

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

TREVIÑO-URIBE RANCHO

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: TREVIÑO-URIBE RANCHO

Other Name/Site Number: JESÚS TREVIÑO FORT, RANCHO SAN YGNACIO, SAN YGNACIO RANCH BUILDINGS

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Treviño Street Uribe and Treviño Streets

Not for publication: ___

City/Town: San Ygnacio

Vicinity: ___

State: Texas

County: Zapata

Code: TX505

Zip Code: 78067

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X
Public-Local: ___
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): 1
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
1

1

Noncontributing

___ buildings
___ sites
___ structures
___ objects
___ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- _____ Entered in the National Register
- _____ Determined eligible for the National Register
- _____ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- _____ Removed from the National Register
- _____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic

Sub: Single Dwelling

Current: Vacant

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Other: Vernacular

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Sandstone

Walls: Sandstone

Roof: *Chipichil* (lime and gravel aggregate), Metal

Other: Stucco; Wood

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Jesús Treviño-Blas María Uribe Rancho¹ (Figure 1) is an exceptional, perhaps unique, survivor of the movement of vernacular Mexican architectural and ranching traditions into lands north of the Rio Grande. Indeed, the multi-structure compound can be understood fully only within the context of 18th- and 19th-century Hispanic building traditions and social history. Specifically, the Treviño-Uribe complex is linked to the Spanish *villa* of Revilla (later renamed Guerrero, Mexico; now an abandoned town known as *Guerrero Viejo*, Mexico) founded in 1750 as part of the series of settlements established by José de Escandón. Initially constructed c. 1830 as a modest single-room *rancho*, or ranching outpost for Jesús Treviño, who maintained his principal residence in Guerrero, the house reached its current appearance through at least four, and perhaps five, building campaigns. High, thick sandstone walls, windowless-facades, *troneras* or gun ports, and a secured gated entry into the courtyard all evince its history as a fortified compound. The first building in what would become the town of San Ygnacio, Texas, the Treviño-Uribe complex sits strategically on the high land overlooking the Rio Grande. Remarkably, the structure retains most of its original exterior and interior architectural fabric and details to provide a sense of the house's initial organization and use. Those responsible for the final construction effort in 1871 continued to adhere to Hispanic construction methods, building materials and domestic spatial patterns illustrating the perpetuation of Hispanic culture along the borderlands decades after the region had become physically and politically part of Texas and the United States.

The following architectural description is chronological and keyed to the 1936 plan as drawn by a WPA/HABS team (Figures 2-1 to 2-5). For clarity, the rooms are initially identified by the names assigned by the WPA/HABS team, but their more probable use (as indicated by recent scholarship) is proposed. Each building campaign is described and followed by a brief analysis that suggests the social and domestic changes that attended the various building efforts.

In brief, architectural evidence points to the following possible building chronology: an initial construction date of approximately 1830 for the room identified on the WPA/HABS plan as storage. This one-room structure stood alone until an 1851 building campaign added the two rooms identified on the WPA/HABS plan as bedroom #1 and kitchen #1 (front portion only). Architectural data suggests an 1851 construction date for the room identified on the WPA/HABS plan as kitchen #2, the arched entry gate and much of the courtyard wall. An 1854 building campaign added the room identified on the WPA/HABS plan as bedroom #2. In 1871, a final major building campaign added the room identified on the WPA/HABS plan as the parlor. It is also likely, at or near this date, the room known as kitchen #1 was enlarged to its present size and became the principal food preparation area, while the room known as kitchen #2 lost much of its function as a food preparation area. Also, at the time of the 1871 addition, the exterior courtyard wall was refaced on its east and south elevations. In the mid 1930s a one-room board-and-batten addition was made to the rear of the 1871 room for use as a post office. In the 1970s a small corrugated metal shed holding a bathroom was added on the north wall of the present kitchen.

¹The Treviño-Uribe building complex evolved from a simple one-room stone shelter to a fortified ranching complex whose rooms and walls formed an enclosed quadrangle for protection against attack. Such substantial ranch headquarters were commonly known as *haciendas* in the American Southwest and northern Mexico. In South Texas, although *hacienda* was used during the Spanish Colonial period, as evidenced by such place names as *Hacienda de Dolores*, the term *rancho* became more commonly associated with the type of complex found along the lower Rio Grande from the early 19th century through the modern period. Historically, the Treviño-Uribe building complex has been identified variously as Rancho San Ygnacio, the Treviño Fort, "El Fuerte" and "the old fort", among others. To further complicate identification, both the land grant division and the town in which the complex lies, were also known as "Rancho San Ygnacio". For the purpose of this nomination, the historic property is associated with its earliest owner and most significant builders and will be called the Treviño-Uribe Rancho. As an architectural property it will be referred to as the Treviño-Uribe complex.

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ORIGINAL STRUCTURE (*CUARTO VIEJO*)**Exterior (north elevation)**

A one-room sandstone structure, this was the first structure erected on the site (Identified on the WPA/HABS plan as 'Storage') (Figure 2-1, Figure 3). Most wood in this structure, as in subsequent additions, is either mesquite (*vigas*/roof beams, lintels, window and door architraves, and thresholds) or cypress (*vigas*/roof beams, door panels, and thin, random-width planks placed across *vigas* to support a *chipichil* roof). Both woods were readily available and, important in such a punishing climate, they were highly durable. Tradition relates an 1830 construction date for this building, although architectural details suggest a possible building date ranging between the 1820s and 1840s. The structure's 26" walls were constructed of randomly-sized sandstone rubble, laid in irregular courses, struck and plastered. All stone likely was quarried from the banks of the Rio Grande. The stones' small size and treatment affirm an early 19th-century construction date, as identical material and construction details are found in Guerrero on buildings known to date from that period. The structure rests on long, sill-like sandstone blocks, and a narrow *banqueta*, or raised stone walk, runs across the facade. Large stepping stones and a stone sill mark the 3'3" entry. An unmolded wood architrave, which is capped by a mesquite lintel, frames the replacement double-doors. A wood plate running across the top of the stone wall levels the wall for the construction of the original *chipichil* roof (mixture of lime, sand, small pebbles or gravel). The building's deteriorated *vigas*, or roof beams, protrude from the wall. According to notes made by the WPA/HABS team, the structure (and the adjacent kitchen) was covered c. 1935/36 by a corrugated iron roof.

Interior

This room's dimensions are approximately 20' 2" x 18' 1". The roof slopes upward from the north wall (9') to the south wall (10'10"). As found throughout the complex, the floor is set below ground level, causing one to step down into the room. According to WPA/HABS documentation, in 1936 the room had a *chipichil* floor. Currently the floor is dirt. Consistent with its use as a fortified structure, the room had no windows. Two entries give access to the room: the double-door opening at the north elevation and a second single-door entry at the south elevation. Both doorways are slightly canted inward. The badly-worn double doors, which long ago replaced the original pair, are often patched and display several generations of machine-cut nails. The single door in the north wall (that now leads out to the courtyard) is original, and its 3" thickness testifies to its defensive function (Figure 4). This door, composed of five large flush boards, is held in place in its substantial mesquite sill and lintel by large round pegs lined with leather. Its architrave is pegged, mortised and tendoned, with later machine-cut nails and a box lock. A third opening (it appears never to have had a door) in the east wall, crudely cut to permit access to the old kitchen, was opened probably at the time the kitchen addition was constructed in 1851. Plain wood shelves rest on carved brackets, known as *manitas*, above all three doors. A single stone shelf projects from the west wall. Lime plaster covers the walls; a similar finish is used in every building.

Analysis

The small dimensions, crude stone work, and lack of architectural detail confirm the building's modest origins as a temporary structure for use by an owner who maintained his principal residence elsewhere. But clearly from the beginning, this was not viewed as an insubstantial or temporary building. Jesús Treviño, had he wished, could have erected a *jacal*, a small structure constructed of posts set into the ground that were interwoven with sticks and mud to form walls. *Jacales* comprised the bulk of ranching structures in this region of the borderlands. Instead, he constructed a substantial, stone building identical to those that stood in Guerrero.

While it would become part of a large complex, this building was never improved. When the 1851 addition was made across the courtyard, it stood isolated from the more finely detailed house. When the

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kitchen was added to its east wall, a crudely-made opening linked the two rooms, perhaps forever relegating this original room to a subsidiary service function.

1851 ADDITION (Casa Larga)**Exterior (west elevation)**

The present complex began to take shape in 1851 with the construction of a two-room sandstone structure that faced west toward the Rio Grande. (This addition is noted as 'Kitchen #1 and Bedroom #1 on the WPA/HABS plan, Figure 2-1)(Figures 5-6, center). Construction techniques, building materials and decorative elements again follow those found throughout Guerrero. The continuous bonding pattern and 46-1/2" (44-1/2" *banqueta* stones; 2" edging stones) *banqueta* that runs across the west elevation provide evidence that these two rooms were built at the same time. Canales, U-shaped stone gutters that are held by supporting carved stone brackets, mark the roof lines of the original flat, *chipichil* roof (Figure 7). The present gable roof over both rooms, covered with a metal roof, was erected in the late 1960s to protect the original construction.

Interior

The rectangular-shaped room identified as 'Bedroom #1' is the larger of the two rooms, measuring approximately 22' 5" long x 13' 4" wide. The west elevation double-door entry, 3' 1/2" wide, is topped by a transom with iron grills. A second set of doors in the east elevation, 3' 5" wide, lead out to the courtyard. Much of the original wrought iron door hardware, including hinges, locks and pulls, survive (Figure 8). The construction date of these two rooms is firmly fixed by the decorative inscription '*Octubre 2 de 1851*' drawn on one of the fifteen closely-spaced *vigas* found in the larger room. Each *viga* in this room is supported by a carved wood bracket, and each bracket (except for the first one) is numbered. The original *chipichil* roof is visible above the planks that rest on the *vigas*. A beam running the length of the room that is braced by a pole now supports the *vigas*. The room has a *chipichil* floor and a storage to the left of the door on the east wall. *Manitas*, or carved wood brackets meant to support shelves are found above three doors: the one in the west elevation, the one in the east elevation (courtyard) and the one leading into the 1854 addition at the south elevation.

The nearly square-shaped room identified as 'Kitchen #1' originally measured approximately 14' 8" long x 13' 4" wide. This room was enlarged to its present size, 14' 8" x 25' 11", in the early 20th century, when it was extended across its rear/east elevation to incorporate the *chimenea* that long had stood in the courtyard. The room has been modernized and furnished for use as a kitchen, and a small metal shed added to its north wall to hold a bathroom. A single mesquite log beam with a hewn upper face, remaining from the 1851 construction effort, runs the width of the room. A parapet in the original south wall remains beneath the new gable roof, and the *tronerias* cut into the top of the parapet are visible (Figure 9).

Analysis

The exceptional architectural trim and greater size indicate the larger room's higher domestic and social status. While identified as a bedroom by the WPA/HABS team, room use at the Treviño-Urbe complex, as elsewhere in the region, appears never to have been fixed. Rather, each room served multiple uses, often mixing public and private functions. In terms of public/private domains, the larger room probably functioned as the superior public room, with the smaller room reserved for relatively private use.

It is not possible to identify the original use of the smaller room with any certainty. But its smaller size and rough architectural details (unfinished log beams) indicate the room's lower status, and the presence of *tronerias* signals the family's continued defensive needs.

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This researcher speculates that at the time of the 1851 addition, the one-room structure noted as 'Kitchen #2' on the WPA/HABS plan, and the arched gated entry to the courtyard, were constructed.

KITCHEN #2**Exterior**

On the exterior, the walls of the room identified as Kitchen #2 (HABS) abuts, but is not bonded in to, the original structure. The rubble sandstone wall is laid in a more regular fashion than the exterior wall of the original room, and its stones are larger than those of the earlier building; both features indicate a later construction date. A 33"-wide window, the single window on any exterior wall, is found in the north wall. The window appears never to have been glazed; part of its mesquite grill remains. A wire screen was attached to the back of the grill at a later date, and the double interior shutters are in place. Faded chips of green paint reveal its once bright coloration. The window's dimensions, placement and the roughness of its interior opening all suggest it was cut into the wall after the room was built; its pegged construction indicates a 3rd quarter of the 19th century construction date. A narrow 12" stone walk runs across the structure's facade. The original flat *chipichil* roof has been removed and the replaced with a corrugated iron roof. A large sandstone chimney breaks through the roof at an angle, rising 5' at the north elevation where this room meets the original structure.

