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

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OCT -9 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: McNair House
Other name/site number: N/A
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 39 Sunset Drive
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Not for publication: Vicinity: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
Signature of certifying official / Title Date 9/18/15
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

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

For Edison H. Beall 11.24.15
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling = house

Current Functions: DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling = house

7. Description

Architectural Classification: LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Monterey

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-8)

McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period of Significance: 1937

Significant Dates: 1937

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): N/A

Architect/Builder: Woolridge, Alexander H. (architect); Neck, A. W. (Builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-14)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-15)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: less than 1 acre

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (use decimal degree format)

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 25.918972 Longitude: -97.497830

Verbal Boundary Description: The Cameron County Appraisal District online records describe the property as Los Ebanos Subdivision Block 1, Lot 11A. The property is referenced by Property ID 49829. The nominated property is roughly bound by Sunset Drive to the southeast, Old Alice Road and private property to the northeast, Town Resaca on the northwest, and private property to the southwest.

Boundary Justification: The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Reba Cardenas McNair with contributions from architectural historian Stephen Fox
Address: 39 Sunset Drive
City or Town: Brownsville State: Texas Zip Code: 78520
Email: cardevelop@aol.com
Telephone: 956-542-8919
Date: June 2015

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheet Map-16 through Map-19)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-20 through Figure-24)

Photographs (see log on page 5 and continuation sheets Photo-25 through Photo-30)

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Photographs

Name of Property: McNair House
City or Vicinity: Brownsville
County, State: Cameron County, Texas
Photographer: Alexandra Hagan
Date Photographed: May 12 and 15, 2015
Number of Photos: 10

The following digital images were submitted to the National Park Service on disk along with this nomination document. For reference, they also are included at the end of this document, beginning on page 25.

Photo 1: View of the southeast (primary) and northeast elevations as seen from the intersection of Sunset Drive and Old Alice Road.

Photo 2: Southeast (primary) elevation.

Photo 3: Southeast (primary) elevation.

Photo 4: Detail of southeast (primary) elevation, looking approximately west.

Photo 5: Northeast elevation, as seen from Old Alice Road.

Photo 6: Northwest (rear) elevation.

Photo 7: Partial view of the southwest elevation.

Photo 8: Entrance hall, just inside the primary entry.

Photo 9: Living room, facing approximately northeast.

Photo 10: Guest house (2003), Noncontributing.

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

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

McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Narrative Description

The 1937 Vivian Faust and Malcolm P. McNair House is a two-story, brick veneer, Monterey style house with an asymmetrical L-front plan, a second-floor cast-iron-railed balcony, and a thin, shallow-pitched, side-gabled roof with exposed rafter tails beneath the eaves. The house was built in the Brownsville, Texas, subdivision of Los Ebanos Addition, an elite garden suburban neighborhood developed in 1926-27 that is characterized by curvilinear streets, subtropical plantings, and frontage on Town Resaca, a meandering oxbow lagoon. The McNair House faces southeast onto Sunset Drive; its east side elevation faces northeast onto Old Alice Road. The house is surfaced with white-painted brick. The second-story balcony features stanchions and railings of black-painted wrought iron with cast iron inserts. The interior of the McNair House is simply detailed with classical moldings. The site slopes down to the bank of the *resaca* on the rear (north) side of the property. Additions to the rear of the house and a noncontributing, freestanding, two-story guesthouse are compatible with the design of the McNair House.

General Setting

The McNair House was built on Lot 11 of Block 1 of Los Ebanos Addition at the intersection of Sunset Drive and Old Alice Road. This corner lot of slightly less than an acre is terraced up above the adjoining streets and slopes down on the north to the bank of Town Resaca. Sunset Drive is an undulating street on the northwestern edge of Los Ebanos Addition, one block northwest of the subdivision's principal thoroughfare, Palm Boulevard, a divided boulevard planted with slender Washingtonia palm trees and flowering bougainvillea bushes. Houses on Sunset Drive are a mixture of one- and two-story, single-family houses, most faced with brick or stucco, built between the 1920s and 1950s. Houses range from cottages to Spanish Mediterranean bungalows to columned Southern Colonial and California ranch houses, as well as two houses that were originally of modern design. Profuse plantings of subtropical vegetation, especially various species of palm trees, as well as such native tree species as Texas ebony (for which Los Ebanos is named) and mesquite give Sunset Drive its lush, verdant character. There are no sidewalks on Sunset Drive so lawns of St. Augustine grass curve down to low, sloped curbs bounding the paved street.

Exterior Description

The McNair House is of wood frame, brick veneer construction raised above grade on low, concealed masonry piers. The asymmetrical front (southeast) elevation consists of a two-story, shed-roofed bay to the left that advances forward of the body of the house, giving the street front its L-plan organization. To the right of the advancing bay is a recessed, side-gable-roofed wing. It is three bays long. Adjacent to the re-entrant corner of the advancing bay is the dark, paneled, wood front door containing a high-set, off-center, four-paned window. The front door is flanked by high-set, black-painted wrought iron lanterns and is offset to the right by two windows. Second-floor openings are located above first-floor openings. All street-facing windows are six-over-six-pane, double-hung, wood sash windows with brick sills, framed with black-painted, hinged, solidly paneled, wood shutters. The second-floor openings above the front door and above the rightmost first-floor window contain wood French doors. These give access to a wood-decked balcony supported on exposed wood rafters and, at the house's east end, by three, slender, black-painted iron poles. The balcony overhangs a tile-paved porch set into the re-entrant angle of the house front at the first floor level. The balcony is railed with delicate,

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black-painted, vertical wrought iron bars interspersed with intertwined arabesque panels of cast iron floral ornament. Decorative arabesque panels also frame the structural stanchions supporting the shed roof that canopies the balcony. An unusual, white-painted wood, board-and-batten fascia is dropped from the eaves level above the balcony. Exposed rafter tails are visible beneath the thin eaves of the side-gabled roof.

The northeast (Old Alice Road) elevation of the McNair House is organized beneath the shallow pitch of the side-gabled roof. A slender brick chimney that tapers in profile as it rises is centered on the gable peak. The top of the chimney stack is articulated with parallel raised courses of brick. The chimney is flanked on the left by six-over-six-paned sash windows at first- and second-floor levels. It is flanked on the right by three sash windows at the first- and second-floor levels. Lapped wood siding faces the wall beneath the apex of the gable. In 2003, a rear-facing, gable roofed, second story of white-painted brick veneer construction was added over the sun room added in the 1940s to the back (northeast) corner of the original house alongside Old Alice Road. This wing is screened from Old Alice Road by a tall brick wall, faceted in plan to correspond to the curve of the street. A one-story, flat-roofed porte-cochère, accessible from Old Alice Road, is attached to this added, two-story rear wing.

The southwest side elevation of the house contains three second-floor windows, organized beneath the peak of the lapped-wood-sided gable. Two first-floor level sash windows are stationed below these second-floor windows. In 2003, a pair of French doors were inserted in place of a single, first-floor window on the southwest elevation. These doors lead from the dining room to a walled side courtyard. In 2003, a low-pitched, gable-roofed second-story wing that projects from the rear corner of the house was also added over the existing one-story utility room added in the 1940s. On the northwest (rear) side of this wing is another chimney stack serving an outdoor fireplace. It is detailed to match the east-side chimney.

The rear (northwest) elevation of the original house is now mostly obscured by the one- and two-story additions. These repeat the profiles and detailing of the 1937 house.

A one-story, two-car garage and maid's room and bath built at the same time as the house, no longer survives.

A freestanding two-story garage and guest house (noncontributing), built in 2003, in the northeast corner of the property, is accessible via a rear gate from Old Alice Road. Both the added rear wing and the back building were designed by Lubbock architect Deane Pierce to be compatible in scale, profile, materials, colors, and detail with the McNair House. Such details from the original house as the exposed rafter ends and cast ironwork are repeated on the additions.

Interior Description

On the interior, the first-floor plan of the McNair House is organized around a longitudinal entrance hall, accessible from the front door. The entrance hall contains a straight-run stair. To the left of the entrance hall is the dining room, which occupies the projecting front west bay. To the right of the hall is the rectangular living room, set behind the recessed Sunset Drive wall of the house and focused on the fireplace and mantle on the room's narrow east end, abutting Old Alice Road. A pantry and kitchen are accessible from the dining room. A sun porch abuts the rear of the living room. In the 1940s, Mr. and Mrs. McNair added an informal, glass-walled sitting room to the back of their house and transformed the original sitting room into a music room. At the same

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time, they added the utility room on the northwest corner. Interior floors are polished oak strips. Walls are of painted plaster.

