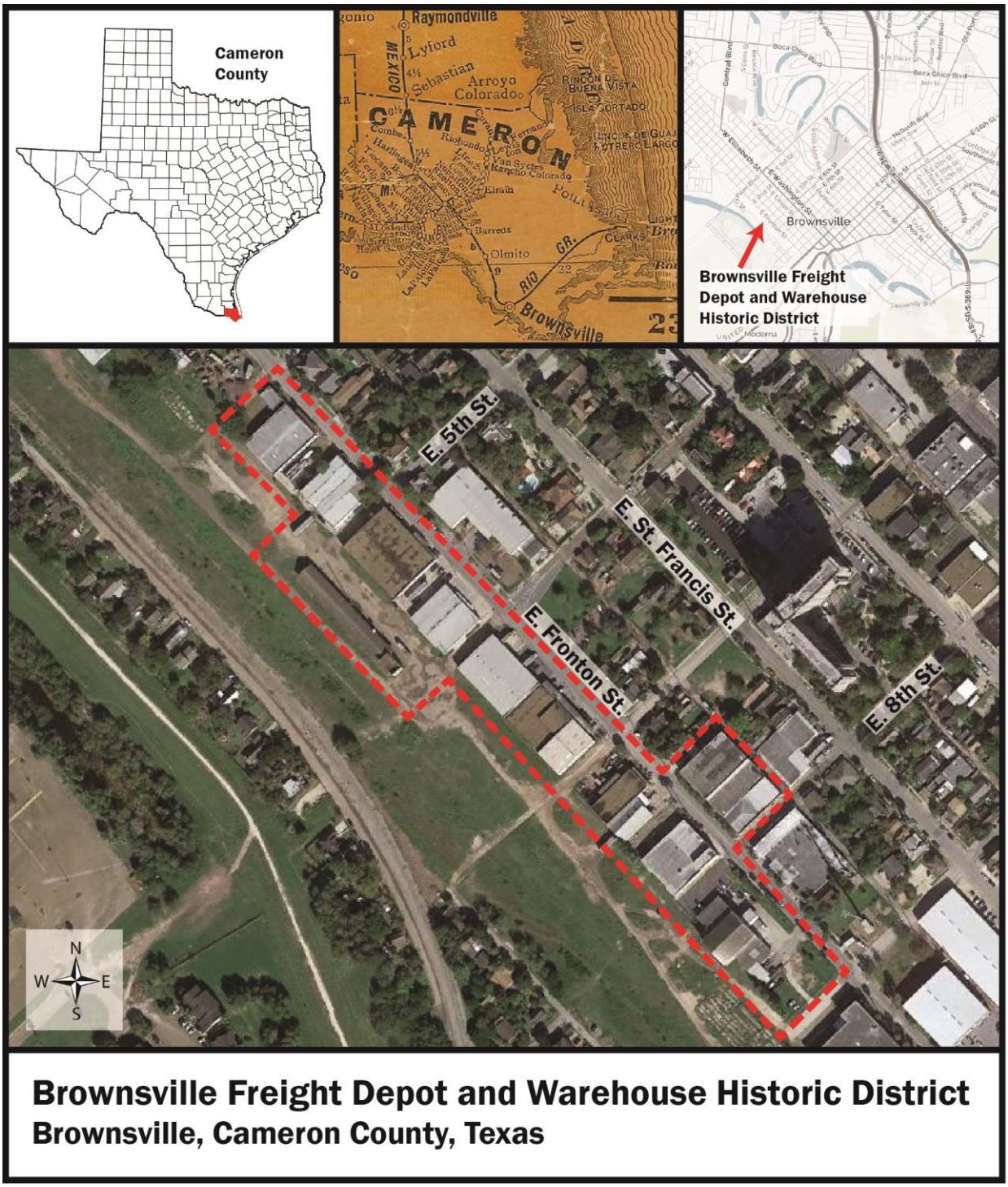
Datum if other than WGS84: NA

	Latitude	Longitude
1.	25.904032°	-97.506692°
2.	25.901761°	-97.504283°
3.	25.902054°	-97.503941°
4.	25.901628°	-97.503506°
5.	25.901345°	-97.503830°
6.	25.900669°	-97.503140°
7.	25.900270°	-97.503577°
8.	25.902287°	-97.505638°
9.	25.902098°	-97.505891°
10.	25.902975°	-97.506827°
11.	25.903183°	-97.506557°
12.	25.903738°	-97.507086°

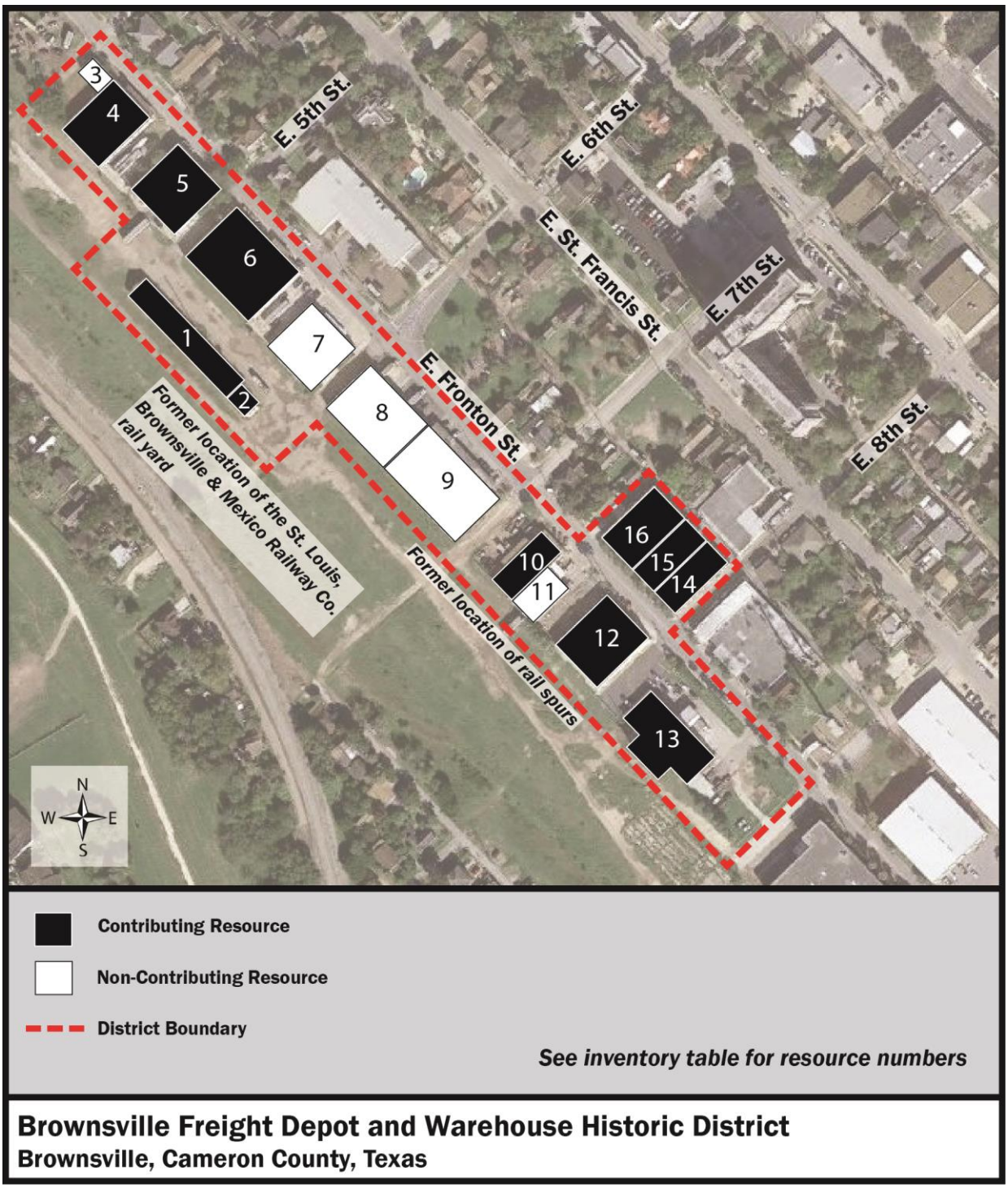
Verbal Bounary Description: The Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District boundaries encompass the south side of E. Fronton Street between E. 4th and E. 9th Streets, a portion of the 700 block on the north side of E. Fronton, and the freight depot and freight depot office along former railroad alignment between E. 5th and E. 6th Streets. In particular, these boundaries include Lots 1-6, Block 16, Lots 1-12, Block 17, Lots 1-6, Block 18, Lots 9-12, Block 19, Lots 1-6, Block 321 and Lots 1-6, Block 318, comprising approximately 8.65 acres of land in the Brownsville Original Townsite, Cameron County, Texas.

Boundary Justification: These boundaries contain the former St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Company freight depot, depot office, and a concentration of commercial warehouse and factory buildings in the 400-800 blocks of E. Fronton Street associated with Brownsville's development as a shipping hub for manufactured goods and locally-grown agricultural products in the early 20th century. These boundaries are drawn to include the largest number of extant properties that possess sufficient historic and architectural integrity to convey their significance. They are drawn to exclude vacant lots, nonhistoric resources, substantailly altered resources, and domestic and other property types not associated with early 20th century commerce and transportation themes.

