

DISCOVER

Brownsville's Historic Places

WALKING TOURS



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Downtown & Market Square Walking Tour

1. Stillman House (c. 1851): 1305 E. Washington Street — Built for Henry Miller, this Greek Revival style house is one of the oldest and best preserved structures in the city, and now serves as a house museum. It was occupied by Brownsville's founder Charles Stillman from 1851-1853, whose first two children were born in Brownsville. The house was purchased in 1858 by Manuel Treviño de los Santos Coy, who served as Mexican consul and remained in the Treviño family for 100 years. In the 1890s the house was occupied by Thomas Carson, who worked for the Stillman family and was mayor of Brownsville from 1879-1892. In 1958 Chauncey D. Stillman, great-grandson of Charles, purchased the house from the Treviño family and gifted it to the Brownsville Historical Association, who later gave it to the City of Brownsville.



2.* Porfirio Diaz House (1875): 1325 E. Washington Street — In 1875 Porfirio Diaz planned his rise to power in the house originally located at this site. Diaz's rebellion or his "Plan de Tuxtepec" was formulated here, and carried out in Oaxaca, Mexico. By November 1876 Diaz was serving his first of seven terms as president of Mexico. The Brownsville Heritage Museum opened at this site in 2002.

3. The Gem/La Joya (c.1848): 400 E. 13th Street — The building, also known as Roser Custom Service, is an example of Spanish Colonial style architecture, and is one of the oldest commercial brick buildings in Brownsville. It was originally built for John Garey who was the contract builder of the lighthouse at Port Isabel and who also served as a Brownsville alderman. It was also the residence of Brownsville Mayor Robert Leman. During the Civil War, this site served as a bookstore or "librería." Union forces temporarily occupying Fort Brown during the war erected a tent on the roof of the building to better monitor activities across the river in Matamoros. The Gem served as a location for social events and more than one speech was given from the balcony. The building has served multiple functions in its long history including a saloon or "house of spirits," a brothel, a boutique, and customs services. The building was restored in 1987. Details such as the French doors and corbelled brickwork were restored using historic photographs.

4. Webb Drugstore (1852): 409 E. 13th Street — This commercial building was originally two adjoining stores built by retired sea captains John Webb and Henry Miller. The drugstore was the first and for many years, the only drugstore in Brownsville. John Webb also operated a stagecoach line and helped draft the application to the Texas Legislature for the incorporation of the City of Brownsville. The building underwent an extensive restoration and currently houses the art gallery, "Galeria 409."

5. Yturria Bank (1854): 1255 E. Elizabeth Street — This Border Brick style building was the first privately/locally owned bank south of San Antonio. Built for Francisco Yturria, the bank also housed one of the city's first telegraph offices. In 1881 Yturria installed an international telephone line which connected his Brownsville bank to his family mercantile store in Matamoros. It was the first international telephone line in Brownsville. Prior to 1904 trading was done in Mexican money; however for the payment of taxes money was exchanged at this bank for United States silver and gold coins stored in a vault. Employees hid in the building's old earthen cellar during frequent bandit raids.

6. San Roman Building (1850): 1245 E. Elizabeth Street — This Border Brick style building was built in 1850 for Jose San Roman, a prominent Brownsville businessman and merchant. The building is composed of two sections that vary in height- one section is two-stories, the other one-story. Although the building's façade was considerably altered in 1969, traces of its original style are still visible on the two-story section as is the name and date "San Roman Bldg. 1850" located below the denticulated cornice.



7.* Bollack Department Store (1911): 1223 E. Elizabeth Street — This building was built for Pauline Bollack, a German immigrant from Bavaria. Mrs. Bollack arrived in Brownsville by way of New Orleans in 1878 and opened a dry goods store on 12th Street opposite Market Square. She moved to this three story structure with an ornate façade when she expanded her business. At the time, it was one of the largest buildings in town and exemplified the modern department store. Her son and several

clerks helped run the store which was renowned for good bargains and good service. A variety of commodities were available at the Bollack department store which included dry goods, leather goods, furniture, clocks, hats, ladies' apparel, and sewing supplies. The structure was renovated in 2006.

8. U.S. Federal Building (1931): 1001 E. Elizabeth Street — This was the site of the original federal building completed in 1892 which housed the U.S. Court, Customhouse and Post Office. Re-constructed in 1931 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, this building has a tile roof and decorative cornice. The ground floor is made of massive stones, and the upper floors of brick, with stones rising to form corner and center pilasters. A horizontal course of stone bands the building just above the ground floor level, and again above the third floor. The chief decorative feature is the three tall arches opening from a central panel into an inner porch at the main entrance. It currently houses the U.S. Post Office and Brownsville City Hall.