Integrity

The McNair House substantially retains its integrity. The house preserves its character-defining details and historic materials. Rehabilitated in 2003, it is in excellent condition. The McNair House retains its integrity to a substantial degree. Alterations and additions to the house respected the integrity of the principal exterior elevations and interior spaces, and were designed to be compatible with the architecture of the house.

McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The McNair House is a single-family domestic dwelling named for its original occupants, Vivian Faust and Malcolm Prothro McNair. Completed in 1937, it is a locally significant example of California Monterey style domestic architecture. The McNair House demonstrates the appeal of southern Californian house types in the southwestern United States, Texas, and the lower Río Grande borderland during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. Contextually, the house relates to the areas of *Suburban Residential Architecture in Twentieth-Century Texas* for its architectural design and secondarily to *Community and Regional Planning in Texas* for its association with the planned garden suburban neighborhood of Los Ebanos Addition developed in Brownsville, Texas, and still one of the city's elite neighborhoods. The McNair House meets Criterion C, significant at the local level in the area of Architecture, as an example of the California Monterey style, which was quite popular in the Lower Río Grande Valley of Texas in the 1930s, and as a prominent residential work of the Brownsville architect Alexander Hamilton Woolridge.

Founding of the Community: Brownsville, Lower Río Grande Border, and Los Ebanos Addition

Brownsville, Texas, county seat of Cameron County, is in 2015 a city of more than 180,000 people. Brownsville is located near the mouth of the Río Grande at the southernmost tip of Texas, across the border from its sister city, Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico (founded 1784), and twenty miles west of the Gulf of Mexico. Brownsville was founded in 1848 at the end of the US-Mexico War in order to establish a U.S. trade gateway opposite Matamoros, which had risen to prominence as a Gulf port in the 1820s. During its first twelve years of existence, Brownsville was one of the largest cities in Texas. As the site of the US Army's Fort Brown, Brownsville was occupied by both the Confederacy and the U.S. during the Civil War. Because Matamoros was not subject to the U.S. Naval blockade of Confederate ports, it became the gateway for funneling Confederate cotton to Europe and the U.S. between 1862 and 1865, generating immense wealth for the Texan merchants participating in this trade.

After the war, Brownsville lost its commercial primacy as railroads linking Texas and Mexico were built in the early 1880s much farther upriver, bypassing the entire southern tip of Texas until construction of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway, which linked Brownsville to Corpus Christi and Houston in 1904-05. Railway construction opened the area to rapid change as developers bought tens of thousands of acres of arid ranch land and installed steam-driven irrigation systems to transform the fertile alluvial delta of the Río Grande into highly productive agricultural real estate. Developers encouraged the immigration of Midwestern farmers and investors in the 1900s and 1910s and founded thirteen new towns and associated farming tracts in Cameron and Hidalgo counties to accommodate the newcomers. Developers sought to appeal to affluent Midwestern transplants by constructing California Mission style buildings and planting evergreen vegetation that thrived in the Lower Río Grande Valley's subtropical climate in an effort to re-image the flat, hot, humid, borderland as an Exotic Tropical Paradise. Rapid population growth created social instability however, as newcomers sought to impose Southern style segregation on the borderland's primarily Mexican-descended and Mexican immigrant population, provoking such violent reactions as the Sedicioso Uprising of 1915.

During the 1920s, the focus of development shifted from agricultural real estate to urban real estate in the Valley's small towns. Spanish Mediterranean architecture, the more sophisticated 1920s' successor to the

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California Mission style, marked this episode. So robust was the Valley's construction market that by 1930 it seemed that the region might escape the impact of the Great Depression. By 1931, the error of this supposition had become evident. However, as in the rest of Texas, real estate and construction activity began to recover in 1935. Especially associated with this recovery was the construction of houses for the Valley's Anglo-American elite.

Because of Brownsville's relative antiquity and its location on the border (most of the Valley railroad towns lie at least ten miles north of the river), Brownsville clients distanced themselves from California Mission architecture in the 1910s. During the second half of the 1920s, as the city's population grew from 11,791 in 1920 to 22,021 in 1930, Brownsville clients embraced Spanish Mediterranean architecture and the planting of subtropical vegetation to represent Brownsville as a tropical paradise. The beautification of the city's single divided boulevard, Palm Boulevard, began in 1923. In late 1926, the James-Dickinson Company, which developed the Acacia Island and El Jardín agricultural tracts northeast of Brownsville in 1924 and was in the process of constructing Brownsville's tallest skyscraper, the eight-story, Spanish style Hotel El Jardín downtown, announced development of Brownsville's first planned and restricted garden suburban neighborhood, Los Ebanos Addition, at the northeast end of Palm Boulevard. Rather than extending Brownsville's right-angled street grid, Los Ebanos became the second subdivision in the Lower Río Grande Valley to adopt a curvilinear street plan. The James-Dickinson Company and its engineer, A. E. Anderson, wrapped the streets of Los Ebanos—several named for such local trees and flowering plants as palm, poinsettia, ebony, hibiscus, and acacia—alongside Town Resaca. Town Resaca is a meandering oxbow lagoon occupying an abandoned cut-off channel of the Río Grande. This marked one of the first times in Brownsville's planning history that a *resaca* was incorporated into the design of a residential neighborhood as a scenic amenity. The conjunction of *resaca* frontage, curvilinear streets named for local flora, and profuse subtropical vegetation enabled Los Ebanos Addition to become the most consistent materialization of the Exotic Tropical Paradise theme in Brownsville, especially as stucco-faced, tile-roofed Spanish Mediterranean style houses were constructed there in the 1920s and early 1930s.

General Trends in Building Practice and Architectural Development

The Monterey house type is a two-story suburban house type named for the town of Monterey, California, where, in the 1830s and '40s, U.S. immigrants to Mexican California built two-story adobe houses surrounded with wood galleries and roofed with wood-shingled pitched roofs. At the end of the 1920s, the southern California architects Donald D. McMurry and Roland E. Coate began to design two-story suburban houses with a protruding bay at one end of the house front that advanced forward of the rest of the house front. A second-story balcony, often cantilevered, was inserted in the reentrant angle where the protruding bay connected to the rest of the house. This simple composition resonated in the 1930s in reaction to the effusive theatricality of Spanish Mediterranean architecture of the 1920s. The formal restraint and simplicity of the Monterey type house, which could be surfaced with wood, brick, or stucco, and its association with a recognized American regional architectural tradition (although none of the nineteenth-century Monterey houses exhibits the protruding bay and cantilevered balcony combination that became the defining characteristic of the modern Monterey type house) made this house type popular not only in California but throughout the American Southwest, including Texas.

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The earliest known Texan example is the Ed R. Campbell House at 2504 Wichita Avenue in Houston (1930), designed by the architect William D. Bordeaux, who had worked in Los Angeles before coming to Houston. Texan architects seem to have gravitated to the Monterey type because it suggested a hybrid of Mexican and American building practices that was as relevant to Texas as it was to California. In Houston the architects Ainsworth & Irvine produced another early version of a Monterey type house at 2158 Pelham Drive for the River Oaks Corporation in 1932 that the corporation promoted as a “house for Texas.” In 1935 the Houston architect Stayton Nunn designed a Monterey type house at 2426 Inwood Drive in River Oaks that the *Houston Chronicle* described as a “‘Houston Style’ House.” The Houston architect John F. Staub designed a symmetrical version of a Monterey type house, the Robert Bowles House at 3015 Inwood Drive in River Oaks of 1935. In place of the wood balcony rails associated with houses in Monterey, California, Staub substituted florid cast ironwork on the second-story balcony of the Bowles House. This substitution struck a responsive chord among Texan architects, as can be seen at the Jacob Eisen House at 3201 Long Avenue in Beaumont (1936) by architects Stone & Pitts, the D. H. Braman House at 902 W. Stayton Avenue in Victoria (1938, John M. Marriott, Newhall & Wade, architects), and the A. B. Poe House at 711 Rim Road in El Paso (1940, Mabel V. Welch, architect). Decorative cast ironwork referenced the mid-nineteenth-century architecture of New Orleans, another regional model advanced in the 1930s. In Corpus Christi, where oil and gas discoveries generated a residential building boom along the bayfront *corniche*, Ocean Drive, in the mid- and late 1930s, regionalized variations of the Monterey type ranged from transitional Spanish Mediterranean—the Frank Crook House at 1717 Ocean Drive (1927, 1932, John M. Marriott); to a Southern Colonial version—the Howard E. Butt House at 3700 Ocean Drive (1936, R. Newell Waters); to a New Orleanian interpretation—the S. Maston Nixon House at 3260 Ocean Drive (1937, Fred G. Gaubatz); to idiosyncratic Olmos Park rock house versions—the J. Knox Culton House at 4109 Ocean Drive (1937) and the A. Douglas Corgey House at 2757 Ocean Drive (1940), both designed by Morris L. Levy and Phil Lloyd Shoop. As these examples demonstrate, the Monterey type house, as a stylish Californian suburban house type, exerted considerable appeal to elite south Texan clients and their architects in the 1930s.