Interior

The kitchen has a *chipichil* floor, and its lime plaster walls still show evidence of the pink paint that once covered the room. The sandstone *chimenea*, which rises in tiers, dominates the room (Figure 10). The *chimenea*'s dimensions, 4'8" wide x 2'8" high and 3'7" deep, indicate its function as the center of food preparation. In addition to the door linking this room to the original room, the kitchen can be entered from double doors in its east wall that lead to the patio just inside the gate and double doors in its south elevation that open to the courtyard. Evidence of a stone walk (perhaps once a *banqueta*), now mostly in ruin, appears along the south, or courtyard, wall of both the original room and the kitchen.

ARCHED GATE

The continuous bond of the kitchen's north wall and the arciform courtyard entry attest to their single construction effort (Figure 11). An arched gateway, 82" wide, functioned as a service passage from the street to the courtyard (Figure 12). Large two-part double doors that are pegged as well as nailed (machine-cut), close the opening. Remains of dark red paint can be seen at the top of the doors. Bits of blue paint remain on the large mesquite lintel above the door. A stone sundial, original to this construction effort, is placed at the top of the arch (Figure 13). The construction of a gun port, or *troneras*, inside the gate to the right of the doors, attests to the still-vigilant nature of life in 1851 and the continued use of this compound as a fortified enclosure.

Analysis

This construction sequence suggests that the original structure, now linked to a kitchen addition, became the work and storage part of the house with its smells and clutter separate from the new, fashionable two-room addition (Figure 2-1). The courtyard wall continued beyond the gate along the north elevation and continued on east and south elevations to enclose and secure the compound. It also is conceivable that the *chimenea* already existed and stood free on the site and was simply incorporated into the building to create a sheltered work space.

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1854 ADDITION (CASA LARGA)**Exterior**

The Treviño-Uribe complex living quarters expanded again in 1854, when a spacious single room measuring 38' 2" long x 13" 4", was placed at the north end of the 1851 building (Identified on the WPA/HABS plan as "bedroom #2). To the casual glance, and because its plaster finish hides the bonding seam, this sandstone addition appears to be of a piece with the two rooms erected in 1851. While subtly executed, this addition is more highly detailed, on both its exterior and interior, than the adjoining earlier rooms. *Canales* supported by decorative stone brackets are placed higher on the west elevation wall, indicating the *chipichil* roof is slightly higher than that of the earlier building effort. At the northwest corner a slender round molding runs the height of the wall, marking the curve of the streets, a detail also found in buildings of Guerrero, Mexico. A 16" *banqueta* runs along the north and west elevations, its narrow width suggesting it was not used as a place to sit or gather. The room is entered through three exterior double doors, one each in the north elevation, west elevation and east elevation. A mesquite lintel caps every door. The 39"-wide door in the north elevation, facing Uribe Street, likely served as the principal entry. Carved stone brackets and ornaments decorate the east elevation wall. The room is covered by a continuation of the same 1960s gable roof that shields the 1851 rooms. On the east elevation, a *banqueta* runs the length of the east (courtyard) elevation.

Interior

The room is built slightly higher above the ground, which accounts for the sloped or 'ramped entry' from this room into its adjacent room. As in the previous building campaigns, this one too was commemorated by a decorated *viga*—the one directly over the elevation entry. In addition to the construction date 'Mayo 15 de 1854', this *viga* is embellished with faded stenciled stars and an inscription that reads "*En Paz y libertad obremos*" (In peace and liberty we work)(Figure 14). A large stenciled star marks the *viga*'s center. A decorative carved stone lintel caps the three doors leading to the exterior; these are the most finely constructed doors in the entire house. Eleven separate pieces of wood compose the matched set of double doors leading to the courtyard. Rather than hinges, metal loops attached to this door (and on the remaining three doors of different design) hold it to the architrave. All door panels are pegged, and each has been decorated with large nails hammered flat against the panels. Again, much of the original hardware remains intact. As in the 1851 portion, this room also has a *chipichil* or natural concrete floor.

Analysis

This room's scale and fine architectural detail suggests that at the time of its construction it became the principal public room of the Treviño-Uribe complex. Again, there was no specific demarcation of space, but furniture was used to indicate room division and use. Lack of direct access to the original room and its adjacent work space, verify the builder's desire to shield this space from the noise, smells and clutter of the work spaces and further evince the room's function as a primary public space.

1871 BUILDING CAMPAIGN**Exterior**

In 1871 a final building campaign added the large flat-roofed sandstone building identified on the WPA/HABS plan as the "Parlor" (Figure 2-1)(Figures 1 & 15). This last building effort marks a continuation of Hispanic traditions, as the building's form, construction details and decorative features were all drawn from practices common to Guerrero (Viejo) and throughout the border region. The building's large sandstone blocks, which are laid in nearly regular courses, reflect its later construction date. Its corner blocks also are carefully dressed and squared, features not seen elsewhere in this complex. Six separate, identical double doors - two opposing doors on the north and south elevations and

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a single opposing door in the east and west elevations - provide entry into the room. Each door is topped by a transom with metal grilles. A mesquite lintel runs below each transom. The corner blocks of these wood lintels are incised with circles, an ornamental feature commonly seen on buildings in Guerrero. A wide *banqueta*, two courses high, runs along the north and east elevations, its corner stones rounded to mark the turn of the street. Carved stone *canales* project from the building's south wall into the courtyard. The building's construction caused the partial demolition of the east courtyard wall. The smooth, unbroken surface of the east wall's exterior face discloses that it was refaced after this building campaign, and at the same time was capped with a decorative corbel.

In the late 1930s a small room was attached to the rear of this building for use as a post office. The east courtyard wall formed the office's back wall (a gun port remains in the wall), the rear wall of the 1871 building formed the office's north wall and the remaining two walls were fashioned from boards and battens. Horizontal planks cover the room's interior walls. A door cut into the courtyard wall permitted direct access into the post office. Two 4/4 windows in the west elevation admit light to the interior. Asbestos shingles now cover the original wood shingles that were attached to the wood plank roof sheathing.

Interior

This building's interior consists of a single, open room measuring 33'7" long by 21'4" wide. A gypsum wall (inserted c. mid-20th century) divides the room roughly into half. Its builder continued the custom of stenciling the construction date on a ceiling beam, and the inscription reads: "*La Paz de Jesu Christo sea con nos otros Diciembre 3 de 1871 San Ygnacio Ruega por nos otros*" (Figure 16) which translates "The peace of Jesus Christ be on us all, December 3, 1871, San Ygnacio pray for us all." (Saint Ignacio was patron of Revilla/Guerrero Viejo, as well as the new settlement of San Ygnacio). This same beam also is decorated at intervals across its length with a number of flower, star and spiral designs inscribed within a small circle. Unlike the earlier additions, all these ceiling beams are milled and have beaded edges. Each beam rests on a thin molded board that encircles the room. The interior door architraves are composed of plain boards with the same decorative incised corner blocks as noted on the exterior. Each interior door reveal is faced with 1-3/4" match board sheathing. Flooring consists of 3-1/4" tongue and groove boards that run the length of the room.

Analysis

This room completed the complex (Figure 17) begun some forty years before with the construction of the original crude one-room structure. It was finished a quarter century after the region became a part of Texas, then the United States, and decades after lumber yards began to sell building components that architecturally linked the entire country. Still, the Treviño-Uribe complex builders continued to adhere to building traditions and styles of living that linked them and their dwelling to Mexico. The builder acknowledged fashionable building details by employing a few popular decorative elements but retained the far more significant imported construction traditions and spatial organization. This building, in materials, form and construction, is identical to hundreds of houses found just across the Rio Grande in Guerrero (Viejo).

While the exact shift in domestic use is not clear, it seems probable that the construction of this room caused a change once again in the way life was lived in the Treviño-Uribe household and a corresponding transformation in room use throughout the complex. As noted above, it is conceivable that at approximately the same time this room was added to the complex, the kitchen was relocated to its present site in the 1851 structure. Placing the 1871 structure at the courtyard gate and building it with six doors points toward a very public use for this room. It may be that the family now wished to banish kitchen smells and noise to the far side of the courtyard, and the use of the 1851 and 1854 rooms shifted. To this end, the original kitchen was remodeled; perhaps it was at this date the window was opened and the original doors were replaced.

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COURTYARD

The compound's courtyard configuration remains intact, with the various buildings forming an L-shaped unit on the north and west sides, while sandstone walls enclose the south and east sides of the property. The east wall stands in good condition, while only a third of the south wall remains. Several *tronerias* (gun ports or loop holes), spaced at regular intervals and capped by mesquite lintels, remain in the walls.

HARDWARE AND OTHER INTERIOR DETAILS

Although individually mentioned in each section, it is important to note that virtually all of the rancho's fine architectural features, including its original hardware, are still in evidence throughout the complex as depicted in the 1936 HABS documentation (Figures 2-1 to 2-5 and Figure 8).

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X
Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B ___ C X D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 1, 4

- NHL Theme(s):
 - I. Peopling Places
 - 3. migration from outside and within
 - 4. community and neighborhood
 - 5. ethnic Homelands
 - 6. encounters, conflicts, and colonization
 - III. Expressing Cultural Values
 - 5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
 - V. Developing the American Economy
 - 4. workers and work culture
 - VIII: Changing Role of the United States in the World Community
 - 1. international relations
 - 2. commerce
 - 3. expansionism and imperialism
 - 4. immigration and emigration

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Exploration/Settlement, Ethnic History--Hispanic

Period(s) of Significance: 1830 -1935

Significant Dates: 1830, 1851, 1871, 1874, 1935

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Jesús Treviño, Blas María Uribe

- Historic Contexts:
 - II. European Colonial Exploration and Settlement
 - A. Spanish Exploration and Settlement
 - 3. Southwest
 - XVI. Architecture
 - X. Vernacular Architecture
 - XXX. American Ways of Life
 - B. Farming Communities
 - E. Ethnic Communities

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**Summary**

Historically, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho vividly expresses early Spanish colonial/Mexican domestic settlement efforts in the American Southwest. Architecturally it is one of the best, most complex and fully realized examples of domestic borderlands architecture that survives from the Spanish colonial/Mexican Period in the United States. It is an exceptional representation of the early ranching traditions that came to define the built environment of Texas and, indeed, much of the southwestern United States in the 19th century. Today, very few contemporaneous buildings survive on the north (United States) side of the border in Texas, and none so vividly portrays the Spanish/Mexican frontier experience as does the Treviño-Uribe complex.

The Rancho is directly associated with the earliest period of Spanish settlement along the lower Rio Grande, specifically with the *villas* and ranch communities established in the mid-18th century by José de Escandón following the formal organization of the new Spanish province of Nuevo Santander in 1746. One of the earliest surviving *ranchos* of the Spanish colonial/Mexican frontier period in the United States, the Treviño-Uribe complex is directly related to Escandón's colonization efforts along the Rio Grande and is, perhaps, the best representation of his legacy in this country. Further, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho vividly expresses the Spanish/Mexican origins of a unique Southwestern ranching culture -- a culture so successfully conveyed by Hispanic pioneers and adopted by Anglo stockraisers that historian Jack Jackson has called it a "distinctively Texan contribution to the frontier experience" (Jackson, 1986: 5). Finally, the fortified stone complex is strongly evocative of Hispanic influences on the architectural fabric of the American Southwest. Based in Spanish colonial building traditions, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho is a superb example of the unique vernacular architecture that developed along the lower Rio Grande in response to the harsh environment and isolated social and domestic circumstances of the borderlands frontier.