9. Majestic Theatre (1949): 1002 E. Elizabeth Street — The Majestic was part of the Interstate movie theater chain founded by Karl St. John Hoblitzelle, the self-proclaimed pioneer of vaudeville and motion picture entertainment in the South. Although the chain had theaters throughout the South, its primary location and center of operations was in Texas. The flagship theater buildings in Dallas and San Antonio still remain. Majestic theaters were considered “the most significant Texas exhibition chain until the decline of the downtown theater and the rise of the multiplex in the late-sixties and early seventies.” The Art Deco style building has housed several businesses since the theater closed in the 1970s. Portions of the façade, including the marquee, still remain.

10. El Jardin Hotel (1926): 1114 E. Levee Street — El Jardin was designed by The Kenwood Company of San Antonio under sponsorship of the James-Dickinson Company of Brownsville and J.M. Nix. After Mr. Nix became involved in the hotel project, he asked architect Henry T. Phelps to add a ballroom wing, a parking garage and a Spanish garden (which no longer exists) to the back of the hotel. This eight-story, stucco structure was heralded after its completion as the finest hostelry in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The hotel, designed with 250 rooms, all with baths, was built in conjunction with a large Missouri Pacific Railroad terminal and the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce building at 1200 E. Levee Street. These buildings were all in the same Spanish Colonial Revival style. The Chamber and Missouri Pacific buildings have since been demolished.

11. Capitol Theater (1927): 1000 E. Levee Street — Built 1927-1928 by San Antonio architect Henry T. Phelps for J.M. Nix, in 1935 it became part of the movie theater chain operated by Karl Hoblitzelle's Texas Consolidated Theatres, Inc. This Spanish Colonial Revival style building features comedy and tragedy masks on the exterior façade and originally seated up to 900. The original marquee was replaced in the 1940s and the theater was closed circa the 1960s.

12. Jose Fernandez Building (c. 1884): 1123 E. Washington Street — Built circa 1884 for Jose Fernandez, a prominent merchant and businessman, it is one of the older buildings in Market Square. The building originally had an open central atrium, a second floor porch that would overlook the activities at Market Square and its main entrance was located on the Market Square side of the building. It was occupied by Fernandez's niece, Serafina and her husband Jose Celaya, until their house located at 441 E. Washington Street was built in 1912. The building is locally known as the Olvera Shoe Store after the business that was located at this site from circa the 1920s to the 1980s.

13.* Market Square (1850): 655 E. 12th Street — Constructed by John Patrick McDonough and Adolph Seuzeneau, this building was the original site of Brownsville city government as well as the center of market activities. The opening Market Square ceremony featured military bands from both Matamoros, Mexico and Fort Brown. The upper floor housed city hall, while the bottom floor was an open air market where a variety of goods were sold. These goods included fresh meats, fruits, vegetables, “dulce” (candy) and tamales (steamed cornmeal with a filling wrapped in corn husks). Virtually everything sold at the old market was locally grown and raised. Market Square featured many fine architectural details such as decorated cornices,



elaborate brick work and upper level balconies. The Market Square building originally had 16 archways and a wooden cupola which, along with the original bell, was destroyed by the hurricane of October 8, 1867. The cupola and bell were replaced in 1875.

14. Juan H. Fernandez y Hermano Building (1883): 1200 E. Adams Street — Built in 1883 for Juan H. Fernandez, a Spanish immigrant from Santander, Spain, Fernandez established a general merchandise store in this building named “La Villa de Llanes.” An advertisement from that era shows Fernandez offered dry goods, groceries, crockery, hardware, crystal ware, arms and ammunition. The store operated on the first floor with family living quarters on the second. The restored building exhibits architectural details pertaining to the French Creole style such as the second floor iron railing.

15.*El Tapiz (1906): 1150 E. Adams Street — Built 1906-1912, this three-story building is one of the original buildings of the core historic Market Square district. At one time the Park Hotel was located in the two upper floors, while the first floor was used for retail establishments. It was later acquired by the City of Brownsville and renovated in 1987. During the renovation, the building entrances and windows facing Adams Street and 12th Street were removed, and the remaining windows were reduced. These changes reoriented the main façade/entrance away from 12th Street towards the fountain between it and the San Fernando Buildings.

16. San Fernando Buildings (1877): 1106 E. Adams Street — Built beginning in 1877 for Victoriano Fernandez as his furniture store, this was a major commercial structure in the Market Square area. The Border Brick style buildings were built in stages, possibly accounting for the varying heights of the three sections. The mid-block section has two levels, and the corner section only one. Covering the entire half block, the buildings’ exterior design is identical on both the East Adams Street side and the Market Square side.