In 1936, the first Monterey type house in Brownsville’s Los Ebanos was built for the produce broker Larry F. Lightner and his wife Camille Sams, daughter of Earl C. Sams, president of the J. C. Penney Company. Mr. and Mrs. Lightner commissioned the Miami country house architect Russell T. Pancoast to design their pink stucco-faced house at 2020 Palm Boulevard. The Lightner House features a street-facing end bay that projects forward from the body of the house. A second-story balcony is set in the re-entrant angle where the end bay connects to the body of the house. Low-pitched, side-gabled roofs, shuttered windows, and French doors opening from the second-floor onto the balcony are character-defining features that also appear in the McNair House.

The resonance of this suburban house type in south Texas and the Texas-Mexico borderland is evident in its replication in the Shelby J. Longoria-Theriot House at 1401 Market Street in Laredo (1937, Guy M. Trout, architect), the F. E. Knapp and E. Chris Christensen Houses in Weslaco (1939, R. Newell Waters, architect), the J. Lewis Boggus House at 702 E. Taylor Avenue in Harlingen (1940), and the William Scanlan House at 1905 Palm Boulevard in Brownsville (1940, Frank E. Torres, altered). The Scanlan House came the closest of these houses to making a connection to the nineteenth-century Border Brick style of the Tamaulipas-Texas border, an authentic regional tradition corresponding to the Monterrey style that architects in Brownsville and the Lower Río Grande Valley seemed not to notice. The appeal of the Monterey type can be seen in its perpetuation into the early 1950s in the Ramón L. Hinojosa House at 235 Sunset Drive (1950, C. Lyman Ellis & Co., architects), the A. Graham Williams III House at 2040 Palm Boulevard (c. 1950, altered), and the Dr. Frederick W. De

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Stefano House at 2000 Palm Boulevard (1950), all in Brownsville, and the G. Parker Knapp House at 149 Lake Drive (1951), the J. Lewis Boggus House at 505 Lake Drive (1951, Cocke, Bowman & York), and the Van B. Alexander House at 1709 S. Parkwood Drive (1952), all in Harlingen.

The McNair House

The McNair House was designed and built in 1937. The house was reported in the *Brownsville Herald* to cost \$6,500 to construct. Malcolm P. McNair purchased the lot on August 8, 1935 and financed the \$593.63 cost in monthly installments of \$20 each beginning on September 8, 1935 at a six per cent annual interest rate. McNair was also responsible for paying the delinquent state, county and city taxes of \$140.12. The construction contract recorded with Cameron County and dated July 23, 1937, required the house to be completed within seventy working days. The contract was for the amount of \$8,572.75.

The McNair House is significant as an early example of the Monterey type house in Brownsville and the Lower Río Grande Valley of Texas. It is significant for extending Texan architects' appropriation of southern Californian house types and architectural styles (along with landscape design) in order to construct architectural identities that could be interpreted as simultaneously modern and rooted. The McNair House achieves significance because it embodies characteristics that strongly identify it with the architectural and historical context of Brownsville, the Lower Río Grande border, and U.S. Southwest during the 1930s and early '40s.

The house is also significant because of its location at a prominent street intersection in Los Ebanos, its frontage on Town Resaca, its distinctive Monterey type architecture, and its subtropical landscaping, which reinforces the 1930s' streamlined version of the Exotic Tropical Paradise myth associated with the development of Los Ebanos Addition and the Lower Río Grande Valley of south Texas during the first half of the twentieth century. Cheryl Caldwell Ferguson in her book, *Highland Park and River Oaks: The Origins of Garden Suburban Community Planning in Texas* (2014), enumerates the defining characteristics of the early twentieth-century planned garden suburban neighborhoods developed in Texan cities. Los Ebanos Addition corresponds to almost all of the characteristics she cites, to one of which, the predominance of stylish, architect-designed houses, the McNair House especially contributes.

The McNair House contributed to the dissemination of the Monterey house type in the borderlands of south Texas in the 1930-50 period as a symbol of fashionable, California-derived domesticity that was both modern and respectful of regional tradition. Los Ebanos presents a succinct demonstration of the affinity that Texans felt for Californian house types in the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. Spanish Mediterranean houses were built in profusion in Los Ebanos, even into the mid 1930s, as exemplified by the Royal D. Sundell House at 2013 Palm Boulevard (1936, W. Frank Godwin). Godwin was also the architect of the C. S. Eidman House at 2 Sunset Drive (1940), an expansive, one-story, California ranch type house. The Gladys Sams and Dean A. Porter House at 2030 Palm Boulevard (1941; extensively altered), next to the Lightner House, was designed by the Weslaco architect R. Newell Waters, who closely patterned it on the attenuated "Hollywood Regency" style house that the Los Angeles architect Paul R. Williams designed for the radio actor Charles Correll in Beverly Hills (1937). The most significant mid-twentieth-century modern house built in Los Ebanos Addition, the Buell O'Connor House at 35 Sunset Drive (1958), was designed by the Harlingen-based architect Alan Y. Taniguchi, who was born and trained in California.

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Architect Alexander Hamilton Woolridge and Builder Arthur W. Neck

The McNair House is significant as the work of the Rio Grande Valley architect Alexander Hamilton Woolridge (1893-1985). According to a biographical profile of Woolridge published in *Texian Who's Who* in 1937, he was born in Appomattox, Virginia, obtained his architectural training through an International Correspondence School course in architecture, and worked for four years in New York for the firm of Vide, Blackwell & Buck before coming to the Lower Río Grande Valley in 1917. Until the mid 1930s, Woolridge practiced in McAllen. He was architect of the Guaranty State Bank Building in Weslaco (1923, altered), the McAllen City Hall and Fire Station (1925; demolished), the First State Bank & Trust Co. Building in Río Grande City (1925), the Masonic Temple in Mission (1928), and the J. C. Penney Co. Building in Edinburg (1928). After moving to Brownsville, Woolridge designed the René D. Sauber House in Los Ebanos (1938) and was one of the architects of Brownsville's first two public housing complexes, Buena Vida Homes (1941) and Bougainvillea Homes (1942). Woolridge was associated with the architect Frank E. Torres on these complexes and from 1940 to 1942 was in partnership with Torres. Woolridge & Torres's work included the Herbert L. Stokely and Dr. James L. Rentfro houses in Los Ebanos (both 1941), country houses on the outskirts of Brownsville for the Tulsa pipeline company president S. Miller Williams, Jr. (1941), Dr. B. M. Works (1941), and the Pan American Airways pilot Francis I. Jacobs (1941), and the V. E. Cook House in McAllen (1942, demolished). In the postwar period, Woolridge designed the law office of Judge J. T. Canales (1949) in downtown Brownsville, Palm Village Shopping Center on Palm Boulevard, Brownsville's first suburban shopping center (1954), and houses in the elite subdivision of Río Viejo for Arthur C. Hipp (1951) and Judge J. T. Canales. The McNair House was one of Woolridge's early commissions in Brownsville.