Criteria Justification**(1) Contributions of Spanish/Mexican Settlements to the American Southwest**

The c. 1830-1871 Jesús Treviño-Blas María Uribe complex is exceptionally significant as a rare artifact of Spanish colonial/Mexican settlement efforts in the lower Rio Grande region of South Texas and the northern Mexican state of Tamaulipas. While the oldest section of the building complex post-dates Spanish rule in Mexico, its architectural and historic associations are rooted in the region's earliest sustained Spanish colonial settlements, founded by José de Escandón along the Rio Grande in the mid-18th century. In response to the harsh environment, hostile natives, limited building materials, and isolation from outside influences, a distinctive architecture eventually arose along a 200-mile stretch of the Rio Grande that uniquely expresses the bi-national history and culture of that region. The Jesús Treviño-Blas María Uribe Rancho is a superb representation of the distinctive traditions that developed in that context.

Vast portions of Mexico and the present United States, comprising most of the territory west of the Mississippi River and sections of the Southeast including parts of Louisiana and Florida, were originally claimed, explored and partially settled by the Spanish before many other European powers gained footholds along the Eastern seaboard. The first Spanish explorers visited the Gulf Coast of Texas nearly a century before the English built a settlement at Jamestown, and Spanish records document a Thanksgiving feast celebrated by missionaries and Indians at El Paso several years before the English Puritans landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Although it is customary to study United States history as a continuous march westward from the English colonies on the Atlantic coast, virtually all of the earliest

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European settlement in the American Southwest and much of California stems from the efforts of Spanish adventurers, missionaries, and pioneer ranchers who trekked northward from their headquarters in central Mexico to colonize their remote northern frontier.

Spanish colonial settlements in the present United States tended to be small, and concentrated in a few scattered oases along permanent waterways. Among the earliest of these were the missionary and civil settlements of the upper Rio Grande in New Mexico, originally founded in the early 17th century. Following an uprising of the Pueblo Indians, an event known as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Spanish survivors and Indian converts fled to the El Paso valley where they established mission-based pueblos at Ysleta and Socorro, and a *presidio* at San Elizario, in the 1680s. Spanish missionary, military and civil settlements cropped up in central and east Texas in the early 18th century, about the same time the Franciscans founded successful missions in the Santa Cruz valley of present Arizona, near Tucson. Settlement efforts along the lower Rio Grande, in present South Texas, began in the mid-18th century. Although the endeavor was concentrated primarily on the south bank of the river, in present Mexico, several small ranching communities, notably Hacienda Dolores and the Villa de Laredo, constituted the earliest European settlement on the Rio Grande below El Paso. By the turn of the 19th century, the Spanish had moved into present California where they founded civil, missionary and military settlements along the Pacific coastal valleys at the edge of the North American continent.

In the sequence of Spanish colonial settlement in the United States, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho is associated with the mid- to late-18th century ranching communities (*ranchos*) of the lower Rio Grande. The great Spanish colonizer, José de Escandón, established a line of *villas* or towns along the south bank of the Rio Grande, in present Mexico, beginning in 1749. Escandón's attempts to colonize the north bank were less successful, but he encouraged and confirmed the efforts of others to create Spanish settlements on the north bank of the river in present Texas. Due to the particularly harsh environment and hostile natives of the region, only the *villa* of Laredo, the *hacienda* at Dolores, and a few scattered *ranchos* existed on the north bank of the Rio Grande by the end of the 18th century. Despite their tenuous prospects, the *ranchos* were firmly tied to the Spanish *villas* across the Rio Grande through formal land grants issued on behalf of the King of Spain in 1767. Each of the *villas* on the south bank laid claim to ranchlands that lay on the opposite shore. Lands including the present village of San Ygnacio, Texas, were associated with the Escandón town of Revilla (renamed Guerrero after 1827 and now known as Guerrero Viejo) and identified as "*Ranchos de Revilla*" on a c. 1750s map (Figure 20, "Mapa de la Sierra Corda y Costa del Seno Mexicano...") of the area (Sánchez, 1994: 230). Braving the harsh elements and hostile natives, Guerrero area rancher Jesús Treviño built a small stone building at *Rancho San Ygnacio* about 1830. In doing so, he founded the first sustained Spanish settlement in the vicinity of present San Ygnacio.

Although Mexico had already overthrown Spain by the time San Ygnacio was founded, the rancho was clearly an artifact of the Spanish Colonial legacy in the present United States. Founded over an approximately 200-year period, the far-flung Spanish settlements within the present United States shared a common cultural heritage, religion, system of government, language and economic base. Thinly dispersed over a vast territory marked by deserts, mountains and canyons with only occasional pockets of verdant farm land and good pasturage, settlement clusters were relatively isolated from one another and far from the central government in Mexico. Their insularity, different physical environments, available building materials and natural resources, and the existence of friendly or hostile natives, affected the way their settlements developed and survived. The durability of the local building materials and the influence of the indigenous people and other immigrant groups affected construction patterns and methods which in turn defined the appearance of these communities.

In California, for instance, the relatively new Spanish-Mexican society experienced an early and enormous influx of immigrants from the United States and other countries with the Gold Rush of 1849. Spanish-Mexican residents were quickly outnumbered by the newcomers who brought their own building traditions to the landscape, replacing or altering the original appearance of the earlier communities.

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Conversely, Spanish-Mexican settlements that remained isolated from outside influence for a longer period, such as those established in New Mexico and in the lower El Paso valley, managed to retain their original building traditions and appearance to a much greater degree.

Ultimately, each Spanish settlement group adapted to their particular conditions in different but important and lasting ways. Along the region of the lower Rio Grande, largely Hispanic communities like Roma and Rio Grande City, in Starr County, Texas, incorporated many of the building traditions of later immigrant groups in the area, and the architecture of those towns resonates with the influences of German brick masons and French merchants of the mid- to late-19th century. Further upriver and more isolated from outside influences, the community of San Ygnacio experienced little contact with Anglo or other European immigrant groups until the 1930s when the first paved highway connected the town to Laredo and Brownsville. Many of the town's citizens are descendants of the original Spanish colonial settlers of Guerrero who moved across the Rio Grande to expand their ranching interests. These families managed to retain ownership of their ranch and town properties despite widespread land fraud following the Mexican War. As a result of continuous Spanish-Mexican influence and land ownership since its establishment about 1830, San Ygnacio remains an almost exclusively Hispanic Mexican enclave, and many of its buildings have more in common with those of the partly submerged town of Guerrero Viejo, across the Rio Grande in Mexico, than with the Americanized towns of the border.

Today, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho survives as a landmark of the great Spanish colonial endeavors in the lower Rio Grande region of the present United States. A variety of geographical factors, including the arid climate and natural superiority of its sandstone and *chipichil* construction materials, helped maintain the building's physical integrity. Its location in a sparsely populated region of the border, with no rail access and few agricultural or economic opportunities, shielded the building and surrounding community from the encroachment and influence of Anglo cultures well into the 20th century. At the same time, residents of the San Ygnacio community have maintained strong cultural ties with the people and traditions of Escandón's colonies in northern Mexico, especially in Guerrero, thus perpetuating the distinctive Hispanic heritage of this borderland region in the United States. In September, during the festival commemorating the founding of San Ygnacio, the parish priest from Guerrero still comes to say Mass. Finally, ownership of the building has remained with descendants of the original builder, a pioneer settler of the Mexican frontier. Successive generations of the Treviño-Uribe family have continuously occupied and maintained the building and respected its legacy since its construction more than 150 years ago. With its fortress-like cut sandstone walls, distinctive courtyard plan, arched and gated *entrada*, and flat *chipichil* roof with decorative stone *canales*, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho outstandingly evokes the heritage of the Hispanic frontier settlement.

(1) Hispanic Ranching Traditions

In addition to its strong cultural associations, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho vividly represents nearly two centuries of Hispanic ranching traditions that dominated life in Mexico's northernmost settlements throughout the Spanish and early Mexican periods. Alternately described as a dwelling and a fort, the complex was first and foremost the headquarters of a large ranch owned and worked by successive generations of an extended family. Anglo settlers who began moving into Spanish/Mexican territory in the early 19th century readily adopted the Hispanic ranch culture that ultimately became synonymous with Texas and the American Southwest in literature, film, folklore, and fact. The Treviño-Uribe Rancho is one of the earliest, most complex and best preserved Hispanic ranch compounds in Texas and one of only a handful of its type still standing in the United States.

Texas history is inextricably tied to livestock ranching, a practice introduced by the Spanish in their earliest colonization efforts. Spanish missionaries initiated stock raising in the San Antonio River valley in the early 18th century. Because they were unable to control their stock, they were also responsible for the beginnings of the wild herds that multiplied across the Texas landscape. Private stockmen began competing with the missionaries for unbranded cattle by the mid-18th century. At the same time, José de

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Escandón's colonists brought herds of *ganado mayor* (cattle, horses, mules and burros) and *ganado menor* (sheep, goats and swine) to the lower Rio Grande region where they established large private ranches. By the last quarter of the 18th century, the Spanish had begun herding longhorn cattle to markets on trails that reached below the Rio Grande into central Mexico and eastward into Louisiana, thus instituting the tradition of the cattle drive. Anglo-American stock raisers who began migrating to Texas in the 1820s and 1830s adopted Spanish ranching concepts such as mounted herding, roping methods, round ups and cattle drives, and customs such as clothing, equipment, and terminology, with very few changes (Jackson in Tyler, 1996: 434).

The Treviño-Uribe Rancho displays many elements traditionally associated with frontier ranches of the American Southwest. In the earliest years of the ranch, it consisted only of a single-room stone shelter. It nevertheless provided greater protection from hostile Indians than the thatch-roofed wood *jacales* typical of the area. When the owners enlarged and fortified the building in the 1851, the resulting walled complex became a haven for the surrounding ranch families seeking protection from increasingly frequent Indian attacks. Local accounts claim that survivors of nearby Dolores Viejo, destroyed by Indians about 1852, sought refuge in the Treviño-Uribe "fort". By 1853, when William H. Emory mapped the border for the U.S. Boundary Commission, Dolores was in ruins and the Treviño-Uribe complex was the largest, most substantial ranch complex in the region and the focus of a Hispanic ranching community known as San Ygnacio, comprised largely of extended family members related to Treviño by marriage or birth. In fact, San Ygnacio, with the Treviño-Uribe complex at its center, had become the most important community on the Rio Grande between Laredo and the American community of Bellville (Zapata).

Befitting the hazards of the frontier, the complex's most salient features were designed for defense. The complex is entirely enclosed by 9'-12' stone walls that range between 2'-2 1/2' thick. A single entrance with double doors large enough to accommodate livestock and wagons leads into the interior courtyard where a corral and stockade contained livestock herded inside the walls for their protection. All exterior doors are built of solid wood with wooden cross bars for barricades. Most rooms are notable for their lack of windows. A single grilled window, too small to allow human access, provides light to one room. Numerous *tronerias* or gunports are spaced at intervals along the exterior walls to allow occupants to shoot at intruders from within the protective walls. Flat roofs made of *chipichil*, a type of fire resistant local concrete, protected the inhabitants from flaming arrows better than the pitched thatch roofs of *jacales* in the region. A low parapet wall extends about a foot and a half above the flat roof offering defenders some protection from attack. According to family tradition, a circular watch tower known as a *torreón* was once attached to the original room of the fort.

Some elements of the complex were built in response to the extreme hot, dry environment. The thick stone walls and high ceilings kept interior rooms cool during the long summers. Because the area receives an average of only 20 inches of rain per year, pitched roofs were unnecessary. Stone *canales*, or spouts near the top of the walls, allow the occasional rain to drain from the nearly flat roofs. Carved from individual blocks of sandstone, these decorative *canales* are nearly identical to those found on the sandstone buildings of *Guerrero Viejo* (State of Tamaulipas, Mexico). A freestanding stone fireplace, known as a *chimenea* or *horno*, was built in the courtyard where all cooking was traditionally done. The hearth was detached to keep the heat out of the living quarters, much like a summer kitchen in the American South. Once a common borderland ranch structure, few examples survive in South Texas outside the community of San Ygnacio. The Treviño *chimenea* was incorporated into the main house by an extension built in the early 20th century, but it retains all of its original features.