17.* Fernandez Hide Yard (1880): 1101 E. Adams Street — Built for Miguel Fernandez this building was used as a bone and hide yard. The bone and hide yard was a fixture in Brownsville’s early days. Local ranchers would bring bones, hides, horsehair and tallow to the hide yard and barter with the merchant for general merchandise and provisions. Cash was rarely used in these transactions instead the merchant would keep a running ledger detailing what each customer brought in and purchased.

18. Old City Library (1928): 1024 E. Adams Street — This Spanish Mediterranean Revival style building was built as the first municipal library in Brownsville. In 1954, the library was moved to the newly built Civic Center. This site became the office of the Fire Chief until 2006. In 1966, the city library was moved and combined with the college library until 1992 when the city once again built its own library.

19. Central Fire Station (1928): 1000 E. Adams Street — This Italian Renaissance Revival style building was designed by architect Ben Clark and contains some Spanish Colonial Revival style details. The building features cast stone door surrounds, spiral columns, and red roof tiles. The building has two functioning poles to enable firefighters to drop from sleeping quarters on the second floor, as well as an original alarm bell. A fully restored 1958 American La France fire truck with an open cab and wooden ladders is also housed at this location.

** Indicates some or all of the original building no longer standing and/or original façade or structure altered.*

Fort Brown Walking Tour

1. Post Hospital Annex/Medical Laboratory (1868): The two-story rectangular building at the corner was the Medical Laboratory. In addition to its function as the hospital laboratory, this building served as an isolation ward and detention barracks at various times. The building was renamed Champion Hall in honor of noted Brownsville historian A.A. Champion.

2. Commanding Officer’s Quarters (1868): Built in 1868 as the commanding officer’s residence, it was moved to its current location in 2007 and restored late 2009. This locale hosted visiting dignitaries such as Gen. John J. Pershing and Charles A. Lindberg, and served as the home for the presidents of the junior college after Fort Brown closed.

3. Post Hospital (1868): Built by architect S.W. Brooks under the supervision of Capt. William A. Wainwright, this building has arches, arcades, and breezeways that accommodate the South Texas environment and the need for air flow. The building was renamed in honor of Dr. William C. Gorgas, a U.S. Army physician and U.S. Surgeon General renowned for his pioneer work in the abatement of yellow fever and malaria which he began while stationed at Fort Brown. This building has been used by the local college for administrative purposes since the early 1970's. Its restoration revealed the fireplaces which heated the hospital, two of which may be seen in the President's Office. In front of the hospital is a flagpole and plaque commemorating the 124th Cavalry Regiment, the last horse-mounted cavalry which was stationed at Fort Brown during World War II.

4. Post Morgue/Old Morgue & Linen Storage (c.1870): Behind the Post Hospital is the Old Morgue and Linen Storage building. The Old Morgue sign is actually on the Linen Storage building. The tall section was the morgue where Dr. William Gorgas conducted yellow fever research in the 1880's. In 1940 these two buildings were connected by a mid-section and an ambulance garage was added.

5. Commissary (c.1904): This structure with a semi-basement was the Guardhouse/ Commissary. The main floor had a guardroom and two guard offices. The building was originally used to store supplies. On the lower floor gridded partitions of strap metal comprised holding cells for up to 14 prisoners. A portion of the cells are still in place.

6. Bachelor Non Commissioned Officers (NCO) Quarters (c. 1901): A small brick structure that served as a telephone exchange and non-commissioned officers (NCO) quarters.

7. Post Chapel (c.1882): This building that looks like a house has served as a school, chapel, and then finally as a post office during the 1920s. The building was restored in 1952 by the Brownsville Historical Association who used it as their offices until 1960. From 1960-1991 the building was used as an office for the General Services Administration (GSA) and a tool and maintenance building. The building was dismantled in 1992 to make room for customs facilities near the bridge and later relocated to the college campus.

8. Cavalry Building (1868): Built under the supervision of Capt. William A. Wainwright, the elongated "T" plan building was used to house cavalry units until World War I. The hurricane of 1933 caused extensive damage to the building. Repairs were made June 1934 after which the building was used as a commissary office and warehouse. Closed after World War II, it was leased by private industry until acquired by the junior college.

9. Neale House (c. 1850): Built circa 1850 for William Neale, an Englishman, who served as mayor of Brownsville, 1858-1859 and 1866-1869, and as a Confederate Army second lieutenant in the interim period. Neale's son was killed in this house during an attack led by Juan N. Cortina. As one of the oldest houses, it was originally on 14th Street between East Washington and East Adams before being moved to this location in 1950. The adjacent gazebo was originally the Fort Brown bandstand constructed c. 1912 and used to elevate the band for events.