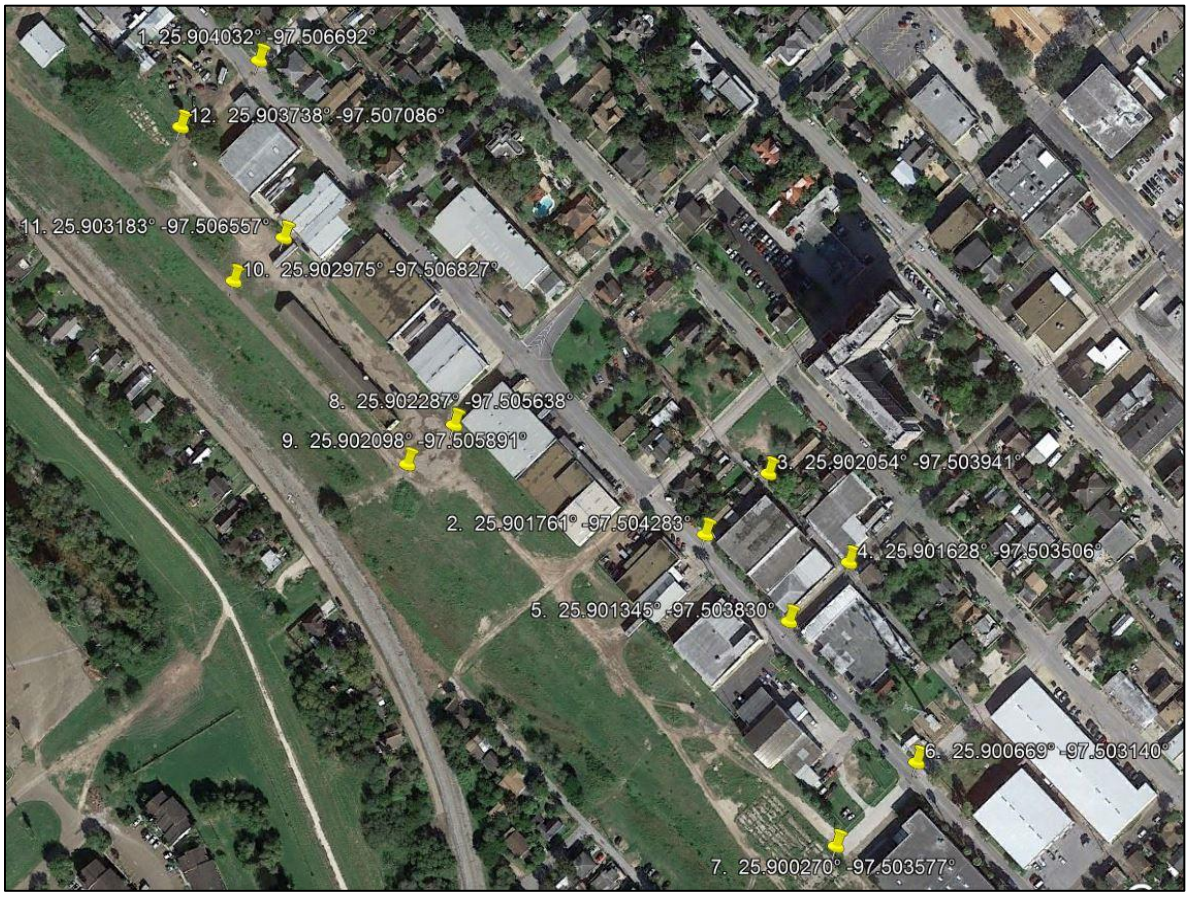
MAP 1: Location of the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District, 400-800 blocks E. Fronton Street, Brownsville, Texas (map imagery from Mapquest.com; aerial imagery from Google Earth).



MAP 2: Historic District Map – 400-800 E. Fronton (Aerial imagery from Google Earth).

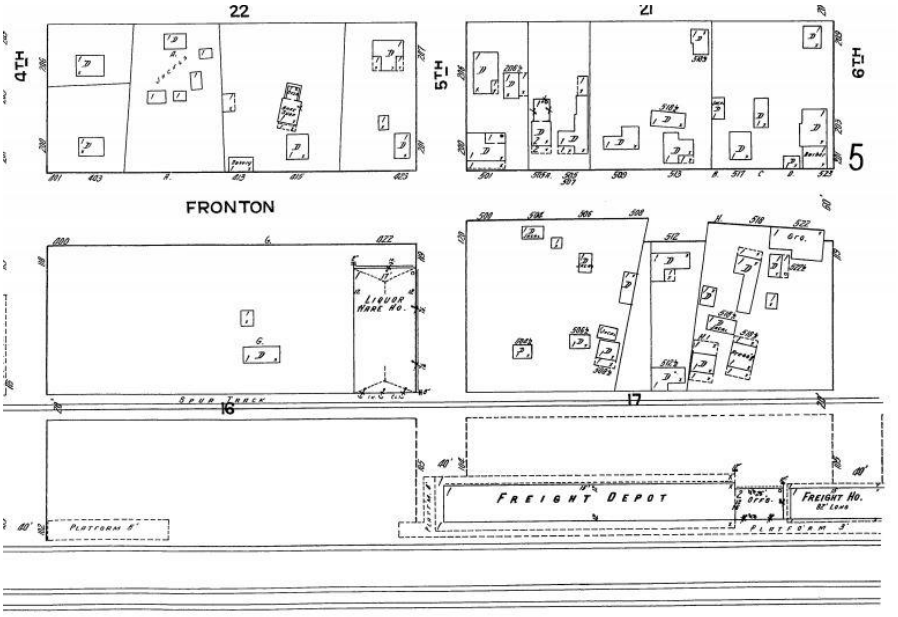


MAP 3: Google Earth locational map with coordinates to indicate boundaries for the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse Historic District. Numbered coordinate points (1 to 12) correspond with those provided on page 58. Map retrieved October 18, 2017.

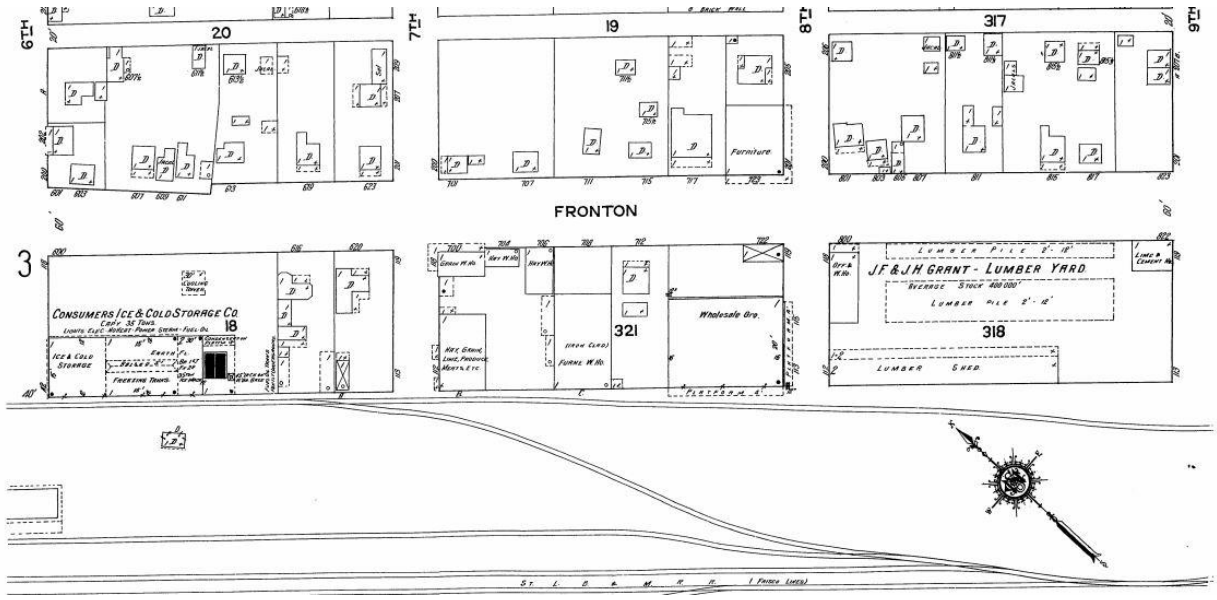


	Latitude	Longitude
1.	25.904032°	-97.506692°
2.	25.901761°	-97.504283°
3.	25.902054°	-97.503941°
4.	25.901628°	-97.503506°
5.	25.901345°	-97.503830°
6.	25.900669°	-97.503140°
7.	25.900270°	-97.503577°
8.	25.902287°	-97.505638°
9.	25.902098°	-97.505891°
10.	25.902975°	-97.506827°
11.	25.903183°	-97.506557°
12.	25.903738°	-97.507086°

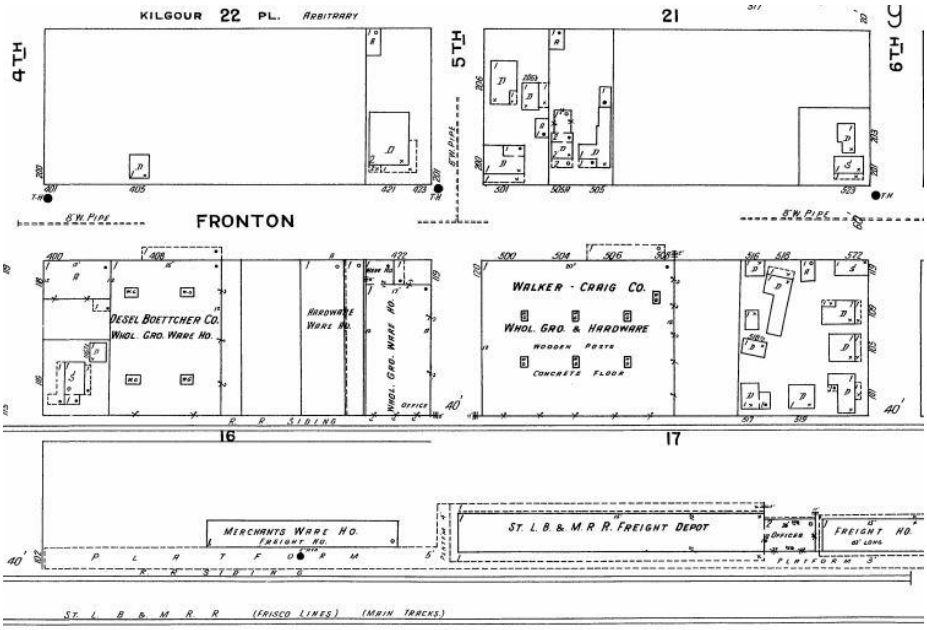
MAP 4A: 400 and 500 blocks of E. Fronton Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1914
(Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.)