The courtyard served social functions, as well. Family and friends gathered within its walls for traditional religious celebrations and fiestas. Important aspects of *La Dolorosa* (Weeping Mary) and *La Posada* (journey of Mary and Joseph) and ceremonies conducted at Easter and Christmas, respectively, occurred within the courtyard walls. Touring musical and theater groups from Mexico staged shows inside the courtyard where the high compound walls provided a backdrop for the scenery and the stone *banquetas* served as a stage. In the early 20th century, traveling showmen projected silent movies against the white

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plastered walls of the house for viewers who sat on blankets in the courtyard. Today, members of the extended Uribe, Gutiérrez, Benavides, Martínez and Sánchez families, descended from the original settlers and scattered throughout South Texas, gather for special events in the old courtyard on a regular basis.

(4) Distinctive Vernacular Architecture of the Border Region

Architecturally, the Treviño-Uribe Complex reflects the changing circumstances of its owners as they adapted to life on the frontier. About 1830, Guerrero-area pioneer rancher, Treviño, erected a simple one-room shelter to protect himself and his *vaqueros* from the elements and hostile natives. Built of a native sandstone found only in a limited region along the lower Rio Grande, the construction methods and materials typify the earliest permanent dwellings of Hispanic ranchers along both sides of the river. Following the Mexican War (1846-1848), jurisdiction over the land north of the Rio Grande fell to the United States and Treviño's son-in-law, Blas María Uribe, moved his family to the ranch to reinforce the family claim to the land. Between about 1848 and 1854, Uribe added rooms to the original building to accommodate his family. In the process he fortified the complex against repeated Indian attack by completing a nine-foot stone wall with gunports or *troneras* spaced at intervals along the walls. Uribe's final addition in 1871 reflects the relative prosperity and security achieved by the family in the last third of the 19th century.

Despite its Spanish colonial historical associations, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho represents an architectural tradition that is unique to the Rio Grande borderlands region of South Texas/Northern Mexico. By the time the Treviño-Uribe Rancho was begun, nearly a century after Escandón's initial settlement, the descendants of pioneer ranchers of the borderlands had developed their own vernacular responses to the conditions they faced. They had adapted their architecture to the arid environment of the region, available construction materials and the presence of hostile Indian tribes and outlaws, as well as to their own domestic and social routines. These conditions are well represented in the location, plan, materials and design of the Treviño-Uribe ranch complex.

Jesús Treviño's original c. 1830 one-room building may have been built as a seasonal, semi-permanent shelter that provided him and/or his workers some protection from the relentless sun and hostile natives of the region. Treviño probably did not live in the one-room dwelling for extended periods of time, if at all, as he maintained his family home near the Mexican city of Guerrero (Viejo). However, the small building's stone construction and *chipichil* roof indicate his intention to establish a permanent presence on the north bank of the river. At that time, most of the area's inhabitants lived in pole and mud, thatch-roofed *jacales* for years before building more substantial stone dwellings.

It was left to Treviño's son-in-law, Blas María Uribe, born in Guerrero, but raised on a ranch near the Treviño land, to fully develop the dwelling. Mesquite beams or *vigas* in the various rooms bear inscriptions that include the dates of their construction, most of which were completed between 1851 and 1854. The stone wall and *zaguan* entry were built during this construction phase, completing the enclosure of the complex. Although the site was by then part of the United States and ostensibly under its protection, it remained subject to attack by bands of Comanche and Lipan Apache warriors and outlaw gangs that wreaked havoc along the newly formed border. The height and mass of the protective walls, the absence of exterior windows, and the inclusion of *troneras* or gunports that allowed those defending the complex to shoot at their attackers from inside the walled complex reflect the building's dual role as shelter and fort.

Rooms added by Uribe were much more refined than Treviño's original stone room. While Treviño's earlier room appears to have been built of river rock, possibly gathered from around the site, Uribe's later rooms were built of locally quarried, dressed sandstone. Interior spaces exhibit many fine details of craftsmanship, including carved wooden braces that support the *vigas*. Although all of Blas Maria and Juliana Treviño de Uribe's six children were born in Guerrero (Viejo) before 1842, local accounts agree

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that Uribe moved his entire family to the complex on the U.S. side of the border where they lived the rest of their lives. Sometime after the move, Juliana died, leaving her husband with six children to raise by himself. About 1870, Uribe remarried. His second wife was Tomasa Gutiérrez, the twin sister of his son, Manuel's bride, and Juliana Treviño de Uribe's niece. According to family accounts, Uribe added the final room to the complex in 1871, at the request of his young bride. While similar in many ways to his earlier additions, the later room exhibits the earliest evidence of outside influence on the local building traditions. It contains some milled lumber in the beams, doors and surrounds, and lacks some of the distinctive decorative folk elements of the earlier (1851-1854) rooms. Nevertheless, it retains the essential character, scale and design of the earlier rooms and, like those, is built of quarried sandstone and displays mesquite beams carved with an inscription and construction date.

After completing his home, Uribe laid out the townsite of San Ygnacio in 1874. The townsite included his own house and a handful of other dwellings built during the preceding quarter century (Figures 25a & 25b). The fortified Treviño-Urbe complex commanded a strategic site on a high bank above the Rio Grande. Several other area ranchers, most of whom were either directly related or married into the Treviño-Urbe family, clustered their dwellings around it for mutual protection and access to the river. Until Uribe laid out his *Plano del Rancho del San Ygnacio* (Figure 22), community growth had been organic rather than planned. Uribe's townsite, platted in a typical Spanish colonial grid pattern with a central plaza, therefore, was a marked departure from the enclave that had grown up around the fortified complex on the river bank. The town's creation reflected a number of changes that had occurred since the initial settlement, including relative safety from Indian and bandit attack, an increased population, greater prosperity and a more diversified economy.

The townsite's configuration in turn spawned community changes. The creation of a central plaza, and the contemporaneous construction of a church that faced the plaza, shifted community development away from the river. Subsequent construction occurred in the blocks immediately surrounding the plaza rather than along the river. At the same time, family activities moved outside the protected private courtyards to the open communal plaza. As a result, fewer courtyard-plan compounds were built after the townsite was platted. Although houses from the later period tended to follow a linear, rather than massed, plan type, few retained the full quadrangle configuration or *placita* plan of their fortified predecessors. Nevertheless, most of the later buildings retained many defining aspects of the earlier construction methods. Today the townsite includes more than 30 historic properties, including the Treviño-Urbe complex, that follow the regional northern Mexican building traditions in plan, materials, or both. Most of the 1874 San Ygnacio townsite is included in the San Ygnacio National Register Historic District (NR 1973).

In materials, plan, use and design, the Treviño-Urbe complex resembles contemporaneous sandstone dwellings in and around the abandoned Mexican city of Guerrero (Viejo) which was evacuated in the early 1950s when Falcón Reservoir was filled. Scores of stone ranch buildings scattered along the U.S. side of the border were submerged beneath the reservoir waters, as well. While none were as fully-developed with enclosed courtyards or as well-preserved as the Treviño-Urbe complex, they shared similar cultural and architectural associations with one another and with their counterparts in the Guerrero (Viejo) area, as well. Today, very few contemporaneous buildings survive on the north (United States) side of the border in Texas and none so vividly portrays the Spanish/Mexican frontier experience as does the Treviño-Urbe complex.

The Treviño-Urbe complex retains its architectural integrity to a remarkable degree. A gabled roof has been erected over part of the building after Hurricane Beulah caused its original *chipichil* roof to leak in the 1960s. It remains in the ownership of the original Treviño-Urbe family descendants and is opened regularly for family gatherings and occasionally for local events.

Early in this century, visitors from outside the area began to recognize the unique architectural character of the border region, particularly of the Treviño-Urbe Rancho. In 1919, the *Architectural Record*

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published a photo essay on the "Picturesque Towns of the Border Land" featuring the stone buildings of San Ygnacio with a picture and paragraph about the Treviño-Urbe "fort" (May, 1919: 384). In 1936, the Treviño House/Fort was selected for recordation in the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). It was one of the earliest Texas properties—one of only two Hispanic ranches of the lower Rio Grande—documented in the 1930s HABS effort. San Bartolo, the other recorded ranch complex of the region, was flooded when Falcón Reservoir was filled in the early 1950s. In 1964 the Treviño-Urbe complex was designated a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark in 1966, and in 1973 it was listed in the National Register as part of the San Ygnacio Historic District.

Period of Significance: 1830-1935

The period of national significance for the Treviño-Urbe Rancho begins with the construction of the single stone room built about 1830, when Jesús Treviño purchased the land on the north bank of the Rio Grande, and ends at 1935 when the first paved highway connected San Ygnacio with other communities.

Oral tradition attributes the construction of the original room, known as the *Cuarto Viejo*, to Treviño, and no other sources indicate otherwise. Deed records verify that Treviño purchased the land on which the property lies from the heirs of Vasquez Borrego in 1830. Therefore, the year 1830 marks the beginning of the period of significance for the frontier rancho. In 1851, following the Mexican War, Treviño's son-in-law, Blas María Uribe began a series of building campaigns to enlarge and strengthen his ranch headquarters. Twenty years later, the Treviño-Urbe complex was essentially completed: its courtyard configuration, walls, stone rooms, distinctive entrance, architectural and defensive features, appeared very much as they do today.

By 1874, when Uribe platted the town of San Ygnacio near his fortified house, border conditions had changed significantly since Treviño first established his outpost. In fact, the town's founding reflects many of the changes that had taken place. Increased population and the proximity of newly established or reoccupied forts along the border greatly reduced the danger from Indian and bandit raids. Ranching was no longer the area's sole occupation as some residents turned to farming and others opened mercantile operations to serve the enlarged populace. Community life, too, shifted from the confines of the rancho's walled courtyard to the open square on which the church and several stores fronted.

The town of San Ygnacio remained relatively isolated, experienced little growth, and retained a distinctive culture until the 1930s. In 1935, the first paved highway connected San Ygnacio to outside markets. The arrival of the highway spurred new physical development along its route, facilitated communication with other communities, and spurred the transformation of the economy and culture of the town. For this reason, the 1935 marks the end of the rancho's period of national significance.

Historical Background**Introduction**

Jesús Treviño, his daughter Juliana and son-in-law, Blas María Uribe, and their families, founded a lasting legacy at *Rancho San Ygnacio*, in present Zapata County, Texas (Figures 18 & 19). The harsh circumstances and life-threatening challenges of the Mexican border frontier are outstandingly represented in the Treviño-Urbe building complex. Its associations with the Spanish colonial/Mexican frontier building and settlement patterns makes the Treviño-Urbe Rancho exceptionally significant; a rare representation in this country of the early colonial Spanish/Mexican architectural traditions .

The Treviño-Urbe Rancho, commonly known as the Treviño Fort, has long been recognized as a significant cultural landmark, by both regional and national standards. As early as 1919, the rancho was identified in a national architectural journal (*The Architectural Record*) as one of the few surviving artifacts of Spanish colonial efforts in what is now South Texas. It was documented by Donald Weichlein

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and Arthur W. Stewart for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1936, and it has changed very little since that time. The building complex was designated an official Recorded Texas Historical Landmark in 1964 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 as a contributing property in the San Ygnacio Historic District. Continuously occupied until 1989, the property remains in the hands of descendants of the original Treviño/Uribe family who established the ranch and platted the historic town of San Ygnacio around the fortified complex.

Historically, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho vividly expresses early Spanish colonial/Mexican domestic settlement efforts in the American Southwest. Architecturally it is one of the best, most complex and fully realized examples of domestic borderlands architecture that survives from the Spanish colonial/Mexican Period in the United States. It is an exceptional representation of the early ranching traditions that came to define the built environment of Texas and, indeed, much of the southwestern United States in the 19th century. A discussion of its historic background reveals the variety and scope of American cultural and architectural themes represented by the Treviño-Uribe Rancho.

Spanish Colonial Settlements on the Lower Rio Grande: 1519 - 1810

For more than two centuries following the first tentative Spanish exploration efforts in what is now South Texas, the area drained by the Rio Grande remained unsettled. As early as 1519, Spanish explorer Alonzo Alvarez de Piñeda charted the Gulf Coast from Florida to Tampico, Mexico. However, it was castaway Cabeza de Vaca who is credited with bringing the first detailed accounts of present northern Mexico and the American Southwest to Spanish headquarters in the New World in 1536 after he wandered throughout that vast territory for nearly nine years. Following de Vaca's return to Mexico City, the Spanish sent large exploratory expeditions into present Arizona and New Mexico, where Spanish colonization efforts in the present United States were concentrated until the 1740s.