The contractor who built the McNair House was Arthur W. Neck (1875-1950), who was especially associated with high-end residential construction during the 1930s and early '40s. A. W. Neck was a native of Missouri who came to Brownsville in the 1920s. Among the buildings Neck constructed were the Sethman Apartments at 1850-56 Palm Boulevard in Los Ebanos (1928), the U.S. Border Service Building at the Gateway Bridge in Brownsville (1929, demolished), Los Ebanos Elementary School at 1439 Palm Boulevard (1931), the Nurses Home at Mercy Hospital (1936, demolished), the Keith Tuggle House at 239 Hibiscus Court in Los Ebanos (1936), the George Kraigher House at 525 Paredes Line Road (1937, designed by the Los Angeles architect Richard J. Neutra), Casa Poinciana, the Hubert R. Hudson country house on Paredes Line Road (1938), the S. Miller William Jr. House on Old Port Isabel Road (1941), Bougainvillea Homes (1941, with W. D. Ferguson), and the Francis I. Jacobs House (1941) on South Padre Island Highway.

Malcolm Prothro and Vivian Faust McNair

Malcolm P. McNair (1896-1967) was chairman of the McNair Clothing Manufacturing Company, founded by his brother, Phillip K. McNair, in Brownsville in 1921. Jack McNair (as he was familiarly known) was born in Aiken, South Carolina. He graduated from Clemson University and served in the US Navy during the First World War. He came to Brownsville in 1921 to work with his elder brother, a graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point, whose first assignment, at Fort Brown in Brownsville, occurred during the Seditious Uprising. In Brownsville, Phillip McNair met and married his wife and, after the First World War, began a clothing manufacturing business. In 1930, M. P. McNair acquired his brother's interest in the company and along with his son built it into one of the largest employers in south Texas, at one time maintaining factories on

McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

E. Frontón Street in Brownsville, as well as in San Benito, Texas. The company produced work clothes, jeans, military uniforms and casual wear.

In 1935, McNair married Vivian Faust Schweers (1898-1999), a native of Alabama who then lived in Augusta, Georgia, with her ten-year-old son, Harry Eugene Schweers. M. P. McNair adopted Harry Eugene “Gene” McNair. Jack McNair and Vivian McNair were also the parents of a daughter, Nancy McNair, born in 1937. Gene McNair (1924-2005) succeeded his father as chief executive officer of the McNair Clothing Company, which he sold to Levi Strauss in 1972. During his father’s lifetime, Gene McNair was elected a Brownsville City Commissioner (1959-61) and Mayor of Brownsville (1961-63).

Vivian Faust McNair was a founding member of the Junior Service League of Brownsville, a founder of Community Concerts, which promoted performances of classical music by touring performers, and a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Mr. and Mrs. McNair were parishioners of the Episcopal Church of the Advent. Mrs. McNair occupied the house she and her husband built until her death at the age of one hundred in 1999.

Summary of preservation efforts

The McNair House was rehabilitated in 2003 by the present owners, the grandson of the original clients, and his wife, to ensure its preservation. In 2008, the house was designated a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark (RTHL). It is a contributing property in the City of Brownsville’s Los Ebanos Heritage Overlay District enacted by City Ordinance 235-97-806 on July 22, 1997.

McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

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Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

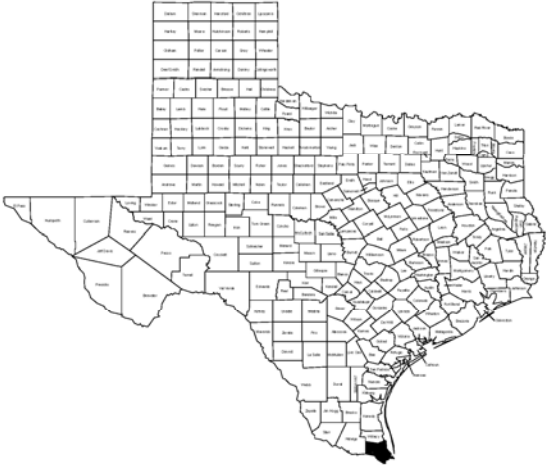
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Building contract and deed restrictions for Los Ebanos Addition, in possession of owners.

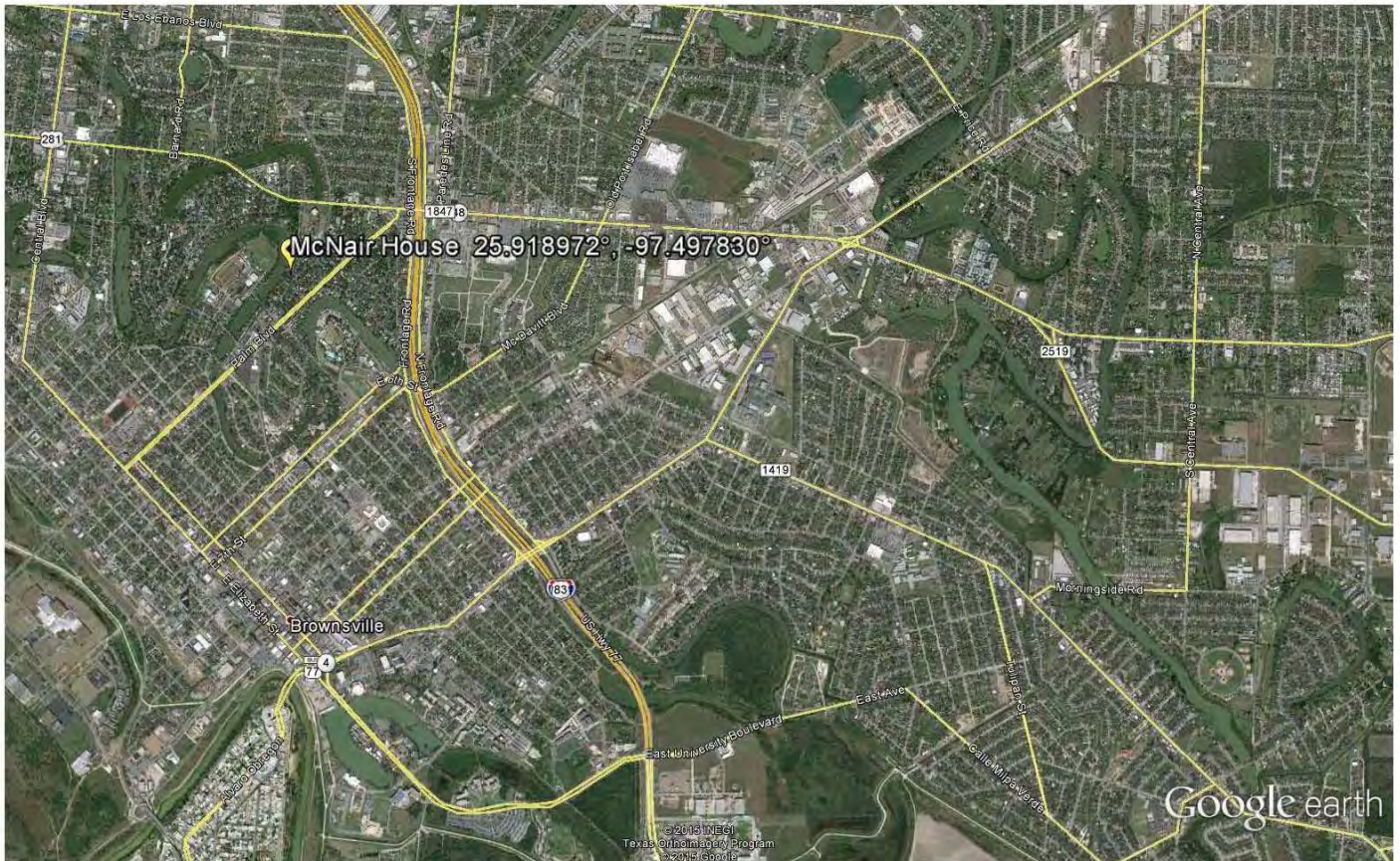
Gerald Moorhead, ed., *Buildings of Texas: Central, South, and Gulf Coast*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013, pp. 227-320.

McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Map 1: Cameron County (shaded) is located at the southern tip of Texas.