MAP 4B: 600, 700, and 800 blocks of E. Fronton Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1914
(Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.)



MAP 5A: 400 and 500 blocks of E. Fronton Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1926
(Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.)



MAP 5B: 600, 700, and 800 blocks of E. Fronton Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1926
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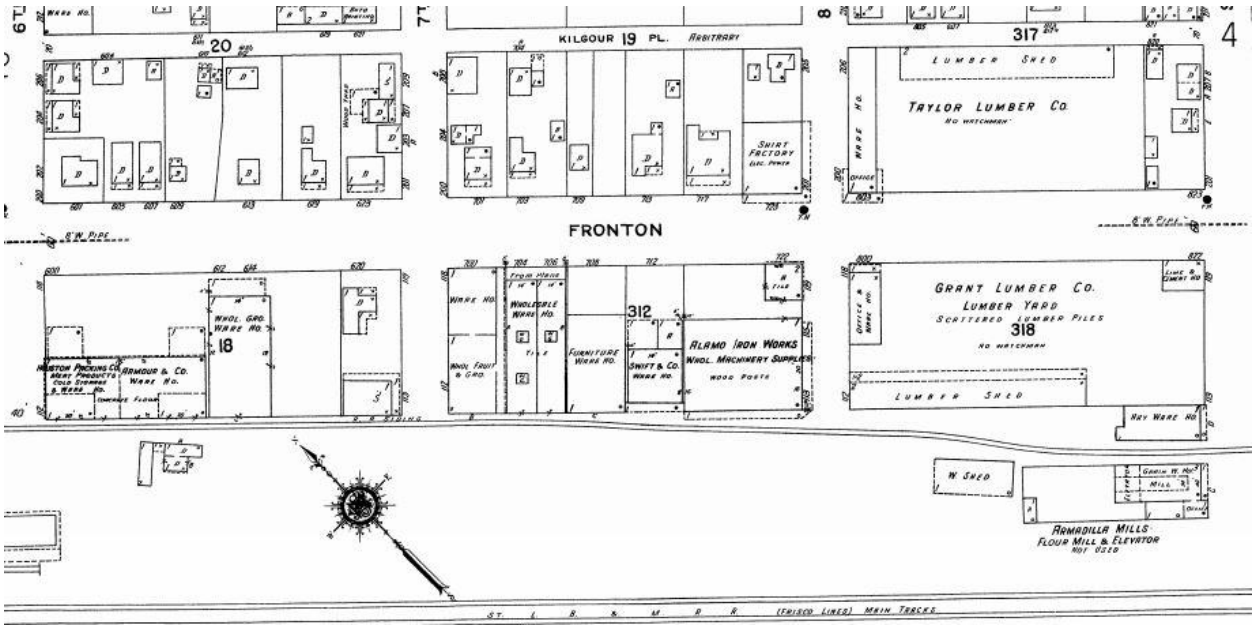
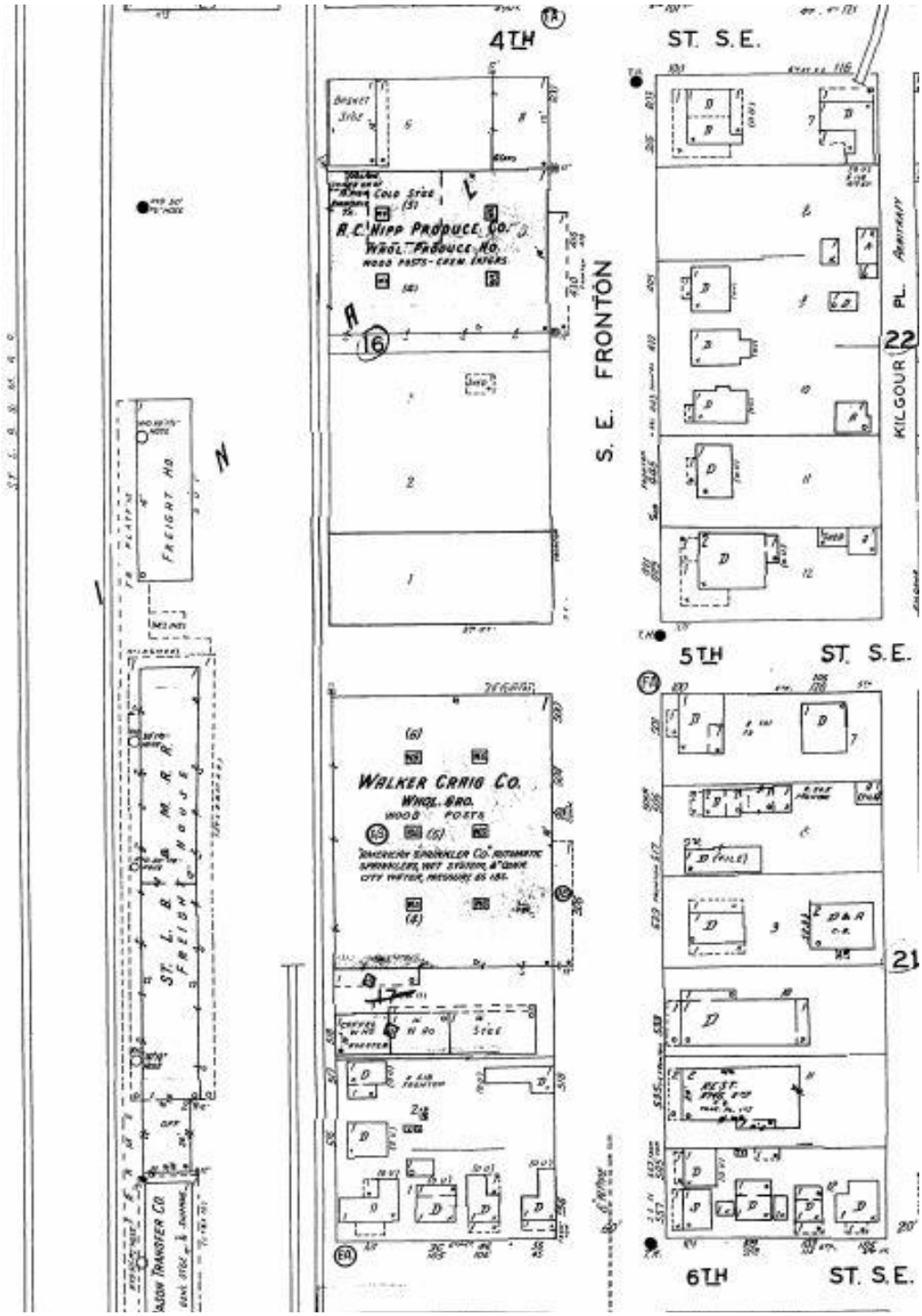
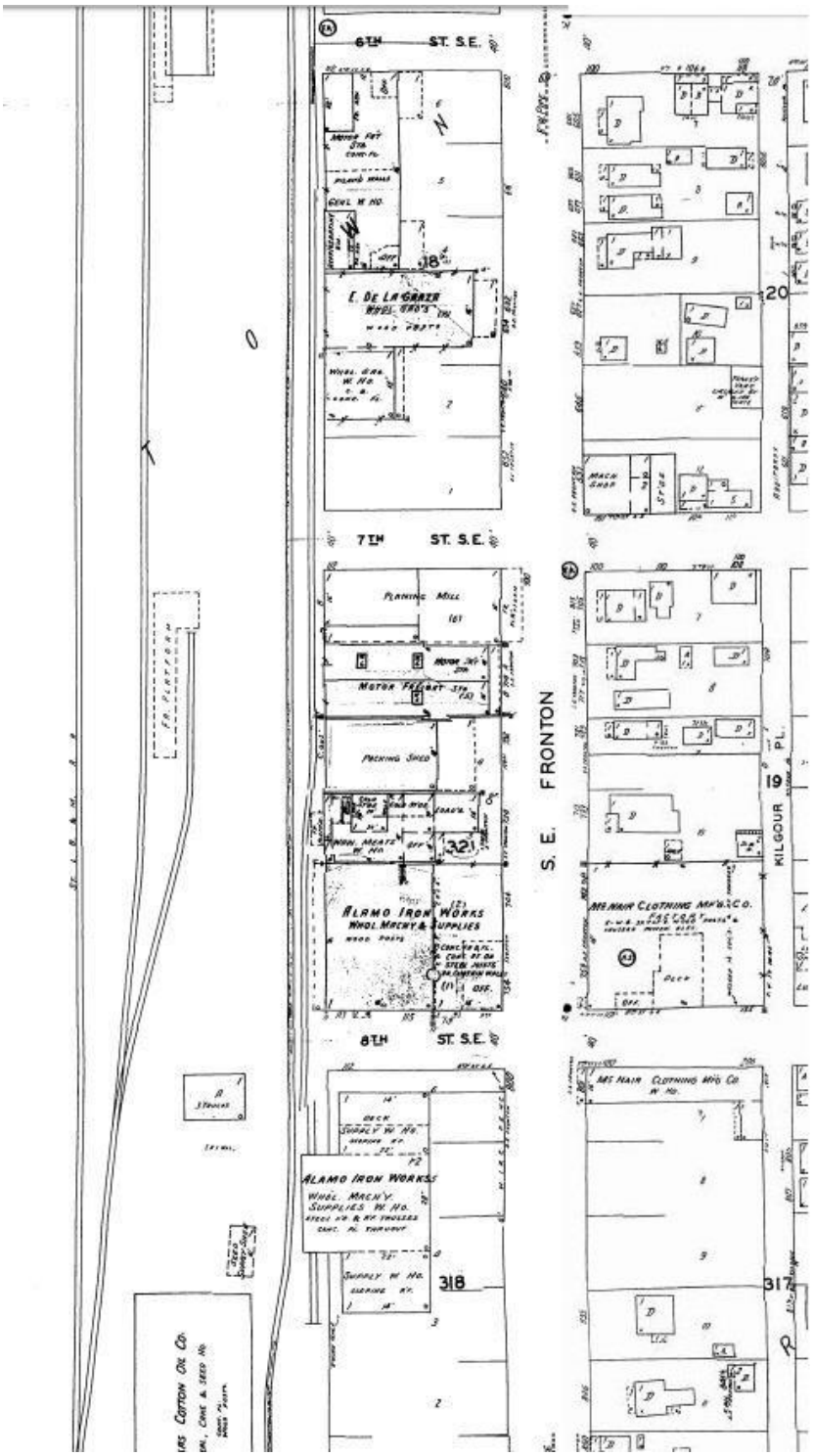


MAP 6A: 400 and 500 blocks of E. Fronton Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1949 (Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.)