10. Taylor's Earthworks Fort/ Fort Texas (1846): The original Fort Brown (historically Fort Texas or Fort Taylor) earthen mounds can be seen from the end of the golf course parking lot, beyond the driving range marked by an upright cannon. It was built in 1846 under the supervision of Capt. J.F.K. Mansfield. Following an attack by the Mexican army, General Zachary Taylor ordered the fort be renamed in honor of Major Jacob Brown, who died during the siege. The earthworks was abandoned after the U.S.-Mexican War due to flooding. Subsequent versions of Fort Brown were built further north.



The peninsula was the former site of the Fort Brown National Cemetery where 19th century military burials occurred. From 1909 to 1911 the remains of over 3,000 soldiers were exhumed and moved to the Alexandria National Cemetery in Pineville, Louisiana.

City Cemetery & Train Depot Walking Tour

1. Old City Cemetery Center (1928): 600 E. Jackson Street — The building originally served as the freight room for the Southern Pacific Depot. It now offers permanent exhibits focused on the Old City Cemetery, as well as rotating exhibits focusing on folk art, religion and funerary customs. It acts as an information center, a starting point for tours, and a special events center for events related to the Old City Cemetery.

2. Old City Cemetery (c.1850): Madison Street & 2nd Street to 5th Street Open 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily — The Old City Cemetery was established circa 1850 replacing Brownsville's first cemetery which was deemed too small to for the growing population. Legal disputes surrounding the ownership of the land delayed its formal registry until 1868, but burials began shortly after the cemetery was established. Some bodies were moved from the first cemetery and reinterred once the Old City Cemetery was created. The cemetery contains a large number of above-ground crypts, massive ornate monuments, and elaborate decorative ironwork fences which mark off many old family plots. The crypts typify the Spanish-French influence in the border area and are reminiscent of the cemeteries in New Orleans, a city where a number of early residents lived prior to settling in the area. Buried amongst the city's residents are Matamoros residents and Fort Brown soldiers and their families—some of which came from across the United States and other countries to be with the soldiers stationed at the Fort. Many markers' inscriptions are written in Spanish, French, and German. The birthplaces listed on the grave markers reveal a mix of nationalities and other cities from across the U.S. and are reflective of Brownsville's cosmopolitanism.



The cemetery was divided into several separate sections: General Grounds, Sociedad Benito Juarez Parcel, Masonic Section, International Order of Odd Fellows Parcel, Sociedad Miguel Hidalgo Parcel, Catholic Parcel and Potter's Field. The sections for the Catholic Church, Sociedad Benito Juarez and Masons were allotted in exchange for funds used to build the brick wall around the cemetery. Other fraternal orders whose members were buried in the cemetery include the Woodmen of the World, the Sociedad Concordia—a Mexican American women's organization, and the Knights of Columbus.



Cemetery Sections

3. Sociedad Benito Juarez: From the late 1870s to the early 1900s, various types of “mutualistas” or community-based mutual aid societies were formed throughout Texas by Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans. Many of the mutualistas, especially those of the early 20th century, had an ardent nationalist and patriotic affinity to Mexico supporting the preservation of culture, heritage, and the Spanish language. These, like many fraternal organizations, provided financial, legal, medical aid and burial insurance. One of the groups, the Sociedad Benito Juarez, has a section located in the first row next to the 5th Street cemetery entrance.

4. Masonic Section: Masons follow a philosophy of service to mankind and international peace by teaching basic moral principles of private and public conduct. The first Masonic lodge in the United States was formed in Boston in 1733. The Rio Grande Lodge #81-Masonic Temple was formed January 23, 1851. The Masonic section was originally partitioned by a chain fence. The chain is missing, but the fence's concrete posts and large arch denoting the section's entrance still remain. Mason grave markers can be identified by the square and compass symbol carved into the marker.

5. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Parcel: The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) was founded in England, and the first lodge in the United States was founded in Baltimore in 1819. There is no known date for the founding of the Odd Fellows in Brownsville. Grave markers for Odd Fellows members can be identified by the IOOF symbol, a three link chain with or without the letters “F,” “L,” “T” in each link. Some Brownsville Masons were also Odd Fellows members so both symbols appear on their grave markers.

6. Sociedad Miguel Hidalgo Parcel: Another prominent and popular “mutualista” was the Sociedad Miguel Hidalgo founded in 1881. The Sociedad Miguel Hidalgo has a 15’ x 15’ section near the Madison Street wall. The iron arch that marks the entrance to this section bears the dates 1880-1969.

7. Catholic Parcel: The Catholic portion of the cemetery was the largest portion allotted, approximately one-fourth of the cemetery grounds. This section is east of the main road and contains a noticeable amount of grave decorations. Grave decorating, where family and friends paint the concrete borders or curbs surrounding gravesites in bright colors, is common in South Texas.