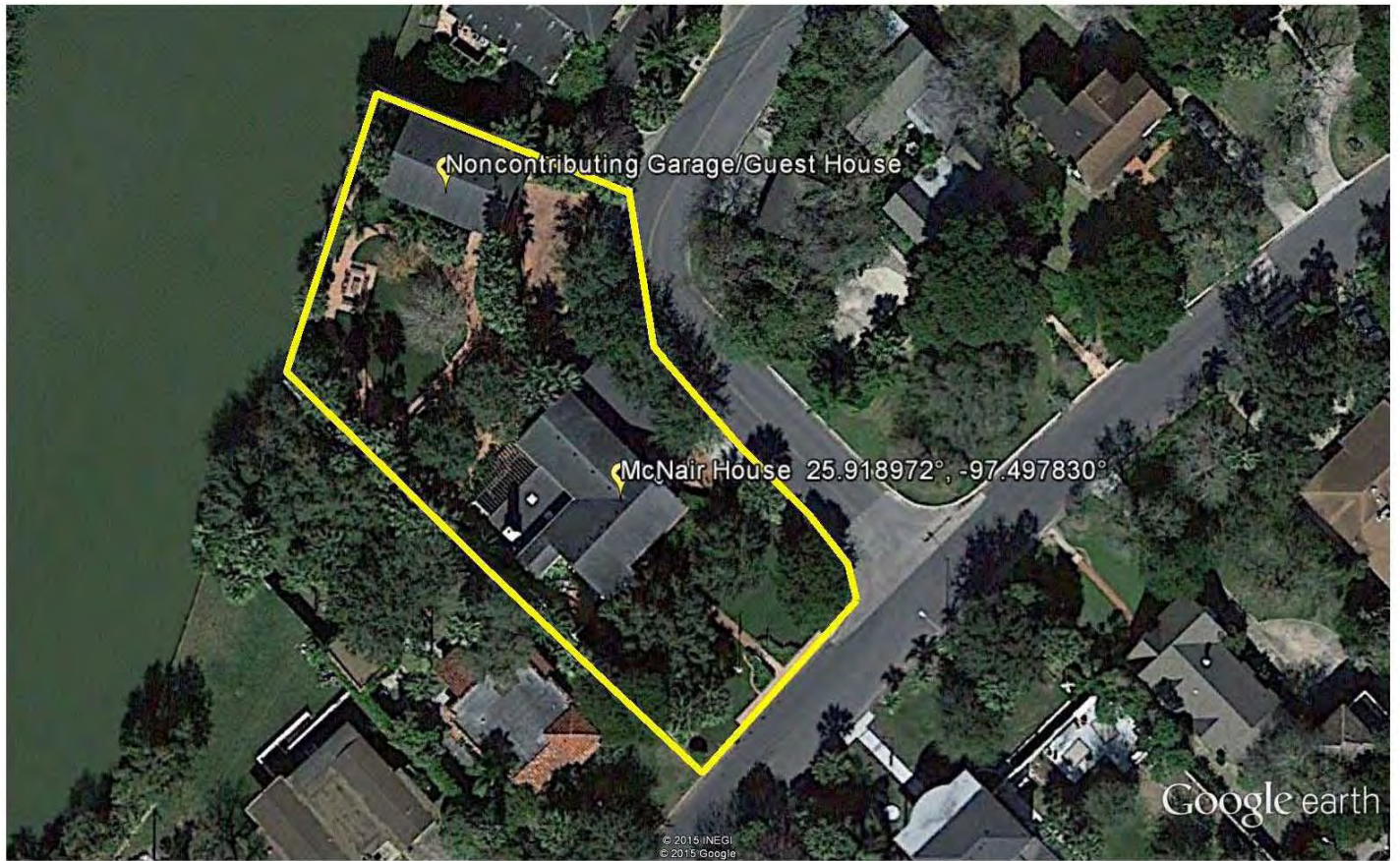


Map 2: Scaled Google Earth map depicts the nominated property's location within Brownsville.



McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Map 3: Scaled Google Earth map depicts nominated property's locational coordinates, approximate boundary, and location of the noncontributing garage/guest house.