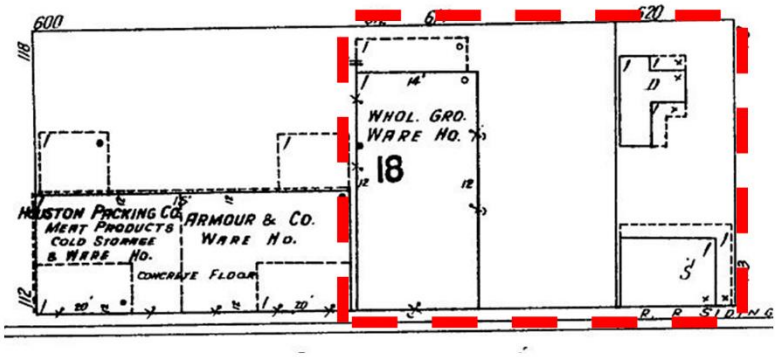


MAP 6B: 600, 700, and 800 blocks of E. Fronton Street, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1949 (Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.)

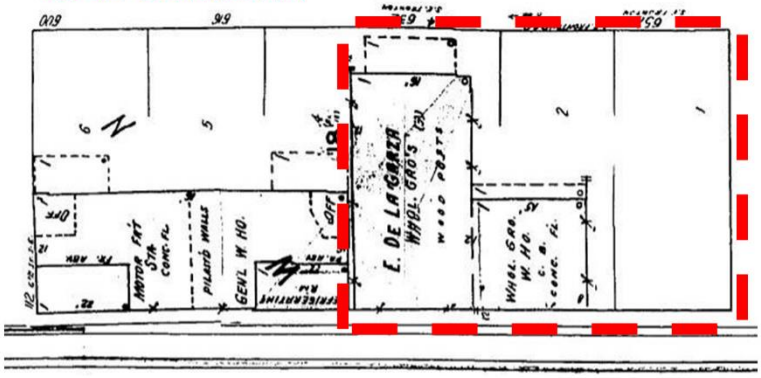


MAP 7: Progression of Resource 9, 600 block E. Fronton Street (southwest side of street). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Brownsville, Texas (1926 and 1949 maps from Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas. Updated 1957 map courtesy Juan Velez, City of Brownsville Historic Preservation Officer, Brownsville, Texas.)

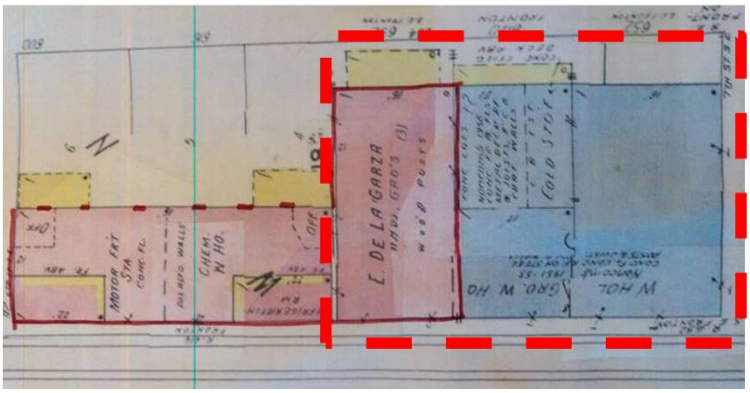
1926 Sanborn:



1949 Sanborn:

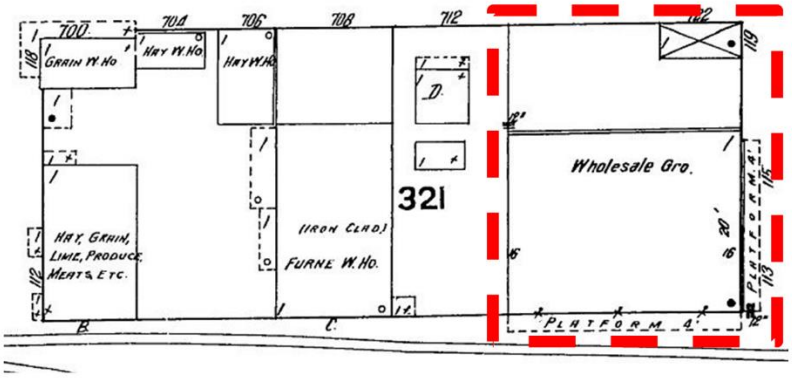


1957 Sanborn:

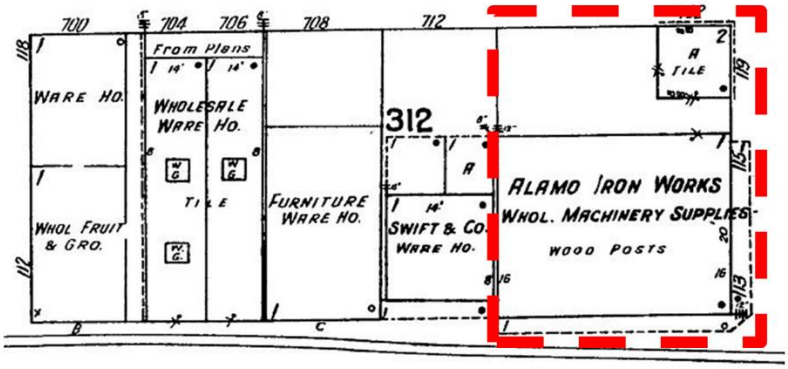


MAP 8: Progression of Resource 12, 700 block E. Fronton Street (southwest side of street). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Brownsville, Texas (1914 and 1927 maps from Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas. Updated 1957 map courtesy Juan Velez, City of Brownsville Historic Preservation Officer, Brownsville, Texas).

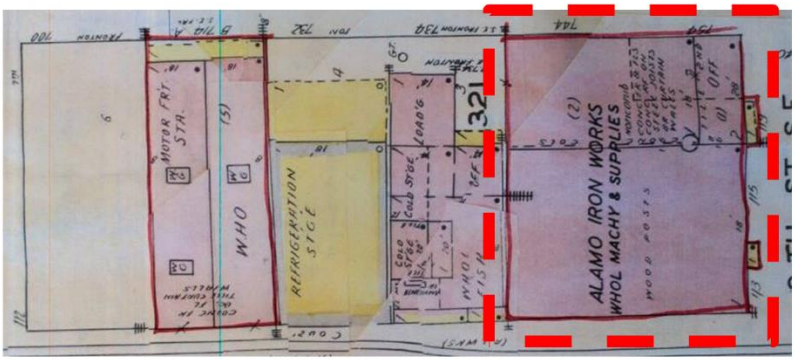
1914 Sanborn:



1927 Sanborn:

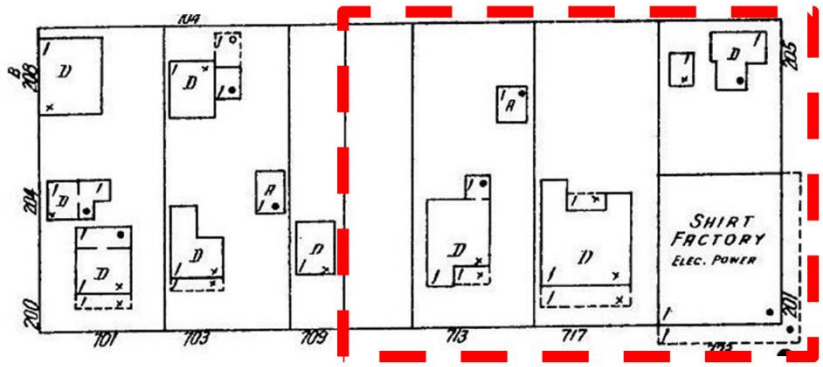


1957 Sanborn:

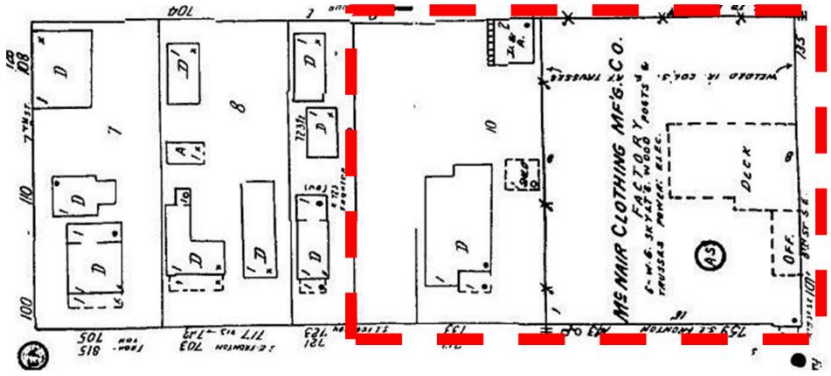


MAP 9: Progression of Resources 14, 15 & 16, 700 block E. Fronton Street (northeast side of street). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Brownsville, Texas (1926 and 1949 maps from Texas Digital Sanborn Maps online databases, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas. Updated 1957 map courtesy Juan Velez, City of Brownsville Historic Preservation Officer, Brownsville, TX).