By the late 17th century, the Spanish determined that it was necessary to explore and begin colonization of the vast desert area known as Seno Mexicano, which includes part of present Texas. First and foremost, they wished to secure the frontier from possible incursions by the French, English and Dutch, whose successful colonizing efforts elsewhere in the New World threatened to expand into Spanish territory. In particular, they feared the ambitious French whose presence in Louisiana posed a threat to Spanish lands in what is now East Texas. Most unsettling, however, was the news that the French explorer La Salle had ventured into present Texas from Matagorda Bay in 1686, with the intention of forming a settlement in land claimed by Spain. Shocked into action, the Spanish decided to establish permanent colonies to discourage encroachment by other European powers. In addition, the Spanish hoped to exploit rumored mineral wealth in the mountain regions and salt fields.

José de Escandón and the Colonization of Nuevo Santander

José de Escandón, a sergeant of the Querétaro (Spanish colonial Mexico) militia with experience in quelling native rebellion, was appointed to head a colonization effort on September 3, 1746. Escandón named the proposed new colony Nuevo Santander after his native region of Spain. Its boundaries extended from Tampico on the south to the Bay of Espíritu Santo near Matagorda Bay, on the north, and from the Gulf of Mexico on the east, westward to the mountains of the Sierra Madre Oriental on the west. The Rio Grande flowed from northwest to southeast through the upper third of the territory. Escandón and his lieutenants conducted a survey of the territory early in 1747 to lay the groundwork and select sites for new colonies. Based on information gathered in the survey, Escandón planned 14 settlements throughout the vast region, with several intended along the Rio Grande and one each on the Nueces and San Antonio rivers.

Escandón's reputation attracted hundreds of Spanish and *mestizo* volunteers to settle the proposed colonies. Incentives included the promise of good land, free from taxes for a period of ten years from the date of settlement, and generous allowances for each family. Volunteer settlers were to be deposited at

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various locales to establish towns or *villas*, as the settlements were known. Escandón insisted that the *villas* be put under civil rather than military or religious jurisdiction, so no *presidios* (permanent military garrisons) were planned. Missionaries from the College of Guadalupe de Zacatecas were recruited to serve the settlers' religious needs and to pacify and minister to the native peoples of the region through the establishment of missions (George 1975:14, 16).

Led by Escandón and escorted by 750 soldiers, more than 2,500 colonists departed Querétaro for Nuevo Santander on November 16, 1748. Escandón set out for the Rio Grande intending to follow Spanish colonial development policy that encouraged settlements to be located "on a river if possible, . . . [with access to] good water and air, close to arable land . . ." (George, 1975: 21). En route, he instructed several different bands of colonists to set up *villas* before the main group reached the south bank of the Rio Grande in March, 1749. Camargo, founded March 5, 1749, and Reynosa, founded March 14, 1749, were the first links in what would become a chain of Spanish *villas* and *ranchos* along the Rio Grande (Figure 20).

Building sites were chosen for the availability of good soil and water and trees for firewood and shade (George, 1975: 20). In fact, arable land was scarce and the residents relied more on stock raising for both food and trade than on the crops that they managed to grow. Beans, squash and corn were the most prevalent crops, but they were grown for subsistence rather than for sale. Stock raising, on the other hand, proved more lucrative. A 1757 Spanish inspection of the northern territories conducted by Captain Tienda de Cuervo, identified only 23 families at the ranching community of Dolores, but among them they had accumulated 400 horses, 3,000 mares, 1,600 mules and 3,000 head of cattle (Hill in George, 1975: 26). Ranchers along the Rio Grande found ready markets for their cattle and horses in Mexico, and they sold mules as pack animals to miners in the northern provinces of Nuevo Santander.

Other Settlement Efforts on the Rio Grande

Encouraged by the scope and potential of Escandón's endeavor, other enterprising ranchers already living in the region requested permission to initiate similar settlements under his jurisdiction. One of the most successful of these settlements was Revilla (renamed Guerrero and now known as Guerrero Viejo--Old Guerrero), whose citizens eventually crossed the Rio Grande to extend their ranching operations, including the Treviño-Uribe Rancho. Another such settlement, ultimately less successful but significant as the first colony on the north bank of the river, was Dolores (Viejo). After a series of Comanche attacks in the early 19th century, some of Dolores' residents fled to the protective walls of the Treviño-Uribe fort where they formed the nucleus of what became the village of San Ygnacio.

Revilla was founded when Escandón approved rancher Vicente Guerra's request to build a new community upriver from Camargo and Reynosa on the south bank of the Rio Grande. Accompanied by 40 families from the present Mexican states of Coahuila and Nuevo León, Guerra founded *villa del Señor San Ygnacio de Loyola de Revilla*, or Revilla, on October 10, 1750. Revilla was moved twice before reaching its permanent site near the confluence of the Salado River and the Rio Grande, where it quickly grew into an important regional commercial and cultural center. In 1827 the town's name changed to Guerrero in honor of Vicente Guerrero, one of the heroes of Mexican independence (Gutiérrez, 1994: 200). Today, following its partial flooding by Falcon Reservoir, it is known as *Guerrero Viejo*—old Guerrero.²

Although his colonization efforts were hugely successful, Escandón failed to establish thriving settlements north of the Rio Grande, as he had planned. Escandón originally intended to build *villas* on

²The Mexican government built a new city of Guerrero, sometimes called Guerrero Nuevo to distinguish it from the original city, about nine miles downriver from the old *villa* and directly across the reservoir from the Texas town of Zapata.

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both the San Antonio and Nueces rivers to encourage settlement into the interior of present Texas. While there is no evidence that he attempted a settlement on the San Antonio River, he did send a group of colonists to the Nueces River. At the edge of the Spanish frontier, far from supplies or protection, the Nueces River band was forced to retreat to the Salado River, south of the Rio Grande, by hostile natives, lack of supplies or both.³ Told to wait for further instructions, the group was demoralized by the deaths of several colonists, including their leader, and they fled to other settlements. For the time being, Escandón's hope of establishing outposts north of the Rio Grande was thwarted (George, 1975: 15).

Along with Guerra, a handful of other ranchers moved into the frontier north of Monterrey and began extending their ranches to the south bank of the river as early as 1745. They supported Escandón's settlement efforts in the region, believing that an increased Spanish presence provided greater security from hostile natives. Some requested permission to bring their ranching endeavors under Escandón's jurisdiction because of the favorable conditions he offered his colonists. Several of these intrepid ranchers ventured across the Rio Grande and through their efforts Escandón achieved his goal to build settlements north of the river.

Hacienda de Dolores: Settlement on the North Bank of the Rio Grande

One Coahuila rancher, José Vásquez Borrego, petitioned Escandón for permission to build a *villa* on the north side of the Rio Grande where he had already established a *hacienda*, and was grazing cattle. Borrego felt it was in his best interests to align his settlement efforts with Escandón's and he sent his son, Juan José, to Escandón with his petition. Borrego proposed to establish a settlement at his own expense, to maintain a ferry service across the Rio Grande, and to help protect travelers from Indian attacks. In return, he was to receive a grant of 50 *sitios* (221,420 acres) for *ganado mayor* and a ten-year exemption from taxes. Considering the hardships that had discouraged his own colonists on the Nueces River, Escandón was impressed with Borrego's resolve and granted his request. Borrego established the *villa* of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, now known as *Dolores Viejo* (old Dolores) (Figure 20), on August 22, 1750, a little more than a year after Escandón arrived on the Rio Grande (Fish, 1989: 2).

Largely due to his personal leadership and resources, Borrego's *hacienda* at Dolores was the first successful Spanish settlement on the north bank of the Rio Grande in present Texas.⁴ Despite Escandón's request that Borrego establish a *villa* similar to his settlements at Reynosa and Camargo, Dolores remained a *hacienda* whose inhabitants labored for their patron's benefit rather than their own. In fact, the first 13 families who settled at Dolores were Borrego's employees, brought from his San Juan del

³It is difficult to identify the specific tribes of native peoples encountered by Escandón's colonists from early accounts. By the 19th century, most sources attributed the repeated raids on the border communities to mounted Apache and/or Comanche warriors whose presence in South Texas increased with the advance of Anglo immigrants from the north and east. U.S. Boundary Commissioner William H. Emory identified the attackers in the San Ygnacio region only as "Indians" or "wild Indians" although he specifically mentioned Lipan Apaches in the Laredo area in his 1852-3 survey of the Rio Grande. U.S. Military inspectors in the mid-1850s also observed that Lipan Apaches conducted raids along the river in the vicinity of San Ygnacio. Local accounts claim that Comanches were responsible for a series of raids that occurred in the 1830s. It is probable that both Comanche and Lipan Apache groups were involved in the numerous attacks on area communities from the 1810s through the 1850s. When known, tribes are specifically named. Otherwise, they are identified simply as Indians or natives, as those are the terms most commonly used in historical accounts.

⁴ Hacienda Dolores (Dolores Viejo) was abandoned after a series of Indian attacks between 1813 and 1818. Although it was resettled, it was subject to repeated raids by Comanches and/or Lipan Apaches from the 1830s through the early 1850s. Lt. William H. Emory noted a large stone rancho abandoned at the site in his survey of 1852-3. A new settlement known as Dolores Nuevo was founded nearby about 1860. It was abandoned in the early 20th century.

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Alamo ranch in Coahuila. Borrego divided his attention between the two ranches and installed his nephew, Don Bartolome Borrego, as his second in command (Fish, 1989: 2).

Dolores prospered and within five years of its founding its population nearly doubled to include 25 Spanish families with more than 100 members. In addition, for a period lasting five years, 27 families of Carrizo Indians also worked on the ranch in exchange for supplies. Borrego maintained a small chapel at the *hacienda* and reportedly hired a teacher of Christian doctrine to minister to the residents' needs. José Tienda de Cuervo's 1757 inspection of the *hacienda* indicated that the colonists lived in *jacales*. In time, they built more substantial sandstone dwellings quarried at great effort from local outcroppings and hauled by oxen to the building sites. Despite modest living conditions, the ranch appeared to be quite successful. Stock raising was the principal occupation of the ranch and a 1758 census counted 3,000 head of cattle, 3,000 mares, 400 horses, 1,600 mules and more than 1,000 burros (Fish, 1989:3-4). By fulfilling the terms agreed to by Escandón and Borrego, heirs of José Vásquez Borrego received final adjudication of the land grant on October 8, 1784 in the city of Revilla. Residents of both Revilla and Dolores contributed significantly to the establishment of the Treviño-Urbe complex and to the development of San Ygnacio.

After the *villas* were established, colonists ventured out from their relative safety to graze stock in the surrounding territory. Lands were held in common until the General Visita of 1767 assigned parcels, called *porciones* (long, narrow tracts of land lying perpendicular to and spanning the Rio Grande) to individual settlers. Once lands were divided, some property owners continued to live in the *villas* but erected semi-permanent outposts on their ranches, while others established new homes for themselves or their children on the ranches. The settlers planted gardens for personal consumption but engaged almost exclusively in stock raising.

The Spanish colonists' successful stock raising attracted the attention of Indians from the north and west and, while they incurred little harm from natives in the early settlement years, raids from both local Carrizo Indians and nomadic Comanches became more prevalent as the 18th century drew to a close. Events beyond the river communities exacerbated the situation in the early 19th century. Mexico revolted against the government of Spain, and Spanish troops were withdrawn from the border in 1813. Left without protection, ranchers were open to unchallenged attack, and Indian raids increased in severity and frequency throughout the region from about 1813 to 1818. During the same period, an influx of Anglo settlers into northeastern and central Texas pushed native groups, particularly Comanches, southward into the region of the Rio Grande. Lipan Apaches, Comanches and Kickapoos repeatedly raided the little ranching communities for nearly a century, with the last major attack occurring on the border as late as 1875 (George, 1975: 27).