The Woodmen of the World is a fraternal organization founded June 6, 1890 by Joseph Cullen Root in Omaha, Nebraska. The organization provided life and burial insurance for its members. While the cemetery does not have a designated Woodman of the World section, several members are buried in the mid-section of the Catholic parcel and throughout the cemetery. Woodmen of the World grave markers are shaped like a large tree stump. The distinctive marker was initially provided to members as part of their burial insurance but was discontinued because it was too expensive. Families of members buried after 1920s paid for the tree marker themselves.

8. Potter’s Field: The term Potter’s Field has been long used to describe the section for burials within cemetery’s walls often housing those too poor to pay for burial in the general sections. It is believed that the term “Potter’s Field” originated from the Bible. In Matthew 27:1-8, Judas gives the money he received for betraying Jesus to the chief priests. The chief priests decide not to keep the money, for it has been tainted with Jesus’ blood, and instead use it to buy a potter’s field to bury strangers.

Potter’s Field at the Old City Cemetery is located on the east side of the main cemetery road. It runs along the sloping edge down to the resaca, the most unstable portion of the land. Potter’s Field was designated for the burial of the indigent, but many others are buried there, including the unclaimed bodies of bandits and criminals, victims of disease epidemics and war. In fact, several “Villistas”, men from Pancho Villa’s army, can also be found in Potter’s Field. Burials in Potter’s Field were thought to have ceased after this period, but there are burial dates as late as 1984, the same year in which an official order was made to cease burials in Potter’s Field.

9. Hebrew Cemetery: The earliest Jewish settlers came to the Brownsville area around 1845 just before the beginning of the Mexican-American War. On May 21, 1868, the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Brownsville and Matamoros, represented by S.M. Blun, B. Kowalski, and others, participated in a transaction with Charles Stillman which deeded a half acre of land next to the Old City Cemetery for a Jewish cemetery. Before the Hebrew Cemetery was established local residents wanting burials in accordance with Jewish traditions transported the deceased to Laredo, TX or Monterrey, Mexico where the closest Jewish cemeteries were located. Some Jewish residents originally buried in the Old City Cemetery were disinterred and re-buried after the Hebrew Cemetery was established. In the 1950’s, the Temple Beth-El congregation assumed responsibility of the Hebrew Cemetery even though it is still owned by the Hebrew Cemetery Association.

10. Southern Pacific Depot (1928): 641 E. Madison Street — This building is an example of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture. After the railroad closed its passenger service, the building served as a local cotton business. The City of Brownsville restored it in 1985. The Historic Brownsville Museum opened at this site in 1986.

11.* Annie S. Putegnat Elementary (1890): 730 E. 8th Street — For over a hundred years, this site has served as a site to educate the students of Brownsville. The land on which the school is built was originally part of the Stillman Estate. In 1889 the land was released to the city for use as a school. The first school built on this site was the Brownsville Public School, later Washington Park Grammar School. It served the community until the 1940s when the present day building was erected using some bricks from the original school building. In 1947 it was renamed Annie S. Putegnat Elementary after the school’s longtime teacher and principal.

12. Washington Plaza/Park (c. 1850): The land for the park was given by Charles Stillman to the City of Brownsville in 1850 and was originally double its current size. Half of the original land was used to build Brownsville’s first school

building in 1889-1890. Also historically known as Washington Square and Washington Plaza, it wasn't until 1907 that the land was leveled, cleared and turned into a formal community park. The park contains monuments to Confederate president Jefferson Davis and Cuban revolutionary Jose Marti, and a bust of Mexican revolutionary Miguel Hidalgo.

13. Cavazos/Truss House (1905): 608 E. Adams Street — This house is a Folk Victorian style house with an L-shaped plan and a notable decorative trim running the length of the house. It was built for Fannie Seward Cavazos, a local businesswoman. It was passed down to her daughter Eloise Cavazos Truss and granddaughter Chula Truss Griffin, a noted local advocate for the preservation of the city's cemeteries.

14. Cisneros House (1926): 451 E. Adams Street — This house was built for Jose Angel Cisneros Sr. by Jose Colunga. Cisneros was a prominent businessman and a descendent of three of the original 13 families that founded San Juan de los Esteros Hermosos (present day Matamoros, Mexico) in 1749. The house has an Eclectic architectural style with elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, Classical style and cottage type houses such as the Neale and Stillman houses of the 1850s.

15. Fernandez/Bollack House (1912): 405 E. Washington Street — Constructed for Mrs. Juanita Champion Fernandez and later purchased by the Bollack family, this large two-story home and the one at 441 E. Washington Street, are related, as were their original owners. Mrs. Champion's son-in-law and daughter, Jose and Serafina Fernandez Celaya, lived at the other house. These two houses, considered to be the best two examples of Neoclassical style architecture in Brownsville, are dominant neighborhood landmarks.