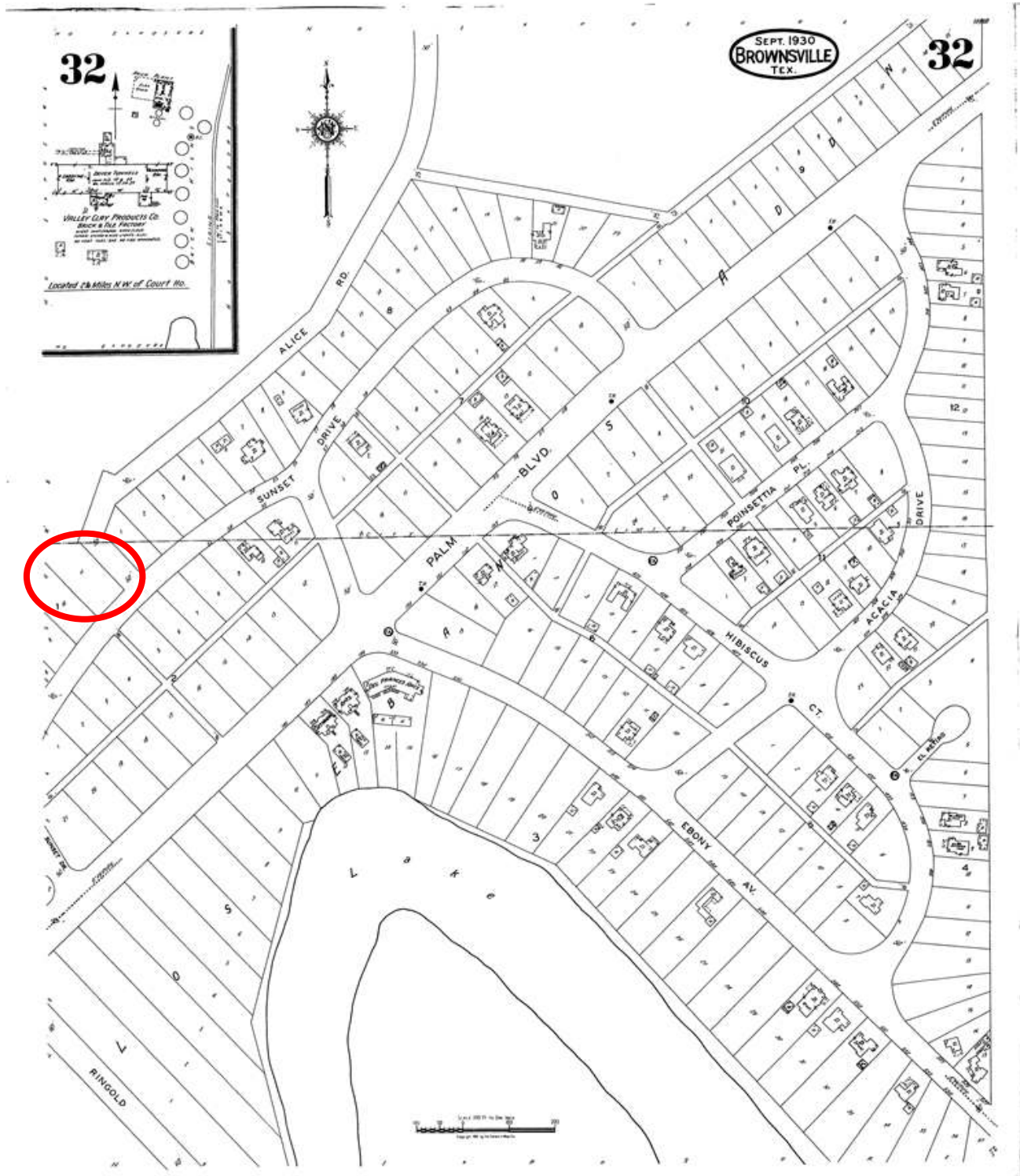


Google earth



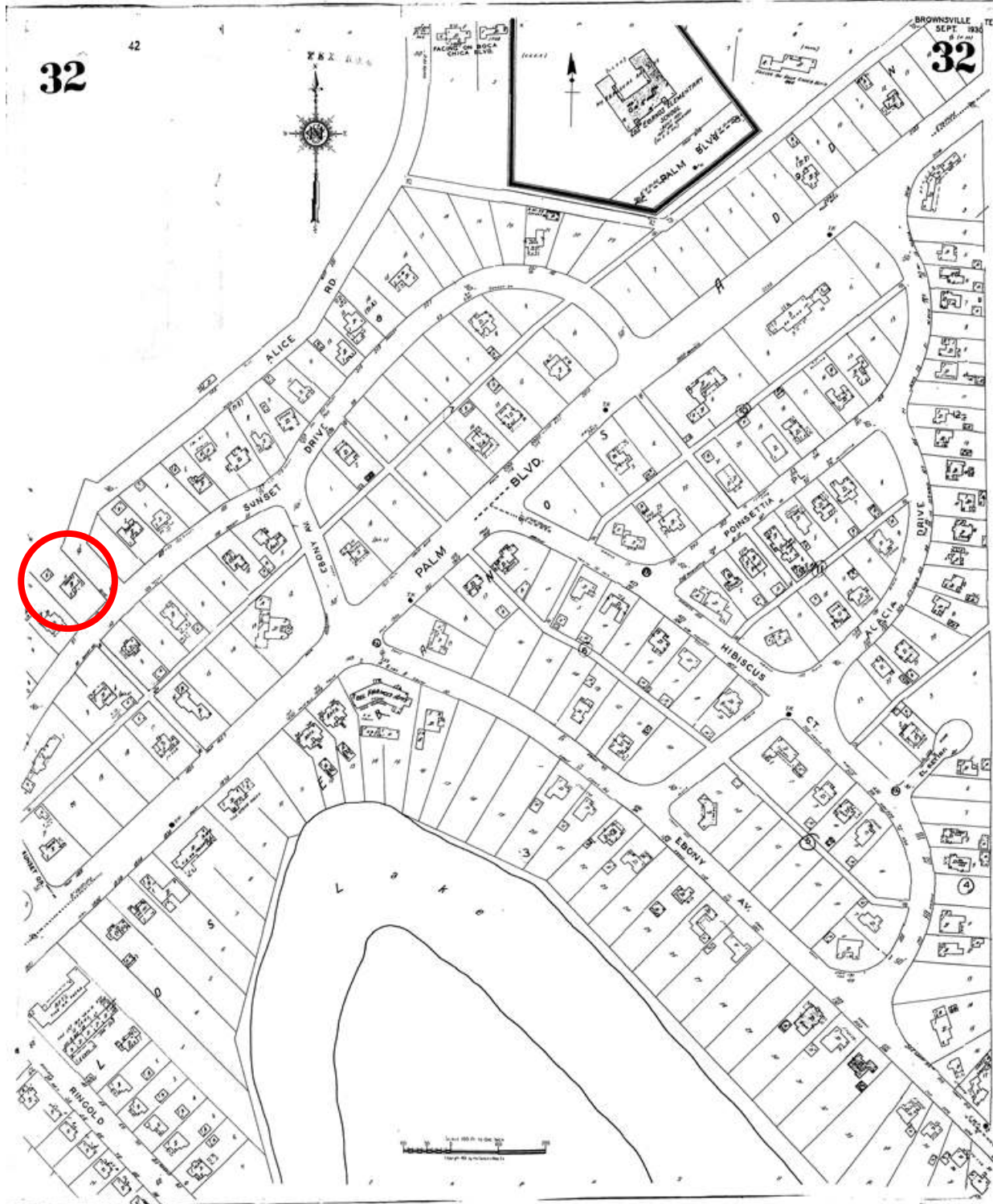
McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Map 4: Sanborn Fire Insurance map from 1930, prior to construction of the nominated property. The future location is circled.



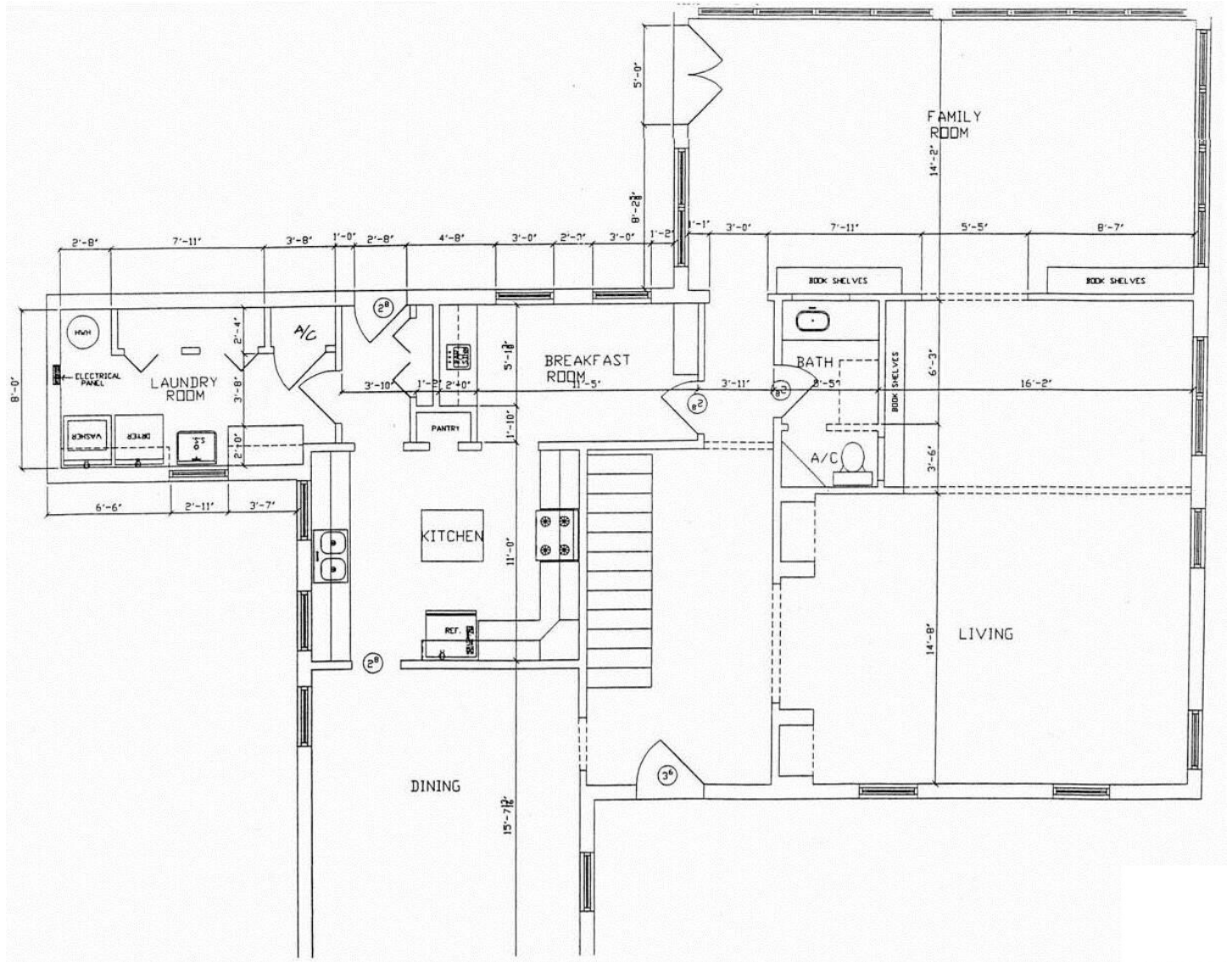
McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Map 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance map from 1949. The nominated property is circled. The single-story garage building to the north of the house is no longer extant.