1926 Sanborn:



1949 Sanborn:



1957 Sanborn:

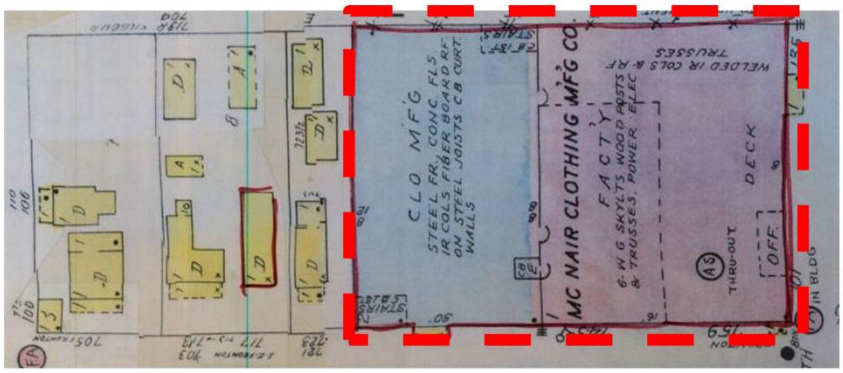


FIGURE 1: Example of the "Border Brick Style" – Nestor Saenz Store, built 1884, Roma, Texas. HABS drawing courtesy Sanchez, 1994.

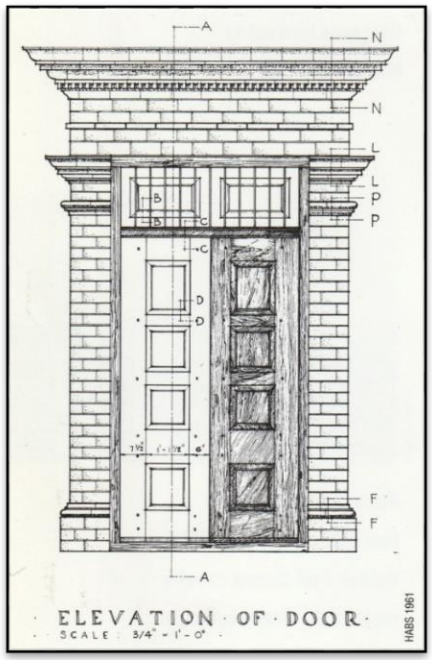


FIGURE 2: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot, c. 1912. Robert Runyon, photographer. Image courtesy of Ambrosio Villarreal. Courtesy Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

FIGURE 3: Ullmann, Stern & Krausse grocery warehouse (Resource 12). Photo by Robert Runyon, 1912. Image provided by Harry E. McNair, Jr. Courtesy Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

FIGURE 4: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. train arriving in Brownsville,1904. Robert Runyon, photographer, reprinted in *Brownsville Herald*, July 7, 2004. Courtesy Brownsville Historical Association Collection.

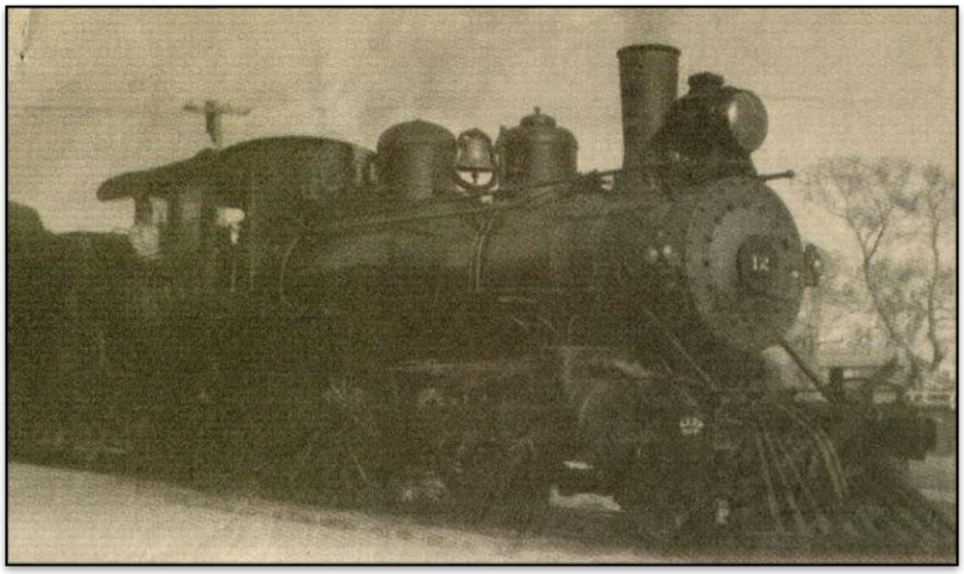


FIGURE 5: Brownsville citizens meet the first passenger train, 1904, courtesy Chilton 2014.

FIGURE 6: Cotton waiting to be ferried across the Rio Grande to Mexico during the Civil War. Original lithograph from *Harper's Weekly* magazine. Image courtesy Chilton, 2010.

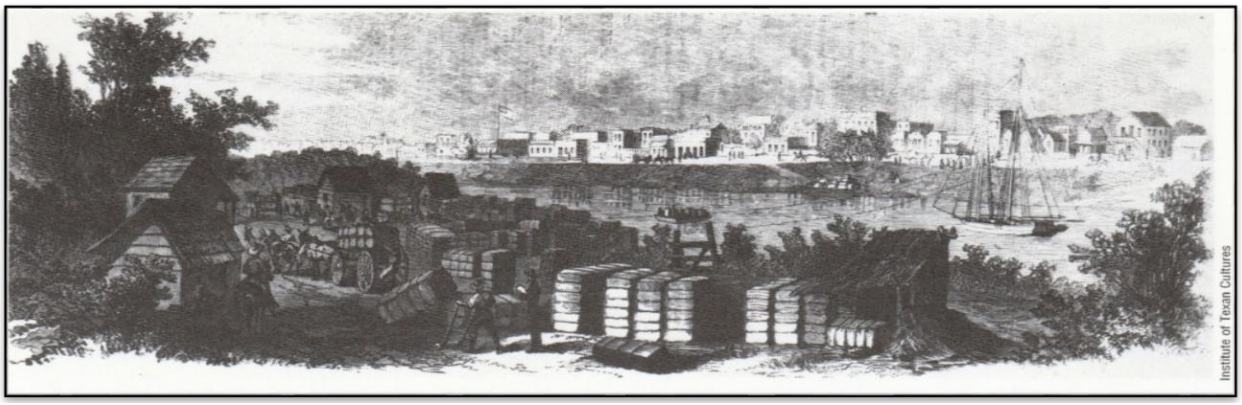


FIGURE 7: Alice to Brownsville passenger stage and freight wagon, c. 1900, courtesy Chilton, 2014.

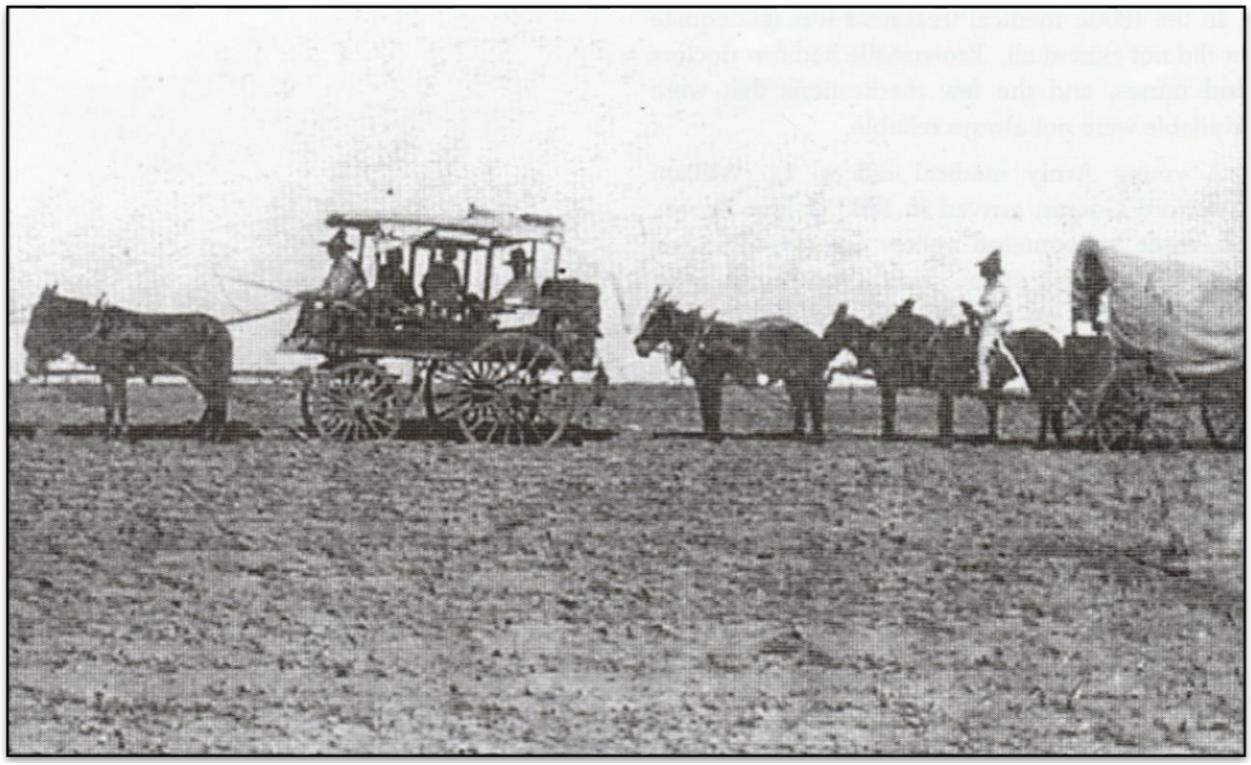


FIGURE 8: Postcards to attract "homeseekers" to the lower Rio Grande, early 20th century, courtesy Gerhardt and Santa Ana III, 2000.

Postcards were among the many marketing tools used by land companies to lure settlers to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The front of the card (above) was a colorful illustration, while the back (below) carried advertising. (Courtesy of Weslaco Bicultural Museum.)

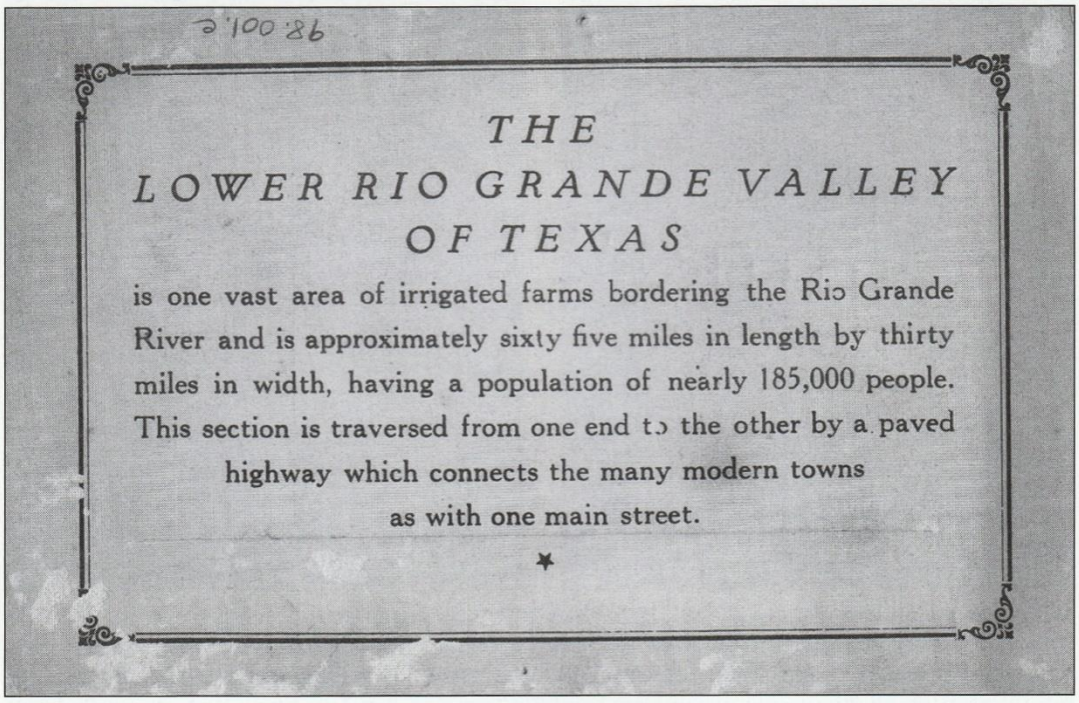


FIGURE 9: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. passenger station in Brownsville, c. 1915, courtesy Brownsville Historical Association Collection.

FIGURE 10: New York & Brownsville Improvement Company *Map of the City of Brownsville*, first drafted 1909. (Freight depot outlined in red).

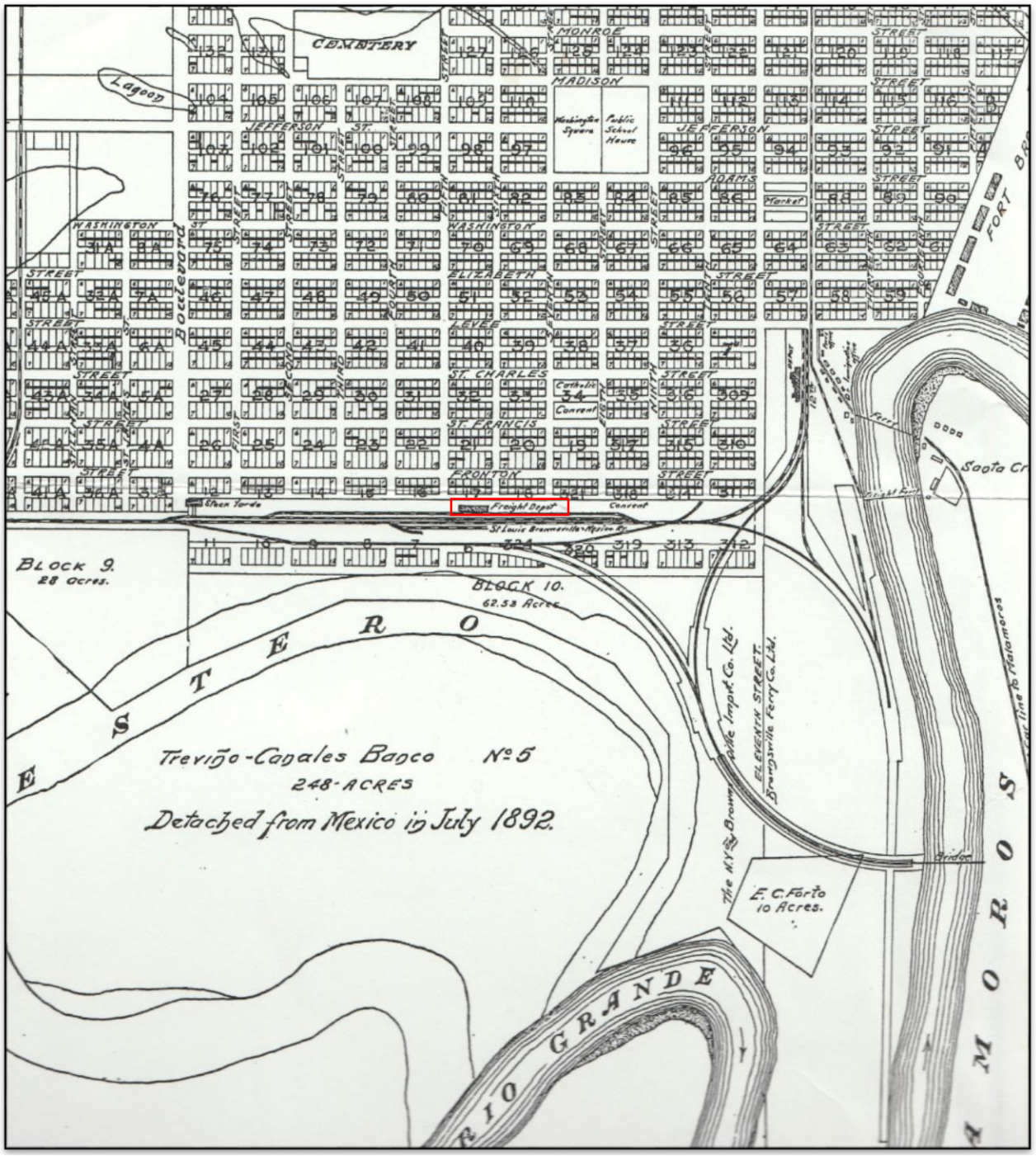


FIGURE 11: The McDavitt Brothers were among the first commercial truck farmers to ship produce from the freight depot in 1905. Label in *Texas Citrus & Vegetable Growers Yearbook*, 1953, courtesy Brownsville Historical Museum collection.

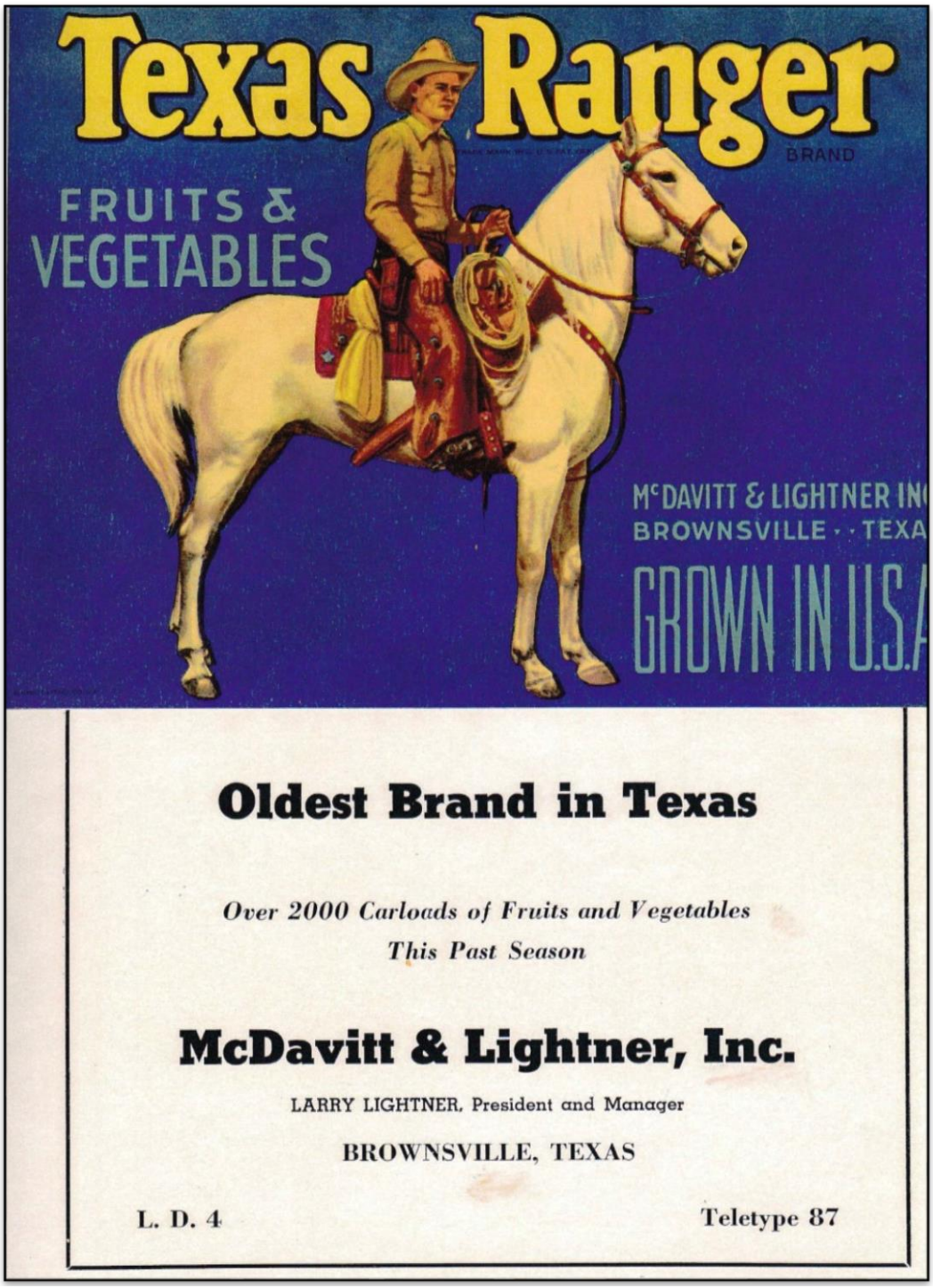


FIGURE 12: Irrigated Citrus Grove, postcard in author's collection.

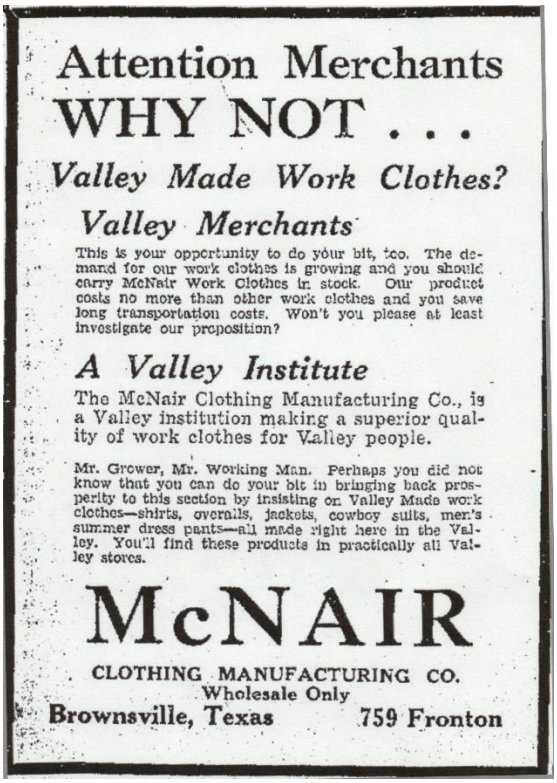
FIGURE 13: First Illinois Cavalry at St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Freight Depot during "Border Troubles" (warehouse on the left razed), photographed c. 1914 by Robert Runyon. Copy courtesy of Ambrosio Villarreal. Original at the Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

FIGURE 14: Artillery on loading platform of the St. L, B & M Railway Freight Depot during "Border Troubles," photographed c. 1914 by Robert Runyon. Copy courtesy of Ambrosio Villarreal. Original at the Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

FIGURE 15: Wagons bringing crops to St. L, B & M Railway freight depot for shipment to outside markets, c. 1912, courtesy Brownsville Historical Association Collection.

FIGURE 16: Eleuterio de la Garza in his Monterrey, Mexico office, c. 1910. He moved his business to E. Fronton Street in Brownsville during the Mexican Revolution. Courtesy Brownsville Historical Association Collection.

FIGURE 17: McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company actually expanded in the 1930s, *Brownsville Herald*, April 30, 1933.



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Mr. Grower, Mr. Working Man. Perhaps you did not know that you can do your bit in bringing back prosperity to this section by insisting on Valley Made work clothes—shirts, overalls, jackets, cowboy suits, men's summer dress pants—all made right here in the Valley. You'll find these products in practically all Valley stores.

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FIGURE 18: Alamo Iron Works shop established on former Grant Lumber Company lumber yard, 1924. Photo from company website http://aiw.alamark.com/?page_id=1290.

FIGURE 19: McNair Shirt Factory (Resource 14, 759 E. Fronton), early 20th century photo in collection of Harry E. McNair, Jr.

FIGURE 20: Red Arrow Freight Lines had an office in the former Nabisco warehouse at 720 E. Fronton Street in the early 1950s. Advertisement in *Citrus Grower's Yearbook*, 1953, courtesy Brownsville Historical Museum Collection.

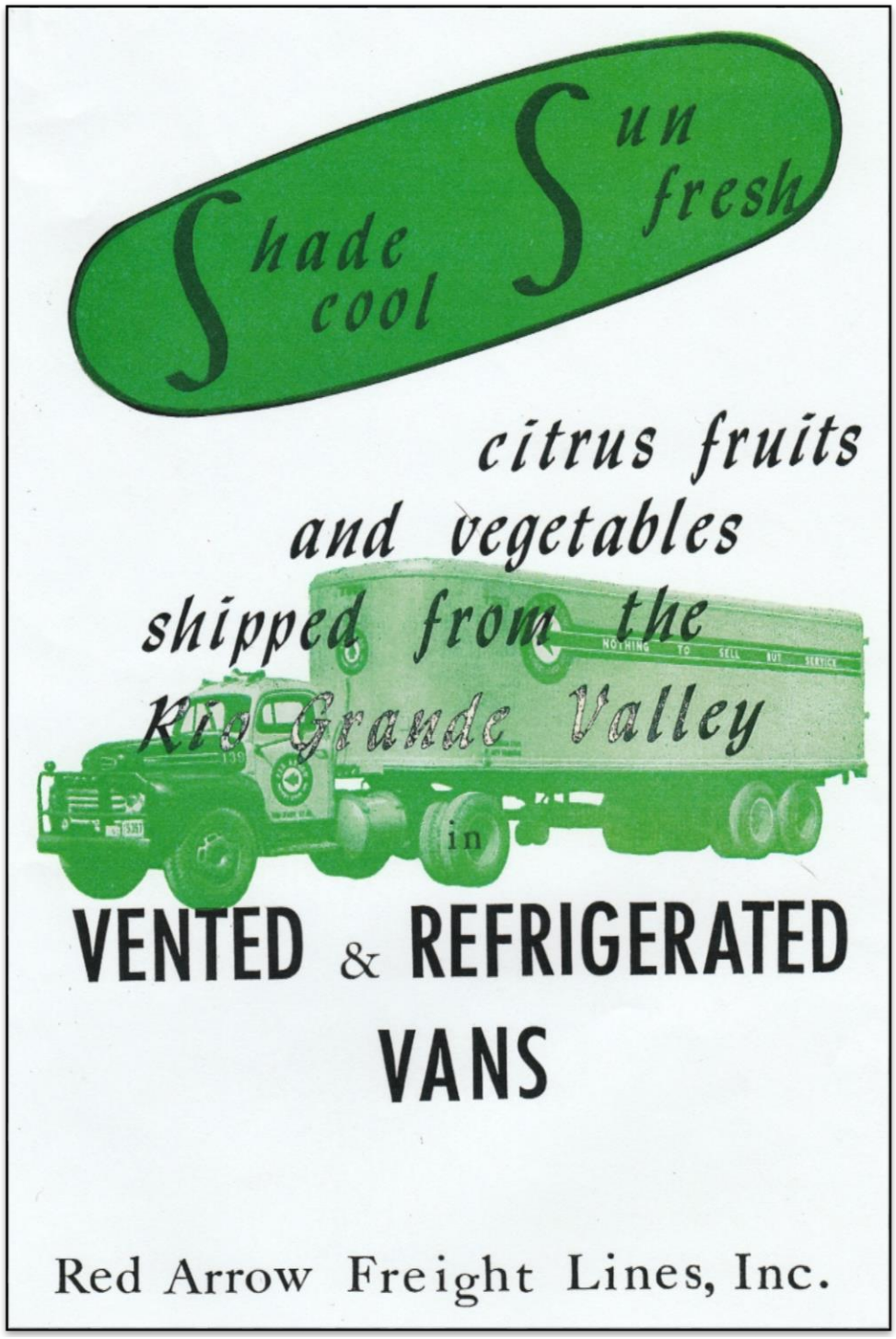

FIGURE 21: Wholesale grocers on E. Fronton Street in 1955 (A. C. Hipp Produce, 430 E. Fronton (Resource 5); E. de la Garza, 634 E. Fronton (Resource 9); and Walker-Craig, 504 E. Fronton (Resource 6). Advertisements in Brownsville city directory, 1955, courtesy Brownsville Historical Museum Collection.