Armed guards maintained constant watch over the *haciendas*, but isolated communities were under almost constant threat of attack during the first half of the 19th century. After a series of deadly raids beginning in 1814, in which a number of residents were killed and women and children kidnapped, Dolores was abandoned. Today, the only surviving remnant of the original community is a ruined bastion with seven gunports. Although residents returned to the area and founded a new settlement at nearby Dolores Nuevo about 1830, it too was eventually abandoned by 1853 due to repeated Indian attack. Some of the survivors fled to the little community that had emerged downriver at *Rancho San Ygnacio*.

Despite its ultimate demise, Dolores was an important step in extending Spanish ranching and settlement traditions on the north side of the Rio Grande. The ranch and its founder, Borrego, directly affected the establishment of the Treviño-Urbe complex and the subsequent development of San Ygnacio. Ruins of *Dolores Viejo* lie along the Rio Grande, north of the present town of San Ygnacio.

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Jesús Treviño Complex at *Rancho San Ygnacio*

The place name "San Ygnacio" first appears in historic documents when the heirs of José Vásquez Borrego resolved a boundary dispute by setting the eastern boundary at "*San Ygnacio Viejo*", in 1778 (Scott, 1925: 114; Barbee, 1979: 34). Subdivisions within the Borrego grant were given names including *Corralitos*, *San Francisco* and *Hacienda San Ygnacio* (Robinson 1979: 126; Barbee, 1981: 34). According to historian Mercurio Martínez, a descendent of Jesús Treviño, José Vásquez Borrego established the "Hacienda of San Ygnacio" and placed it under the charge of his son-in-law, José Fernando Vidaurri (Fish, 1989: 6). Little is known about this earlier settlement of San Ygnacio because the same Indian raids that prompted settlers at *Dolores Viejo* to abandon that site in 1818 also prompted residents to flee *Hacienda San Ygnacio* that year (Robinson, 1979: 126; Barbee, 1981).

Despite increased threat from Comanche and Apache raids in Mexico's northern frontier, settlers continued to cross the Rio Grande to extend existing ranches or carve out new ranches of their own. Among these settlers were Jesús Treviño and Doña Ygnacia Gutiérrez Uribe. Both Treviño and Señora Uribe were residents of Revilla who established ranches near one another on the north side of the Rio Grande in present Zapata County in the 1820s. The widow of Don Dionicio Uribe, Doña Ygnacia Gutiérrez de Lara de Uribe, crossed the river with her two young sons in 1822, only four years after the violent Indian attacks caused the abandonment of *Dolores Viejo* and *Hacienda San Ygnacio*. She founded a ranch named Uribeño (now submerged), about five miles northwest of present Zapata, where she raised her two sons, Blas María Uribe (born c. 1811) and Juan José Uribe (born c. 1813) (Barbee 1981: 35). Although few facts are known about her life, Doña Ygnacia must have faced tremendous challenges, from hostile Indians to a climate that vacillated from drought to flood conditions. Her courage has become almost legendary in Zapata County lore (Barbee, 1981: 36). Doña Ygnacia's son, Blas María Uribe, would be most responsible for the present configuration and appearance of the Treviño-Urbe complex and for the development of the town of San Ygnacio.

Sometime after Doña Uribe settled on the north side of the Rio Grande, Jesús Treviño, a wealthy alderman of Revilla (*Guerrero Viejo*) purchased 125,000 acres of ranch land in the southwestern corner of the Vásquez Borrego Grant from the Borrego heirs. The purchase contained the former *Hacienda San Ygnacio*, sometimes called *Rancho San Ygnacio* or the San Ygnacio Subdivision, located about 10 miles upriver from the Uribeño Ranch. Along with his sons-in-law, Vicente Gutiérrez and Manuel Benavides and their families, Treviño established a ranching compound with his headquarters on the south side of Arroyo Grullo, on the north bank of the Rio Grande. Although the land acquisition was not finalized until 1830, Treviño may have built the original stone room of the present Treviño-Urbe complex as early as 1822 when the initial purchase was made.⁵ It is possible that he may have wanted to establish a physical presence on the property or simply wished to provide a shelter for periodic visits to the ranch. While the exact date of construction is unknown, it is almost certain that Treviño built the one-room shelter by 1830 when the property transaction became official (Barbee, 1981: 36), and family tradition maintains 1830 as the date the original one-room house was built (Martínez, letter November 15, 1962; Sánchez de Herrera interview, September 26, 1991).

⁵ An exact construction date for the earliest room of the fort is not known. Most sources cite 1830 as the date Treviño purchased the land and built the original one-room stone building. However, Barbee stated that Treviño purchased the land in 1822, but offered no source for this information. Robinson noted that HABS documentation conducted in 1936 recorded Vasquez Borrego's sale of the land to Treviño in 1829 (Robinson, 141), but translated deed records indicate that the sale, from Borrego's heirs, occurred in 1830. HABS documentation also gives the date of construction as 1854, but that probably reflects the inscription on a beam in one of the later rooms. Treviño was dead by 1844 and thus could not have built the building in 1854. Also, the one-room building appears to predate the 1851-54 additions by many years, giving credence to family sources such as Mercurio Martinez that it was built several decades earlier. Martinez stated in several documents, including his book *The Kingdom of Zapata*, that Treviño built the original building in 1830. Dates of construction for the other rooms are well documented by inscriptions on the *vigas*.

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Frontier life required constant vigilance and sacrifice as hostile natives, primarily Comanche and Lipan Apache groups, presented an unpredictable and potentially deadly threat to the Mexican pioneer rancher. Following its independence from Spain, the Mexican government established a modest military presence along the Rio Grande and Indian raids temporarily subsided in the 1820s, as a result. By 1830, when Treviño formalized his purchase of Rancho San Ygnacio, former residents of *Dolores Viejo* felt sufficiently safe that they returned to their ranches on the north side of the river. However, prudent settlers throughout the area fortified themselves against the possibility of renewed Indian raids by building stone houses with *chipichil* (concrete) rather than thatch roofs, installing gunports called *troneras* within the stone walls, and occasionally constructing *torreones* or watch towers to look out for approaching Indians. According to family tradition, Treviño or one of his heirs attached a circular *torreón* to the one-room building (Sánchez de Herrera interview, September 26, 1991), but it was removed after Indian raids ended.

There is little evidence that Treviño maintained more than a temporary residence at his small ranch house. He owned other ranches south of the river and apparently spent most of his life in that region. Treviño's *vaqueros*, or ranch hands, may have occupied the stone house on the north bank of the Rio Grande in his absence. The small size of the building belies its importance, however. Most early inhabitants of the Spanish/Mexican frontier lived in simple *jacaes*. Many established Spanish/Mexican ranch families lived for many years in similar one- or two-room houses. J.B. Jackson commented on a housing tradition that was still current in New Mexico in 1959:

the house and the room are identical; the room is thought of and designed to be a completely self-sufficient unit with its own corner chimney . . . , its own door, its own window; plenty of young Spanish-American working couples start married life in a one-room house standing by itself in a yard. They rapidly acquire a second room, it's true, and a third when they think they need it, but each of these additional rooms is pretty much of the same size, and built to be self-sufficient if necessary (Wilson, Christopher 1991: 112).

Although Jackson was describing building types in central New Mexico, his observations are also true of Hispanic ranch dwellings of South Texas, including the Treviño-Uribe complex.

In 1831, Blas María Uribe married Jesús Treviño's daughter, Juliana. Uribe and his new bride may have lived in Revilla, renamed Guerrero in 1827, for some time after they were married. According to their son, Trinidad, who was born in 1838, all six Uribe children were born in Guerrero (*The South Texas Reporter*, July 16, 1978). It is possible that Uribe managed his family's ranch at Uribeño from a home base in Guerrero much like his father-in-law managed *Rancho San Ygnacio*. Certainly life in Guerrero, by that time an established and substantial city, had many material and cultural advantages over an isolated and unprotected life on the ranch north of the Rio Grande. With its church, schools and commercial opportunities, Guerrero remained the most important urban center to ranchers of the San Ygnacio vicinity until the 20th century and many Hispanic families on the north side of the border sent their children to school in Guerrero.

Political Change: 1836-1848

Between 1836 and 1848, sovereignty over the region of the lower Rio Grande, including Rancho San Ygnacio, changed political hands several times. San Ygnacio area ranchers experienced little change in their daily lives when Texas declared its independence from Mexico in 1836. Although the Republic of Texas claimed jurisdiction over the territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, it made no real efforts to enforce its claim. In practice, the border region was an entity unto itself, and ranchers all along the north bank of the Rio Grande retained strong familial and economic ties to the *villas* on the south bank. In 1839, Antonio Zapata, Jesús Cardenas, Antonio Canales, of Mexico, and a handful of American adventurers, among others, convened in Guerrero to form a separate Republic of the Rio Grande consisting generally of northern Mexico-southern Texas, "Tamaulipas and Coahuila north to the Nueces

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and Medina rivers, respectively, and Nuevo Leon, Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua and New Mexico" (Tyler, 1996: Vol. 5: 537). Laredo became the "capital" of the ill-fated Republic and for nearly two years, the region was plunged into political turmoil. Although the Republic of the Rio Grande was short-lived, its establishment reflected the real cultural affiliation of the border residents, an affiliation that was politically severed by the outcome of the Mexican War a few years later.

At the conclusion of the Mexican War (1846-1848), Mexico officially ceded lands lying between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande to the United States. Webb and Starr counties were created and *Rancho San Ygnacio*, no longer part of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, was divided between them. Despite the new government's assurances that Spanish and Mexican land grants in the United States would be honored, many Hispanic landowners took action to strengthen their claims.

Family sources disagree on the exact year Uribe took possession of the Treviño property but it probably occurred sometime between 1842, when his father-in-law died, and 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo transferred the territory to the United States. Uribe's grandson, Zapata County historian Mercurio Martínez, claimed that Uribe moved to the ranch in 1844 and began enlarging the fort at that time (Martínez letter, 1962). Other family members maintain that Uribe did not move to the ranch until the outcome of the Mexican War prompted him to establish his domicile on the property. Uribe understood that the new government required evidence of actual occupation to validate his claim to the land (Sánchez de Herrera interview, September 26, 1991). In any case, it is almost certain that Uribe moved his operations and livestock along with his family to *Rancho San Ygnacio* by the conclusion of the Mexican War in 1848. It turned out to be a wise move.

Following the war, Texas Governor P.H. Bell appointed James B. Miller and William H. Bourland to head a commission to adjudicate Spanish and Mexican land grants in the ceded territory. As a result of the Miller-Bourland Commission hearings, many land grants along the lower Rio Grande transferred to Anglo lawyers and entrepreneurs eager to exploit their development potential. This was especially true in Cameron and Hidalgo counties which lay nearer the Gulf coast and had better agricultural and commercial prospects. Steam transportation on the Rio Grande, used by Zachary Taylor's troops during the war, opened mercantile possibilities on the river and enterprising Anglos like Richard King, Charles Stillman and Henry Clay Davis, formed partnerships with Mexican land owners, sometimes by marrying into their families, to develop towns on the American side of the border. Roma, Rio Grande City and Hidalgo, communities that began as *haciendas* and ranching outposts associated with the *villas* on the south side of the river, emerged as bi-cultural mercantile centers with steamboat landings in the post-war period.

San Ygnacio area ranchers probably experienced less pressure to relinquish their lands than their contemporaries in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr counties. Far from the semi-tropical coast, the area surrounding San Ygnacio received less rainfall, suffered more intense heat, and had rockier, less fertile soil than the downriver communities. Commercial prospects were limited, as well. The area was isolated and lacked adequate transportation to support trade. Steam navigation on the Rio Grande above Roma, about 65 miles downriver from San Ygnacio, was possible only when the river was in full flood stage. Mule trains carrying goods to and from the region were often attacked by Indians and bandits.

In many cases, Anglo businessmen wrested ancestral lands from their Hispanic owners through questionable legal machinations and, occasionally, outright fraud. A group of Zapata County ranchers, including members of the Treviño-Uribe family, whose claims dated to the José Vásquez Borrego grant, resisted pressures to surrender their family lands and fought hard to keep them from unscrupulous land speculators. Residents of San Ygnacio recount that their ancestors banded together and hired lawyers to protect their property rights. Payment was made in land and the parcel is still called the *Potrero Abogados*—the lawyer's grazing lands (Sánchez interview, June 9, 1996).

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On January 22, 1858, Zapata County was formed from parts of Webb and Starr counties. It was named in honor of Antonio Zapata, a pioneer stockman of the region and a supporter of the abortive Republic of the Rio Grande. The county was organized on April 26, 1858, with Carrizo (formerly Bellville) named as county seat. Carrizo was later renamed Zapata (Zapata County Scrapbook, n.p.). The 1860 county census tallied only 1,248 residents, (Tyler, 1996: 1144) nearly all of whom were ranch families descended from the Escandón colonists

Indian and Bandit Wars

Little actually changed in San Ygnacio despite its transfer to the United States. Ranching continued to be the major occupation and Indian attacks on isolated *ranchos* resumed with the withdrawal of both Mexican and U.S. military forces on the north side of the border, following the conclusion of the Mexican War in 1848. If anything, communities along the Rio Grande enjoyed even less security after the war, than they had when a single government maintained jurisdiction over both sides of the river. Once the river was established as the international boundary between the U.S. and Mexico, outlaw gangs were attracted to the region because they could commit crimes on one side of the border and retreat to the other side with little fear of capture or punishment. Federal troops were prohibited from pursuing criminals into foreign territory and they received little cooperation from Mexican authorities in this regard. Comanche and Apache warriors also used the river boundary to successfully dodge the few federal troops assigned to patrol the 1,500 mile border. According to Lt. William H. Emory, who surveyed the border for the U.S. Boundary Commission, some Mexican villagers provided shelter, food and arms to Apaches and Comanches accused of raiding American communities and ranches. In exchange, the Indians agreed not to raid their communities (Emory, Vol. I, 1857: 86).

In addition to bandits and Indians, various outlaw revolutionary groups surfaced periodically along the border from the 1850s through the Mexican Revolution and so-called Bandit Era of the 1910s. Such bands raided *ranchos* for supplies and horses, occasionally burning buildings and killing inhabitants to further their political goals, avenge the confiscation of their lands, and generally terrorize their enemies. They, too, found the Rio Grande a convenient deterrent to pursuing troops.

Indian attack remained a central fact of frontier life on the Rio Grande until after the American Civil War when the United States re-established a permanent line of forts along the border. Settlers had enjoyed a brief respite from Indian raids in the late-1840s, when military camps were set up along the Rio Grande during the Mexican War. However, once United States troops withdrew from border forts, including Ringgold Barracks, at Rio Grande City, and Fort McIntosh at Laredo, Indian and outlaw bands intensified their assaults on the frontier communities. During the early 1850s, Indians launched a fierce attack on Dolores, killing many settlers and forcing the survivors to abandon the settlement permanently. Lt. Emory noted the ruins of a "large stone rancho" during his 1852-3 survey of the region. From their location, they appear to be the ruins of Dolores (Figure 21). According to numerous local accounts, the survivors of Dolores fled to the safety of Uribe's compound at *Rancho San Ygnacio* where they formed the beginnings of a community around the enlarged Treviño-Urbe complex with its protective walls.

The identity of specific Indian groups involved in the repeated attacks in the San Ygnacio area is not entirely certain. Although Emory mentioned Lipan Apaches in the vicinity of Rio Grande City, downriver to the southeast, and Laredo, upriver to the northwest, he did not identify the tribal groups that he encountered in the vicinity of San Ygnacio. His is one of the only known contemporaneous reports on the extent and effect of Indian raids in the immediate vicinity of San Ygnacio:

The land from Bellville (near present Zapata) to Laredo [sic] is not altogether barren, . . . but, until recently, the Indians have had entire possession of the country, and now they make continual forays, crossing and recrossing the river to elude pursuit, at some of the many fords which occur in the river. I was myself very near falling into the hands of a party of these savages

. . . .

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In many instances, along this portion of the river, . . . the incursions of the wild Indians, and the depredations of the semi-civilized and half-breed Indians, render such enterprises (farming and stock raising) uncertain and unprofitable (Emory, Vol. I, 1857: 67).

Emory's obvious bias notwithstanding, his observations clearly reveal the tenuous conditions under which San Ygnacio area ranchers lived and worked during this period.

Nearly all of the region's stone ranch buildings constructed before 1870 contain defensive features such as *troneras* to protect its inhabitants against attacks. At San Ygnacio, Uribe built numerous safety features into his buildings and walls as he enlarged and fortified his family compound. New rooms were added in October 1851 and May 15, 1854, as indicated by the dated *vigas* that support the ceiling. The additions were connected to the original stone room to form an ell, with one side fronting onto the Rio Grande and the other side facing Arroyo Grullo. The 9' high courtyard walls completed the enclosed compound, creating a hollow quadrangle. An arched *zaguan* entrance, with massive double doors large enough to allow livestock and wagons provided access to the courtyard interior. A stockade, corral and several outbuildings lay within the 2 1/2' protective walls, as well. All of the new rooms and the courtyard walls contained *troneras* through which defenders could ward off attack from any direction. Exterior walls were windowless to prevent intruder access. Family sources indicate that a stone watch tower or *torreón* stood beside the original stone room but was removed sometime before 1919. According to family tradition, the Treviño-Uribe compound served as a fort for the entire community in the event of an attack.

Ranching at San Ygnacio

At *Rancho San Ygnacio*, Blas María Uribe established his domicile and began expanding his ranching and business operations as a United States citizen. Ultimately, Uribe acquired 5/9 of Treviño's original 125,000-acre San Ygnacio subdivision and established the San Julian and El Barcito ranches in Zapata County and the San Julian, Las Albercas and El Ojito ranches in present Webb County. He became one of the region's largest stock-raisers in the 19th century and ran extensive herds of cattle, sheep and goats as well as good horse stock (Martínez letter November 15, 1962). Uribe operated a pack-mule train to carry merchandise to and from Corpus Christi, but it was a dangerous undertaking when Comanche and bandit raids on the supply trains were common occurrences (Lott and Martínez, 1953: 101).

In the early 1860s, in response to the war-era trade boom at the mouth of the Rio Grande, Uribe launched a line of freight-carrying boats to navigate the river between Laredo and Brownsville. This could only be accomplished when the river was at full flood stage, however. At other times, men had to haul the boats over the shallow and rocky places on the river with ropes. Uribe continued to transport goods between San Ygnacio and Corpus until 1881 when the Texas-Mexican railway was completed to Laredo, opening a more convenient market only 30 miles upriver (Lott and Martínez, 1953: 101).

Civil War and Banditry

The American Civil War spawned a lucrative trade in contraband cotton and other goods at the mouth of the Rio Grande, but despite Uribe's efforts, Zapata County remained largely unaffected by the conflict or the opportunities. More immediate concerns focused on the activities of outlaws and bandits who began raiding ranching communities and towns along the border before the war. One of the most colorful mid-19th century border figures was Juan N. Cortina, alternately despised as a bandit and admired as a revolutionary hero of the dispossessed. Outlaw activities increased during the Civil War when troops were otherwise engaged and in one attack Isidro Vela, Zapata County's chief justice, was murdered. Confederate troops led by Captain Refugio Benavides crossed the border into Mexico in a retaliatory action, killing three of the men (Tyler, 1996: 1144). The incident foreshadowed the type of conflict that would plague the region in the post-war period.

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During the early post-war years, Zapata County became a target of increased bandit activity even as Indian attacks began to abate. Bands of both Mexican and American outlaws descended upon county ranches, stealing cattle and livestock and occasionally killing the occupants. In 1875, in response to the murder of several prominent officials, including a district judge, Governor Richard Coke moved the county's judicial proceedings to Webb County until order could be restored (Tyler, 1996: 1144). In many respects, Zapata County epitomized the lawless frontier of Western legend, during this period. It wasn't until the United States established a strong military presence along the border in the form of new or re-occupied frontier forts in the mid- to late-1870s, that area San Ygnacio area residents achieved relative security from such periodic raids.

Townsite of *Rancho San Ygnacio*

Despite the climate of violence that prevailed along the border in the mid-19th century, the county population increased from 1,488 in 1870, to 3,636 in 1880. Ranching remained the dominant occupation and for a time, sheep outnumbered cattle. Farming was done almost entirely on a subsistence level (Tyler, 1996: 1144).

Through a combination of Uribe's efforts, a good location on the river, and the demise of Dolores, the Treviño-Uribe complex became the focal point for the development of a small but thriving community known as San Ygnacio. Located on a bluff above the river, the site afforded some protection from flooding and from marauders. A ferry operated between the little community and its counterpart on the Mexican side of the river. San Ygnacio became the principal crossing point for thousands of head of cattle destined for markets in the Mexican cities of Monterrey, Monclova and Saltillo. Staple goods such as *piloncillo* (unrefined sugar), flour, beans and corn returned through San Ygnacio en route to the Texas interior (Fish, 1989: 9). Eventually a small customs house was established near the fort. The ferry and customs house remained in operation through the 1960s (The Laredo Times, July 9, 1961:7).

The date of Juliana Treviño de Uribe's death is unknown but Blas María remarried about 1870. His second wife, Tomasa Gutiérrez, a niece by marriage, encouraged Uribe to build a new addition to the family compound. The last major room of the Treviño House was added in 1871, to accommodate the new bride (R.G. Sánchez, interview 1996). The central *viga* of this room is dated December 3, 1871, and carries the inscription "*La Paz de Jesús Cristo Sea con Nos Otros, 3 Diciembre 1871, San Ygnacio Ruega por nos otros*" (The Peace of Jesus Christ Be on Us All, Saint Ygnacio Pray for us all). Notably the room contains no *troneras* or other defensive features, indicating that Indian attack was no longer a concern. In 1872, again at the request of his wife, Don Blas ordered the construction of the community's first church on property that she had brought to the marriage (R.G. Sánchez, interview 1996; Lott and Martínez, 1953: 101). An 1873 deed from Uribe to Claudio María Dubois, a church official in Galveston County, Texas, states that the parcel, located in the "Rancho known as El San Ygnacio" was "for the benefit and promotion of the Roman Catholic faith and religion". The deed indicates that the church, Nuestra Señora del Refugio, was under construction at that time (Fish, 1989: 10).

In 1874, Uribe had the townsite of San Ygnacio platted to include his family compound and the other dwellings that had sprung up around it. An 1874 survey map of the settlement made by Alex von Blucher (NR nomination, THC files) formed the basis of the present town plat (Zapata County Courthouse). Blucher's map, entitled "*Plano del Rancho de San Ignacio*" (Figure 22), depicted the footprints of 11 buildings or structures clustered around the Treviño-Uribe complex, primarily along what is now Uribe Street, near the river front. The map depicted a single building, identified as a "*Capilla*" or chapel, in the block fronting onto the east side of the Plaza which lay at the center of the plat (Blucher, 1874). Clearly, Uribe intended to encourage the development of a new town centered around the plaza, at a safe distance from the riverfront. Today, the oldest buildings in the city remain near the waterfront while those built after 1874 are scattered throughout the "new" townsite, with some of the earliest and most impressive facing onto the plaza.

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Blas María Uribe died at one of his other ranches, *El Ranchito*, in April 1895, and his body was brought back to San Ygnacio where he was buried in the *Panteon Uribe* (Uribe Cemetery) north of the townsite he platted. His descendants continued to live in the fort while other relatives formed new households throughout the town of San Ygnacio or moved upriver to Laredo. Although San Ygnacio never became a major commercial center—nearby Laredo dominated regional commerce after the railroad arrived in 1881—it is the only *hacienda* in Zapata County that grew into a town that remains to this day. Some of the submerged *haciendas*, like Lopeño, attracted other dwellings and structures which formed small communities, but none were platted as townsites as was San Ygnacio. Virtually all of the other contemporaneous ranching outposts of the region that survived inundation, such as Corralitos and Rancho San Francisco, contain only two or three buildings, all of which are vacant today. In contrast, San Ygnacio consisted of about 12 separate, substantial building complexes and a church by 1874, when Uribe had the townsite platted around a central plaza. By the time of Uribe's death, postal service had arrived and several mercantile stores operated in the town. Most of the inhabitants owned or worked on ranches in the surrounding area. San Ygnacio was second only to the county seat of Zapata (formerly Carrizo), in population at the time it was platted into a townsite.

The platting and subsequent development of the townsite marked the passing of the frontier era at San Ygnacio. While the old fort maintained its vigil on the banks of the Rio Grande, new houses and stores sprang up in the lots around the town square and expanded outward from the new community center. Although many were built of the same quarried stone that comprised the Treviño-Uribe Rancho, they no longer featured the window-less facades, walled courtyards, troneras, protective parapets, and other defensive elements of the frontier period.

San Ygnacio in the 20th Century

In the first decade of the 20th century, as Anglo entrepreneurs began developing large-scale irrigated farms in downriver Hidalgo and Cameron counties, the overwhelmingly Hispanic population of Zapata County continued ranching. Commercial farming made some tentative inroads in the county, though, and cotton was introduced for the first time after 1910. Still, little changed in Zapata County in terms of demographic and occupational composition. Descendants of the early pioneers remained in the majority and held most elective offices. This was in sharp contrast to other South Texas counties where an influx of Anglo farmers took control of local politics, pushing out the old guard Hispanic land owners after the turn of the century.

In 1913, during the Mexican Revolution, widespread panic in the northern Mexican state of Tamaulipas led to the near-abandonment of the city of Guerrero, formerly known as Revilla. At least 500 people fled across the river to Zapata County and many never returned to their homes (Byfield, 1966: 5). Some already owned property in the United States through their family land grants, or *porciones*, that spanned the river. Others found work on ranches throughout South Texas (Byfield, 1966: 5). Although far from abandoned, the old city of Revilla (Guerrero) never recovered its pre-revolution levels of population or commerce.

Despite turmoil in Mexico, Zapata County citizens experienced few changes in their daily lives. Most continued to work the ranches of their ancestors until the 1920s, when the county's first commercial oil and gas production began in the vicinity of the town of Zapata (Byfield, 1966: 5). However, most occupations remained tied to the region's historic ranching culture. In 1935, Zapata County had a population of only 2,867 (Dopp, 1938). It received little attention from the outside world. No railroads passed through the county—the nearest one came to Laredo, 36 miles to the north—and until the mid-1930s the county had no paved roads. There was more communication with Mexican communities across the river than with Brownsville. That began to change in the 1930s, however. In 1931, an international toll bridge connecting Zapata to Guerrero all but replaced the traditional flat boat ferries on the river. In the mid-1930s, the state completed the county's first paved highway, connecting San Ygnacio and the county seat at Zapata to outside markets for the first time (Byfield, 1966: 6).

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Falcón Reservoir

Water remained a limiting factor in the settlement and development of Zapata County: either there was too little or too much. Arid conditions prevail throughout the region, precluding extensive agricultural development without the aid of irrigation technology. At the same time, flooding on the Rio Grande periodically destroyed crops and settlements. As early as 1924, the President Harding appointed a committee to study the feasibility of installing a dam on the lower section of the Rio Grande to reduce the potential for flooding and to conserve water in a reservoir in the vicinity of San Ygnacio.

Unlike Cameron and Hidalgo counties where the introduction of modern irrigation systems transformed the desert into vast citrus orchards and truck gardens, Zapata County, further north on the Rio Grande, remained largely tied to stock raising. It was not until 1935, when a new all-weather highway (present U.S. Route 83) connecting Laredo with Brownsville was completed, that Zapata County had direct access to outside markets for the first time. The combination of reliable transportation and cheap fuel brought modern irrigation to Zapata County during that time; over the following decade more than 12,000 acres of land lying on or near the Rio Grande were brought under cultivation (Byfield 1966: 6). Zapata County began to reap the benefits of irrigation that counties on the lower stretches of the Rio Grande had enjoyed for several decades. Irrigated farms in the county produced tomatoes, onions, green peppers, cantaloupes and other truck crops and provided jobs for hundreds of local residents (Martínez, 1966: 7).

Then, in 1948, the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) selected a site in Zapata County for a new dam on the lower Rio Grande. Because of the recent progress that occurred with the introduction of irrigation, new roads and petroleum discoveries, many area residents were shocked when the United States government proposed building a dam. Destroying hundreds of homes in numerous communities, and thousands of acres of pastureland and farmland, the dam would essentially undo much of the county's advances. Further, the U.S. Department of State regarded the residents who were to be displaced as "humble folk of Mexican origins, illiterate and inexperienced in such matters," who did not comprehend the "limitations in law confronting the United States section of the I.B.W.C. in its attempt to be just and helpful" . . . (Byfield, 1966: 7). Ranchers received minimal compensation with no consideration for the replacement value of homes, outbuildings, and personal belongings. No moving costs were provided. Worse, newly irrigated fields and ancient pasture lands were condemned without replacement compensation. People who lived a subsistence existence could hardly be expected to replace that which had taken 200 years to build (Byfield, 1966: 49).

Not only ranches but whole communities, including most of the county's historic *haciendas*, the county seat at Zapata, and the town of San Ygnacio, were to be destroyed by the dam construction or swept away in the subsequent inundation of the countryside (Byfield, 1966: 53). Among other historic and prehistoric sites scheduled for inundation were the ranching outposts of San Bartolo (ca. 1867, HABS No: HABS TEX-3-113), Ramireño (ca. 1810), Rincón (1867), Uribeño (ca. 1822), Capitaño (ca. 1780), Tepezan, San Rafael, Lopeño (ca. 1821), Falcón (1781), La Lajitas, and Clareño (George, 1975: 53-59). All of these communities were near-contemporaries of the Treviño-Uribe Rancho and shared historic associations and building traditions (Figure 23). Even then, however, the Treviño-Uribe Rancho was recognized as an exceptional example of Spanish/Mexican vernacular architecture in the United States. Its larger size, fine craftsmanship and fully articulated enclosed courtyard design were more comparable to the stone complexes of Guerrero's well-to-do citizens than to the isolated ranching outposts of South Texas.

In April 1951, about 200 residents signed a petition to exclude San Ygnacio from condemnation, citing the town's heritage and its location high above the expected maximum reservoir levels. As further evidence for their cause, the petitioners noted that the town was untouched by great floods on the Rio Grande in 1865, 1885, 1899, 1900, 1932, and 1948. The request was granted and San Ygnacio was spared. Ironically, the town sustained widespread damage just two years later in the great flood of 1953

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(Heller in Tyler, 1996: 5-894). Despite the flood, the residents of San Ygnacio were relieved that they were not forced to abandon their historic town.

Present San Ygnacio

Today, the unincorporated town of San Ygnacio has a population of about 900 people, most of whom are descendants of the pioneer Treviño, Uribe, Gutiérrez, Benavides and Martínez families. Gas and oil discoveries on historic ranches brought unusual wealth to some of the town's citizens, and several have renovated old buildings for modern use. With a few notable exceptions, these renovations have obscured or destroyed the buildings' historic architectural fabric, and several significant resources within the San Ygnacio Historic District have been altered beyond recognition or repair.

Happily, the Treviño-Urbe complex has endured few alterations beyond those intended to protect the building's original architectural fabric. In 1967, torrential rains spawned by Hurricane Beulah caused the main roof to leak and the owners erected a pitched roof over the building to shed water and prevent future damage. About the same time the west wing was stuccoed in an attempt to protect the facade. These are the only visible changes made to the building since 1919, when photographs of the building were published in the *Architectural Record* (Figure 24). Its current owners are committed to the historic building's preservation.

In the years that have passed since the construction of Falcón Dam, many people have realized a greater appreciation for the historic resources of the border, both those submerged under the waters of Falcón Reservoir and those that managed to survive. In 1975, the Texas Historical Commission and the Texas Historical Foundation published *Historic Architecture of Texas: The Falcón Reservoir*, a documentary reconstruction of the historic ranch buildings lost at Falcón Reservoir. Based on Joe F. Cason's field sketches and measurements, and photographs collected by the Texas Archeological Salvage Project, the publication provided many beyond the border their first glimpse and understanding of the region's unique built environment. Subsequent work, including the Texas Historical Commission's *Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project* and its publication, *A Shared Experience* (1991, 2nd edition 1994), seeks to highlight these resources in an effort to promote a greater understanding of the historic and architectural legacies of the border.

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María Sánchez de Herrera. Resident of San Ygnacio and co-owner of the Treviño-Uribe Rancho. With Dr. Cynthia Brandimarte, Dr. Mario Sánchez, and other members of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. San Ygnacio, Texas: September 26, 1991.

Dennis Cordes. Architect, Texas Parks and Wildlife. With Terri Myers by telephone, January 2, 1997.

Dr. R. G. Sánchez. Resident of San Ygnacio, Texas and part-owner of the Treviño-Uribe Rancho. With Terri Myers on June 9, 1996 and with Terri Myers and Marlene Heck on December 8, 10, and 11, 1996, at the Treviño-Uribe Rancho in San Ygnacio.

Victoria Uribe. Resident of San Ygnacio, Texas and caretaker of Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church. With Terri Myers on June 9, 1996 and with Terri Myers and Marlene Heck in San Ygnacio on December 11, 1996.

Eugene George. Professor of Architecture University of Texas at Austin. With Terri Myers on August 2, 1996 and on October 10, 1996, and with Marlene Heck and Terri Myers on December 5, 1996.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register. NR 1974
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #TEX-3-112 (TEX, 253-SANYG,1)
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository): _____

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM Reference: Zone Northing Easting
 14 456040 2991320

Verbal Boundary Description: All of Lot 29, Block 8, Townsite of San Ygnacio, Zapata County, Texas.

Boundary Justification:

Lot 29, Block 8, Townsite of San Ygnacio, comprises approximately two-fifths of the block, lots 27 and 28 making up the balance of the block (see plat map, Figure 26). Lot 29 contains the entire Treviño-Urbe ranch complex. It has historically been associated with the Treviño-Urbe family and remains in the ownership of the original family today. Lot 27 once contained a *jacal*, but it is now vacant. Lot 28 contains a separate, c. 1900 historic building that is not directly associated with the construction or history of the Treviño-Urbe complex. Historic resources face the Treviño-Urbe Rancho on Treviño, Uribe and Benavides streets. Although they date from the 1850s-1870s and are associated with some of the same historic themes as the Treviño-Urbe Rancho, none are as fully developed or retain their architectural integrity to the same degree and none so fully embodies the influence and richness of Spanish/Mexican history and building traditions in South Texas as does the Treviño-Urbe Rancho.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY

July 2, 1998

**APPENDIX
GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

banqueta: a continuous bench of masonry often near the fireplace wall or along a side wall, also a similar feature at the base of an exterior wall.

canales: projecting rain spouts at the upper part of the roof, also called *gárgolas*.

chipichil: a local term for lime concrete containing a pea gravel aggregate, also called *tipichil*.

chimenea: an interior cooking hearth.

entrada: an entrance.

ganado mayor: large livestock including horses and cattle.

ganado menor: smaller class of livestock including goats and sheep.

hacienda: a large landed estate or property, also refers to large residences associated with these; term sometimes applied to courtyard-centered houses, although *rancho* was more common term in Texas and New Mexico.

horno: a bee-hive shaped exterior baking oven.

jacal: hut of vertical pole (palisade) construction chinked or plastered with mud; covered by a thatched roof.

Mestizo: person of mixed Spanish and Indian parentage.

placita: small courtyard or plaza surrounded by a complex of rooms or walls.

presidio: a permanent military outpost.

rancho: ranch, isolated farm/ranch house or complex

sitio: a unit of land measurement, approximately 4,428.4 acres of land.

torreón: a fortified round tower, often two stories.

tronera: a gunport, loophole.

vaquero: literally, a cattle worker, Spanish or Mexican cowboy, predecessor of Texan cowboys.

viga: horizontal roof beam often projecting beyond the exterior wall surface

villa: a town.

zaguan: a gated entry, often a large, double-door entrance to a fortified *plaza* or *placita*.

*some terms taken from Eugene George, 1975 and Boyd C. Pratt and Chris Wilson, 1991 (see Bibliography)