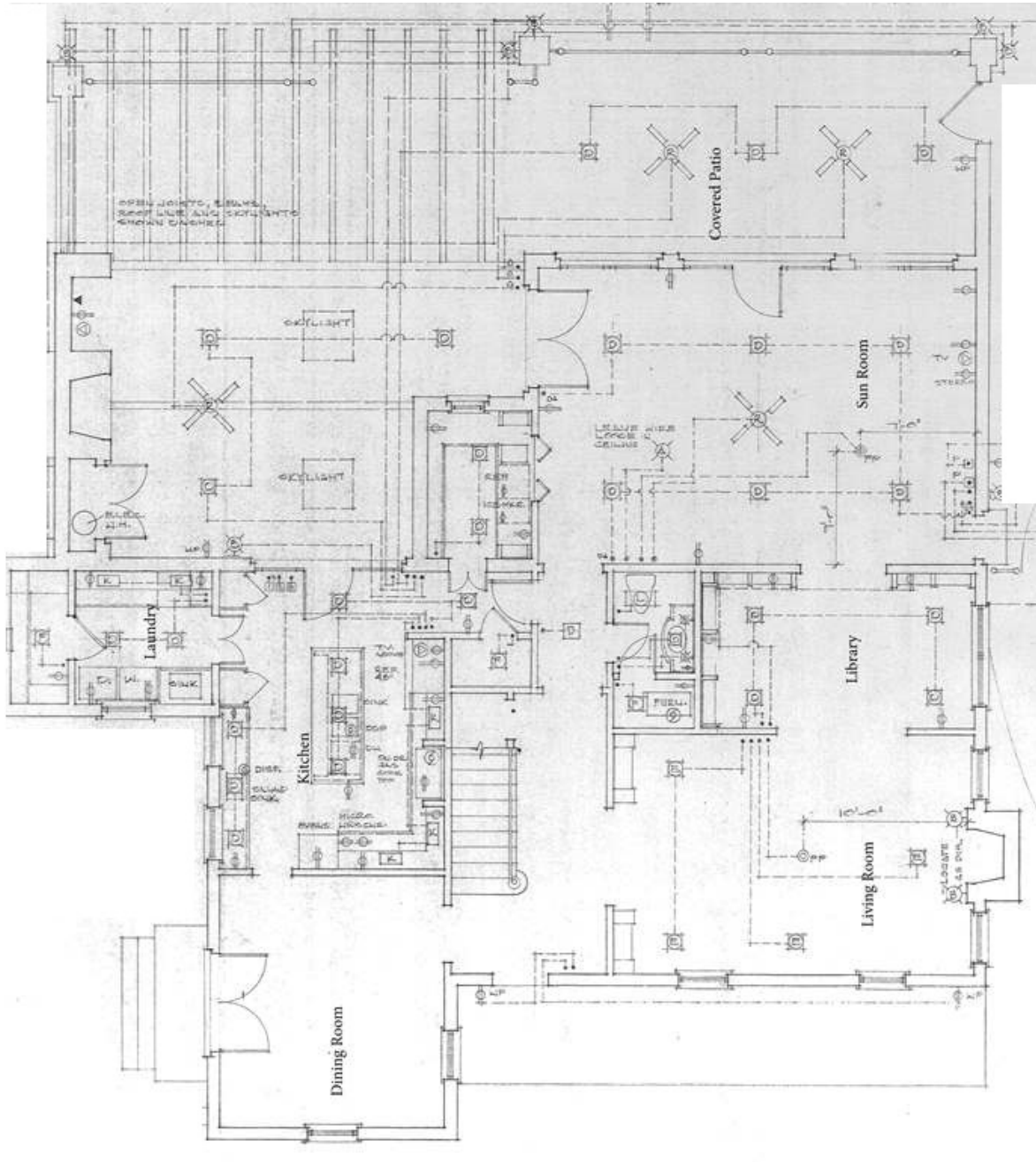
McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Figure 1: First floor plan, prior to the 2003 rear addition (which is depicted on the following page).



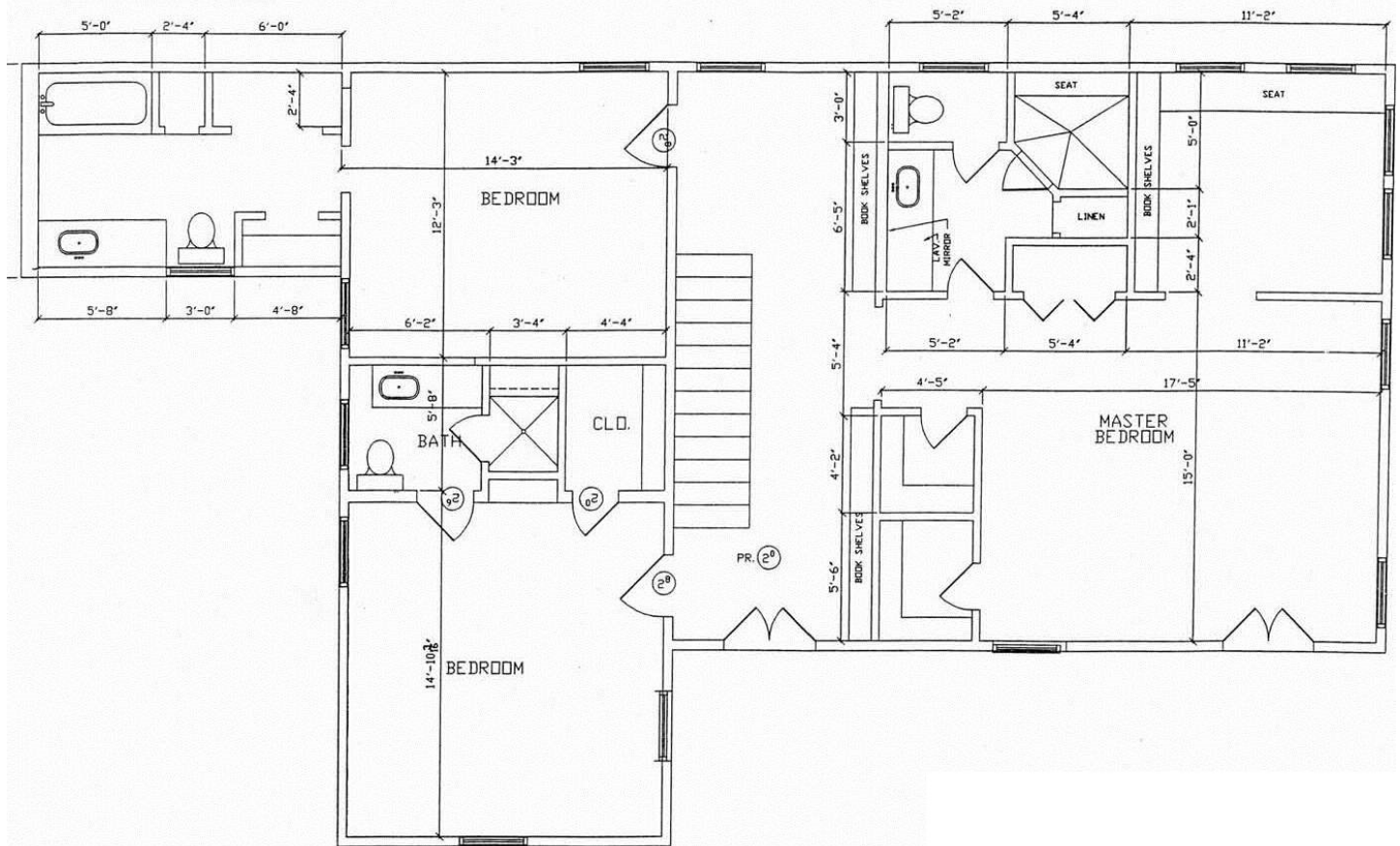
McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Figure 2: First floor plan, existing. (Adapted from the electrical plans prepared in 2003.)