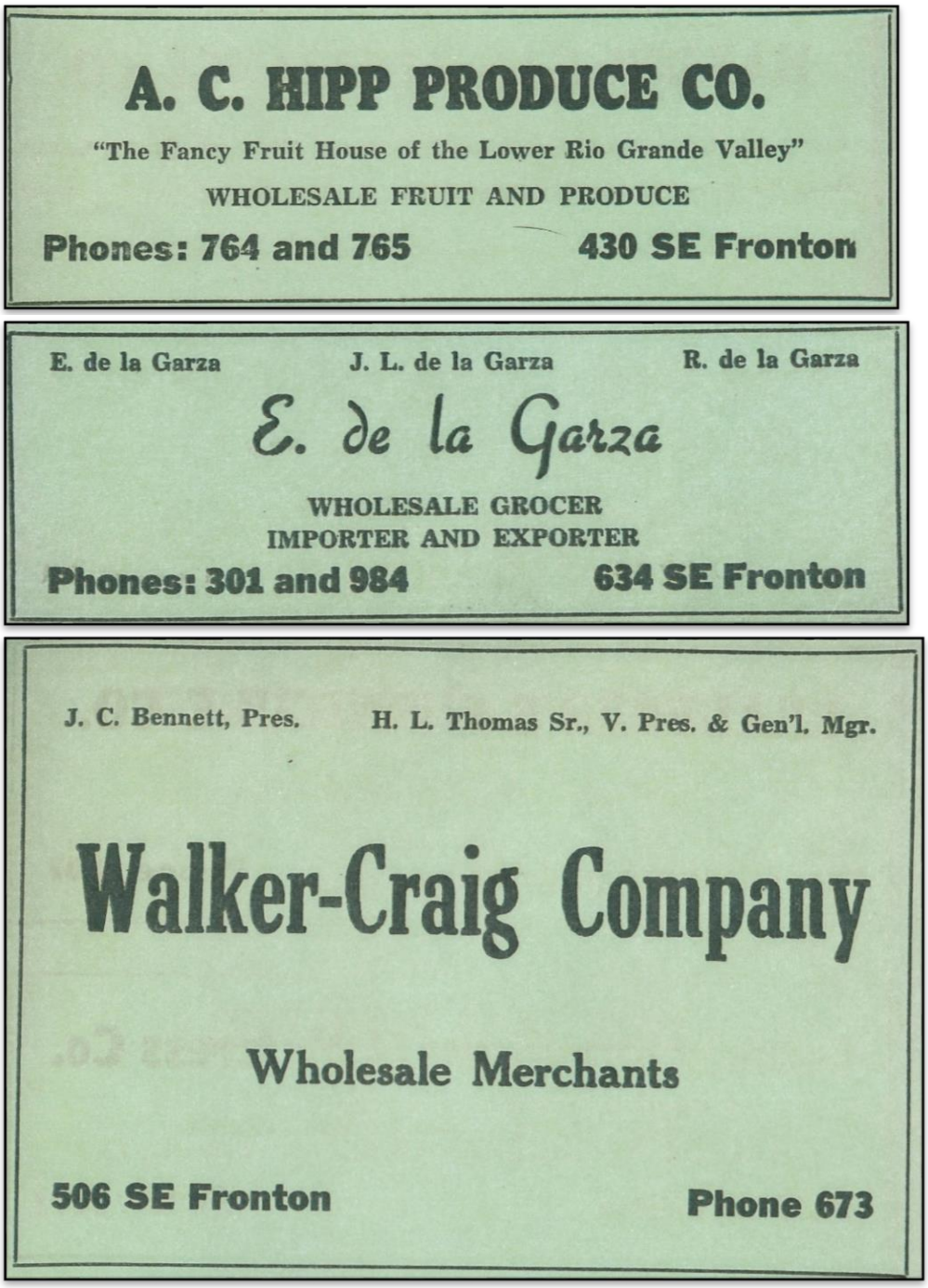

FIGURE 22: Brownsville Fruit & Vegetable Company announces Grand Opening of new store at 454 E. Fronton, 1959. In *Brownsville Herald*, January 8, 1959, page 4.

FIGURE 23: McNair factories (Resources 14, 15, and 16 right to left) as they appeared in 1956 and as they appear today (2017). Historic image in *Brownsville Herald*, April 30, 1956, page 44.

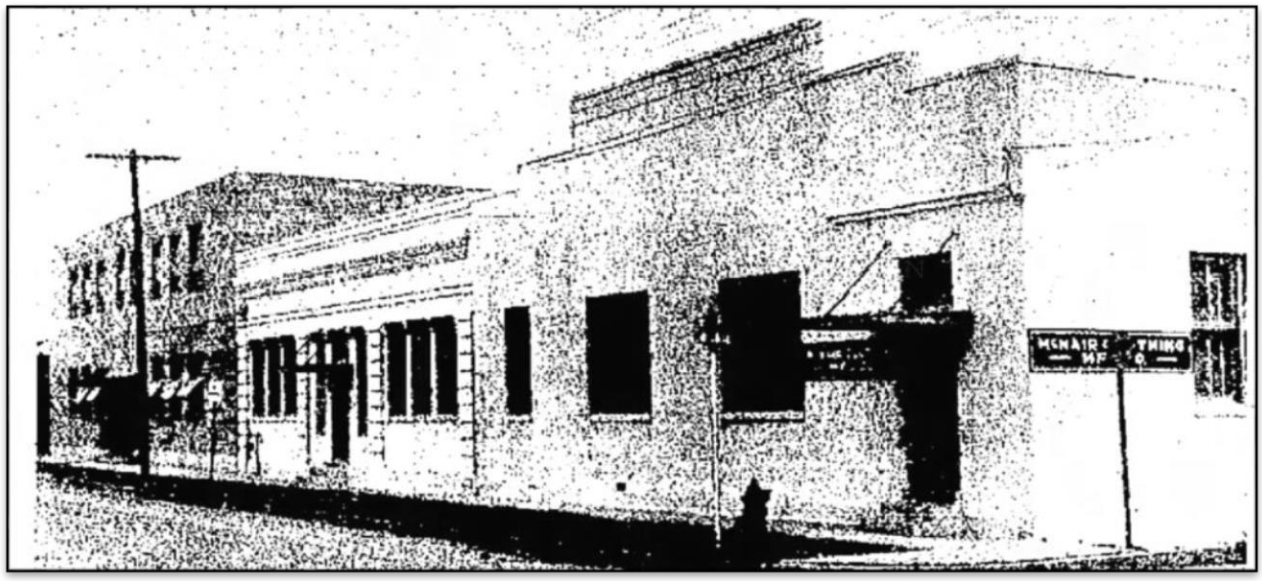

PHOTO 1: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot (left) and Depot Office (right), (Resources 1 and 2), front/south elevations, facing north/northeast.

PHOTO 2: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Depot Office (left) and Freight Depot (right), (Resources 2 and 1), side/east and rear/north elevations, facing northwest.

PHOTO 3: Nabisco Warehouse (right) and Ullmann Stern & Krausse Warehouse (left), 720-730 E. Fronton Street (Resources 10 and 12), front/north elevations, facing south.

PHOTO 4: 600-700 blocks of E. Fronton Street, (Resources 9, 10 and 12 showing right to left), front/north elevations, facing south/southeast.

PHOTO 5: 400-500 blocks E. Fronton Street (Resources 4 and 5 showing right to left), front/north elevations, facing south.

PHOTO 6: 700 block E. Fronton Street (Resources 16, 15, & 14 on left; Resource 12 on right), facing southeast.

PHOTO 7: Rear (freight line) view along rear, 400-700 blocks E. Fronton, facing north/northwest.

PHOTO 8: Rear (freight line) view along rear, 600 block E. Fronton (Resources 8 and 9 showing left to right), facing north.

PHOTO 9: Resource 6 side/west elevation (left) and Resource 1 (freight depot; behind right), front/north elevation, facing southwest.

PHOTO 10: McNair factories, Resources 14, 15 & 16 (right to left), 700 block E. Fronton, front/south elevations, facing north.

PHOTO 11: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot, west and south elevations, facing east/southeast.

PHOTO 12: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Depot Office, front/south and side/east elevations, facing north.

PHOTO 13: 430B E. Fronton Street (Resource 3), side and front/north elevations, facing south.

PHOTO 14: 430A E. Fronton Street (Resource 4), side and front/north elevations, facing west.

PHOTO 15: 454 E. Fronton Street (Resource 5), front/north and west elevations, facing south.

PHOTO 16: 504 E. Fronton Street (Resource 6), east and front/north elevations, facing west.

PHOTO 17: 534 E. Fronton Street (Resource 7), side/east and front/north facing west.

PHOTO 18: 600 block E. Fronton Street (Resource 8), front/north elevation, facing west.

PHOTO 19: 634 E. Fronton Street (Resource 9), original c. 1924 building volume, front/north elevation, facing southwest.

PHOTO 20: 720 E. Fronton Street (Resource 10), front/north elevations, facing south.

PHOTO 21: 720 E. Fronton Street (Resources 11 and 10 left to right), front/north elevations, facing west.

PHOTO 22: 730 E. Fronton Street (Resource 12), rear/south and east elevations, facing north.

PHOTO 23: 800 E. Fronton Street (Resource 13), front/north elevation, facing south.

PHOTO 24: 759 E. Fronton Street (Resource 14), front/south and east elevations, facing north.

PHOTO 25: 749 E. Fronton Street (Resource 15), front/south elevation, facing northeast.

PHOTO 26: 739 E. Fronton Street (Resource 16), front/south elevation, facing northeast.

PHOTO 27: St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Freight Depot, facing south (Depot Office visible at far left).

PHOTO 28: Bracket and brickwork detail, St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway Co. Depot, south elevation, facing northwest.

PHOTO 29: 430A E. Fronton Street (Resource 4), rear (freight line) elevation, facing northeast.

PHOTO 30: 454 E. Fronton Street (Resource 5), rear (freight line) south elevation, facing north/northwest.

PHOTO 31: 504 E. Fronton Street (Resource 6), rear (freight line) elevations, facing north.

PHOTO 32: 600 block E. Fronton Street (Resource 8), north and west elevations with c. 1906 original building volume visible on the right, facing south.

PHOTO 33: 634 E. Fronton Street (Resource 9), facing west/southwest.

PHOTO 34: 634 E. Fronton Street (Resource 9), c. 1956 building volume front/north elevation, facing southwest.

PHOTO 35: 730 E. Fronton Street (Resource 12), east side elevation with c. 1925 office volume on right, facing north.

PHOTO 36: 730 E. Fronton Street (Resource 12), brickwork detail at southeast corner, facing north.

PHOTO 37: 749 E. Fronton Street (Resource 15), brickwork detail, front/south elevation.

PHOTO 38: 749 E. Fronton Street (Resource 15), brick detail, rear/north elevation.

PHOTO 39: 739 E. Fronton Street (Resource 16), rear/north elevation, facing west/southwest.


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MEXICO

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Nomination
Property Name:	Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District
Multiple Name:	
State & County:	TEXAS, Cameron

Date Received:	Date of Pending List:	Date of 16th Day:	Date of 45th Day:	Date of Weekly List:
2/14/2018	3/9/2018	3/26/2018	4/2/2018	3/30/2018

Reference number:	SG100002266
Nominator:	State

Reason For Review:

X Accept _____ Return _____ Reject **3/26/2018** Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Control Unit Discipline _____

Telephone _____ Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

real places telling real stories

TO: Edson Beall
National Register of Historic Places
Mail Stop 7228
1849 C St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

From: Mark Wolfe, SHPO
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

DATE: February 1, 2018

The following materials are submitted:

X	Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination of the Brownsville Freight Depot and Warehouse District, Brownsville, Cameron 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, KMZ files, and nomination PDF
	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:

GREG ABBOTT, GOVERNOR • JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIR • MARK WOLFE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TEXAS • 78711-2276 • P 512.463.6100 • F 512.475.4872 • TDD 1.800.735.2989 • www.thc.state.tx.us