16. Celaya/Creager House (1912): 441 E. Washington Street — Originally built for Jose Celaya, the house was purchased by the Creager family in 1924 as their residence. Rentfro B. Creager was an important figure in local and national Republican politics. It is said that President Warren G. Harding visited Brownsville as a personal favor to Creager who had helped Harding get elected.

Former County Courthouse(s) Tour

1. Immaculate Conception Cathedral (1854): 1218 E. Jefferson Street — This brick Gothic Revival style church is one of Brownsville's oldest structures. It was built by the French missionary Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate. The priest architect Pierre Keralum designed this building and others in the Valley. The 250,000 bricks used for the church and rectory were made locally under the supervision of the Oblates. Of note are the blue sailcloth ceiling and the bronze chandeliers imported from France in the 19th century. A monument to the early Oblate "Cavalry of Christ" stands near the entrance.

2. 1882 Cameron County Courthouse (1882): 1131 E. Jefferson Street — This was the first structure built specifically for the Cameron County Courthouse. Constructed in the Second Renaissance Revival style, the building was designed with a double-door entrance on all four sides and tall Palladian style windows above the doors. The distinctive cupola and other roof embellishments were destroyed in the hurricane of 1933. County officials occupied offices on the first floor. The courtroom was located on the second floor, while the third floor provided sleeping rooms for court officers. The courthouse was conveniently located across the alley from the jail built during the same period. It has continuously housed the Masonic Lodge since 1914.

3. The Old Jail/Fernandez Building (1882): 1154 E. Madison Street — The architect for the original parts of the Border Brick style building was J.N. Preston and Son. In 1912 when the County vacated the old jail, two Spanish merchant brothers, Jose and Joaquin Fernandez, bought the structure. The Fernandez brothers converted the old jail and courtyard area into a store and two living quarters. They heightened the old wall and added doors and windows.



4. La Nueva Libertad/Cueto Building (1893): 1301 E. Madison Street — Built for Andres Cueto, La Nueva Libertad was a general merchandise store and bakery with upstairs living quarters for the Cueto family. This building complex and the lifestyle it accommodated underscore the influence of cultures from Spain and Mexico. The melding of these and other cultures gave Brownsville its unique character. The building complex also shows the influence of French Creole style architecture and the similarities many local buildings have with those in the French Quarter in New Orleans.

5. Lusena House (c.1850): 1301 E. Madison Street — The Lusena family purchased this home from Charles Stillman, the founder of Brownsville. It is among the oldest wooden frame homes in the city. This house was originally located at 1011 E. Madison Street and scheduled for demolition when it was saved, moved to the Cueto complex and restored.

6. Webb/Martinez House (1906): 1324 E. Madison Street — This Eclectic style house is a mixture of regionally prevalent architectural styles. The mansard roof and the floor-length front and side windows are characteristic of the French Creole style. The large columned porch wraps around from the front to one side, and its roof has a three-tiered entablature with corbelled wood on the bottom and top. Both are reminiscent of the Greek Revival style. Joseph Webb (1850-1933) had this residence constructed for his family about 1906. Known as “Don Pepe,” Webb served as Cameron County clerk for 34 years.

7. Cross Building (1906): 1452 E. Madison Street — John S. Cross, later known as “Juan,” married a slave woman who had nursed him back to health in Louisiana. Cross and his bride came to Matamoros and Brownsville where he became a successful merchant, businessman, and rancher. Cross formed a partnership with his son Meliton, and they built this Spanish Colonial style building in 1906. It later served as a shrimpers’ hotel, an art museum and the Carlotta Petrina Museum.

8. El Globo Nuevo(1897): 1502 E. Madison Street — The first section of the commercial building was built in 1897 for Adolfo (also spelled Adolpho) Garza, while subsequent additions were built prior to 1914. The building is a typical 19th century Rio Grande Valley commercial structure with plain brick façades highlighted by denticulate cornices and openings grouped into bays by simple pilasters. In the parapet over the central pier is a block with the date 1897 in raised brick.

9.* Casimiro Tamayo Store (1878): 1454 E. Monroe Street — This Spanish Colonial style corner building with a corbelled brick cornice has four pairs of double-left chevron doors with transoms opening onto the street. Casimiro Tamayo was a well-to-do businessman and a prominent local politician born in nearby Point (Port) Isabel, Texas. He was a customs hide inspector and the owner of 1,100 acres in Cameron County.

10. Old Cameron County Courthouse/Oscar C. Dancy Building (1912): 1150 E. Madison Street — The second Cameron County Courthouse built was a three story Classical Revival style building with four entrances and occupying an entire city block. The octagonal rotunda is highlighted by the blue and green stained glass dome. It was designed by Atlee B. Ayres who also served as the Texas State Architect. Named after Oscar Dancy who was elected county judge in 1921, a post he retained for the next fifty years, with the exception of one two-year term in 1932. He initially moved to Brownsville, Texas, in 1909, for his wife’s health. The hallmark of his judgeship was his effort to develop the county road system, which prompted him to claim that the “C” in his name stood for concrete.

11. Field/Pacheco Complex (1894): 1049 E. Monroe Street — Built for Henry M. Field, this large, picturesque, two-story corner building gives a dramatic image of Old Brownsville before the turn of the 20th century. It was built for a cavernous combination store and warehouse on the ground floor, with the family residential quarters on the second. The building was owned by Field until 1914 when it was bought by Andres Pacheco. This brick building still retains its original second-story roofed veranda with its decorative jig-saw brackets, spindle cornices, and spindle railings. The second-floor living quarters and the covered veranda on both the East Monroe and 11th Street sides are actually two stories high. The projecting veranda also creates a covered walkway along the street façade. The building opens to the sidewalk through eleven arched double doorways. To permit street widening, the wooden posts which support the veranda had to be supported on cantilevers over the street curb, but the veranda overhang was otherwise left

unchanged. Former servants' quarters, a carriage house, an upholstery shop, and a garage adjoin or relate to the site of the Field-Pacheco complex. There are three small living quarters on the property line marked by the brick wall.

12.* Laiseca Store (1887): 1059 E. Monroe Street — The Laiseca Store was purchased by Domingo Laiseca in 1921 to operate as a general store. The building was historically known as “El Globo Chiquito,” which was the name of the first store operated in this building. This structure is an excellent example of a modest, late 19th century wood-frame store. It's simple, but rare, twin-gabled form is accented by shuttered doors on the 11th Street facade, and by bargeboards along the gables. Swirling, jig-saw scrollwork trims the twin gables. A porch once extended around the street façade of this corner structure, but it was destroyed by the 1933 hurricane and not replaced.



13.* Cross/Dosal House (1906): 911 E. Madison Street — Built for John S. Cross, this house is one of the best examples of the typical Brownsville house in the late 19th and early 20th century. It is a small, rectangular, one-story, wood-frame cottage with a porch extending across the front. Supporting the porch are six square wood pillars with elaborate star-and-rinceau jig-saw decoration beneath the cornice. The house was purchased by Rosa Knosel Dosal in 1921 and remained in the Dosal family for many years.

14. La Madrilena (1892): 1002 E. Madison Street — The Madrileña (from Madrid) was built for Adrian Barreda Ortiz. This building stood as a shell until it was restored by Rey and Ethel Cantu. This building is considered a noteworthy example of a small-scale, Border Brick style brick corner store. The double doors with barred transom pilasters are repeated around the structure. The brickwork of the openings and the elaborate cornice treatment are both typical of this architecture, although the detailing of the pilasters, corbelling and pinnacles is considered unusual in a building of this size.

** Indicates some or all of the original building no longer standing and/or original façade or structure altered.*

Palm Boulevard Walking Tour

1. Church of the Advent (1926): 104 W. Elizabeth Street — This church is the third structure built for the congregation which is one of the earliest Episcopal congregations organized in Texas. The first church, built by S.W. Brooks, was completed in 1854 and destroyed by the hurricane of 1867. The second church building was rebuilt in 1877 by Brooks, using the original church plans and at the same site, around the corner from the post office on Elizabeth Street. In the 1920's the congregation purchased this site, then considered to be on the edge of Brownsville, and commissioned Scottish architect Thomas McLaren to build this Spanish Colonial style church.

2. First Presbyterian Church (1927): 435 Palm Boulevard — The 1927 church building is a good example of Gothic Revival style architecture. Organized by Hiram Chamberlain on February 23, 1850, this is the first Protestant congregation in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Chamberlain served as the pastor until his death on November 2, 1866. His daughter, Henrietta, married Capt. Richard King in a ceremony officiated by Chamberlain. The Kings remained active members of the church.

3. Brownsville High School (1916): 600 Palm Boulevard — Located at the corner of W. Elizabeth and Palm Boulevard., this was the former location of the 1916 High School & 1928 High School (midblock). The building was designed by architect Atlee B. Ayres. The 1928 addition at mid-block was created by Ayres & Sons and Phelps & Dewees. It was a high school until 1967 when it became Central Junior High School.

4. Clearwater School (1922): 733 Palm Boulevard — This Prairie style school was designed by architect M.L. Walter. First used as a junior high school, it was annexed by Brownsville High School in 1955. The building was used as a high school until 1967 when it became the Clearwater Elementary School.

5. Manautou House (1924): 5 E. Elizabeth Street — This house is a rare example (for this region) of Prairie School architecture. It was designed for Edward Manautou by Edward Guy Holliday. Manautou was a wholesale and retail business owner from Brownsville to San Antonio.



Alonso Building and Sacred Heart Walking Tour

1. Sacred Heart Church (1912): 672 E. Elizabeth Street — Architect Fredrick B. Gaenslen of San Antonio (later of Houston) designed this church. During his 40-year career Gaenslen was the designer of many Roman Catholic churches in South Texas. Sacred Heart Church was the first English speaking Catholic parish in Brownsville. This imposing Gothic Revival style structure is tan brick. The façade is dominated by twin towers flanking a center entrance porch. The central structure of the church is two stories with a pitched roof. Inside, the high altar is ornately designed, with golden trim. The richly-colored stained glass windows bear the names of many pioneer and prominent families of this area.

2. Rock/Gomez House (1900): 500 E. Levee Street — This small house was built for Refugia Rock, the widow of Herman S. Rock. Mr. Rock was a customs hide inspector and was also a member of the team led by Capt. L.H. McNelly who was charged with catching cattle thieves and bandits in 1875. The house has a large porch supported by large columns. The parapeted gables and molded brick cornice across the façade are characteristic of the Border Brick style. The Gomez family owned the house from 1915 to 1996.

3. Brooks House (1888): 623 E. St. Charles Street — Built by architect Samuel W. Brooks as his home, this Victorian style house was moved from its original location on 1131 E. Jefferson Street. Brooks was a well-known architect remembered for the design and construction of many historic buildings, homes and civil engineering projects in Brownsville.

4. Hanson House (1876): 647 E. St. Charles Street — Built by architect and builder Martin Hanson as his home, this Gothic Revival style house is among the finest frame style houses in Brownsville.

5. Russell/Cocke House (1872): 602 E. St. Charles Street — This home was for lawyer W.H. Russell. In 1885, this transitional Greek Revival/Victorian style house was bought by J.J. Cocke, an engineer and surveyor. The house remained in the Cocke family until the 1920s.

6. Alonso Building (1877): 510-514 E. St. Charles Street — Built for Manuel Alonso, who came to Brownsville from Santander, Spain, it was originally a dry goods store called "Los Dos Cañones" (the two canons). Like many store buildings during that period, the second floor served as the family's quarters. The second floor gallery and iron wrought railing are reminiscent of French Creole architecture. In 1995, the Gorgas Science Foundation purchased and restored the building. It was then purchased and donated to the Brownsville Historical Association in 2010.



7. Celaya House (1904): 504 E. St. Francis Street — This Neogothic style house was built for Augustine Celaya, a member of the family that helped create the first railroad company in Brownsville. The city records indicate the 11 room house was built for \$3,000 using brick cured locally on the banks of the Rio Grande River.

8. Puente/Brulay House (1911): 515 E. St. Charles Street — Built in 1911 by Jose Colunga for Luis Puente, the wooden Queen Anne style house features a detailed hipped roof with a tower and a recessed porch with columns. The house belonged to Lucie Starr Grider from 1913-1962. Mrs. Grider's daughter, Inez, married Louis Brulay, whose father, George Brulay, introduced sugarcane to the area.

9. Browne/Wagner House (1894): 245 E. St. Charles Street— This house was built for Mrs. Josephine Glavecke Browne in the Border Brick style common in the area during the late 19th century. Mrs. Glavecke Browne was the daughter of Adolphus Glavecke, a man closely involved in the events leading up to the Cortina Wars. In 1920, Mrs. Robert E. Wagner became the owner the house.

10. Old Gas Station (1935): 308 E. Elizabeth Street — This Spanish Eclectic style building formerly served as a gasoline service and repair station for the Magnolia Petroleum Company which eventually became the ExxonMobil Company.

11. Fernandez/Kowalski House (c.1890): 319 E. Elizabeth Street — This house was built for Benjamin Kowalski, former Mayor of Brownsville, in the Spanish Colonial style. The house was purchased in 1918 by Miguel Fernandez, who married Kowalski's niece, and remained in the Fernandez family until purchased by The Clarissa Francis Corporation in 2002. The house has been renovated for commercial use.

12. McDermott Motor Building (1927): 455 E. Elizabeth Street — Built in the Spanish Colonial style, this building was designed by architect and preservationist Harvey P. Smith. The large parking lot is a reminder of its previous use as a car dealership. Charro Days, Inc., the organizer of the Mexican-themed annual celebration, began using the building as its headquarters in 1987.

13. Kowalski/Dennett House (1893): 507 E. Elizabeth Street — This house was built for Louis and Amelia Kowalski by architect S. W. Brooks. This two-story Second Empire style residence features a mansard or French roof. There is a balcony along the street front and garden side. The brick first story has a molded cornice and elaborate detailing on doorways and windows. The second story has decorative shingle-sheath mansard walls with a standing scam-hipped roof. The house, the brick-paved courtyard, and the side garden are set off from the street by a decorative iron fence.