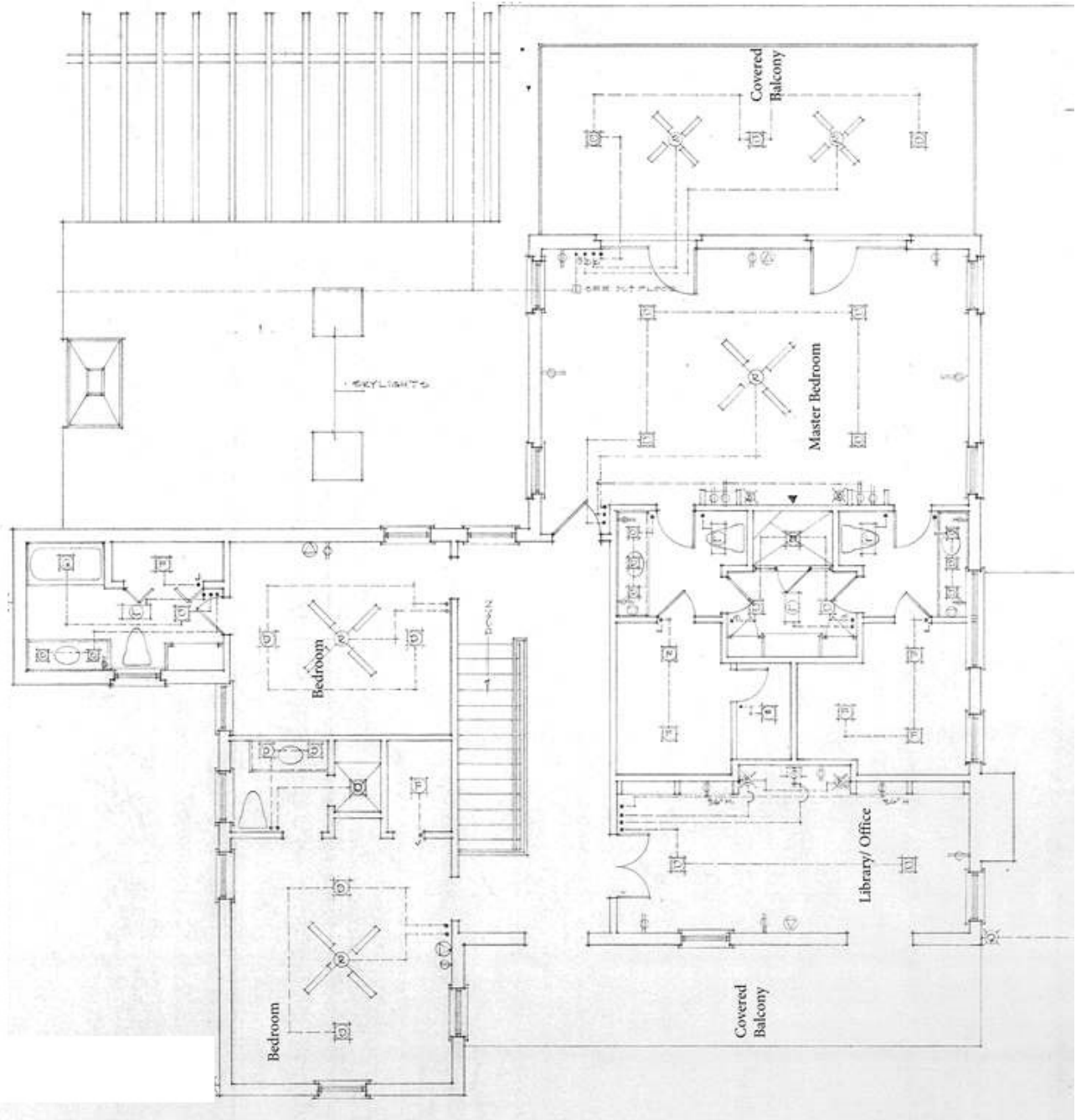
McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Figure 3: Second floor plan, prior to the 2003 addition (which is depicted on the following page).



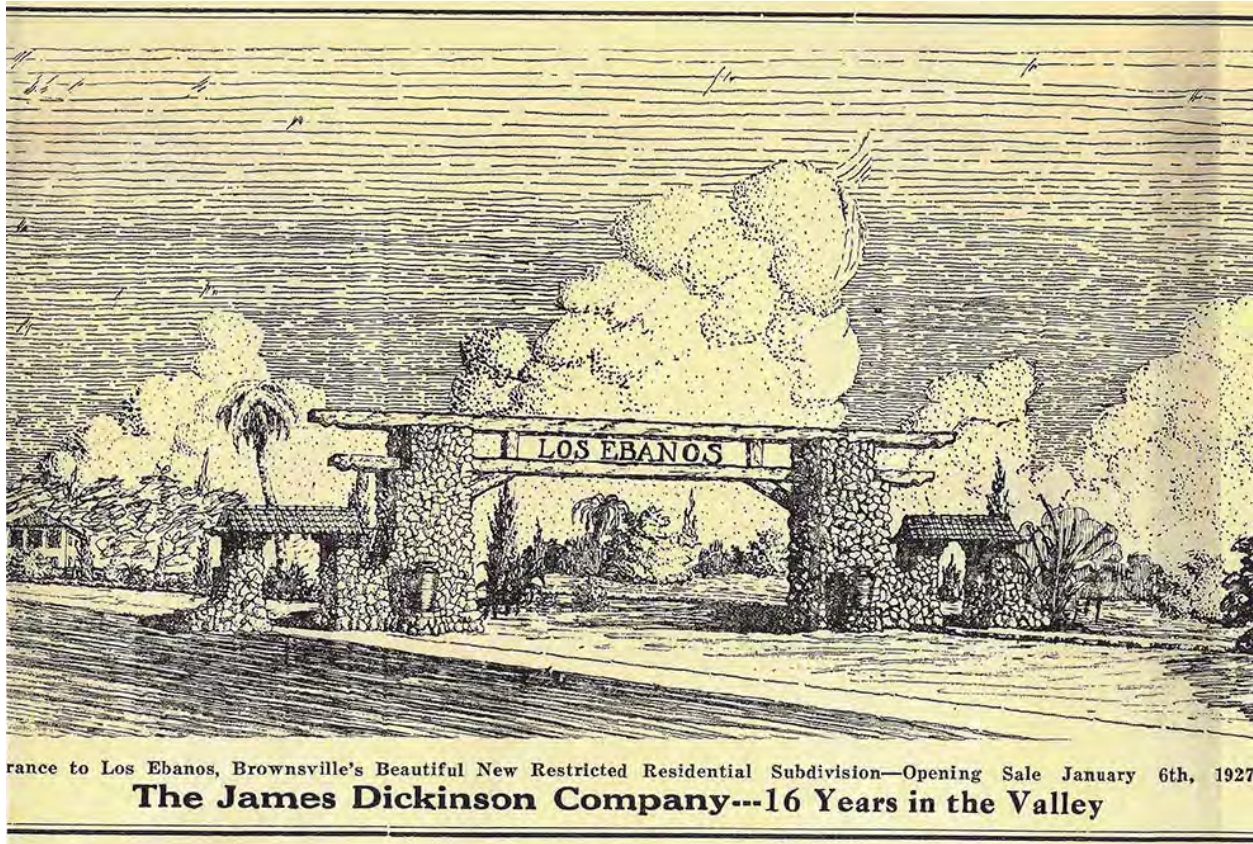
McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Figure 4: Second floor plan, existing. (Adapted from the electrical plans prepared in 2003.)



McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Figure 5: An early advertisement for Los Ebanos Addition.



McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

CURRENT PHOTOS OF THE NOMNATED PROPERTY

The following photos were also submitted to NPS as high quality digital files.

Photo 1: View of the southeast (primary) and northeast elevations as seen from the intersection of Sunset Drive and Old Alice Road.



Photo 2: Southeast (primary) elevation.



McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photo 3: Southeast (primary) elevation.



McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photo 4: Detail of southeast (primary) elevation, looking approximately west.



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Photo 5: Northeast elevation, as seen from Old Alice Road.



Photo 6: Northwest (rear) elevation.



McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photo 7: Partial view of the southwest elevation.



Photo 8: Entrance hall, just inside the primary entry.



McNair House, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas

Photo 9: Living room, facing approximately northeast.



Photo 10: Guest house (2003), Noncontributing.



Old Alice Rd

Old Alice Rd





MONAHAN HOUSE
RECONSTRUCTED BY MONAHAN IN 1850 FOR
GENERAL MONAHAN. THE HOUSE WAS
BURNED IN 1864 AND REBUILT IN 1865.
IT IS ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING
EXAMPLES OF THE BRICK HOUSE
TYPE IN SAVANNAH. THE HOUSE
IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE
ANTEBELLUM HOUSE IN SAVANNAH.
IT IS A NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARK.



39



39













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: McNair House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Cameron

DATE RECEIVED: 10/09/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/04/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/19/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/24/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000836

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11-24-15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

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

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

RECEIVED 2280

OCT -9 2015

**Nat. Register of Historic Places
 National Park Service**

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

FROM: Carlyn Hammons
 Texas Historical Commission

RE: New Submission, National Register Nomination
 McNair House, Cameron County, TX

DATE: September 30, 2015

The following materials are submitted:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form and electronic locational data (in .kmz format) on CD. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for <u>McNair House</u> to the National Register of Historic Places. <i>CB</i>
	Resubmitted nomination.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CD with ten (10) TIFF photograph files.
	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:

